

Shortage of Psychiatrists in Police Dept

The State government should appoint psychiatrists to help officers and personnel deal with stress, C.R. Chandrashekar, psychiatrist and prolific writer on mental health issues, said here recently.

“The suicides of police officers show the level of stress they are working under. The government and civil society should be sensitive towards the problems police face. We should explore solutions to the problems, rather than discussing the suicides as individual incidents,” he told presspersons.

He was speaking on the sidelines of a training programme for counsellors, teachers and medical students.

The government should introduce psychological screening of candidates during recruitment of police officers and constables. “This could weed out candidates with neurotic issues or those who can not cope with stress. The Army’s recruitment process involves personality tests aimed at selecting students with high degree of mental strength and coping tendencies,” he said.

According to him, while some police personnel may be genuinely suffering from depression and other disorders, others may be using the threat of suicide as a weapon of blackmail.

There is an acute shortage of psychiatrists in India, though the situation is improving. In 1975, there were only 250 psychiatrists in India and only 10 in Karnataka. Now, there are over 4,000 psychiatrists in the country and around 250 in Karnataka. In 1980, when the state government constituted a fact finding committee into incidents of Bhanamati, there was not one psychiatrist in in Hyderabad Karnataka region. Now, however, there are 27 psychiatrists in these six districts.

It is a positive development. However, while the West has one psychiatrist for 1,000 population, India has one for three lakh population. This gap has to be filled, he said.