

80pc HIV cases are expats sent home from ME

Plan to make compulsory HIV/AIDS tests for marrying couples: Durrani

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PESHAWAR - UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia and Pacific Dr Nafesa Sadiq said that 80 per cent HIV/AIDS registered cases at Antiretroviral Therapy centers in Pakistan are deported Middle East immigrant workers. He warned that in Asia the disease death rate is continued to climb further.

"There are 100,000 injecting drug users in Pakistan with HIV prevalence rate among them ranged from two to five per cent," she said while speaking at an inaugural session of a three-day provincial parliamentary seminar. She also stressed over the religious scholars to play their role, as has been played by South African clergy in social awareness against the disease. Pakistan is one of the eight pilot countries for the UN reforms, she added.

HIV/AIDS is one of the five priority areas for the UN system in Pakistan," she told the parliamentarians of different countries. Speaker Bakht Jehan Khan, Federal Health Minister Nasir Muhammad Khan, Dr Noor Jehan Panizai, Syed Naveed

Qamar, Dr Aldo Landi, Dr Abdul Ghafoor and Ross Robertson also spoke on the occasion.

Speaking as a chief guest NWFP Chief Minister Muhammad Akram Durrani said the government is planning to make compulsory HIV/AIDS tests for marrying couples so that its transmission could be stopped. All steps would be taken to control the disease transmission, he added.

Sri Lankan Health Minister Nimal De Silva said that his country had recorded 856 cases so far, but the number could be around 8,000.

He at the same time termed Antiretroviral Therapy as an expensive treatment, and said that the only better option to contain the ailment was preventive measures.

De Silva stressed over the need for use of new syringes, safe blood transfusion services and safe sexual practices to control further disease transmission. "In one of the Chinese province, where unscreened blood transfusion was very common, the disease transmission ratio was quite high as compared to other parts of that country," he point-

ed out. He said the Australian government had provided intravenous canulas to the IDUs to curtail HIV transmission.

NWFP Health Minister Inayat Ullah said the disease is spreading fast in the province and at the same time stressed upon the masses to follow the teachings of Islam that could protect them against all communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS transmission.

MPA Israrullah Gandapur assured support in the efforts against HIV to the delegates on behalf of the local parliamentarians. He urged the lawmakers to play their part along with the donor organisations to prevent the spread of the ailment. Representatives of the National Aids Control Programme, WHO, UNFPA and UNAIDS also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Abdul Ghafoor said that co-infection of HIV and TB could pose alarming situation in future. He said that HIV patients were more vulnerable to TB. He said that 17.7 million women and 2.3 million children lived with the disease worldwide, and they accounted for 48 per cent of the new infections.