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Policy demanded for HIV/AIDS control

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI - Speakers in a seminar stressed the need to remove the stigma associated with AIDS in the country and the need for open dialogue to prevent an epidemic of HIV/AIDS. It was held at a local hotel here on Tuesday.

They emphasized the need for a specific policy on this disease.

Dialogue was on "Situational analysis - The challenges of HIV and AIDS in Pakistan." Pakistan National AIDS Consortium, Pakistan Press Foundation and European Commission organized it.

They felt that the taboo should

be removed, as AIDS is not only caused by unsafe sex but also by blood transfusion and reused syringes and needles. They said that there should be no discrimination attached to HIV/AIDS.

It should be treated like other diseases like TB or Hepatitis. Those infected with the virus were also present in the programme and said that the government should support them and their children so that they could lead a better life. They said that they could not openly talk about their problem due to the stigma attached with them.

Dr Saleem Azam stressed that they must stop children from

getting the habit of drug use. He felt that the NGOs were doing more than the government in control of HIV/AIDS.

Dr Sikander Suhani spoke in light of HIV surveillance report of the second quarter 2005 by the National AIDS Consortium programme. He said that poverty and illiteracy were the basic reasons behind the disease. He said that ensuring the use of condoms alone does not solve the problem. Anti Virus solve the problem. He said that denial towards those infected with the virus was the traditional approach.

"We have no behavioural or biological research," he said

while stressing the need for research in Pakistan. Negotiations are important in the prevention and spread of AIDS.

Dr. Arshad for the provincial AIDS Control Programme said that medicines for HIV/AIDS have arrived and the inventory is being made. He said that the prerequisite (forms) for delivery of these medicines was made.

He informed that partnership was being made between the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplant and the Sindh Government in this concern.

It may be mentioned here that government has taken loan of Rs 47 million dollars from the World

Bank for HIV/AIDS

Shaukat Ali said that development of indigenous resources was the need for the future.