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400 down with HIV each month

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KOTA BARU, Thurs. - Nearly 400 people are infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV which causes AIDS every month.

Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said 21,500 people so far were infected with the virus or suffered from AIDS-related illnesses as of May.

She said HIV, which spreads through blood transfusion, unprotected sex or from expectant mothers to their babies, infected 13 people every day.

Marina also blamed the spread of the virus to chronic dadah addiction, particularly intravenous dadah use and high-risk sexual habits.

"The alarming rise in the number of sufferers is worrisome as there is still no cure for AIDS," she said at a seminar today on the challenges of AIDS and dadah towards the year 2000.

Her speech was read by the council's committee member, Dr Ismail Baba.

The most disturbing fact, Marina said, was that HIV carriers mainly came from the 18 to 30 age group.

She said statistics from the World Health Organisation revealed that in the middle of last year, 95 per cent of the 21 million HIV/AIDS patients across the world came from developing countries.

"Therefore, the general opinion that the virus only afflicts those in the developed nations is untrue."

She stressed the need for dissemination of clear information, education and awareness as the ultimate weapon to tackle the HIV/AIDS issue.

She said it had been proven that proper moral and religious education was able to steer the younger generation to lead a healthy lifestyle.

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