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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE
(2008-2009)**

(FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN ARMED FORCES

THIRTY FIRST REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

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COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2008-09)

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INTRODUCTION

1. I, the Chairman, Standing Committee on Defence (2008-09) having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Thirty-first Report on the subject 'Stress Management in the Armed Forces'.

2. The Committee selected the above subject for examination during the year 2007-08. As the examination of the subject remained inconclusive, it was re-selected by the Standing Committee on Defence for examination during the year 2008-09.

3. During their examination of the subject, the Committee took briefing and evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Defence and ex-servicemen and experts having experience in this field on 4 December 2007, 9 June 2008, 23 June 2008 and 19 May 2008 on the subject.

4. Based on the background note and written replies to the list of points furnished by the Ministry of Defence on the subject; memoranda submitted by ex-servicemen and experts; briefing/oral evidence tendered by the representatives of the Ministry and non-official witnesses; and the observations made by the members of the Committee during the Study visit to Delhi Cantonment Area in June 2008; the Committee finalised and adopted the draft Report at their sitting held on 13 October, 2008.

5. Taking note of the number of cases of suicide and fratricidal killings in the three services of the Armed Forces and certain measures stated to have been initiated in the recent past for Stress Management, the Committee have observed that this issue has not been perceived by the Ministry of Defence in its entirety with a view to devising appropriate and timely strategies to minimize the stress level of the serving personnel of the Armed Forces. They have accordingly desired the Ministry to make a realistic assessment of the problems plaguing the Armed Forces Personnel so as to identify the areas needing urgent reform in the right direction.

6. The Committee have observed that after having identified the specific causative factors for stress among the Armed Forces Personnel through various studies, the Ministry have not contemplated multipronged strategies to address the problems of negative stress behaviour in the Armed Forces. The Committee have accordingly, urged upon the Ministry to realize the gravity of the problem in all its ramifications and take expeditious steps to bring about perceptible improvement in the prevailing situation.

7. The Committee have also emphasised upon the need for statutory provisions mandating the district authorities to address the problems and grievances relating to criminal and civil disputes of the families members of the Armed forces personnel deployed on hard duties at far flung places.

8. The Committee have desired the Ministry of Defence to keep the shortages of personnel at the Unit level to the barest minimum in the counter insurgency and in the border areas and also desired that the duration of deployment of defence service personnel in those areas should be reviewed and rationalised so as to contain their stress level.

9. The Committee wish to convey their thanks to the representatives of the Ministry of Defence and ex-servicemen and experts for appearing before the Committee for tendering evidence and for furnishing the relevant information in connection with the examination of this subject.

10. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations/ recommendations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report.

NEW DELHI;
17 October, 2008
25 Asvina, 1930 (Saka)

BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on Defence.

CHAPTER-I

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN THE ARMED FORCES

Introductory

1.1 The Armed Forces operate in a dynamic environment, which presents several challenges to its personnel. As the Armed Forces are becoming more and more complex in terms of technology and operations, the amount of stress faced by the personnel is also increasing. According to the Ministry of Defence, the changing scenarios in the country along with the environmental and operational commitments together have put enormous demands for adjustment on the uniformed services.

1.2 Elaborating on the stress related issues in the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence in their note stated as under:-

“Though the overall psychiatric morbidity in the Armed Forces has been less than the national figures, even a few unusual incidents in the Armed Forces draw excessive media attention. Stress manifests itself in various ways in peacetime and wartime environment and can affect anyone serving at any level. Soldiers engaged in low intensity conflicts over long periods of time are prone to develop psychological problems. The rapid change in society has also led to considerable upheaval in the soldier’s life. The change from joint family to the nuclear family system, increasing aspirations for a good quality life and frequent dislocations, long waiting for married accommodation have caused additional stress and strain leading to psychological distress. Response of a soldier to the stress can be positive or negative. Positive responses can be a sense of purpose and mission, pride in uniform, regimental spirit, camaraderie, vigilance, endurance of hardship pain and injury, heroic acts of courage and self-sacrifice. Negative stress behaviours include misconduct behaviours (self inflicted wounds, malingering, absent without leave, desertion, suicide etc.) combat fatigue and posttraumatic stress disorder etc. Apart from these stress can precipitate psychiatric illnesses like depression, anxiety, insanity, and alcohol and drug abuse.”

Common Stressors

1.3 Explaining the common stressors in the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence in their note on the subject stated as under:

“(a) During Training Period: Tender age at recruitment, loss of emotional support from family and friends, strenuous physical demands of training activities, limited scope for privacy and problems at distant home.

(b) In Peace: Marital problems, children’s education, property disputes, financial problems, difficulties with civil administration in resolving disputes.

(c) In Field: Separation from family members, adverse climatic conditions, isolation, long tenures, unknown enemy in counter insurgency areas, uncertainty of life, difficult living conditions and fatigue.”

1.4 As regards, the mental health scenario in Armed Forces in India, the Ministry of Defence submitted the following information:-

“WHO’s projections indicate that by 2020 depression is going to be the second most common illness globally after cardiovascular diseases. There is a rising trend of psychiatric illnesses in our country over the last few decades. Armed Forces personnel being drawn from the same society are not immune to unique operational and environmental stresses, which are resulting in creasing incidence of psychiatric disturbances.”

1.5 According to the Ministry of Defence, the following Mental Health Care Delivery System is in existence in Armed Forces:-

“Armed Forces community has a culture of its own. Each unit both medical and non medical have an inbuilt system of developing and taking care of all the individuals both socially as well as professionally. From the very beginning a Commander takes these aspects as his key result areas using buddy care system, frequent interactions and Sainik Sammelans. A sense of belonging and responsibility are thereby cultivated in an individual resulting in displaying of camaraderie. However, because of fresh stress and strain of environment these mechanism need to be strengthened. In addition to this, mental health care is delivered through a wide net work of medical professionals, including medical officers at unit level, medical specialists in peripheral hospitals and a team of specially trained mental health professionals including psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurses and psychiatric nursing assistants in well established psychiatric centres at zonal and command hospitals.”

Consequences of Stress

1.6 According to the information made available by an expert, stress has been recognised as a cause for a variety of illnesses and behavioural problems. It can lead to suicide, fratricidal killings, early mortality and desertion from Armed Forces. The direct cost of stress for the Indian armed forces could be several hundred crores of rupees per year due to man-days of work lost, cost of treatment and deaths. The indirect costs are very difficult to estimate, and include such things as impaired motivation, prolonged un-serviceability of equipment, poor decision-making, poor quality of work, loss of creativity and accidents. Under stress 'attention' gets narrowed: People under stress ignore the central cues and respond to peripheral signals.

Cases of suicides and fratricidal killings

1.7 The following table shows number of deaths in the three Services of the Armed Forces due to suicide during the last five years:

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (upto 31.3.08)
Army	96	100	92*	120	115	27
Air Force	24	13	23	24	16	06
Navy	0	04	05	01	02	0
Total	120	117	120	145	133	33

* Includes 15 attempted suicide cases

1.8 An analysis of above figures, reveals that during the period 2003 to 2007, there were 635 cases of suicide in the Armed Forces, which also included 15 cases of attempted suicide in Armed Forces.

1.9 On being asked whether these suicide cases could be related to the operational stress, the Ministry of Defence stated in their written reply that "the number of cases of suicides in peace areas has been more than field locations except in the year 2005 where suicide cases in field were marginally higher than peace areas. However, the suicide rate of Indian Army is approximately 7.48 per lakh based on data from 2002 to 31 October 2007. The suicide rate in Army is below the national average, which is approximately 11 per lakh." The Ministry also stated that none of the suicides in Indian Air Force as well as Indian Navy for the period 2002 to 2007 has been attributed to operational stress.

1.10 When enquired whether the phenomenon of suicide could be symptomatic to any systemic problem, the Ministry of Defence replied as under:

“The socio-economic environment in the country has changed and has led to break-up of joint family system. This has led to numerous domestic problems for troops who stay far away from their families most of the time. Domestic problems coupled with marital discord, broken love affairs, financial strain and serious medical ailments are amongst the main causes for suicides among troops. Suicides attributable to work related reasons are few. Thus there is apparently no systemic problem.”

1.11 On being asked whether more number of cases of suicide are reported from field stations, a representative of the Ministry of Defence deposed during the evidence:-

“Peace station is slightly higher compared to field stations.”

1.12 According to the Ministry of Defence, Army orders a Court of Inquiry (COI) after every incident of suicide to investigate the matter and ascertain the causes of suicide. In this context, the representative of Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) deposed during evidence as under:-

“The Courts of Inquiry must be conducted after every incident of suicide and they are conducted. But something, which the Armed Forces may internally look, is, how independent, objective and transparent they are. If that is done in an objective and transparent manner and if there is genuine redressal of grievance or genuine investigation for the cause of such a suicide, then I think it will be much better. They will learn the right kind of lessons and so far as the person concerned also, there is a feeling that there is fairness in justice. There is a perception that these Courts of Inquiry are not as transparent as they can be. This is something that the Forces can themselves look into because they have to ensure discipline. It can be like any other court. But in the changing circumstances, the more objective and transparent they are the better it will be. “

1.13 During the evidence, the representative of the Ministry of Defence explained the reasons for fratricidal killings in the Armed Forces as follows:-

“I will first deal with this fratricide issue because it is more of a personal nature, relates to an individual and not so much as an organisational thing. A person takes this drastic step when he is very much antagonistic towards that individual and has a personal grievance against him, whatever is the reason and it could be perceived also. At that point of time he resorts to this extreme step.”

