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`AIDS creates crisis of governance'

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The AIDS situation in the country has created a crisis of governance with far-reaching impact on the private and public sector, Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said today.

She said it had a great impact on the household, education, agriculture, business and the health sector.

She said 34,000 cases of HIV infection had been reported between 1988 and May this year.

Of this, 95 per cent were men with the number of women infected on the rise.

She said 82 per cent of those infected were between 20 and 39 years.

Marina said this in her working paper entitled "Social Impacts of HIV/AIDS" at a national seminar on "HIV/AIDS in the Context of the World of Work" organised by the Department of Occupational Safety and Health and the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

On the impact of AIDS on households, she said the AIDS epidemic was responsible for 95 per cent of orphans in developing countries.

Marina said that in places where HIV infection was common, quality of education afforded to children was severely affected.

In her paper, she stressed that care and treatment for these group was heavily taxing public health services in developing countries.

"New AIDS therapies increase health sector expenditure in infrastructure, drugs, training and personnel."

Marina said that its impact on countries where the population is dependent on agriculture was immense.

In the business environment, she said that HIV-related illness was the main cause of absenteeism, low productivity and a high labour turnover among workers.

On prevention measures, she said, it should be based on a realistic attitude about the prevalence of the epidemic nationwide.

Marina said that Government, non-Governmental organisations and the private sector should make concerted efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination against AIDS victims.

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