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Surge in women HIV carriers

More being infected through sexual contact than needles

KUALA LUMPUR: More Malaysian women are being infected by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) through unprotected sex than needle sharing.

Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun said this could be observed from the rapid surge in the number of women HIV carriers.

She said the ratio between women and men infected with HIV was 1:70 in 1993 but now it is 1:10.

"Although the total number of AIDS patients has dropped, more women and children have been infected.

"We are very worried about the unstoppable spread of HIV in the country," she said, adding that as of last year, Malaysia recorded some 84,000 HIV carriers. Last year alone, 3,692 new cases were reported and 900 people died of AIDS, she said.

Of the new cases, 48 were children and 704 women, Chew said after opening a Multi-Faith Community Gathering in conjunction with International AIDS Memorial Day at PT Foundation yesterday.

She praised the volunteers of PT foundation for their efforts and dedication to HIV/AIDS work that had led the non-profit body to win the Best NGO of the Year Award.

"You all have helped over 16% of the people under the Positive Living programme return to full-time employment," she said.

PT Foundation is a community-based organisation providing HIV/AIDS education and care programmes for marginalised communities, mainly sex workers, transsexuals and family members of AIDS patients.

Later at Wisma MCA, Chew, who is also MCA Wanita chief, opened a Blog and Writing Skills Seminar attended by 60 Wanita members.

On an unrelated issue, Chew said the wing's Women and Children Aid Unit was expected to begin operation next month.

"We realised that many women and children who need assistance do not know the proper channels for seeking guidance or have no access to them," she said.

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Reaching out to drug users



Raising AIDS consciousness: PT Foundation senior programme manager Mitch Yusmar (left) taking Chew Mei Fun for a tour after she opened the Multi-Faith Community Gathering in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.