

The panelists speaking at the women's day progra...

that dowry is still a big problem in India but in recent times many parents are realising that the best dowry they can give to their daughters is a good education. She also added that the media can play a big part to eliminate social taboos and barriers that prevent women from excelling in all areas.

Speaking about how the economic condition of her country has affected women, the ambassador of Norway Aud Lise Norheim said that affluence has encouraged women to take up leadership positions which have in turn given rise to more day care centres.

The Swedish ambassador Britt Flagstrom also spoke about day care centres and how in her country a combined maternity leave for both parents encourages men to get involved with bringing up a baby.

The Swiss ambassador Dora Rapold expressed her disappointment at the fact that girls today take their freedom for granted and said that if the current generation does not appreciate the struggle that has taken place to come to this position what has been achieved so far maybe lost very soon.

The Canadian ambassador Barbara Richardson, who is a mother of young children, said that it has been very difficult to juggle home and work but she believes that supportive employers and understanding from society as a whole can help a woman enormously when the going gets tough. She believes that women can bring creativity and intuition into and organisation.

Rokia Rahman presented the condition of Bangladeshi women in a positive light. "I have worked with women in villages and I was surprised to see how intelligent they are about starting their own business. They seem to know exactly where to invest their money in to get the best return," she said.

Najma Akhter who joined as a garments worker when she was only 11 years old said, "I decided to become a trade union leader because although 75% of the garment workers are women, they are represented by a male dominated union. I want to establish the fact that we are workers first and women second." She expressed her anger although they were working side by side with the men very late at night their work was not equally recognised as men.

Important points were raised at the discussion. One was that women must be recognised, appreciated and supported in their productive as well as reproductive roles. Women must also be able to actively participate in public life and making decisions. Women must also be ensured a violence-free environment at home and outside. Laws that discriminate and perpetuate male preference must be repealed. A uniform family code for all women must be established.