

A Study On Stress Management In Capfs With Reference To Family Accommodation At Border Outpost Duty

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Abstract: *The stress problems of CAPFs personnel due to family and domestic issues require an effective but practical solution. The objective of this paper is to analyse the issues on provision of family accommodation at BOPs/PLACE OF DUTY for the stress management of CAPFs personnel while performing the operational duties in guarding the nation. The absence of humane approach and concern on this issue caused a severe gap in the well-being of our forces, causing distress and prone to extreme steps. The solution of such a diverse and complex problem cannot be a universal or sacrosanct. A comprehensive humane approach and policy is needed in this regard which can only be derived after we understand the dynamics and the nature of the job. The research also revolves around the suggestions that can be taken by the Govt. to provide better life to CAPF personnel.*

Keywords: - Stress Management, CAPFs (Central Armed Police Force), BOP (Border out post), family stations (accommodation facility to keep family)

1. INTRODUCTION:

CAPF (Central Armed Police Force) consists of seven armed forces of union of India under operational and administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs in Government of India. The seven CAPFs are as Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Assam Rifles (AR) and National Security Guard (NSG). These forces raised for border guarding, maintaining law and order /internal security, counter insurgency and providing security to the vital installations. The total strength of all CAPFs, including all ranks, according to the NCRB, a govt. agency, is 9, 23,800 personnel on 1st January 2019. NCRB is responsible for collection and analysis of data of CAPFs.

The deployment of CAPFs is spread throughout the country without any fixed tenure or place. The Border out post (BOP) or the place of deployment is the place where a sub unit of CAPFs i.e. platoon or coy deployed for border/area domination and other operational activities. CAPFs in earlier times are generally deployed in difficult and disturbed places and their BOPs or the place of duties were even more in difficult and remote areas without having sufficient basic amenities including the family accommodations. The deployment of CAPFs is from one active operational area to another without any option or system of rotation of duties between active and peace postings.

CAPF personnel hardly get any opportunity to keep his family with him during in his service about more than 30 years. This is being happened only due to non-availability of family accommodations at BOPs or place of duty in CAPFs.

According to NCRB data, over 439 CAPFs personnel committed suicide between 2014 to 2019 – more than the number of personnel who were killed on duty i.e. 220. The suicidal

deaths during the period of 2014 to 2019 in CAPFs revealed that 31.4%, which is 138 out of 439 suicides, were due to 'family problems' and 15.4 % which is 68 out of 439 suicides, were due to 'marriage-related issues' and thus making 46.8% suicides due to only related to individual's domestic issues whereas 10.7% suicides were recorded due to 'service-related issues'.

The CAPF personnel encountered problems related to personal / family in addition to other professional issues and felt helpless to resolve the family problems. The forces tried to address the problem by providing basic amenities and also construction of living barracks and family accommodations at headquarters.

Motivation and problem of statement:

Having about 24 years of experience in CAPF, the respondent felt disappointed when come across and learnt about the abrupt loss of life due to committing suicide by personnel due to domestic issues. These deaths always give a sinking effect with impact on the morale of fellow colleagues. It is a fact that in the present time there is complete change in the society and there's approach towards this job. The youths from the present day society joining the forces now days are more sensitive and vulnerable. In CAPF, personnel stay away from their families' maximum in their entire service without any chance to live with their families. The newly marrieds or individuals with some serious domestic problems who intends to live with their family but the system is developed in such a way that they are not able to live with their families even at their duty place/BOPs. The reason is either restrictive attitude of authorities or non-availability of family accommodation at BOPs/place of deployment or in their vicinity. The family accommodation is generally available at unit headquarters but they are quit far away from BOPs/duty place and due to operational commitment these personnel are permitted to visit their families for a day or two in a month. The very core purpose of theirs to live with the family is defeated and does not solve their problems. The continuity in problems of personnel affects the overall functioning and efficiency of the force.

The present study is to create and introduce a conducive environment to make available a stress free and happy work place by introducing provision of family accommodation at BOPs/duty places in CAPFs.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

There is no study or research has been done on provision of family accommodation at BOPs /place of duty or in vicinity to reduce stress among CAPFs personnel which force them to commit suicide. The Times of India (30 April 16) published an article regarding family accommodation to newly married jawans for one year at BOPs at western border. It was said that BSF Headquarters was chalking out a plan to allow newlywed jawans to stay with their wives as newly married jawans are tied up with their duties and have to join soon after the marriage. However, number of article has been published and research has been done which brought out that high attrition rate and suicides in paramilitary forces arising out of work-related stress and alienation from family, it is proposed to have more camps off the border and troubled areas so that personnel can have regular peace postings and be closer to their families.

