

Thursday, 8 March, 2012

City set to celebrate Int'l Women's Day today

Staff Report

LAHORE: The International Women's Day will be observed across the city today (Thursday) with a number of colourful activities to acknowledge women's achievements in social, economic and political spheres of life.

The theme for International Women's Day this year is "Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures". The government and civil society organisations have planned to arrange joint seminars, conferences, panel discussions, documentaries and exhibitions to celebrate the day in a befitting manner.

All the activities are aimed at creating awareness among women with regards to speaking up for their rights and recognising their efforts in the process of national development.

Speaking about the significance of the day, WHO Country Representative in Pakistan Dr Guido Sabatinelli said, "This day is significant with regards to appreciating and acknowledging achievements as well as struggles of women as agents of change to improve their social status, lives, communities and health."

He further added that the theme for International Women's Day this year, "Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures", demanded inclusion and participation of kids and adolescents among the people at the receiving end of basic human rights, like access to optimal health, education, adequate nutrition, protection and opportunities for leadership and personal development to inspire future human development.

It further re-emphasises the importance of women and girls'

Conference calls on govt to table bill against domestic violence

LAHORE: There has been an alarming rise in incidents of domestic violence across Punjab, and the situation demands the government took immediate steps like introduction of legislation to stop the heinous crime, said speakers at a press conference on Wednesday. The speakers included former MNA Mehnaz Rafi, Salman Abid from SPO, High Court Bar Association Secretary Akbar Dogar, LHC Advocate Hina Hafeezullah Ishaq, Bushra Khaliq from WISE, Ambreen from ActionAid, Aurat Foundation Resident Director Nasreen Zehra, Senior Programme Officer Mumtaz Mughal and Programme Officer Shamaila Tanvir. The press conference was organised by Aurat Foundation in connection with International Women's Day under Legislative Watch Programme for Women Empowerment. The speakers called upon the government to move a draft bill named Punjab Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2012 in the current session of Punjab Assembly (PA) in order to provide support and protection to the victims. They demanded its early passage and effective implementation as a law, at all costs. They also said that the domestic violence bill should be incorporated in the 'Empower Women Package', which was going to be announced by Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Shahbaz Sharif on the International Women's Day. The passage of the bill would provide protection and relief to the victims. They said that domestic violence, including physical, sexual, mental, psychological and economic abuse was a slap on the face of the civilised society. They said that women were not the only victims of domestic violence, children and other vulnerable persons were also subjected to domestic abuse. The speakers also suggested the government to establish a help-line facility in the province so the victims of violence could immediately contact the law-enforcing agencies for protection and remedial relief. Highlighting incidents of domestic violence in Punjab during 2011, they said that 348 domestic violence and 64 sexual harassment cases were registered in addition to vani, sawara, illegal confinement, women and child trafficking, early marriages, sexual abuse by close relatives and life threats were also increasing. **STAFF REPORT**

access to these core resources that both protect their health as well as empower them to get fully involved in and benefit from health developments. Over the past 100 years, many scientific advancements, knowledge and new health technologies have improved the health status/outcomes of women and girls worldwide.

However, existing challenges like high maternal mortality rate, increasing number of women living with HIV/AIDS, nutritional deficiencies, gender-based discrimination as well as violence against young girls and women cannot be ignored in the context of Pakistan. The best coping strategies to address this increasingly heavy burden on

women include strengthening the role and empowerment of women and girls, he said.

He concluded on the note, "International Women's Day renews our commitment towards ensuring that women, girls, children and all marginalised groups of society have equal access to health, education, training, science, and technology, and that we need to work and challenge unequal systems, structures and practices that perpetuate health inequalities across the world."

However, nowhere in the world can women claim to have equal rights and opportunities as men, according to a UN report. The majority of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor are women. On average, women receive

between 30 and 40 percent lesser pay than men for the same work, the report said.

Women also continue to be victims of violence, with rape and domestic violence listed as significant causes of disability and death among women worldwide. In 1975, during International Women's Year, the UN began celebrating March 8 as International Women's Day. Two years later, in December 1977, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a UN Day for Women's Rights. The day is aimed at helping nations worldwide to eliminate discrimination against women. It also focuses on helping women gain full and equal participation in global development.