

Aiyoh...
Wat Lah?!
Awards

Joint Action Group
for Gender Equality
(JAG)



NOMINEES

FOR THE

The Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards

The internationally acclaimed annual event organised by the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) intended to raise awareness on what constitutes sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia and to encourage higher standards of behaviour from public figures and institutions in relation to gender and sexuality.

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) comprises:

*All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
Sisters in Islam (SIS)
Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)
Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)
Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)
Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)
Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)
Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO)
Tenaganita
Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC)*

To the best of our knowledge, these nominations have not been retracted or disputed.

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THE CATEGORIES

Foot in Mouth

A public statement that manifests notions of sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia even if the speaker did not intend to come across as misogynistic, sexist, homophobic, and/or transphobic.

Insulting Intelligence

A public statement that displays sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia and is illogical, irrational, or blatantly false.

Policy Fail

A state or federal policy that is sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, and/or transphobic in its content and/or consequences.

Cannot Ignore

A seriously offensive act or statement by a public figure or institution that is particularly damaging to the cause of gender equality and that requires a severe response.

Least Helpful to the Sisterhood

An act or statement by a female public figure which displays sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia, that in particular displays an attitude of extreme conservatism towards women's position in society and/or promotes inequality between the genders.

Enough Already!

A public act or statement that displays sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia and is repeated over a period of time.

Right on Track

A public statement or action that is helpful in fighting sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and/or transphobia.

CATEGORY: FOOT IN MOUTH

| Nominee | Background and basis for nomination |
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| 1 Publishing an article on women candidates in the 13th general election, focusing on the candidates' looks. 19 April | <p>The Star Online ran an article on women GE13 candidates, focusing on the women candidates' looks. One MCA candidate profiled was quoted as saying "Putting on lipstick is necessary so I do not look pale".</p> <p><i>In this day and age where women across the world have made great progress in the political sphere, this article takes Malaysia back to the dark ages. It implies that women politicians ride on their appearance to succeed, ignoring the fact that they may be as capable as their male counterparts to run for office. It furthers the stereotype that women politicians should be more concerned with their physical appearances. Such a piece would be unlikely for men candidates.</i></p> |
| 2 "I did not mean that women are property. What I meant was, if we build a house and want it to appear nice, it needs to have make-up, like (how) women (put on make-up)." 21 December | <p>Federal Territories Minister Tengku Adnan reportedly said this while apologising for a statement he had made earlier when explaining property valuation in Kuala Lumpur. The initial statement he was apologising for was: "If you enhance your property, it is the same as women. If you don't wear make-up, the price is cheaper, right? If you wear make-up, it is pricier. Isn't it the same?"</p> <p><i>The initial statement portrays women as commodities that are valued on the basis of their looks. While Tengku Adnan apologised for this statement, his apology was no better.</i></p> |
| 3 Writing an overly sexualised column with constant references to fellatio. 20 December | <p>In a "Dear Thelma" type letter, fictional character Lord Bobo responded to a young woman's query on what to buy her boyfriend for Christmas, advising her that all she needed to do to keep her lawyer boyfriend happy is to give him fellatio.</p> <p><i>This is an example of an attempt at humour gone wrong. The article implies that the only way for women (girlfriends in particular) to remain attractive to their partners is pleasing them sexually, by offering fellatio to be specific. This piece not only degrades women but also short-changes men who aspire for higher standards in their intimate relationships.</i></p> |

CATEGORY: INSULTING INTELLIGENCE

| Nominee | Background and basis for nomination |
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| 1 Lauding the appointment of seven women to the cabinet as a historic achievement. 22 May | <p>In an article published by Bernama, the appointment of seven women to ministerial positions by Prime Minister Najib Razak was said to mark a new era in the history and achievements of women.</p> <p><i>With only seven of 63 Ministers and Deputy Ministers appointed being women, women represent just 11% of these posts. This is not a cause for celebration but concern. Worse, of the full ministerial positions (i.e. not including Deputy Ministers), only 5.7% are</i></p> |

women. This is dismal considering this has declined from previous years. If the government is serious about gender equality, it should be aiming for the bare minimum of 30% women's representation.

- 2 "Air Asia uniforms are sexy and they do not reflect the nation's identity."

