

'No' to sexual harassment law

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has voiced objections to proposed legislation for sexual harassment in the workplace.

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said existing guidelines and laws, such as the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, were more than adequate.

He added that the Penal Code had special provisions for sexual harassment offences and listed the appropriate punishments.

Shamsuddin said as these guidelines and legislation were already in place, employers should be given the freedom to formulate human resources policies "based on the objective and vision of the respective companies".

He added that there were no statistics to support the notion that Malaysians were predisposed to sexually harass co-

workers, colleagues or subordinates.

"In fact, available statistics point in the other direction," he said in a statement.

Shamsuddin said the ministry should avoid making "ad hoc piecemeal amendments" to current legislation, especially when it involved issues that had wide-ranging legal consequences and could have an adverse effect on foreign direct investments.

The *New Sunday Times* had reported that Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam wanted to incorporate sexual harassment into the Employment Act 1955 by early next year, to make it punishable by law.

Subramaniam had said the proposed legislation would define sexual harassment, what an employer should do in such circumstances, the employer's responsibilities as well as the legal consequences to be faced by the employer and the offender.