1.14 As per the data furnished by the Ministry of Defence in their background note on the subject, number of deaths due to fratricide during the last five years are as under:-

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (upto 31.3.08)
Army	08	11	13	24	08	0
Air Force	01	01	01	0	0	0
Navy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	09	12	14	24	08	0

1.15 The aforesaid table reveals that 67 cases of fratricide were reported during 2003 to 2007.

1.16 Elaborating on the medical aspect of cases of suicide and fratricide a representative of the Ministry of Defence stated during evidence as follows:-

“As far as the medical aspect of it is concerned, this happens primarily because of depression. The suicides particularly are on account of depression. The soldier or say a junior commissioned officer gets into a depressing mood and that drives him to this extreme step. There may be two people who may face equally difficult circumstances. One may respond to it more robustly and may handle that difficulty; the other one may not be able to do so because of their psychological weaknesses and they get into depression. Of course, the current circumstances make it very much more difficult.”

1.17 However, when inquired whether there has been any mechanism to identify soldiers suffering from Stress, a representative of the Ministry of Defence stated as under:-

“People are trained in such a manner that they are able to identify soldiers, who are already there in the service, and we keep a discreet watch on them so that we do not take these unfortunate steps.”

1.18 When enquired whether any psychological test of recruits is conducted at the time of induction of soldiers, the witness clarified:-

“There is no psychological screening as of now.”

1.19 On being asked whether the Ministry have undertaken any study to compare suicide rates in Indian Armed Forces with that in developed countries, the representative of the Ministry of Defence stated during evidence as under:-

“....we have compared four countries, three developed countries, the US, UK, France and India and found that the rate in India is about half compared to the developed countries.”

1.20 During the evidence, the representative of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) while acknowledging that there has been increase in the cases of suicide and fratricide in the Armed Forces, made following submission:-

“The number of suicides and fratricides are both on the increase. This is a disturbing trend. The reasons for these are, of course, also something that we have mentioned. These people have to live in extremely difficult conditions. We are fully aware of the circumstances of soldiers who live in counter-insurgency operations fighting amongst your own people, when the community around also cannot be trusted. There could be people who come from the shadows of society. That can be an extremely difficult task. There tackling internal insurgency is a very difficult task. Then, the fact that, sometimes, the kind of climatic conditions and difficult conditions that they have to live in, like Siachen or say some difficult areas near the border, that can cause extreme stress on soldiers because they are away from their families for a very long period of time. As you know, they have been engaged in counter-insurgency operations for many years now and because of this their replacement has already been delayed. Relief comes with great difficulty and that causes additional stress.”

Cases of Desertion

1.21 At the instance of the Committee, the Ministry of Defence furnished the following statistical data on the number of personnel who have deserted Armed Forces during last two years:-

	2006	2007	Total
Army	1401	983	2384
Navy	159	367	526
Air Force	71	39	110
Total:	1631	1389	3020

Causes of Stress

1.22 According to the Ministry of Defence, the causative factors identified on the basis of the studies undertaken in the recent past are as under :-

- “(a) Socio Economic Causes:
- (i) Family discords
 - (ii) Increased responsibilities towards family and difficulty in taking adequate care of family responsibilities due to break up of joint family system.
 - (iii) Extra marital affairs
 - (iv) Poor financial conditions and inability in meeting the family obligations.

- (v) Due to socio – economic changes individuals get into heavy debt and are unable to pay back dues/loans.
 - (vi) Psychological pressure on a soldier due to constant exposure of family to social ills like dowry demand, sexual exploitation, alcoholism and drug abuse etc. Also inability to remedy the situation.
- (b) Environmental/ Organizational Causes
- (i) Prolonged separation from family and difficulty in attending to family commitments.
 - (ii) Stress due to prolonged commitment in counter insurgency environment.
 - (iii) Uncongenial and stressful environment in the lines and frugal living conditions coupled with lack of rest due to operational commitments.
 - (iv) Ignorance of the signs of stress & suicidal behaviour amongst junior leaders.
 - (v) Low relationship-high task orientation of leaders
 - (vi) Denial of leave inspite of domestic problems leading to frustration and a sense of hopelessness.
- (c) Medical/Psychological Causes
- (i) Individual suffering from mental depression and lack of mental robustness
 - (ii) Poor interpersonal relationship of individual in the unit
 - (iii) Stigma attached to individual seeking medical help from psychiatrist (mental/Psychological case)
 - (iv) Low tolerance levels in certain soldiers further aggravated by stress.
 - (v) Suffering from long drawn and incurable disease
 - (vi) Apprehension of sexual dysfunction.”

Familial Reasons for Stress

1.23 During the evidence, the representative of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) made following observation on the reasons for familial stress in the Armed Forces:-

“One more condition I would like to bring to your notice is, of course, what happens to their families when they leave their families behind. Sometimes, accommodation may not be able to them, but more often than not, they have the problems of financial nature. Then, if they are coming from rural areas, they may have land problems; their lands may be occupied by others or they may have held some land for which they want regularization which is not possible to get; they may have revenue disputes; they may have civil disputes. Invariably, commanding officers take them up with the District Magistrates, but they also have their constraints. That is because there is a certain law and we have to go through the due process of law. In that process, the soldier does not get quick relief. That causes frustration. Now-a-days, there is a great deal of exploitation; there is the aspiration that their children should do

extremely well. Competitive pressures in society are also increasing and, therefore, when their children are unable to get admissions in good colleges or are unemployed, it becomes even more difficult. Finally, Sir, the fact that now-a-days we have nuclear families, and joint family system is breaking down, takes away the source of support that you could get in the past. The uncle or a nephew, or an old mother in the joint family used to look after their children, but now-a-days their families are small. There is great aspiration for material well being and your conditions of work are extremely difficult. So, these factors put together put excessive stress on people, particularly those who are not well off and who are not very well connected in society and who do not exercise much influence. They get into a mode of depression and are often driven to suicides.”

1.24 Explaining the familial reasons for stress, the representative of the Ministry of Defence stated during evidence as follows:-

“The genesis of a suicide lies more in the family problems. Most of the suicides are due to family problems, financial problems, failed love affair, not getting married to the lady one loved, wife ringing up on the mobile straight away with some problem, etc. He is not in a position to influence the situation and is put under a tremendous stress as he is not able to help them out. At the same time even the family is getting ill-treated by the *goondas*, etc. There are problems like land disputes and even getting an electric connection for his agricultural land. These kind of small problems do not get resolved when the soldier comes home on leave for about sixty days. After spending his leave when he goes back, the problems remain where they are. A number of suicides have occurred when a soldier has come back from leave. That indicates that the genesis lies in the family problems which he is not able to solve.”

Responsiveness of Civil Administration

1.25 While highlighting the importance of Civil Administration in helping the Defence personnel and their family in cases related to civil disputes, a representative of the Ministry of Defence deposed as under:-

“The civil administration becoming more responsive will very largely contribute towards a reduction in the suicides. In fact, the Defence Minister had written a letter and the Chief Secretary had also written letter to the Defence Secretary. However, on ground the effect is very minimal. They are still treated as routine with no special priority being given. You yourself brought out that in the earlier times it used to be promptly acted upon and a communication responding to this used to be sent back to the Commanding Officer. I am afraid nothing is happening in that regard. “

1.26 On being asked about the basis of the statement on the poor response from civil authorities, a representative of the Ministry of Defence deposed as under:-

“We will have to compile the data from the unit level. From the feed back by the Commanders, it is pointed out that there is absolutely no response.”

1.27 Responding to a question about the steps needed to make the Civil Administration responsive to the grievances of the Armed Forces personnel, a representative of the Ministry of Defence deposed as under:-

“Sir, something similar to RTI can be done for addressing grievances of the Armed Forces. That may make it more transparent and people more accountable.”

1.28 Elaborating further on the issue, another representative of the Ministry of Defence stated as under:-

“When he says that it should be on the pattern of RTI, perhaps he means that we lay down fixed time schedule within which he must respond like in the case of an RTI question, we are obliged to reply within 30 days. Accordingly, priority is given. Factual information is given because if facts are not written, it is of no use. If we can lay down some time-frame, it will help.”

1.29 When asked whether it is possible for the Ministry of Defence to set up a mechanism for collecting data from Commands or Units, the representative of the Ministry of Defence deposed as under:-

“We will have to set up a net electronically. That could be the best and the fastest way. If a letter is taken by *jawan* to the District Collector, the same thing is processed up electronically to the Command and to the Army Headquarters and MoD also. Then, from this side, somebody may interact with the State Government that so and so has approached the DC. If we have that kind of a net connection, it can be done.”

1.30 The Ministry of Defence also furnished a copy of the letter written by Raksha Mantri to Chief Ministers of all the States stressing on the need for prompt response from district authorities for redressal of grievances of serving soldiers and their families. In this connection, explaining the circumstances, which warranted such a communication from Raksha Mantri to Chief Ministers of different States and the response of the Chief Ministers of different States in this regard, the Ministry of Defence, in their subsequent note, stated as follows:-

“Due to a sudden spurt in suicides and fratricides in Army during September-October 2006, a meeting was taken in the Ministry of Defence by Raksha Mantri on 8.11.2006 to discuss the problem and take suitable remedial measures to curb such incidents. It was decided in the meeting that a letter will be written by RM to the Chief Ministers of all States requesting to instruct the State/District authorities to attend to the problems of the soldiers both serving as well as ex-servicemen and their families on priority basis.

The response of State Governments has been positive and encouraging. Many State Governments have put in place grievances redressal monitoring mechanism for serving soldiers/veterans and their dependants. Some State Governments have constituted district level Sainik Welfare Committees and senior functionaries of State Government have been nominated as members of the Committee. State Governments have issued instructions to District level officers to be proactive in solving the problems of serving and ex-servicemen of the Armed Forces.”

Impact of Shortage of Officers

1.31 A representative of the Ministry of Defence, while highlighting the relation between the shortage of officers and stress, stated as under:-

“We are authorised to 22 officers in an Infantry Battalion. As against that we have only got about nine in a battalion. Out of that, due to various professional commitments people go out. Therefore, the number of people actually available is very less. It is because of this paucity of officers that the type of interaction which we need at our junior officers’ level is lacking. The need of the hour today is that you have to be much more intimate because the troops are more educated. However, I would like to bring to your notice that with the measure that has been adopted and with the Commanders focusing on this, in about six months of this year there was only one incident of fratricide.”

