



The challenge of law enforcement post-COVID-19

Context:

- The COVID-19 has impacted the Policing and has given new challenges in short term.

Law Enforcement during Pandemic times

- In a society struck by a deadly virus, strict maintenance of public order is most essential. Police ensured strict observance of guidelines, including physical distancing norms which reduced the disease spread.
- Law enforcement was considered next only to healthcare in its critical function of preventing disease spread.
- Public cooperation during the pandemic helped the police to overcome the challenges of manpower and mobility.
- Police skilfully used social media to disseminate all relevant information to a majority of the population, both in urban and rural areas.
- Zero Traffic on major highways lead to sharp reduction in traffic accidents & fatalities. Delhi Police reported a 70% fall in heinous crimes (murders and rapes) between April 1 and 15 compared to the same period last year.
- The Tamil Nadu Police, for instance, reportedly received 2,963 calls on domestic violence in April 2020 alone.

What are the possible reasons for increase in domestic violence?

- Most men were at home, either without work on in fear of losing their jobs. Data show that domestic violence increases when there is greater unemployment.
- The second reason is the non-availability of liquor during the lockdown period, which caused frustration among those men who are habituated to drinking.
- There was a similar increase in sexual and gender-based violence in West Africa during the 2013-16 Ebola outbreak.

What will be the challenges for Police in Post-COVID time?

- Due to restrictions across borders, crime gangs innovate to adapt to changing nature of illicit market. They may infiltrate health services and make profits through the sale of tightly regulated drugs
- Various fake portals have been launched to get people to donate money for the cause of combating COVID-19
- Low quality Products: Police will also have the responsibility to curb large-scale manufacture of ineffective masks and hand sanitizers.

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- One of the major challenge will be keeping prisons free of the virus given the scenario of overcrowded prisons in India.

Way Ahead:

- Government has to draft a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure by keeping COVID-19 in perspective since the virus is here to stay for atleast a year.
- Supreme Court has directed the States to constitute high-powered committees to consider releasing convicts who have been jailed up to seven years on parole, in order to decongest prisons.
- Public Cooperation experienced during the pandemic has to become the building block for future police-public relations.