

# AIDS killed 355 in state since 1989

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**KUCHING:** The state recorded a total of 973 Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) cases, which resulted in 355 deaths, from 1989 to last year.

The figure constituted part of the 1,568 new cases related to HIV and AIDS during that period.

"The recorded figure is a concern as it reflects the lack of understanding and awareness towards AIDS in Sarawak," said state health deputy director Dr Chin Zin Hing during the 30th International AIDS Memorial Day (IAMD) held at the Unimas faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences yesterday.

He also said IAMD is an initiative coordinated by the Global Network of People Living With HIV, which started in 1983 as a memorial and a community mobilisation campaign to raise social consciousness about HIV and AIDS.

Dr Chin pointed out that among the main factors for the spread

of AIDS was having multiple partners and unprotected sex.

"Some AIDS patients despite being fully aware of their condition still practise unprotected sex which leads to the rising numbers," he stressed.

The commemorative day which was attended by students and representatives of various faiths also saw the lighting of candles as part of a memorial, which is also joined by 1,200 community organisations from 115 countries.

"IAMD which is held on every third Sunday of May in Malaysia since 2006 is an important intervention for global solidarity, breaking new barriers of stigma and discrimination while giving hope to the new generations," he said.

He also said that current statistics have shown that 33 million people are suffering from AIDS worldwide.

This year's theme 'In Solidarity' signifies the unification of the global community with those suffering from AIDS, he pointed out.



**CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL:** Representatives of various faiths from Sarawak lighting up candles to commemorate International AIDS Memorial Day.