

HindustanTimes.com

Editorial

One hurdle too many

December 3, 2005

*Anti - centre's response
Editorial*

The home Ministry's response to a petition filed in the Supreme Court for removing homosexuality as an 'offence' is myopic in its approach. The ministry has trashed the NGO, Naz Foundation's request, claiming there was no evidence that the inclusion of homosexuality as a sexual offence hampered its work for the Aids affected. It is ironic that the petition was returned even as the PM exhorted the nation to shed inhibitions in talking about sexuality issues. That the Planning Commission and the Law Commission have recommended legalising prostitution and homosexuality has been ignored by ministry officials.

*Planning
Comm +
Law Comm
for legalizing
prosto +
homos.*

In being dismissive of the issue, officials have highlighted the urgent need to re-engineer the paradigm on which we view the Aids scourge. To understand the linkages, one can also look at similar constraints faced by NGOs funded by the US for Aids work with prostitutes - sex work being

illegal and closely linked with crimes of trafficking. We are not drawing parallels between prostitution and alternative sexuality on the basis of their vulnerability to HIV. But like the US, we are struggling to meet urgent healthcare needs without endorsing practices that may lead to increased vulnerability to HIV. A human being cannot be denied healthcare on the basis of his work or sexual orientation. The government should not be allowed to be held hostage to dogmatic beliefs.

Let's not hold sexual orientation against a citizen's rights to testing and treatment. Privacy issues aside (a person's preferences is none of our business), it is a duty to treat the ailment, not victimise the patient. The virus is spreading at an alarming rate among heterosexual populations too. Discriminatory policies will only be self-defeating.