1.32 Elaborating further, a non-official witness stated during evidence as under:-

“As you are all very well aware that the Armed Forces are short of over 12000 officers which is almost 25% of the authorised strength. This shortage is in the units mainly. The formation Headquarters run with full authorisation and are therefore not affected by this shortfall. A unit with authorised strength of 24 officers have no more than 10-12 present. Out of these some are on leave and some more are committed to doing various course or studies to meet the demands of newer technologies and tactics resulting in merely 3-4 officers present in the unit at any one time.”

1.33 In this context, the representative of the Ministry of Defence stated as under:-

“As I said, Sir, once the deficiency of Army officers is made up and the number of officers increases, things will be better. What is happening now is that one officer is doing his work in addition to his operational task on which he is out with the troops. If the troops are out in the night, he is also out.”

1.34 The Committee have taken up for examination the issue of shortage of officers and other allied subjects and their Report on these issues will be presented to Lok Sabha separately.

Reluctance in psychiatrist's help

1.35 The Ministry in their written reply informed the Committee of the following factors for stress classifiable under Medical/Psychological category:-

“Medical/Psychological causes like individual suffering from long drawn and incurable disease, mental depression and lack of mental robustness, stigma attached to individual seeking medical help from psychiatrist (mental/psychological case), low tolerance levels in certain soldiers further aggravated by stress etc.”

1.36 Explaining the meaning of stigma in context of availing the help from psychiatrist, a non-official witness in his written note informed the Committee as follows:-

“referral to psychiatrist treatment is considered a ‘stigma’. The commanding officer fills up a document called Medical Form 10 for psychiatric evaluation. The fact that Form 10 has been raised for an individual makes him outcaste. When an individual is referred for psychiatrist's evaluation and treatment, he is kept under escorts till his psychiatrist clears him. This ‘stigma’ may adversely affect an individual's service carrier, thus prompting him to hide his mental problems.”

Basic amenities to the soldiers posted at high altitude stations

1.37 During the study visit of the Standing Committee on Defence to Jammu, Leh, Srinagar and other forward areas, the Committee observed that there were delays in supply of consumable and non-consumable items to the Armed Forces. During the visit of the Committee to Siachen Area, it was noticed that soldiers were being issued used items of personal clothing which were not fit for reuse.

Establishment of Armed Forces Tribunal

1.38 A large number of cases relating to service matter of the members of the Armed Forces have been pending in the Courts for a long time. In a note to the Committee, the Ministry of Defence have informed that the number of cases pending before the Supreme Court and various Courts as on 31.10.2005 were as under:

	Supreme Court	High Courts
Army	94	7611
Navy	12	463
Air Force	22	1250
Total	125	9324

1.39 Stressing upon the need of setting up an appellate body composed of non-military personnel or civil personnel, the Supreme Court in its judgment in Prithvi Pal Singh vs Union of India (1982) had observed:-

“with the expanding horizons of fair play in action even in administrative decisions, the universal declaration of human rights and retributive justice being relegated to the uncivilized days, a time has come when a step is required to be taken for at least one review and it must truly be a judicial review as and by way of appeal to a body composed of non-military personnel or civil personnel.”

1.40 The Committee, in view of the above judgement of Supreme Court as well as the recommendation of Law Commission had urged the Ministry in their Second Report on the Demands for Grants (2005-2006) to work out a new mechanism to deal with all the outstanding court cases pertaining to the Armed Forces personnel. In pursuance to this, the Ministry of Defence proposed to enact a new legislation by constituting an Armed Forces Tribunal for the adjudication of complaints and disputes regarding service matters and appeals arising out of the verdicts of the court martial of the three services.

1.41 The Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 notified on 28 December, 2007 provides for the adjudication or trial by Armed Forces Tribunal of disputes and complaints with respect to commission, appointments, enrolment and conditions of services in respect of persons subject to the Army Act, 1950, the Navy Act, 1957 and the Air Force Act, 1950 and also to provide for appeals arising out of orders, findings or sentences of court martial held under the said Acts and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

1.42 The Ministry of Defence during examination of Demands for Grants (2008-09) on the issue of enactment of Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 furnished the following information: -

“Armed Forces Tribunal Act 2007 (55 of 2007) has come into force w.e.f.15.06.2008 in terms of Section 1(2) of the Act. However, establishment of the Tribunal is yet to be notified under section (4) of the Act.... By way of temporary arrangement, it has been decided to set up the Principal Bench of the Tribunal at West Block-8, R.K.Puram, New Delhi. The lay out plan has been finalized in consultation with CPWD and it is expected that the civil works will begin soon. Efforts are on to locate a permanent accommodation for the Principal Bench at Delhi.”

1.43 Elaborating further on the issue, the Ministry of Defence in their note stated as under:-

“.... A Selection Committee is being constituted for Selection of Members of the Tribunal; Chief Justice of India has nominated the name of one sitting Judge of Supreme Court of India to act as the Chairman of the Selection Committee for appointment of Members of the Armed Forces Tribunal. The other three members of the Committee will be (i) Chairperson AFT; (ii) Defence Secretary & (iii) Secretary, Law.”

CHAPTER-II

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN THE INDIAN ARMY

2.1. The Committee have been informed that the Army is addressing the issue of stress with seriousness and concern that it deserves.

2.2 The Ministry of Defence also informed that there are well laid out formalized Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) on all issues related to unit administration, welfare and man management in the units and formations. In addition, numbers of letters on the subject insisting upon strict compliance of the same by Commanders have been issued. The Commanders have been sensitised to the gravity of situation and superior Commanders in the chain are carrying out necessary checks during their interaction, visits and inspection of the units/formations.

Studies Conducted on Stress related incidents

2.3 The Committee have been informed by the Ministry that stress related incidents have been studied and analysed in detail to arrive at likely causes and remedial measures. Following studies have been conducted on the subject:-

- (a) Suicides in the Army by College of Defence Management in 2005.
- (b) Suicide Awareness and Prevention Strategies by Lieutenant Colonel S. Dixit, classified specialist of psychiatric of 155 Base Hospital in 2006.
- (a) Case studies on 'Attempted Suicides' in 2006.
- (b) Suicide in the Army and Guidelines for Detection & Prevention at various levels by Service Selection Board, Bhopal.
- (c) Management of Stress in the Army' By Northern & Eastern Commands in 2006.
- (d) Study reports on Soldiers Running Amok cases in Northern Command in 2006.
- (e) Suicide and Fratricide amongst Troops Deployed in Counter Insurgency Areas in 2007 by DIPR.

2.4 Asked about the findings of the aforementioned studies, the Ministry of Defence informed that the following causative factors have been identified on the basis of the studies conducted by Army:-

- “(a) Socio-Economic Causes like family problems/discords, extra marital affairs, financial problems, Psychological pressure on a soldier due to constant exposure of family to social ills and their inability to remedy the situation.

- (b) Environmental/organisational causes like prolonged separation from family and difficulty in attending to family commitments, stress due to prolonged commitment in counter insurgency environment, ignorance of the signs of stress & suicidal behaviour amongst junior leaders, denial of leave etc.
- (c) Medical/Psychological causes like individual suffering from long drawn and incurable disease, mental depression and lack of mental robustness, stigma attached to individual seeking medical help from psychiatrist (mental/psychological case), low tolerance levels in certain soldiers further aggravated by stress, etc.”

2.5 The Committee have also been informed that Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) had conducted a study on ‘Psycho-Social aspect of optimising the operational efficiency of Security Forces to combat insurgency’ during September, 2000-May 2005 in the North Easter Region. As regards the major findings of the study and the recommendations of DIPR thereon, the Ministry of Defence stated as under:-

“Among various stressors, three main operational stressors like fear of harassment followed by uncertain environment and domestic stress have emerged as the most significant stresses responsible for the onset of psychological problems like anxiety, depression, helplessness etc. amongst officers. Amongst the three groups of population (officers, JCOs and Jawans) the Officers are the most stressed lot. Thus they emerge as the most vulnerable Group for undergoing various psychological disorders and adjustment problems. Another observation was that Assam Rifles Troops carried a strong relative deprivation as compared to Army Units. This was due to the organisational climate and their role in the climate. Organisational climate and support contributes significantly more towards one’s commitment, operational efficiency and lower role stress as compared to one’s emotional quotient. Thus, intervention for modulating the organisational climate towards making it more supportive for various harsh and hostile uncertain environments is more important than intending to make any change in one’s personality to optimise one’s commitment.”

Remedial Measures Initiated at Army Headquarters Level

2.6 When asked about the remedial measures initiated to manage stress among Defence personnel, the Ministry of Defence stated that the following measures have been initiated at Army Headquarters Level: -

- “(a) Liberalized leave policy has been enforced. Larger percentage is being granted leave. Further, splitting of annual and casual leave is being permitted.
- (b) Frequent Visits by senior staff officers apart from formation commanders to units to assess conditions of employment and living have been asked for.