Ikmal Hisham Abdul Aziz, an UMNO Member of Parliament, reportedly wrote this in a question made in Parliament to the Transport Minister. In his question, he asked if dress code guidelines are imposed on flight attendants.

5 July

Attacks on dressing almost always are directed at women, and not men. Bush jackets and suits and ties are no more "Malaysian" than sexy clothing but we don't hear calls to ban them. Further, the use of the Malaysian "identity" to justify his objections is misplaced – is national identity really contingent on dressing?

- 3 "The Syariah flogging requires that the female offender is in sitting position as opposed to the opposite sex who needs to stand. This is a proof that Islam places great respect to female, without abandoning its principle that every crime must be punished, regardless of gender."

The women's wing of Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA) made this comment in response to the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality's (JAG) letter. JAG had noted concern that the Johor Religious Department had whipped women and men for allegedly committing incest and having sex outside of wedlock. In their letter to the editor, Wanita ISMA stated that they fully supported whipping as a response and provided justification for whipping under Syariah law.

Whipping under both Syariah and civil law is inhuman and degrading, and violates international human rights principles. Whipping in Malaysia also discriminates against Muslim women, as women cannot be whipped under civil law.

19 June

CATEGORY: POLICY FAIL

Nominee

Background and basis for nomination

- 1 A government department sponsoring "Asmara Songsang", a propaganda musical against LGBTs.

28 March

The musical play *Asmara Songsang* (Abnormal Desire) portrays the lives of three LGBTs. In the play, those who persisted with this lifestyle were killed in a lightning storm. Fuad Hasan, director at the Department of Special Affairs, Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture, which sponsored the musical, reportedly said that musical was "*satu usaha membantu kerajaan untuk menentang kewujudan LGBT yang semakin menular di kalangan remaja*" (an effort to help the government to combat the existence of LGBTs that is increasingly spreading among teenagers).

The government has an obligation to protect and promote human rights of all citizens, including the right to be free from violence. By sponsoring this musical, it was instead guilty of actively promoting hatred and prejudice against the LGBT community.

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| 2 | A state government stating that it would reconsider sending women athletes to SUKMA, presumably for their safety. | 9 July | The Penang state government reportedly said they would reconsider sending female athletes to future SUKMA Games (a national sports competition) in view of a rape which allegedly occurred during the SUKMA Games 2013 in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). <i>Protectionist policies do not empower women nor do they do justice to addressing the crime of rape. Instead of penalising women, efforts should be focused on creating safer spaces for their participation in public life.</i> |
| 3 | A state government seeking a polygamous husband to be a role model for harmony and fairness in the family. | 30 July | The Kelantan government reportedly sought out a polygamous husband to be a role model in "maintaining harmonious relationships by being fair to all his wives". The Kelantan Women, Community Development and Health Committee chairperson Mumtaz Md Nawi said "the selected candidate would serve as proof that a husband could ensure harmony in a polygamous marriage". <i>Instead of glorifying men who are in polygamous marriages, laws should be tightened and better enforced to increase chances of "fairness". Research conducted by Sisters in Islam and local universities demonstrates that it is extremely unlikely that a polygamous marriage can be fair, especially for the first wife and her children. It begs the question then as to why the Kelantan state government would persist in supporting such marriages.</i> |
| 4 | The warning by a municipal council to hair salons to remove posters deemed "too sexy". | 27 September | Hair salon operators in Kota Baru reportedly received verbal warnings from the Kota Baru Municipal Council to remove posters featuring models who did not cover their heads (<i>tutup aurat</i>). A salon operator reportedly said they had been told by enforcement officers that the posters placed in front of their salons were "too sexy". <i>This is another example of government attempting to dictate how women dress and what they should look like. This is a violation of women's right to bodily autonomy, and is made worse by the fact that it affects the livelihood of the salon operators.</i> |

