

# Govt. sanctions 12 new Sashastra Seema Bal battalions for Nepal, Bhutan borders

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The government has sanctioned a dozen fresh SSB battalions, comprising over 13,000 personnel for the Nepal and Bhutan borders guarding force, to “fortify” defences along these fronts including the tri-junction area in Sikkim that adjoins Bhutan and Tibet, officials said.

Though the Union Home Ministry has denied creation of a new field frontier for the border force, it has allowed the SSB to create one out of three new sector — responsible for the operations of about 5-6 battalions — and it is expected to come up in the Delhi-NCR region.

## **Key Highlights**

- The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), with an estimated strength of about 90,000 personnel, is the designated force to guard the open Indian fronts with Nepal (1,751 km) and Bhutan (699 km).
- SSB Director General (DG) Kumar Rajesh Chandra told that the 12 new battalions will be raised in phases, three units each over the next four years.
- The SSB chief added that the government has also sanctioned a total of 548 posts to the force for deployment at four ICPs (integrated check posts) along the Nepal border out of which two are already operational at Jogbani and Raxaul (both in Bihar).
- As per an official proposal of the border force approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the new battalions will be used to reduce inter-border outpost distance, strengthen trade and transit routes along Nepal and Bhutan and fortifying SSB’ strength in the tri-junction area in Sikkim.

- The tri-junction area is the plateau between India, Bhutan and Tibet and the SSB is deployed just below it on the southern side as part of its mandate to guard the front with Bhutan.
- The militaries of India and China had witnessed an over 70-day standoff in the Doklam at the tri-junction in 2017.
- The new manpower will also help the SSB, as per the proposal, in upgrading the existing border posts at “strategically important” locations along the two fronts and providing armed security to the eight integrated check posts along these fronts.

**SOURCE:** *The Hindu, The Print*