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2006 to 2016

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Banikanta Kakati Research Institute
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AN OVERVIEW OF CRIME IN ASSAM

Abstract

Assam, the gateway to north-east India, is gradually becoming a new crime centre of the country. To understand the present crime scenario of this region, it is necessary to examine the crime statistics of the state. In this paper, crime data of Assam for the period of 2006 to 2016 have been discussed. The objective of this paper concentrates on focusing violent and gender-specific crimes. Statistical data under different crime heads belonging to these two categories have been analysed for a better understanding of the issue.

Keywords

Crime scenario in Assam, cognizable crime, crime rate, crime against women

1.0. Introduction

Crime is a social menace, which prevails more or less in every society inhabited by human beings. According to sociologists, crime is an indispensable organ of any social structure, which assuredly causes hindrances in the process of social uniformity and solidarity. It occurs irrespective of community and geographical location. Every part of the earth has been wrangling with crime since time immemorial. Assam, a North-Eastern state of India, is no exception in this case. The state, known for its incredible natural beauty, cultural richness, and agricultural prosperity has now emerged as a new prime destination for the criminals. Despite many social restrictions, law enforcement regimes, punishment; crime of the state is increasing rapidly. According to the current report of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2016, Assam stands fifth in the cognizable crime rate (IPC) category (313.9 per 1 lakh of the population). On the other hand rate of cognizable crime (SLL) is 14.6 (per 1 lakh of the population). Combining the two

categories (IPC&SLL), the rate of cognizable crime committed in Assam for the year is 328.5 by which Assam has secured the tenth position at the national level. The reasons behind the rapid growth of crime in the state are numerous, which tend to vary under different situations. In general, crime causation/prediction can be divided into two - biological, and sociological. Biological factors that may lead to crime causation are a genetic influence, mental disorder, influence of blood group, etc., whereas sociological factors comprise addiction to drugs, social and gender discrimination, family chaos, emigration, overpopulation, depression, inadequate access to education, political issues, economic inequality, so on and so forth. In the context of Assam migration, overpopulation, unemployment, political disturbance, poverty, natural calamities are some of the major reasons because of which crime rate is increasing in an ascending manner. Theft, murder, kidnapping, burglary, etc., are some of the major crimes committed in Assam, apart from gender-specific crimes. A crime like a witch hunting, violation of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act 1985, counterfeit currency, extortion are the emerging indicators of the manifestation of crimes in the State.

Assam has witnessed a spurt in crimes against women like rape, molestation, cruelty by husband and his relatives, dowry death, etc., and as per statistics revealed by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), 2016, the State has earned the dubious distinction of securing the second rank at the national level (highest among the north-eastern states). According to the report, the rate of crime against women in Assam is 131.3 (per one lakh female population), registering a 6.2% rise in crime against women. The mentioned rate is lower than the previous year, but the position has remained unchanged as per the report. There are a huge number of cases related to different kinds of crime prevailing in the state, thus making it impossible to discuss all such aspects in this paper. Therefore in this study, the main emphasis is on some violent and gender-specific crimes, mostly practised in Assam along with their statistics and graphical representation.

