



ISLAMABAD: Girls busy painting during colourful programme, featuring seminar on violence against women and theatre to commemorate the National Women's Day at Fatima Jinnah Park on Tuesday.-APP

National Women's Day

Govt urged to ensure equal women participation in politics

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD - Each year February 12 is commemorated as National Women's Day in Pakistan, a milestone in the women rights movement that even today serves to encourage and invigorate their struggle.

Women activists at various events reaffirmed their determination to continue the struggle for their rights as equal citizens and for a peaceful, democratic and just society.

Women Action Forum (WAF) in collaboration with the *Insani Huqooq Ittehad (IHD)*, *EVAW/G* alliance and Pakistan Reproductive Health Network (PRHN) organised a joint event to commemorate the women's rights movement in Pakistan and to mark the National Women's Day at the Fatima Jinnah Park in F-9 Tuesday.

Highlighting the background

of the day, Nasreen Azhar, senior WAF member, mentioned that this day rekindles the memory of that afternoon in 1983 when on a call given by the Women's Action Forum and the Punjab Women Lawyers Association, women gathered on the Mall in Lahore to protest peacefully against the Law of Evidence. The law sought to reduce the legal status of women by proposing that the evidence of two women should equal that of one man. The women had planned to march to the Lahore High Court to submit a petition against the law, but they were brutally attacked by the police. They were tear gassed and beaten, and several were hauled off to jail.

Other speakers mentioned the situation of violence against women, acts of terrorism and conflicts and their effects on women, children and other vulnerable groups. While express-

ing their deep concern over killings of people on the basis of their ethnic and religious identities, they urged the government to ensure the safety and security of people as enshrined in the constitution of Pakistan.

Speakers demanded the government to ensure free, fair and timely elections and equal participation of women in politics in coming elections. They also urged effective steps to make sure that women are not deprived of their constitutional right to vote. Prominent among who spoke were Naseer Memon, Professor Farkhanda Aurengezeb, Nighat Rizvi, Nasreen Azhar and Sheema Khan.

Theatre performances were also part of the event highlighting the different aspects of violence especially deprivation of right to land. They portrayed that the tradition of honour killing and other violence have

background of land disputes.

Food, information material and handicrafts stalls were also set up at the event by different organisations and women from communities. Famous motivational poems of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib were also sung by a local singer.

Meanwhile, to pay tribute to the national heroines and inspire young domestic girls of 40 quarter, a community near DHA, Chanan Development Association (CDA), a national youth-led organisation, organised an interactive theatre performance which was attended by some 50 domestic working girls and their mothers.

The theatre depicts how the women rights are violated and a message for girls to stand, struggle and claim for their rights by taking part in national development and by casting the vote.