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# Price reduction for HIV drugs to be known soon

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**PETALING JAYA, Sat:** At least two multi-national drug companies are set to announce their decision to reduce the price of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs by next week.

Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, who disclosed this today, said although she cannot reveal the details, the reduction will be "substantial".

"There are a couple of companies that are committed to reducing the prices of such drugs and by next week, they will be making some sort of announcement.

"I cannot name them as I do not want to pre-empt them. But there are two major ones and their reduction will be substantial. It will make a big difference to a number of patients."

She said this after attending a ceremony in which Reckitt Benckiser managing director for Malaysia and Singapore Julia Chong presented computers, printers and software to the organisers of Project Iceberg - HIV/AIDS More Than What You See.

The organisers are Wanita

MCA, the MAC and *Sin Chew Jit Poh*.

The project, launched on Feb 21, is an education-based campaign targeted at those between 10 and 18 years old to raise awareness on the prevention of HIV infection and the implications of the disease.

Marina confirmed that the price reduction will be between 30% and 60%, as announced by Kuala Lumpur Hospital consultant physician Dr Christopher Lee on May 1.

She also said MAC has a drug assistance scheme to help poor patients and 50 needy patients are benefiting from it.

"With the reduction, we can now include 25 more impoverished patients to the scheme and this will make a huge difference because on average, a patient spends about RM2,000 a month on ARV drugs."

While she is relieved that some firms intend to reduce drug prices, Marina expressed hope that all will do so because HIV treatment involves a cocktail of various drugs.

"This is the only way for the patients to survive and the companies have to do their bit by making the ARV drugs more affordable," she said.