Status of Policing in India Report 2019

Why in news?

The report on the Status of Policing in India, jointly developed by NGO Common Cause and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, was released recently.

What is the report on?

- This is the second such joint report.
- The report surveys on police adequacy and working conditions.
- The latest report surveys 12,000 police persons across 22 states together with their family members (around 11,000).
- **Significance** - The report offers a potent explanation for the low credibility of the police in public perception.
- In October 2018, the Delhi High Court in its judgment on the Hashimpura massacre case relied on the 2018 edition of the Status of Policing in India Report.
- With the report's findings, it established the institutional bias of the police force against Muslims to convict 16 policemen for killing 42 people in 1987.

What are the key findings of 2019 report?

- **Infrastructure** - Across the states -
    1. 70 police stations did not have wireless devices
    2. 214 police stations lacked telephone access
    3. 24 police stations had neither of the above
- Police stations, on average, have just 6 computers and states like Bihar and Assam less than one.
- Nearly 240 stations did not even have vehicles.
- 1 in 5 women in the police said she lacked a separate toilet.
- The police work, on average, 14 hours a day.
- **Social attitude** - Police forces exhibit frightening prejudices against women, lower castes, and minorities.
- One in four male personnel demonstrates high bias against their female colleagues.

- About one in four police persons in several states does not receive any kind of gender sensitisation training.
- Most of them see complaints of gender-based violence as false and motivated, which explains why most sexual assaults go unreported.
- Nearly one-fourth of the women personnel surveyed reported of the absence of the Internal Committee mandated for dealing with sexual harassment at the workplace.
- One in two police personnel surveyed feel that Muslims are likely to be "naturally prone" to committing crimes.
- 35% of police personnel interviewed think that it was natural for a mob to punish the "culprit" in cases of cow slaughter.
- 43% think it is natural for a mob to punish someone accused of rape.
- 37% of personnel interviewed feel that for minor offences, a small punishment should be handed out by the police rather than a legal trial.
- 72% of police personnel experience "political pressure" during the investigation of cases involving influential persons.
- The frequent transfers of senior police persons who do not conform to a political leader's demands have entered the realm of popular culture.

What does this imply?

- The findings are certainly worrying when rapid social transformation demands a robust and sensitised police force in the country.
- The training given to officers, a 6-month crash course on civil and Criminal Procedure Codes, the Indian Penal Code and the Evidence Act may not be sufficient.
- On the other hand, there are simply not enough people to do the fundamental job.
- E.g. in U.P. and Haryana, there are as many as 60% and 53% vacancies in positions reserved for SCs, STs, OBCs, and women
- There are vacancies at all ranks, but those in senior ranks are higher than those in the constabulary.

What is to be done?

- There is a need to insulate police personnel from political influence.
- Transfer as a form of punishment for displeasing someone should be reconsidered.
- Unlike most functioning democracies, India's police force does not have its genesis in the concept of public service.
- It is instead the creation of the British as an instrument of enforcement and oppression.

- So, above all, India’s police force should be redesigned to work as a protector of citizens - of all citizens’ security, rights, and property, without bias.

Source: Indian Express, Business Standard

