

Ministry of Home Affairs

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Ministry of Home Affairs: Reforms, Roles and Realities

Context

The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** plays a crucial role in safeguarding **India's internal security** and maintaining **federal harmony**. Over the decades, the MHA has transitioned from a **reactive crisis manager** to a **strategic policy-making body**. This transformation is central to understanding the evolving nature of **India's internal security apparatus**, especially for UPSC aspirants studying governance, internal security, and polity.

Basis and Role of the Ministry of Home Affairs

- The MHA serves as the **nerve centre of India's internal security and federal governance**.
- Unlike many other nations, India's MHA integrates **security and administrative coordination**, making it a **pillar of national stability**.

Constitutional Backing:

- 'Public order' and 'police' are State subjects under **Entries 1 & 2, List II (State List), Seventh Schedule**.
- However, Centre's role is justified through:
 - **Article 355**: Union's duty to protect States from external aggression and internal disturbance.
 - **Article 256 & 356**: Ensure constitutional governance and Centre-State cooperation during emergencies.

Key Functions:

- Monitoring internal security and issuing advisories.
 - Sharing intelligence, providing **financial and manpower support** to States.
 - Ensuring law and order **without violating State autonomy**.
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Evolution of MHA's Role

The expansion of MHA's functions is a direct response to emerging **national security threats** and **state-level incapacities**.

Key Drivers of Change:

- **Rise of terrorism and insurgency** since the 1980s.
- Inadequate response by States to threats in **Punjab (militancy)**, **Kashmir (terrorism)**, and **Central India (Maoist insurgency)**.
- Increased dependence on **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)** like **CRPF** and **CISF**.
- Industrial unrest during the 1970s-80s led to the creation of **CISF** for securing critical infrastructure.

Organisational Changes:

- **Addition** of departments: **Disaster Management** and **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)**.
 - **Separation** of the **Department of Justice** and **North-East affairs** from MHA.
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Key Challenges Faced by MHA

Despite its strategic position, the MHA has faced several historical and structural limitations:

1. Narrowed Focus:

- Prioritised insurgency, terrorism, and border security.
- Neglected areas like **police modernisation, inter-agency coordination, and disaster management.**

2. Frequent Leadership Changes:

- Example: **Indira Gandhi's third term and Rajiv Gandhi's tenure** saw **4 different Home Ministers**, leading to policy instability.

3. Reactive Legislation:

- Laws enacted **after crises**, e.g.:
 - **TADA** (post-Punjab insurgency)
 - **POTA** (after 2001 Parliament attack)
 - **NIA Act** (after 26/11 Mumbai attacks)

4. Crisis Ministry Mindset:

- Stepped in **only during emergencies**, rather than focusing on **long-term structural reforms.**

Recent Reforms and Strategic Initiatives

The past decade has witnessed a **paradigm shift** in the approach of the MHA:

1. Budgetary Strengthening:

- MHA's budget crossed **₹1 lakh crore in 2019.**
- **2025 allocation: ₹2.33 lakh crore**, with **₹97,000 crore** for **CAPFs** (up from ₹38,000 crore in 2013-14).

2. Legislative Overhaul:

- Since 2019, over **27 legislative reforms** have been introduced.

- Key reforms:

- **Amendments to UAPA and NIA Act**
- Clear **definition of terrorism** under Indian criminal law
- Emphasis on **terror financing prevention**

3. Institutional and Technological Strengthening:

- Expansion of **National Investigation Agency (NIA)**
- Revamp of **Multi-Agency Centre (MAC)**
- Push for a '**duty to share**' intelligence culture
- Establishment of **National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU)**

4. Criminal Justice Reforms:

- Enactment of **3 new criminal codes**:
 - **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**
 - **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita**
 - **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam**
 - Full implementation of **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)** - integrates **17,130 police stations, courts, and forensic labs**.
 - Promotion of **forensic-led investigations**.
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Significance of These Reforms

These reforms have had a **measurable impact** on India's internal security:

- **Violence in conflict zones reduced by 70%.**
 - **Stone pelting incidents in Kashmir** have nearly stopped.
 - **Insurgency in the North-East** has weakened significantly.
 - **Naxal-affected regions** are witnessing **economic and social development.**
 - Boost to **political stability and governance** in previously disturbed areas.
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Way Forward

1. Strengthen Institutional Coordination:

- Regular training for better Centre-State-Police-Judiciary synergy.
- Creation of **Joint Command Centres** for coordinated action.

2. Federal Support Model:

- Provide States with **modern equipment, training, and funds.**
- Encourage **merit-based policing and autonomy** in law enforcement.

3. Policy Continuity and Vision:

- Reduce political interference and ensure **long-term planning.**
- Shift from event-based policies to **proactive and preventive governance.**