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Patriarchal structures shaken to their core

Twin cities come out to mark International Women's Day; participants demand healthcare rights for all amid pandemic

ISLAMABAD

An 'Aurat Azadi March' was observed after residents gathered outside the Islamabad Press Club on Monday and marched towards D-Chowk to commemorate International Women's Day in the federal capital. In view of last year's attack by a group of men pelting stones and attacking them with sticks, this year the participants were escorted by police officials to ensure their safety.

The organisers brought together women belonging to different socio-economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds on a common platform to protest against patriarchal structures that limit women's rights. The foremost demand of the march this year was based on healthcare rights in light of the global theme of 'Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world'.

In this regard, Aurat Foundation hosted a Women

Leadership Assembly at the Rawalpindi Press Club (RPC) followed by a women's rally in Rawalpindi on Monday.

The celebration brought together women leaders from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples Party, along with human rights activists, artists and around 100 other women under the network 'Women Alliance Pakistan'.

Renowned human rights activist Tahira Abdullah presented a list of demands, which included the inclusion of women, transgender and youth in all parts of the local government, including access to votes, local governments having the same quota for women representatives as the federal government, the creation of women caucuses and improvements to women councillor programs.

She further highlighted the need to recognise that



RALLYING CRY: Holding banners and placards, participants at the Aurat Azadi March shout slogans in the federal capital. PHOTOS: ONLINE

women are human beings and should not be forced to return to homes where they are being abused and that there is a need for feminist training of counsellors in local reconciliation and arbitration

committees.

High Commission of Canada Head of Cooperation Christopher Khung emphasised the need to include men in the struggle for women's rights and underscored that

Pakistan cannot develop if its women are not empowered, stressing the full support of the Canadian government for the women of Pakistan's struggle for their political rights.

Meanwhile National Commission on Rights of Child (NCRC) Chairperson Afshan Tehseen applauded the extraordinary role of women and girls in the country's progress on the occasion of International Women's Day being observed in the federal capital on Monday. Celebrated globally on March 8, it aims to highlight the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, including girls.

She mentioned that this year's theme is 'Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world', which celebrates the tremendous efforts of women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. "The theme highlights how women can be made equal partners in the decision-making process especially with regard to policymaking," she added. AFP