

Pakistan's history incomplete without women's role, says Aseefa

First lady launches book on Aurat Foundation at event celebrating organisation's 40th anniversary; says Benazir believed in meaningful participation of women in all sectors

By Salis bin Perwalz

A ceremony was hosted at the CM House on Thursday to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Aurat Foundation.

Addressing the event, First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan's history was incomplete without women. She praised the Aurat Foundation for four decades of advocacy for women's rights stating that every discussion on women's empowerment reminded her of her mother Benazir Bhutto who believed in the meaningful participation of women in all sectors rather than their symbolic inclusion.

The Aurat Foundation paid tribute to four decades of women's struggle for democracy, peace, social justice and equality in Pakistan on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

The event was attended by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, provincial ministers, MNAs, MPAs, Sindh chief secretary, senior government officials, civil society representatives and leaders of the Aurat Foundation from across the country.

The ceremony highlighted women's struggles and achievements in democracy, peace building, poverty alleviation and climate justice, acknowledging the pivotal role played by Aurat Foundation since its establishment in 1986.

Delivering opening remarks, Aurat Founda-



Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah presents the Global Peace Award to First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari at an event celebrating the Aurat Foundation's 40th anniversary.

tion President Anis Haroon recalled the difficult journey of the women's movement, stating that before February 12, 1986, women had little recognition in public life. She recalled how women were baton-charged for filing petitions for equality in the Lahore High Court, imprisoned for raising their voices, yet remained steadfast in their demands.

During the event, Aseefa launched a book documenting the Aurat Foundation's 40-year struggle and unveiled a documentary highlighting its journey, including a special tribute to Benazir for her historic role in advancing women's rights.

She noted that despite making progress in various fields, women in Pakistan continued to face serious challenges, adding that true freedom for women would only be achieved when

every girl was granted her full rights.

She was also honoured with a peace award on the occasion.

The CM announced a grant of Rs50 million for the Aurat Foundation, reaffirming the Sindh government's commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality.

The ceremony featured the presentation of lifetime achievement and leadership awards to prominent individuals for their contributions to women's rights, human rights, social services, education, journalism, law enforcement, minority rights, disability leadership and community development.

Awards were also presented to students for technological innovation and to Aurat Foundation workers in recognition of their dedication to organising the

event.

Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented to MNAs Shazia Atta Marri and Rana Ansar for political leadership, Shehnaz Wazir Ali for her lifelong struggle for women's rights and Justice (retd) Majida Rizvi for her legal and human rights services.

Rabia Malik received the Special Persons Leadership Award, while Pakistani-American Natalia Rahim was honoured with the Community Services Award. The Technology Innovation Award was presented to students of Nusrat Bhutto University for developing an agricultural drone.

Awards were also given to journalist Maria Ismail, poet and painter Aalia Mirza, DIG Sheeba Shah for law enforcement leadership, Sister Catherine for services in women's education, Mangla Sharma for minority rights, Advocate Asia Munir for legal support to oppressed women, Mirza Ishtiaq Baig for social services, and Advocate Ghazala Kashif for local government leadership. In addition, three Aurat Foundation staff members were also recognised for their exceptional efforts in organising the event.

The ceremony concluded with a renewed pledge to continue the struggle for gender equality, justice and dignity, reinforcing the Aurat Foundation's role as a cornerstone of Pakistan's women's rights movement for the past four decades.