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WHO: Cancer deaths to rise

■ By Annie Freeda Cruetz

KUALA LUMPUR: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that without urgent action, global cancer deaths will dramatically increase from 7.6 million this year to 17 million by 2030.

Each year, more than 12 million people were diagnosed with cancer.

In a statement to the *New Straits Times*, WHO said cancer was a major killer in both developed and developing countries.

It also said that cancer was accountable for one in eight deaths worldwide — more than AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.

It was estimated that in 2008, close to 3.7 million new cases were reported in the western Pacific region with 2.6 million deaths.

In Peninsular Malaysia, nearly 70,000 new cases were reported over a two-year period between 2003 and 2005, with breast cancer as the biggest threat.

This was based on a 2008 report by the National Cancer Registry on the disease.

According to WHO, at least 30 per cent of all cancers could have been prevented through simple measures such as adopting a healthy diet and regular exercise, limiting alcohol consumption, no tobacco use and protection against cancer-causing agents.

Some cancers can be de-

tected early, treated and cured.

It is, therefore, appropriate that the campaign slogan for this year's World Cancer Day, which is tomorrow, would be "Cancer can be prevented, too".

"There is a universal fear of cancer.

"But with the right frame of mind, and by taking appropriate action, some cancers can be averted or cured," said WHO regional director for the Western Pacific, Dr Shin Young-soo.

For example, he said not smoking could greatly reduce

the risk of getting cancer.

"Regular exercise and eating healthily also help," he said.

He added that physical inactivity was estimated to cause some 25 per cent of breast and colon cancer globally.

facts&figures

Cancer cases

12m

people diagnosed with cancer every year

70,000

new cases reported between 2003 and 2005

30%

of all cancers could have been prevented