

Employers must provide safe, conducive workplace free of sexual harassment, says MEF

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Apart from safety and health, a proper and conducive work environment demands that all forms of sexual harassment must be eradicated.- NSTP file pic, for illustration purposes only

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has voiced its support for the passing of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill in Dewan Rakyat.

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said employers must provide a safe place of work and a conducive environment where all staff were treated equally.

"Apart from safety and health, a proper and conducive work environment demands that all forms of sexual harassment must be eradicated.

"MEF knows that the majority of members have introduced in-house policies on anti-sexual harassment and briefed all staff on them," he said in a statement today.

The Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill, first proposed in 2011, was finally approved by the Dewan Rakyat recently. The first reading of the bill was held on Dec 15 last year.

The proposed act expands the legal rights of victims of sexual harassment beyond provisions of existing laws, including the Penal Code and Employment Act.

The act proposed the setting up of a tribunal to handle sexual harassment complaints, which will be headed by members of the judicial and legal services.

The Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment will be empowered to award compensation and direct the defendants to issue an official apology to complainants.

The act allows the victims to file claims against the alleged perpetrators to the Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment established under the act.

Syed Hussain said it was imperative to note that sexual harassment, especially at the workplace, must not be considered trivial.

"If issues on sexual harassment at the workplace are not addressed appropriately it has negative impact on the victims, especially their mental wellbeing, and leaves them with trauma that could disrupt their life and productivity.

"Employers, no matter small or big, must make the effort to raise awareness and educate staff on anti-sexual harassment policies.

"Only by working together can we have a holistic team of employees working for common objectives," he said.

He added that MEF would brief all members on the new Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill to raise awareness and to ensure that its members are updated on the latest developments on the act.