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## Review of Mai verdict demanded

By A Reporter

ISLAMABAD, April 28: Pakistan's criminal justice system is totally male oriented with very deep patriarchal biases hindering provision of justice to rape victims.

This was stated by representatives of different NGOs and human rights activists at a seminar here on Thursday. Their concerns followed the recent Supreme Court ruling in the Mukhtar Mai case. Representatives from Aurat Foundation, Women's Organisation for Rights and Development, PODA and other human rights activists were present on the occasion.

"The judiciary is insensitive to the existing practices in our society which entail sexual harassment, domestic violence and honour killing and put the victim in a ridiculous questioning."

It is like putting the rape victims in the same painful and insulting situation by asking them again and again to describe how the event took place," said Naeem Mirza, a human rights activist.

The speakers said the judgment showed that the impunity provided to the rapists under the Hudood

Ordinance 1979, that required four male Muslim witnesses to award punishment, has now become a part of the judicial culture. Lack of conviction in rape cases despite the Women Protection Act 2006, which removed the crime of rape from Hudood Ordinance and put it back in the Pakistan Penal Code, is indicative of the continuing misogynist mindset of our judiciary, they said.

Mr Mirza added: "Corrupt investigation system, lack of access to modern technology such as DNA testing labs and the inability of prosecution to gather sufficient evidence have collectively forced Mukhtar Mai to face this situation."

The speakers said they would continue their struggle unless Mukhtar Mai got justice and the responsible persons were brought to book.

They demanded that the government should file a review petition with the SC on behalf of the women of Pakistan, adding a full bench of the apex court should hear the review petition.

They also asked the government to modernise DNA labs and strengthen the prosecution and investigation system in the country.



REPRESENTATIVES of NGOs and human rights activists addressing a press conference on the Supreme Court verdict in Mukhtar Mai case on Thursday. — Dawn