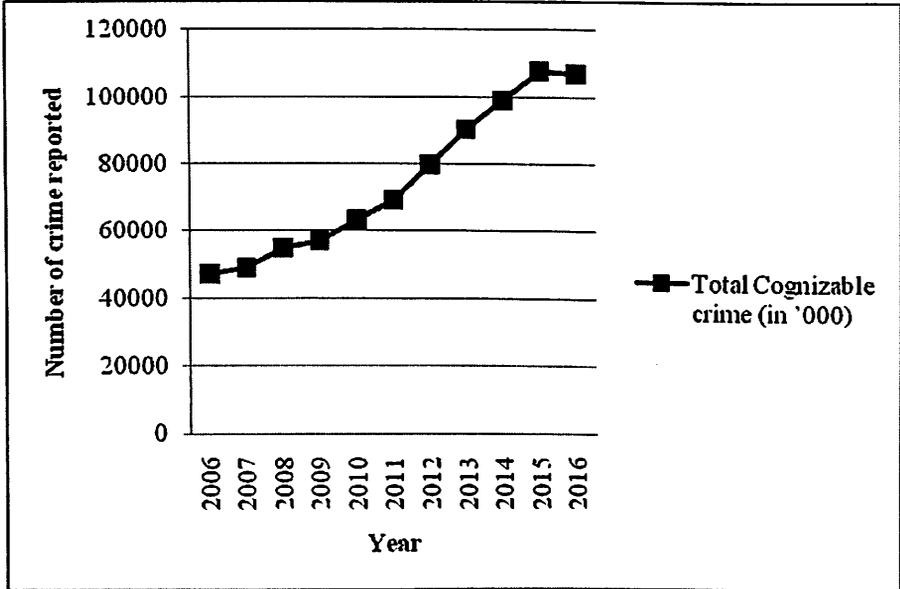
2.0. Crime scenario of Assam

Assam, known as the north-eastern sentinel of India, has become the new crime hub of the country. As per the statistics provided by the NCRB, the State stands high in the list of violent crime rate, compared to the other Indian States, as well as Union Territories. Population explosion can be regarded as one of the major reasons contributing to the growing

crime rate in Assam. As per 2011 census, the growth rate of Assam has increased by 16.93%, thus comprising 2.5% of the total population of the world. The primary reason for this growth rate is the large-scale influx of immigrants into Assam. It has become a threat to the demography as well as the social security of the State. Unemployment, economic inequality, land as well as food scarcity, uneven distribution of wealth, etc., are some of the outcomes of population explosion. This has led to hostility among people, and as a result, people have started indulging in various crimes to meet their desires knowingly or unknowingly. Other causes leading to the high growth rate of crime in Assam are flood, political rivalry, insurgency, gender differentiation, etc. In the following Table, crime data of Assam from 2006 to 2016 has been presented for better understating of the trend in the state.

Table 2.1: Year-wise number of cognizable crime reported in Assam from 2006 to 2016

Year	Total Cognizable crime (in '000)
2006	47181
2007	48967
2008	54840
2009	57160
2010	63493
2011	69207
2012	79771
2013	90289
2014	99027
2015	107825
2016	107022



The ascending pattern of the trend line manifests that crime in Assam has reached an alarming level. According to the data, in 2006 Assam Police dealt with 47,181 crime cases which gradually escalated to 69,207 in the year 2011. The trend kept elevating, and in the year 2016 total cognizable crime reported was 1,07,022, which is more than double compared to 2006. This reveals that within ten years Assam reached a new horizon in case of crime. As per NCRB 2016 report and as already stated, Assam is in the second position in the context of violent crime rate (74.2 per one lakh of the population). Theft, kidnapping, cheating, crimes against women, and violation of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), 1985, are the five varieties of crimes which have registered a constant rise in the last five years. In addition to these, cases of murder, dacoity, robbery, extortion, burglary, rioting, criminal breach of trust, counterfeit currency, etc., are also increasing in Assam with every passing year.

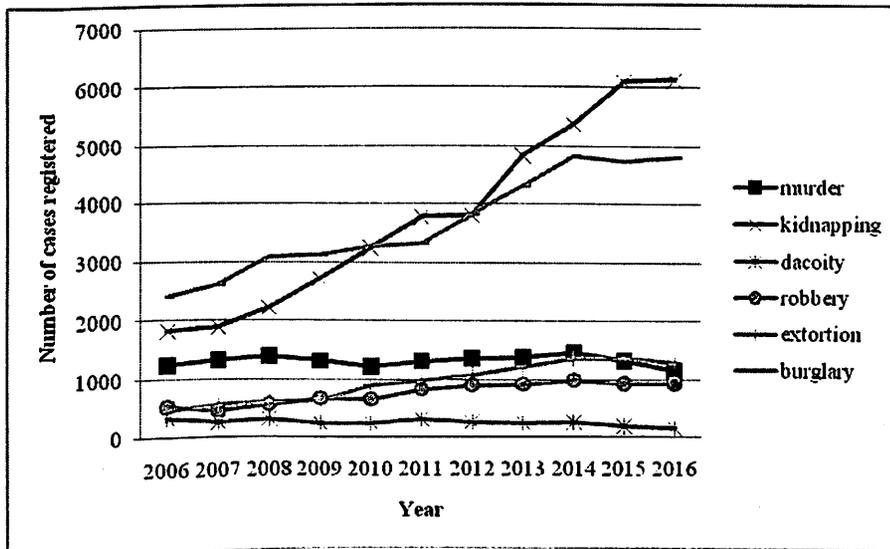
3.0. Crime statistics of Assam under different crime heads

