

Girl shot at over love marriage

Multan Cantt police 'side with' accused

By Nadeem Saeed

MULTAN, Sept 26: Rather criminal negligence of the Multan Cantonment police has encouraged two people who shot at and injured a young woman on Sept 16 last to threaten her with dire consequences.

One Farhat, 23, was shot at and injured by her brother Malik Shafiq and accomplice Malik Qasim, a police constable, when she and her husband Asif were passing through the Cantt bazaar.

Her family was annoyed with her over love marriage. Before the firing incident, Farhat had braved enormous hardships to save her marriage which was solemnized on Dec 16, 1996, in a local civil court. Only two weeks before the attack, she was granted a permission by the high court to live with her husband after her recovery from her father's house. The court took action on Farhat's SOS appeal.

Though she escaped death, miseries are there. Despite repeated visits and requests by her husband Asif to the Cantonment police, the firing case was registered after four days of the incident and that too on the pressure of local human rights activists. The SHO concerned was using delaying tactics and not registering a case on one pretext or the other. He wanted a medico-legal certificate (MLC) to register the FIR.

But, on the other hand, the forensic expert who examined Farhat went on leave for five days and consequently the MLC issuance delayed as no other doctor was authorized to perform the duty in his place. The MLC was issued after six days of the incident.

A team of journalists also visited the Cantonment police station on the request of the HRCP to enquire about the pace of investigation after the registration of case. SHO Mian Tanveer said: "I rushed to the spot just five minutes after the firing but became slackened after knowing that the woman was fired at by her brother." When asked about least interest in bringing the culprits to book, he said actually people themselves settled such disputes when all other "options" ended.

In replying to a question, the

SHO said police might arrest the accused — Malik Bashir, Malik Shafiq and Malik Qasim — when it had ample evidence of their involvement.

When contacted the police again on Sunday, the moharir expressed his ignorance about having any information whether the accused had obtained an interim bail. Farhat's father-in-law told this correspondent that the SHO was forcing him to meet the accused in the police station.

"When we have lodged our complaint, the police should take action against the accused instead of asking them to have a meeting with them," he said.

Her husband Asif said that his in-laws were still threatening them with dire consequences.

It may be noted that the police, however, have deputed a constable outside the hospital room of the injured, Farhat.

A Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) team comprising lawyers had also met the police authorities to express concern over the Cantonment police's indifferent attitude in the Farhat case.

The team met disappointment when the SP city said: "Why did the complainant include the name of Malik Bashir in the FIR for abetment when it is a simple case of honour. The brother saw his sister with his lover' and he opened fire spontaneously."

Farhat's father Malik Bashir is an influential person and has relations with MNA Tahir Rasheed.

HRCP's Multan Task Force Coordinator Rashid Rehman, who is also counselling for Farhat and her husband, observed that the law and norms of justice were hurt grossly in this case as the accused had the backing of MNA Tahir Rasheed. He said the state was bound to protect a marriage, a woman and a child under article 35 of the constitution but here the state institutions were instrumental in usurping basic human rights. He questioned that whether the MPs who patronized criminals were showing any regard to their oath to stand by the constitution and law of the land.