

Headline	HIV in Sabah largely via sex, says Dept		
MediaTitle	Daily Express (KK)		
Date	08 Dec 2011	Color	Full Color
Section	Nation	Circulation	30,557
Page No	2	Readership	97,836
Language	English	ArticleSize	143 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 737
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 2,210



HIV in Sabah largely via sex, says Dept

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KOTA KINABALU: HIV in Sabah is largely transmitted via sex unlike in the peninsula where the sharing of needles among drug addicts is the main culprit.

“With this in mind, the approach in creating awareness is different in Sabah compared to Peninsular Malaysia,” said State Health Department Director Dr Mohd Yusof Ibrahim.

He said this after flagging off 10 cyclists participating in a bicycle convoy, Wednesday, to spread awareness on the risks and prevention of HIV, in conjunction with World AIDS Day.

“Although Sabah has among the lowest number of HIV cases nationwide, there is still a need to educate the public on the issue, especially on the importance of practising safe sex.

“It is not easy to change human behaviour, thus the reason we supported the distribution of about 700 free condoms to the public to create awareness,” said Dr Mohd Yusof.

It was recently reported that between January and September 2011, a total of 107 HIV cases were reported, 20 AIDS cases and four deaths compared to 129 HIV cases, 28 AIDS cases and 17 deaths for the same period last year.

“Today marks the official launching of the bicycle convoy, organised by the State Health Department, in collaboration with the department’s Cycling Recreation Club,” said Dr Mohd Yusof, adding that it is expected to reach



Dr Mohd Yusof flagging off the bicycle convoy.

Sandakan by Dec 10.

“Sabah will be hosting the national-level World AIDS Day on Dec 10 at Yu Yuan Secondary School in Sandakan, thus the reason this convoy was organised as part of spreading awareness while promoting a healthy lifestyle through cycling.

“The theme for this year’s World AIDS Day is ‘Menuju Sifar’ (Head for Zero) with the slogan ‘Towards Vertical Transmission Elimination’. It will be launched by Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Shirlin.

“The public may show their support for the fight against HIV by putting down their signatures on a book which we have also launched today,” said Dr Mohd Yusof.

He added that the convoy would be making stops along the way to allow the public to put their signatures on the book.