CATEGORY: CANNOT IGNORE

Nominee

Background and basis for nomination

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| 1 | Indicating that the government had no objection to a statutory rape case being withdrawn, as long as the offender settled the matter in the Syariah Court. | 13 May | Deputy Public Prosecutor, Ahmad Nazmeen Zulkifli, said this in a Sabah court during a case involving the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl by a 40-year-old man. The man had reportedly offered to marry the 13-year-old girl. <i>Statutory rape is a crime, yet the prosecutor was willing to overlook this because the accused offered to marry the victim in the Syariah Court. Marriage should not be a get out of jail card for rape, most especially when children are the victims.</i> |
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- 2 Not fielding any women among the 40% of "new faces" in the general elections and justifying this action by saying women are not ready "due to work and other commitments".
- 4 April
- Pahang PAS committed to field at least 40% new faces in 13th general election, but none of the candidates were women. Pahang PAS commissioner Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man reportedly justified this action by saying that women were not ready "due to work and other commitments".
- Such an argument is based on a stereotype that women's primary responsibilities are at home. The idea that men should bear an equal responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of their families seldom arises. It is viewed as completely normal for men to be dedicated to their careers as political leaders. Unlike women who wish to pursue political careers, it is acceptable that men not worry about these "other commitments".*
- 3 Printing and distributing election pamphlets insinuating that a woman and mother would be a less effective Member of Parliament.
- 25 April
- During the GE13, pamphlets directed at woman candidate Teo Nie Ching were reportedly distributed to the Kulai constituents. One pamphlet depicted a constituent saying "You're going back to suckle. If we have a problem, whom should we look for?"
- The excuse that politicians who are mothers are incapable of doing a good job is based on an archaic notion that a woman's place is at home. It ignores the obstacles that women are confronted in this field and devalues their reproductive rights and contributions.*
- 4 Referring to a woman Member of Parliament as a "kiasu spinster".
- 9 December
- After DAP Member of Parliament Teresa Kok asked a question in Parliament on whether lecturer Ridhuan Tee taught ethnic cleansing at the National Defence University Malaysia, he reportedly wrote an article insinuating that she was a "kiasu spinster".
- Name calling is an easy (and lazy) way to avoid dealing with an issue at hand. Additionally, in this instance the choice of the words used are deliberately aimed at discrediting Teresa Kok on the basis of her marital status. The same would not have been used for a male politician making the same criticism. Imagine, a "kiasu bachelor"?*
- 5 "If I were to go with you, people will say this is a new girlfriend. *Nanti susah* (later it would be difficult for me), this is my constituency ... *Belum kahwinkah? Saya ada kuota tiga lagilah* (Are you married? I still have a quota of three)."
- 21 December
- Sarawak's Minister of Housing Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg reportedly said this to two DAP elected representatives, Violet Yong (Pending) and Christina Chiew (Batu Kawa), in the state assembly, after they invited Abang Johari "see for himself the plight of the hawkers" in his constituency.
- Besides skirting the question at hand, the response from the Minister demonstrates how he viewed the women not as elected representatives, but as sexual objects. It is also in bad taste – and a poor reflection of how he regards his existing wife – that he has trivialised the institution of marriage in this manner.*

CATEGORY: LEAST HELPFUL TO THE SISTERHOOD

| Nominees | Background and basis for nomination |
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| 1 Urging the government to prohibit indecent dressing to help curb sexual crimes and sexual harassment. 12 July | <p>In Parliament, PAS Member of Parliament Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff voiced concern at the rising number of sexual crimes in the country. She urged the government to “<i>menguatkuasakan etika</i>” (enforce morality) to overcome this. Singling out indecent dressing as the reason for sexual harassment, she argued that women who covered their bodies would not suffer this fate.</p> <p><i>Blaming women’s morality (and dressing) for sexual crimes perpetrated against them is so passé. Such views are not backed by conclusive evidence. Yet they persist because it is easier to pinpoint societal problems on particular groups, in this case women, rather than trying to get to the root of the problem.</i></p> |
| 2 Stating that better laws are needed to protect men from domestic violence. 1 August | <p>Commenting on the rise in domestic violence cases, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Rohani Abdul Karim said that the government would improve legal protection for men, because existing laws purportedly leaned towards women. The Minister is also reported to have blamed the new trend on hot-tempered wives, those more educated or had better jobs than their husbands, and husbands who were effeminate.</p> <p><i>The existing domestic violence law is gender neutral, and thus accords both women and men equal protection. Nonetheless, the fact remains that domestic violence is largely committed against women. Worse, there is a worrying rise in the number of news reports of women killed by male partners. Instead of new measures for male victims, the government needs to increase efforts to ensure that the existing law is enforced more effectively.</i></p> |

