



Need of Police Reforms

This article is based on the [“Need urgent police reforms”](#) which was published in Financial Express on 22/12/2022. It talks about the legal and institutional framework governing police matters in India and challenges related to it.

For Prelims: Police Forces, Internal security, Police Act 1861, Supreme Court, United Nations, Psychological Distress, Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Police-Public relations, Bioweapons, Model Police Act 2006, Parliamentary Standing Committee, Community Policing.

For Mains: Ideal Role of Police in Context of Indian Democracy, Challenges Related to Policing in India, Committees/Commissions on Police Reforms.

In India, [state police forces](#) are responsible for maintaining law and order and investigating crimes, **central forces assist them with intelligence and [internal security](#) challenges** (e.g., **insurgencies**). Expenditure on police accounts for about **3% of the central and state government budgets**.

The legal and institutional framework governing police matters in India was inherited from the British. **The current legal framework, comprising the [Police Act 1861](#) and other state specific laws, is deficient in establishing an accountable police force.**

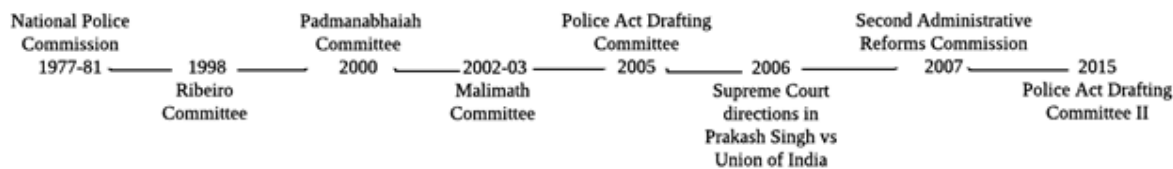
While multiple reform proposals have been recognised by the **Government of India** and the [Supreme Court](#), such reform has not been achieved or implemented to the desired extent. Therefore, India needs to revise the **legal and institutional framework** to move towards **smart policing**.

What is the Ideal Role of Police in Context of Indian Democracy?

- The **primary role of police forces is to uphold and enforce laws, investigate crimes and ensure security** for people in the country.
 - In a large and populous country like India, **police forces need to be well-equipped, in terms of personnel, weaponry, forensic, communication and transport support**, to perform their role well.
- Further, they need to have the operational freedom to carry out their responsibilities **professionally, and satisfactory working conditions** (e.g., regulated working hours and promotion opportunities), while being **held accountable for poor performance or misuse of power**.
 - **Police reforms** are also necessary periodically, since crimes and insurgencies are changing and becoming more sophisticated.

What are the Committees/Commissions on Police Reforms?

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What are the Challenges Related to Policing in India?

- **Low Police-Population Ratio: State police forces had 24% vacancies** (about 5.5 lakh vacancies) in January 2016. Hence, while the sanctioned police strength was **181 police per lakh persons in 2016, the actual strength was 137 police**. Note that the [United Nations recommended 222 policemen per lakh population](#).
 - **As a result of understaffing, policemen are overburdened with work**, which not only **reduces their effectiveness and efficiency** (resulting in poor investigations), but also leads to [psychological distress](#) and leads to [pendencies of cases](#).
- **Political Superimposition:** According to police laws, both the **Central and State police forces are under the control of political executives**. Police priorities are frequently changed by political leaders according to the political mood of the state.
 - The [Second Administrative Reforms Commission](#) noted in 2007 that **politicians unduly influenced police personnel for personal or political reasons**.
- **Colonial Legacy:** To streamline the country's police administration after the revolt of 1857, the British enacted the **Police Act of 1861**. This **act does not correspond with the democratic aspirations of the population** after 75 years of Republic India.
- **Public Perception:** The **Second ARC** has noted that [police-public relations are unsatisfactory in India](#) because people view the police as **corrupt, inefficient, and unresponsive**, and often hesitate to contact them.
- **Infrastructural Deficit:** Today's police forces require strong communication support, modern weapons, and high mobility. [CAG audits for 2015-16 have found shortages in weapons among state police forces](#).
 - Also, the **Bureau of Police Research and Development** has also noted a **30.5% deficiency in stock of required vehicles** with the state forces.
- **Changing Technology, Challenging Policing:** In the next decade, [digitalization, hyperconnectivity, and exponential growth of data](#) are expected to accelerate.
 - There is a threat to effective policing from the convergence of different domains like [bioweapons](#) and [cyberattacks](#).

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Making the Police a SMART Force:** There is a need for making Indian police **Strict and Sensitive, Modern and Mobile, Alert and Accountable, Reliable and Responsive, Tech Savvy and Trained**.
 - Various studies indicate that when **police officers treat citizens with dignity, allow them an equal voice in interactions** and are guided by considerations of transparency and accountability, it **strengthens people's compliance with laws**, ameliorating conditions for commission of crimes.
- **Promoting Community Policing:** Increasing [community policing](#) makes sense because it **involves police and community members working together to solve crime and crime-related issues** and also improves people-police relations.
- **Setting up Police Complaints Authority:** According to the Supreme Court, an **independent complaints authority is needed to investigate complaints** of police misconduct.
 - In accordance with the [Model Police Act, 2006](#), each state must establish an authority **made up of retired High Court judges, civil society members, retired police officers, and public administrators** from another state.
- **Strengthening Cyber-Policing to Combat Cyber-crime:** As crime becomes more sophisticated, complex, and transnational, new digital investigative and data management capabilities along with innovative AI-enhanced tools are critical.
 - For example, **criminal statistics** will have to be updated to adequately capture cybercrime across the country.

- **Transparency in Appointments:** Police reforms are crucial to **hold the structure of the criminal justice system together**. The 1861 Act must be amended, in accordance with the **Supreme Court's directives**.
 - Since the **appointment of the director general of police**, i.e The chief of the police in a state is **pivotal to the police's administration**, there is a need to devise a **transparent and merit based procedure** for such appointments.
- **Addressing Women Under-Representation:** **Parliamentary Standing Committee** advised states and Union Territories to **create a road map for ensuring 33% representation of women** in police. It also **recommended at least one all-women police station in each district**.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss the need of Police Reforms in India considering the evolving nature of crime and insurgencies.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q.1 Instances of the President's delay in commuting death sentences has come under public debate as denial of justice. Should there be a time specified for the President to accept/reject such petitions? Analyse. **(2014)**

Q.2 National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India can be most effective when its tasks are adequately supported by other mechanisms that ensure the accountability of a government. In light of above observation assess the role of NHRC as an effective complement to the judiciary and other institutions in promoting and protecting human rights standards. **(2014)**