The Times of India article, (April 27, 2016) "Family accommodation to newly married jawans at the borders"

The times of India article, (Oct 19, 2019) "Ensure jawans get to stay with family for 100 days annually: Home minister to CAPFs"

Objective:

1. To analyse the reasons of stress due to domestic problems and appropriate measures to mitigate the stress level in CAPF personnel.

The main objective of this study is to understand the nature and extent of Provision of 'Family permission' i.e. keeping family in the BOPs/duty places or in the vicinity in small Towns or even villages, to make their life happy and stress-free.

The research concentrates on the nature and type of stress experienced by force personnel due to his domestic and marriage related issues and effects of provisions of family accommodation on morale and efficiency of personnel, border operational duties and threat of border criminals and chances of connivance of personnel at the border. Based on the empirical findings, the study is aimed to propose policy or guidelines for making provisions of family accommodation at BOPs/duty place for a happy and stress-free domestic life with enhanced efficiency of the personnel.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The personnel from all ranks of CAPFs like BSF, CRPF, SSB and CISF are the participants. The research design is mixture of both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve the objective of study. The initial information gathered by means of personnel interaction to the personnel of CAPF units. This study is descriptive and explanatory in nature. The study is based on the primary data from the field as well as data from literature. The methodology adopted was structured questionnaire and personal interaction and also through Google form due to Covid-19 with personnel from all ranks in CAPFs on the subject. Efforts were made to collect the primary data by field survey conducted by visiting purposefully to BOPs/place of duty of different CAPFs i.e. BSF, SSB, CRPF and CISF Battalions in Dhubri, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts in Assam. In pursuit of the objective of the study data have been arranged with the help of simple statistical tools to draw various inferences.

Stress:

The service life in the CAPFs is tough and demanding, both physically and mentally and the service conditions have more impact on the personal front of personnel. The individuals' helplessness in resolving domestic and marriage related issues back at home makes CAPF personnel stressed. The exigencies of job and relatively prolonged absence from home prevent the individual to resolve his domestic issues. Stress is an illness which requires a humane and practical approach by identifying the reasons, causes and solutions thereof. The NCRB report also pointed out that during the period from 2014 to 2019, the main reason for stress in CAPFs is domestic and marriage related issues due to which the suicidal deaths are more than 46.8% suicides in CAPFs.

The FAMILY for any individual is most prominent existence in his life which provides him all time's unconditional emotional support. Personnel living more than nine months in a year away from families at the remotest of places with high risks share his problems/emotions with faith and trust to his family only and the common for the motivation of every individual is living a "HAPPY AND STRESS-FREE" family life.

An individual makes all adjustments to keep peaceful and healthy relationships between his newlywed wife and other family members. He remained in constant touch with his family and remains continuously emotionally charged/drained due to over awareness of problems and tensed relations among his family members. The spouses are highly qualified from well-off families and are more inclined to live with the husbands rather with her in-laws. The prolonged separations, tendency to avoid living with in-laws, in-different attitude of locals and open society with availability of social platforms add on to the problems like infertility,

extra marital affairs, infidelity, etc. forced the personnel in constant stress at his duty place. The job stress and domestic stress are inter-related and is a burning issue in today's forces which affects both work and family life of personnel. Stress leads to various Physiological, psychological and behavioural difficulties.

The uncertain functioning in CAPFs with frequent and sudden movements disrupts the leave plan of personnel with compelling circumstances in curtailment or denial of leave. During the leave personnel is more committed in his social obligation with his family and friends. The return from leave is fixed and thus failed to attend other domestic affairs, children education and quality time with his family which causes undue stress. They failed to balance their official and personal duties and to negate the stress and depression started using substances specially liquor impacting negatively on his health both mentally and physically.

The main factors for stress due to domestic/marriage related issues in CAPFs are:

- a) Rifts between wife and his family members
- b) Prolonged separation from family
- c) Compatibility issue like education and her family status
- d) Extra marital affair, infidelity and Infertility issue
- e) Drug abuse/ alcoholic addiction
- f) Social isolation
- g) Lack of emotional support

Analysis/interpretation of data:

The study has included data from five forces of CAPFs that is BSF, CRPF, SSB, ITBP and CISF deployed in various types of duties in distinguished roles extending from guarding international borders to vital installation, maintenance of law and order to Anti-Naxal operations.

