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Send messages of hope by SMS and raise funds for AIDS/HIV awareness

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Malaysian AIDS Council and Malaysian AIDS Foundation together with Merck Sharp & Dohme and Articulate New Media today launched a HIV fundraising campaign to enhance the awareness of the disease among Malaysians.

The campaign, "SMS - Make A Difference", also aims to raise RM300,000 between September and November by getting the public to use the short messaging system to send a one-word message "hope" to number 32121.

For every SMS sent, RM1 will be donated to the foundation to help educate the families and friends of people living with the disease, fund support programmes for those who infected or affected and to protect the rights of people who may suffer discrimination.

This campaign, however, is only applicable to Maxis and DiGi customers, who will be charged RM2 for every "hope" SMS sent.

Launching the campaign, council president cum foundation chairman Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir said: "We need to be vigilant in tackling HIV/AIDS issues in the country. It is through these collaborations with the private sector that we hope to increase the awareness and education of people about the epidemic.

"We are extremely pleased that all partners have contributed their areas of expertise to help make this campaign possible," she added.

The decision to use SMS as the platform for the HIV fundraising campaign was made based on two simple reasons - Malaysians love to SMS and they are always willing to lend a hand, she added.

Merck Sharp & Dohme Malaysia managing director Ewe Kheng Huat and Articulate New Media head of marketing C.M. Chai were present.

Ewe said a simple programme such as this would make a difference to the foundation to support its programmes for the prevention, care and treatment of HIV. Of 44,840 reported cases of HIV/AIDS in the country, only about three per cent of the ill receive treatment.