

1. How the Forces Protect VIPs in India?

Prelims: Governance- Security

Mains: GS-III- Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

- ▶▶ **Context:** The Government recently downgraded the security cover of former PM Manmohan Singh, from Special Protection Group (SPG) to Z plus of the CRPF. The security cover of several other VIPs too has been downgraded.

How Does the Government Decide the Level of Protection an Individual Needs?

- ▶▶ The **Home Ministry takes the decision based on inputs from intelligence agencies**, which include the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing.
- ▶▶ They largely give a subjective measure of threat to life or injury to a person from terrorists or any other group, based on information from their sources.
- ▶▶ Certain individuals, by dint of their position in government, are automatically entitled to security cover. These include the Prime Minister and his immediate family.
- ▶▶ The Home Minister and officials such as the National Security Adviser too generally get security cover on the basis of their position.
- ▶▶ Since none of the intelligence agencies in India is accountable to any statutory body, barring the internal oversight of the Home and External Affairs Ministries, VIP security is sometimes seen as open to manipulation.
- ▶▶ A number of protectees, it has been alleged, are under security cover for political reasons and not necessarily due to any real threat.

What Are the Various Protection Levels?

- ▶▶ There are largely **six types of security covers**: X, Y, Y plus, Z, Z plus and SPG.
- ▶▶ While **SPG is meant only for the PM and his immediate family**, other categories can be provided to anyone about whom the Centre or state governments have inputs about facing a threat.
- ▶▶ There are various kinds of cover within these levels. These include security of residence, mobile security, office security and inter-state security. Different VIPs are given different kinds of cover depending on threat perception.
- ▶▶ For example, if the Chhattisgarh CM is assessed to be facing a threat from Maoists only in his state, the Centre may choose to give him residence and mobile security only in his

state, and appropriate security by the concerned state police when he travels out. Similarly, some may have a threat only when they travel, so they are given an escort force.

- ▶▶ Then, different forces may be engaged for residence and mobile security. Many protectees get residence security from state police and mobile security from a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

Genesis of SPG:

- ▶▶ In March 1985, following the recommendations of a committee set up by the Home Ministry, a special unit was created for this purpose under the Cabinet Secretariat. This unit, initially called the Special Protection Unit, was renamed as Special Protection Group in April 1985.
- ▶▶ Subsequently, the Parliament passed The Special Protection Group (SPG) Act, which was notified in June 1988 “to provide for the constitution and regulation of an armed force of the Union for providing proximate security to the Prime Minister of India and for matters connected therewith”.
- ▶▶ The SPG Act defined “proximate security” as “protection provided from close quarters, during journey by road, rail, aircraft, watercraft or on foot or any other means of transport” and to “include the places of functions, engagements, residence or halt”.
- ▶▶ Coverage: SPG protection was extended, apart from the Prime Minister, to “former Prime Ministers of India and members of their immediate families” through an amendment in the Act in the aftermath of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991.

