

07/03/2000

Time to introduce sex education

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I WELCOME the call by the president of the Malaysian AIDS Council Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir that sex education should be introduced to our school curriculum to combat the increasing number of youths being exposed to the deadly virus (NST, March 3).

The Fifth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, which was held in Kuala Lumpur late last year, revealed some chilling statistics on the true situation of the killer disease.

The World Health Organisation's experts on AIDS estimate one in every 2,000 Malaysian adults is HIV positive.

Worldwide, it is estimated that this year one million babies are to be born with HIV. Some 300,000 of them are expected to die before celebrating their first birthday.

Elsewhere, in Africa experts estimated more than one person will die everyday from AIDS (NST, Oct 29, 1999).

In Malaysia, despite various efforts by the Ministry of Health, Malaysian AIDS Council and the media, with regard to the deadly AIDS disease, the situation seems to be heading for a critical level. Sex and health education plays a paramount role in combating a disease of this nature.

Reports by certain western countries that are experiencing a declining trend in the number of HIV positive cases among the younger generation have supported this point.

The ICAAP Fifth International Congress, organised jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Malaysian AIDS Foundation, has rightly pointed out - among other things - that we are on the verge of losing the battle against the AIDS scourge if drastic and bold measures are not introduced immediately.

It is time we spell out some drastic measures and act on them. The situation is getting worse and we cannot afford to wait any longer. The statistics speaks for itself. Our youths have been classified as the most vulnerable group.

Delaying a comprehensive sex education to the youths amounts to denying their right to life-saving education.

I strongly support the call by the Malaysian AIDS Council that the Education Ministry should quickly look into the possibility of introducing sex education in schools.

If the word sex is offending to certain quarters give it another name, so long as children are aware of the birds and the bees and the dangers associated with premarital sexual relationships and other health issues. The time, money and effort spent on this life-saving education will guarantee a healthy, prosperous and vibrant generation of youths to face the challenges of the new millennium.

On behalf of all concerned parents I appeal to the Government in particular the Education Minister, Tan Sri Musa Mohamad, to give utmost priority to this issue.