



राजभवन सूचना परिसर, उत्तराखण्ड

Rajbhawan Uttarakhand-Information Wing

Press Note

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The Governor of Uttarakhand Smt. Margaret Alva has said that even though women in the south Asian region have generally been considered tradition and religion bound, and socially restricted, the region has made a unique contribution in producing women leaders, who have played a stellar role in steering the course of history of the sub-continent.

Delivering her keynote address while presiding over Sri Lanka's National Women's Day celebrations at Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium in Colombo, the Governor said that besides women leaders in Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh who made it to the top, there were many others who reached high positions and fared extremely well in varied spheres and professions once closed to women.

The Governor, however, said that in spite of these positive developments, there are numerous constraints and difficulties that women in the sub-continent are faced with on issues such as violence, healthcare, education, employment, family norms, inheritance, and political participation.

The Governor said, "We as progressive States, must address these challenges and join hands to empower our women, through awareness and opportunities. The benefits of progress must reach the least of them in order to create inclusive societies. From being mere recipients of its benefits, they must become decision makers and participants in the process of development."

The President of Sri Lanka Shri Mahinda Rajapaksa was present at the colourful annual event, held to coincide with the International Women's Day. The theme of this year's National Women's Day was "Daughters of Wonder - Bringing together the great daughters of the land to build a magnificent Sri Lanka."

On the occasion, the Governor said, "It is an accepted fact that nations can no longer afford the cost imposed by gender disparity. They must recognize, that the engines of growth that drive a nation's development are inseparably linked to the contributions made by its women."

She said that the nation building exercise must not only ensure equal opportunities to this important segment of its population, it must also protect it against the impact of a global economy that threatens its livelihoods and market place. "Organising local women, providing cheap credit, upgrading their skills and ensuring marketing support, are essential for their survival", she said.

Laying emphasis upon women's education, the Governor said that it must receive special attention because of its ability to raise their consciousness through knowledge. "But to achieve change through education and to create an environment for a positive social response, educational institutions must take a more proactive position, by linking women's education to the processes that promote their economic emancipation and empowerment. It is an idea and a promise, whose time has come", she said.

Emphasizing upon the need for enhanced women participation in nation building exercise, the Governor said, "The big task before us today, is to ensure justice, to reduce disparities and make women equal partners in nation building. This entails a new determination, and a new approach, to educate public opinion towards eradication of prejudices and abolition of all other practices, which are based on the notion of inferiority of women. It will be too much to expect that these goals can be achieved by Government efforts alone. The political will might be there, but it is not enough. What is essential, is the male will for change, in its attitude towards women; and the determination of women to change things for themselves."

Stating that the landmark Constitution Amendments of 1992 helped greater women's participation in local levels of political activity and governance, the Governor said that, "We can proudly claim to be far ahead of many developed and progressive countries in this respect. These democratic institutions have brought in around 1.5 million women into the system of governance, upholding the principle of an inclusive and participatory democracy, and changing the development agenda at the grass roots."

Those who were present on the occasion include Southern Province Governor Kumari Balasuriya, Women's Affairs Minister Tissa Karalliyaddha, Ministers Maithripala Sirisena, Basil Rajapaksa, Dullas Alahapperuma, Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Dr. Sudharshani Fernandopulle, Pushpa Rajapaksa, Ashoka Lankathilake, and large number of representatives of Sri Lankan women's organizations, among others.