According to survey total 351 personal responded from all ranks up to the rank of commandant from all the above mentioned five CAPFs directly deployed and dealing with the battalion level functioning and man-management in BOPs/ place of Duty.

According to data the personnel under stress due to family separation are 25.3%, the personnel feeling isolation is 31%, due to stress and isolation fall in addictions is 13.5% and suicidal feeling due to stress and isolation is a sizable population that is 21.6% and even 27.2% having tendency of leaving the force and 81% personnel opines that their duty place is hard and difficult.

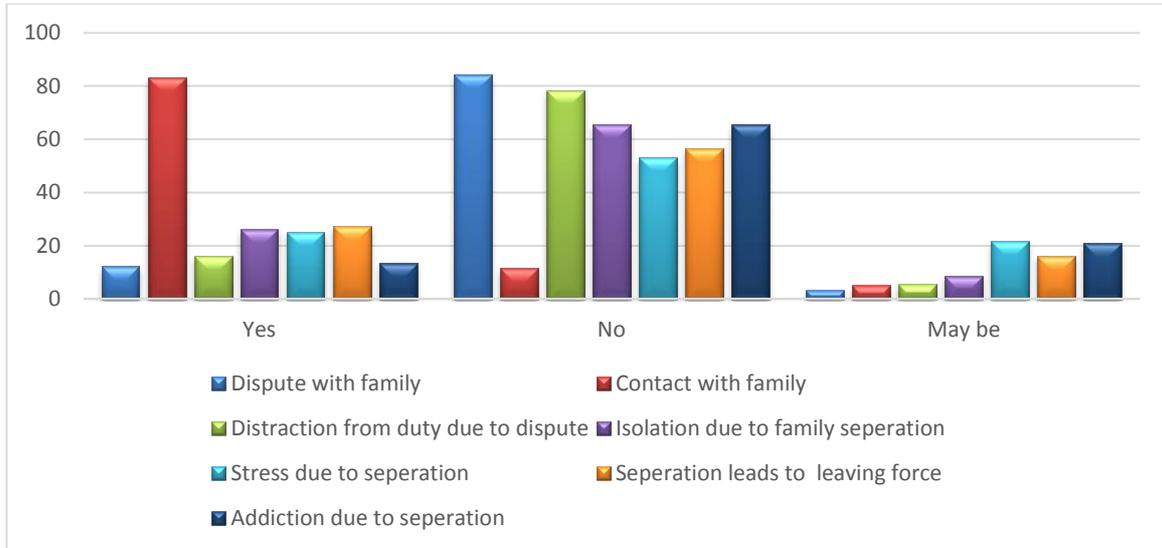


Fig-1

The majority 85% denied any family disputes, 87% denied any domestic/marriage related problems, 59% personnel stressed due to family disputes want to live with family and even without stress 46% personnel want to live with family in BOPs/duty place, if the chance given.

The data says 44.5% personnel living in nuclear families with 84.5% non-working spouses. Though the 42.3% are comfortable in raising the children single handed but majority 68.2% are of the view that the presence of father makes a difference in raising and developing the personality of kids.

