

Too many threats, too few paws

As bomb threats surge in the Capital, Delhi Police's dog squad is operating with just 60% of its sanctioned strength

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NEW DELHI: In a city rattled by hoax bomb threats, high-stakes security drills and drug busts, Delhi's most loyal frontline defenders are falling short — not in spirit, but in numbers. The Delhi Police dog squad, vital to detecting bombs, tracing suspects, and locating the missing, is operating at just 60% of its sanctioned strength.

With only 64 dogs on duty instead of the required 105, the Capital's canine force is stretched dangerously thin.

The pressure has only intensified since July last year, when the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) came into effect, calling for forensic-led policing across India. In Delhi, where more than 500 hoax bomb threats were recorded in 2024 alone—targeting schools, railway stations, and markets—the demand for trained dogs has skyrocketed. Yet, in six of the city's 15 police districts, dogs are not easily available.

Back in August 2023, police commissioner Sanjay Arora issued a directive: every district must have its own dog squad, and select police stations should be equipped with specialised kennels. Two years later, that vision remains mostly unfulfilled. Vast swathes of the city—police districts including South, Southeast, Dwarka, Shahdara, Rohini and Outer Delhi—remain without a single dog. And in the districts that do, numbers barely meet emergency needs.

According to the Crime Branch, which oversees the K9 squad, each district should house at least seven dogs—trained in explosives, narcotics, and tracking. But internal records accessed by HT show a stark shortfall: Northeast Delhi has just two dogs; North has four; Central and East have five each.



64 DOGS ON DUTY | **105 DOGS REQUIRED** | **500 BOMB HOAX THREATS IN 2024**

Delhi Police Dogs display their skills at the Delhi Police dog squad headquarters in Model Town. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

New Delhi and Southwest fare slightly better with eight and nine dogs respectively. Eleven of the 64 dogs are stationed with the Crime Branch, serving city-wide emergency needs.

Senior police officers say they're often forced to "borrow" dogs from neighbouring districts or the Crime Branch for routine security checks, VIP movements, and special events. "We even rely on CISF's dogs for help during large-scale deployments," said an officer in New Delhi district, which handles the bulk of VIP movements.

Even where dogs are available, they are often overworked and fatigued.

"Dogs can work for about an hour at a time, especially Labradors and Golden Retrievers. In summer, they tire quickly and need at least 30-45 minutes of rest between deployments," said head constable Vishal Singh, a dog handler. "Belgian Malinois are more efficient—they can go longer, but they're



also expensive and difficult to procure."

Of the 64 dogs currently in service, 58 are trained in explosive detection, just three are tracker dogs, and three are trained for narcotics. They include 22 Labradors, 17 Belgian Malinois, 16 German Shepherds and nine Golden Retrievers.

But Delhi needs more—and needs them fast. The workload

has become overwhelming.

Each bomb threat, even if a hoax, triggers a full-scale response: bomb disposal units, sniffer dogs, and crime teams are dispatched to every location named in the threat. And each email often lists 10 to 15 schools or locations.

"We need two to three dogs per school to sweep every floor and room. When we get multiple

threats in a day, it's physically impossible to manage," said a canine handler in Model Town.

Last October, an explosion outside a CRPF school in Rohini damaged walls and nearby vehicles. The following month another low-intensity blast occurred in Prashant Vihar. While there were no casualties, the dog squad was pressed into action both times to trace the source and remnants of the improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Then came the real test of endurance. Last week, a four-storey building collapsed in northeast Delhi's Mustafabad, killing 11. The rescue operation ran for 16 hours, and a three-member dog squad was deployed to search for trapped victims. A similar building collapse in Burari three months earlier had killed five and left over a dozen trapped. Tracker dogs helped locate survivors in both instances.

"These incidents involve multi-storey structures, and first responders often can't see through the debris. Dogs are crucial in helping us detect trapped persons or bodies," said a senior fire department official.

The dog squad had once been stronger.

In November 2023, during the G20 summit, the Delhi Police had 95 dogs. That number climbed to 98 by year-end. But since then, a wave of retirements and deaths has thinned the ranks. By mid-2024, the number dropped to 72. As of May 2025, it stands at 64. Another six dogs are expected to retire by year-end.

