Police to create 'Shishtachar' squads to check harassment of women in public spaces

Teams to move around in 'high-risk' areas, conduct drives in at least '2 vulnerable spots' every day; ahead of Assembly election, BJP had promised to create units similar to U.P.'s 'Anti-Romeo Squads'

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Delhi Police will launch dedicated squads, 'Shishtachar (etiquette)', to check sexual harassment of women in public places. According to a circular issued by Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora on March 8, 30 Shishtachar squads, comprising men and women officers, will be deployed across spots with higher rates of crimes against women.

The move comes nearly 40 days after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the Delhi Assembly election, in the run-up to which it had promised to create squads to "enhance women's safety in public spaces", along the lines of the 'Anti-Romeo Squads' introduced in Uttar Pradesh by Yogi Adityanath in 2017.



Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora said the squads must enforce the law 'without cultural or personal morality'. FILE PHOTO

12-member teams

An Inspector will head each team with a Sub-Inspector, four female constables, five male constables and a constable from the district's Anti-Auto Theft Squad for technical assistance.

Each district will have at least two such teams, supervised by the Additional Commissioner of Police in the respective district's Crime Against Women Cell (ACP-CAW), stated the circular.

It added that the squads will move around in "high-risk" areas and conduct drives in at least "two vulnerable spots" in the Capital every day.

"These teams will have women personnel in plain clothes to identify and deter perpetrators," it also said.

The teams have been directed to conduct surprise checks in buses and interact with drivers, conductors, and passengers to get information about instances of harassment.

The teams are also expected to interact with market welfare associations (MWAs) and residents' welfare associations (RWAs) to identify other high-risk spots. "Officers have been directed to handle cases sensitively and ensure swift legal action under Sections 74 (criminal force against a woman with the intent to outrage her modesty) and 78 (stalking) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita," the circular read. It added that the law must be enforced "without any bias stemming from cultural or personal morality".

Weekly reports

To monitor performance, the ACP-CAW of each district will submit a weekly report to the DCP of the Special Police Unit for Women and Children (SPUWAC), detailing the activities and actions taken, it read.

These reports will be subsequently compiled and submitted to the Police Commissioner through the Special Commissioner of Police (SPUWAC).

Monthly evaluations will be conducted based on feedback from schools, colleges, RWAs, MWAs, and Police Control Rooms.