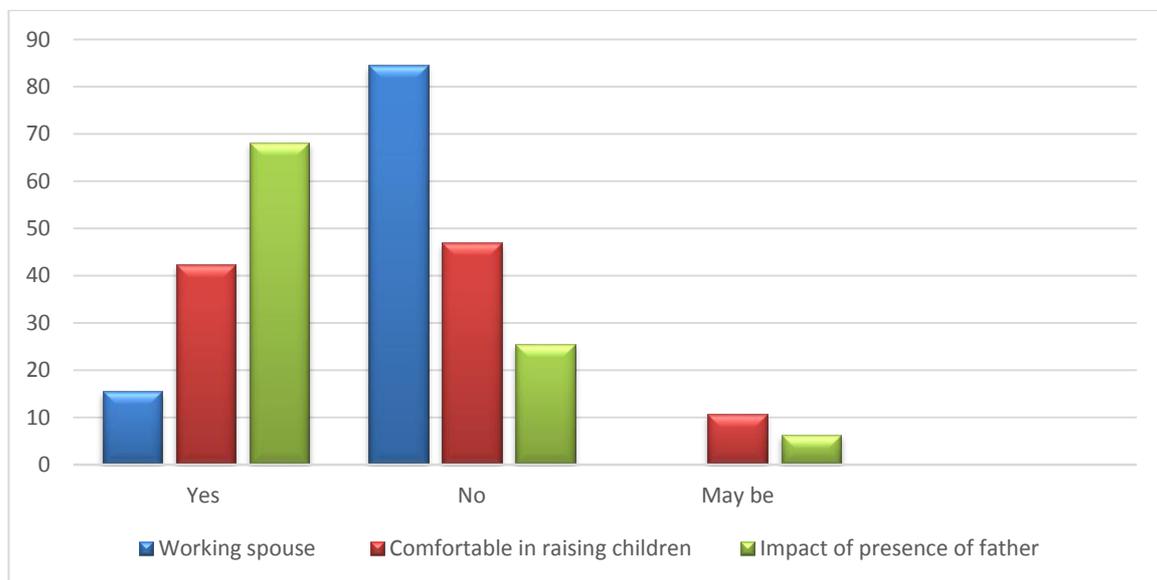


Fig-2

As per the data collected the availability of basic amenities in and around the BOPs/duty places, in terms of water 80%, electricity 55%, mobile connectivity 76%, PHC 41%, primary school education 51%, Township/nearby market 76% and availability of transport is 60%.

As per the data collected majority of personnel i.e. 58% felt safe if family resides outside, 39% denied any security threat to personnel or family members and 65% denied any chances of connivance if the family stays outside BOPs/duty place or in the vicinity. Also 57% personnel felt that border population is friendly and 33% opines that rented accommodation is available.

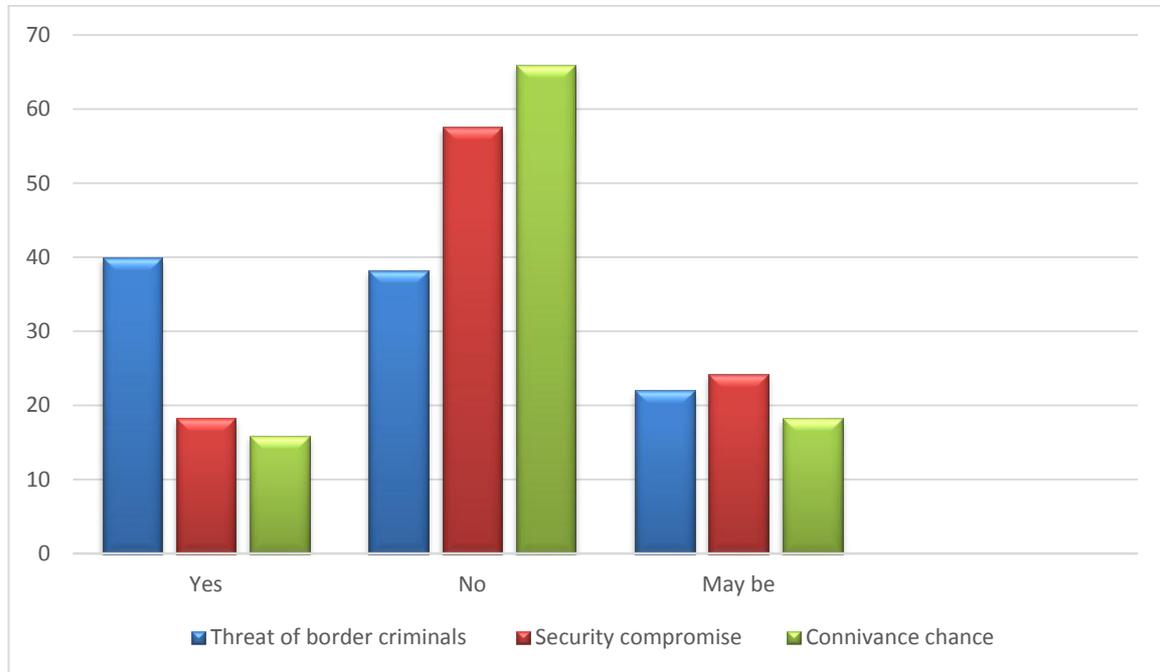


Fig-3

The data also suggests that the 40% personnel felt that sufficient land to make family accommodation is available in BOPs, 76% felt that presence of family will not hamper their duties and even 90% personnel says that they don't have any problem if their colleagues resides with family to resolve their personal/family affairs and without affecting the operational duties as opined by 78% personnel.

