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Marina-Aids

MARINA CLAIMS CREDIT FOR ANTI-AIDS FIGHT

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, June 23 (Bernama) -- The president of the Malaysian Aids Council Marina Mahathir told an international conference here today that the Malaysian government has treated Aids seriously and her organisation has influenced government policy.

Speaking at the three-day Third International Aids Impact Conference, attended by hundreds of Aids scientists and researchers from around the world, Marina said there was still resistance to Aids education in "Muslim Malaysia and Indonesia" because such conservative societies associated Aids with "immoral and depraved behaviour".

She said Malaysian anti-drug agencies, for instance, lacked interest in HIV transmission among intravenous drug users.

Marina said the Indian and Indonesian governments were "still in denial" about the impact HIV would have on their countries. India faced more devastation from Aids than any country and two million Indonesians would be HIV-positive by the next decade with no commensurate national response.

Marina said Asia and the Pacific were relative latecomers in Aids prevention and education, despite the region being more affected than any other continent.

It was left to non-government organisations such as the Malaysian Aids Council to implment realistic approaches to care.

She said many Asian countries, despite their denial of Aids, had the resources to combat the disease.

It would not be difficult to mobilise them if the political will was there, she added. -- BERNAMA

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