
Weekly Report of Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme

Religious Controversies

1. Top Pakistani religious body rules women's protection law 'un-Islamic'

The Women's Protection Act, passed by Pakistan's largest province of Punjab, which gives unprecedented legal protection to women from domestic, psychological and sexual violence, has been deemed un-Islamic by the Council of Islamic Ideology. The council is known for its controversial decisions. In the past it has ruled that DNA cannot be used as primary evidence in rape cases and also blocked a bill to impose harsher penalties for marrying off girls as young as eight or nine.

Keywords: Pakistan, Women's Protection Act, Council of Islamic Ideology, unislamic

Secularism, Religious Freedom and New Religious Movements

1. Pakistan's religious minorities demand new laws to guarantee civil rights

Pakistan's religious minorities are demanding for the approval of some basic principles of law for religious minorities to ensure the civil rights of religious communities in Pakistan and keep their separate identity within the wider socio-political fabric. Minorities in the Muslim majority country have been facing persecution and do not enjoy equal rights. However, recently Pakistan passed a law which has recognized Hindu marriage act.

Keywords: Pakistan, Religious Minorities, Law, Civil Rights

2. After 28 years, Bangladesh revives case to drop Islam as state religion

Legal action to drop Islam as Bangladesh's state religion has been revived after 28 years, and the country's High Court has agreed to hear the case later this month. Bangladesh's 1971 constitution originally declared all religions were equal in the eyes of the state. However, under the military rule of Hussain Mohammad Ershad the constitution was amended in 1988 to make Islam the state religion.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Islam, State, Religion, High Court

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Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue

1. ‘No Religion Sanctions Violence Against Women’: Interfaith Leaders

In the run up to the International Women’s Day, on March 8, religious leaders from four of Burma’s major faiths have called for a change in community attitudes in order to end discrimination and violence against women and girls. According to the organisers and the panellists, no religion has teachings intended to discriminate against women. They also highlighted how their respective religions call for the equal treatment of every human being, regardless of their gender.

Keywords: Myanmar, Religion, Violence, Women, International Women’s Day