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# Number of deaths due to AIDS has dropped

**BACHOK:** The number of deaths due to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has dropped from 900 in 2008 to 805 last year, said Malaysian AIDS Council president Datuk Mohd Zaman Khan. Zaman Khan, the former crime buster, said the free needle and syringe programme had largely contributed to the drop.

"This goes to show that criticism by some that such an exercise will only encourage more drug addicts and cause more deaths due to AIDS

is not correct and a wrong perception," he told reporters during a briefing on the prevention and dangers of HIV and AIDS, here yesterday.

He said the government had so far distributed 15,000 to 28,000 needles to drug addicts through 13 centres that were set up, and due to the success of the programme another six centres would be opened, especially in Kelantan, namely Rantau Panjang, Tanah Merah and Kuala Krai.

Zaman Khan said Kelantan registered the highest number of deaths due to AIDS with 107 while 105 died in Selangor last year.

The Federal Government had approved an allocation of RM8.4 million to continue the free needle and syringe programme until end of the year and we would work with various government agencies, corporate sectors and community sections to increase the awareness and dangers of HIV and AIDS, he said. - Bernama