

01/11/2000

New set of guidelines for managers

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Government plans to formulate a code of practice to address the issue of AIDS in the workplace, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said today.

He said the proposed guidelines would be based on recommendations from non-governmental organisations and experts in the field of occupational safety and health.

Fong said the code of practice could be used as a guidance by human resource managers in dealing with workers infected with HIV.

He said most managers when presented with such a predicament had no idea how to handle it and usually consulted the Labour Department or non-governmental organisations.

Due to this, he said, the ministry decided to come out with a set of guidelines - to spell out what employers should do in dealing with workers with AIDS.

Fong said at present there was no provision in the local employment law for HIV and AIDS, in relation to workplace discrimination.

He said this after officiating at a national seminar on HIV/AIDS in the Context of the World of Work, which was organised by the Department of Occupational Safety and Health and Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, under the auspices of the Human Resource Ministry.

Fong said ideas, views and discussions generated during the seminar would form the basis of the proposed code of practice.

He added that the general level of awareness among most employers of the problem of AIDS at the workplace was low.

Fong said that this was based on a recent paper by DOSH entitled "The Current Status of HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control in Malaysia".

Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said the council had received a few complaints from employees with AIDS who had been unfairly dismissed.

However, she said these cases were difficult to prove as employers had always managed to find a loophole to prove their cases.

She said seeking redress against such dismissals was difficult as victims were afraid of exposure, adding that the council could only document those cases.

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