"We only use dogs between the ages of two and 10. Beyond that, they grow weak and can no longer serve in high-pressure environments," said a dog squad official.

"We inducted 30 dogs between 2023 and 2024, mostly from military and paramilitary training centres. But we lost nearly the same number to retirement or illness." At present, 115 police personnel are posted with the canine unit to train, care for, and operate the dogs across districts. But those numbers, too, are under strain.

Recognising the growing burden, the Delhi Police has now begun drawing up plans to expand the scope of the canine unit. Senior officers told HT that two new categories of dogs—combat dogs and life-saver dogs—will soon be introduced for the first time in Delhi.

"These dogs will go beyond bomb and narcotics detection. Combat dogs will help during raids, and life-saver dogs can assist in medical emergencies and disaster rescues," said Devesh Kumar Srivastava, special commissioner of police (Crime Branch).

"The aim is to build a more versatile, responsive, and resilient squad."

But as the city waits for that upgrade, the immediate concern remains dire: a squad on the brink, a city vulnerable, and the rising weight of emergencies falling on four legs that are simply too few.

SC gives Sept 30 deadline for filling DPCC vacancies

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday castigated the Delhi government for its failure to fill posts in the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), ordering all 204 vacancies — of a sanctioned strength of 344 — to be filled by September 30, 2025.

A bench led by Justice Abhay S Oka, while hearing a suo motu contempt petition, observed, "We cannot tolerate laxity shown by the Delhi government, especially when Delhi is worst affected by air pollution at least for three months." The court initiated proceedings on May 8 by summoning the Delhi chief secretary after being informed that 55% posts in DPCC lay vacant.

Describing the situation as a "sorry state of affairs", the bench noted that the DPCC—essential for enforcing pollution-control laws—was "virtually defunct". Senior advocate Aditya Sondhi, representing the Delhi chief secretary, told the court that 41 posts would be filled by December 31, 2025, with the remainder addressed by March 2026.

He explained that each recruitment cycle, from advertisement to examination and appointment, typically spans seven to eight months.

the bench, also comprising justice Ujjal Bhuyan, rejected this timeline as unduly protracted. "We direct all 204 posts be filled by September 30, 2025," the bench ordered, warning that

any failure would constitute "aggravated contempt". It also mandated a compliance report by October 15 and excused the chief secretary from personally appearing at the next hearing.

Aparajita Singh, assisting as amicus curiae, reminded the bench that pollution control boards are expected to anticipate vacancies and begin recruitment six months in advance. She cited an earlier Supreme Court directive from August 27, 2024, which set an April 30, 2025, deadline for filling vacancies in Delhi-NCR pollution boards—a directive that went largely ignored by the NCR states. The court accepted her suggestion and instructed the Delhi government to detail advanced recruitment plans in its compliance report.

At a prior hearing, the court was informed that state pollution boards in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan had 45% vacancies, while Haryana's stood at 35%.

"We find it's a very sorry state of affairs," the court had remarked. "With almost 55% posts vacant, the DPCC is non-functional."

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) also presented nationwide data showing that Bihar and Jharkhand faced vacancy rates as high as 90%, with several states registering more than 60% unfilled posts.

The court extended the September deadline to all state boards and directed the CPCB itself to achieve full strength by the end of August 2025.

Memberships open to DDA's golf course

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Monday opened membership to its golf course in Sector 24, Dwarka, officials said on Monday.

Officials said that the golf course at Dwarka will have a "pay and play" facility in addition to tenure playing rights for three and five years. According to a brochure issued by DDA, a non-government individual can

get a five-year membership for ₹9 lakh, and a three-year membership for ₹6 lakh. In addition, there will be a monthly fee of ₹2,200. The respective fees for the government category were ₹3 lakh and ₹2 lakh, with a monthly fee of ₹1,500.

The course, the longest in the country, was inaugurated by lieutenant governor VK Saxena last December. HTc

DDA's demolition drive fails to clear chokepoint on Taimoor Nagar drain

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NEW DELHI: A court-mandated anti-encroachment drive on May 5-6, led by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), cleared hundreds of illegal structures along the Taimoor Nagar drain near Eastern Avenue Road. But a critical stretch of the drain's outfall—where it meets the Yamuna—remains dangerously constricted, raising concerns just weeks ahead of the monsoon.

