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Development of Police Organisation

The beginning of civil protection against crime and disorder in England came with the promulgation of the Edict West Minster in 1285 by King Edward I. Under the system, local groups of property owners numbering about a hundred each were responsible for maintenance of peace in their district.

This system prevailed in Great Britain for centuries. However, the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century witnessed a considerable increase in crimes of violence in England. Therefore, a police force of 126 constables was set up by the Middlesex Justice Act, to arrest the growing incidence of crime and disorder.

Thereafter, a regular system of constabulary was, established in England by the Act of the British Parliament passed in 1787 for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in Ireland. These constables were responsible for enforcement of law and order in boroughs and towns. With the advance of time, the complexities of life multiplied due to the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation.

Consequently, the existing strength of the constabulary proved inadequate for the maintenance of law and order. Therefore, Sir Robert Peel, the then Home Secretary of England pleaded for a change in the existing system of constabulary'. This led to the passing of Metropolitan Police Act, 1829, which provided for a separate police force for Metropolitan city of London.

Similar police force was introduced throughout die United Kingdom in subsequent years. The constables working in the police were popularly called "Peelers" after the name of Sir Robert Peel who pioneered this scheme. Later on they came to be known as 'Bobbies'.

The first two Commissioners of Robert Peel's London Metropolitan Police made ceaseless effects to raise a police force which was committed to eschew violence. The results were commendable as it helped in a general sense of orderliness and respect for law among the British people.

One of the important developments in British Police system was the introduction of rural police force. The rural police system in Britain was an outcome of historical development. The rural beat consisted of eight villages or hamlets with a population of about 2000 persons. Rural police mostly dealt with rural, agricultural and live-stock matters.

In order to perform its duties efficiently, it had to maintain liaison with the various government departments and also agricultural and veterinary officials. Though a policeman was supposed to be on duty day and night, he had to perform eight hours beat patrol, which could be continuous or with an interval in between two-periods. He also had to do night patrolling to keep a watch against prevention of crime.

On the whole, it can be said that in United Kingdom the police enjoyed public support and respect and there were very few occasions of lethal use of force by the policemen. The police personnel were well trained and equipped with latest gadgets and weapons to tackle the problem of crime and criminals efficiently. With the subsequent reforms and modernisation of British Police force, it now ranks as one of the most efficient police organisation in the world.