

Improving the Quality of Policing in India

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[GS Paper 2 -Governance, Centre-State Relations]

Context - The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) convened a conference in late October in the capital, which saw the participation of the union home minister, a few States Home Ministers and police chiefs. The Delhi conference was a very important occasion aimed at improving the quality of policing in the country through an exchange of ideas.

Sardar Vallabhbhai's Vision of Police

- **Training and Professionalism:** He placed great value on professional policing, one reason why he insisted on an elitist and well-trained corps such as the Indian Police Service (IPS) which worked alongside the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).
- **Didn't abandon the civil services:** He was under immense pressure from various quarters, to disband both the Indian Civil Service and IPS, but as a distinguished and astute visionary, he was steadfast in his belief.
- **Nationally accepted standards:** Subsequent events proved him right. Despite all their faults, the two all-India services have been a cementing force and have greatly contributed to establishing nationally accepted standards of governance, especially in the area of law and order.

Current Status of Policing in India

- A case study of Tamil Nadu: The way the Tamil Nadu police have handled the case of a blast in Coimbatore that happened recently, and a possible terror-related plot, also fits in this scene and is relevant to the state of law and order in the State and elsewhere.
- Delay in serious cases: There is a section of influential public opinion which has accused the Tamil Nadu government of having been slothful and delayed handing over investigation of the incident to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). This has been rebutted by the State Director General of Police (DGP) who said that his force could not abruptly abandon the investigation and had to do the preliminary investigation to facilitate an NIA take-over.
- Shifting the responsibility: The exchange of barbs by the two sides has been an unfortunate and avoidable development and the truth lies in between. Rather than getting into a slanging match, what is more important is an examination of the standard operating procedures in place, the identification of lacunae and the initiation of corrective measures.
- West Bengal case: Conflict between the Ministry of Home affairs and State over utilizing talent in the IPS and the sharing of resources available in the States.

Better Approach for Governance of Police

- Collaborative approach: It is a no-brainer that New Delhi is the senior partner in what is definitely a collaborative relationship. But there have been actions over the decades that have inflicted many deep wounds on public order.
- Forge a strong camaraderie: These have been situations that have demanded large numbers of well-trained policemen. The Centre has always chipped in with support from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). There have also been other outfits such as the Border Security Force (BSF), the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) which have also worked in tandem with the State Police. Therefore, it makes sense that the MHA and State Police stop squabbling but explore how best to forge a strong camaraderie.
- The State must cooperate with centre: We are also witness to frequent spats between States and the Centre over the use or alleged misuse of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Here again both parties have to share the blame. But the basic point that has been ignored is that crime and bureaucratic corruption have inter-State ramifications and only a national agency can bring in a much-needed and wide perspective.
- CBI is inevitable for corruption at state level: Insensitive action by a few States to withdraw consent to the CBI to function in a state smack of politics and vindictiveness, which diminishes the fight against public servant graft.

Way Forward

With the exponential rise of technology the nature of crimes has significantly changed. We must impart modern training with professionalism to our Police. Police subjects

need to delink from Centre-state politics.