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#### Hospice for AIDS patients

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - AIDS patients nationwide will be able to enjoy specialised treatment at hospices in future if a pilot project here proves successful.

Hospis Cahaya, being built here with part of a RM314,333 grant from the Japanese Government, is expected to be operational by mid-year.

Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said the hospice will have 16 nurses working around the clock to look after patients.

She said there was a possibility that more hospices along the lines of Hospis Cahaya could be set up nationwide.

On the hospice, Marina was grateful to the Japanese Government for the grant. "We hope it will help provide a caring atmosphere for patients," she added.

Japanese embassy deputy mission head Masafumi Kuroki said the Japanese Government took a serious view of assistance for HIV victims.

He said the Japanese Government was also providing similar assistance to Thailand and the Philipines.

Meanwhile, Marina reiterated her appeal to pharmaceutical companies to reconsider their decision to raise drug prices considering the financial burden it would place on patients, especially those suffering from AIDS.

"At present, the more sophisticated the drugs are to prolong a patient's life, the more expensive it becomes. Imagine how the patient would feel when the prices go up," she said.

It was reported on Feb 16 that 12 multinational companies planned to raise prices of drugs due to inflation and import cost. This would mean that patients would have to pay between three and 12 per cent more for drugs when they visit private clinics and hospitals.

Marina said until the end of last year, there were 38,044 reported cases of HIV patients, which indicated an increasing trend annually.

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