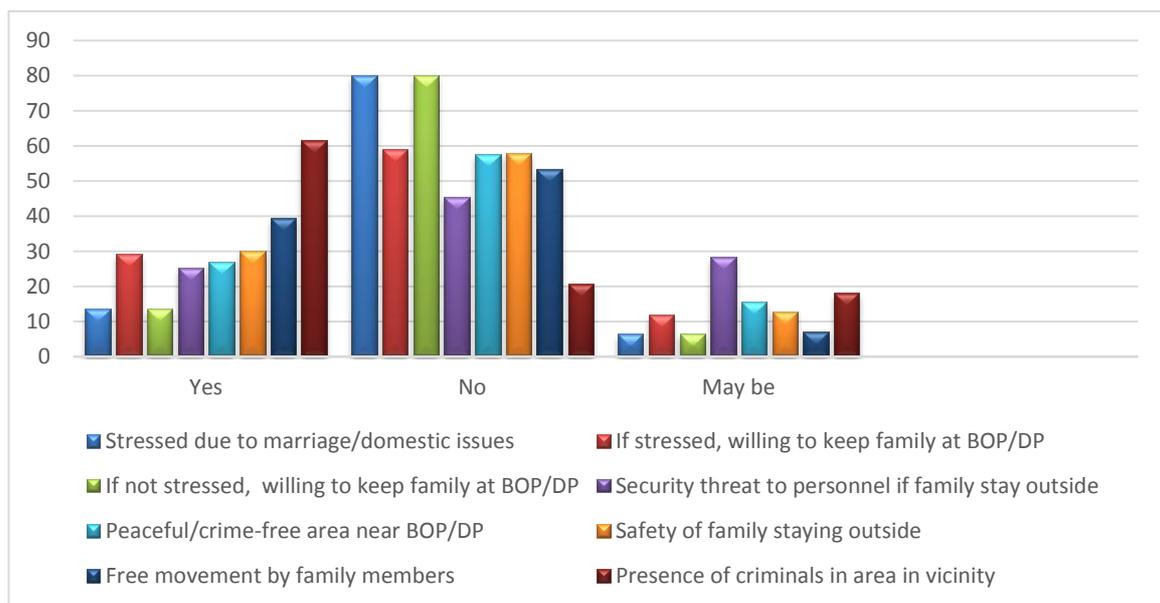


Fig-4

In addition to this the data is also collected from the 54 wives of the SSB personnel living and deployed in risky, hard and difficult terrain of Kokrajhar Assam on the international borders. 60% of wives are stressed on the functioning of their husbands. More than 50% share their problems with their husbands and more than 60% wives felt the importance of presence of husbands in raising and developing personality of their kids. Above all more than 70% are of the opinion that it's immaterial whether stressed or not, they want to live with their husbands at their duty places.

OPINION OF WIVES OF PERSONNEL:

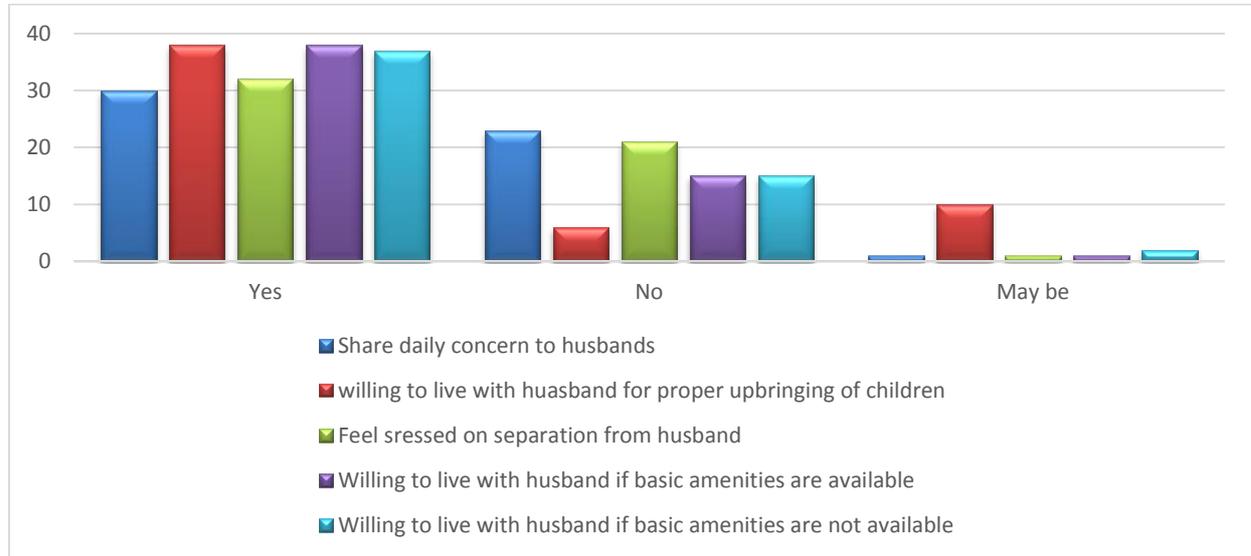


Fig-5

4. MAJOR FINDINGS:

According to data the personnel due to domestic and marriage related problems felt stressed, isolated and developed tendency of leaving the force. The separation from the family affects their work and health. They find that the BOPs/Duty places are located in hard and difficult areas.

