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Topic-

Know your ex NCC Cadets' Alumni who are making a difference to the world.

1. The National Cadet Corps (NCC) in Nation Building:

The National Cadet Corps (NCC), the largest uniformed volunteer organisation in the world, is committed to the business of youth empowerment and is ideally suited to help the nation realise its demographic dividend, thereby making a significant contribution to nation-building.

From its modest beginnings on 15th July 1948 by an Act of Parliament, and with an initial subscriber base of 20,000 cadets, the NCC today boasts of authorised strength of 14 lakh cadets. It has a pan-India presence that includes 16,288 institutions in 703 out of 716 districts of the country. The 8000-plus institutions which are wait-listed bear testimony to its popularity.

Harnessing Youth Power:

Perception Profile of Young India. The younger generation is certainly more tech savvy. It is materialistic in its outlook; given to following an easy laid-back lifestyle. Many lack focus and commitment, and are not inclined towards scholarly pursuit, research or innovation. Most are indifferent towards social or community causes and issues. Motivating youth to be engines of change is a challenge. Ask any parent, teacher or elder, most would support the youth being put through compulsory military training. The credibility of the Armed Forces also perhaps has a major role in influencing their mindset. Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, in his address to cadets on 4 November 2004, in New Delhi, had famously stated, “...in my view, NCC training must be made compulsory for all eligible students....at the school or college level” 1 . Not many would know that for a brief spell in 1963, NCC training was made compulsory for college students. Owing to budgetary and establishment constraints, the scheme was withdrawn in 1968.

The Future Citizenry. The whole essence of the NCC lies in investment in the future citizenry of our nation. It harnesses youthful energy through its aims and by stringently implementing its wide range of activities. Over 70 percent of its effort is dedicated to leadership training.

Salience of NCC

There are several areas in terms of geographical space which assume prime importance in terms of an enhanced role for the NCC. Take the example of Bastar District, where the battle with left-wing extremism will be won or lost, or Kashmir, at least North Kashmir, or areas comprising Dhanis and small hamlets in the desert region or Rann of Kutch, or in some areas of the North East where the young can be lured into traps highly detrimental to national interest.

2. - Approach to Expansion

Incremental Expansion - 15 to 25 Lakh

Presently, a cadet expansion plan is underway for increasing the strength from 13 to 15 lakh. The same is likely to materialise by 2020. In the past, it has also been considered that in addition to completing the ongoing expansion plan (2 lakh), the NCC cadet strength be increased further by 10 lakh, absorbing the additional cadet strength by exercising the various options.

Present Coverage. As on date, the NCC has a pan-India presence with 16,288 institutions in which cadet strength is over 13 lakh. Waitlisted institutions are 8,627. However, the coverage is less than one percent of the student population (14, 64,153 Schools/25 crore Students as per Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) data).² There has always been a growing demand for NCC. There also exist spatial gaps in the presence of NCC.

Two Lakh Expansion Plan

Overview. The last increase of NCC cadet strength was undertaken from 2010, wherein cadet strength was to be enhanced by two lakh from 13 to 15 lakh. The increase envisaged the raising of five group headquarters and 61 units in five phases by absorbing 40,000 cadets annually. This involved provisioning of service manpower (140 Officers, 465 Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and 1025 Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) as also commensurate central and state government civilian manpower/ transport.

Progress. Phase I and II (raising of two group headquarters and 26 units) were completed between 2011 and 2013. In 2014, a review was undertaken. Post the review, priorities were realigned with a focus on the coastal, border, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) and insurgency affected areas. By early 2018, authorised cadet strength was 14.2 lakh. Phase IV and V are expected to conclude by 2020, with cadet strength touching 15 lakh. This approved expansion involves a financial outlay of well over Rs. 300 crore. Figures, however, need validation.

Salient Features. No new raisings are proposed for the first three years. An average increase of 90,000 cadets is envisaged for the first eight years, and thereafter, it will be an average increase of 70,000 cadets per year. The manpower accretion and transport requirement involved in the proposal of 12 years will be substantial. Share of the Services, centre and state government manpower, Associate NCC Officers (ANO, teaching staff fully trained by a course to perform duties in NCC) and lady NCC officers, and instructional staff, would be required in numbers. Financial outlay would be substantial. Extrapolation of experience of present expansion would be a rough guide.

Expansion through NCC-Like Training

Essential Facts Revisited

As stated earlier, pan-India, there are more than 14.5 lakh schools and a large number of colleges as well. The student population is in the range of 25 crore. The NCC coverage is presently confined to nearly 14 lakh cadets, 16000 institutions, with over 8000 wait-listed. 703 of 716 districts of the country have an NCC footprint. Remote areas, insurgency-affected areas or newly carved out district have voids.

Mission. The aim behind undertaking NCC-like training would be to inculcate discipline, character, comradeship, leadership qualities and intrinsic values of nationalism among school children.

Approach and Provisions. The scheme must be on volunteer basis for both institutions as well as students. It is recommended to be a one-year programme - Class 8, due to consideration of formative

age and academic curriculum. Methodology of conduct should be on similar lines as in NCC by ESM (combat arms) and nominated teachers with prior orientation training. Funding is recommended by one agency – the Centre.

3. A Role for the NCC in the Nation’s Mission to Develop Cyber Security Capacities for the Future:

Overview

The world is going digital for the better, not to forget our own flagship ‘Digital India’ campaign. This has led to IT-isation and networking of systems like never before within the country and around the world - with consequent risks. Proliferation of smart phones, lure of the internet and social media are adding to the problem.

The NCC Advantage

The NCC, with its organisational strength, work ethos, pan-Indian presence and motivated cadets is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution in this field. As stated, the NCC is the largest uniformed youth organisation in the world. In its noble mission of youth empowerment, it directly touches the lives of over 13 lakh boys and girls. This figure will rise in the future.

Our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, had recommended to the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) during its silver jubilee event in 2015, to create a Cyber Security Task Force (CSTF). The CSTF aims to create a force of a million cyber security professionals by 2025. This probably should highlight the importance being attached to capacity building in this vital field.

About the Author



Lt. Gen. Vinod Vashisht, AVSM, VSM & Bar (Retired) held the assignment DG NCC prior to superannuation on 31st October 2017.