



ISLAMABAD: Vice Chairwoman of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Nilofar Bakhtiar lights earthen lamps during the launching ceremony of an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign at the PRCS Headquarters on Tuesday.

NWFP registers 509 HIV/AIDS cases this year so far

■ Provincial AIDS Control Programme manager says 371 men, 124 women tested positive for deadly disease ■ Says proper screening of people could take HIV/AIDS tally to millions

Staff Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial AIDS Control Programme Manager Dr Sher Muhammad Khan said on Tuesday that 509 cases of HIV/AIDS including 124 women and 371 men were registered in 2009 in NWFP and the figure was increasing day by day.

Speaking at a seminar on HIV/AIDS organised by Provincial AIDS Control Programme here, he said that according to official figures total number of HIV/AIDS prevalence in Pakistan was more than 100,000, while estimated cases as per unofficial figures were nearly 300,000.

He said that Pakistan was previously thought as a country with low prevalence of the infection but now it had moved to high-risk countries where HIV/AIDS prevalence had been increasing for the last five years.

"If proper screening is carried out, the number of infected persons might run in millions," he added.

He said factors behind increasing HIV/AIDS cases included poverty, low literacy rate especially among

PRCS launches HIV/AIDS awareness drive

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on Tuesday launched HIV/AIDS campaign to create awareness of the disease among youth by lighting candles at its National Headquarters here. PRCS Vice Chairwoman Senator Nilofar Bakhtiar was the chief guest on this occasion. She said an estimated 33.2 million people were victim of AIDS worldwide. AIDS has killed an estimated 2.1 million people, including 330,000 children in last seven years, she said. Over three-quarters of these deaths occurred in sub-Saharan Africa retarding economic growth and destroying human capital, she added. Nilofar said though treatment of AIDS/HIV could slow down the course of the disease, currently there was no vaccine

to cure it. Antiretroviral treatment reduces the mortality and the morbidity of HIV infection, but these drugs are expensive and not easily available in all countries, she said. Preventing infection is a key to control the AIDS pandemic and awareness is the pivotal step towards it, she maintained. Some 3,182 HIV/AIDS cases in the country have been reported with the PRCS, she added. She said the PRCS was focusing on youth to make them aware of the infection and the ways it spreads. PRCS Secretary General Muhammad Ilyas Khan said the awareness campaign was aimed at reducing the burden of HIV/AIDS through strengthened local responses, community based prevention, care and anti-stigma activities. PR

women, use of non-sterilised medical instruments, labour migration, lack of system to check for HIV positive deported persons, transfusion of unscreened blood, reuse of syringes, quackery, community dental clinics, street barbers, unsafe sex and rising number of drug addicts that put Pakistan in danger of facing a rapid spread of HIV.

He said the objective of the seminar was to create awareness among the people. Dr Khan said

that the Provincial AIDS Control Programme was providing free treatment to AIDS patients.

NWFP Health Minister Syed Zahir Ali Shah, the chief guest, said in his address that the activity provided an opportunity to express support and solidarity with those living with HIV/AIDS.

He said that arranging the seminar was laudable, but this campaign should be spread to the far-flung areas of NWFP where people

did not know about HIV/AIDS.

He said every possible effort would be made to support the Provincial AIDS Control Programme.

Professor Dr Lubna Hassan said HIV could not be transmitted through casual and everyday contact, shaking hands, coughing and sneezing, swimming pools and toilet seats, eating utensils and food, mosquitoes and other insects and animals.