

WSF's Karachi leg later this month

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The third leg of the polycentric World Social Forum will take place in Karachi from March 24-29. The event originally planned like its counterparts in Venezuela and Mali had to be postponed following the devastating earthquake in Kashmir and Pakistan on October 8 last year.

The six day event, a gathering of civil society organizations from around the world, will be held to reinforce the global movement against globalization, wars, colonization, denial of human rights and a host of other issues.

The opening plenary will be addressed by Bishop Desmond Tutu, Tariq Ali and Arundhati Roy, while the closing plenary will be addressed, among others, by the Dalai Lama.

The organizers hope to attract between 30,000 and 40,000 activists and groups, from different continents, mainly from the Asia-Pacific region, to give a boost to the movement launched in January 2001 at Porto Alegre, Brazil.

This gathering of the civil society will deliberate upon a host of subjects, including the peace initiatives by India and Pakistan, Myanmar-Thailand, Palestine-Israel, Iraq, Iran-West and the US, and Afghanistan.

Mr Karamat Ali, a member of the organising committee said that: "terrorism, matters related to people's right to have control of their natural resources, privatization and trans-boundary disputes, trade development and globalization with particular reference to the WTO, Safta, trade unions and free trading zones would also be part of the agenda."

The issues of social justice and human rights, including democracy, de-institutionalization of political systems, support to military regimes, political victimization, child/women trafficking and sexual exploitation are some of the proposed themes. The event will also provide an opportunity to deliberate upon religious fundamentalism and intolerance and treatment of minorities, besides state-entrenched violence, militancy, violence against women and children and honour killings.

The other issues to be deliberated upon are those relating to water and dams, problems in mega cities, livelihood and the problems faced by fisher-folk, etc.

The organizers said that the city government had assured them of its full cooperation in organizing the event. They expected that the federal government would also facilitate issuance of visas to the delegates and other participants, particularly those coming from India and Bangladesh.

In reply to a question, Mr Karamat Ali said that the WSF charter was actually a charter of humanity and all those subscribing to the views expressed in the charter would be welcomed to attend the moot. Political leaders and activists may participate in their individual and independent capacity, not from the party platform, he added.

Another organiser, Begum Saleha Athar said the event would strengthen the international civil society's quest for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action.

It will provide an alternative open meeting place to the groups and movements of civil society which are opposed to the domination of world by capitalist forces and any form of imperialism and are committed to building a world order meant for humanity.