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■ **WOMEN SOLIDARITY MELA**

Violence against women, extremism highlighted

Saadia Khalid
Islamabad

Terming it as a first significant step towards the welfare of women journalists, civil society expressed its solidarity and extended its full support to the newly formed Women Journalists Pakistan (WJP).

In an event titled 'Women Solidarity Mela' organised by Aurat Foundation (AF) in collaboration with Oxfam-GB, AFDG Naeem Mirza, said that WJP was a long desired forum to exclusively deal with the issues of female journalists. "WJP is not a parallel body of any other already established media representative organizations. We truly welcome its formation and offer best wishes to them," he said.

He said that it was a positive sign that more and more women are joining the field of journalism and it was also a good sign that many organisations are now thinking to form separate section for women journalists. "If we can have National Commission for the Sta-

tus of Women (NCSW), First Women Bank and other women related organisations than why can't we have one separate forum for women journalists," he added.

Meanwhile Bait-ul-Maal Managing Director Zamurrud Khan on the occasion said that Bait-ul-Maal has always taken extensive measures for the welfare of women. "We have started a programme for skill development of women, which is not only free of cost, but we also give daily scholarship to them," he said.

He further said that they have also taken several measures for journalists and quoted a recent example of a female cameraperson who was diagnosed with brain tumour. "That lady has been operated with a cost of 0.4 million, all of which is paid by Bait-ul-Maal," he said.

He further announced that Bait-ul-Maal would give bail money of upto Rs50,000 to any woman who does not have money for her bail.

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) President

Pervaiz Shaukat on the occasion said that they don't believe in segregation of male and female and have always given equal opportunities to the women journalists working in different media houses. "We are soon going to announce Woman Working Group under the umbrella of PFUJ which would exclusively deal with the issues of harassment and unfavourable working condition for women journalists," he added.

He quoted various examples women become victims of character assassination by their male colleagues and said that PFUJ would hold a proper inquiry against such cases.

Sheema Karmani and her group from 'Tehrik-e-Niswan' gave a beautiful, but thought provoking performance on the theme of violence and extremism. She wonderfully depicted that how women become victim of taboos and social injustices.

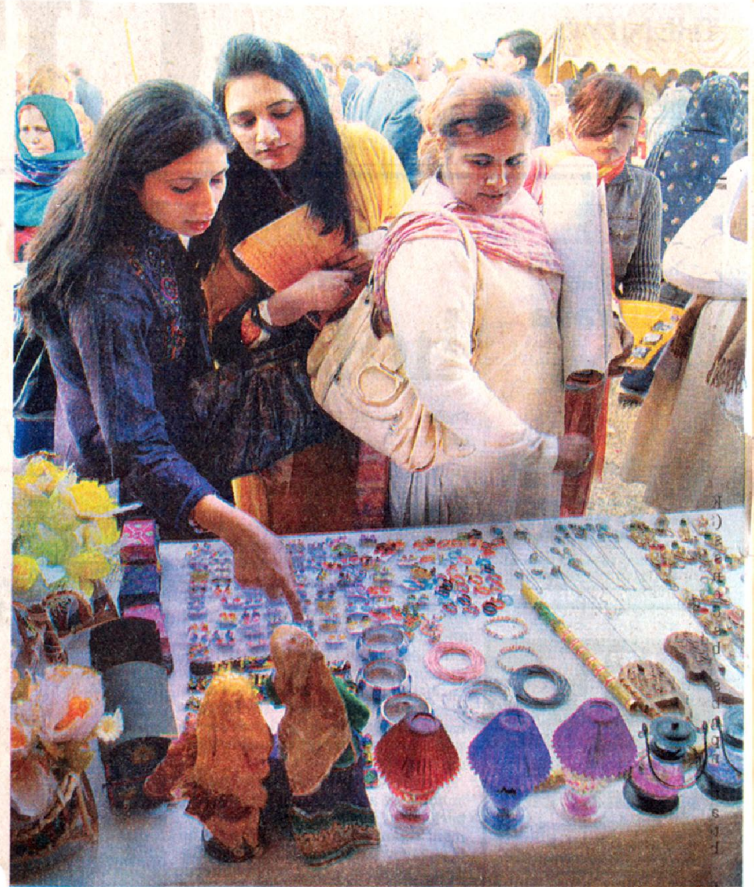
Federal Minister for Human Rights Syed Mumtaz Alam Gillani said that women made

an integral part in our society and concrete measures should be taken to mainstream them. "Only educated women can ensure an educated and civilised family in future," he added.

A documentary on the violence and extremism by Samar Minallah was also presented on the occasion.

Moreover, stalls by different civil society organisations that staged the products made by the women who are either violence victims or belong to rural areas. One such stall was of Potohar Organisation for Development and Advocacy (PODA) where the handicraft made by the women living in rural areas was staged. "We provide material for stitching, sewing and embroidering to those women after which they prepare these master pieces," said PODA ED Samina Nazir.

She said that PODA also teach the rural women to recycle different projects to prepare different pieces. "Many of the decoration pieces staged here are prepared from trash paper," she mentioned.



ISLAMABAD: Women taking keen interest in a stall during Women Solidarity 'Mela'. — PPI