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INTERPOL

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Why is in news? Are Interpol's notices being politically exploited? And their role and effectiveness of Interpol notices in international law in promoting global security and fostering cooperation.

The International Criminal Police Organization, more commonly known as Interpol, comprising 194 member countries, plays a **crucial role as an information-sharing network to enable national police forces to combat transnational crimes.**

Concerns have been raised about the **misuse of Interpol's notice system**, especially the **issuance of blue corner notices**, which are less scrutinised than their red corner notices.

Critics argue that countries often exploit existing protocols to target political refugees and dissidents.

While efforts have been made to address this, questions remain about striking a balance between facilitating police cooperation and preventing misuse of this powerful tool.

Blue corner notice:

There are seven types of notices issued by Interpol — Red Notice, Yellow Notice, Blue Notice, Black Notice, Green Notice, Orange Notice, and Purple Notice.

A blue corner notice also known as an **"enquiry notice"** allows police forces in member states to share critical crime-related information such as obtaining a person's criminal record, and location and, having his or her identity verified among others.

For instance, in January 2020, Interpol issued a blue corner notice to help locate **fugitive self-styled godman Nithyananda.**

Difference between blue corner notice from a red corner notice:

A red corner notice is issued by a member state to **arrest a wanted criminal** through extradition or any other similar lawful action.

Such notices are issued **against persons wanted by national jurisdictions** for prosecution or to serve a sentence based on an arrest warrant or a court decision.

The country issuing the request need not be the home country of the fugitive, Interpol acts even on the request of a country where the alleged crime has been committed.

While blue corner notices are **issued prior to the filing of criminal charges**, red corner notices generally follow criminal convictions.

The concerned individual can be **stopped and arrested while travelling through a member state.** There will also be other detrimental consequences such as the closure of bank accounts.

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However, Interpol **cannot compel law enforcement authorities** in any country to arrest the subject of a red corner notice as the exercise of such powers is entirely discretionary.

In 2018, a red corner notice was issued against **fugitive billionaire Nirav Modi in relation to the Punjab National Bank scam**.

However, in October 2022, Interpol rejected a second request by India to issue such a notice against **Gurpatwant Singh Pannun**, whom the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has listed as a “terrorist.”

The agency said that India has failed to provide sufficient information to support its case and that his activities have a “clear political dimension.”

Is the notice system prone to misuse?

Although Interpol’s Constitution **explicitly forbids any activities of a political character**, activists have accused it of failing to enforce this rule.

Much of this outrage is directed at Russia, which has repeatedly issued notices and diffusions for the arrest of Kremlin opponents. According to the U.S. rights organisation Freedom House, Russia is responsible for 38% of all public red notices.

International human rights groups have also accused **China, Iran, Turkey, and Tunisia, among others**, of abusing the agency’s notice system for authoritarian ends.

In response to the mounting criticism, Interpol toughened the oversight of its red notice system.

However, vulnerabilities remain when it comes to the issuance of blue notices with experts flagging that such notices are less likely to be reviewed before publication.

The agency’s data shows that **blue notices have roughly doubled in number** over the past decade.

But countries like Turkey argue that such restraint in the issuance of notices hampers police cooperation and that the West should not interfere with their internal affairs.

About INTERPOL:

The International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) is an international organization that **facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control**.

It originated with the **first International Criminal Police Congress in 1914**, which brought officials from 24 countries to discuss cooperation on law enforcement matters.

It was founded **in 1923** as the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC).

In 1946, after the end of World War II, the organization was revived as the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO) by officials from Belgium, France, Scandinavia and the UK.

In 1956, the ICPC adopted a new constitution and the name INTERPOL.

It is headquartered in **Lyon, France**.

It has **seven regional bureaus** worldwide and a **National Central Bureau (NCB)** in all **194 member states**, making it the world’s largest police organization.

India has been a member since 1956.

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India maintains NCB which serves as the national platform for cooperation between domestic law enforcement units and the international police community.

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is designated as National Central Bureau of India.

Objectives of INTERPOL:

To ensure and promote the **widest possible mutual assistance** between all criminal police authorities within the limits of the laws existing in the different countries.

To establish and develop all institutions which contribute to the prevention and suppression of ordinary law crimes.

It cannot undertake any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character.

Functions of Interpol:

Interpol focuses on broad categories of **international criminal behaviour** such as terrorism and crimes against people and property, as well as economic, financial, and corruption crimes, and counterfeiting, among other things.

To combat transnational crime, Interpol **collaborates closely with all member nations** and international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union.

The Interpol essentially **unites police forces all around the world**, even if the individual member countries do not have diplomatic connections.

Interpol enables international information exchange, knowledge sharing, and research.

INTERPOL's Structure:

Interpol's Constitution lists the following administrative divisions as members of the organisation:

General Assembly

General Secretariat

Executive Committee

National Central Bureaus

The General Assembly and the Executive Committee form the organization's governance.

