



OPENING SPEECH BY

MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES MALAYSIA

YB Dato' Sri (Dr) Richard Riot Anak Jaem

MALAYSIAN BUSINESS CONSORTIUM ON HIV & AIDS (MBCH)

FORUM 2017

&

3rd ASEAN BUSINESS COALITION ON HIV-AIDS (ASEAN-BCA)

ORGANISED BY

MALAYSIAN AIDS FOUNDATION

AND

DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

MALAYSIA (DOSHS),

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES

13 OCTOBER 2017 (FRIDAY)

09:00 – 10:30

HILTON KUALA LUMPUR

[VIP Salutation]

Salam Sejahtera dan Salam 1Malaysia,

A very good morning to all of you,

1. First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome or SELAMAT DATANG KE MALAYSIA to our guests from the ASEAN Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (ASEAN-BCA) Member States to the 3rd Meeting on ASEAN Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (ASEAN-BCA) and Malaysian Business Consortium on HIV & AIDS (MBCH) Forum 2017.

2. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the organiser, Malaysian AIDS Foundation and partners – the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Health Malaysia, GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceutical Sdn Bhd, Sime Darby Foundation, PETRONAS, and Hilton Kuala Lumpur – for inviting me to officiate the Malaysian Business Consortium on HIV & AIDS (MBCH) Forum 2017 and sharing with us this platform in our ongoing effort to promote occupational safety and health culture in every workplace and to make every job and task safe and healthy for the worker.

3. As with any other disease – infectious or otherwise – the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia recognises the impact that HIV/AIDS has on the worker and the workplace. It is our belief that today's Forum is a timely reminder of how the workplace has a responsibility to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on not only its workers but also the community in which it operates.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

4. DOSH has given its full support to the MBCH since its inception. We are heartened to note how the MBCH movement has grown over the years and the successes it has had in terms of strengthening and uniting the Malaysian business sector towards realising our shared vision of a Malaysian society free

from the negative impact of HIV & AIDS, and more specifically towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

5. HIV & AIDS affects people from all walks of life regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, education and socio-economic backgrounds. While undeniably some are more vulnerable than others, people directly and indirectly impacted by the epidemic in general represent a wide segment of society and therefore a significant proportion of the Malaysian work force. Ministry of Health Malaysia data demonstrates that HIV & AIDS does indeed affect a multitude of occupational sectors, which in turn could have a direct impact on productivity, employee benefits, occupational safety and health, production costs and workplace morale.

6. Recognising the role of employers in addressing HIV & AIDS issues at the workplace, DOSH developed and launched the Code of Practice on Prevention and Management of HIV and AIDS at the Workplace in 2001. This Code of Practice, which applies to all employers and employees in any workplace in Malaysia, outlines effective ways of preventing and managing HIV and AIDS at the workplace, promotes education and awareness on HIV/AIDS, and supports the creation of a non-judgemental, non-discriminatory work environment.

7. While there is no compulsion for the Code of Practice to be institutionalised into the workplace human resource policy, DOSH provides guidance and support to companies and employers that look to create an enabling workplace environment for HIV and AIDS. Since we launched the Code of Practice, a total of 42 companies have adopted it. And thanks to the rigorous efforts of our partners at the Malaysian AIDS Foundation and MBCH, more and more companies have signed up for and continue to show great interest in the Code of Practice.

8. As far as mitigating the negative impact of HIV and AIDS at the workplace is concerned, the Code of Practice is undeniably our most powerful tool. As a responsible actor in the national AIDS response, the Ministry of

Human Resources is committed to reviewing the Code of Practice to reflect the progress and advances in HIV prevention and treatment made in the past decade. We will also strengthen our commitment to support the high-impact work of the Malaysian AIDS Foundation and its sister organisation the Malaysian AIDS Council in the enactment of the Code of Practice and ensuring legal protection for workers living with HIV against any form of HIV-based workplace discrimination.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. Over the course of its thirty-year history of HIV/AIDS, Malaysia has recorded a total of 111,916 notified HIV infections; 18,827 of which resulted in AIDS-related deaths. However, owing to the coverage of lifesaving antiretroviral treatment, the first line of which is provided for free by the Ministry of Health Malaysia, AIDS-related deaths have stabilised in the past decade. This situation has led to a significant improvement in the quality of life of people living with HIV, although people living with HIV – particularly workers and employees in the business sector – continue to be affected by attitudes, practices, and policies that stigmatise and discriminate against them.

9. We share our concern with our colleagues at the Malaysian AIDS Foundation over the growing number of incident reports involving termination and dismissal of employment based on HIV status. We could not reiterate our stand any clearer – HIV discrimination has no business at the workplace. In fact, DOSH has been working very closely with the Malaysian AIDS Foundation on mitigating such cases and presenting evidence that employees living with HIV bear no risk of transmitting the virus to their colleagues within workplace-appropriate interactions. Advances in antiretroviral treatment have also improved health outcomes for people living with HIV – not only in terms of preventing AIDS-related deaths, but also bringing down the viral load to undetectable levels, significantly reducing the risk of transmission to an uninfected partner; all of which, needless to say, will result in improved productivity and a healthier work environment.

10. Evidence also suggests that the implications of workplace practices and policies that stigmatise and discriminate against employees living with HIV would only cost businesses valuable talent, expertise and overall productivity. There is no scientific data to support HIV discrimination – it is completely founded on one’s own fear and prejudice. And as you have heard from our PETRONAS colleague, a sound HIV/AIDS workplace policy – one that treats workers living with HIV as equals – is the foundation of safe and healthy work environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

11. Before I conclude, I would like to wish the Malaysian AIDS Foundation continued success with the MBCH programme and a fruitful meeting ahead at today’s MBCH Forum 2017. We at the Ministry of Human Resources remain steadfast in our commitment to safe, healthy workplaces that respect the rights and dignity of employees living with HIV and look forward to strengthened collaborations in the future.

12. To our guests from the ASEAN Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (ASEAN-BCA) Member States, I wish that all of you would continue enjoy a productive and memorable stay in Kuala Lumpur, and that you have a safe returnhome. I hope to see you next year for our 2nd ASEAN Red Ribbon for Outstanding Workplace (ARROW) Award which will be held during the 25th ASEAN Labour Ministers’ Meeting (ALMM) 2018.

13. On that note, it gives me great pleasure to hereby launch the Malaysian Business Consortium on HIV & AIDS (MBCH) Forum 2017.

Thank you.