



## 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.**

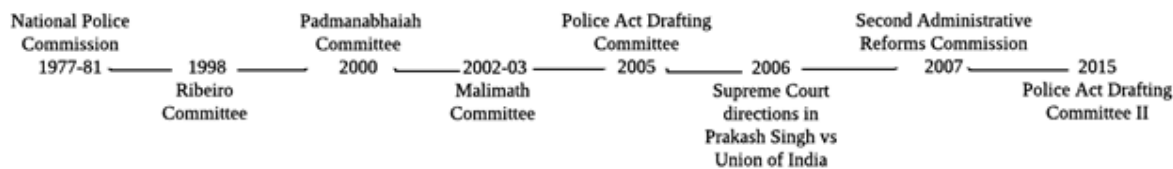
While multiple reform proposals have been recognised by the **Government of India** and the [Supreme Court](#), such reform has not been achieved or implemented to the desired extent. Therefore, India needs to revise the **legal and institutional framework** to move towards **smart policing**.

### 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)**