

# 'Restricting condom sales only leads to greater problems'

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat:** Restricting the sale of condoms may cause greater problems as their usage is the choice of the individual concerned.

Users may still get condoms through illegal channels and women can end up as victims of unsafe sex and fall prey to sexually-transmitted diseases, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said today.

"Getting doctors to prescribe condoms may backfire because even the seriously ill sometimes refuse to go to doctors for medicine.

"Thus, expecting them to go to doctors just to get condoms is impractical."

Shahrizat was commenting on reports on Tuesday that the Selangor government has agreed with the state youth council's proposal that there should be restrictions on the sale of condoms, and that they should be sold only at specific locations such as clinics, hospitals and pharmacies.

The Selangor Fatwa Committee has also supported the proposal, which is supposedly aimed at discouraging teenagers from indulging in free sex.

Shahrizat said it is wrong to generalise that all youths indulge in free sex or that they are the main users of condoms.

"Do not generalise that all youths engage in free sex based on the doings of a few.

"Although we do not have the right statistics on who and the number who use condoms, we should not forget that millions of married couples in this country use condoms as a way of birth control.

"The restriction may limit their choice," she said at the launching of the Keluarga Bahagia - Smart Kids-CIE Cares PC donation drive here today.

Yesterday, National Fatwa Council chairman Datuk Dr Ismail Ibrahim said the issue of restricting condom sales is more a social problem rather than a religious one.

Selangor Youth Council president Datuk Abdul Rahman Patil, in calling for the restrictions on the sale, argued that the current practice of selling condoms openly is yet to show a positive result in combating the HIV/AIDS problem in the country.

However, various women's groups and the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) have voiced their disagreement to the proposal by the council and the "Selangor" Fatwa Committee.

MAC president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said all women must have the right to protect themselves from unsafe sex and refuse unsafe sex with HIV-infected husbands: