

Arming the Traffic Cop in Delhi

Why in news?

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- Delhi Police have decided to allow higher ranking traffic cops to carry side-arms to enforce better traffic control.

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- This move is ill-advised and fraught with risk.

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Why is it futile?

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- The apparent reason for this move is to help the traffic police cope with the growing instances of road rage.

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- Incidence of assaults on police personnel seeking to impose traffic rules has indeed seen an uptick.

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- But, as most policemen are simply run over by rule breakers, it is unclear on how arming cops with pistons, solve the problem.

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- Also, in a state like Delhi, arming the traffic police will see retaliatory arming by habitual offenders, thereby accelerating breakdown.

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- Though formal gun licences are difficult to procure, the easy access to crude country-made pistols will prove a menace.

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- Notably, PCR vans, who are the first responders in any crime, are equipped with weapon-carrying personnel anyway.

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What could be a better alternative?

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- While stricter enforcement increase traffic compliance, in Delhi, powerful citizens regularly pull ranks to avoid traffic tickets.
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- Also, rampant bribing of the traffic cops has also reduced the regulations to a mockery.
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- Addressing these basic issues would contribute immensely rather than arms which is just a lazy substitute for lack of political will.
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- **Drunken Drive** - This was a deeply entrenched menace in Delhi for long & a campaign against it was launched with strong political backing.
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- Despite the patchy ground level implementation, it did yield considerable results, with Delhi-ites seeking an increased reliance on Taxi services after parties.
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- This approach needs to be widened to ensure compliance for other traffic rules too, with a strong political will.
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What are the experience elsewhere?

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- Kolkata's traffic cops have been armed for some decades without much issues.
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- But the culture evolved due to the Naxalites menace in the 60s, which clearly isn't the case with Delhi.
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- Arming cops in the US has also been largely negative, as social prejudices have led cops to shoot without substantial reason.
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- In the US, traffic and dashboard cameras have often nailed the lie and enabled victims to sometimes secure justice.
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- Indian vehicles are still loaded with relatively basic features and it will be a while before they catch up.
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- Thus, arming Delhi's traffic police will only serve to make the public more vulnerable, not less.

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Source: Business Standard

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