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RM30mil fund set up to fight AIDS: Council

GEORGE TOWN: The Government has allocated RM30 million to fund a series of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) programmes for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency system (AIDS) carriers.

Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) president Tan Sri Mohd Zaman Khan said another RM8.5 million had been set aside to run the body tasked to implement the ART programmes.

"The Government allocation will alleviate HIV/AIDS carriers' sufferings and help them get back on their feet again.

"There are an estimated 3,650 new HIV/AIDS carriers added to the country every year with the number of women patients rising rapidly," Zaman said.

He said the number of female HIV/AIDS carriers, comprising sex workers, housewives and single women, was on the rise due to low disease prevention awareness.

Zaman also said that the HIV in carriers could mutate and weaken the human body's resistance system very quickly if patients were to fail to consume their medication on time.

Zaman said a mere 30-minute lapse was enough for the HIV to mutate.

He said that carriers would need to be self-disciplined in taking their ART medicine within the stipulated time frame.

"It is important for HIV patients to take their medicine on time to avoid the HIV from mutating.

"Therefore, if HIV positive drug offenders are arrested or detained, they must seek help from the police in the lock-up, with regard to their medication."

In a related development, Malaysia Islamic Development Department assistant senior director (family, social and community) Zakuan Sawai said the Federal Government would construct a HIV/AIDS shelter home in Kuala Lumpur, by next year, under the Tenth Malaysia Plan.