- (c) Focus on leadership, man management, motivation and morale. Commanders at all levels to be more intimately involved with their Command.
- (d) Contact between the leaders and the led, both formal and informal, has been further enhanced to feel the pulse of the troops. Commanders must be accessible and keep the channels of communication open.
- (e) The Junior Commissioned Officers and Non Commissioned Officers have been educated and sensitized to be alive to the sensitivity of the troops and treat them with due respect and dignity.
- (f) Characteristics of troops, temperaments and behavioural tendencies are being kept in mind while dealing with troops belonging to different regions especially in an all Indian Mixed Class Composition unit.
- (g) Unit administration and officer-man relationship is being accorded high priority. Accountability of commanders down to section level has been enforced.
- (h) Buddy system is being expanded to be among four/five Personnel Below Officers Rank to be effective.
- (j) Group activities like sports, games and recreational activities are being encouraged at unit/formation level within the constraints of operational deployment.
- (k) A number of Junior Commissioned Officers, Non Commissioned Officers of Nursing Technician and Nursing Assistant cadre have already been imparted training of psychological counsellors through three courses held at Base Hospital Delhi Cantonment, Command Hospitals Eastern and Northern Commands. They have been trained to identify 'high risk personnel' to provide timely treatment and avoid loss of trained manpower. These trained psychological counsellors have already been posted to Northern and Eastern sectors in Armed Forces.
- (l) Using the services of 'Psychological Health Mentors' at unit level who are trained in psychiatric centers of various hospitals. These mentors are the Religious teachers, Army Education Corps Junior Commissioned Officers/Non Commissioned Officers and Regimental Medical Officers.
- (m) It has been decided to further augment and strengthen the resources by providing in-house training on psychological counselling to selected PBOR from non-medical units. The training in the form of short courses/training capsules will be conducted at the Psychiatry Centers under the Commands. 60 personals from various Commands will be trained in 12 week course.
- (n) It is also proposed to train Religious Teachers (RT) JCOs as psychological counsellors. The training will be for 12 weeks. It is proposed to train 1500 RT JCOs through this programme during the next three to four years. Modalities for the same have been worked out by DG MS (Army) and are in final stages of implementation.
- (o) Committees have been established at Army Headquarters, Command Headquarters, Corps Headquarters and Divisional

Headquarters level to monitor and periodically review measures to be adopted. At Army Headquarters the Committee is headed by the DG DC&W with ADGMS, ADG PS and ADG D&V as members.

- (p) Yoga and Pranayam have been introduced during PT period to counter negative thinking and stress.
- (q) Rest & Recouping/Distressing Centres have been established in Eastern and Northern Commands.
- (r) Religious teachers are also utilized to preach & counsel vulnerable troops.
- (s) Training of doctors and Junior leaders by service psychiatrists has been undertaken in dealing with personnel at high risk of stress related diseases.
- (t) Regular & frequent spells of leave & turnover/rotation of personnel deployed in sensitive/stressful situations are ensured
- (u) All personnel returning to unit after leave are interviewed & medically examined by the Regt MO. Any stress marker is looked for and motivational talk is rendered to all.”
- (v) All medical officers are being trained to look for early signs & symptoms amongst defence personnel while conducting their regular medical examinations and referring them to appropriate auth for necessary further action.

Visit by Senior Staff Officers

2.7 Army Headquarters have initiated a measure of frequent Visits by senior staff officers apart from formation commanders to units to assess conditions of employment. When asked whether this measure would helpful, the representative of the Ministry of Defence stated during the evidence:-

“Inspections may be one thing. They are official activities. But this kind of a phenomenon is to encourage camaraderie between the two levels. Suffering and not complaining may be inherent sense of discipline, which is there in the Defence Forces, and because on which there may be some break down of communication. So, specifically to address that, these things have been designed.”

2.8 Elaborating further the importance of the visits made by senior staff officers, another representative of the Ministry of Defence stated during evidence:-

“The Commander will not be in a position to go every time to every place. So, the only way out is that we have the Staff Officer visiting the Unit to find out if things are being implemented. He is not really going out for an inspection because he does not have that authority. It is the Staff Officer on behalf of the Commanding Officer who goes and finds out whether it is there, to give an input to the Commander. If that is adding to the stress factor, we can look at it.”

Liberalized Leave Policy

2.9 When asked to state the details of the liberalized leave policy, the Ministry of Defence furnished the following information:-

“The management of leave of both officers and PBOR is an important facet and the existing policy on Annual leave has been revised. Fresh guidelines have been issued vide letter dated 10 January 2007 emphasising on various aspects as mentioned below:-

- (a) Leave, as such should not be denied to troops except under exigencies of services or on operational grounds.
- (b) No local restrictions on grant of leave shall be imposed, whatsoever, except with the explicit permission of the competent authority.
- (c) Officers may avail annual leave in three parts instead of earlier two, subject to exigencies of service. There are no restrictions on splitting of annual leave by PBOR.”

2.10 The Committee pointed out that there might be instance when a soldier proceeding on leave have to spend several days in reaching their home town from the place of their posting and enquired whether they are entitled to have additional travel time. In his reply, the representative of the Ministry of Defence deposed as under:-

“I wish to bring one more thing to your notice that when a *jawan* goes on leave, he gets a certain number of days plus the traveling time. Therefore, one keeps on getting additional time for travel for the further one is situated. It is not that a fixed number of days are given to him. We give extra time -- to each and every *jawan* -- that is taken for travel.”

Measures Initiated/undertaken in the Ministry

2.11 The Ministry also informed that they have initiated following measures to address the issues relating to stress:-

- (i) Removal of restriction of 1450 Kms while availing all India LTC in respect of all service personnel.
- (ii) Authorization of two free warrants to JCOs/OR deployed in CI/CT operational areas.
- (iii) Government has enhanced High Attitude Area Allowance substantially to all ranks deployed in areas above 14000 feet.
- (iv) RM has written to all Chief Ministers of all states to address problems of soldiers on priority. Similar letters have been issued to Chief Secretaries.
- (v) Rescheduling of the existing chartered flights to cover more destinations specially in North, North east and South has been accepted and is being implemented.
- (vi) With the implementation of Part-I of the AV Singh Report, officers have been assured time based promotion up to the rank of Col (Time Scale), thus increasing the promotional avenues and enhancing the satisfaction level.

- (vii) State Governments have been requested to fill all vacancies in district Sainik welfare department and all the departments where reservation for ex-servicemen exists.
- (viii) Under the married accommodation project, houses are being built at different stations to improve the availability of family accommodation.
- (ix) Government is considering various measures to further improve the service conditions of Armed Forces personnel.”

Trainings for Stress Management

2.12 Ministry of Defence informed the Committee that training measures required to be incorporated in institutionalized Training and formation/unit Training to tackle the stress has been identified. When asked about the steps taken in this regard, the Ministry of Defence stated in their written reply as under:-

“Headquarters Army Training Command has been tasked to review institutionalised training being imparted on the subject, especially in Platoon Commander, Potential Subedar Major, Junior Leader Course (Non Commissioned Officers Academy), Young Officers, Junior Command and all Company Commander level courses of all arms and services and senior command course. Capsules are also being introduced in Defence Service Staff College, Wellington. The following aspects are being incorporated: -

- (a) Introduction of a capsule on leadership, improvement in inter-personal relationship, man management and stress management.
- (b) Case studies on the subject.
- (c) Importance and effectiveness of Yoga and Pranayam”

2.13 According to the Ministry of Defence, Formation Headquarters have been suggested to organize the following as per circumstances and necessity:-

- “(a) Each Divisional/Area Headquarters will organize a training workshop on man management and stress management for five days which will be attended by at least one officer, one Junior Commissioned Officer and one Non Commissioned Officer from each unit of the Army.
- (b) Committees to review and analysis stress related incidents and suggest additional measures have been established at Command, Corps Headquarters and Divisional Headquarters.
- (c) Widespread dissemination of reading material on management of stress in appropriate languages.”

2.14 On being asked to furnish details of the terms and references of such Committees and their composition, the Ministry of Defence stated in their written reply as under:-

“Committees have been established at Army Headquarters, Command Headquarters, Corps Headquarters and Divisional Headquarters to monitor and review stress related incidents and suggest remedial measures. These Committees meet once in a quarter. The constitution of Committees at various levels is as given below:-

- (a) Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army).
 - (i) Chairman - DG DC&W.
 - (ii) Members - ADG MS (Army, ADG D&V and ADG PS.
- (b) Command HQ.
 - (i) Chairman - COS.
 - (ii) Members - MGIC Adm, Brig A and DDMS.
- (c) Corps HQ.
 - (i) Chairman - COS.
 - (ii) Members - Brig Adm, DDMS and Col DV.
- (d) Divisional HQ.
 - (i) Chairman - Dy GOC.
 - (ii) Members - Col A, ADMS.”

2.15 When enquired, whether the training/workshop have been conducted in each Divisional/Area Headquarter on man management and stress management, the Ministry of Defence in their written note stated in their written replies:-

“Workshops on stress and man management were organised by each Command in the Army for five days at division/area level. These workshops were conducted in all the formations by way of lectures, open forum, discussions, case studies and Yoga/Pranayam in a phased manner. Phase I entailed training of instructor teams followed by training of nucleus staff of each unit in Phase II. In Phase III, these nuclei staff trained personnel in each unit. These workshops have been conducted upto all Division/Area level.”

2.16 The Committee have been informed that in order to minimize casualty due to fratricide/suicide/assault & affray, Havildars and Naib Subedar in all units/Headquarters/Camps are being sensitized and made effective in respect of their role, importance and responsibility in leadership, inter-personal relationship, sub unit administration and man management. In addition, Commanding Officers and formation commanders will ensure the following:-

- (a) Commanding Officers will personally get involved in leadership, man management and stress management training of Havildars & Naib Subedars during routine Individual Training Cycles, promotion or weapon/equipment cadres.
- (b) Formation Commanders will ensure focus of training towards junior leaders and its implementation on ground.

2.17 According to the information furnished to the Committee, Headquarters Army Training Command has been tasked to review institutionalized training being imparted on the subject, especially in Platoon Commander, Potential Subedar Major, Junior Leader Course (Non Commissioned Officers Academy), Young Officer Junior Command and all company commander level courses of all arms being introduced in DSSC, Wellington. The following aspects are also being incorporated:-

- (a) Introduction of a capsule on leadership, improvement in inter-personal relationship, man management and stress management.
- (b) Case studies on the subject.
- (c) Importance and effectiveness of Yoga and Pranayam

Deployment as Sahayaks

2.18 In reply to a specific query regarding deployment of lower ranks in any of the three Services as Sahayaks in any form in the Armed Forces and specific duties assigned to them, the Ministry of Defence in their written note stated as follows:-

“Sahayaks are authorized to Officers and Junior Commissioned Officers in the Army when serving with units or Headquarters functioning on War Establishment. The scale of authorization of Sahayak is given below:-

- (i) One for every field officer and above.
- (ii) One for every two officers of the rank of captain and below
- (iii) One for every subedar major
- (iv) One for every two Junior Commissioned Officers of the rank of subedar and below.

