

New police system in doldrums

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ALL is set to implement the new police system as a model in Faisalabad district amid shortage of police personnel, vehicles and ancillaries requiring huge funds.

The Punjab government after marathon meetings and several studies for satisfying public complaints against police cruelty, delay in investigation, implication of innocent people in false cases and use of third degree methods during interrogation, has decided to change the police system in vogue since 1861 by constituting two separate independent wings — investigation and watch and ward.

In line with this decision, Faisalabad district has been chosen as one of the models of the new system. However, it appears that the required homework for it has not been done. The infrastructure required for achieving results has not been provided due to which the experiment may bounce back and create frustration among well-wishers of the new system.

A grim picture of the infrastructure of the police has emerged in Faisalabad district which is in deficit in all respects. Implementation of the new system will further expose the police efficiency instead of rendering appreciable services to the public and achieving target envisaged.

As the third largest district of Pakistan with a population of about 2,100,000 in the city and 3,240,000 in rural areas, demographic pressures, unemployment, poverty, pollution and lack of civic amenities are contributing to the high crime rate in Faisalabad.

On the basis of population of the district, i.e. 5,340,000, the police strength is 6,503 men, meaning one policeman against 821 persons. In case of urban police, one policeman is supposed to provide security and prevent crimes and carry out investigation for 999 persons, as the strength of police in urban areas is 2,101 against a population of 2,100,000. Likewise in rural areas (Saddar division), against a population of 3,240,000, the police strength is 1,126 indicating that one policeman is supposed to provide protection to 2,877.

The Faisalabad police initially decided to constitute five special squads each comprising four inspectors, as many sub-inspectors, two ASIs, 10 HCs and 10 constables to investigate various cases. However, for achieving the targets, at least 20 inspectors and sub-inspectors each, 10 ASIs and 50 HCs and constables each were required to be inducted on a priority basis. On a similar pattern, investigation staff comprising one inspector and sub-inspector each, two head-constables and four constables are required to be attached with each sub-divisional police officer of the rural division.

To monitor investigation of rural circles, four inspectors and sub-inspectors each, eight head-constables and 60 constables have to be recruited. Under the restructuring of police in the new plan, the crime registration organization is also to be set up for which one inspector and SI, two head-constables and six constables are required.

There are 28 police stations in

Faisalabad district out of which 13 are in urban areas, including one women's police station which is spread over 72 beats. For each beat, under the new watch and ward system, one SI, two ASIs, four HC and 20 constables are required. It was noticed that 72 SIs, 144 ASIs, 288 HCs and 1,728 constables are without any shift, while 216 SIs, 432 ASIs, 864 HCs and 5,184 constables are posted in shifts in city areas.

In rural areas (Saddar division), there are 15 police stations with total Zails of 60. For each Zail, one SI, two ASIs and three constables have been posted as investigation staff. Similarly, for each beat of the watch and ward in the Saddar division, one SI, two ASIs, four HCs and 24 constables have been posted. There are 60 SIs, 120 ASIs, 240 HCs, and 1,440 constables without shifts, while 180 SIs, 360 ASIs, 720 HCs and 4,320 constables are posted shift-wise.

According to the criteria laid down under the new system, five special squads will investigate 2,000 cases annually. In this way, the district police will require 20 special squads for investigation of five categories of crimes in urban areas and will require 80 inspectors, SIs each, 40 ASIs, 200 head-constables and constables.

Police sources revealed that the urban areas required 25 inspectors, 345 SIs, 645 ASIs, 1,470 head-constables and 6,978 constables for investigation/watch and ward and other duties. It may be noted that in urban areas, 25 squads had been constituted with 100 inspectors and SIs each, 50 ASIs, 250 HCs and constables each.

The district police have also been facing acute shortage of vehicles. They have only 15 jeeps, 50 pick-ups and 149 motorcycles in working condition. Most of these vehicles have completed their technical life and are incurring huge expenses on repair and maintenance. Another 22 jeeps, 115 pick-ups and 1,558 motorcycles are required in consonance with the yard-stick set under the new police system.

The communication wing of the district police is also not up to the mark and requires to be upgraded according to the new system and needs seven base sets, 112 mobile wireless sets and 1,399 walky-talky sets.

It was said that under the new system police stations would be put under the command of ASPs, but no measures have been taken for its implementation.

Similarly, out of 28 police stations in the district, buildings of only eight police stations are according to the laid down standard. The rest are either in a shambles or housed in rented buildings without any infrastructure worth the name. None of the police stations in the district has a provision of residential quarters as provided in police rules. Two police stations and 60 per cent of the police posts are still without telephone. Up to 20 posts and 11 check-posts are housed in privately constructed buildings looking like pigeon holes.

A retired senior police officer told Dawn that the new system was expected to bring some relief to the police and litigants and expedite the judicial process. Investigation

of 50 cases annually by each investigation officer would help in curbing the practice of keeping cases pending for personal gains, especially after receiving bribes from parties involved in litigation. He claimed the new system would provide a relief to the complainants because they would not have to visit the police station every day in search of the investigation officer who was now bound to remain in the police station for the purpose.

Under the existing system, the transfer of cases from one investigator to the other has become the order of the day. In some cases, parties manoeuvre assignments of investigation to officers of their choice resulting in complicated problems for police high-ups and hatred among aggrieved parties. In the new set-up, a case will be transferred from one officer to another, but not from one section to another. In other words, it will remain with the investigation department.

Another retired police officer stressed the need for training of investigators on modern scientific lines. The new system could not yield the desired results without imparting professional training to the investigation staff, he said.

The most important step in the new police system is that station house officers and other police personnel will perform duties only to deal with administrative working, local government laws and prevention of crime. Crime against property, women and children as well as narcotics-related and white collar crimes, guard and escort duties, handling mobs and processions, law and order and prosecution, crimes against individuals especially homicide, suicide and other heinous incidents, terrorism, sectarian violence have been excluded from the ambit of working of police stations.

One wonders if wizards of the new police system had given any thought to the ground realities and new emerging trends viz-a-viz sectarian contradictions and hatred which have severely hit the very fibre of society. This menace has created a sense of insecurity in all spheres of life especially mosques, Imambargahs and other places of worship, educational institutions, commercial and trading markets, which require round-the-clock surveillance, vigilance and protection. Not only this, the police are also supposed to provide protection to worshippers in mosques and Imambargahs. Such protection is also needed for places of worship of other religions. There are 1,732 mosques, 155 Imambargahs, 195 Churches and 287 other sensitive points in the district. For all these 2,369 points, full time presence of police personnel is required.

Police managers of district Faisalabad emphasize recruitment of police personnel and other infrastructure according to new restructuring plan of the police, but it is doubtful that the constraint-ridden government will be able to meet the financial requirements of the district and the fate of the new system is also likely to be according to the famous saying: "Na ho ga no mun tail na radha nachay gi."