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Aids-Equipment

4,000 DEATHS DUE TO AIDS SINCE 1986

KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 (Bernama) -- About 4,000 out of the 40,049 people in Malaysia infected with the human-immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes Aids, have died from 1986 to last April, Malaysian Aids Foundation (MAF) chairman Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said today.

"The numbers are increasing at an alarming rate," she said at a HIV test equipment presentation to MAF, here.

However, she said, the cost of treatment was coming down and this would help Aids patients in the country get better treatment.

Marina said that compared with many countries in the region, Aids and HIV patients in Malaysia had better access to treatment.

"Malaysia has improved access to treatment and the private sector collaboration is something we can be proud," she said.

At the ceremony, Roche Diagnostics (M) Sdn Bhd, a division of the Switzerland-based Roche Group, represented by its general manager Chang Wing Yong, donated HIV test equipment worth about RM400,000 to MAF.

The "Cobas Amplicor" set comes with accessories, test kits and Roche antiretroviral drugs.

Chang said the equipment had the ability to detect extremely low levels of circulating virus enabling physicians to accurately quantify and monitor HIV viral load levels at even low concentrations.

Marina said the equipment, with its accuracy and sensitivity, would help in the identification of precise therapies for patients to suppress the HIV infection.

She said the equipment would be placed at the Johor Baharu Hospital as the MAF did not run any hospital.

Launched in 1993, the MAF is the fundraising arm of the Malaysian Aids Council.

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