The duties assigned to Sahayaks are as under:-

- (i) To provide personal protection and security.
- (ii) To attend telephones, receive and deliver messages during operations, training and exercise and in peace.
- (iii) To maintain weapons, uniforms and equipment of Officers/Junior Commissioned Officers in accordance with custom and usage in the Army.
- (iv) To assist in digging trenches, erect bivouacs and shelters during war, training or exercise while the leaders are more busy in planning, coordination and execution of operations.
- (v) To be of assistance during patrols and independent missions.
- (vi) To carry and operate radio sets, maps and other military equipment during operations, training cadres and outdoor exercises.

No personnel in Navy and Air Force are deployed on duties as Batman/Orderly/Sahayak.”

2.19 During study visits, the interaction of the Committee with Jawans has brought out that some of the soldiers are deployed to work as Sahayaks with the families of the officers.

2.20 On being asked about the deployment of soldiers as Sahayaks, the representative of the Army stated during evidence as follows:

“The issue of Sahayaks is misconstrued. They are more like a buddy to the individuals.”

2.21 Replying to a specific query that several instances have come to notice where soldiers have been seen to be deployed at the residence of officers, the witness clarified:

“Would have been attending the work at home due to reverence. He is not supposed to do it technically. He is not supposed to work in the house.”

2.22 In reply to another specific query whether any case had come to notice where any Orderly had committed suicide because of the unhappiness with his officer, the representative of the Army deposed as under:

“Not at the level of Army Headquarters. If at unit level there is such a case, I will check it if you will give me the year.”

Group Activities

2.23 When enquired whether there is any particular time for sports and other recreational activities, a representative of Ministry of Defence stated as under:-

“You may be well aware that there is so much focus on recreational activities, especially sports. Maybe, in the field area we cannot conduct normal sports but even there, there are recreational rooms. TV, of course is very common. Films are shown to the troops, especially in field areas. There is a lot of focus on sports. You are very well aware that the Armed Forces do exceptionally well in sports.”

Availability of Psychological Counsellors

2.24 When enquired, whether the existing number of psychological counsellors is adequate in view of the recommendation of DIPR to have one psychologist for every 1000 personnel, the Ministry of Defence stated as under:-

“As per the initial proposal 46 AMC personnel (Senior NCOs of Nursing Assistant and Nursing Technical Category) have been trained as psychological counsellors and thereafter promoted as JCOs. In order to meet additional requirements the following measures have been taken and are in the pipeline:-

(i) Selected personnel from non-AMC units are being imparted 12 weeks Psychological Counsellors training at designated psychiatry centres to function as ‘Unit Psychological Counsellors’.

(ii) Proposal for training of all the Religious Teachers in Army as Psychological counsellors is being finalised and will be implemented with effect from 2008.

(iii) Next batch of 50 AMC JCO Psychological Counsellors will be trained from July to September, 2008.

(iv) 600 RT JCOs and PBOR from non AMC units will be trained as psychological counsellors in various training nodes every year with effect from 2008.”

CHAPTER-III

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN INDIAN NAVY

3.1 When enquired whether any study has been conducted to examine the stress level among personnel serving in Indian Navy, the Ministry of Defence in their written reply stated as under:-

“ An in-house study titled “Occupational Stress in Naval personnel” was carried out at INHS Aswini, Mumbai in 2005-2006 which found that Naval personnel on board submarine and ship had lower level of occupational stress as compared to those serving’ on shore establishments. Occupational stress was more in junior sailors as compared to officers and senior sailors.”

3.2 The Committee have been informed that the Indian Navy has a mechanism to cater to the factors identified for causing or precipitating the stress related illnesses among the naval personnel and their families. The following steps have been taken by Navy to improve the mental health/mental stress state of naval personnel are given in succeeding paragraphs.

(a) Divisional System

3.3 According to the information made available by the Ministry of Defence, in the Navy the ‘Divisional System’ is a time tested unique forum, which provides regular interaction between officers and sailors. In this system a group of sailors are assigned to one Divisional Officer (who may also be the departmental Officer) acting as their ‘guide, philosopher and friend’. The sailors are encouraged to share all their problems including personal, domestic, service and any other issue affecting them. The Divisional Officer renders all possible help in the form of informing appropriate agencies, authorities and the command to ensure ‘Redressel of their Grievances’ in an informal environment. In addition ‘Divisional Officer’s Periods’ (DOP) are conducted periodically and problems posed by sailors are recorded with remedial measures taken. The sailors in the Navy have a well laid down system of forwarding their requests to Divisional Officer pertaining to their welfare, promotion and domestic issues which are disposed off in a time bound manner at appropriate levels. These issues can reach right up to the ‘Chief of the Naval Staff’ for attention and redressel.

(b) Physical Activity

3.4 The daily routine of ships and establishments includes morning physical training and evening sports activities. In addition the living accommodation of all sailors is adequately provided with television, indoor games and internet facilities (wherever possible). The sailors are also permitted to proceed ashore (i.e. to city) to take care of any household chores etc. and the married sailors are permitted to proceed home at the end of the day's work when in harbour. Further arrangements have also been made for conduct of stress busting classes like Yoga, Pranayam, Art of living etc. periodically.

(c) Sensitization of commanders

3.5 At every appropriate level the issue of stress and strain in service is addressed by Commanders in a very comprehensive manner. The Commanding Officers, Divisional Officers and Medical officers on board address the issue appropriately through COs Durbar, Group Discussions, Workshops and Counselling Sessions.

(d) Regular and frequent spells of leave

3.6 Turnover and rotation of personnel deployed in sensitive and stressful situations is ensured.

(e) Liberalized leave policy

3.7 When asked to state the details of the liberalized leave policy, the Ministry stated in their written reply as under:

“In the Navy officers and sailors are entitled to 60 days of annual leave and 20 and 30 days of casual leave respectively. Leave is granted as per leave plan in majority of the cases subject to service exigencies. Sailors are also granted advance of annual leave in emergencies.”

(d) Early Detection of Stressors

3.8 All personnel returning back to unit after leave are interviewed and medically examined by the AMA, who looks for any stress marker or overt sign of psychiatry illness. AMAs are trained to keep an index of suspicion for symptoms or signs of psychiatric illnesses or stress disorders among the servicemen and promptly attend to them/refer them to appropriate level of specialist care.

CHAPTER-IV STRESS MANAGEMENT IN INDIAN AIR FORCE

Measures Taken to Counter Stress/Suicides

4.1 According to the information furnished by the Ministry of Defence in their written note on the subject, the Indian Air Force has a well-established system for addressing personal problems of individuals. The relevant details of the extant system are reproduced below:-

(a) **Redressal of Grievances.** A well-established system of speedy redressal of grievances exists under Air Force Law for all personnel of the IAF. The system is fair and has stood the test of time.

(b) **Organizational Support and Welfare of Personnel and Families.** Welfare meetings are held regularly for the personnel to address welfare related measures separately for Airmen, Non Combatant (Enrolled) and Defence Security Core (DSC) at all stations of the IAF. The problems put up by the station personnel are followed up by the Welfare Officer for remedial action and a feedback on the measures taken is given by him during the next meeting. Where requested or felt necessary, assistance is also provided by the station administration through Provost Units of IAF to address domestic/personal problems of individuals at their native places. Where required, the station administration interacts with the civil administrative machinery to try and resolve personal/legal problems and disputes of individual. In addition, an open forum exists at stations for the personnel to resolve personal problems through interviews with their Commanding Officer(CO)/Air Officer Commanding(AOC) . For the families, the Air Force Wives Welfare Association (AFWWA) meeting is held regularly wherein educational activities and welfare activities being provided by the administration are highlighted for the benefits of the Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) families by the senior ladies of the station.

(c) **Counselling/Interview with Commanders.** Counselling sessions are held by supervisors for their subordinates on a regular basis. Similarly, a system of interview with the CO/Station commander/AOC also exists at all stations for individuals to seek a solution to their personal problems that cannot be resolved by their immediate superiors.

(d) **Leave.** The stations have been advised to ensure liberal grant of leave to needy personnel, especially for those with compassionate reasons.

4.2 On being asked about the frequency of meetings held to address welfare related measures, the Ministry of Defence informed that Welfare meetings for Airmen & NCs(E) and DSC Durbars are held once in a quarter at every station/ Independent unit by Air Officer Commanding/ Commanding Officer/ Station Commandant/ Commanding Officer.

Study conducted on Stress Level

4.3 When enquired about study conducted to examine the Stress level among Personnel serving in Indian Air Force, the Ministry in their written reply stated as under:-

“An internal study was conducted on suicides reported during the period 2002-2007 (31st October, 2007). It found that causative factors in 21% cases were relating to domestic problems, 17% due to financial problems, 23% due to medical problems and 12% due to marital problems alcoholism etc.”

