The Centre wanted to dilute the 2006 Supreme Court judgment on police reforms as it pleaded that Directors-General of Police should have a two-year tenure subject to superannuation, said Prakash Singh, former DGP of Uttar Pradesh who had moved the court on the subject.

On Tuesday, the court passed a slew of measures restricting the choice of State governments in such appointments. It said all proposals for the appointments should be sent to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) that would shortlist the names.

Mr. Singh, who had first moved the petition in the court on police reforms, said distortions had crept in the appointment of DGPs as “political masters” wanted these posts to be filled with their choice.

Poor compliance “These distortions were brought to the notice of the court. The Home Ministry, through the Attorney-General, complained that the majority of States didn’t comply with the 2006 order and suggested a remedy that DGPs should have two-year tenures subject to superannuation. This was an excuse to modify the original order of two-year fixed tenure,” Mr. Singh said.

He said under SC directions, deserving officers should get time to frame policies and get them implemented during their tenure. “If an officer with impeccable record is to retire in 22 months, should he be overlooked because he doesn’t have two-year service left,” Mr. Singh asked.

The Home Ministry filed an application in 2017 to modify the original order of two-year fixed tenure. The application itself was spurred by the decisions of the Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal governments to appoint police chiefs on their convenience.

The Ministry sent a terse letter to the Andhra Pradesh government last year as it sent names of seven DGP-rank officers to the UPSC, which included three officers on the verge of retirement. The State government had kept the post vacant for months and on November 24, issued an order to appoint N. Sambasiva Rao, an IPS officer of the 1984 batch who was to retire on December 31. Mr. Rao is likely to hold the post till the next general election in 2019.

Bengal example In July 2016, the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal allowed IPS officer Surajit Kar Purkayastha to stay in office for a fixed term of two years, though he was to retire on December 31.

Former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha had also used the SC order to appoint Ashok Kumar, a 1982-batch IPS officer, as the DGP in November 2014 for a fixed term of two years, though the officer attained superannuation in June 2015. Mr. Kumar, however, took voluntary retirement in September 2016, two months before his tenure would have come to an end.

The Home Ministry insisted that only those officers be included in the panel who have a year-and-a-half to two years to retire.

“Distortion and aberrations had crept into the procedure regarding the appointment of DGPs and the manner in which it was being manipulated by political masters with the connivance of the bureaucracy. This had to stop,” Mr. Singh said.