

Friday, 18 November, 2011



ISLAMABAD: MNA Dr Donya Aziz addresses an Aurat Foundation seminar at a local hotel. STAFF PHOTO

## Passage of Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Bill hailed

■ Civil society calls for fixing loopholes in bill's draft before its enactment in Senate

ISLAMABAD  
ASMA KUNDI

While appreciating the passage of the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment Bill), 2011, civil society representatives demanded here Wednesday that the loopholes in the bill should be plugged before presenting it in the Senate.

They also warned that if the Senate blocked the bill, the civil society would give stage a sit-in demonstration outside

the Parliament House. Speakers expressed these views while speaking at a seminar held by the Aurat Foundation's Legislative Watch Programme.

Dr Donya Aziz said that she and other supporters of the bill in the National Assembly and its standing committee had faced a lot of resistance.

She said many members of the Standing Committee on Law had argued that at least the punishment for forced marriages and marriage with the Holy Quran shall be lessened.

She said any amendments proposed by the senators or concerned civil society organisation would be welcomed.

She suggested that in order to make the bill "a perfect piece of legislation" the lawyers from the lower courts should also be consulted with. Senator Nilofar Bakhtiar pledged her commitment towards the cause and assured the audience that she would fully support the passage of the bill in the Senate.

She said if any amendments were suggested by the senators, the bill would

have to be re-sent to the National Assembly to be passed again. That, she said, could further delay the passage of the bill.

Earlier Naeem Mirza, referring to the presence of Senator Nilofar Bakhtiar, said the civil society and women's rights organisations and activist were very much anxious about the passage of the bill through Senate. Samar Minalah suggested including 'sung-chati', a kind of marriage similar to 'swara' and 'vani' in the list of offences the bill aimed at curbing.

Rehana Hashmi, the executive direc-

tor of the Sisters Trust, appreciated the government for the legislations being made to safeguard women's rights.

She said the government and courts (both the high courts, lower courts and the Supreme Court) also needed to devise a strategy for the implementation on the new legislation.

Tahira Abdullah said although the passage of the bill was appreciable but there were still some loopholes in the draft of the bill that needed to be addressed before its passage by the Senate.