



Preventing another scuffle

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Preventing another scuffle-Smooth civil-military relations require delicate oversight through statesmanship

- In a disturbing incident in Bomdila, Arunachal Pradesh recently, two soldiers of the Indian Army were arrested by the local police and reportedly beaten up for alleged incorrect behaviour during a festival, which was then followed by alleged retaliatory high-handedness by their Army compatriots.
- This is an apt example of the leadership on both sides not using their superior skills to prevent the unsavoury happenings and living up to the requirement of statecraft.
- The term 'statecraft' is important because the leadership at every level of the government is a vital cog in maintaining a harmonious relationship with other arms, all the while respecting the other's domain specialisation.
- The Bomdila incident is not the first instance of the civil administration and the military having locked horns.
- There is a delicate thread that links the uniformed and non-uniformed sections.
- Pride in one's job should not translate to contempt for another's job.
- The civil administration has challenges that no uniformed person ever faces, such as the pressures from social strife, economic hardships, and law and order.
- The uniformed services, on the other hand, see themselves as protectors of the nation even at the cost of their own lives.

Core issues

- So, just as a uniformed force must acknowledge the expertise of the civil administration, so too should the latter respect and ensure that a soldier does feel a bit special.
- This results in healthy civil-military relations.
- While direct intervention in domestic affairs is a big no, on the other

extreme is the utilisation of the armed forces in happenings that should logically come under the civilian domain.

Do not deify the military

- Deification of the military could lead to resentment among certain sections of society.
- And here is where the politician comes in: using the armed forces very often as a bulwark to sort out civil issues is detrimental to military philosophy.
- So also is the absence of oversight to prevent civilian bureaucratic control and delays in resolving the problems service personnel face.
- The trick is to anticipate and prevent a Bomdila type incident so that 'superior judgment is not required to firefight something that could have been prevented had those superior skills been used at the right time'.
- Good leadership from both sides is the key to preventing new Bomdilas.

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