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Aids-Ranking

WORLD BANK ECONOMIST SUGGESTS "SCORING MECHANISM" TO DEAL WITH AIDS

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- A senior economist with the Washington-based World Bank suggested today that the Malaysian private sector establish a "scoring mechanism" based on rankings for the business community to play a more effective and responsible role in dealing with the Aids epidemic.

Dr Mead Over said such a mechanism was necessary to ensure companies were responsible when sacking their workers found to be HIV or Aids-infected or drawing up Aids-related policies.

Under the mechanism, companies with caring policies for their workers would be given star ratings while firms with selfish policies to maximise profits at the expense of their workers would be given demerit points, he said when delivering a talk at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS).

Such a mechanism would pave the way for the "selfish" companies to mend their ways, said Over, a senior economist with the World Bank's Development Research Group.

He said companies which resorted to cost-cutting measures by not spending money for their workers' welfare would suffer the consequences.

He said Malaysian companies dealing with Aids related policies could take the cue from the private sector in developed countries which took such policies seriously to protect their reputation and business interests.

By adopting humane policies, it would boost the companies' stock market performance and improve their public image, he said.

Over also said countries hit by the economic crisis must prioritise their Aids-prevention efforts including protecting the poor from being marginalised and in intervention measures by providing subsidies to encourage save behaviours such as the use of condoms.

He said the financial crisis which had lowered the per capita Gross National Product, widened the income gap and labour mobility had led to greater consequences of the spread of the Aids-causing virus HIV.

Speaking at the session, Dr C.P. Senan, the Health Ministry's Deputy Director of Disease Control (Aids and Sexual Transmitted Diseases), said the government's allocation for Aids programmes had been slashed by 50 per cent from RM40 million to RM20 million due to the economic downturn.

Some 50 people attended the talk titled "Financial Crisis, Health and Aids" chaired by ISIS's Deputy Director Dr Zainal Aznam Yusof.

Also present was Malaysian Aids Council President Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA
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