

Marina: More willing to take HIV test

STAR 3 MAY 2001

PETALING JAYA: The news that HIV/AIDS related drugs will soon be made more affordable has prompted more people to make inquiries about going for blood tests.

Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said the increased number of calls it received was a positive sign that more people are realising that the disease can be treated.

Marina said many shunned tests as they perceived AIDS as fatal and it would therefore be pointless to undergo tests, only to be told they were infected.

"With current treatment available, AIDS does not kill and the message needs to be amended," she said after receiving computers and printers worth RM150,000 donated by Dettol as prizes for quiz and elocution contests held in an education campaign called "Project Iceberg: HIV/AIDS — More Than What You Can See."

Wanita MCA, Malaysian AIDS Council and *Sin Chew Jit Poh* are the organisers for the project which is targeted at students aged between 10 and 18 in 1,422 Chinese primary schools and independent Chinese schools nationwide.

Marina said two drug companies were expected to announce a major price cut of HIV drugs this week.

She said the council's drug assistance scheme could help 50% more patients acquire the drugs.

Marina urged more drug companies to focus on their social obligations more than their profit margins.