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New Delhi, September 4: The protectors of the society too need protection. Or so had thought the organisers of a concert to educate 6,000 policemen on HIV/AIDS.

Concert For Life, held at Talkatora Stadium on Wednesday night, was meant to spread awareness about the disease. But when "informed" speakers prescribe holidays, not condoms, ignorance may no longer be bliss.

Consider this: Sudhir Sharma, chairman of Delhi Labour Welfare Board, telling the audience that AIDS is a foreign phenomenon. "Indians are so pure, these foreigners will never understand our culture," he said, suggesting an ingenious way of tackling HIV/AIDS: "If the constables are given holidays, all the pressure will be taken off them. And then I promise, no disease will touch them."

Not that many would have realised how unrealistic the idea was. Constables admitted that they were unaware of the disease or its threat. Said one from Bengal Police: "I and my colleagues don't know anything. We came to just watch the concert."

A constable of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), who is stationed at Kalkaji, said he had heard about the virus, but that was all. And considering what the speakers had to offer, others like him would have been hardly enlightened by the end.

The function opened with a performance by pianist Brian Silas with the song Woh subah kabhi to aayegi. Sreerupa Mitra Chaudhary, president of organisers Coalition for Rural Empowerment (CORE), said: "AIDS is not a disease. It's a phenomenon which makes us evaluate our culture. I request you to take our message forward to your states and battalions."

While Dennis Lazarus, deputy resident representative of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in India, called "HIV/AIDS everyone's concern", S. Rathore did speak about the disease and its causes.

Rathore, Joint Director of National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), said: "The young in the defence and the paramilitary are extremely vulnerable. They belong to the age-group that is most susceptible to AIDS. More than 80 per cent of the cases in India are because of unprotected sex. Until there is sex education in schools and the society broadly, we cannot control the disease."

Asked what he had understood, a Delhi Police constable, said he now knew that AIDS must be contained but was not sure about the symptoms or how to take precautions.

The speeches were followed by theatrical portrayals on the agony of AIDS victims. First by Bharatnatyam exponent Geeta Chandran and her troupe followed by Komal Gandhar, a 22-member group of prostitutes and their children who have been rehabilitated. The function came to an end with a fusion music and contemporary dance performance by Creation Group. Whatever happened to HIV/AIDS.