

Headline	Sabah HIV cases are low but rising		
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Sabah HIV cases are low but rising

Mardinah Jikur

SANDAKAN: A total of 100,000 HIV cases were recorded since the virus was first detected in the country in 1986 to the end of last year.

Sandakan Municipal Council Deputy President Hamsan Awang Supain said the public should continue to be vigilant as new cases of infection are among those aged between 20 and 40.

He said 15 years ago, 90 per cent of infections are among men with a ratio of 10 men, one woman infected.

"Whereas now the trend in the ratio is 4:1 or in four infected men there is a woman infected, especially those among housewives," he said, adding that AIDS is the 10 leading causes of death for young people.

He said this when officiating at the Sandakan Aids Support Group (Saga) gala dinner in conjunction with the World AIDs Day at Sabah Hotel here, on Saturday.

Also present were Saga President Dr Zaiton Yahaya and Sandakan Municipal Council Public Health Chairperson Lily Aw among others.

The theme this year is 'Ending AIDS: Continue commitment, Intensify Efforts, Hands Up for HIV Prevention.'

The dinner is part of a three-in-one ceremony namely in conjunction with the Sandakan-level World AIDS Day, 8th Anniversary for Saga and award presentation to the most deserving.

Hamsan said HIV infection in Sabah is low compared to other states like Johor,

Kelantan and Selangor, however the number of new cases in Sabah has increased.

About 90 per cent of infection in Sabah is through sexual intercourse and 60 per cent of positive cases were among women.

Sandakan is one of the three districts in Sabah with the highest infection.

The HIV infection is feared by many because of the stigma and vice versa.

"Those infected with HIV also find themselves marginalised because society is not yet open," said Hamsan.

On that same note, Hamsan advised married couples, parents and everyone to love themselves, their family and their friends by avoiding unhealthy lifestyle.

As for youths, Hamsan hoped they do not get caught in useless activities such as loitering, taking drugs and being involved in sexual promiscuity that will bring negative impact on them.

"Understanding HIV/AIDS alone is not enough, it must be followed by a healthy lifestyle and staying away from negative activities," said Hamsan, adding that early detection is important and can save lives.

Hamsan also praised Saga, a non-governmental organisation, which is active in educating the public about HIV and AIDS through numerous activities and community programmes.

Meanwhile, Zaiton attributed the success of the programme to Saga members, Saga volunteers, individuals and philanthropists and attendees who helped Saga since it was founded eight years ago in the district.

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Hamsan presenting appreciation to some of Saga members at the event.