

Headline	Govt confident of meeting 2015 target		
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Govt confident of meeting 2015 target

By IKRAM ISMAIL

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WITH the continued drop in the number of new HIV cases in Malaysia over the past years, the Health Ministry is confident it will achieve its target by 2015.

The ministry's HIV Strategic National Plan (2011-2015) has set up a target of fewer than 11 cases for every 100,000 population.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahya says the rate had been decreasing steadily following the collective effort by the government, NGOs and responsible citizens.

"Last year, we recorded 3,438 new cases, which had a ratio of 11.7 cases for every 100,000 people. This compared to 12 years ago, when the rate was 21.7 cases for ev-

ery 100,000 people," he said.

Dr Hilmi represented the health minister at the launch of the Malacca zero-HIV campaign.

At a press conference later, he said discrimination against AIDS patients had declined due to increased understanding within society.

"The people must understand this disease is not spread via conversation or by befriending patients. We want to ensure this country has zero discrimination against AIDS patients," he said.

Dr Hilmi declined to comment on the sharp increase in new HIV cases among students as reported by *The Malay Mail* yesterday.

Regional director of United Nations Programme on HIV/

AIDS (UNAIDS) for Asia Pacific Steven J. Krauss said Malacca was the first city in the Asean region to launch a zero-HIV infection programme by 2015.

He said 15 cities in Asean gave a positive feedback on the programme while looking at Malacca as the model.

"Bangkok is planning to launch a similar programme

this November. So many people around the world said to us this is a really good idea to implement," he said.

"For UNAIDS, the most important thing is the commitment of the national leadership to take steps needed in stamping HIV from effecting their people. And the Malaysian leadership has gone to great length to do that."

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NO INFECTION: Dr Hilmi (right) launches the Malacca Historical City's zero-HIV by 2015 campaign — Pic SHAHIR OMAR