

MKR & WPF joins hand to celebrate Father's Day June 19, 2007, By Schezee Zaidi Islamabad

Mir Khalilur Rehman Foundation (MKR) and World Population Fund (WPF) joined hands Sunday to celebrate Father's Day in Islamabad.

Parliamentary Secretary for Population Welfare Donia Aziz was present as the guest of honour to share her thoughts regarding the importance of the day while Tehrik-e-Insaf Chief Imran Khan joined later at night to express his point of view.

Families with sons, daughters, wives gathered to take this one-day opportunity to show how much they love and appreciate men in their lives and to say thanks for all they have done while fathers and grandfathers present on the occasion enjoyed the respect and love showered on them by the speakers seeking more direct, more personal and more "real life" ways of expressing thanks, appreciation and love for fathers and other nurturing men in their lives.

The first of its kind initiative taken by MKR and WPF to celebrate Father's Day in a proper manner was a natural opportunity to improve a relationship, reconnects, or connects with a father for the first time.

Mahvish Yasin of WPF anchored the event, which also screened a slide show of photographs and information on Father's Day, followed by a semi-classical music extravaganza.

Speaking on the occasion, Donia Aziz said that celebrating Father's Day is a good initiative in the milieu of our family based society. She said that fathers have an incredible role to play, not just that of a provider but also the role of a guide and mentor.

Donia Aziz said that there is an urgent need to highlight the role of the father and initiate advocacy for men's participation in decisions relating to family health and planning. She said that since rural population is not particularly inclined to discuss family issues related to health, pregnancies, and family planning, the Ministry of Population Welfare started the project of "Male Mobilizers" in 2002, to talk to men about family health programmes.

She said that currently there are about 2,500 Male Mobilisers and there are plans to increase the number to have one Male Mobiliser in each union council. Donia Aziz said that though we have talked to women regarding their problems, but now we need to communicate with men to include them in taking decisions regarding family issues.

She said that government is taking initiatives to protect the rights of the senior citizens by giving concessions in various

sectors. She said that old age benefit is also being increased to improve the social sector assistance.

Imran Khan talked about the strong family system in Pakistan and said that with the leading role of the father still in place in our society, celebrating a separate day for fathers is not very applicable. Talking about the fragmented family structures of the West, he said that even with lack of social security networks, we are still a more civilized society and our fathers enjoy complete respect and honour. He stressed the need to uphold the strong family units, which is the main strength of our society.

Qadeer Baig, the Country Representative of WPF Pakistan said that the youth community in Pakistan is among the largest in the world with over 55 million youth population. He stressed the need for working together to utilize this immense youth power for positive achievements. He also stressed the need to ensure men's involvement and participation in family health affairs.

Qadeer Baig said that while interacting with the youth community, WPF felt the need to create awareness regarding the importance of the role of a father in the lives of growing children, to help and guide them to make a positive choice in life.

Talib Sial, Senior Joint Secretary Ministry of Youth Affairs also shared his views as a father and floated the idea that as both father and mother are treated as one unit and not a separate entity in our society, we should start celebrating "Youm-e-Waldain", instead.

Nadeem Iqbal, the Executive Director of MKR said that in the current times the need to promote ideologies and philosophies of life has increased due to the lack of role models. He said that the day is dedicated to highlight fathers as the role model for future generations. He said that the day is being celebrated to honour all fathers and intends to make the event bigger every year.

Nadeem Iqbal said that MKR is a people-centric body and aims to empower people for social betterment through learning, teaching, and social action. He said MKR has inherited the rich legacy of quality journalism in Pakistan from the dynamic personality of late Mir Khalilur Rehman, Founder of the Jung Group, who encouraged the nation to read and think.

Working in partnership with the Jang Group and GEO TV, MKR Foundation has access to over 10 million thinking people in Pakistan, he said.