CATEGORY: ENOUGH ALREADY!

| Nominee | Background and basis for nomination |
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| 1 Characterising LGBT as a dangerous social ill that is infectious, a threat, and which needs to be curbed. | <p>(1) Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin reportedly warned, at a meet-and-greet session with employees of Islamic agencies, that Malaysian Muslims faced two challenges: the alleged spread of the LGBT movement and demands for freedom of religion among Malays. (22 April)</p> <p>(2) President of the NGO Persatuan Kebajikan Darul Modahish, Mohd Khairiri Ramli reportedly said that the NGO ran programmes to “<i>pulih</i>” (cure) LGBTs and help them “<i>kembali ke pangkal jalan</i>” (return to the right path). (21 April)</p> <p>(3) UMNO Member of Parliament Noh Omar reportedly said in Parliament that “the greatest threats to Malaysia are religious conflicts and the spread of LGBTs”. He said the government must “take immediate measures to curb such social problems”. (24 Oct)</p> <p>(4) At the UMNO general assembly, delegate Abd Mutalib Abd Rahim reportedly asked, referring to the LGBT community, “Why</p> |

has this disease endemic in the west begun to seep into this country?" and stated that "LGBT exists in the west so that bad people can be purged". (7 Dec)

(5) Deputy Education Minister Mohd Puad Zarkashi reportedly called LGBT "a social illness" and warned that "Just like drugs, a lack of awareness will cause LGBT to spread." (29 March)

Systematic efforts to bully those who do not conform to the imposed dominant sexual norm only increase the discrimination faced by people with diverse gender orientations and sexual identities. Therapies to "cure" LGBTs lack medical justification and threaten health, according to the World Health Organisation.

2 Characterising LGBT as against Islam.

(1) Muslim Lawyers' Association vice-president Azril Mohd Amin reportedly stated in a Facebook posting that "Our position clearly dismisses any efforts to make LGBT orientations into values that must be accepted by all UN member countries as part of 'universal human rights'," citing the position of Islam as the religion of the federation as a reason. (13 Oct)

(2) Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, while giving a speech to Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) undergraduates announcing that the university would "soon get RM100 million a year in research funds to help it champion true Islamic values", reportedly said that "gay rights, lesbianism and same-sex marriage ... are sinful acts abhorred by Islam". (17 Sep)

(3) PAS Member of Parliament Khalid Samad said in Parliament that PAS always rejected LGBT and apostasy as they were against the religion. (8 Nov)

People have used religion time and again to justify discriminatory and hateful actions and language, even though the Quran urges compassion and wisdom in inter-human relation. Though some may oppose the idea of diverse gender orientations and sexual identities, or worse, exploit this antagonism to gain political mileage, the rights of sexual minorities to be free from discrimination and violence must be respected in accordance with universal human rights standards.

3 Attacking the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO), a human rights coalition, as anti-Islamic for raising LGBT rights.

(1) The Malaysian Muslim Lawyers Association reportedly warned that "Islam will come under the threat of apostasy and secularism" if the government gave in to COMANGO's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) demands. The association's president Zainul Rijal Abu Bakar reportedly noted that COMANGO's demands included LGBTIQ rights and the elimination of section 377A of the Penal Code, which would "effectively usurp Islam and Malaysia's sovereignty". (13 Oct)

(2) A Friday sermon delivered in mosques, issued by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), reportedly claimed COMANGO's report "threatened the sovereignty of Islam", stating that "among the issues raised [in the COMANGO report] were freedom of religion and the acknowledgement of LGBTs." The sermon urged "Muslims, whether group or individuals, to use all media to 'defend the religion' and called on the authorities to

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'effectively deal' with the group [COMANGO]." (18 Oct)

(3) Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom reportedly said in Parliament that "the government would not hesitate to take action against groups that spread beliefs that do not conform to the Islamic teachings." He reportedly said that "COMANGO had been advocating the rights of the LGBTs and adultery if it was consensual, for instance, which is clearly against the Islamic teaching." (11 Nov)