The majority of personnel denied any domestic/marriage related disputes but maximum personnel felt stressed due to family separation and a sizeable population want to stay with their families at duty place, if the chance given.

The majority living in nuclear families are house wives and of the view that the presence of father makes a difference in raising and developing the personality of children. The sense of alienation will also be eliminated.

Now some development has reached to far flung border areas with basic amenities to many BOPs/duty places, in terms of water, electricity mobile connectivity, PHC, primary school education, Township/nearby market and availability of transport, it means a decent living can be made available in those areas nearby BOPs and duty places.

The majority of personnel felt concerned if family resides outside BOPs/duty place or in the vicinity but denied any security threat to personnel or family members or any chances of connivance. They consider border population is friendly and offer accommodation on rent, if available.

The majority of wives of the personnel are of the opinion to live with their husbands irrespective of the hardship, place of duty and the related problems.

It is possible to construct family accommodation in BOPs as sufficient land is available. The presence of family solves the leave problems, boost their morale in duties, and even their colleagues are having no issues on staying of their families.

In absence of family accommodation at BOPs/duty place and keeping family at Bn HQ does not solve the purpose especially for newly married and issueless couples.

Challenges/Threats:

1. Affection operational duties if family accommodation is provided at BOPs/place of duty.
2. Chances of threat to personnel and their family members from smugglers/criminals or connivance with them.
3. Gathering and analysis of details regarding construction of accommodation in BOPs/Duty place or availability in vicinity, on rent.
4. In emergency less manpower will be available.

5. SUGGESTIONS:

Home minister Shri Amit Shah on Oct'19 2019, expressed concern on the hardship faced by CAPFs because of deployment for continuously in long stretches at duty places far from home with prolonged separations from their families. He formally said to make arrangements for CAPF personnel to facilitate each personnel to stay with his family for at least 100 days in a year. After going through the data, its analysis and personal interactions it seems that the provision of making availability of the family accommodation for personnel at BOPs/Duty places or in vicinity is viable and the CAPF personnel may live well beyond 100 days with his family. However, at the same time the following points may also be kept in mind while deciding on providing the family accommodation.

1. Identify the personnel having family and marriage related issues like infertility, child bearing, medical related, education of children etc.
2. Identify and select the BOP/Duty place where the problem of individual can be addressed.
3. Identify the personnel in their fag-end of their career where their children are settled and their spouse needs their personal attention and care in older age.
4. Create a homely environment at BOP/Duty place where communication among themselves and with experienced members will be a stress buster.
5. Identify the BOP/Duty place, 1 to 2 BOPs strategically located where sufficient space is available to construct family accommodation keeping in view the availability of basic amenities and other facilities.
6. Identify the towns/villages in vicinity of BOPs/Duty places where the rented accommodation is available keeping in view the safety and security of personnel and their families and without hampering the operational duties.

6. CONCLUSION:

Theories are not the remedy to manage stress among all ranks in CAPFs. Even more than 50 years after raising of various CAPFs, no clear policy and guidelines is still framed about provision of accommodation at BOPs /duty place in the CAPFs. A humanitarian approach is required as CAPFs are having peculiar working environment in comparison to other government departments.

There is no doubt about the scarcity of basic amenities in initial phase and infrastructure conditions were pathetic for accommodating troops. The deployment was also in far flung and inhospitable terrain it is considered and even apprehensions about BOP/Duty places are disturbed or near to borders and keeping families there may affect operational duties thus providing family accommodations at BOPs/duty place were out of question. After construction of border roads, fencing, mobile networks and lots of other development work, the troops are started thinking of keeping their families at BOPs.

The CAPF personnel have their family responsibilities and social obligations and the advent of nuclear family system in the society has increased their problems and grievances in these job conditions. In order to mitigate problems in these service conditions the only option is to allow to bring families at BOPs/duty place as staying with their family at BOPs/duty place will certainly help personnel in resolving their issues and live happy, stress-free life with increased zeal and efficiency.

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