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Adults' responsibility to ease suffering of infected children

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - It is the adults' responsibility to ease the suffering of children infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, and enable children at risk of HIV to grow up uninfected.

Malaysian AIDS Council president and Malaysian AIDS Foundation chairman Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said today although AIDS was the most publicised disease in the world, its impact on children had not been adequately dealt with.

"In a world with AIDS, children must become everybody's responsibility," she said during the unveiling of MAC and MAF's World AIDS Day media campaign, directed at the issue of social discrimination against affected children.

This year's World AIDS Day theme, "Children Living in a World with AIDS", was selected by the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS.

"It is our hope that the campaign will increase public understanding of the magnitude of the epidemic as well as result in policies and actions which would prevent HIV transmission and minimise the impact of AIDS on children, their families and their communities," she said.

Meanwhile students of Futurekids Computer Learning Centre presented more than 200 "Hope & Care" cards to Marina, to be distributed to children affected by HIV/AIDS in Malaysia and overseas.

Marina also accepted a RM10,000 contribution from family and friends of Futurekids students, which will go to MAC's Paediatric AIDS Fund for Malaysian children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

She also unveiled the MAC and MAF's programme for World AIDS Day.

On Sunday, Malaysians will be able to take part in the annual Red Ribbon Carnival which offers sports, cultural and other fun activities under the patronage of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, will be the guests of honour at Sunday's Red Ribbon Concert.

Pharmaceutical company Merck, Sharp & Dohme has pledged RM20,000 for Walk of Hope on the same day, aimed at promoting public solidarity in challenging the impact of AIDS in Malaysia.

All three events will take place at Stadium Merdeka. Entrance to the carnival is free, while those interested in attending the concert will be invited to donate a minimum of RM5.

Marina also said Malaysia would host the Fifth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in 1999.

The biennial ICAAP is aimed at advancing communication and collaboration transcending disciplines, cultures and boundaries on scientific, behavioural, educational, ethical, economic and political aspects of AIDS.

Its objectives are to instill a higher degree of awareness about HIV/AIDS and its impact in Malaysia; to bring about better management of HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia and to provide the best and latest information on HIV/AIDS research.

About 3,000 participants are expected to attend.

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