City police bid to verify floating population

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, May 3- While planning to revive the verification process of the floating population of Guwahati, City Police is feeling the need to be more systematic regarding records maintenance.

"As Guwahati is being targeted by miscreants time and again, the requirement of a strong data base of criminals as well as the non-permanent population of Guwahati is being urgently felt in the police department.

"Surveys have been done many times to identify the tenants and employees of various private and business establishments, who constitute a large part of the floating population of Guwahati. Yet, due to disorganized record maintenance, desired results were not achieved," a senior police official told The Assam Tribune.

"Now we are trying to adopt a standard formatting of the available data in Excel or similar other software so that records are accessible without difficulty and can also be updated easily," he mentioned.

He further added that work of verification would be tackled at the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) level to ensure greater efficiency.

Though such drives are launched time and again to nab the linkmen of militant groups, blast masterminds and doubtful citizens among others, lack of a systematic approach on the part of the police department obstructs a thorough scanning of the city. Failure of the tenant registration drives and identification of daily labourers deployed by business establishments indicated that a concerted effort, along with a record database of the floating population is the need of the hour, even while launching the combing operations.

In the absence of proper planning, the security forces invariably beat about the bush when a blast occurs in any of the city markets.

"A database of daily labourers, vendors and other people engaged in the market areas would not only help to identify the victims in case of incidents like blasts but also give a right direction to the police investigation in many ways," stated police sources.

"Sometimes an ignorant attitude on the part of policemen is also responsible for the failure of such drives, apart from other reasons. Many of them shy away from entering the data in computers, either due to ignorance or inefficiency, and rely on manual paperwork," the sources mentioned.
Floating population a major headache for police

By S Dutta Choudhury
GUWAHATI, May 19 — Presence of large number of floating population has become a major cause of headache for the city police as it is impossible to keep a tab on the floating population as a large number of people come to the city every day in search of jobs and settle down in the vacant land including the hillocks, both sides of the Railway tracks etc. There have been instances where police found people changing houses up to four or five times a month, making it impossible for the law enforcing agencies to keep a tab on them. A large number of the floating population also work on the construction sites in the ever growing city and Sri Nath admitted that it is impossible for the police to keep watch on the labourers engaged in all such sites. However, he expressed the view that the Guwahati Municipal Corporation can evolve a mechanism to ensure the registration for the labourers while giving permission for construction of buildings.

The City SP revealed that despite the hardships faced by the police, the crime rate has come down in the last six months. He said that 2,689 cases were registered in the police stations of Guwahati city in the last six months as compared to 2,710 registered in the previous six months. However, he admitted that the police force can never be complacent and “our effort should be on further reducing the crime rate.”

Replying to a question, the City SP admitted that the strength of the city police force is not adequate to deal with the situation arising out of unchecked growth of the city. He revealed that the strength of the police force has not increased since 1985, while the population has increased manifold during this time. According to an estimate, the police-public ratio in Guwahati is 1:700 at this moment. “Every city police in Guwahati is much more than in other districts, as we have to control traffic, guard vital installations, provide security cover to VIPs and even visiting dignitaries,” he pointed out.

On the steps initiated by the City Police to get particulars of the tenants of the rented houses, Sri Nath said that the response from the house owners is far from satisfactory. He revealed that.

The City SP said that night patrolling by vehicles and on foot has been intensified while, in some places, the citizens’ committees are also doing very good work. He admitted that the private security guards engaged by the citizens in some areas are also doing a very good job in preventing crimes.

Competing on the reports that militants frequently sneak into Guwahati, Sri Nath said that due to its location and terrain, Guwahati is a vulnerable city and militants can easily sneak in. He pointed out that it is not possible to check each and every while entering the city, which can be approached by rail, road and even waterways. He said that according to an estimate, about 2,50,000 vehicles ply on city roads every day and police can only carry out random checking on the checkpoints. Police also keeps a watch on the railway station and bus stands and achieved success in recent months in recovering weapons. “It is not possible to check each passenger and policemen only keep watch on suspicious movements,” he said.

Guwahati City, Sri HC Nath admitted that there is no mechanism to keep a tab on the floating population. He said that efforts are on to further reducing the crime rate.

Commenting on the recent spurt of crimes in the city hotels, Sri Nath said that all the hotels should keep detailed records of the inmates. He said that police check the hotels from time to time, but it is not possible to check every hotel room regularly. He also revealed that under the Sarani Act, it is the duty of the hotel management to take steps for the security of the guests.

