

## US first lady proposes global HIV Testing Day

REUTERS, United Nations

The United States plans to propose a global annual HIV Testing Day modelled on a US campaign encouraging at-risk individuals to determine if they have the AIDS virus, first lady Laura Bush said on Friday.

Despite gains in preventing and treating HIV infection, "life-saving treatment never reaches people who don't know they're infected," she told a UN conference on HIV/AIDS. "So another challenge is making sure more people know their HIV status.

The three-day UN conference that ended on Friday was convened to plot global strategy for battling the pandemic over the coming decade.

"Here in the United States, June 27 is recognized as National HIV Testing Day," Laura Bush told the meeting. "The United States will soon propose the designation of an International HIV Testing Day. I urge all member states to join us in support of this initiative."

The annual US campaign was started in 1995 by the National

Association of People with AIDS. The group distributes kits to help community groups and health authorities promote the campaign in their areas.

With US and international help, "millions are now learning to live with HIV/AIDS instead of waiting to die from it," she said.

"More people need to know how AIDS is transmitted and every country has an obligation to educate its citizens," said Laura Bush, a former school librarian who often uses the White House as a platform to promote education and reading.

"This is why every country must also improve literacy, especially for women and girls, so they can learn to make wise choices that will keep them healthy and safe," she said.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, addressing the conference after the first lady, told delegates reversing the pandemic required every world leader "to decide and declare that 'AIDS stops with me.'"

"I look to every one of you to demonstrate this personal commitment in the declaration that you adopt today," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at a handicrafts fair organised by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation on its office premises at Motijheel in the city yesterday.

## Pomegranate juice can slow prostate cancer

BBC ONLINE

Drinking a daily eight ounce glass of pomegranate juice can significantly slow the progress of prostate cancer, a study suggests.

Researchers say the effect may be so large that it may help older men outlive the disease.

Pomegranates contain a cocktail of chemicals which minimise cell damage, and potentially kill off cancer cells.

The study, by the University of California in Los Angeles, appears in the journal Clinical Cancer Research.

Previous research had indicated that pomegranate juice could have a beneficial effect on prostate cancer in tests on mice.

But the latest study has shown that humans can potentially benefit too.

The UCLA team focused on 50

men who had undergone surgery or radiation treatment for prostate cancer - but had shown signs that the disease was rapidly returning.

The presence of prostate cancer cells is monitored by measuring levels of a chemical they produce called prostate-specific antigen (PSA).

The researchers measured how long it took for PSA levels to double in individual patients - a short doubling time indicates that the cancer is progressing quickly.

The average doubling time is about 15 months, but in patients who drank pomegranate juice this increased to an average of 54 months.

Some men on the study continue to show suppressed PSA levels after more than three years, even though they are receiving no treatment apart from drinking pomegranate juice.

### Combination effect

Lead researcher Dr Allan Pantuck said: "I was surprised when I saw such an improvement in PSA numbers.

"In older men 65 to 70 who have been treated for prostate cancer, we can give them pomegranate juice and it may be possible for them to outlive their risk of dying from their cancer."

"We are hoping we may be able to prevent or delay the need for other therapies usually used in this population such as hormone treatment or chemotherapy, both of which bring with them harmful side effects."

Pomegranate juice is known to have anti-inflammatory effects and high levels of anti-oxidants, which are believed to protect the body from damage by particles called free radicals.