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# Stork talk is no child's play

Nobody disagrees that we should have sex education. But with the impasse that we have now, the more aware and concerned parents have to do their own educating.



**I** MAY be getting long in the tooth these days but I've always held high hopes for the youths of today.

Everywhere I go, whether here in this country or abroad, it is the young people who I find most enthusiastic and energised about the world, ever eager to contribute to society in one way or another.

As much as we like to think of the youths of today as lethargic and apathetic, there are certainly also plenty who are bright young things, sparkling with new ideas.

I saw that recently at the United Kingdom and Eire Council of Malaysian Students (UKEC) conference in London where many of the students got up to ask some really sharp questions.

And I've seen that with the young women students at the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Every visit I've had there has been nothing short of inspiring.

Of course, let's not forget the youth-led revolutions in the Middle East, where they have helped to mobilise people using social media.

Meanwhile, back home, someone who calls himself Yoof was making a rare visit to a bookstore, probably heading to the magazine section to look for short reads on cars and football, when he came to a screeching halt in the kiddie section upon seeing a book called *Where Do Babies Come From?*.

Instantly donning his righteous cap, he quickly scanned this book

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meant for eight-year-olds, utterly shocked at learning how babies are made (all this time he thought they came from Aisle B at Tesco), blushed and made the sort of thoughtful decision that only Yoof can make: ban this book, it's obscene!

While youths elsewhere are conducting revolutions and changing the course of their countries, ours are banning children's books. Way to go, Yoof!

For decades, the seemingly endless debate in our country about sex education has revolved around only one question: who should do it?

Teachers are reluctant to handle the awkward questions that may arise while parents think it's better done in the more formal setting of school.

Nobody disagrees that we should have sex education.

The best formula is actually to have both teachers and parents do it; teachers do the fact-based bits while parents deal with the many emotional issues that are bound to come up.

But with the current impasse that we have now, where essentially our kids are not getting any sex education, the more aware and concerned parents have to do their own educat-

ing.

Every day we read of children being sexually abused, unwanted babies being born and often dumped while sexually-transmitted diseases including HIV continue to spread.

It's obvious that to at least prevent some of these, we need to educate our children about both their bodies and about sex.

There have been enough studies overseas to show that there is a strong correlation between good school-based sex education and low rates of teenage pregnancies.

Now, if parents want to educate their children – they have every right to do that – then some teaching aids are needed. Good simple books are very helpful.

When I asked the inevitable question at age 11, my mother brought out a cartoon book, not unlike Peter Mayle's, to explain the facts of life to me. It helped her and me a lot.

I suppose the easily shocked Yoof is not a parent yet or is going to leave the educating of his children to someone else (the Internet perhaps?).

And our equally easily shocked Home Ministry, which is probably embarrassed that it was caught out

sleeping for the past 30 years, immediately banned the book.

So now, perhaps Yoof would like to check all the Education Ministry's materials on sex education, too. Or perhaps, the ministry can write its own sex education book. No doubt a book that says babies are made when Daddies put their ahem-ahem in Mummies' dot-dot-dot would really be helpful.

By the way, you've heard the story of the nurse who told a woman to put her diaphragm at her "door" and then was puzzled when the woman came back a few months later pregnant, right? Turns out that she'd been putting it at the door to her bedroom.

Meanwhile, Yoof and friends have offered to go through every single book there is to ensure that no others will make them blush.

I think that's a great idea really. It'll keep them well occupied, make them better informed and perhaps improve their English. Might be a way to keep Mat Rempits off the streets, too.

The rest of us, meantime, will carry on with, oh you know, unimportant things like trying to survive in this economy and bringing up our kids to be decent well-educated children.