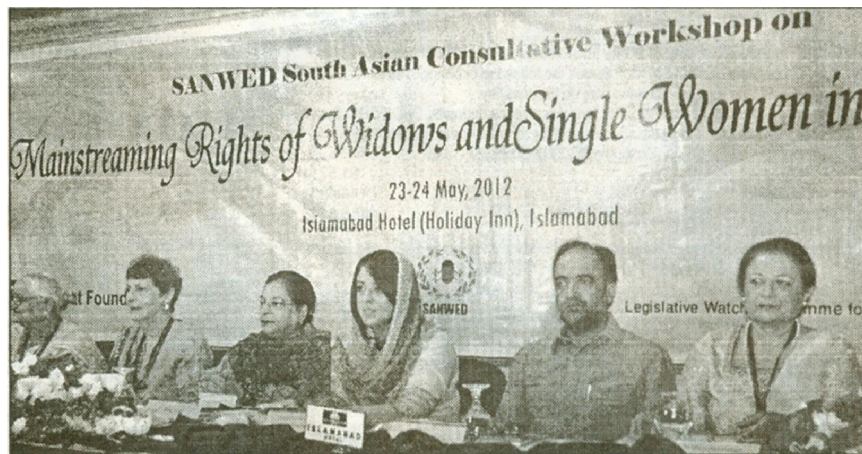


Tuesday, March 6, 2012



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Qamar Zaman Kaira and Fiza Gilani, daughter of Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, presiding over the seminar on "Mainstreaming rights of widows and single women in public policy," here on Wednesday.—Recorder photo

Women empowerment

Govt to allocate reasonable amount in budget

RECORDER REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In order to provide complete social and economic protection to women, the government should allocate reasonable amount in the budget that would ensure women empowerment both socially and economically.

This was the crux of the two-day workshop organised by Aurat Foundation, in collaboration with South Asian Network for Widows' Empowerment in Development (SANWED) focused on issues and challenges faced by widows and single women across South Asia. Syeda Fiza Batool Gilani, Goodwill Ambassador for Women's Empowerment, Lily Thapa, Founder, Women for Human Rights (WHR) and General Secretary, SANWED, Nepal, Dr. Mohini Giri, Chairperson of Guild for Service, India, Anis Haroon, former Chairperson, National Commission on the Status of Women, Pakistan, and Cecilie Landsverk, Ambassador of Norway to Pakistan were among the participants.

Fiza Batool Gilani, Goodwill Ambassador for Women's Empowerment, said that the women in Pakistan have been constantly complaining of having being isolated from the mainstream society. Women feel disappointed on being maltreated by the male-oriented set-up in Pakistan. Women in Pakistan have the legal right to inherit fam-

ily wealth, yet they rarely exercise the right. "The present government has taken numerous initiatives like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) to provide social protection to the women that have already been victim to the male atrocities", Fiza said.

She said that not only the widows but also the divorced women deserve equal rights like that of the other women.

"A Woman has to be dependent on her husband, brother or her father to live her life in our society. She has to face physical or mental torture at the hands of her guardian that may be her husband, brother or father", Fiza added.

"While the cause of women empowerment and emancipation has started getting attention at different levels thanks to the exemplary struggle waged by the women rights groups, as there has been discernible lack of focus on public policy intervention in mainstreaming the rights of widows and single women" Fiza said. Anis Haroon, former Chairperson, National

Commission on the Status of Women, Pakistan said that the peace process between India and Pakistan shall be enhanced and women shall be involved actively in the process. She said that compared to widow (whose husbands died), the divorced women are more stigmatised. "The exploitation of women has reached its

peak especially in the rural areas," she added. Cecilie Landsverk, Ambassador of Norway to Pakistan, said, "The women, especially the widows and divorced, have to go through numerous challenges in their lives. Widows should be economically strong by getting employment as it would not only liberate them but also empower them enough to play their role in economic development."

Lily Thapa from Nepal said that women are forced to be victim of male atrocities in Nepal. "Most of the young girls are forced to marry older men, resulting in greater number of widows. In Nepal, widows are discouraged to participate in daily life activities."

Lily added that "we all know the key role widows play in the society, important contributors to the economy and in turn the development of the whole nation. We have many cases in Nepal, where widows have played vital role in peace and development by organising and mobilising them as agents of change."

Dr Mohini Thapa, Chairperson of Guild for Service, India, said that there are 40 million widows in India, which make 11 percent of total female population, while in contrast only 2.5 percent of total Indian men are widowers and that about 25 percent of widows are working outside home and 20 percent of them are working as agricultural laborers.