



MULTAN: The model of 'Police service counter' building to be built at the Qasim Bagh Fort — Dawn

Will new police set-up work?

By Nadeem Saeed

MULTAN, Aug 16: Modern information technology will be used at the country's first police service counter being established in Multan.

The construction of the building of the service counter is going on at the Qasim Fort. The estimated cost of the building, octagonal in shape, is Rs 3.5 million. The police authorities claim that the building will be completed by mid-September to launch new police service aimed at promoting the concept of community policing by encouraging collaboration between police and public.

According to the concept-paper of the service, the most important and basic service at the counter will be 'Help line 15' that will be supported by an exchange of 10 lines with an auto-hunting facility. For counter verification of the information received, two separate phone lines with only outgoing call facility will be installed at the counter. Fire brigade and bomb disposal squads will also be linked up with the police wireless system to launch an integrated effort against any eventuality.

Information at 'Help line 15' will be recorded and later will be compared with the record of respective police station(s) on a day-to-day basis to ensure that cases have been registered.

"It will encourage free registration of cases," says SP CIA Mushtaq Bargat, who is also the operation in-charge of the proposed police service counter (PSC) in Multan.

He says the high-tech computer-based information system of the Multan PSC will comprise four kinds of data base;

(a) Details of all the stolen vehicles throughout the country will be fed into the computer and updated regularly through e-mail from Karachi, Quetta, Lahore and Peshawar.

(b) Every citizen can get computer clearance before buying or selling a vehicle.

(c) To check the menace of fake number plates, record of all the registered vehicles will be fed into the PSC system.

(d) Criminals' record along with their photographs will also be saved of such incidents where culprits left no vital clue to reach their identity.

He says that a technical service mobile squad will remain stand round-the-clock. This squad will comprise a finger print expert, a forensic expert, a photographer, a video cameraman and an in-charge of the record room. On receiving information, this squad will rush to the place of incident to help the investigation team with specialized experience.

To change the image of police, Mr Bargat says, ambulance service will be included in services to be provided at the PSC as a confidence-building measure between police and public. In case of any eventuality, police personnel will do the rescue work and also provide first-aid to victims. Besides, contact numbers of different welfare and charitable organizations will be available at the counter.

The SP says the PSC is an effort to separate the watch and ward wing of police from its investigation units. After locating 10 exit points of the Multan city, as many as 36 picket points have been identified. However, only police patrolling will be carried out to abolish defamed

pickets.

A citizen advisor council comprising official and non-official members will keep a watch on the working of the PSC and make suggestions for improvement in performance where needed.

Besides inter-linking the PSC information system with Punjab police network, it will also be linked with the CPLC (citizen police liaison committee) of Karachi via e-mail for exchange of information.

Mr Bargat says all this system including the building will cost Rs 5 million. Besides government assistance, donations from general public have also been sought.

When asked how such an efficient, honest and courteous personnel would be found from the present lot of policemen to run the PSC and achieve the desired results? he said first of all a system of check and counter-check would keep them 'honest'. Secondly, he continued, officers for the purpose would be selected from the PCS cadre of inspections, SIs and ASIs while the subordinate staff would also be picked from the recently recruited youth in police so that fresh blood could bring in a change in police culture.

Although the PSC will prove a "great effort" to change police culture and make it more responsive and performance oriented, skepticism always expressed by the common people about such reformatory measures as until and unless political meddling in police affairs exists and senior police officials keep on with succumbing to the pressures of political masters, it may prove a futile effort.