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Marina: Hear out youngsters speaking on AIDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Young people should be encouraged to discuss AIDS in meetings and symposia rather than being treated like children and discouraged from doing so, Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said today.

"There is a mistaken belief that young people cannot be involved in discussions on AIDS.

"They must be allowed to discuss the matter freely, and we in the council would appreciate any feedback from them as we want to know their views," said Marina.

She was speaking to reporters after launching the 12th World AIDS Day at the National Library today.

Marina said youngsters must increase their knowledge about AIDS as most of those who had AIDS were youngsters.

"Statistics from the Ministry of Health reveal that 70 per cent of those with AIDS in Malaysia are in the 17 to 25 age group. That is why we must focus on the youngsters."

The World AIDS Day was commemorated with young people voicing their hopes on issues of care and treatment, awareness, prevention and participation in AIDS programmes for the next millennium.

The event had been formulated and implemented by groups of young people.

"This year, the Malaysian AIDS Council has taken the first step by providing a platform for young people to initiate ideas and implement them in planning the content of World AIDS Day.

"Involving, empowering and mobilising young people to take action on AIDS issues is one of the Malaysian AIDS Council's main objectives in holding this event.

"Not only were young people actively involved in organising the event, they were also responsible for formulating the 'Wish List' and the young person's symposium today."

The list was read out by young people at the event. It covered four broad topics of participation, awareness, partnership and care and treatment.

It was the result of a brainstorming session among 25 young people aged between 14 and 27.

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