

ROLE OF RPF

The Railway Protection Force has emerged from a turmoil of systems; there being as many forms of its existence and as many modes of functioning as there were railway Companies in British India for imparting the set-up a uniformity of working, the RPF Rules were enacted in 1959 and RPF Regulations published in 1966. In the same year, some limited powers to apprehend and prosecute offenders involved in railway property were conferred on the Force by enacting the Railway Property (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1966. Primarily RPF has been entrusted with responsibility of the safety of Railway property. But, while the provisions of RPF Act were soon found wanting for the maintenance of an effective and disciplined Force, the RPF Rules and Regulations too were found judicially unsound. The RPF Act, 1957 was accordingly modified by Parliament vide Act No.60 of 1985 on 20 September 1985 for the constitution and maintenance of the Force as an armed force of the Union.



The Committee recommended that since policing on the railways is the constitutional responsibility of the State Governments, certain matters relating to the security of railway passengers could be segregated from the policing functions and be given to the Railway Protection Force.

The Committee also recommended that the Railway Protection Force may be given the following additional duties relating to security of passengers:

1. Escorting of passenger trains in vulnerable areas.
2. Providing access control, regulation and general security on the platforms, in passenger areas and circulating areas.

The Railway Ministry accepted the above recommendations of the Committee. Accordingly, RPF by an amendment of the Railways Act/RPF Act has been empowered to deal with the offences, which directly relate to the functioning of the Railways, as the Police, being preoccupied with the law and order duties, have little time for these minor offences. It was against this backdrop that the RPF Act and The Railways Act have been amended. The main purpose is to supplement the efforts of the State Governments to reinforce the security of the passengers and the passenger areas on Indian Railways. For giving these additional responsibilities to the Railway Protection Force, the Railway Protection Force Act, 1957 was again modified by Parliament vide act No.52 of 2003 on 23rd December-2003 for providing more legal powers to RPF to provide better protection to Railway Property, Passenger area and Passengers. In view of latest amendment RPF is entrusted with following duties:-

1. to protect and safeguard railway property, passenger area and passenger;
2. to remove any obstruction in the movement of railway property or passenger area; and
3. to do any other act conducive to the better protection and security of railway property, passenger area and passenger.

Further, it was felt that for effectively dealing with the cases under the Railways Act, the Railway Protection Force should be empowered to enquire and to launch prosecution against the persons committing offences under the Railways Act and accordingly the Railway Act has been amended to empower RPF to investigate and prosecute in offences covered under the Act.

It was necessary to make the above amendments for following reasons :-

1. Railway Protection Force will be legally enabled to provide protection and safeguard to the passenger and his luggage, which will ensure better Passenger Facilitation.
2. Access control to stations can be regulated in a more effective way and general security on the platforms in passenger area and circulation area will get reinforced
3. Empowerment under The Railways Act will ensure more smooth train operations since many sections of The Railways Act aim at hassle-free train operations.
4. Entrusting of new responsibilities to RPF would mean optimum utilization of human resources.
5. Railway Protection Force will be able to take steps for prevention of any cognizable offence against the passengers and will also be legally empowered to apprehend any person who is involved in such offences.

With the introduction of amendment in RPF and Railways Act, RPF has been vested with the powers to investigate in Railways Act cases. RPF has accepted the challenge and 1286 important passenger trains have been provided with RPF escorts over Indian Railways.