4.4. According to the Ministry of Defence, the Indian Air Force have also taken some additional measures in the last two years for addressing stress related problems in personnel and the same are given below:-

- (a) **Improvement in Living and Working Conditions of Personnel.** The Married Accommodation Project at stations are being progressed on a fast track to increase availability of married accommodation to personnel since lack of married accommodation is a long-standing problem and is the root cause of several other problems including stress. Similarly working environment is being improved through provision of better amenities, improving the work place ambience, relaxed and friendly work atmosphere, and better interpersonal communications through increased interactions between airmen right from their training stage through the 'Buddy' concept and between officers and PBORs at stations. Regular turnover of personnel is ensured at isolated places. Schooling, sports and recreational facilities at stations are also being improved in a phased manner.
- (b) **Formation of 'Samvedna' and 'Sadbhavana' Cells.** In 2006, 'Samvedna' cells were formed at all AF stations to ensure that the family members/next of kin (NOK) of a deceased person receive the Non Effective (NE) benefits expeditiously. An NE cell has also been formed at the Dte. Of Accts at Air HQ which monitors and co-ordinates the progress of entitled NE benefits for the NOK/family of the deceased individuals. Similarly, 'Sadbhavana' cells have been created this year at all AF stations to improve quality of life of air-warriors. These cells provide administrative assistance to individuals arriving on posting/those who leave the unit on posting out. This helps the individuals in settling down in/clearance from the station.
- (c) **Use of trained mentors /employment of psychological counsellors at stations.** About 525 trained mentors are deployed at the stations for the purpose of counselling individuals. In addition 48 psychological counsellors are also engaged by the Commands.
- (d) **Thrust on physical fitness through AFFIT, sports and games.** The Air Force fitness programme called AFFIT has

been established in more than 75 stations of AF. Sports and games are being given due thrust with increased participation and interaction between officers and PBORs.

- (e) **Promotion of Yoga** Ground training instructors trained in Yoga impart yoga training at the stations. Training of more instructors has been planned. Yoga also forms an integral part of the physical training syllabus at the training centers.

4.5 When enquired, whether Air Force also has a system like 'Divisional System' prevalent in Indian Navy, the Ministry of Defence stated in their written reply as under:-

"In Air Force, a facility is available for all Air Force Personnel to post any suggestion/query complaint at the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) website on IAF intra-net which are considered at appropriate level and feedback given for the query/suggestion/complaint expeditiously. In addition, separate Welfare meetings are being conducted at Station level every quarter. Facility of open interviews by Air Officer Commanding/Station Commander/COs with Warriors on any issue to instil confidence and faith in the leadership and resolve the issues."

4.6 On being asked about the system of redressal of grievances in place in Indian Air Force, the Ministry stated in their written reply:-

"Section 26 of the Air Force Act, 1950, authorises an airman, who deems himself wronged by his Commanding Officer or other superior officer, to submit a representation to such officer's superior officer, who shall make as complete an investigation as possible. The detailed procedure for dealing with such a complaint has been prescribed at para 621 of the Regulations for the Air Force, 1964. Likewise, the statutory provision for officers' grievances is stipulated at para 622 of the Regulations for Air Force. Besides, the above, statutory right is also available to a person tried by Court Martial at the pre and post confirmation stage."

Liberalized Leave Policy

4.7 When asked to state the details of the liberalized leave policy, the Ministry stated in their written reply as under:-

"In the Air Force air warriors are entitled to 60 days annual leave and 30 days of causal leave in a year and no restriction is placed on them from availing their entitlement of leave as per their leave plan."

PART-II

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

Cases of suicides and fratricidal killings

There were as many as 635 cases of suicide including attempted suicides and 67 cases of fratricidal killings in the three services of the Armed Forces during the years 2003 to 2007. These statistics also indicate that Army was worst affected by this malady in terms of number of cases of suicides and fratricide in each of the year during this period. While expressing their grave concern over this alarming trend of suicides and fratricidal killings in the Armed Forces during the recent past, the Committee are in no doubt that this phenomenon is attributable to increased stress environment leading to psychological imbalance in the soldiers. The Committee have been informed that seven studies on issues related to stress management have been conducted by Army since 2005 besides an internal study by Air Force on suicides reported during the period 2002-2007 and an in-house study by Navy on 'Occupational stress in Naval personnel'. The Ministry of Defence have informed that the main causes for suicides among troops identified on the basis of these studies are changing socio-economic environment in the country and the domestic problems and there is apparently no systemic failure as suicides attributable to work related reasons are few. While certain measures are also stated to have been initiated in the recent past to manage stress in the Armed Forces, the Committee are of the considered view that it is premature to ascertain the efficacy of these measures at this stage. The Committee's examination of the subject and their interaction with the ex-servicemen, experts and organisations having experience in this field has brought out that this issue has not been perceived by the Ministry of Defence in its entirety with a view to devising appropriate and timely strategies to minimize the stress level of serving personnel of Armed Forces. The Committee have dealt with some of the important aspects related to the subject in the succeeding paragraphs of this Report.

Stress Management in the Armed Forces

2. The Committee understand that the demands on the personnel of Indian Armed Forces have been increasing over the years due to changing operational commitments of diverse nature. At the same time, they are required to meet aspirations of their family members for a good quality life on account of rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in the society. Undoubtedly, the inability of soldiers to solve their family problems due to operational requirements and other constraints within which they have to work and non-fulfillment of some of their expectations in certain cases results in enhanced negative stress leading to a variety of illnesses and behavioural problems including suicide, fratricidal killing, early mortality or desertion from the Armed Forces. The Committee wish to point out that besides adversely affecting the efficiency and performance of the defence personnel due to impaired motivation, negative stress level also put additional burden on the public exchequer in the form of man-days lost due to sickness, cost of medical treatment and loss of trained officers and soldiers. To the utter dismay of the Committee, the Ministry of Defence have made an attempt to downplay the magnitude of the problem by putting forth the plea that “the overall psychiatric morbidity in the Armed Forces has been less than the national figures”. Equally specious is the plea advanced by the Ministry of Defence that there is a rising trend of psychiatric illnesses in our country over the last few decades and Armed Force personnel being drawn from the same society are not immune to these influences. The Committee consider it lamentable that the Ministry of Defence, rather than making an earnest attempt to identify the precise reasons for untimely loss of such a large number of precious lives of trained soldiers, have taken recourse to drawing satisfaction from the facts that such cases are on the rise in the society and the psychiatric morbidity in Armed Forces is less than the national averages. In the opinion of the Committee, this attitude of the Ministry not only displays insensitivity towards the problem but also highlights their inaction to improve conditions in Armed Forces where soldiers are trained enough to fight under adverse situations. The Committee trust that the Ministry of Defence would now make a realistic assessment of the problems plaguing the Armed Forces personnel with a view to

identifying the areas needing urgent reforms in the right direction. The Committee also suggest that the organisations from both public and private sector having expertise in the area, should be associated with such studies so that the causes of the increasing stress are identified at its root in an independent manner and appropriate solutions found to remedy the situation. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise action taken in this regard.

Studies conducted on stress related incidents

3. There were as many as nine studies undertaken in the Armed Forces on suicides and matters relating to stress management. Though these studies reportedly identified specific causative factors for stress among various ranks deployed in different areas in the three services, the Committee received an impression that no effective follow up action has been taken on crucial areas such as sensitizing the officers, improving basic facilities in the field, etc. The Committee await the outcome of specific action taken in pursuance of each of these studies.

Study Reports on Stress Management

4. The Committee regret to point out that one copy each of the only two Reports relating to suicide and fratricide and on stress management was made available marked as 'secret'. The Committee wonder why reports of these studies should not be made public which do not appear to contain any thing sensitive or strategic. Such studies can yield desired results only if the reports are made public and there is concerted action by all concerned. The Committee, therefore, suggest that the veil of secrecy should be removed from such studies and the reports placed in public domain.

Suicide in Peace Stations

5. Though a majority of suicide cases in Army are stated to be taking place at peace stations, the Committee find it rather surprising that no specific study on this aspect has been undertaken to identify the exact causes for such a phenomenon. The Committee feel that it is

an important area requiring urgent attention of the Ministry of Defence. They, therefore, desire that immediate steps should be taken to make objective studies on the cases of suicide reported from peace stations with a view to identifying the main reasons for prevalence of psychological problems in peace stations and appropriate follow-up action taken to minimize such incidents.

Causes of Stress

6. The studies on stress management in the Armed Forces have identified certain causative factors for stress which are broadly classifiable under the three categories namely, socio-economic including familial reasons, environmental/organizational and medical/psychological causes. The Committee are in no doubt that after having identified these specific causative factors for stress among the Armed Forces personnel, the Ministry of Defence have not contemplated multipronged strategies to address the problems of negative stress behaviour of different ranks in the Armed Forces. Though certain remedial measures have recently been initiated at the Service Headquarter level and by the Ministry to manage stress among the Defence personnel, the Committee feel convinced that much is still left to be desired to address the organizational issues like better manpower management, provisions for better amenities and conducive climate to counter negative thinking among the Defence service personnel at the lower ranks so as to minimize the undesirable consequences of stress in the Armed Forces in the long run. They trust that the Ministry of Defence would atleast now realise the gravity of the problem in all its ramifications and take expeditious steps to bring about perceptible improvement in the prevailing situation.

Familial Reasons for Stress

7. The Committee have been given to understand that familial reasons are one of the predominating causative factors of stress among the Armed Forces personnel. These reasons include aspects like separation from family, familial discords and disputes, concern regarding children's education and their upbringing and welfare

measures for the family. The Committee are of the firm view that while Armed Forces personnel have to strike a balance between their personal and military life within the constraints inherent in the military service, the Government also cannot fully absolve themselves of their responsibilities towards personnel engaged in meeting diverse challenges before the nation. Undoubtedly, there is an imperative necessity to address the legitimate needs of Defence personnel and the Committee would strongly recommend the following measures:

- (i) The Government should make earnest efforts to provide family accommodation at the station of choice of the Armed Forces personnel deployed on operational duties in counter insurgency and border areas. Married Accommodation Project should be completed expeditiously and different categories of residential accommodation lying vacant at various military stations should be utilised for the purpose.
- (ii) Efforts should also be directed towards imparting skill development and extending help to the children of Armed Forces personnel in getting admission in schools and institutions of higher professional and technical studies. Opening of institutions for imparting higher technical education in different parts of the country primarily for the wards of the Armed Forces personnel be considered .
- (iii) The welfare organisations for Defence services personnel and their family members should be financially strengthened to enable them to extend necessary help to the distressed families of different ranks and also to act as psychological counsellors for soldiers and their family members.

