

# Tafep officer often deals with emotional people

Case officer Hema Sri gathers facts regarding workplace complaints

CHEOW SUE-ANN

She has been called useless and a waste of taxpayers' money. And she has been accused of being biased when dealing with workplace complaints.

The irony is not lost on Ms Hema Sri, 35, a case officer at the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (Tafep). Her job is to gather information to determine if a company or employer has displayed discriminatory behaviour against employees or groups of employees.

Ms Hema told The New Paper: "Sometimes, there are cases where either party withholds information, whether knowingly or not."

## ESTABLISH FACTS

It comes down to her and her colleagues to establish the facts.

Her job also involves engaging the company or employer to ensure it reviews and rectifies any problematic areas to better adhere to Tafep's guidelines for fair employment practices.

Some examples of discrimination include unfair hiring practices that exclude individuals based on age, sex or race.

Ms Hema said one of the biggest challenges is convincing both employee and employer that she is a neutral party looking out for both their interests.

She said: "It can be a challenge to manage the emotions of the complainants, who can often be upset, agitated and frustrated by the time they come to us."



Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices case officer Hema Sri has had complainants get verbally abusive towards her. TNP PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

She recalled a case where an employee felt he had been discriminated against when a co-worker was promoted instead of him. Her investigation revealed there were reasons the other person was better promoted.

When she tried telling him that, he got agitated and was verbally abusive towards her.

Ms Hema said such cases are rare, with most people helpful and cooperative.

She added that she has

received calls from individuals involved in past cases who still turn to her for help and advice, even for unrelated issues.

Ms Hema, who used to work in the social service sector, said: "Even if I can't help them, I make it a point to refer them to someone who can, or simply just listen and provide any information I can. Just hearing a 'thank you' makes it worth it."

sueann@sph.com.sg

# COE supply for cars to dip during Nov-Jan quota period

CHRISTOPHER TAN, SENIOR TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

Car buyers will see a slight dip in the certificate of entitlement (COE) supply for the November to January quota period, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) announced yesterday.

Car buyers will have an average of 4,813 COEs a month (including the Open category, which can be used for any vehicle type except motorcycles, but mostly ends up being used for bigger cars).

This is 1.9 per cent less than the current 4,904 COEs.

The monthly quota for cars up to 1,600cc and 130bhp will average 2,036, 3.6 per cent less than the 2,112 now.

Cars above 1,600cc or 130bhp will have 2,023 COEs a month, 2.9 per cent less than the 2,083 now.

In the Open category, 754 COEs will be available, 6.3 per cent more than the 709 now. This increase is largely because of the recycled COEs of scrapped taxis.

Mr Neo Nam Heng, chairman of diversified motor group Prime, estimated that some 9,000 taxis were scrapped over the last two years.

Asked why COEs from

scrapped taxis are not recycled back to the system in a more timely fashion, LTA said: "Taxi companies are given six months to replace their deregistered taxis. As taxi registration patterns can vary within this six-month period, adjustment for net registration/deregistration of taxis is calculated every six months."

"This helps to minimise fluctuations while enabling taxi companies to plan ahead for adjustments to their fleet size. This is intended to be a business-friendly approach."

Mr Neo said the return of some taxi COEs "will ease some fears" about escalating premiums.

"The market was actually expecting another big cut to the supply," he said.

"Luckily, the deregistered cab COEs are clawed back. Otherwise, the situation would have been very bad."

With this buffer from taxi COEs, Mr Neo said premiums will stabilise further.

As for the longer term, he said the first sizeable batch of cars with COEs renewed in 2015 will have to be scrapped by next year. The COEs from these will mitigate next year's shrinkage.

christan@sph.com.sg