

QUETTA: Politicians, government and the media are neither focusing nor addressing children's issue sufficiently in Balochistan – where child trafficking, corporal-punishment and child labour cases are increasing day by day. This was the conclusion of a play performed by children

from different state-run schools at the Quetta Press Club on Friday. The play shed light on the issues of child abuse in Balochistan.

The play was arranged by Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) SEHER, to mark the Prevention of Child Abuse day.

Students from the fifth to the tenth grade participated in the play, acting as anchor persons, political leaders and key government figures. The school children prepared TV reports on issues like child labour, insecurity and lack of basic facilities at schools, problems faced by the handicapped and under-privileged children.

The performers mimicked different political leaders and were questioned about various issues. Among different performances, the roles of Chief Minister Nawab Aslam Raisani and Maulana Fazalur Rehman caused outbursts of laughter that echoed in the Press Conference Hall.

“Work is work, whether it is done by a child or any adult,” said one of the actors.

According to SEHER, there are 11,000 children in the Quetta city labour force, out of which 10,000 earn money by picking garbage. Also, 2,797 cases of child trafficking were registered in Balochistan – specifically from Taftan, Gwadar and Mandbulo, townships that share border with Iran.

Executive Director of SEHER Abdul Wadood said 62% children drop out of school in Balochistan every year due to the practice of corporal punishment. Most of these children are from the nursery level or the first grade.

“There is no proper check in government schools and religious seminaries over corporal punishment,” said Wadood.

“Over 2,500 children were sexually assaulted in Balochistan since 2007. We have registered 432 cases of child abuse and exploitation in Quetta solely,” said Wadood. He further added that children are abused and exploited at internet cafes, mini cinemas, snooker clubs and restaurants.

According to SEHER, about 20,000 children were recovered while being smuggled to countries bordering Balochistan. “The children belonged to different parts of the province. Desperate measures need to be taken to address the issues of child trafficking, corporal punishment and child labour,” he added.