

'I am just a call away for women in distress'

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT of Police **Niharika Bhatt** is in charge of the southern division of Chandigarh, which is notorious for keeping cops on their toes due to its population density, a large number of paying guests, and proximity to Mohali. This young police officer, who was transferred here after a stint in Uttarakhand, says her team is keeping a vigil on the unscrupulous elements in the division with a special focus on women safety. Bhatt tells **Jagpreet Singh** that tenant verification drives are an ideal way for the police to get to know the people of the city

any problem. We have been holding sensitisation drives for police officials regarding women-related issues. They know the protocol that needs to be followed when a woman lodges a complaint. The city has a woman SSP and ASP, women can approach us on our mobile phone numbers anytime they face any problem.

The police have been conducting raids to ensure tenants' verification. Why this sudden focus on verification of tenants and servants?

We have received a number of suggestions and complaints from residents' welfare associations regarding the importance of conducting tenant verification at regular intervals. Also, the Chandigarh Police needs to know who is living in our area. A special drive is being conducted for tenant verification in all sub-divisions of city. For example, we verified 600 houses recently in a drive in Sector 63. A similar drive is being conducted in all the sectors by the policemen on duty in the area.



Niharika Bhatt *Jasbir Malhi*

Chandigarh is not considered a safe city for women after dark. How do you think the UT Police can make women feel safe?

We have identified several blind spots where there is a probability of unscrupulous elements targeting women. Police teams are keeping a regular check on these spots; they have been there both in uniform and plain clothes. There are also clear instructions from the SSP to all the ranks of policemen to help the women in

Has the drive helped you?

Recently a wanted Kashmir youth was held during the drive. A 19-year-old youth, Nasir Ahmad of Kupwara district, was residing at Mani Majra. He was arrested after it was found that he was wanted in a case filed at the Kralpora police station. So,

it is a very useful exercise for police, and it is conducted at regular intervals.

How do you rate Chandigarh on law and order as compared to other cities in Uttarakhand where you were posted earlier?

There is a difference between crime committed in Chandigarh

and Uttarakhand. In Chandigarh, there is more of petty crime, the majority of which is induced by drug addiction. This is not so in Uttarakhand. But since Uttarakhand borders Uttar Pradesh (UP), there is a high incidence of anti-social elements from UP committing crime in the state and going back. In

Chandigarh, persons involved in crime are mostly from the city or neighbouring townships. Though Chandigarh is contiguous with Punjab and Haryana, the police here are much more professional, disciplined and efficient.

Which factors do you blame for rising crime, especially in the southern sectors of Chandigarh?

The southern part of Chandigarh is a very big division and both the area and population density is much higher as compared to the East and Central Division. Also, the southern sectors have the longest boundary with the neighbouring state. There is a greater diversity of people here, which leads to more crime. Snatchers from Mohali come here to prey on the locals and then make good their escape. The police in the southern division, however, are keeping a close vigil on anti-social elements.

There have been some cases of local goons demanding protec-

tion money. How do you plan to tackle this menace?

We have been conducting raids in few such areas of Chandigarh, including Burail, on the basis of intelligence inputs or complaints. The arrest of accused Monty Shah followed such intelligence inputs. Our teams continue to act against such unscrupulous elements.

Chandigarh has a large number of resident welfare associations. How do you plan to rope them in to improve law and order?

Special meetings are conducted with the RWAs regularly and their suggestions for the city and their particular area are considered for further action. We have been requesting the RWAs to install CCTV cameras in their area to help the police in case of any criminal activity. Issues relating to traffic, parking or any problems in the market or surrounding areas are frequently discussed during our meetings with RWAs, and we try to find out a practicable solution.