Responsiveness of Civil Administration

8. With a view to mitigating the hardships on account of family problems due to criminal or civil disputes of serving Armed Forces personnel deployed on hard duties at far flung places, the Defence Minister sent a communication in December, 2006 to Chief Ministers of all the States requesting them to instruct the district authorities and the State Government officials to be more pro-active in giving prompt

response to the grievances and problems of the defence personnel and their families. The Committee are however, distressed to find that this communication has not yielded desired results and such matters are still treated in routine manner with no special priority being given to such cases. The Committee are of view that such an apathetic attitude to the part of the district authorities adversely affects the morale of the entire force to the detriment of national interests. They, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Defence should once again take up this matter with all the State/Union Territory Governments at appropriate level emphasizing the need for according priority and considerate approach in all such cases. Specific steps should be taken to pay greater attention at Tehsil/Block level in those areas from where greater number of personnel traditionally join and serve the Armed Forces. There should be statutory provisions mandating the district authorities to address the problems and grievances of serving Defence personnel within a stipulated time frame. The Committee also desire the Ministry of Defence to make institutionalised arrangements in close coordination with the State Governments/officials and put in place a computerised and centralized mechanism to monitor the progress of each complaint received from defence service personnel or their family members.

Inter Personal relationship

9. Another major reason for stress in the Armed Forces relates to conflict in interpersonal relationships. The Committee have been informed that the Armed Forces Community has a culture of its own, where sense of belonging and responsibility are cultivated in an individual to display camaraderie. Admittedly, the existing mechanism in this regard needs to be strengthened because of fresh environment of stress and strain. Needless to say that the JCOs and the officers posted at the unit/platoon level have to be sensitised towards the needs of the soldiers both as an individual and group. This assumes greater importance as the soldiers now being inducted in the Armed Forces possess a higher educational level. Steps should also be taken to impart necessary training to all these ranks with a view to making them a source of guidance and assistance for the soldiers. The Committee also

feel that appropriate training is also needed to change the mindset of senior officers in the Armed Forces. They trust that appropriate improvements in the existing system will be made without any further loss of time to ensure better interaction between Armed Forces personnel of different ranks. The soldiers should be encouraged to share their problems with their seniors and emphasis must be laid on redressal of their genuine grievances.

Abolition of practice of domestic `Sahayaks`

10. The Committee understand that the practice of utilizing services of Jawans as Sahayaks is prevalent in the Army in one form or other since British days. It is learnt that numerous Jawans are engaged at the residence of some of the senior officers for domestic work and to serve the family members of officers. A representative of the Army categorically deposed before the Committee that the Jawans are not technically supposed to attend to the household duties at the residence of the officers and the personnel attending to such duties do so due to their reverence. The Committee hardly need to stress that Jawans are recruited for serving the nation and not to serve the family members of officers in household work which is demeaning and humiliating. The Committee take a very serious view of the shameful practice which should have no place in the independent India. The Committee expect the Ministry of Defence to issue instructions to stop forthwith the practice, which lowers the self-esteem of Jawan. Any officer found to be violating the instruction in this regard be dealt with severely. Similar action needs to be taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs in respect of para military organisations and other organisations.

Basic Amenities

11. The Committee need hardly emphasise that the basic facilities for the soldiers particularly those deployed at high altitudes or in border areas need to be met in a most efficient manner. Delays in supply of consumable and non-consumable items should be avoided and they should not be deprived of better quality of weather appropriate clothing

and good quality of ration. The requirement of such essential items must be reviewed at regular intervals and the supply of items as per entitled scales must be monitored at appropriate level. The Committee would like to be apprised of the specific measures taken in this regard.

Shortage of Manpower

12. Presently there is a shortage of approximately 12,000 officers in the Army and this shortage is adversely affecting the functioning at the unit level. The Committee have been informed during evidence that this shortage of officers is leading to greater stress among junior and middle level officers owing to the need to perform multiple functions and inadequate time and opportunity for intimate administration of personnel under command. Considering the fact that such shortages of officers coupled with stressful conditions in the most inhospitable conditions particularly in counter insurgency operational areas impinge upon performance of both officers and the soldiers, the Committee are of strong view that it is high time that concrete and result oriented steps are taken to reduce the stress at the battalion/unit level. While the issue of shortage of officers continues to remain an area of concern and the same is being dealt with by the Committee in a separate Report, they would like that in the meantime, the Ministry of Defence should take up this matter with the Army Headquarters impressing upon them the need for keeping the shortages of personnel at unit level to the barest minimum particularly in the counter insurgency and border areas so that the situation does not go worse.

13. The Committee also suggest that the duration of deployment of defence service personnel in the counter-insurgency or high altitude operational areas should be reviewed and rationalised so as to contain their stress levels. The Committee would like to be apprised of the precise steps taken in this regard.

Leave Policy

14. Yet another area causing stress to the personnel of Armed Forces relates to the denial of leave even in times of extreme need ostensibly on the grounds of exigencies of services, operational requirements and shortage of manpower in the field units. Although liberalised leave policy has been put in place permitting the officers to split their annual leave in three parts with no restrictions on splitting of annual leave by PBORs, the Committee are convinced that the ground realities present a different picture. This is corroborated by the deposition of the representative of the Army that there are certain issues involved in the matters connected with grant of leave to a person deployed in a battalion or a unit in the sense that certain tasks have to be performed and other personnel may also at the same time go out on training courses. The Committee are also constrained to observe that while no restrictions exist for PBORs to split their annual leave, no commensurate facility of free warrants for the travel has been provided for in the liberalized rules except grant of an additional rail warrant to all ranks serving in field or counter insurgency operational areas. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the entire issue of extending benefits to the service personnel under liberalised leave policy should be examined by the Ministry of Defence with an open mind so that the benefits of this policy may percolate down at least to the lower ranks in the Armed Forces.

Reluctance in seeking Psychiatrist's help

15. The Committee's examination has also revealed that personnel in the Armed forces are prompted to hide their mental problems as any referral to a psychiatrist for treatment is considered a `stigma' which may adversely affect the career of a service personnel. Since such cases have been identified as a causative factor for stress, the Committee feel that the system of referring a person specifically for psychiatrist's evaluation by the commanding officer should be suitably modified by ensuring that Defence personnel of all ranks undergo such evaluation during medical examination in batches at fixed intervals of time. While the modified system would take care of the distressed

person for appropriate and timely treatment, he would at the same time remain saved from being branded as an outcaste in the eyes of his colleagues.

Mental Health Professionals

16. The Committee are concerned to note that the authorised strength of mental health professionals is much lower than the felt need particularly in view of the increasing instances of stress in the Armed Forces. The Committee need hardly point out that this difficulty is not such which cannot be surmounted. The Committee hope that the Ministry will pay serious attention to this aspect and initiate appropriate administrative action to remove bottlenecks being experienced in this regard.

Establishment of Armed Forces Tribunal

17. The Committee understand that one of the reasons for increasing stress in Armed Forces relates to non-availability of quicker appellate mechanism to deal with the service related problems and disputes, etc. They are, however, distressed to note that despite notification of Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 on 28th December, 2007, the Ministry of Defence have not been able to establish the Tribunal even after lapse of a period of over nine months. Keeping in view the fact that a large number of cases relating to service matters of the personnel from Armed Forces are pending for a long time in various courts of law, the Committee are of firm belief that the Armed Forces Tribunal is required to be set up expeditiously to provide quicker relief to the aggrieved Defence service personnel. They, therefore, desire that the Ministry of Defence should make earnest efforts for establishing the Tribunal at the earliest.

New Delhi;
13 October, 2008
21 Asvina, 1930 (Saka)

BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on Defence.

APPENDICES

**MINUTES OF THE NINTH SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2007-2008)**

The Committee sat on Tuesday, the 4th December 2007 from 1500 to 1630 hrs. in Committee Room 'C', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil – Chairman

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Ramesh C. Jigajinagi
3. Dr. K.S. Manoj
4. Shri Adhalrao Shivaji Patil
5. Dr. H.T. Sangliana
6. Shri Arjun Charan Sethi
7. Prof. Mahadeorao Shiwankar
8. Shri Manavendra Singh

RAJYA SABHA

9. Smt. N.P. Durga
10. Shri K.B. Shanappa

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri S.K. Sharma - Additional Secretary
2. Shri A. Louis Martin - Joint Secretary
3. Shri Gopal Singh - Director
4. Shri D.R. Shekhar - Deputy Secretary-II
5. Smt. J.M.Sinha - Under Secretary

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

1. Smt. Neelam Nath - Addl. Secretary(N)
2. Smt. Neelkamal Narang - FA (DS)
3. Shri Ajay Tirkey - JS(E)
4. Shri G. Elangovan - CCR&D (R&M), DRDO
5. Lt Gen Y. Singh - DGAFMS Sr. Col Comdt., AF Hq.
6. Lt. Gen. I. J. Koshy - DG, C&W & Offg AG, AF Hq.
7. Air Marshall J.N. Burma - AOA, AF Hq.
8. Surg V. Adml. Sujan Singh- DGMS(Navy) , AF Hq.
9. Maj. Gen Nilendra Kumar - JAG(Army), AF Hq.
10. Maj Gen S. R. Mehta - Sr. Consultant (Med), AF Hq.
11. Rear Adml Anil Chopra - ACNS ((P&P), AF Hq.
12. Cmde M. Phadke - JAG (Navy), AF Hq.

