

DATE: **28 JANUARY 2015 (WEDNESDAY)**

MEDIA: **THE STAR – WORKER WOES OVER VISA DISCORD – PG.01**

THE STAR – VISA FEE JUMP HAS EMPLOYERS FEELING STUMPED – PG.06

THE STAR – ANGER OVER STEEP VISA FEES – PG.06

THE STAR – DEPUTY D-G: NEW SYSTEM DESIGNED TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY – PG.06

Wednesday 28 January 2015 PP1641/03/2013 (No. 20249) (031549) Peninsula RM1.20, Sabah RM1.80, Sarawak RM1.20

NATION
Seized – heroin in cupboards
Drugs worth RM8.4mil found hidden in furniture imported from Pakistan. >13

NATION
Ex-cabbie escapes gallows
18-year jail term for killing girlfriend's three-year-old daughter upheld. >15

STAR2
Relaxed vibe
Wearable and easy pieces were seen at the Lacoste Spring/Summer 2015 show in New York. >2

web: thestar.com.my mobile: thestarmobile.com Customer Service: 1300 88 7827 facebook.com/TheStarOnline twitter.com/staronline WeChat ID: TheStarOnline

The people's paper
Star

NATION
Recovery efforts called off
Indonesian military gives up trying to lift AirAsia wreckage from the Java Sea. >3 and 25

Worker woes over
EXCLUSIVE
Visa discord

The 'calling visa' processing fee for Indonesian workers has surged from a mere RM15 to RM250 under a new system outsourced to a private company. With 150,000 applications a year, it is going to cost some RM35mil more. Fuming Indonesian agents are now threatening to stop sending workers to Malaysia and employers are worried. >See Page 6 for reports by P. ARUNA and FARIK ZOLKEPLI

Visa fee jump has employers feeling stumped

PETALING JAYA: The steep increase in visa fees has caught employers by surprise and they expect companies to be badly hit by the move.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said that although the high processing fees charged by the "one stop centres" in Indonesia were borne by the workers, the cost would ultimately be passed to the employer.

"At the end of the day, if the employer is not willing to bear the fees, the workers will refuse to

come here.

"The employment agencies there will pressure bosses to come up with the extra fee," he said yesterday.

Shamsuddin said that if Indonesians were barred from coming to Malaysia, it would have a huge impact on various industries. Indonesians comprise about 70% of the estimated 2.8 million foreign workers in Malaysia.

Most are in the construction, plantation and manufacturing sectors.

"Most companies are already facing financial difficulties after a bad

year in 2014 and the outlook for this year is not good.

"It is surprising that this action was taken by our own Government to make employment of foreign workers more costly," he said.

Malaysian Association of Foreign Maid Agencies (Papa) vice-president Foo Yong Hooi said that if the new visa processing fee was maintained, Malaysia would lose foreign workers.

"The jump in fees is too high. Malaysian companies and employers are the ones who will suffer if

the workers refuse to come here," he said.

On the Immigration Department's website, it was announced that online applications for Visa with Reference (VDR) for all foreign workers entering the country had to be done through the Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS).

It is stated on the FWCMS website that all health checks for foreign workers in the country of origin must also be done through its company from Jan 15 this year.

Deputy D-G: New system designed to improve efficiency

KUALA LUMPUR: The Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS) is designed to improve efficiency in the process of getting foreign labour, said Immigration Department deputy director-general Datuk Sakib Kusmi.

He said the system, which is run by a private company called Bestinet Sdn Bhd, was designed as a "one-stop centre" to handle various matters concerning foreigners, including visa applications and biometric profiling.

"The system is still undergoing a test-run. It is to make it more convenient for foreign workers or students to apply for visas while undergoing other processes such as health and biometric screenings," he said yesterday.

There have been rumblings among some in Indonesia who are unhappy with the new system because of the increased cost.

"There has been no official complaint from the Indonesian government, but I have heard that some are not happy.

