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INSURANCE

# HEALTH REMAINS A PRIORITY

Sun Life Malaysia finding ways to provide protection for B40 segment, says CEO

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**T**HE public's receptiveness towards insurance has improved since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the uncertainties that linger during the recovery period have made people more concerned about health protection.

Sun Life Malaysia chief executive officer, president and country head Raymond Lew said there were worries within the company that customers would allow their policies to lapse during the pandemic due to financial constraints.

"We imagined all the possible scenarios where there might be no sales. We looked at our capital and the cost of maintaining salaries, but our main concern was lapsation of policies.

"However, what happened was quite the contrary. We saw improved persistence, and people dared not allow their insurance policies to lapse," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Lew said Sun Life Malaysia was one of the top performers among insurers in the Asian region last year.

He said the key drivers were the role played by CIMB Bank as its distribution partner and people's



Sun Life Malaysia chief executive officer, president and country head Raymond Lew says the company aims to double its top line and reach RM1 billion in annual first-year premium by end-2027. FILE PIC.

positive perception of insurance post-Covid-19.

"We saw a V-shaped recovery after the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, enabling us to sustain the business."

Lew noted that the company had an annual first-year premium (AFYP) of more than RM500 million and a total premium of RM1.7 billion last year.

Digitalisation also played a crucial role in the company's growth over the years, improving its efficiency and productivity. Most of its daily operations were conducted online, including training and client meetings.

"We use data to understand our customers better, such as knowing the language they prefer to communicate in, and we also get their background to ensure they get personalised service."

Lew said the company was also keen on empowering its advisers and bank partners with digital capabilities to enable optimum customer services.

"Like an insurance specialist, we provide tablets for them, and we also have an application so they can do their business on the go without relying on branches.

"At the corporate level, we are looking at new ways to do digital branding. We also learn how to engage with our employees digitally. We work in a hybrid manner, where around 80 to 90 per cent are in the office and some work from home," he said.

Lew noted that the B40 income group was the least insured segment.

The company had been looking at various measures to reach out to the segment and make them

view insurance as a priority.

Lew said the company was finding ways to partner with CIMB to deliver protection for this segment via digital platforms or telemarketing without costly human interaction.

"There are many payroll accounts in CIMB, so maybe these people can purchase some form of protection, at a low cost, if they have an account with the bank."

Sun Life Malaysia has maintained a positive outlook on growth for the next five years.

Lew said the company had set a target to double its top line and reach RM1 billion in AFYP by the end of 2027.

"We want to focus on quality because we know we are a late-comer in this industry, but we also know we have a strong takaful proposition."