

# MEF: Few sex discrimination complaints due to shame

By M. MAGESWARI  
mages@thestar.com.my

**PETALING JAYA:** Most women fear being put to shame and do not lodge sex discrimination complaints at their workplaces, says Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan.

"They are worried that they will be teased or end up being embarrassed for lodging such complaints," he said, adding that these women

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Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan

were also concerned over the ensuing "publicity".

The absence of clear procedures for complaints also contributed to

the low number of cases, he said.

He said these would explain why only seven sex discrimination complaints were lodged with the Human Resources Ministry in 2011.

"And, there were only two in 2012," added Shamsuddin.

In one of the cases, a teacher, who was sacked after she became pregnant, won her case at the Shah Alam High Court. She was awarded RM300,000 in damages.

Sex discrimination may be direct or indirect. Direct sex discrimina-

tion is when staff are treated unfavourably because of their gender.

Indirect sex discrimination occurs when employers hold assumptions about the type of work women and men are capable or not of doing.

Shamsuddin said there had been complaints about job advertisements for "males only" or "females only".

"Other complaints were about women being treated unfairly at interview sessions," he said.

Industrial law expert Alex De Silva cited the case of a stewardess who was dismissed when she refused to resign after becoming pregnant with her third child. However, she lost her case against the airline.

"The Federal Court had ruled that Article 8 of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees equality and protection of gender discrimination, does not apply to the stewardess as she was bound by a collective agreement," De Silva said.