

Protection against violence: Women DIG, SPs in new scheme of things

By Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The provincial government has decided to create the post of a woman DIG and deputy women SPs at the Violence against Women Centres (VAWCs) to effectively enforce the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act.

The stated aim of the gender specific set-up is to protect women against violence without the influence of the male-dominated provincial police. It is a complete paradigm shift from the existing model of registration and prosecution of gender violence cases which currently rely heavily on the male-dominated mindset.

The chief minister on Tuesday directed the IGP to create the post of DIG Women Protection after his secretariat's Special Monitoring Unit's (Law and Order) head Salman Sufi gave him a briefing.

Officials confirmed the availability of a woman DIG officer who could be posted against the new post. They said the first woman SP would be posted at the maiden centre in Multan, where all justice delivery departments including FIR lodging, police reporting, prosecution, medico-legal, forensics and post-trauma rehabilitation are being placed under one roof.

The centres would be established gradually and there might not be any problem in arranging for women SPs for them, they said.

According to officials, the woman DIG will have powers to make decisions for the protection and rehabilitation of women victims of violence across the province and ensure the delivery of justice, without unnecessary delay or moral judgments. She will be able to collaborate with the women SPs at the VAWCs.

The DIG Women Protection post is proposed to be placed in the CPO under the direct command of the IGP. The women police officers to be placed in VAWC's across 36 districts in Punjab will benefit directly from this step as there will be a higher official to curb typical political pressure or red tape marring successful investigation or case registration of VAW Crimes, officials said.

The job of the DIG will be to supervise working of police officials deployed in the centres in all districts of Punjab. She will keep record of all VAW cases, and ensure registration of FIRs in any police station of any district of Punjab and referral of women victims to VAWCs even in districts where they will not immediately be available.

She will supervise collection of all evidence, crime scene preservation, forensics and consequent investigation, liaise with prosecution to ensure higher rate of convictions of perpetrators of crimes against women, overlook targets, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, maintain records and publication of information. She will also liaise with district women protection committees, district women protection officers and women protection officers.

The SPs at the centres will have complete autonomy to issue FIR against any case of violence against women. Their jurisdiction will not only be limited to cases that directly come to the centres. They will also handle other cases in nearby areas and redirect them to the centres for investigation.

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