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Title: Need to bring forth a legislation for combating AIDS.

SHRIMATI ARCHANA NAYAK (KENDRAPARA): Thank you very much. I would like to raise the following matter for the consideration of the hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare:-

It is really shocking to hear that India has topped in the number of persons affected with AIDS in the world. Almost 39 per cent of AIDS patients are women in India. The HIV prevalence rate in young women exceeded that of young men. In the 15 to 24 age group, while prevalence rate of HIV in men is 0.22 per cent, it is 0.46 per cent in women in the same age group.

Gender inequalities in society left girls and young women socially and economically disadvantaged, greatly increasing their vulnerability. The culture of silence surrounding sex issues led them to remain ignorant of its spread and prevention. Social constraints also limited their access to prevention services. Early marriage also posed risks to young women. This is relevant as 50 per cent of them were married by 18 years. A significant proportion of HIV infections in India occurred in married women infected by unprotected sex.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government to bring in an effective legislation at the earliest to fight against the spread of AIDS, to create awareness amongst the rural people and to prevent discrimination against AIDS patients in the country.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI): Sir, yesterday only our Cabinet cleared a huge package for the entire programme. As the hon. Member may be aware, more than few hundred crore is allotted for AIDS fund and that will be entirely spent for this country and for this programme.

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