

Treat AIDS cure claims with caution: Council

PETALING JAYA, Tues: The Malaysian AIDS Council has advised people with HIV/AIDS to be wary of claims of a cure for the illness, and to consult a physician before seeking such treatment.

The council, which echoed the Health Ministry's stand that scientific research is needed to prove the effectiveness of treatment, said the claims should be verified before they are publicised.

Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said in a statement today that for a cure to be valid two things must be fulfilled.

"Firstly, a viral load test must determine if the HIV virus is eradicated from the body," she said.

"Secondly, the immune system must be rehabilitated because if it remains dama-

ged, a patient will still be susceptible to opportunistic' diseases that may prove fatal."

There is a need to determine if the medicine is merely treating the symptoms, she said, adding if the virus remains in the body, the immune system will progressively get weaker leading to opportunistic illnesses.

However, the council feels that such claims should be taken seriously as they may be a cure for AIDS.

Last Friday, a Bahasa Malaysia daily reported the claims of a woman who said she was cured of HIV/AIDS after taking a herbal medicine known as "Gelighar" made by Vihsdia Enterprise.

Following this, Positive Living, a support programme under the Pink Triangle, was flooded with enquiries.