

From Iran Iranian Women Win New Legal Rights

Tehran: Iran will grant more rights to women in family courts, the official Islamic News Agency said on Tuesday. "The judicial procedure currently applicable in family courts will be reviewed in an effort to put an end to women getting tyrannized." IRNA quoted judicial head Ayatollah Mahmud Hashemi Shahroudi as saying "Women have for so long been ignored in society and this has nothing to do with Islamic jurisprudence but rather originated from the unhealthy norms prevailing in society," the ayatollah added.

Under Iranian civil law, men can divorce their wives any-time they want but women in the Islamic Republic have in principle no legal right to divorce without their husband's

approval. The law has been criticized by Iranian feminists. But the Parliament has recently approval laws upon which women have the right to divorce their husbands in case of addiction or sterility or when they leave their wives for more than six months. - DPA (Daily Star, July 26, 2000)

From Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Princess in Official Post

The Saudi News Agency reported that a Saudi Princess was appointed deputy assistant at the Ministry of Education. This position is the highest ranking administrative post ever given to a women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The appointment was announced at the end of a Cabinet meeting headed by King Fahed Bin Abdel Aziz Al-Sououd in Jaddeh. (An-Nahar, July 11, 2000)

Campaign to Encourage Breast-Feeding in Public By Suha Ma'ayeh

Amman - The Ministry of Health next week will launch a national campaign to promote breast-feeding among mothers to encourage them to nurse their children in public. "The objective is to motivate mothers to breast feed their children wherever they are," said Muna Hamzeh, chief of the ministry's health education department told [sic] the Jordan Times on Monday.

Relying on the support of the husbands, immediate family members and relatives, Hamzeh said society should encourage mothers to practice their right to feed their babies. She added assisting lactating mothers will allow them more time to nurse instead of rushing to complete their chores at home or work in order to find time to nurse. Hamzeh said "a baby friendly mother and child concept" will be institutionalized in the Health Ministry's maternal and child centers to prepare women for breast-feeding in their early months of pregnancy.

Many women shy away from nursing children in public. Socio-economic developments have discouraged women from the practice, as they have other priorities to tend to. Mothers are entitled to a three-month maternity leave in the private and public sector. When they return to work, they are entitled to a one-hour nursing leave each day, for several months.

The campaign does not provide a specific time as to when mothers should stop nursing, but emphasizes that mothers can breast feed the first six months without any supplements. According to Health Ministry sources, more than 40 to 50 per cent of mothers lactate for more than a year.

A study conducted by University of Jordan professor Mahmoud Alawi from the department of Analytical Chemistry and Environmental Analysis found high levels of dioxin in the breast milk in Jordanian women who lactate for long periods of time. He was quoted earlier this month as saying that he considers breast-feeding longer than a year "harmful" to the child.

The study, conducted in cooperation with the German Institute of Ecological Chemistry and Waste Analysis at the Technical University of Braunschweig, revealed that all samples of breast milk taken from women in five large cities were above the maximum tolerable level of dioxin per gramme of fat milk. Dioxin is one of the most toxic chemicals known to cause cancer, birth defects and damage to the immune system, liver, skin and neuromuscular systems. (previously published in the Jordan Times, Tuesday July 25, 2000)