

Security lapse in Guwahati



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Monjib Mochahari 6 March 2009 11089 views

After series of terror strikes, which claimed more than 150 lives last year, the mysterious killing of at least seven people the last week of February has engulfed Guwahati city in fear and anxiety. The people who are in panic suspect it to be a serial killer. The target of the serial killer is so far the homeless pavement dwellers, beggars and daily labourers. The first incident of such type of killing was reported in the first week of January when a labourer was found dead in Fancy Bazaar in Guwahati.

The series of killing indicates that all the victims have been attacked the same way and all of them were pavement dwellers and beggars. In all these attacks the modus operandi has been the same. The police investigation, who claim that all the incidents occurred in wee hour of the morning between 3.30am and 5am. The police and district administration is clueless to nab the culprit. Police have failed to arrest the culprit but have arrested four youths few days back for questioning. However, arrested youth claimed that they are all innocent. The murders come as a Bollywood thriller, 'The Stoneman Murders', based on the unsolved serial killings of beggars in Mumbai between 1985 and 1987, hit the screens last week.

According to the report, there are more than 980 pavement dwellers in

Guwahati. Out of which, 503 are male, 390 female, 63 children, along with almost 15 persons with disabilities and 10 people with mental illnesses. However, the figure could be even more than what it appears in the government statistics. A majority of the pavement dwellers are daily labourers but they have been staying away from work. All of them belong to a section of vulnerable persons, who can be easily victimised of any crime because they do not have a shelter/home.

The recent incidents of serial killing and its subsequent failure of the police to nab the killer show many loopholes that prevail in the city. The fast of pace of developmental activities like construction of road, bridges, buildings and vice-versa, in the last couple of years have increased the migrant labourers in the city. Guwahati has a population more than 5 lakh. The labour who are mostly migrants coming far away from the rural areas, who cannot even afford to live in a rented house mostly live in streets. At the same time, the failure of the employers to give proper safety and security to its migrants labourers is raising various questions like whether the labourers who come from far away places should live in the streets and give all their energy in the work places at the cost of their own lives? Whether, the Labour law for safety and security has any relevance? Whether these people should remain socially marginalised for ever? These questions still remain unanswered.

Another problem that can be drawn from this recent episode of serial killings is the loopholes in the police administration. Even after seven days of killings, police have absolutely failed to nab the culprit. Its cluelessness indicates its ineffectiveness to deal with any situation that arises at any point of time. In Guwahati alone, there are more than 10 police stations. However, the fact remains clear, the police forces do not have even basic facilities like insufficient number of vehicles to patrol the city, ill-equipped, lack of proper co-ordinating network and vice-versa. Moreover, the fact is, the lack of intelligence training to deal with

any modern type of threat is adding to the ineffectiveness of the police personnel to make headway in any crisis situation.

The recent killings of innocent pavement dwellers should be a wake up call to restructure the entire police administration of the state. The culprit should be brought to justice before the next victim falls, as well as the state government must ensure and make it mandatory that the employers of labours who come from far away places to work in the city be provided with basic facilities, safety and security measures. No one should be deprived of security measures.

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