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Women-HIV

WOMEN SHOULD BE GIVEN THE RIGHTS TO SAY "NO" TO SEX

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Women should be given the rights to say "no" to sex if their partners are HIV carriers to ensure that they are not infected.

This is the view of Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen who is MCA Wanita Chief and Malaysian AIDS Council President Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir.

The three women leaders said women should be given the rights for good health and as a move to reduce the increasing number of women infected by HIV.

They said this at a media conference after the launching of "Wanita MCA Iceberg II - A Message of Love and Hope". It was launched by Shahrizat at a shopping complex here today.

The project is to raise awareness among Chinese women on HIV/AIDS by holding roadshows all over the country, starting with Melaka for Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah for Sabah/Sarawak.

According to Marina, although the number of women infected with HIV/AIDS is small, it has leapt from just nine women (with HIV) in 1990 to 629 last year.

"It is a big leap, and this figure did not include unregistered cases," she said.

Last year, 51,256 HIV infection cases were reported to the Health Ministry, 7,218 of which were AIDS cases with 5,424 of succumbing to the disease.

The ministry also recorded an increase of nearly 46 per cent in the number of new cases last year from 834 in 2001 to 1,218 last year.

On the needs for halfway houses for women and children from families with HIV cases, Shahrizat meanwhile said the ministry would facilitate the setting up of such facilities when needed.

On the part of the AIDS Council, Marina said it had taken care of about 300 women and children from such families.

She said there was a need for such facilities as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) released early this year an estimated figure of 14,000 children, who were orphaned by AIDS in the country.

This would create social problems due to public discrimination of families with HIV, she said.

Shahrizat also launched the MCA'S HIV/AIDS Information Manual in Mandarin and English.

Dr Ng meanwhile said the Iceberg II, a continuation of its first project on HIV/AIDS, the Iceberg I launched in 2001, was to disseminate correct information about HIV/AIDS to schoolchildren in national type and independent Chinese schools.

Last year, Chinese accounted for 14.4 per cent of the HIV infections and 27.7 per cent of AIDS cases reported, she said.

-- BERNAMA

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