

## 'Fewer cases of violence against women reported in 2012'

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD, Aug 29: In the past, parliamentarians did not allow their wives and daughters to contest elections, but when a graduation degree was made mandatory by Pervez Musharraf in 2002, politicians asked their educated females to contest elections.

Now that this condition has been revoked, these feudal lords came back in the parliament in the May 11 elections.

This was stated by Member of National Assembly Arifa Khalid on Thursday during the launching ceremony of an annual report on violence against women prepared by the Aurat Foundation and titled 'Beyond Denial'.

The report stated 7,516 cases were reported in 2012, which was lower than the previous five years.

Ms Arifa, who belongs to the Pakistan Muslim League-N, said, "Whenever peo-

ple ask me whether I am elected as MNA on general seats or reserved seats, I feel violence, discrimination and humiliation."

She said to end the violence, there were three steps: know the problem, face it and solve it.

The media and film industry in Pakistan suggest women have no role outside the house, she maintained.

The report's author, Dr Rakhshinda Perveen, said in most cases of violence, women lost their lives.

"Violence due to dowry is increasing because television programmes show marriage functions in which people give dowry and other valuable gifts," she said.

While replying to a question, Dr Perveen said in Islamabad, more cases were registered because people were educated and aware of their rights.

However, in rural areas, there was a trend to conceal such incidents, she added.

Khawar Mumtaz, the chairperson of National Commission on Status of Women, said the report had been prepared from data collected from newspapers which did not provide a complete picture of the rate of violence against women. "In times of war and conflict, violence against women is used as a weapon," she added.

Child Psychiatrist Dr Ambreen Ahmad said the health and behavior of a person was directly related to his or her environment.

Women were more affected (mentally) if they were tortured by their husbands, she added.

"Depression, anxiety, phobias, suicides and alcohol abuse is generally observed in victims of violence. Women

facing domestic violence live in constant fear which may result in mental disorders," Dr Ambreen said.

The deputy director of the Gender Crime Cell of Police Bureau, Mehreen Maqsood, said a mandate was given to police in 2006 to look into these issues.

She encouraged women to join the police force and resist domestic violence.

The report stated that 4,766 of the total 7,516 cases of violence were reported from Punjab i.e. 63 per cent of the total cases. Sindh had the second highest number of reported cases at 1,628 cases which formed 22 per cent of the total cases reported.

Among other regions, 674 cases were reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 167 cases from Balochistan were reported.

The federal capital's figure is very high (281 cases) considering the region is much smaller and houses a much smaller population compared to other regions.

A slight decrease has been reported this year compared to the 8,539 cases reported in 2011. The figure was at 8,000 cases in 2010, 8,548 in 2009 and 7,571 in 2008.

Crime category	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan	Islamabad	Total
Abduction	1,222	207	33	18	127	1,607
Murder	835	381	395	84	50	1,745
Domestic violence	573	230	114	34	38	989
Suicide	394	120	44	8	9	575
Honour killing	227	158	42	3	2	432
Rape	676	103	14	11	18	822
Sexual assault	12	46	-	-	-	58
Acid throwing	45	28	8	-	2	83
Burning	48	11	4	2	6	71
Others	734	344	20	7	29	1,134
Total	4,766	1,628	674	167	281	7,516

Province-wise breakdown of different crimes reported against women in 2012.