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Marina calls for media to dispel myths about AIDS

PENANG, Mon. - The media has been urged to play a greater role in dispelling myths and misunderstandings about HIV and AIDS among the public.

In making the call today, Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said this could be done by providing the public with more accurate and factual reports on the disease.

"Many myths and misunderstandings about HIV and AIDS abound today because of inaccurate and sensationalist reporting about the disease by the media, especially in the West in the early days," she said.

"This is because the tendency of the media in the West then was to sensationalise rather than provide accurate factual reporting on the epidemic," she added.

Marina was launching a day-long media practitioners' workshop on HIV/AIDS jointly organised by the MAC and the Malaysian Press Institute at the City Bayview Hotel here.

The workshop is the first to be organised for the Press outside of Kuala Lumpur where three similar events have been held.

It is attended by about 20 journalists from various media organisations in the northern region.

Topics discussed include the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS, prevention programmes and the treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Marina said the aim of such workshops was to provide the media, as the crucial link in providing information to the public, with accurate and factual information on the disease.

She added that it was because of the crucial role of the media in educating the public that the biennial Red Ribbon Awards was introduced in 1996 as an incentive to get people in the media, in advertising and in the arts to disseminate more information on HIV/AIDS and related issues.

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