INTERPOL NOTICES



RED NOTICE
WANTED PERSONS



GREEN NOTICE
WARNINGS



YELLOW NOTICE
MISSING PERSONS



ORANGE NOTICE
IMMINENT



BLUE NOTICE
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



PURPLE NOTICE
MODUS OPERANDI



BLACK NOTICE
UNIDENTIFIED BODIES



SPECIAL NOTICE
INTERPOL - UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
GROUPS AND UNSC SANCTIONS

Red Notice: A Red Notice is a request to find and arrest a person awaiting extradition. It is issued by the General Secretariat on the basis of a valid national arrest warrant at the request of a member country or an international tribunal.

Yellow Notice: A Yellow Notice is issued to assist in the location of missing persons, or in the identification of those who are unable to identify themselves. It is published for victims of parental abductions, criminal abductions (kidnappings) or unexplained disappearances.

Blue Notice: A Blue Notice is issued to gather further information on a person's identity, whereabouts, or activities in connection with a crime. This does not ensure the person's extradition or arrest.

Black Notice: A Black Notice is a call for information on unidentified remains found in member countries.

Green Notice: A Green Notice is issued to convey warnings and intelligence about individuals who have committed criminal offences and are likely to commit similar offences in other countries.

Orange Notice: An Orange Notice is issued to warn of an event, a person, an item, or a process that poses a significant and urgent hazard to public safety.

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Purple Notice: A Purple Notice is a request for information about criminals' methods of operation, objects, gadgets, and hiding tactics.

Interpol-United Nations Security Council Special Notice: The Interpol-United Nations Security Council Special Notice is issued for people and companies subject to United Nations Security Council sanctions. Its primary duty is to notify national law enforcement agencies that designated persons and entities are subject to sanctions such as asset freezes, weapons embargoes, and travel bans.

Interpol and COVID-19:

The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) has warned member countries that cybercriminals were attempting to target hospitals and institutions on the front lines of the **fight against COVID-19 with ransomware**.

Issue:

Cybercriminals are using ransomware to hold hospitals and medical services digitally hostage, preventing them from accessing vital files and systems until a ransom is paid.

Details:

In an alert sent to 194 nations, including India, Interpol said organisations at the forefront of the global response to the COVID-19 outbreak had also become targets of ransomware attacks, which were designed to lock them out of their critical systems in an attempt to extort payments.

The agency's Cybercrime Threat Response Team had detected an increase in the number of attempted ransomware attacks against key organisations and infrastructure engaged in the virus response.

Interpol also issued a '**Purple Notice**'. It is issued to seek or provide **information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods** used by criminals.

Interpol General Assembly:

Recently, the Indian delegation, led by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and National Investigation Agency (NIA), urged member countries to **deny safe havens to crime, criminals, and the proceeds of crime** at the **91st Interpol General Assembly held in Vienna, Austria**.

Criminals and fugitives wanted by Indian agencies have been successfully returned through increased leveraging of Interpol channels and enhanced relationships with international law enforcement agencies.

Key Highlights of the 91st Interpol General Assembly:

During the 91st Interpol General Assembly, resolutions were passed to **strengthen the collaborative response to disrupt financial crime and corruption, combat online child sexual exploitation, and promote diversity within Interpol itself**.

The delegation engaged in discussions with law enforcement agencies from various countries on coordinated strategies to combat organized crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, online radicalization, and cyber-enabled financial crimes.

They also advocated for **real-time prevention** of these crimes.

The delegation supported the **adoption of Interpol's Vision 2030** and the establishment of the **Interpol Future Council**.

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New tools being used by Interpol:

Early warning system: Interpol had been developing a global early warning system for the collection and sharing of terrorism-related inputs.

Information of terrorists: Interpol had one of the biggest repositories of information related to foreign terrorist hideouts and tools. It has a huge repository of fingerprints, DNA profiles, Facial recognition kits, Cyber-enabled financial crimes, and Property crimes, among others.

Interpol's **global stop-payment mechanism** (an anti-money laundering rapid response protocol): It has helped the member countries recover more than \$60 million (past 10 months).

Global Crime Trend Report (by Interpol): It highlighted the massive increase in online child sexual exploitation and abuse, which is only set to increase.

Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation database: It helped investigators around the world identify an average of seven child abuse victims every day.

The success of its secure **i-24** for 24/7 information sharing

Red Notice: It is not an international arrest warrant and Interpol could not force any member country to arrest a subject of the notice.

Interpol's Singapore unit: It had been providing support to the member countries to develop a legal framework and come up with tools for tracking and seizing cryptocurrencies. It was also collaborating with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Way forward:

Beyond databases and tools: Interpol is required now to articulate an expansion beyond its databases and tools.

Real-time dissemination of information: The success of its secure i-24 for 24/7 information sharing aside, the importance of real-time dissemination of information should gain primacy.

Equitable significance: should be accorded to the legitimate interests of growing economies pursuing democratic charters.

Demographic dividend: A large and young technology-oriented workforce in startups can be utilized for upgrading the security architecture.

Interpol and law enforcement agencies of member nations: They must endeavour to build, maintain and operate a people-centric ecosystem to meet the evolving challenges.