

American envoy urges Kenyans to get tested for HIV

By JAMI MAKAN

United States ambassador Michael Ranneberger yesterday urged Kenyans to get tested for HIV.

Speaking outside the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) during a programme marking World Aids Day, Mr Ranneberger said all adult Kenyans should know their status by 2010. To help achieve this goal, he announced the American government's plan to buy 10 million test kits for 2009.

"Knowledge is power," he said. "Helping millions of Kenyans learn

if they are HIV-infected is the epitome of empowerment."

To encourage HIV testing, the diplomat held up pictures of President-elect Barack Obama when he was tested at a mobile clinic in Kisumu during his 2006 visit as a US senator. "If you know your status, you can prevent illness," Mr Obama reportedly said at the time.

In a separate interview yesterday, the American envoy rejected suggestions that he has been advising Prime Minister Raila Odinga on key matters, including land near State House allegedly

being sought by the family of former basketball superstar Michael Jordan for a new hospital.

"It is an utterly ridiculous idea, and you can quote me on that," he told the *Daily Nation*.

Michael Jordan

Mr Ranneberger reportedly met Mr Odinga last week for a half-hour closed session, accompanied by Mrs Deloris Jordan, the mother of Michael Jordan.

She has allegedly been seeking a coveted plot near State House to help the Nairobi Women's Hospital

build an ultra-modern hospital.

In September, the American envoy reportedly wrote a letter to President Kibaki regarding the project.

The letter followed a meeting attended by President Kibaki, Mrs Jordan and Dr Sam Thenya of Nairobi Women's Hospital.

Yesterday, Mr Ranneberger appeared alongside other diplomats at KICC, including German ambassador Walter Lindner and Japanese envoy Shigeo Iwatani. All the three highlighted efforts of their respective governments to combat Aids in Kenya.

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