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Malaysia 6th in CSR Asia survey

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SINGAPORE: Malaysia emerged in sixth place among the top 10 Asian countries that are increasingly giving heed to corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosure, according to an annual survey conducted by CSR Asia.

In the top ten list, Australia led the pack, followed by China (second), Hong Kong (third), India (fourth), Japan (fifth), Pakistan (seventh), Philippines (eight), Singapore (ninth) and Thailand (tenth).

The Asian Sustainability Rating (ASR) is CSR Asia's proprietary research, which ranked the 200 largest listed companies in ten markets operating in Asia Pacific on their sustainability disclosure.

In a news release today, CSR said leading companies in the Asia Pacific region had shown an increased level of CSR disclosure, especially in the area of corporate governance.

While the top 20 companies, including the sole Malaysia's British American Tobacco (BAT), scored 75 per cent and above, only 60 out of 200 companies scored above 50 per cent, CSR said.

In particular, companies in South-East Asia lagged behind with Thailand (29.5 per cent) and Singapore (25.5 per cent) ranked low in the ratings and Pakistan (18 per cent) was bottom, it added.

CSR said Australian companies were leading the way in reporting of CSR activities, followed by India and Japan.

In the survey, the companies were rated against 51 indicators covering six sections namely, governance and policy, strategy and communication, marketplace and supply chain, workplace and people, environment, and community and development.

Overall, Malaysia scored 59.6 per cent for governance, codes, policies, 23.4 per cent (CSR strategy and communication), 34 per cent (marketplace and supply chain), 27.3 per cent (workplace and people), 28.4 per cent (environment) and 39 per cent (community and development).

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CSR said disclosure performance by Malaysian companies had in most cases improved over the past year and this was partly due to encouragement from both government and the stock exchange.

In most cases disclosure scores had risen between 2008 and 2009, it said, adding that there was still more to do however, and the large number of laggard companies tended to drag down Malaysia's score overall.

CSR also said the breakdown of disclosure into the constituent parts of the ASR demonstrated that although companies often had policies, codes of conduct and relevant governance structures, they were generally poor at communicating their CSR strategies.

It said only around one third of companies in Malaysia were disclosing more detailed information.

CSR said the challenge for the future was for Malaysian companies to move beyond broad policies and demonstrate real activity through more detailed reporting.

The top 10 companies in Malaysia's CSR ranking list, apart from BAT, were Tenaga Nasional Bhd, Bumiputra-Commerce Holdings Bhd, Telekom Malaysia Bhd, PLUS Expressways Bhd, Petronas Gas Bhd, Public Bank Bhd, YTL Corp Bhd, MISC Bhd and DiGi.com Bhd. -- Bernama