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`Stop discriminating against AIDS victims'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight urged Malaysians to eliminate discriminatory attitude towards victims of HIV/AIDS.

Noting that the number of those infected with the deadly disease continues to increase, Dr Mahathir said that apart from being more caring, prevention methods should also be enhanced or revamped to produce better results.

"In the past 10 years, the number of people infected with HIV in Malaysia has risen from about 5,000 reported cases in 1992 to more than 45,000 in 2002.

"Last year alone, almost 6,000 new cases were reported. "Clearly, the prevention efforts made thus far have not been as effective as we would like.

"We should perhaps study what has worked elsewhere and adapt them here and discard what has not worked," he said at the Red Ribbon Gala 2002 organised by the Malaysian AIDS Foundation.

Reiterating that a caring attitude was as important as effective preventive methods, Dr Mahathir said a negative attitude against HIV/AIDS victims must be discarded at all costs.

During the dinner, Petronas, DRB-Hicom, Telekom Malaysia Bhd and Tenaga Nasional Berhad donated RM250,000 each for the "In The Name of Love" campaign of the Malaysian AIDS Foundation.

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Malaysian AIDS Foundation chairman Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir.

The Dr Siti Hasmah Award 2002, awarded in recognition of those who have contributed towards the HIV/AIDS cause in Malaysia, went to activist Michael Chow Shuh Yun.