

women are worse off. Literacy among women is less than half of the (abysmally low) rate among men. However, urban upper-class women enjoy opportunities for education and professional work in some fields. They make up most of the membership of women's groups who promote women's rights and lobby the government. But again, growing Islamicization threatens even this slender achievement.

With a GNP per capita of USA dollars 380, Pakistanis know extreme poverty and its consequences. The infant mortality rate is 103 per thousand, much of it caused by simple diarrhoea/dehydration. Mortality is higher among girls than boys who tend to receive better care within the family because higher value is put on their lives. There are 2900 people per doctor and fewer nurses than doctors. Malnutrition and disease take their toll - the average life span is 56 years. Hospitals are free for basic medical care but grossly under-staffed and under-funded.

Adult literacy is 28% - among rural women it is considerably lower, in rural Baluchistan less than one percent. There is no social safety net except for the family/clan and Islamic charities. Unemployment is about ten percent. Working conditions can be harsh, even bordering on slavery - the ILO estimated that in 1989 there were 20 million bonded labourers, a figure which may be exaggerated but nevertheless indicates the scale of the problem. The exploitation of children, for example in the brick-making industry, is epidemic.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada looks forward to an early restoration of civil administration in Sindh and the return of the army to its normal duties. We are pleased that Pakistan has recently passed legislation against bonded labour and look forward to its being fully implemented. We remain dismayed, however, by the deteriorating treatment of women as a result of the application of the Hadood Ordinances and of minorities as a result of various other laws. We are particularly concerned over the government's decision to introduce a religious column in the national identity card. Minorities, especially Ahmadis, Hindus and Christians clearly fear that this can only lead to further discrimination. There is mounting evidence that many prisoners in police custody are the victims of torture and female prisoners of rape; we hope that the Pakistani authorities will soon take remedial measures. Finally, we remain concerned that the special and speedy courts fall short of acceptable standards of due process.

Canada maintains close contact with Pakistani human rights groups, and has been involved in making recommendations for Pakistani participants in Canadian human rights courses. The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development is involved in a project to promote the rights of bonded labourers. Canada frequently makes its concerns known to the authorities, through multilateral channels as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad and the Pakistan High Commission in Ottawa.

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