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# HIV spread through sex still a challenge, says Subra

By Vanessa Ee-Lyn Gomes  
[vanessa@mmail.com.my](mailto:vanessa@mmail.com.my)

**KUALA LUMPUR** — The number of HIV cases in the country has consistently dropped over the past 12 years, said the Health Ministry, but transmission through sexual relations remains a challenge.

Its minister, Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam, said two out of the three targets toward a zero-HIV nation had been achieved.

“We managed to reduce new HIV cases among intravenous drug-users and elimination of vertical transmission from mother to child, with a transmission rate of less than two per cent since 1998,” he said at an event to commemorate World AIDS Day yesterday.

“We have not managed to control transmission of HIV infection through sexual relations.”

Dr Subramaniam said 20 per cent of last year’s cases involved drug addicts sharing needles, and 80 per cent was from sexual activities.

“In the past three years, 4,854 HIV cases were sexually transmitted, with 36 per cent, or 1,767 cases, involving men who had sex with men,” he said.

He said the target for next year — 11 cases in 100,000 citizens — was reachable at

the rate the number of HIV cases was decreasing.

“The rate of new HIV infections has declined consistently from 28.5 cases for every 100,000 citizens in 2002 to 11.4 cases for every 100,000 citizens in 2013,” he said.

“Up to September, there have been 104,197 people infected with HIV, 21,111 people with AIDS and 16,918 deaths reported, which makes the number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) at 87,279.”

World AIDS Day is commemorated every Dec 1, with this year’s theme for Malaysia being “Getting to zero — shared responsibility” to educate people on how to overcome HIV and AIDS, as well as to strengthen the country’s commitment towards fighting the disease.

“It also highlights the involvement and commitment of all to overcome HIV/AIDS and it is not just the responsibility of the government alone,” said Dr Subramaniam.

The Joint United Nations Programmes on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) said by taking a quick approach, nearly 28 million new HIV infections and 21 million deaths from AIDS would be prevented as well as end the epidemic by 2030.