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PAEDIATRIC AIDS FUND TO HELP HIV/AIDS CHILDREN

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) today launched its Paediatric AIDS Fund (PAF) in efforts to assist and care for children who are HIV-positive and those affected with AIDS.

MAF Chairman Marina Mahathir said the aim of the PAF was to provide financial assistance for the education and medical treatment of children infected by HIV/AIDS and their families.

It would also be given to groups involved in disseminating information in creating public awareness towards issues relating to paediatric AIDS as well as social research to improve the quality of life of the affected children, she said.

"Children must not be deprived of educational opportunities and normal childhood just because there is HIV in their lives," she told reporters after the launching of PAF by the Education Minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, here.

Marina, who is also the president of the Malaysian AIDS Council, felt that supporting these children was a valid measure to prevent the risks of infection later which would render them more vulnerable to all factors.

Asked whether the MAF was considering setting up a special home for these children, Marina said that the foundation was studying the matter as it did not want the children to be abandoned by their families.

According to Marina, there are approximately 700 children below the age of 19 in Malaysia infected with HIV and the number is expected to be rising.

For a start, she said that the foundation has organised a charity premiere of the Walt Disney film "Toy Story" to be screened on May 12 at the Tanjong Golden Village, One Utama Cineplex, Bandar Utama here.

The foundation hopes to raise RM500,000 from the premiere through the sale of tickets and sponsorship, said Marina. The foundation now has an allocation of RM1 million.

"Toy Story" is a full length computer animated feature which has been awarded an academy award for special achievements and will be released worldwide on May 23.

Tickets are sold at RM100 for adults and RM50 for children. Those interested in the show can contacted the PAF (tel 03-7581033). --BERNAMA

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