(4) The chief of the Ulama Council of PAS reportedly stated at the party's Ulama Council Conference that COMANGO is "simply fighting for the right of the vice of unnatural sex" and urged Malaysians to "rise against this evil effort". He asked if COMANGO "has forgotten that it has exceeded the limits of the human rights of other communities" and that "Islam places the rights of society ahead of individual human rights". (22 Nov)

(5) UMNO Member of Parliament Noh Omar put forward an emergency motion in Parliament to condemn COMANGO, stating that COMANGO has "interfered and challenged the sanctity of Islam" and called upon the Registrar of Societies to investigate COMANGO. When tabling the motion, he reportedly told Parliament that "Comango had made demands with regard to the LGBT movement". The motion was rejected. (8 Nov)

COMANGO has been attacked by both government and non-government entities, simply for participating in a United Nations mechanism, which the government itself actively participates in. The basis for this attack has largely been because COMANGO has highlighted discrimination against LGBTs and freedom of religion, and the attacks have been justified by invoking a narrow and conservative interpretation of Islam. International human rights mechanisms like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) exist to promote all human rights, including LGBT rights.

4 Committing "character assassination" of a Pakatan Rakyat GE13 candidate by associating them with LGBT issues.

(1) S. Nallakaruppan, President of Parti Bersatu India Malaysia (MUIP) reportedly said "*Saya selamanya berpegang kepada hakikat bahwa biseksual tidak layak jadi Perdana Menteri. Semua orang tahu, banyak laporan mengaitkan Anwar dengan isu biseksual*" (I have always maintained that bisexuals are not qualified to be Prime Minister. Everyone knows there are many reports that relate Anwar with the bisexual issue). (14 April)

(2) Prime Minister Najib Razak reportedly warned Malaysian citizens not to "experiment" with voting for the opposition because it will endanger their future, stating that "*PKR adalah parti tidak tentu arah, semua boleh, pluralisme boleh, LGBT boleh*" (PKR is a party without direction, everyone goes, pluralism goes, and LGBT goes). (9 April)

(3) The President of Jaringan Melayu Malaysia reportedly said of PKR candidate Rafizi Ramli, "*Jika benar beliau seorang gay, saya tidak mahu rakyat tersalah pilih kerana di Malaysia kita tidak mahu ada ahli Parlimen yang mengamalkan homoseksual*" (If it is true he is a gay, I don't want the people to choose wrongly as we do not want a Member of Parliament who practices homosexuality). The

NGO also submitted a police report to probe into allegations that Rafizi Ramli was gay. (5 March)

(4) Three days before GE13, Pertubuhan Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia withdrew the "*Sandang Ketua Imam Khalifah*" award which had been previously awarded to Anwar Ibrahim. The group's leader, Siti Fadzilah Meor Abdul Rahman commented: "*Selepas membuat kajian terperinci, kita dapati Anwar dengan jelas menyokong agenda LGBT dan fahaman pluralisme agama yang sangat bercanggah dengan perjuangan silat gayong termasuk mentaati Tuhan, setia kepada raja dan pemimpin negara serta beramal baik*" (After making detailed research, we found that Anwar clearly supports the LGBT transgender agenda and religious pluralism which extremely contradicts *silat gayong's* struggle including obeying God, loyalty to the king and country's leaders, and being good). (5 March)

(5) Jaringan Melayu Malaysia has called on opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim and his former tennis partner to consider being facilitators of a parenting seminar on handling LGBT problems. The group's director Hamdan Mohd Salleh said Anwar, who had also been accused by his detractors as being supportive of the LGBT movement, could be the star attraction at the seminar. (1 March)

Continually associating Anwar Ibrahim and the opposition with LGBTs is a blatant tactic to discredit him and the opposition. Aside from being a dirty political tactic, it also further stigmatises LGBTs, an already marginalised community.

