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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

CAPF Centralisation Debate — Unified Command vs State Autonomy in Internal Security

 **HINDUSTAN TIMES**

24 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**POLITY****SECURITY & DEFENCE****GS PAPERS****GS2****GS3****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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 Hindustan Times

24 March 2026

GS2

GS3



Hindustan Times

MAINS RELEVANCE:

GS Paper 2

GS Paper 3



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"Assam Rifles operates under dual control of MHA and the Army. Does this model work, or does it create confusion in command during operations?"

CAPF Centralisation Debate — Unified Command vs State Autonomy in Internal Security

On Assam Rifles' 191st Raising Day (March 24, 2026), Hindustan Times editorial examines the ongoing debate about centralised control over Central Armed Police Forces, triggered by the CAPF Bill 2026 and recent Supreme Court judgments on IPS deputation. The editorial asks whether unified central command strengthens internal security or undermines state-level institutional capacity.

THE CAPF LANDSCAPE

India maintains seven Central Armed Police Forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs:

| FORCE | EST. | STRENGTH | PRIMARY ROLE |
|--------------|------|------------|--|
| CRPF | 1939 | ~3.25 lakh | Internal security, counter-insurgency |
| BSF | 1965 | ~2.65 lakh | India-Pakistan, India-Bangladesh borders |
| CISF | 1969 | ~1.85 lakh | Critical infrastructure, airports |
| ITBP | 1962 | ~90,000 | India-China border |
| SSB | 1963 | ~90,000 | India-Nepal, India-Bhutan borders |
| Assam Rifles | 1835 | ~65,000 | Indo-Myanmar border, NE counter-insurgency |
| NSG | 1984 | ~7,500 | Counter-terrorism, VIP protection |

Total CAPF strength: ~10 lakh personnel — larger than the armies of most countries.

THE DUAL CONTROL QUESTION — ASSAM RIFLES

Assam Rifles has a unique governance model:

- **Administrative control:** Ministry of Home Affairs (pay, posting, promotion)
- **Operational control:** Indian Army (deployment, operations, intelligence)

Arguments for Unified Control (under MHA)

- Single chain of command eliminates confusion
- Better integration with civilian law enforcement
- Consistent with other CAPFs
- Army should focus on external threats, not internal security

Arguments for Army Control

- Assam Rifles personnel are trained to Army standards
- Counter-insurgency in NE requires military-grade operations
- The Army provides intelligence, logistics, and air support
- Dual control has worked for 191 years — “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it”

THE CENTRALISATION TREND

The editorial notes a broader centralisation trend in internal security:

Recent Developments

- **CAPF Bill 2026:** Proposes greater central oversight over CAPF deployment, training, and cadre management
- **SC judgment on IPS deputation:** Supreme Court ruled that states cannot refuse to send IPS officers on central deputation, strengthening central control
- **BSF jurisdiction expansion (2021):** BSF operating area extended from 15 km to 50 km inside international borders in Punjab, Assam, and West Bengal — opposed by state governments

State Governments' Concerns

- Internal security is a **State subject** (Entry 1, State List — Public Order; Entry 2 — Police)
- CAPF deployment in states often bypasses state police chiefs
- States fear loss of control over their own territory
- Opposition-ruled states see centralisation as politically motivated

THE IPS DEPUTATION ISSUE

The Supreme Court's recent ruling mandating that states release IPS officers for central deputation has reignited federal tensions:

| ISSUE | CENTRE'S POSITION | STATES' POSITION |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Deputation | Essential for national integration | Depletes state police capacity |
| Control | IPS is an All-India Service under Centre | Officers serve state governments |
| Constitutional basis | Article 312 (All-India Services) | Entry 2, State List (Police) |
| Practical impact | 900+ IPS officers on central deputation | States short by 15-20% of cadre |

THE SARKARIA COMMISSION'S WARNING

The Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations (1988) had cautioned against excessive use of central forces in states:

- Central forces should be deployed **only on state request** or during emergencies
- Prolonged deployment creates **dependency** and weakens state police capabilities
- States must invest in their own police modernisation

The editorial argues that 37 years later, the trend has moved in exactly the opposite direction.

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Resolve Assam Rifles dual control:** Either fully under MHA or fully under Army — not both
- ② **CAPF deployment protocol:** Formalise consultation mechanism with state governments before deployment
- ③ **State police modernisation:** Increase Police-Population Ratio (currently 152 per lakh, UN recommends 222)
- ④ **Internal security doctrine:** Create a comprehensive national doctrine that defines Centre vs State roles

UPSC RELEVANCE

CAPFs (names, establishment years, roles), Assam Rifles dual control, BSF jurisdiction, Article 312, State List Entry 1 and 2

MAINS GS-II:

Federal tensions, Centre-State relations, All-India Services

MAINS GS-III:

Internal security, border management, counter-insurgency

INTERVIEW:

Does centralisation of police forces strengthen national security or weaken federalism?

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

CAPFS UNDER MHA:

- CRPF (1939): Largest CAPF, 3.25 lakh, internal security
- BSF (1965): 2.65 lakh, India-Pak, India-Bangladesh borders
- CISF (1969): 1.85 lakh, airports, critical infrastructure
- ITBP (1962): 90,000, India-China border (LAC)
- SSB (1963): 90,000, India-Nepal, India-Bhutan borders
- Assam Rifles (1835): 65,000, Indo-Myanmar border (dual control)
- NSG (1984): 7,500, counter-terrorism

ASSAM RIFLES:

- Oldest CAPF: Est. 1835 as Cachar Levy
- HQ: Shillong, Meghalaya
- Dual control: MHA (admin) + Army (operational)
- Border: 1,643 km Indo-Myanmar
- Nickname: Sentinel of the North-East

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK:

- Entry 1, State List: Public Order
- Entry 2, State List: Police
- Article 312: All-India Services (IAS, IPS, IFoS)
- Article 355: Centre's duty to protect states from internal disturbance
- Article 356: President's Rule

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

- Police-Population Ratio: India 152 per lakh (UN: 222)
- Sarkaria Commission (1988): Centre-State relations
- Punchhi Commission (2007): Also examined CAPF deployment
- BSF jurisdiction expanded (2021): 15 km → 50 km in 3 states
- FMR suspension: India suspended Free Movement Regime on Indo-Myanmar border (Feb 2024)

Sources: [Hindustan Times](#), [MHA](#)

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