

Police Staff Shortage in Karnataka

Bengaluru: The staff shortage in Karnataka police is now not a secret. The consequences -- increasing work burden and pressure on policemen -- threatened to spin out of control when a proposal for a mass leave protest gathered support, before fizzling out.

Contrasting with Karnataka's woes, neighbouring Kerala has a surplus of policemen, according to the latest report of the Bureau of Police Research and Development. While Karnataka is staring at 33,307 vacancies, Kerala has a surplus of 200 personnel.

In civil police units or police stations where cops perform core policing duties, Karnataka has a shortage of 29,569, while Kerala has a surplus of 1,254 staff.

In India, Karnataka stands at fourth place in terms of staff shortage, and in South India, it is miles behind all its neighbours -- the shortage in civil police in Andhra Pradesh is 12,000, Tamil Nadu 23,000, and Telangana 12,000.

In Kerala, all recruitments are undertaken by the state's public service commission and every year, at least one set of recruits is hired.

Another reason for the Karnataka policemen's threat to hit the streets was the lack of respect for the constabulary. Even here, there is a lot to be learnt from Kerala, one of the first states to adopt police reforms in redesignating the constable system. Constables were redesignated civil police officers in 2010.

"One of the biggest reason behind it was to give a morale boost to the lower ranks of the department. The term constable has a colonial hangover to it and during that time, they were not considered too important. However, it is not just a name change -- civil police officers have powers to investigate, unlike the earlier system," said Loknath Behera, DGP and head of Kerala police.