

# Civil Defence Volunteers

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**In News:** Recently, The Delhi Police issued a statement, pointing out that civil defence personnel, also known as Delhi Civil Defence (DCD) volunteers, have no power to stop people using police barricades and prosecute them for violation of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour.

## What is the issue?

- Civil defence personnel lauded for their work during the pandemic but now facing allegations of high-handedness, the role of the civil defence volunteers in the national capital has come under intense scrutiny recently.
- Due to their identical khaki uniform, it often becomes difficult for people to distinguish between police and civil defence personnel.
- Recently, One incident turned into a full blown fist-fight between a group of civil defence personnel and the general public near IIT-Delhi.

## Eligibility for becoming a Civil Defence Volunteer

- A person who intends to apply for appointment to a Civil Defence Corps must fulfill the following conditions;
  - s/he shall be a citizen of India or Bhutan or of Nepal.
  - s/he shall have completed the age of 18 years provided that this age limit may be relaxed at the discretion of the competent authority up to a maximum of 3 years for any branch or category of the Corps.
  - s/he shall have passed at least the primary standard, that is to say, the fifth class, and this condition may be relaxed by the Controller at this discretion.

- Both men and women shall be eligible for appointment to the Corps.
- A person shall not be entitled to be appointed to the Corps unless he is found to be physically fit and mentally alert.
- Any service in the National Volunteer Force and in the Armed Forces of the Union shall be a special qualification.

### **Role of civil defence volunteers**

- According to the Civil Defence Act, 1968, civil defence is defined as any measure “not amounting to actual combat, that protects persons, property and places in India from hostile attack”.
- The 2010 amendment expanded the definition by including disaster management as one of the responsibilities.
- The basic role of the volunteers is to assist the local administration. During the pandemic, the volunteers assumed the role of frontline workers by way of participating in screening hotspots and distributing food for the needy.
- Recently, DCD volunteers have also been deployed to ensure social distancing in markets and other crowded places and also at vaccination sites.
- Before the Covid outbreak, a large number of DCD personnel were deployed as marshals in public buses to ensure safety of women.

### **Civil defence volunteers recruitment**

- Recruitment drives are carried out from time to time by the Delhi government.
- Anyone aged above 18 years with primary level educational qualification can apply. In most cases, those who have passed Class 8 are preferred. But, people with higher qualifications also apply.
- The candidates found eligible are made to undergo a

week-long basic training course. At later stages, specialised training is also imparted.

- A person who intends to apply must also be a citizen of India or a “subject of Sikkim or Bhutan or Nepal”, according to the Act.