

More AIDS info for Johor folk

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By Sharon Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun: The Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) will look into ways to provide more information on AIDS in Johor in view of the impending pre-marital HIV tests for Muslims intending to marry.

"One of the things we will do is to provide some form of additional infor-

mation to people there."

"They should really get informed before going for any test." MAC president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said yesterday.

She also questioned the need to test a person who has not taken any sexual partner or has no background of drug abuse.

"The test is usually done if you are in the high-risk group. Testing should not be taken lightly," Marina said.

MAC has voiced concern over the effectiveness of the test during the 'window period' which refers to the early months of an infection, when the disease cannot be detected by a standard HIV test.

Marina said the counselling module set up by the Johor religious authorities should begin by assessing the individual on whether a test is required.

"We are rather alarmed

that the test will only be a rapid test, without the confirmatory test."

"This test does not necessarily confirm whether a person is HIV positive. People can suffer a lot of agony for no reason," she said.

Beginning Nov 13, the Johor Religious Affairs Department is making it compulsory for all Muslims in the state intending to get married to undergo a pre-marital HIV test.