For a better understanding of the present crime scenario of Assam, this section tries to provide crime statistics of the state registered during the period 2006- 2016 under different crime heads. The statistics under different crime heads are divided into two tables below. Each table will be followed by a graphical representation of the data. Table 3.1 presents a number of cases reported under murder, kidnapping, dacoity, robbery,

extortion, and burglary. Cases registered under theft, rioting, criminal breach of trust, cheating, counterfeit currency, and violation of NDPS act are projected in Table 3.2

Table 3.1: Number of registered cases against various crime heads from 2006 to 2016

Year	Murder	Kidnapping	Dacoity	Robbery	Extortion	Burglary
2006	1247	1818	332	532	460	2420
2007	1332	1893	262	464	574	2625
2008	1405	2219	314	568	626	3117
2009	1323	2719	251	680	645	3139
2010	1223	3250	248	662	909	3281
2011	1321	3785	310	841	992	3340
2012	1368	3812	266	907	1074	3825
2013	1383	4831	249	933	1214	4305
2014	1478	5378	267	996	1357	4823
2015	1333	6103	194	937	1361	4739
2016	1149	6137	157	939	1295	4798



From the above diagram, it can be observed that there has been an unusual growth in the trend of kidnapping. According to NCRB report (2016), the rate of kidnapping in Assam is 18.8 (per one lakh of the population), and is only second to Delhi. A majority of the adult victims of kidnapping falls under the age group of 18 - 30 years, whereas highest number of child victims belongs to the age group of 16 - 18 years. In both the cases, female victims outstand male victims during the year 2016. During 2006 - 2016, the state police registered a total number of 40,412 burglary cases. In 2014, highest numbers of such incidences were reported by the victims, since then a slight decline has been spotted. The rate of burglary cases in Assam for the year 2016 is 15 (per 1 lakh of the population) according to the NCRB report. The trend of murder in the state has maintained a steady growth, in fact, the number has come down to 1149 in 2016 from 1333 (2015). The rate of murder in Assam is 3.5 (per 1 lakh of the population) and based on it Assam has been ranked sixth (NCRB 2016 report). The report further reveals that murder due to property dispute has been highest in the State followed by personal vendetta or enmity. As per the report, in 2016 maximum child victims of murder lies under the age group of 12 - 16 years and highest number of adult victims falls in the age interval of 45 - 60 years. Dacoity cases in Assam are less compared to other crimes but not negligible. During the period 2006 - 2016, 2,850 dacoity cases have been registered, out of which highest number of such incidents took place in the year 2006. However, since then the numbers of dacoity cases have been decreasing. The data of robbery incidents in the state shows that occurrences of robbery offences are also on rise. In the year 2014, highest numbers of robbery cases were reported. In 2015, the number declined to 937 from 996. During 2006 - 2016, Assam Police registered 8459 such cases. Extortion related statistics presented in the table 3.1 divulges that such incidences are rising gradually. In 2010, 909 extortion cases were registered, since then extortion cases in Assam have been rapidly escalating. In 2015, highest numbers of extortion cases were reported by the victims in different police stations of Assam. It needs to be emphasized here that today people come forward to register such incidents whenever they receive extortion calls rather than submitting to the demands of the offenders.

Table 3.2: Number of registered cases against different crime heads for the period 2006 to 2016

Year	Theft	Rioting	Criminal breach of trust	Gheating	Counterfeit currency	NDPS act
2006	6904	2241	467	741	85	121
2007	7516	1940	588	739	95	168
2008	8146	2103	679	886	87	184
2009	7644	1828	802	1098	84	174
2010	7860	2183	992	1326	68	180
2011	8350	2347	933	1453	59	208
2012	9394	5077	1278	1693	61	178
2013	10692	2444	1492	2607	85	251
2014	12198	2490	1413	2916	56	210
2015	12024	2215	1568	3781	55	217
2016	12846	1620	1608	4195	63	386

