

Saturday, March 09, 2013

Women's access to education way towards progress, prosperity

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Islamabad

Highlighting women's rights through motivating speeches, rallies, theatre performances and art exhibitions, a number of events were organised to commemorate 102nd International Women's Day on Friday.

International Women's Day is celebrated around the world to show solidarity with the women of world. It is a day when women are recognised for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. In 1975, during International Women's Year, the United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day on March 8. Two years later, in December 1977, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace to be observed on any day of the year by member states, in accordance with their historical and national traditions.

Activities began with the inauguration of a three-day women festival jointly organised by Lok Virsa (National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage), Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights and Lok Parya. Begum Nusrat Parvaiz Ashraf, spouse of Prime Minister

Raja Pervaiz Ashraf cut the ribbon to inaugurate the event. In her speech, Nusrat Ashraf talked about various constitutional provisions introduced by the government for empowering women in different fields of national life and protecting them while serving at workplace. "Pakistan is a Muslim society and the role models for our women are Hazrat Khadeeja (RA) and Hazrat Fatima (RA). We 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 stressed upon the masses, in particular non-governmental organisations, civil society and other human right activists to join hands with the government for successful implementation of its on-going policies concerning women development. In his welcoming remarks, Lok Virsa's Executive Director Khalid Javaid apprised about different initiatives undertaken by Lok Virsa to support womenfolk. Chief Executive Officer Lok Parya Jamil Asghar Bhatti also spoke on the occasion.

The festival features include exhibition of posters by girl students, women conference, women artisans-at-work, stalls of organizations working for women empowerment, stalls of



ISLAMABAD: Activist of the Insani Haqooq Ittehad holding a torch during a Women's Day rally at D-Chowk. — INP

women entrepreneur and other companies, women games, musical performances, food court by women all over the country, children play area and many other attractions.

To support the voices of Women with Disabilities, Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP) organised a seminar at National Institute of Special Education. The event

was aimed at giving voice to special women who face double discrimination on the one hand as being a woman and on the other hand as a person with disability. Speakers on the seminar

pointed out that according to World Health Organisation figures, 15 per cent population of the country consists of persons with disability and half of them are women. They added that 70

per cent of women with disability hail from rural areas where they face extreme challenges and their problems always remained neglected. "These women are facing kinds of barriers including attitudinal barriers, communication barriers, accessibility barrier and policy barrier", they pointed out. They further said that in the national persons of persons with disability policy 2002, no article is specifically addressing women with disability.

The day ended with event was a rally organised by Insani Haqooq Ittehad (IHI) that started from China Chowk and ended at Parade Chowk in front of the Parliament House where participants made speeches and presented their Charter of Demand.

The rally was organised by different civil society organisations and networks including Insani Haqooq Ittehad (IHI) Network, End Violence against Women and Girls (EVAW/G) alliance, Women Action Forum (WAF), Fight against Dowry Advocacy Network (FADAN) and Dosti YAN (Youth Advocacy Network). Participants of the rally were carrying placards inscribed with their demands. The speakers said women are rendering remarkable services in every sphere of life but still are deprived of equal opportunities and face violence.