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there were instances when the house owners failed to provide any information about their tenants. “We are still checking the rented houses, but the house owners should also realise that they would get into serious trouble if their tenants get involved in any criminal act,” he said.

The City SP admitted that unchecked encroachment of the hills is a major problem as anti-social elements can easily take shelter on the hills taking advantage of lack of adequate police patrolling in those areas. However, he said that efforts are on to increase domination by the police in those areas but lack of motorable roads complicated matters for the police. The encroachment on both sides of the railway tracks is also a major problem as those areas have become breeding grounds of anti-social elements. Sri Nath said that though police carry out raids from time to time and apprehend some anti-social elements, a comprehensive plan must be launched for eviction of these people to remove the menace.

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SIVASISH THAKUR

GUWAHATI, May 10 – The insensitive urbanization process of the city and the resultant pressure on the environment continues to extract a heavy toll on its forests, hills and wetlands.

The city has a number of reserve forests, some of those forming part of the hills right within the municipal limits and some occurring on the outskirts. In addition, there is a wildlife sanctuary and a bird sanctuary, supporting a rich biodiversity including varied wildlife. Unabated encroachment and tree-felling in these forests have already robbed much of their green cover.

The 18 hills in the city in particular have been subjected to severe anthropogenic pressures, thanks to the growing population and inert government authorities that have remained a mute spectator to the vandalism being perpetrated on the hills.

Land use patterns revealed by satellite imagery show that of the total hill area of 7,023 hectare, patta land, government land, reserve forests and others account for 543.96 h, 1,449.27 h, 2,641.24 h and 2,388.53 h respectively. These data date back to several years, and the current position could be more depressing with human settlements continuing to expand on the hills.

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Urbanization taking toll...

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Official data put the encroachment on the city's reserve forests at 1,640 hectare, most of which occurs on the hills. The hill population, as per the 2001 census, was 1.23 lakh but that must have more than doubled by now, going by the city's rapid growth.

The few occasional eviction drives by the Forest department have yielded little in terms of clearing or checking encroachment. This is because there have been no follow-up measures once an area is freed of encroachment. The biggest impediment to eviction drives, however, has been undue political intervention, a forest official conceded.

The Forest department, however, cannot wash its hands off the matter, holding the political class responsible for the mess. The plight of the city's reserve forests, the Amchang sanctuary and the Deepor Beel in the face of growing encroachment lays bare the department's lapses in according protection to the forests, which is its primary responsibility. Deforestation apart, there have been widespread poaching of wildlife, especially lesser animals and birds, in the city - something that goes largely unnoticed.

The rapid loss of forest cover has already led to an intensifying man-leopard conflict in the city. Every year, a number of leopards either die or are captured while straying into residential areas in search of prey. The city hills used to have a sizeable leopard population but that has started to decline of late following the man-animal conflict.

The Amchang sanctuary best illustrates the apathy that conservation has been subjected to. Officially, over one-tenth of the 78.64 sq km sanctuary is under encroachment. Significantly, fresh encroachments took place in Amchang even after it was declared a sanctuary. The available infrastructure also belies its status as a sanctuary.

"Along with expanding human settlements inside Amchang, anthropogenic pressure on the wildlife habitat has increased manifold, creating a situation conducive for various wildlife crimes such as poaching, tree-felling, etc," Moloy Baruah of Early Birds, who has been a regular visitor to the sanctuary, said.

"Eviction drives are costly affairs, and those are rarely taken to their logical conclusion due to political intervention," a forest official conceded.

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Dispur PS records highest criminal cases in May

Bikash Singh
GUWAHATI, Aug 1—An analysis of the crime figures in the month of May this year under the 16 police stations of Guwahati reveals that Dispur has achieved the dubious distinction of topping the crime table with Noonmati, Jalukbari and Paltan Bazar areas not very far behind, police sources said today.

Out of the total 80 theft cases, 30 were committed in Dispur area in May, followed by 10 cases in Paltan Bazar area, eight in Jalukbari, seven in Noonmati, and six in Latashil. A total of 46 burglary cases were reported in May out of which 15 were committed in Dispur area, five in Chandmari, four in Geetanagar, and three each in Noonmati, Fatashil Ambari and Bharalumukh area. Out of the total of 12 cheating cases three were recorded in the Paltan Bazar area, the sources further said.

In the category of kidnapping and abduction, Dispur, Geetanagar and Fatashil Ambari areas registered three cases each.

