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# Malaysia in top 5 for HIV cases

■ **By Annie Freeda Cruz**

**KUALALUMPUR:** Malaysia is one of five countries in the Western Pacific which together account for 90 per cent of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) cases in the region, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Topping the list is China with 700,000 cases followed by Vietnam (290,000), Malaysia (80,000), Cambodia (75,000) and Papua New Guinea (54,000).

A WHO statement yesterday said there were some 1.4 million people with HIV in the region at the end of last year compared with 870,000 people in 2001, and 1.3 million the previous year.

It stated that there were more than 370 new HIV cases and more than 250 acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)-related deaths last year.

The number of AIDS-related deaths among adults and children also increased from 41,000 to 90,000 during 2001-2008.

More adult women were infected by HIV, from 260,000 in 2001 to 410,000 last year, although infec-

tions were generally predominant among men (69 per cent in HIV infected adults).

WHO regional director for the Western Pacific, Dr Shin Young-soo, said a slight decline in the estimated number of new infections for all ages was seen in the region from around 145,000 to 136,000 between 2001 and 2008.

For the majority of the countries in the Western Pacific region, he added, prevention intervention would need to target high-risk groups, such as sex workers and their clients, drug users and homosexuals.

"HIV continues to be predominant among men due to them having unprotected commercial sex, injection drug use and needle sharing, and unprotected sex among men."

During the same time period, the number of new infections among children in the region also rose from 4,200 to 5,700.

Globally, an estimated 33.4 million people are living with HIV, with the Western Pacific Region accounting for 1.4 million of infections at the end of last year.

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