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## Plan to improve blood donation procedures

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Malaysian AIDS Council will work with the Health Ministry to improve present blood donation procedures and simplify blood donation forms.

Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said today a revamp of the present blood donation system was needed as questions on the existing form were confusing and gave potential blood donors the wrong impression.

"The questions are not fully understood by people, especially those relating to high-risk behaviour such as having multiple sexual partners, engaging in homosexual and bisexual practices and abusing drugs intravenously," she said.

The present form states that those who practice such high-risk behaviour should refrain from donating blood.

Marina said because of this, people who suspect themselves of being HIV positive would still donate blood at donation drives in order to avoid having their health status questioned by their friends and colleagues.

"If these people decline to donate after reading the form, it will raise questions in the minds of other people present due to the social stigma attached to the disease."

The review proposal comes on the heels of the recent case where a 47-year-old woman was given HIV-contaminated blood by the Jitra Hospital in Kedah while she underwent treatment for menstrual complications.

A blood test on May 8 showed that the woman was HIV positive. Her family has since filed a RM100 million suit against the hospital.

She said the council would give its input on how to make blood donation forms more user-friendly by tightening loopholes and looking at ways to make blood donation safer.

Marina was speaking to reporters after launching Cosmos Discovery Sdn Bhd's Malay version of its Octopus Online website in a ceremony at the Nikko Hotel.

Also present were the organisation's artiste` director and event manager Veronica Ong, Pembina (Persatuan Penggerak dan Kebudayaan Nasional) president Datuk Zulkifli Ahmad and Malay website manager Mohd Jamil Zulkifli.

The website, which also has English and Chinese versions, can be accessed at <http://www.octopus.com.my>.

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