

12/10/1999

Call for new attitude towards AIDS victims

Bhavani Krishna Iyer

A CHANGE of attitude among the public will play a pivotal role in providing HIV/AIDS victims a better place in the society, Kuala Lumpur Datuk Bandar Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff said.

Human immunodeficiency virus or HIV and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS victims had the right to live and they deserved as much respect as any other ordinary citizen, added Kamaruzzaman.

Opening the "Positive Lives" Exhibition at Galeri Petronas, KLCC, recently, Kamaruzzaman said behind every HIV/AIDS victim was a sad story.

"These stories have been captured by renowned photographers for exhibition and it is my sincere hope that the exhibition will create an awareness in the public of how HIV and AIDS affect the victims, their family and friends," he said.

The exhibition was among the activities organised by the Malaysian AIDS Council in conjunction with the Fifth International Congress On AIDS in Asia and Pacific (ICAAP) to be held in Kuala Lumpur from Oct 23 to 27.

Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, vice-president Datuk Dr Low Bin Teck and Galeri Petronas director Zainal Abidin Ahmad Sharif were present.

Marina said "Positive Lives" was a documentary in photograph format presenting the other side of HIV/AIDS victims which was often left undiscovered.

She said in the process of getting involved in preventive strategies, "we forget that behind every statistic and case there is a human being much affected and suffering".

The photographs also revealed how love and care had given hope to some HIV/AIDS victims.

The fifth ICAAP is expected to attract some 3,000 international participants.

"Positive Lives" is an extraordinary collaboration - a story of people coming together to share their experience of HIV and AIDS.

The exhibition began in 1990 and was designed to tell the human story behind HIV and AIDS in Britain.

It has been a project far exceeding the expectations of the organisers and has been taken on an international tour since 1993.

As part of the cultural programme for the fifth ICAAP, a collection of 67 "Positive Lives" photographs of the South Asian Chapter, namely Bangladesh and India, have been selected for display at Galeri Petronas.

The exhibition features the works of internationally-renowned photographers Shahidul Alam, Mike Abraham and Dayanita Singh from the collection of Drik Gallery, Bangladesh.

The congress is the largest HIV/AIDS congress for the region and is especially significant since it is being held in a Muslim country for the first time.

It is also hosted by a non-Governmental organisation (Malaysian AIDS Council), for the first time in ICAAP history.

The congress, "The Next Millennium: Taking Stock And Moving Forward", focuses on the region's need to evaluate past activities which would enable better formulation of prevention strategies, treatment and cure for HIV/AIDS victims.

(END)