While the 40-foot-wide drain was freed of encroachments in its eastern stretch, its downstream section near Taimoor Nagar Extension is still reduced to barely 5-6 feet, hemmed in by unauthorised five- to six-storey buildings and obstructed by large Delhi Jal Board (DJB) pipelines.

During a spot check on Monday, HT found DDA machinery at the site, removing debris. Some residents have begun voluntarily demolishing parts of their buildings. "Clearing the drain is ongoing. The goal is to restore uniform width and build 15-foot-high boundary walls to prevent garbage dumping," said a senior DDA official.

"The original layout had roads on both sides, but the encroach-



ments have wiped them out. These will be restored to enable cleaning and monitoring," the official said.

The official added that locals had been warned to remove structures voluntarily. "If they don't comply, we'll approach the court and take down the buildings. A uniform 40-foot width is non-negotiable, but the full plan may take more than a month."

At several points, HT found makeshift footbridges—sand-

bags and narrow pipes—further blocking flow. An MCD worker, Md Abid, was clearing floating garbage. "We clean regularly, but fresh waste keeps coming. The walls need to be raised," he said.

Despite MCD signboards warning of ₹5,000 fines, waste dumping continues. The few families still living in the unauthorised buildings declined to comment.

Residents say that multi-sto-

rey constructions on drain land reflect a failure of enforcement.

"The May 5 drive was welcome, but the choke point remains. Without clearing the outfall, this effort will be wasted when the rains come," said an RWA member, requesting anonymity.

DDA did not respond to HT's queries regarding long-term measures. Officials said the next phase of demolition is being planned, but may require additional court intervention.

₹2.4cr fake NCERT books seized, 2 held

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NEW DELHI: In one of the largest crackdowns on academic piracy in recent years, Delhi Police have busted a counterfeit textbook racket involving pirated NCERT books worth over ₹2.4 crore. A father-son duo was arrested on Monday from a shop on Mandoli Road, from where police seized more than 170,000 pirated books.

Deputy commissioner of police (Shahdara) Prashant Priya Gautam said the operation began after a tip-off was received on May 16 regarding the sale of counterfeit educational materials at a shop in the MS Park police station area.

"The police, joined by officials from NCERT including assistant production officer Prakashveer Singh, conducted a raid on Anupam Sales, located in Ram Nagar on Mandoli Road," Gautam said. "The raiding team discovered stacks of counterfeit NCERT textbooks, predominantly Class 12 social science books, bearing forged signatures and fake authentication marks to deceive buyers. The shop's operators, Prashant Gupta (48) and his son Nishant Gupta (26), were taken into custody on the spot."

A case under Section 318 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 63 and 65 of the Copyright Act, 1957 was lodged at MS Park police station.

Uniforms must for govt hospital staff

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NEW DELHI: In a bid to curb impersonation and ensure better accountability in public hospitals, the Delhi government has ordered all doctors, nurses, technicians, and outsourced workers in state-run facilities to strictly adhere to uniform and name-badge rules. A circular issued by the health and family welfare department on May 16, reviewed by HT, warns of on-the-spot penalties for violators, including deductions from their daily uniform allowance.

The directive, addressed to medical superintendents, directors, and department heads, mandates colour-coded attire

and clearly visible name plates clipped to the left chest. Outsourced staff must wear uniforms bearing the service provider's logo. Surprise checks will be carried out every three hours in OPD, IPD, and ward areas by nodal officers and duty doctors.

"It's been observed that hospital staff avoid wearing the mandated dress despite drawing uniform allowances," the order notes. Repeated violations may impact annual increments.

Officials said the move follows rising complaints of impostors extorting money. "The aim is to ensure genuine personnel are easily identifiable," an official said. Personal mobile phone use during duty hours has also been barred.

