

Women rights violations Speedy dispensation of justice demanded

AHMAD AHMADANI

ISLAMABAD – The civil Society and human rights organisations on Friday demanded of the government to ensure immediate dispensation of justice against women rights' violations.

This was demanded in a public event to pay tribute to 'Women's Leadership at Grassroots Level: Actions & Achievements' here in a local hotel.

Aurat Foundation and OXFAM-GB jointly organised this event to mark the national women day. Ms Mukhtaran Mai, an icon of struggle and courage in Pakistan, participated as Chief Guest in the event.

Moreover, the Aurat Foundation had invited representatives of Women's Leaders' group to share their stories of struggle for gender equality and political rights with women from grassroots.

Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer, read out an appeal, as made by Haleema Bhutto, which demanded support for justice. He also shared with the participants that Insani Haqooq Ittehad (a network of Rawalpindi-Islamabad based NGOs, civil society organisations and human rights activists) would soon be taking up Haleema's appeal with the government and the courts. He also demanded of the government to immediately hold elections of district government to put the system back in work.

Furthermore, Haleema Bhutto from Ghotki, who was currently protesting a daily sit-in, in front of National Press Club, Islamabad, demanded justice.

In March 2010, her husband accused her of 'Karo Kari' and the village Panchayat declared her punishable. Since then, for security of her life and struggle to get justice, she came to Islamabad. She vowed to continue her struggle till she got justice. Ms Feroza Zahra, Programme Manager, Raising Her Voice, Oxfam, highlighted various features and successes of the programme.

Other speakers included Ms Attiya Batool and Ghazala Anjum, women leaders from Hafizabad and Sukkur.

Ms Razia Sultana, representative of Women's Leaders' Group from Rawalpindi, said that with the support of some civil society organisations they had established a centre for education and skill development and had so far registered 600 to 700 girls who would get education till metric.

Ms Riffat Khan, representative of Women's Leaders' Group from Bhakkar, while addressing the participants, gave in details an account of her activities and emergency relief work for the women affected by the recent floods.

Pakistani Women's Day ceremony held

'All discriminatory laws to go after March 8'

ASMA GHANI

ISLAMABAD – A colourful ceremony held on Friday to mark the Pakistani Women's Day wherein women from different walks of life participated to celebrate the day with the aim "Chaly Chlo Key Manzil Abhi Nahin Hai" which was the theme of the event as well.

The National Commission on the Status of Women had organised the event in collaboration with PTV and non-governmental organisations including PODA and Aurat Foundation.

On the occasion, Chairperson NCSW Anis Haroon said that the government has ensured that till March 8 the commission is given total autonomy after which the commission would start a movement to ensure repeal of all discriminatory laws against women. She said that the Federal Shariat Court's judgement regarding the Women Protection Act needs to be challenged and NGOs and other organisations should take lead in this regard. She said no institution has the right to bar the Parliament from legislation.

The event offered an opportunity to courageous women from different cities of the country to share their stories of struggle for women rights. Rehana Nasreen and Surrya Manzoor shared their experiences as councillors when the local government system was not suspended. Nasreen Nisar who has been awarded Tamgha-i-Shujat by the government on her brave act as she secured the lives of 23 army per-

sonnel from terrorists also shared her experience.

Zahida Hina, journalist and writer, speaking on socio-cultural aspect of religious extremism, said that terrorism has left very dangerous impacts on the society and women are the worst affectees of this phenomenon, seeds of which were deliberately sown in 1977 by a dictator. The Shariat Bill has limited the rights of women and women's rights are violated in the name of religion, she said.

"Girls' schools and colleges are being blown up and students are not given admissions in foreign universities. Girls' education ratio has been declined and women have been barred from participating in elections. Honour killing is also on the rise and there are no recreational activities for the people". She ended her talk telling the latest news that the only college for girls in Orakzai Agency has also been blown up.

Salman Raja Advocate while speaking on discriminatory laws and its impacts on women's rights, said that the institutions established in General Zia's era are causing problems for the stakeholders. He explained the judgement of Federal Shariat Court (FSC) in which it had declared sections 11, 25 and 28 of the Women Protection Bill (WPB) as null and void. He said the bill moved by Sherry Rehman in the Parliament to amend the blasphemy law was withdrawn as the FSC had conveyed to the government that the law was against the Islamic injunctions.