

Headline **Renewed hope fuels mission**  
Date **27 Nov 2010**  
MediaTitle **The Star**  
Section **Metro**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily**  
Circ / Read **304,904 / 1,026,812**

Language **English**  
Page No **M23**  
Article Size **536 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
Color **Full Color**  
ADValue **20,058**  
PRValue **60,175**



# Renewed hope fuels mission

There is a positive change in people's attitude towards HIV and AIDS



Headline **Renewed hope fuels mission**  
Date **27 Nov 2010**  
MediaTitle **The Star**  
Section **Metro**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily**  
Circ / Read **304,904 / 1,026,812**

Language **English**  
Page No **M23**  
Article Size **536 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
Color **Full Color**  
ADValue **20,058**  
PRValue **60,175**

**J**UST a few days ago, my colleague Melody put up our usual Christmas tree at work. She then posted some pictures on Facebook and tagged us. One of the captions read: "And, in conjunction with World AIDS Day on Dec 1, the tree has a message ...".

Every year, our office Christmas tradition is to put up two trees respectively named "The Monica Tree" and "The Phoebe Tree", after the two characters from the popular sitcom *Friends*.

Following the traits of the characters (and a particular episode involving two differently decorated doll houses), the Monica tree is usually properly decorated according to a colour scheme and looks pristine. With the Phoebe tree, on the other hand, anything goes – we trim it with dinosaurs, soft toys, pamphlets and anything else we can find around the office area that the tree can hold up.

This year, as we work on stories in conjunction with World AIDS Day, Melody decided that she would put up some red ribbons and expired condoms she found in the office.

I suppose besides being a bit of a joke, it also helped make a statement and spread awareness about World AIDS Day. Many of our colleagues have actually gone up to the tree to have a look at it, slightly amused.

I am hoping that amid the amusement, seeing the red ribbon there would make them think a little about the implications of living in a world with HIV and AIDS.

The red ribbons that hang on the tree was first folded 11 years ago. I know this because it was in 1999, after I attended the International

Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in Kuala Lumpur, that I made them.

At that time, I had a whole fish bowl full of the ribbons and I distributed them on World AIDS Day at the college I was studying. Having participated in the conference, and volunteered at the Malaysian AIDS Council, I felt that I should do my part in spreading awareness about HIV and AIDS among my peers.

Things have changed a lot since I first started being interested in the cause over a decade ago. Personally, I have noticed that there is less stigma attached to HIV and AIDS among the people I meet. Globally, we are reading more stories about the success of medication in extending the lifespan of somebody living with HIV.

This week alone, there were three significant developments, according to an Associate Press article.

It quoted a United Nations report that new cases dropped by nearly 20% over the last decade. While we cannot predict the future, this could possibly be the sign of the reverse of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in action.

Then there was also the "historic shift" in church teachings, according

Headline **Renewed hope fuels mission**  
Date **27 Nov 2010**  
MediaTitle **The Star**  
Section **Metro**  
Journalist **N/A**  
Frequency **Daily**  
Circ / Read **304,904 / 1,026,812**

Language **English**  
Page No **M23**  
Article Size **536 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
Color **Full Color**  
ADValue **20,058**  
PRValue **60,175**

to reports about the Pope suggesting in the new book "Light of the World" that condom use - something the Vatican has been against for many years - is permissible in cases of, to quote a note from Holy See Press Office Director Fr. Federico Lombardi S.J., "exceptional circumstance in which the exercise of sexuality represents a real threat to another person's life".

\*Niki Cheong blogs at [www.nikicheong.com](http://www.nikicheong.com) and Twitters at [www.twitter.com/nikicheong](http://www.twitter.com/nikicheong).

The article also mentioned the results of a three-year study that found daily doses of a medication that can "cut the risk of infection in healthy gay and bisexual men when given with condoms, counselling and other prevention services".

Having said all this, there is a long way to go in the battle against HIV and AIDS. Recently, I joined a host of other local personalities in the AIDSaware campaign ([www.aidsaware.ruumz.com](http://www.aidsaware.ruumz.com)), in aid of the PT Foundation.

Over 42 of us, including Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, Datuk Sheila Majid, Datin Seri Tiara Jaquelina, Joey G, Amber Chia, Tony Eusoff and Mizz Nina, took photos for a charity calendar, each of us posing with a HIV/AIDS related message.

Erra Fazira's one read: "*Di jangka 128,000 orang akan menghidap HIV di Malaysia pada 2015* (An estimated 128,000 people will have HIV by 2015)".

These numbers are staggering.

And only education, awareness and pro-active action will be able to stop this from continuing. So, this Wednesday, on World AIDS Day, educate yourself about HIV and AIDS.

You can also wear a red ribbon in solidarity with those who have died from the disease or are living with it as well as to spread awareness about HIV and AIDS.

I know I will.

Headline **Renewed hope fuels mission**  
 Date **27 Nov 2010**  
 MediaTitle **The Star**  
 Section **Metro**  
 Journalist **N/A**  
 Frequency **Daily**  
 Circ / Read **304,904 / 1,026,812**

Language **English**  
 Page No **M23**  
 Article Size **536 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
 Color **Full Color**  
 ADValue **20,058**  
 PRValue **60,175**



**All as one: Forty-two local personalities come together to support the AIDSaware campaign.**