

After Attack, Government Revives Armed Vigilante Groups In Jammu And Kashmir's Rajouri

Village Defence Committees armed with rifles were first formed in 1990s at peak of unrest, lost value later as situation improved; now next generation ready

Rajouri:

In a mega exercise to revive vigilante groups armed by the government to defend against terrorist attacks, revamp of erstwhile Village Defence Committees is going on aggressively in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri. There are already 5,000 armed members in the district and more villagers are registering to get weapons from the police.

The committees have been renamed Village Defence Groups or VDG and are being revamped at such a large scale for the first time in over two decades. Each member is equipped with a .303 rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition. The government is also planning to equip them with SLR rifles.

The committees were set up almost 30 years ago when the law-and-order machinery had collapsed in Jammu and Kashmir. The administration was even criticised for abdicating its responsibility to protect common people and instead arming such groups. Eventually, the role of these committees was diminished as security forces regained control on the ground.

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