

First women join tribal police

LANDI KOTAL: Three Christian women have been recruited to the tribal police here for the first time in the country's history. They were among 15 Christian women applicants for the job, despite the fact that the posts were open to all religions. Officials said that no Muslim woman had applied.

"Their basic job is to carry out body searches of women passing the Torkham border crossing," Khalid Khan, an official in the Khyber tribal region, said.

"But they will also help us in house raids," he said.

Security agencies elsewhere in the country have recruited women, but Mr Khan said the tribal districts were facing a shortage of women applicants.

"We consider it as a first drop of rain and we are hopeful that more women, both Muslims and Christians, will apply," another official said.

The tribal police force with more than 4,500 personnel assists other security agencies to maintain law and order in the tribal region.

The tribal police are mainly responsible for controlling local crime and drug smuggling, while the military and paramilitary forces are responsible for border control and security.

The new recruits will undergo three months of basic training before being deployed at Torkham.

"I do not want to be at home like other women. I want to serve my country and help my family," 21-year-old Riffat Abid, one of the successful applicants, told AFP here.

Another successful applicant, Mehak Ghaffar, 20, said her husband was earning up to Rs7,000 a month, which was insufficient to feed the 12 members of the family. "This was the happiest day of my life. Our family has been facing extreme poverty for generations and I want to get rid of that," she said at her small home.

"At least my kids will not work as sweepers. We, the three women, will be the initial drops of rain for our families," she added.

The other successful candidate, Naila Jabbar, 22, said: "I become a man when I leave my home. I am happy that I will support my family."

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