The above graphical representation projects that theft incidents in the state are elevating abnormally. As compared to 2006, a number of such cases registered in 2016 almost doubled. The upward trend of theft incidents demands the attention of the government. Auto theft cases were highest in 2016 (4330 cases), followed by other incidents of theft. According to the data furnished in table 3.2, highest numbers of rioting cases were reported in the year 2012, but it reduced to a significant level in 2013 compared to the previous year. Rioting due to previous enmity, family disputes, heated arguments, power supply issues, civil disputes, and attack on police etc., occurred mostly during 2016. Cases reported under criminal breach of trust were highest in the same year. During the period 2006 - 2016, state police registered 11,820 such incidents, with an average of 1074.5 per year. Its upward trend indicates a probable increase in the future. The state has also witnessed a rise in cheating incidences. During the period 2006 - 2016; 21,435 cheating cases were filed in the state which is surprisingly very high. In 2016, highest numbers of such incidences were reported. The incidences of counterfeit currency offence are less in number, but it should not be overlooked. From 2006 - 2016, a total number of counterfeit currency cases filed in Assam was 798. In 2007, highest numbers of such cases

were filed. The violation of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act cases are alarmingly and surprisingly increasing in the state. The number of cases registered every year under violation of NDPS Act is seen to surpass its previous year record (Table 3.2). According to a report related to such cases (registered before 2010), marijuana, and other banned pharmaceutical drugs were found to be in possession of the accused. Recent trends indicate that brown sugar, morphine, proxyvon and heroin have also gained popularity. The ascending trend line of such cases indicates that necessary steps must be taken to curb this menace.

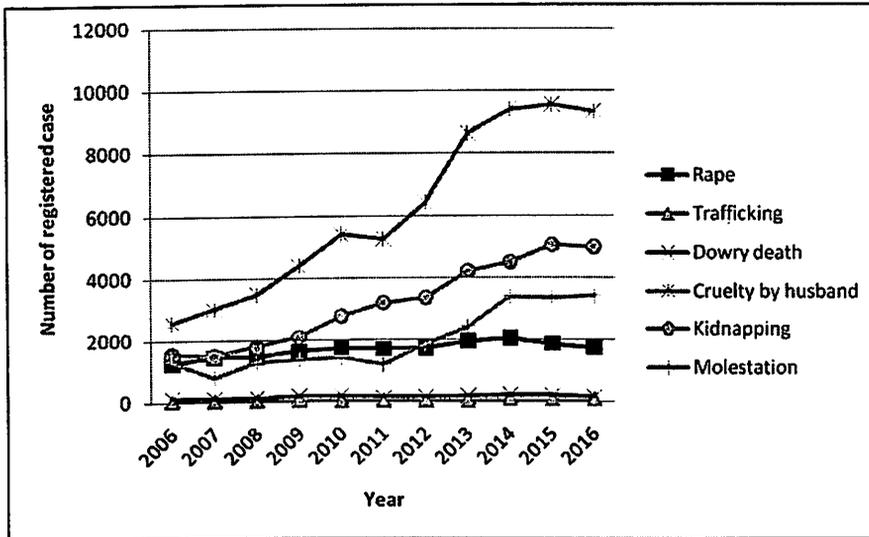
4.0. Crime against women in Assam

The rising rate of crime against women in Assam has become a major concern. Though the constitution of India endows the women of our country with gender equality, growing rate of such crimes shows a different and worrying situation. The rate of cognizable crime against women in State is 131.2 (per one lakh female population) which is second highest in the country. The recent data produced by Assam Police regarding crime against women in the state is alarming. The State has witnessed instances like day-light rape, molestation, sexual harassment, dowry death, incidents of witch hunting, trafficking, kidnapping, etc. But the brighter side of the story is that women of the state no longer feel shy to file a report in the police station. It is not exactly that there has been an increase in the number of such cases, but rather there has been an increase in registration of such incidents, as earlier such cases were hardly reported. The following data with the corresponding diagram reflects the crime scenario of Assam against women (2006 – 2016).

