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THE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT

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Public-private partnership against AIDS stressed

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ISLAMABAD: At a dialogue on "Strengthening Public-Private Partnership for HIV and AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Care" in Islamabad Friday, it was unanimously agreed that HIV and AIDS was serious threat that could neither be taken care of by the government or by the civil society organisations alone and rather it required constant and timely efforts both by public and private sector.

During the dialogue, organised by the Pakistan National AIDS Consortium, experts from local and foreign organisations working against AIDS finalised recommendations to strengthen the partnership between the government and the civil society organisations in Pakistan.

They identified poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality, migration, commercial sex industry, lack of the use of condoms and inadequate blood transfusion screening as the factors contributing to the disease.

"To prevent a generalised epidemic, HIV infection should be controlled at the low epidemic stage when it is below five percent in vulnerable groups," said experts. Several HIV/AIDS patients from Kasur told the workshop that they were ignored in the society and treated badly.

PNAC President Raja Khalid Mehmood, on the occasion, said his organisation had initiated a dialogue at national level in consultation with the government to raise awareness amongst consumers about HIV and AIDS.

He was quite confident that the impact of this process would definitely reinforce the efforts being carried out by various government and non-government agencies at provincial and district levels to control spread of this deadly disease.

Raja Khalid said the PNAC would continue playing its role in making people more aware about their responsibilities in addressing issues and challenges related to HIV and AIDS.

Dr. A. Kasool, country's noted economist, brought to light various socio-economic aspects of HIV/AIDS. While emphasising the worst impact of HIV and AIDS on a nation's economy, the economist said the issue should be handled like a "developmental issue".

He also stressed the need for better partnership between private and public sector in this fight against HIV/AIDS.

According to Qaiser Baig, national manager of the PNAC, civil society organisations had