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Assam River police crippled by staff crunch

GUWAHATI: Assam's river police force stares at a shaky future, striving hard to monitor the water bodies but crippled by its poor strength with 60% of its sanctioned posts lying vacant for years.

"The current strength of the state's river police is around 78 when the total number of sanctioned posts is 207. At least 129 posts have been lying vacant till the end of last year," a senior river police official said.

The force is functioning without 13 top-ranking officers, including technical experts. "River police wing is heavily short of constables, too. Out of the sanctioned 104 posts of constables, 52 are lying vacant," the official added. There are four river police stations and seven river police outposts in the state.

"The situation is so dismal that river police outposts in Tezpur and Buraburi in Dhubri district don't even have their own buildings," a source said.

The river police force has been suffering from lack of proper equipment. A source said the wing had only four speedboats and four boats for shallow waters to cover more than 100 km of the river stretch. Even the speedboats were found to be outdated with low-powered engines.

The force is responsible for detecting and preventing crime in the riverine route and char areas of the Brahmaputra.