

Rich tributes paid to workingwomen

National Women's Day observed with commitment to protect their rights: Bushra says government committed to abolishing anti-women laws

OUR STAFF REPORTERS

ISLAMABAD - A lively event was held to pay rich tributes to the workingwomen from different walks of life here on Saturday.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) organised the event to mark the Pakistani Women's Day, wherein the achievements of working women, who opted professions that remained 'men's profession' for decades, were highlighted.

A documentary was screened during the event, depicting the lives of such women in which the struggle of courageous ladies belonging to rural and urban areas was shown. The documentary was developed under the CIDA funded project, promoting gender equality for decent employment focused on women role models who had achieved the extraordinary through sheer perseverance and determination.

The women who have chosen the men's profession as their career included, chef at a leading hotel Sadaf Mobin, Rent a car business Safia Khurshid, a teacher for special children in a backward area Rahmat-un-Nisa, Former driver for UN Tahira, textile business Shamim Sardar, Elite Force Nasreen, Construction Contractor Samina and a circus acrobat Mitho.

ILO Officer Incharge, Mar-

gret Reade Rounds on the occasion highlighted the role of ILO in advocating and promoting social justice.

"It is not only important to provide favourable working environment to women but there should also be equal access to opportunities," she said.

A photographic exhibition was also organised on the occasion, where the photographs depicting the struggle of women in various fields ranging from agriculture to the elite force.

The jury for the photographic exhibition included Filmmaker and Activist Sammar Minnalah, NCA Faculty member Dr Mur-taza Jaffery and Actor and Artist Jamal Shah. Jamal Shah speaking on the event said that art was the most effective and harmless means of communication.

It has a power to bring about changes in society and encourages people to promote positively in life.

Farah Chandani, First Secretary Development and Chief Operating Officer Jim Sutherland, at Head Office, Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, also attended the event.

Meanwhile, Insani Haqooq Itehad (IHI) on Saturday organised a discussion on 'Religious Extremism and its Impact on Women' to mark the

National Women's Day and demanded of government to ensure legal protection on women rights.

Large number of representatives of the civil society organisations, women rights activists and students from universities participated in the discussion at National Library Auditorium.

Naeem Mirza representative of an NGO shared the history of women's struggle for repeal of discriminatory laws and introduction of positive laws. He also demanded of the government to immediately pass the 'Domestic Violence Bill'.

Bushra Goher, Chairperson Standing Committee on Women Development, in her address, appreciated the efforts of civil society to highlight the problems faced by women in the country. She said that religious extremism and Talibanisation had deep roots in the state systems and policies.

She said that the civil government was committed to abolish those laws or constitutional amendments which were introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq.

Justice (R) Nasira Javaid Iqbal said though Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996, yet it remained failed to remove discriminatory laws against women.

More than 80 per cent housewives were subjected to domestic violence which often went

undetected, and 66 per cent women accepted it as their fate, 33 per cent complained, while less than 5 per cent ever take concrete steps to redress the situation. She further complained that women in Pakistan had very little legal protection in family matters as given in Muslim Family Laws.

She further recommended that inheritance and other family laws should be brought under a uniform code. Women should have the right to immovable property, as dower and the property should be transferred to the woman at the time of Nikah.

If a woman applies for Khula she should retain her dower as consideration for entering into the marriage contract and should have been given to her at that time.

Rukhshanda Naz, Director, UN Women, in her address criticised the role of religious parties in electoral politics which hinder the governments to take positive steps towards women's development and empowerment.

A recorded interview of famous poet, Kishwar Naheed, was also played where she talked about the brutal lathi charge on February 12, 1983 to disperse the women demonstrators and a fatwa (decree) by religious leaders against those women who took part in the demonstration.