5 Making empty promises to improve pro-women laws.

(1) At the golden jubilee celebrations of the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO), Prime Minister Najib Razak reportedly proclaimed that unlike past practice, he would give pro-women legislation due attention. Referring to what happened with the Domestic Violence Act, he said, "I guarantee you, for something good, it will not take seven years". He was also reported as saying that "the Government would hasten efforts to make changes to legislation, regulations, practices and thinking that obstructed the progress of women". (30 Jan)

(2) In front of a global audience at the Women Deliver 2013 conference held in Malaysia, Prime Minister Najib Razak reportedly said "*Suara-suara kuat [wanita] secara bersama akan membantu merangka penyelesaian, dasar dan strategi yang akan memastikan kemajuan untuk kanak-kanak perempuan dan wanita; negara kita, wilayah kita dan dunia kita.*" (Women's voices help formulate solutions, policies, and strategies which will ensure advancement for women and girls; in our country, region and world). (30 May)

Politicians the world over often make all kinds of offers to gain greater popularity, sometimes singing different tunes in the international and domestic arenas. The reality is that women's groups like JAG have long fought for the government to pay attention to women's concerns. While some of its demands have been taken up, these have only been incorporated partially or in a piece-meal manner. For the most part, the government demonstrates a lack of political will to follow-up on its promises, rendering these to remain as lip service.

CATEGORY: RIGHT ON TRACK

| Nominee | Background and basis for nomination |
|---|---|
| 1 The Federal Court decision dismissing the government's appeal to ban a book by Sisters in Islam. 14 March | <p>In 2008, a book published by Sisters in Islam, "Muslim Women and the Challenges of Islamic Extremism" was banned by the Home Ministry. In 2010, the High Court lifted the ban, and the Court of Appeal subsequently maintained that decision. The government appealed to the Federal Court, and the Federal Court dismissed the appeal. Justice Datuk Abdul Wahab Patail called the initial ban "an outrageous defiance of logic that falls squarely within the meaning of unreasonableness, and of irrationality".</p> <p><i>The initial ban of the book was an attempt by the state to control information, particularly to create a monopoly over the interpretation of what Islam says about women. By overturning this ban, the courts played their check and balance role to uphold a fundamental freedom guaranteed under the Federal Constitution.</i></p> |
| 2 An assemblyperson's appointment of a transwoman as his political secretary, the first time this has happened. 11 July | <p>DAP assemblyperson for Tanjung Bungah Teh Yee Cheu appointed Hazreen Shaik Daud, a transwoman, as his political secretary.</p> <p><i>All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The appointment of Hazreen Shaik Daud as political secretary is a positive step to demonstrate that a transwoman can perform duties based on merit and relevant experience, without discrimination on the basis of his or her gender identity.</i></p> |
| 3 The High Court decision declaring religious conversions unilaterally by one parent of a child is unconstitutional. 26 July | <p>In 2009, Indira Gandhi's husband, who converted to Islam, converted their three children as well. He did this without Indira Gandhi's consent, and without the children's presence at the time of application. The case went to the High Court, where Judicial Commissioner Lee Swee Seng declared that the conversion certificates of the children were null and void and that their unilateral conversion to Islam was "unconstitutional" and "against natural justice".</p> <p><i>Unilaterally religious conversion of children by one parent is an injustice to the rights of the non-converting spouse to equal say in decisions that affect the children. In many cases, conversion is used merely as a tool - often by a father - to gain an unfair advantage in custody disputes. Many women have been at the short end of such situations, including high profile cases involving S. Shamala, R. Subashini, Indira Gandhi, and recently S. Deepa. This ruling that the conversions were null and void is a positive step towards ensuring this injustice does not happen in the future.</i></p> |
| 4 The government of Malaysia withdrawing its appeal in a gender discrimination case concerning pregnancy. | <p>In 2009, Noorfadilla Ahmad Saikin had her job offer retracted by the Education Ministry because she was pregnant. She sued the government for discrimination and won. The landmark High Court judgement asserted that CEDAW "has the force of law and [is] binding on member states, including Malaysia." The government chose to appeal the decision in the Court of Appeal, but eventually</p> |

27 June

withdrew its appeal, and by doing so affirmed the High Court's judgement.

Malaysia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in 1995 and is bound by its obligations under CEDAW. While it is not ideal that it has taken the government some time to recognise this obligation, as well as wastage of public funds in appealing the decision, it is still a relief that the government has finally come to its senses. The withdrawal of its appeal against the High Court judgment that CEDAW has the force of law in Malaysia, we hope, will continue to stand without government interference.