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# HIV cases down 50 per cent since 2003

**KUALA LUMPUR** — New HIV cases in Malaysia have recorded a drop of over 50 per cent in 11 years, from 6,978 cases reported in 2003 to 3,393 last year, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said.

He said new HIV infections among drug users, the high-risk group that previously recorded the highest rate of new infections, also showed a consistent drop.

“This is the outcome of the reducing harm programmes — the Needle & Syringe Programme, and the Methadone Replacement Therapy — being launched simultaneously by the ministry, the

Malaysian AIDS Council and other affiliates in 2006,” he said at the 12th Malaysian AIDS Council bi-annual meeting here yesterday.

The text of his speech was read out by Deputy Director-General of Health (Public Health) Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman.

Dr Subramaniam said new HIV infections among drug use had decreased from 53 per cent in 2006 to only 22 per cent last year.

However, sexual transmission contributed to over 74 per cent of new cases last year, a drastic rise compared to only 32 per cent five years ago.

He said sex within the context of HIV was a sensitive and complex issue to address and, as such, the ministry’s officers should find the best overall way to curb infection through sexual transmission.

Those infected with HIV must also be sincere and responsible in not infecting their partners.

Dr Subramaniam said the government was confident the Millennium Development Goal of targeting 11 new infections for every 100,000 of the population by 2015 could be achieved. — Bernama