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Make ARV drugs

cheaper, AIDS council tells firms

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Malaysian AIDS Council hopes that all pharmaceutical companies producing anti-retroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS treatment will lower their prices in the interest of saving lives.

There are seven major ARV (anti-retroviral) drug manufacturers. Five lowered their prices by up to 68 per cent in June last year.

“Not every company is as sensitive, and we wish that those which have not reduced prices would do so,” said MAC vice-president Dr Christopher Lee. “The question is, why have some budged while others have not? We challenge them to think of this as an ethical issue.”

Last year’s price reduction was the result of intense lobbying by Government and HIV/AIDS activities worldwide.

MAC president Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir said local drug firms are able to produce cheaper, generic versions of ARV drugs but are prevented from doing so by patent laws.

She and Dr Lee were speaking at a Press conference at the National **HAART** (Highly Active **Anti-Retroviral** Therapy) Forum 2002 today.