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Mamata borrows Bihar idea - Ex-armymen for rail passengers' security

RAMASHANKAR



Special Auxiliary Police personnel at a march past. Telegraph picture

Patna, Feb. 25: What chief minister Nitish Kumar did five years ago, railway minister Mamata Banerjee did today. She adopted the Bihar model of recruiting retired army personnel for security. Presenting the railway budget in the Parliament, she announced that the railway would soon recruit 16,000 ex-armymen for providing security to the passengers.

The Bihar government had initiated the process of recruitment of ex-armymen in 2006. The Nitish-led NDA government had then announced to appoint 5,000 retired armymen as the Special Auxiliary Police (SAP)

personnel.

"We decided to recruit retired armymen for carrying out special operations against Naxalites and professional criminal gangs because of manpower shortage in the police force. Also, the recruitment of policemen was a long drawn process," said Abhayanand, the brain behind the recruitment of the ex-armymen in the state police force.

Abhayanand, who was additional director-general (headquarters) then, contacted the senior officials of the Indian Army at Danapur in Patna and chalked out a detailed plan for the recruitment of the ex-army personnel across the country. An advertisement for the recruitment of the ex-armymen in the Bihar police force was displayed at all the army centres.

"The response was positive and we appointed 5,000 retired army personnel on a monthly remuneration of Rs 10,000," said a senior IPS officer assigned to coordinate with the army officials for the recruitment of the SAP personnel. The experiment did wonders in a short span because it was a trained force.

"It soon became a role model for the governments of states like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, which announced to recruit ex-army men on the pattern of the Bihar government," said Abhayanand.

Later, the Bihar government decided to appoint 5,000 more ex-armymen but only 3,000 turned up at the Bihar Regiment Centre (BRC) at Danapur for recruitment. The government, on the persuasion of the state police headquarters, has now relaxed the process of recruitment and increased the age limit from 45 years to 47 years. It also enhanced the monthly remuneration of the SAP jawans from Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000.

"We have decided to increase the existing strength of the SAP jawans from 12,000 to

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17,000. The government has approved the proposal and the process of recruitment will soon start,” director-general of police Neel Mani said.

In addition, there is a separate battalion of the ex-armymen in the Bihar Military Police. “If required, we will raise more battalions of ex-armymen to contain crime and activities of the Maoists,” Mani added.

At present, about 8,500 ex-armymen are working with the state police.



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