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Rallies, exhibitions highlight women issues

Resolve to continue struggle for protection of women rights, end gender discrimination in society: Demand relevant laws effective implementation

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ISLAMABAD - International Women's Day, an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments and looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generation of women, was marked here Friday by organising rallies, exhibitions, literary references and discussions mostly held by nongovernmental organisation and civil society.

On the day, women declared their solidarity with the women of the world on the 102nd anniversary of International Women's Day.

Violence whether against women, or people of another sect, religion, ethnicity or country, is a product of a patriarchal mindset - a mindset that seeks to exploit and subjugate others and appropriate resources and power for itself, remarked the participants of a rally held to mark the day.

"Today, as we celebrate International Women's Day, our hearts go out to all those who have lost their relatives and friends in the cold-blooded violence unleashed in our country in the name of religion."

The rally was organised by different civil society organisations and networks including In-sani Huqooq Ittehad (IHI) Network, End Violence against Women and Girls (EVAW/G) alliance, Women Action Forum (WAF), Fight against Dowry Advocacy Network (FADAN) and Youth Advocacy Network. It started from China Chowk and ended at Parade Chowk in

front of the Parliament House where participants made speeches.

The representatives of various organizations and rights activists reiterated their commitment to peace and social justice, and demanded that those who have committed heinous crimes against the nation's citizens must not be allowed impunity.

Another three-day women festival kicked off at Shakarparian. The event is jointly organised by Lok Virsa (National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage), Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights and LOK Parya NGO.

First Lady of Pakistan Begum Nusrat Parvez Ashraf inaugurated the festival. She stressed the need to bring change in the society where women get maximum access to the education, which is ultimately their tool for progress and prosperity.

She also informed about various constitutional provisions introduced by the government for empowering women in different fields of national life and protecting them while serving at workplace.

The festival include exhibition of posters by girl students, women conference, women artisans-at-work, stalls of organisations working for women empowerment, stalls of women entrepreneur and other companies, women games, musical performances, food court by women all over the country, children play area and many other attractions.

Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) arranged Muzakira on the theme of "Pakistan

Literature and Women Writers". Prominent poetess and scholar Kishwar Naheed said observance of women's day in Pakistan was started by Begum Nusrat Bhutto and during Bhutto to government Pakistani women participated in all disciplines of life.

Dr. Raees Fatima said unity of Pakistani women through literature is demand of the hour because a woman can depict women problems through her writings much better than a male writer. Women must be brought into mainstream instead of observing one day for them, she urged.

Woman is not a poor creation, said Sarwat Mohyuddin. The God has gifted patience to her and she builds up a positive society with her fragile body but with strong and unshakeable aims. Although our society is continuously denying the sacrifices of women but she is continuously serving the society by ignoring all such hurdles.

Kausar Sameen viewed that women face strong observations and criticism from society on her liberal speech and writings as compared to men. Yasmeen Hameed expressed that the complications in human relations have been increasing day by day and these complications are changing the overall style of Urdu poetry. The new thoughts in contemporary poetry have been discouraging the gender parity.

The academy also arranged a literary reference in the memory of famous poetess Shabnam Shakeel who recently passed away.

The speakers termed her death a big loss to Urdu literature.

Ifkhar Arif said that Shabnam Shakeel was a unique and stylish poetess with her own diction in Urdu poetry. She wrote many everlasting poems to give awareness of contemporary, particularly women problems in our society by observing the eastern values. Due to her beautiful poetry, she acclaimed love and respect from all segments of society, he added.

White Ribbon also organised 2nd National conference on 'Gender and Media' in which renowned journalists shared their ideas on the role of media for protecting their rights and presenting their real image in the society.

Ambassador of Denmark Ole Emil Moesby speaking on the event stated that gender equity is core of development in any county. He informed that globally only 22 percent news are related to women which is not enough as challenges of women are highly sensitive issues which should be highlighted by the media. He said that 73 percent of media jobs are occupied by men and participation of women in decision making posts is quite rare and there is need to involve more women in news rooms.

Awards made part of the second conference wherein 27 journalists were given awards in various categories.

The Nomad Center & Art Gallery celebrated the day by organising various activities to create awareness on women's right's issues with the aim to achieve an expanded outreach.

On the day Pakistani women's achievements and contributions were shared and celebrated while recognising the roles of supportive males in our efforts.

Nomad conducted various workshops with the aim of mainstreaming the works of female artists and creative children from marginalised backgrounds representing issues reflecting challenges faced by women in respect of human rights violations while showing a ray of hope as a crucial perspective for survival.

The Aman Mela for empowerment through crafts, street children's from Mashal School's Art workshop for awareness and sharing, and a powerful mime performance by 'Thespian Alliance' was also part of the three day-long activities.

The second National Women-at-Work Festival also took off at the F-9 Park. On the inaugural day, over 50 stalls showcasing the women's work were set up. The girls from various educational institutions participated in the art, speech, and drama competitions. The students of the four educational institutions also performed their plays highlighting the women agony in different parts of the country.

This festival is being organised by the Development Communications Network (DEV-COM-Pakistan) in collaboration with the Pakistan Bait ul Maal, ICIMOD, Islamabad Crescent Lions Club (ICLC), Aiwane-Quaid, Nazriya Pakistan Council, and the Debating and Literary Society of the Quaid-i-Azam University.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of civil society hold placards during a rally in connection with the International Women's Day, at China Chowk on Friday. Staff photo by Syed Mehdi