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Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj Organises 2-day MUN

Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj organised a 2-day MUN conference that was attended by about 500 students across 18 schools. The closing ceremony was graced by dignitaries Pramit Dash, Program Director - Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, Rajeev Ahir, Director, Natural Resource Management, GIZ India, and Naveen Vivek Horo, Country Head and Senior advisor, GIZ. The ceremony commenced with the welcome address and felicitation of the guests by the Principal, Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj, Sheetal Labroo. Awards were presented to the Best Delegates, High Commendations, Special Mentions and verbal mentions in each committee, acknowledging the outstanding performances and contributions of students. The guests appreciated the participants for their diligent efforts in attempting to resolve global issues through their collective pursuit, through the platform MUN conferences and urged them for their continued and collaborative efforts in contributing their bit towards their society and nation. The ceremony concluded on a high note, with a sense of accomplishment and inspiration among all participants.

Bal Bhavan Public School, Mayur Vihar, Hosts Grand Investiture Ceremony 2025-26

Bal Bhavan Public School, Mayur Vihar, conducted its Investiture Ceremony for the session 2025-26, a momentous occasion celebrating leadership, responsibility, and the spirit of service. The event witnessed the formal induction of 56 newly elected student council members. The ceremony was graced by the presence of Ravinder Singh Negi, Hon'ble Member of the Delhi Legislative Assembly from Patparganj constituency. The school director BB Gupta, school's guiding light, Ramesh Kandpal from Anuvrat Nyas, the school principal Vividh Gupta, school manager Kavita Mehrotra and principal BBPS Swasthya Vihar Neha Gupta were also present to grace the occasion. The programme commenced with an enchanting Bharatnatyam performance on Dev Stuti, setting a spiritual and graceful tone for the event. This was followed by an uplifting welcome address by the school principal, Vividh Gupta. Adding to the celebratory atmosphere, the choir group of the school's performing Arts Society 'Pehchaan' captivated the audience with a soulful group song. The outgoing head girl and head boy passed the baton of responsibility to the newly elected Head Girl, Aditi Arunima, and Head Boy, Aarush Mishra, who addressed the gathering with confidence and a vision for the year ahead. In his address, Ravinder Singh Negi applauded the school for fostering leadership and civic responsibility among students. The solemn proceedings concluded on a patriotic note with the National Anthem.

Tagore International School, Vasant Vihar Celebrates Inclusivity and Diversity

Tagore International School, Vasant Vihar hosted Prismatic 2025 – The Inclusivity Fest, a vibrant two-day celebration dedicated to diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. It was a two-day event. On the first day Anil Kumar Sharma, an Indian Politician and a leader of Bharatiya Janata Party inaugurated the event. The second day, chief guest Veditha Reddy, IAS, currently serving as the Director of Education and Sports for the Government of Delhi inaugurated the event. The guests list included Aarushi Gambhir, a Disability Inclusion Strategist, a passionate writer and speaker who has worked with organisations like Access for Everyone, SoulUp, and Volunteer for India, Dr. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Deputy Director of Education, Seema Roy Chudhary, DDE zone 20, District South West A, Anit Gupta and Ritu Malhotra, founders of ARC. Anil Kumar Sharma, Veditha Reddy and Anit Gupta shared powerful insights on inclusion, education, and social equity. They stressed on sensitizing the youth towards CWSN and on providing equal opportunities to everyone in the fields of academics and sports. Prismatic included storytelling, mime acts, nukkad natak, and a Bollywood dance performance. Initiatives like Project Saksham and the international talent platform DISHA were also spotlighted. The festival fostered empathy, creativity, and awareness through engaging workshops and performances, all under the leadership of student-led teams Saksham and Awaam. The event concluded with heartfelt speeches and a behind-the-scenes video, leaving a lasting impression of hope, unity, and the transformative power of inclusive education.

AVB Public School, IP Extension, Organizes Self-Defence Training Workshop

In an effort to promote student safety and self-confidence, AVB Public School, IP Extension, organized a Self-Defence Training Workshop. The primary objective was to empower students, especially girls, with essential self-defence skills to build their confidence and ensure personal safety. The program was conducted under the guidance of Ms. Pooja Tomar, a skilled trainer deputed from the DCP Office, IP Extn, Patparganj. Students were trained in basic techniques such as blocking, escaping holds and counter attacks. Special sessions were held on awareness, quick thinking and using everyday objects for protection. Practical demonstrations and interactive drills allowed students to practice techniques in a controlled environment. Real-life scenario enactments added a practical dimension to the training. principal, Ritu Verma praised the initiative and emphasized the importance of self-defence as a life skill and lauded the students' eagerness to learn.

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