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'16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence' campaign takes off

All stakeholders revive pledge to eliminate violence against women

■ MUNIR AHMED / FAREHIA REHMAN

ISLAMABAD — '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign' kicked off Friday with colourful advocacy events by the nongovernmental organizations.

Nomad Art Gallery arranged a more artistic event '*Aman Shanakht Banao*' (Make peace your identity) to visually enthuse the participants to voice against gender-based violence. The gallery partnered with the UN Women for this event.

Member National Assembly and Chairperson National Commission on Human Development (NCHD) Nafisa Shah was the chief guest along with Alice Shakleford, the Country Representative UN Women.

Speaking on the occasion, Nafisa Shah said, "Although the government has achieved a milestone by passing three pro-women bills in its three-and-a-half-year tenure, yet they continue to suffer and a radical change is required in the very mindset of soci-

ety in this regard."

Nafisa Shah who was the chief guest on the occasion said it was high time everyone realised his responsibility and let women play their role in the progress and prosperity of society. She expressed the pleasure women were more aware of their rights than before.

"We have a woman speaker in the National Assembly with 77 members. Similarly, in the Senate we have 17 women senators which is a good sign of women's active participation in running the affairs of the country."

A mural was put on display to get the signatures of the visitors endorsing the cause. Nageen Hayat, Director Nomad said the mural titled '*Aman Shanakht Banao*' is result of intensive discussion, workshops, and research on the violence against women in Pakistan.

The mural also included 'The People Are Demanding' highlighting strong representation from all walks of life in form of comments and their demands from the government to make the society better and peaceful.

Nageen said the mural would open for comment and artwork from Nov 25 to Dec 10.

On display were the paintings by 22 artists. The work is the outcome of the

workshops on violence against women in which the artists took part.

The participating artists included Humera, Sumera Jawad, Abbas Shah, Zia Zaidi, Tabassum Rizvi, Arjumand Awan, Nasreen Aurongzeb, Riffat Khattak, Mubashir Iqbal, Najam ul Hassan Kazmi, Ufaq Ehsan, Nsir Malik, Salma Manzoor, Asad ur Rehman, Zaira Zaka, Nadeem Ahmed, Anjum Ayub and Samreen Asif.

The multi-media presentation titled 'Reality Check' was based on the news clips from different TV channels. It showed the volume of sensational news reporting constantly been shown on television channels including violence, protests, and arson.

To quote Nageen again, "It has become a national pastime to watch it, and is now a part of the psyche and subconscious of viewers of all age groups who are becoming almost immune to the level of violence around them."

The other feature of the event was political cartoons by Akhtar Shah, while a touching classical performance by Sumaira Aleem on classical music instrument sitar.

She is a student of Begum Basirat Rais, a dedicated sitar-player, teacher, and composer of classical music.

In another event, participants of the

Aurat Yakjehti Mela (Women Solidarity Fair) pledged to work hard to end all types of violence and discriminations against women by bringing together women's, peace, and human rights movements.

This event was organized by the USAID, and the Aurat Foundation at the Lok Virsa.

Civil society activist Anis Haroon, Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Andrew Sisson, Mission Director USAID Pakistan, Naeem Mirza, Chief Operating Officer Aurat Foundation, and Simi Kamal, CoP, Gender Equity Program were among the panellists.

Naeem Mirza called upon redressing the status of women and girls.

Dr Andrew Sisson said, "We all, men and women need to play an active role in addressing and preventing violence, changing gender attitudes, and increasing the commitment by community and government leaders on the issue."

Anis Haroon urged to maintain peace in the home to peace in the world. She highlighted the need to challenge militarism and end violence against women by bringing together women's, peace, and human rights movements.