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DAWN

Govt urged to own women's crisis centres

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE, June 22: The Punjab government should own women's crisis centres for the sake of women victims of violence.

"Instead of closing down these centres, the Punjab government should enhance their capacity so that women belonging to far-flung areas should get all types of help at district level," Justice Nasira Javaid Iqbal (retired) said at a news conference arranged by the Aurat Foundation (AF) here on Wednesday.

"A sum of Rs13 billion has been proposed for women development in the budget for next fiscal, therefore the government should spare some amount for these centres out of it. Darul Aman is not a substitute of crisis centre because the nature of work of both institutions is different. The crisis centres should have their own identity," said Ms Iqbal, who was flanked by MPAs Sajida Mir and Riffat Sultana Dar (PPP), Shamila Aslam (PML-N) and Amina Ulfat (PML-Q).

Quoting an AF report, she

said that 14,429 women victims of violence received temporary shelter, health treatment and legal aid through these centres.

In Vehari, Sahiwal and Khushab districts, 2,418 women were benefited through microfinance schemes while hundreds other were able to resume their normal family life through counselling.

Former chairperson of a crisis centre Nafisa Sikandar, AF's Nasreen Zehra, Shamaila Tanvir and Mumtaz Mughal said these centres played a key role in rehabilitating and providing security to women victims of violence.

These crisis centres were established during the tenure of PML-N government in 1998 to provide security, health treatment, legal aid and counselling to women victims of violence free of charge.

The services of these centres were extended to 12 districts - Vehari, Sialkot, Muzaffargarh, Khushab, Sahiwal, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Mianwali, Rawalpindi and Lahore - in phases.