

58 percent of the sanctioned women police posts remain vacant in Kolkata

A sudden spurt in crimes against women in the state in recent times has once again brought to the fore the long felt need for substantially increasing the number of lady police personnel both under Kolkata Police and West Bengal Police.

For, a strong contingent of women police will help the state administration to tackle the rising graph of crimes against women, which is causing concern to the chief minister. Ideally, each of the 65 sub-divisions of the state should have at least one all-women police stations, say sources. The ground reality at the moment is not inspiring. While Kolkata will have eight all-women police stations by end-2016, the state's total may not cross 40 by then. Moreover, understaffing and poor infrastructure complicate matters further according to a home department official. Women's safety and security can hardly be guaranteed if the number of women police (totaling 4,482, i.e. 2.85 per cent of the state police strength of 88,366) continues to remain so insignificant.

Increasing urbanisation and a rising female participation in all aspects of socio-economic life necessitate stricter vigilance by the law enforcing authorities. Assertive visibility of women police (24 x 7 patrolling by radio flying squads) at every nook and corner, especially after sunset, can surely go a long way in keeping anti-social elements at bay, asserts Kalpana Ghosh, a retired Kolkata police officer. It does little credit to West Bengal as being amongst worst-affected ones in terms of girls/women trafficking, rapes, sexual harassment, domestic violence, alleged a women rights' organisation, 'Swayam'. Filling up of vacancies does not appear to be getting the priority it deserves.

While 58 per cent of the sanctioned women police posts remain vacant, the chief minister often stresses that lady constables and officers can truly be compassionate to the trauma of sexual violence victims. Yet, Kolkata police has only 800 women out of the total strength of 26,000. It remains to be seen if Union women and child welfare minister Maneka Gandhi's recent appeal to all states and UTs to raise the percentage of women in the police force to at least 30 by 2017 would have the desired effect on the state.