MEF:  
Private sector not discriminating against Malays

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“We must find out the reasons why the Malays are facing unemployment. What are the reasons employers find them less employable?”

PETALING JAYA: Most employers do not look at race when employing staff, and only want the best person for the job, says Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan.

In responding to an opinion piece published in FMT (Chinese must confront anti-Malay racism), on purported racism in the private sector, Shamsuddin said this was an unfair generalisation.

“There will be some companies which blatantly discriminate against people, but most employers do not look at race in employment.”

Shamsuddin said he believed the perception stemmed from the large number of Malay graduates who were unemployed, but this did not equate to racism.

“We must find out the reasons why Malays are facing unemployment. What are the reasons employers find them less employable?”

For Shamsuddin, he believes the biggest stumbling block faced by Malay job seekers was a poor mastery of English and the reluctance to speak the language.

English, he said, was the language of commerce, and mastery of the language was becoming increasingly vital in a globalised economy.

“Businessmen are out to make money, they just want someone who can do the job, regardless of their race or religion.”
Shamsuddin also called for better give and take between employers and employees when it came to religious obligations.

“Muslim employees should not see fulfilling their religious requirements as constraints to do their jobs, while employers should adopt some form of flexibility.”

As an example, Shamsuddin said, if a Muslim employee had to pray, then the employee should “repay” the time spent praying by working extra, rather than going home back on the dot.

Employers on the other hand could be more flexible by allowing employees to take their lunch at later times.

“Take for example Zohor prayers. It can be fulfilled between 1.20 pm and 4 pm, so companies can allow their staff to take their lunch break from 1.20 pm onwards, so that they can pray during their lunch break.”

Shamsuddin said in this respect, employees must be fair to employers, adding that it was not right for religious activities to result in loss of productivity at the work place.