

‘Prolonged lockdowns can cause economic suicide’

PETALING JAYA: MEF President Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman J.P. urged the government to address the issues of mental stress following reports of increased incidences of suicides since the Movement Control Orders were enforced in March 2020.

“We are alarmed by the high number of suicides that had taken place since the lockdowns began last year as it has had a tremendous impact on the mental health with incidences of crime, domestic violence and homelessness also rising sharply,” said Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain.

“The implications are much worse as it affects employers, families and communities, and may even destroy a nation.

“And it appears that there are more people dying due to suicide in today’s condition. We need to do something very fast to solve this.”

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain was responding to the statement of the Health Director-General Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah to the media on June 29 that there was an average of four suicides recorded per day in the first quarter of 2021.

It was reported that from Jan 1 to Mar 31, 2021 there were 336 suicide cases in Malaysia – over half the total number of suicides throughout 2020. It was also understood that 631 suicide cases were recorded in 2020, while in 2019 there were 609 suicide cases.

Dato’ Dr Syed Hussain stated that mental depression was not due to the pandemic but linked to financial problems and difficulty in business due to the long periods of lockdowns.

“To look at the situation based on the Covid-19 perspective with lockdown as the only solution is clearly not right,” he said.

“We must treat the suicides caused by economic reasons as a major wake-up call because every life is sacred and needs to be protected. The loss of a human life is also a loss to the nation.

“Today, we can see how Malaysians are recreating themselves and taking up alternative options to generate income, but the lockdowns does not give them the space.

“Though Malaysians are indeed creative, the environment must allow them to survive.

“People should not be deprived of making a living and no amount of financial aid will be able to address this issue.

“We appreciate the government aids and the *Bendera Putih* initiatives to assist those falling into destitution, as well as efforts to counsel those suffering from mental stress.

“However, having peace of mind is about having money in hand to manage one’s own affairs without needing handouts.

“Opening up the economy with strict SOP will reduce this economic suicide.

“MEF is of the position that opening up in areas that were not in the red zone would greatly help alleviate this depressing situation.”

He said as employers, the health and safety of employees was a major concern and companies should also designate officials to address mental stress among employees.

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