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What they want in terms of security

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Chennai: Nearly 33 per cent of the elderly in the city are living alone, according to a recent survey of HelpAge India, a non-governmental organisation working for the welfare of senior citizens.

Representatives of various senior citizens' welfare organisations say that being alone is one of the reasons why the elderly become more vulnerable to abuse by family or outsiders. The elders' helpline (1253) in the office of the Commissioner of Police receives an average of five calls every day.

In a bid to redress the grievances of the elderly, one police station in each of the nine police districts in the city would set aside a day to interact with residents, particularly the elderly, from October 1.

While voluntary organisations working for the welfare of the elderly, such as Senior Citizens' Bureau and Dignity Foundation have welcomed the initiative, they say the interaction has to be frequent to help people gain confidence of the law and order situation in the city.

Many of the police stations are not helpful in attending the grievances of the elderly, they complained.

Concerns raised by senior citizens tend to be brushed aside, the atmosphere is not too friendly and not all police personnel treat them with respect, organisations pointed out. The police department must take effective measures to protect the welfare of the aged, say organisations.

About 200 persons were interviewed for the survey by HelpAge India. Indrani Rajadurai, special advisor, HelpAge India, said that 71 per cent of the interviewees reported emotional abuse. This has led to the launch of a campaign for the prevention of elderly abuse and ensuring their security.

Besides complaints such as abuse by family members, property-related dispute, crime and burglary; many elderly people say the city is increasingly becoming an unfriendly place as basic necessities of the elderly are not given much heed. "Hawkers encroaching on footpaths, pickpockets, hit-and-run incidents...these are also issues we want the police to readdress for the elders," says M. Singaraja of the Senior Citizens' Bureau.

Tamil Nadu Elders' Welfare Association general secretary S. M. Chellaswamy said all police stations must have the list of senior citizens, particularly those living alone in their jurisdiction.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Chennai/article799384.ece>

A district committee comprising Collector, police official, NGO representatives and district social welfare officer, must be formed to implement the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 in the city. This has already been done in many districts across the State, he said.