



PERMANENT COMMISSION TO WOMEN - GS I AND III MAINS

Q. The Permanent Commission for women in armed forces not only improves service conditions for women, but also opens the gate of gender equity in the armed forces. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *Supreme Court asks Coast Guard to ensure women officers get permanent commission*

What's in the news?

- The Supreme Court emphasized the need for the Indian Coast Guard to grant Permanent Commission to women officers.
- Further, CJI too directed the Indian Coast Guard to consider it, indicating the court's willingness to intervene if necessary.

Key takeaways:

- Attorney-General highlighted operational difficulties in implementing permanent commissions for Short Service Commission Officers.
- AG suggested to limit permanent commission for women to 10%, stressing that women should not be considered inferior.

Indian Coast Guard:

- The Indian Coast Guard was established on August 1, 1978, as an **armed force of the Union**.

Mission:

- To protect India's maritime and national interests within its maritime zones.

Functions:

- It enforces laws related to customs, immigration, poaching and pollution at sea.
- It conducts round-the-year real-life operations at sea, despite being relatively small in size.

Role of Indian Navy:

- The Indian Navy operates globally, while the ICG is restricted to territorial waters extending out to 30 nautical miles from the coast.
- The Indian Navy protects Indian ships and ports from external threats, while the ICG enforces maritime laws, ensures safety and preserves the marine environment within territorial waters.

Significance of the Permanent Commission for Women:

1. Gender Equality:

- Permanent Commission for Women in the Armed Forces removes gender discrimination.



2. Secure Employment:

- It provides increased job security and extended tenure for women officers. It can also grant equal entitlements as men, including pension benefits after 20 years of service.

3. Fostering Opportunities:

- Ensures economic opportunities and improves social conditions, and dignity for women.

4. Behavioural Change in the Society:

- It can encourage more women to join the Armed Forces, expanding the talent pool and addressing officer shortages.

Challenges Faced by Women Officers in the Indian Armed Forces:

1. Gender Bias and Discrimination:

- Women face biases from male officers who question their commitment due to marriage or family responsibilities.
- Biases exist among both genders, affecting the perception of women officers' capabilities.

2. Limited Career Opportunities:

- Women officers have historically faced restrictions in combat roles, limiting their career advancement.
- Challenges in obtaining commanding positions due to gender norms and lack of representation in leadership roles.

3. Work Environment Issues:

- Lack of gender-sensitive facilities like separate toilets for women officers at certain postings.
- Unequal treatment and expectations, such as proving themselves more than male counterparts for recognition is a major challenge.

4. Societal and Cultural Barriers:

- Traditional societal norms hinder the acceptance of women in combat roles and leadership positions.
- The need for a shift in societal attitudes towards viewing women as equals in the armed forces.

5. Recruitment and Retention Challenges:

- Recruitment and retention rates in the armed forces are affected by the lack of a strong mixed-gender force.
- The Indian Army's decision not to allow women in commanding roles impacts recruitment and retention efforts.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Acceptance of Gender-specific Rights:

- Acknowledge and incorporate gender-specific rights like maternity and child care leave into the policies of the armed forces.

2. Equality in Physical Fitness Standards:

- Physical fitness standards should be role-based, not gender-based, to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all officers.



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3. Need to go with Merit-based Promotion:

- Women officers should compete on merit without any preferential treatment or discrimination, following a merit-driven approach for promotions.

4. Developing of Pragmatic Policies:

- The armed forces need to adopt a pragmatic policy for the gradual inclusion of women in all ranks and disciplines, shedding patriarchal attitudes and creating necessary infrastructure.

5. Need for the Codification of Rules and Regulations:

- Codify terms of service for women officers considering organizational interests, establish military laws to address gender crimes, and ensure that only volunteer women meeting psychological and physical fitness standards join combat roles.

