

Inquiries pending on diversity of police

As South Asian woman goes on beat, questions remain over commitment to multi-*ethnic* force

The first South Asian woman to be recruited as a police officer since the handover has successfully completed her training and will start her first day at work tomorrow.

But opinion is divided on whether this heralds a new multi-cultural dawn or is simply window dressing.

Hong Kong-born Heina Rizwan Mohammad will work as a police constable in Yuen Long, a district with a mix of locals and members of *ethnic minorities*.

Police did not initially reveal her identity, but Hong Kong Unison, which campaigns for the rights of *minorities*, confirmed that it was Mohammad who entered the police college as a constable for a 27-week training course in February.

Last weekend she had her official passing out ceremony.

Unison director Fermi Wong Wai-fun said it was only the first step, but it was a symbolic one.

In the past five years the Pakistani population in Hong Kong has increased by 63 per cent, Wong said.

She acknowledged that the police now recognise they need a contribution from the *ethnic minorities* here.

But Wong said: "There's still a long way to go, and we can only hope that Heina will be respected within the force and she won't be marginalised. This also goes for the local population - that they accept her and respect her.

"She should be, as Hong Kong is classed as a multicultural city, but only time will tell."

The Pakistan Association of Hong Kong's general secretary, Alex Ilyas Mohammad, said Mohammad's recruitment was "a great honour".

He said: "It's good news but it needs to be built upon. Hopefully this is not just a token gesture.

"There's also a need for police officers from other *ethnic minorities* like India and Nepal to be recruited as well."

Mohammad, 22, had previously worked for the force as a community liaison assistant, organising activities and reaching out to minority groups.

Last October she told the Post that she had given eight talks to officers about the languages, cultures and taboos of various *ethnic* groups and enjoyed explaining the differences in the cultures.

She said her work in the city had helped her better understand the force's culture.

"For example, some Indian men wear turbans. Some police officers thought this was due to fashion, but in fact they do so out of religious reasons," she said.

Mohammad organised activities and sport events for young people from the local and minority communities in the district.

She revealed that she wanted to become a police officer because her grandfather was once a policeman.

Last year, the force recruited police officer Faisal Abdul, who is of mixed Pakistani and Chinese heritage, to patrol in Yuen Long.

POLICING



Pakistani Heina Rizwan Mohammad (second from right) at her passing out parade and inspection last weekend. Photo: David Wong

INQUIRIES PENDING ON DIVERSITY OF POLICE

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FERMI WONG WAI-FUN, UNISON DIRECTOR

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