

# NGOs outraged over slip-up

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**PETALING JAYA, Mon:** How could this have happened? Does this reflect the carelessness of government hospitals?

These were the questions raised by several NGOs responding to the recent medical mishap which resulted in a housewife being infected with HIV.

The Malaysian AIDS Council, expressing regret over the incident, urged the Health Ministry to heed the results of the investigations

## 'Apology for woman given HIV-infected\* blood inadequate'

carried out and identify the source of the negligence.

Its president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said the consequent response is for the ministry to reassure the public that the occurrence of similar incidents is rare and will ensure it will not be repeated.

National Council Women Organisation (NCWO) secretary-general Ramani Gurusamy described the incident as most unfortunate and a terrible mistake.

She said the incident must serve as a reminder to hospitals of how crucial it is to adhere strictly to proce-

dures in blood screening.

"There should not be a mix-up of blood which has been screened and that which has not because this may mean life or death of an innocent patient," said Ramani.

Women Lawyers Association president Rasamani Kandiah said the incident was alarming and would affect public confidence of government hospitals.

"An apology won't be enough," she told the Sun.

### BLOOD SCREENING PROCEDURE

- A donor enrolment form needs to be filled, stating the donor's particulars and lifestyle, whether he/she indulges in risky behaviour which may put them in high risk groups.
- Thereafter, donors also must undergo physical examination to determine if they are fit to donate. The details include the donor's weight, height, any ailments, blood pressure and haemoglobin level.
- The blood taken from a donor is put in a bag and labelled with his particulars. This will also include his blood group. A standard practice following standard guidelines requires a specimen form the blood be screened.
- A small blood sample is taken for screening for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, syphilis and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. This container is also labelled.
- Screening takes one day and at most two days.
- If it reads positive then the blood bag is destroyed or incinerated. The donor is contacted to inform him of the result and he is given counselling.
- Only when the blood sample tests are negative for all the diseases, will it be released for transfusion. The blood donated will be kept for between two and five weeks, depending on the chemicals used.
- Screening for HIV and other diseases is done to ensure the blood is not contaminated.

