

Headline	Hilmi HIV AIDS stigmas due to lack of understanding		
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Hilmi: HIV/AIDS stigmas due to lack of understanding



DEPUTY Health Minister, Dato Seri Hilmi Yahaya during the press conference. PHOTO: LIM LEE LING

BY JULIE NGADAN

KUCHING: Stigmas exist because of the lack of understanding on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

People wrongly perceive this disease can be transmitted by touching, having meals together, swimming in the same pool, spending time together in an enclosed air-conditioned room, using the same lavatory and being bitten by the same mosquitoes.

But the fact is HIV cannot be transmitted through these ways because normal body fluids and waste products such as faeces, nasal fluids, sweat, tears, urine, or vomits have insufficient amount

of virus in them to infect unless they are mixed with blood or there are "significant direct contacts with the HIV patients".

This was stressed by Deputy Health Minister, Dato Seri Hilmi Yahaya at a press conference during the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) Meeting at Hilton Hotel here yesterday.

"However, certain body fluids, which contain high amount of HIV such as blood, semen, breast milk, vaginal fluid, anal mucus, amniotic fluid, cerebrospinal fluid and synovial fluid can cause transmission of HIV disease," he explained.

Hilmi added protected sex by using a new condom for every

sexual intercourse could save people from the lifetime consequences of HIV or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

"It is also important to note that HIV transmission through heterosexual intercourse is the highest now in Malaysia, overtaking sharing of unclean needles among drug users, which used to be the highest.

"We (Ministry of Health) have allocated a sum of RM 190 million per year to help patients with HIV/AIDS besides financial assistance from Global Fund (USD 2.5 million for three years)," he said.

Hilmi disclosed that they

(members of Harm Reduction Committee under the Ministry of Health) would be going down to the ground to check the condition of homes for people living with HIV/AIDS (or the so called shelters).

"Currently, we have 25 shelters in Malaysia run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and most of them are really in primitive conditions. According to our reports, some of the occupants do not get enough food to eat.

"So, we are going down to the ground together with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Malaysian AIDS Council and Sime Darby to check the condi-

tion of every shelter in the country and we will identify their problems," he added.

Hilmi also spoke about the recent fire at the Sultanah Aminah Hospital (HSA) in Johor Bahru.

He said the Fire and Rescue Department had completed its investigation.

He added the ministers wanted to set a special committee to check the problems with HSA and all the other old hospitals.

On the recent earthquake in Aceh, he said: "So far, the Medical Relief Society (MERCY) Malaysia has gone there and if there is a need, we (the Ministry of Health) will send our medical teams to Aceh."