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# 'HIV infection rate cut can be met earlier'

MELAKA: The target to reduce HIV infection to 11 per 100,000 people by 2015 is expected to be achieved earlier with consistent decline in cases annually.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said Thursday, Malaysia's HIV infection in 2000 was at 21.7 per 100,000 people, declining to 11.7 per 100,000 people in 2012.

"This decline is the result of efforts by the government, non-governmental organisations and individuals. They should be continued and enhanced as complacency can lead to increase in cases. Since the first case was reported in 1986 until December 2012, some 98,279 HIV infection cases were reported of which 3,438 cases were reported last year," he said at the

launch of Melaka Historical City Towards Zero HIV by 2015 here.

His speech was delivered by Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya. Those present include the State Exco member for Health and Sports Development, Datuk Abdul Rahaman Abdul Karim and Regional Director of United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (

UNAIDS ) for Asia Pacific, Steven J Krauss.

Melaka is the first city in Asean region to launch a zero HIV infection programme in the city by 2015. Dr Hilmi told a press conference later that discrimination against AIDS patients in the country had declined due to deep understanding within society.

"The people must be made to understand that this disease is not spread via conversation

or by befriending patients. We want to ensure that this country has zero discrimination against AIDS patients."

Asked if the programme will be launched in other Asean cities, Krauss said 15 cities in Asean had given positive feedback on the programme and looking at Melaka as 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.

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