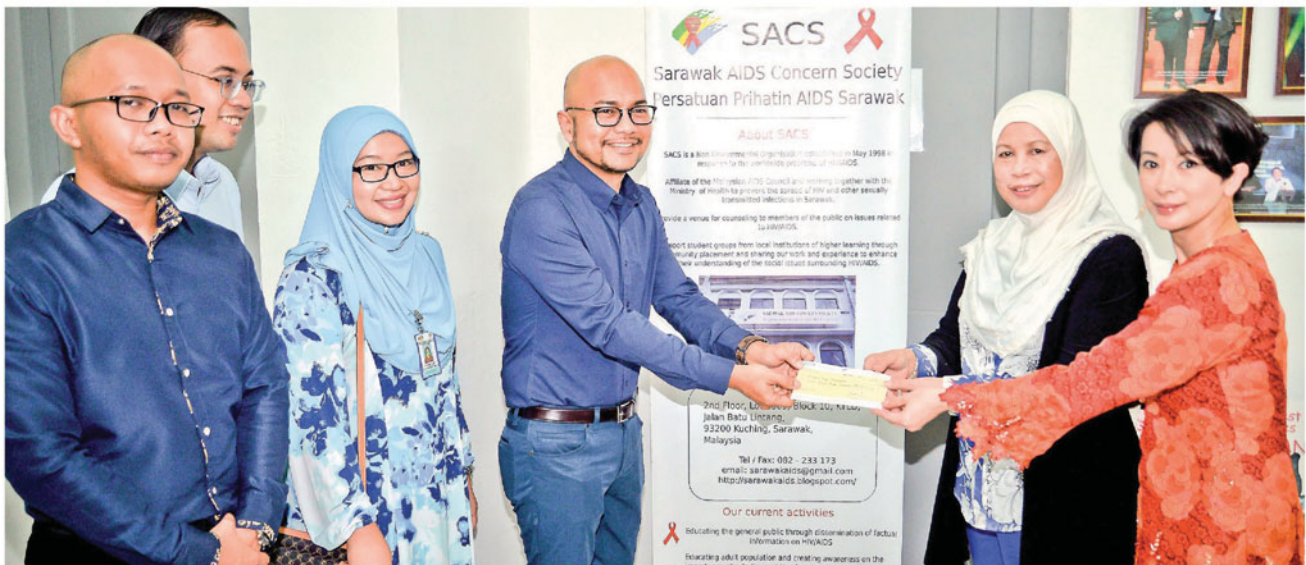


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RM70K DONATION FOR MAF



DATUK Amar Hajah Jamilah Anu (second right) handing over the donation cheque to Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) received by its Executive Director Jasmin Jalil (fourth left) witnessed by Datuk Lorna Enan Muloon (right), Stevie Astly Robbart, Azahermy Abdullah and Dr. Ruziana Miss. PHOTO: RAMIDI SUBARI

BY DESMOND MARKUS

KUCHING: The Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) received a RM70,000 donation to further strengthen its ending AIDS efforts in Sarawak following the launch of Teratak Kasih Tok Nan, the state's first One Stop Support Centre for people living with HIV.

Tanjung Datu Assemblywoman Datuk Amar Hajah Jamilah Anu, Patron of Teratak Kasih Tok Nan was given the honour to hand over the contribution to during her visit to the centre yesterday.

Since its inauguration last May,

the centre operated by Sarawak AIDS Concern Society (SACS), a partner organisation of the Malaysia AIDS Council, has served as a safe space for HIV-infected people and families in the local community to access HIV-related health, social and welfare services.

It also acts as a halfway home for those travelling long distances to access HIV treatment at the Sarawak General Hospital, having the maximum capacity of 13 occupants at one single time.

"I am proud of what the centre has achieved that in such a

short time, especially the impact it has had on improving access to lifesaving HIV treatment despite being readily available, a struggle that many people living with HIV in Sarawak have had to face at the expense of their health and well-being," said Jamilah.

"My visit to the centre confirms my biggest fear that stigma is what fueling the AIDS epidemic, further perpetuating unfounded fear in the community, silencing the voices of those affected by it, and causing those at high risk of HIV to be more vulnerable,

"Together with the MAF and

SACS team running the centre, I remain committed to the Sarawak AIDS response. I hope all the stakeholders, both in the government and non-government sectors, will play their respective roles as well in making the fight to end AIDS a priority for the state," she further remarked.

The MAF-initiated ending AIDS campaign in Sarawak began last year with the MAF Kuching Gala Night held in conjunction with World AIDS Day in December to raise funds for the centre which is now known as Teratak Kasih Tok Nan after Jamilah's late husband,

Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem.

The donation will be channelled to high impact HIV treatment, care and support programmes under the MAF, particularly for people in underserved settings such as the deep interiors of Sarawak.

By the end of 2016, a total of 2,436 HIV infections were reported in Sarawak since the first case in 1989, of which 542 resulted in AIDS-related deaths. While yearly new HIV infections remaining comparatively low, the trend has shown an increase from 147 cases in 2011 to 258 last year.