



## PRESS RELEASE

### *For Immediate Release*

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## **The Fourth Annual White Ribbon Campaign Kicks Off With a Bang** *Men from all walks join together to speak out on violence against women.*

**Kuala Lumpur, 25 November** – The White Ribbon Campaign 2006 kicked off with a bang today as celebrities, dignitaries, activists and the greater public came together to raise awareness of violence against women.

Organised by non-governmental organisations the All Women's Action Society (AWAM) and Man's Action Network Against Violence (Man.V), this annual event is part of global efforts traditionally held on this day, the International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women.

Supported by United Nations and held at 1-Utama Shopping Centre, the campaign aims to create awareness and pro-active participation among young men in efforts to stem the great tide of acts of violence against women. During the campaign, men wear the symbol of the white ribbon and pledge never to commit, condone or to remain silent about violence against women.

United Nations Resident Coordinator Dr. Richard Leete in his opening speech revealed the shocking facts that more than one third of women suffer physical violence at the hands of their male partners at some point during their lives, and about half suffer emotional abuse. Moreover, up to 20 per cent of women are the targets of sexual violence.

Guest-of-Honour Dato' Param Cu maraswamy, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and respected human rights advocate, said: "It is a period of reflection for men all over, of all walks of life, rich or poor to reflect on the suffering of women subjected to violence by men. It is a period of examining our conscience on the injustice of the matter."

Man.V Coordinator David Anthony also described violence against women as a gross human rights violation. "Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. Violence against women is not a destiny or a misfortune but an injustice," he said.

AWAM President Judith Loh-Koh made an impassioned plea for all to remain silent no longer. "We are all here because we believe it is not enough to be an observer.... We have made the choice to speak out. We need to have a strong collective voice to say no to violence against women. We need to stop this epidemic," she said.

The launch began with a performance by Akademi Seni Kebangsaan to the thunderous drumming of the Tugu Drum Circle depicting the various relationships between men and women. Kuching-based rock band Evenstarr then performed the campaign's theme song "Patah" from their upcoming debut album.

Thereafter, celebrities like Reshmonu, Manbai, Vick Teo (of Malaysian Idol fame) joined the ranks of community groups like the orang asli of Pulau Carey from AWAM's outreach programme, members of the

Youth Against Violence group, college students and members of the public to speak out against violence and sign the White Ribbon pledge.

In a related event, the White Ribbon Campaign 2006 Media Forum brought together members the press to participate in a dialogue and examine the portrayal of women in the media. The panelists were Jason Tan, editor of *Off The Edge*, Ng Miew Luan, Chief of Regional News of *Sin Chew Daily* and Philomena Pragasam, Programme Manager of Traxx FM and with Dr Mary Suma Cardoso.

The panel offered insights into various industry perspectives and standards of practice on the issue of violence and looked at recent sensationalised cases of violence against women in the media. The panel also called for greater gender sensitivity among the media practitioners.

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**The All Women's Action Society (AWAM)** is a leading non-government organisation that advocates for gender equality, non-discrimination and the eradication of violence against women. We provide services for women in crisis, lobby for legal reform and conduct public education programmes.

**Man's Action Network Against Violence (Man.V)** is a group of men who work towards building an egalitarian and non-violent society. Man.V has designed UNFPA-supported workshop programmes to educate young men on violence against women and has conducted these workshops across Malaysia, in Melaka, KL and Terengganu. Man.V is linked with AWAM.

**UNFPA**, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

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