Table 4.1: Crime against women for the period of 2006 to 2016

Year	Rape	Trafficking	Dowry death	Cruelty by husband	Kidnapping	Molestation
2006	1244	29	105	2548	1544	1290
2007	1437	21	100	3000	1471	789
2008	1438	27	103	3478	1789	1272
2009	1631	37	170	4398	2092	1342
2010	1721	25	175	5410	2767	1400
2011	1700	21	121	5246	3192	1193
2012	1716	30	140	6407	3360	1840

2013	1937	18	170	8636	4222	2409
2014	2047	82	205	9405	4499	3381
2015	1852	73	208	9553	5068	3362
2016	1723	75	150	9327	4997	3416



As per the data, the number of cases registered under cruelty by husband has topped the list in case of crime against women in Assam (58.7 per one lakh female population). In terms of registration of such incidents, the state holds the fourth position. Due to growing awareness about women's rights, women of the state have come forward to file cases against atrocities inflicted on them by their husband and his relatives. According to table 4.1, cases of kidnapping of women, or minors in the state have also been on the rise with every passing year. Kidnapping cases for marriage purposes top the list. Out of the total kidnapping cases, 4,706 kidnapping cases were committed for marriage purposes. Assam stands the second position in this regard at the national level. Molestation cases against women have risen significantly since 2012. In fact, according to a report of the Assam Police, 3416 cases (2016) were registered which is more than double compared to 2006. From 2006 to 2016, a total number of 18,446 rape cases were reported in different police stations of Assam. Most of the child victims of rape fall under the age group of 16 years to below 18 years, whereas highest number of adult victims belongs to the age group of 18 years to below 30 years (NCRB 2016 Report). The offenders were known persons of the victims,

and neighbours committed highest numbers of such incidents. According to the data furnished in table 4.1, from 2006 to 2016 total 438 women trafficking cases were registered but the ground picture according to the police officials is far worse since most of the cases are hardly reported. Reasons like flood, militancy, poverty, unemployment, etc., compel the victims to submit themselves to the traffickers without any resistance as they are lured with the promise of a better future away from the state. Unfortunately, the number of women killed in dowry-related cases is also increasing yearly. Though in 2016 the registered number of such deaths is quite low than the previous years it is undoubtedly an alarming issue. In 2015, the highest number of dowry death cases was reported from different parts of the state.

Another crime that has been rising significantly in Assam against women is witch hunting. In rural areas of Assam, there is a tradition of consulting local healers popularly known as 'oja' or 'bej' instead of approaching qualified health practitioners. After the identification of the disease, hunt for witch begins which is a procedure of inflicting unbearable physical as well as mental torture on the victim. As per records available with the NGO Mission Birubala more than 400 persons have been killed in Assam during the period 2007 to 2014 in witch hunting cases. Witch hunting is practised in Assam irrespective of community or geographical location. Even Kamrup (Metropolitan) district, where the state capital is situated, has witnessed such kind of barbaric activity. Debojani Bora, a national level athlete, was labelled as a witch by her villagers in Karbi Anglong district of Assam. She was dragged to a local community prayer hall and was assaulted by a group of people in broad daylight. According to her husband, the incident was a result of personal hostility. Most of the victims of witch hunting have been found to be women. They are branded as a witch to deprive them of the right to gain hold over family property. Allegations of sorcery are also imposed on women if they deny sexual favours, especially widows. The number of the male victims is less as compared to women. They are victimized mostly due to property related fights. In 2015, it was revealed by a minister in the state assembly that 93 cases of witch hunting were reported during that particular year, and 77 persons were put to death during 2010 - 2015. It is to be noted that most of the cases go unreported by the victims.

5.0. Conclusion

Crime is a mark of disgrace upon mankind, and growing crime rate reveals lack of humanity among people. Crime can be controlled,

though not eliminated because its complete eradication is doubtful if not impossible so long as the elements of aggression and violence remain in the human blood. Crime in Assam is on the rise, and because of its growing rate the state has earned a bad reputation. It is not only creating hindrances in the process of development of the state but is also threatening the well-being of its inhabitants. It is true that a huge number of cases go unreported as the victim's fear of further loss. Psychology of fear prevents victims and their dear ones from reporting crimes before law enforcing agencies, so is the social stigma attached to it works against the urge to seek justice at an appropriate forum. It is imperative for the state machineries dealing with law and order to play a prime role to handle the deteriorating situation in order to ensure safety of common citizens. The government must strategise crime prevention policies, and the civil society and human rights organisations have to join hands to stand together against it by reporting crimes. In other words, an eclectic approach to handle the danger of crime rise has to be properly articulated and effective measures have to be undertaken for the health of society at large.

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