In the category of other Indian Penal Code (IPC) cases, the total cases recorded were 275, out of which Dispur area recorded 77, Geetanagar 40, Basistha and Jalukbari 23 each and Paltan Bazar 15 cases. In the category of small and petty crimes, Basistha area recorded two cases followed by Chandmari, Bharalumukh and Latashil with one each the police sources added.

There were nine cases of crime against women in May, out of which two were committed in the Noonmati area, followed by one each in Basistha, Khetri, Paltan Bazar, Latashil and Jalukbari areas.

Altogether the month of May totalled 480 cases of criminal activity, out of which 136 cases were recorded under the Dispur police station 62 under Geetanagar PS, 44 under Bharalumukh PS, 32 under Latashil PS and 30 under Chandmari PS.

The overall crime cases remained low under the jurisdiction of the women PS (2 cases), North Guwahati PS (2), Geetanagar PS (2), Azara PS (2) and Khetri (2) sources added.

Talking to this correspondent, SP (City), Hiren Nath said that the overall crime graph has registered a decline marking a fall of about 200 cases from the previous years.

The overall property related offences are mostly recorded in Dispur as it has the largest area which includes Hatigaon, Odalbakra, Forest gate and Mathuragong. These places have a large number of floating population. Besides this, Paltan Bazar area also has a large number of floating population as it is the hub of inter-state transit. The police are regularly visiting the hotels and checking the customer registers, the SP said.

Sri Nath further stated that some people of the city keep their house locked for about a year which invites trouble. The police have time and again appealed to the commercial establishments to engage security guards only after the police verification. The landlords must furnish a detail of the tenants at their respective PS. "The response from the landlords is not very encouraging," he said.

In many cases, the streets are dark and even a rich and affluent area like Geetanagar puts off all the house lights after 8 pm, which makes the movement of the security forces difficult, he added. However, the police cannot be complacent and "we have beefed up security in and around the city. Patrolling has been intensified," he said.

Asked about the crimes against women, he said that with the increase in the awareness level, crimes against women are reported now a days, which was not the case earlier, he said.

Talking to this correspondent, the SP said that the overall crime graph has registered a decline marking a fall of about 200 cases from the previous years.
Traffic police grapple with rise in number of new vehicles

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Traffic police grapple with rise in number of new vehicles around 2 percent each, which is an indicator of high rate of educated unemployment, says the study.

Accurate as it is, the number of vehicles has skyrocketed in the last few years. For instance, the number of vehicles registered in the city was 12,793 in 2001 and 14,431 in 2003, according to the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Dhubri. In fact, the number of vehicles registered in the city has almost doubled in the last two years.

The rise in the number of vehicles has also affected the traffic. "We had set a target of reducing Rs 26.85 crore as road anarchy losses. But the total collection has crossed Rs 75 crore," said the vice chairman of the car buying society, Dhubri.

As a result of the increase in the number of vehicles, traffic congestion is becoming a major problem in the city. The traffic police are under pressure to control the situation, and they are working hard to ensure smooth traffic flow.

However, the increase in the number of vehicles has also had a positive impact on the economy. The rise in the number of vehicles has led to an increase in the number of job opportunities in the area, which is a welcome development.

A study by the Society for Social Transformation and Environment Protection has traced the origin, migration pattern, the educational status and faith practiced by these labourers who inevitably take shelter in any one of the pockets in the city. The city is strewn with poverty pockets which epitomize the squalor that is part of civilization.

Based on an analysis of hundreds of samples, the study has concluded that almost 91 percent of the migrant labourers in the city are from Assam and 9 percent of them are from Bihar, West Bengal and other states of India.

Among the districts of Assam, Dhubri district has the highest percentage of daily wage labour in the city comprising 14.23 percent, followed by Goalpara at 15.67 percent, Burmura at 14 percent, Kamrup at 12.87 percent and Nalbari at 11.67 percent. The break-up also says that lower Assam has the highest percentage of poor labourers.

The gender breakup of labour shows that almost 50 percent are adult male, 28 percent are adult women, 7 percent are boy child labour and 5 percent are girl child labour. The study which has also touched on the distribution of labour by religion says that almost 50 percent are Hindu and remaining are from Islam and other religions.

However, this distribution pattern highlights at certain labour markets. At the Harigaon labour market, 20 percent of labour are from the Hindu faith and 80 percent from Islam.

On the other hand, an analysis of 338 samples from 10 labour markets in the city says that more than 53 percent of labour are illiterate. "The labourers who attained primary and middle school standard constituted 38 and 18 percent respectively. Interestingly, the percentage of HS and BA standards also constitutes around 2 percent each, which is an indicator of high rate of educated unemployment," says the study.