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More women getting HIV

WHO: They might have contracted the disease from their husbands

SALINA KHALID

KUALA LUMPUR: About 30% of all new HIV cases in Malaysia are women, a 400% increase compared with five years ago.

"It is an alarming figure. This finding has changed the previous perception that homosexuals and drug users are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

"It has brought a new set of issues that we need to deal with and it is becoming more complex now," said the United Nations Resident Coordinator Kamal Malhotra at the launch of The Red Carnival in conjunction with World AIDS Day at Sungei Wang Plaza yesterday.

Organised by PT Foundation for the 11th year, the two-day event has brought people from all walks of life especially youths in efforts to boost awareness on HIV/AIDS.

The findings, revealed by a World Health Organisation study on women's health around the world last month, necessitated a new approach in dealing with HIV/AIDS.

"It should be dealt with as more than a health issue, but with the religious and legal aspects as well," he said.

As of today, there are 33.4 million people around the world who are infected and living with HIV.

There were nearly three million new cases last year.

In Malaysia, 85,000 people have been infected with the disease, with about 15 new cases daily.

Up to June, a total of 1,497 people were infected.

A total of 315 Malaysians have died from AIDS.

PT Foundation chairman Hisham Hussein said many women and

children had been infected with HIV/AIDS in the last few years.

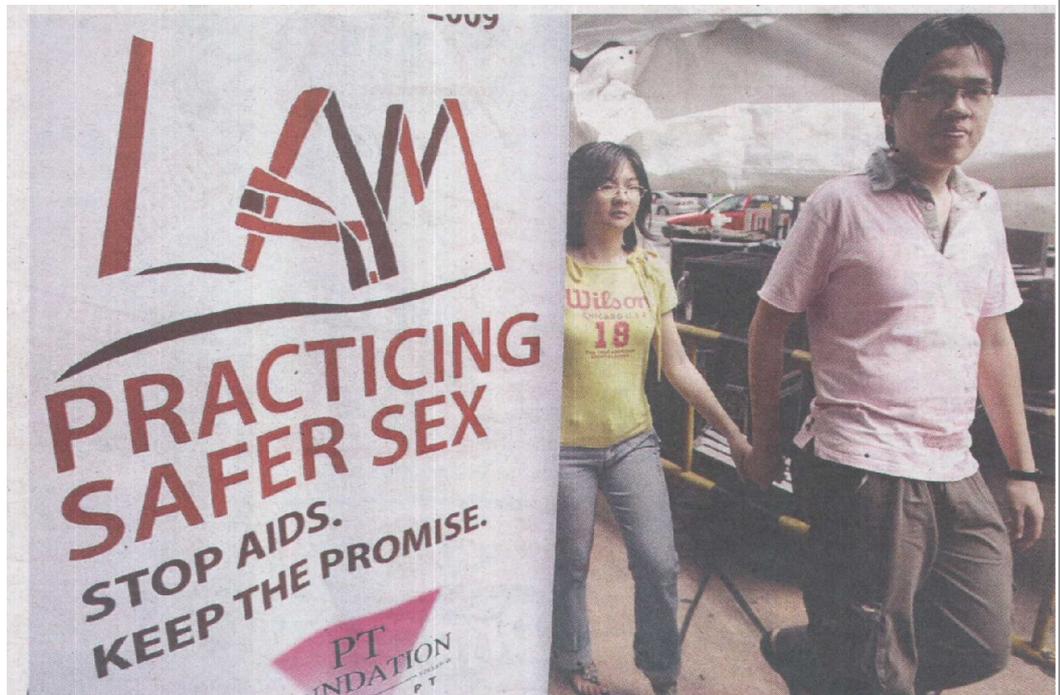
He said most of these women did not see themselves as the vulnerable group that could get infected.

"They believe that they would not get infected because they are not drug users nor do they have

multiple sexual partners.

"Yet they get it from their husband," he said.

Hisham had urged the public to change their attitude about HIV/AIDS and to reduce stigma and discrimination against those who are infected with the ailment.



Educating the public: A couple walking past a banner on display to promote AIDS awareness during The Red Carnival held in conjunction with World AIDS Day at Sungei Wang Plaza, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday. — AP