2. At the outset, the Chairman drew the attention of the representatives of the Ministry of Defence to the Direction 58 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding maintaining confidentiality of the deliberations of the sitting. Due to paucity of time, Hon'ble Chairman desired to have briefing on the subject 'Stress Management in Armed Forces (Civil and Defence Personnel)' only and the briefing on the subject 'Married Accommodation Project' has been postponed to a later date. Thereafter, the representatives of the Ministry briefed the Committee on the subject 'Stress Management in Armed Forces (Civil and Defence Personnel)'.

3. The Committee sought clarification on the issues viz. existing modality for engagement of psychological counsellors to manage the stress, the studies conducted by the Ministry of Defence to examine the causes of suicides among the troops and officers, the newly introduced liberalized leave policy, provision for recreational and sport activities, high altitude allowance for the armed forces and proposal to provide flight facility to the troops located at high altitude and North Eastern Region and other difficult area. The Committee also emphasised the need for conducting specific research to identify the causes of suicides among the troops and officers.

4. The representatives of the Ministry of Defence then clarified the issues. As regards the points on which the representatives could not readily respond, the Committee desired the Ministry to furnish written information at the earliest.

5. A copy of verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTEETH OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2007-2008)**

The Committee sat on Monday, the 19th May 2008 from 1100 to 1250 hrs. in Room No. `074', Parliament Library Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil – Chairman

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Vijay Bahuguna
3. Shri Ramesh C. Jigajinagi
4. Shri Santosh Gangwar
5. Shri Suresh Kalmadi
6. Dr. K.S. Manoj
7. Shri Raju Rana
8. Dr. H.T. Sangliana
9. Shri Arjun Charan Sethi
10. Shri Manavendra Singh

RAJYA SABHA

11. Shri Jai Parkash Aggarwal
12. Shri R.K. Dhawan
13. Shri A. Elavarasan

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri A. Louis Martin - Joint Secretary
2. Shri D. R. Shekhar - Deputy Secretary - II

WITNESSES

1. Wing Cdr. (Dr.) U.C. Jha (Retd.)
2. Lt. Col. Inderjit Singh (Retd.)
3. Capt. U.R. Nikam (Retd.)

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed Wing Cdr. (Dr.) U.C. Jha (Retd.) to the sitting of the Committee and drew his attention to Direction 58 of Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha. He then, requested him to express his views on the subject, 'Stress Management in Armed Forces (Civil and Defence Personnel)'.

3. Wing Cdr. (Dr.) U.C. Jha (Retd.) briefed the Committee on the above subject and expressed his views on the issues relating to effect of stress, need for human rights' approach towards Armed Forces, having transparency in writing CRs, prescribing time limit to finalize the complaint by Services HQs, modernization of military justice system, liberalization of leave policy, creation of just and favorable work condition, compensation for overtime, etc. He also responded to the queries raised by the Members.

Witness then withdrew.

4. The Committee then, requested Lt. Col. Inderjit Singh (Retd.) to brief the Committee on the above mentioned subject. Lt. Col. Inderjit Singh (Retd.) expressed concerned over acute shortage of officers at unit level, which adversely affected Officer-man relationship in the Armed Forces. He also highlighted the changes in socio-economic environment and its role in career aspirations in the Defence Services. He stressed on improving quality of officers and creating conducive environment in which Jawans could perform their duties. He also laid stress on strengthening Zila Sainik Board by conferring them statutory power. He also answered to the questions raised by the Members.

5. A copy of verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-THIRD OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2007-2008)**

The Committee sat on Monday, the 9th June, 2008 from 1500 to 1625 hrs. in Room No. `139', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil – Chairman

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

1. Shri Santosh Gangwar
2. Shri Jigajinagi Ramesh Chandappa
3. Shri Suresh Kalmadi
4. Dr. K.S. Manoj
5. Shri Rajesh Verma

RAJYA SABHA

6. Shri Jai Parkash Aggarwal
7. Shri Abu Asim Azmi
8. Shri R.K. Dhawan
9. Shri K.B. Shanappa
10. Smt. Viplove Thakur
11. Shri M.V. Mysura Reddy

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri S.K. Sharma - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Rajeev Sharma - Director
3. Shri D.R. Shekhar - Deputy Secretary – II
4. Smt. J.M.Sinha - Under Secretary

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

1. Shri N.S. Sisodiya - D.G, IDSA
2. Maj. Gen. P.K. Rath - ADG, D&V Director
3. Brig. D. Saldanha - Prof. &HOD Psychiatry, AFMC, Pune
4. Col. H.R.A. Prabhu - Sr. Adv. Psychiatry, BHDC
5. Surg. Capt. A.A. Pawar - Sr. Adv. Psychiatry, INHS, Asvini
6. Wg. Cdr. P.L. Narayana - Spec., Psychiatry, AFCME, New Delhi

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed Shri N.S. Sisodiya from IDSA and other officials from the Armed Forces to the sitting of the Committee and requested them to brief the Committee on the subject 'Stress Management in Armed Forces (Civil and Defence Personnel)' and also drew their attention to the Direction 58 of Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha.

3. Then the experts/officials from the Armed Forces briefed the Committee on the issues relating to problems of the soldiers deployed in inhospitable and hostile environment, their absence from home and family for a very long period of time, stress among personnel serving in Navy and Air Force due to specific difficulties, adverse effect of shortage of officers on the relationship between officer and soldiers, etc.

4. The officials also expressed their views on the role of outside factors, such as, change in value system of the society, increasing aspirations of youth, prevalence of conspicuous consumption etc. in causing stress among Armed Forces personnel.

5. The Committee also inquired about the actual implementation of the measures initiated by the Ministry to address the issue of stress among service personnel. They also stressed upon the need for undertaking case studies to ascertain the actual reasons of the suicide committed by the service personnel.

6. The officials also responded one-by-one to the queries raised by the members. As regards the points on which they could not readily respond, the Committee desired them to furnish written information at the earliest.

7. A copy of verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2007-2008)**

The Committee sat on Monday, the 23rd June 2008 from 1500 to 1615 hrs. in Committee Room 'G-074', Parliament Library Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil – Chairman

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Vijay Bahuguna
3. Shri Santosh Gangwar
4. Dr. K.S. Manoj
5. Shri Asaduddin Owaisi
6. Prof. Mahadeorao Shiwankar
7. Shri Manavendra Singh

RAJYA SABHA

8. Shri Jai Parkash Aggarwal
9. Shri Abu Asim Azmi
10. Shri A. Elavarasan
11. Shri M.V. Mysura Reddy
12. Shri K.B. Shanappa

SECRETARIAT

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. | Shri A. Louis Martin | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Shri Rajeev Sharma | - | Director |
| 3. | Shri D.R. Shekhar | - | Deputy Secretary-I |

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Shri P.K. Rastogi | - | Spl. Secretary (R) |
| 2. | Lt. Gen Thomas Mathew | - | AG |
| 3. | Lt. Gen Yogendra Singh | - | DGAFMS |
| 4. | Vice Adm D.K Dewan | - | COP |
| 5. | Surg. Vice Adm V.S. Dixit | - | DGMS (Navy) |
| 6. | Air Mshl S Mukerji | - | AOP |
| 7. | Shri Ajay Tirkey | - | JS (E) |
| 8. | Maj Gen P.K. Rath | - | ADG (D&V) |
| 9. | Dr. M.K. Mandal | - | Director DIPR |
| 10. | Brig A.K. Singh | - | DDG (D&V) |
| 11. | Shri P.M. Sanyal | - | Sr. Principal Director
(Civilians) |
| 12. | Shri V. Rajagopalan | - | Director (CP) |
| 13. | Shri S.C. Barmma | - | Director (AG) |
| 14. | Col AK Sharma | - | Dir. (HRC) |
| 15. | Col A.K. Verma | - | Dir AFMS |

2. At the outset, the Chairman drew the attention of the representatives of the Ministry of Defence to the Direction 58 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha regarding maintaining confidentiality of the deliberations of the sitting. The Chairman then requested the representative of the Ministry to give their views on the subject 'Stress Management in Armed Forces (Civil and Defence Personnel)'.

3. The representative of the Ministry then responded to the specific queries of the Chairman and members of the Committee on the issues relating to reasons for stress among Service personnel, trends of suicide cases among Service personnel, the measures taken by the Ministry to address the problems of stress among Armed Forces personnel, etc.

4. Members of the Committee, inquired about the actual implementation of the measures taken by the Ministry to address the issue of stress among service personnel. They also desired to know whether the Ministry had received the feedback from the State Governments on the letter written by the Defence Minister to the Chief Ministers of the State Governments about being proactive towards the grievances and problems of the defence personnel and their families. The Committee also requested Director, Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) to furnish details of the study made by them on the stress related issues in Northern and Western Commands.

5. The representatives of the Ministry responded one-by-one to the queries raised by the members. As regards the points on which the representatives could not readily respond, the Committee desired the Ministry to furnish written information at the earliest.

7. A copy of verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE (2008- 09)**

The Committee sat on Monday, the 13th October 2008 from 1500 to 1530 hrs. in Committee Room `D`, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil - Chairman

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Shri Santosh Gangwar
3. Shri Jigajinagi Ramesh Chandappa
4. Dr. K.S. Manoj
5. Shri Shrinivas Patil
6. Shri Manavendra Singh
7. Shri Balashowry Vallabhaneni

RAJYA SABHA

8. Dr. Farooq Abdullah
9. Shri Jai Parkash Aggarwal
10. Shri Abu Asim Azmi
11. Shri R.K. Dhawan
12. Shri M.V. Mysura Reddy
13. Shri K.B. Shanappa

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Rajeev Sharma - Director
2. Shri D. R. Shekhar - Deputy Secretary
3. Smt. J.M. Sinha - Under Secretary

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee. The Committee, thereafter, took up for consideration the draft report on the subject `Stress Management in the Armed Forces', and adopted the same, without any modification.

3. The Committee then authorized the Chairman to finalise the report in light of the observations made by the Ministry of Defence after factual verification of the narrative portion of the draft Report and present the same to the Parliament.

The Committee then adjourned.

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