"However, the department is willing to meet with the Indonesian authorities or agency association to discuss the matter. We welcome feedback to iron out the kinks, if any," said Sakib who stressed that the system was designed for the convenience of all.

Sakib said the department would review the system if the need arose, based on feedback and complaints.

On fears of submitting biometric information to a private company, Sakib assured the public that the company merely developed the system but the Home Ministry, especially the Immigration Department was in charge of all information obtained through the FWCMS.

"We will ensure that all information submitted to the system is confidential," he said.

On the department's FWCMS website, the system is described as a solution developed exclusively for governments of countries which recruit large numbers of migrant workers with modules tailored to the needs of the governments or countries.

For the Malaysian model, FWCMS is involved with relevant parties in source countries that recruit migrant workers to Malaysia.

Anger over steep visa fees

Employment agencies threaten to stop sending Indonesian workers

By P. ARUNA
aruna@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The visa-processing fee for Indonesian workers headed to Malaysia has seen a steep hike – from RM15 to RM250 – and angry employment agency operators have threatened to stop sending workers here.

Asosiasi Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Apjati), which represents over 500 agencies, has written to the Indonesian Parliament and the country's Human Resources and Foreign ministries, calling for an immediate halt to the sending of workers to Malaysia.

The steep increase in the visa-processing fee was imposed last month under the Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS), which saw the "calling visa" process being outsourced to a private company.

"We strongly reject the increase in fees. It is an exploitation of our citizens. Such an increase must be done through an agreement between both governments.

"Malaysia should have negotiated with our government first," Apjati president Ayub Basalamah said yesterday.

Apjati is the largest association of private recruitment agencies in Indonesia. Its members send more than 150,000 Indonesians to work in Malaysia each year.

He said the additional fees for the cost of applying for a Visa with Reference (VDR) or "calling visa", were a huge burden on Indonesian citizens wanting to work or study in Malaysia.

With the estimated 150,000 Indonesians coming to Malaysia every year, it would mean an addi-



No labour from neighbour?: Over 150,000 Indonesians come to Malaysia to work each year. But the sharp rise in visa processing fees may cause the steady supply to cease. — AZMAN GHANI / The Star

tional cost of about RM34.5mil per year.

The VDR is required for those who want to obtain work permits, student permits or professional passes in Malaysia.

The fees are borne by the workers and not by their Malaysian employers, except in the case of domestic maids.

The Malaysian embassy in Indonesia had last month issued a statement to employment agencies announcing the new fee structure.

It said this was in line with the setting up of FWCMS' "one stop centres" in Jakarta, Medan, Pekanbaru and Pontianak to process the

visa applications.

"What is worse is that, in addition to paying the new RM230 processing fee, the previous RM15 and other minor charges, we have to provide details of our workers to a private company instead of to the Malaysian embassy," said Ayub.

Malaysian Ambassador to Indonesia Datuk Seri Zahrain Mohamed Hashim said the embassy had been instructed by the Home Ministry to outsource the visa processing.

Zahrain admitted that there had been written protests and complaints about the increased fees since the implementation in December.

"The complaints are not only from workers groups but also from agents sending students to Malaysia," he said.

However, Zahrain felt the fees were fair as the company had its own costs to cover.

"The company conducts background checks on those applying for visas and sends the information to the Immigration Department which then approves the visa.

"Previously, we have had problems with false documents. This company is now taking care of this problem," he said.

He added that other countries such as the United States had also raised their visa charges.

DATE: **28 JANUARY 2015 (WEDNESDAY)**

MEDIA: **UTUSAN MALAYSIA – PEKERJA ASING TAKLUK SEKTOR PEMBINAAN – PG.018**

Pekerja asing takluk sektor pembinaan

KUALA LUMPUR 27 Jan. - Sektor pembinaan di negara ini sebenarnya masih bergantung kepada tenaga kerja asing sepenuhnya walaupun pelbagai langkah telah diambil oleh kerajaan untuk menggalakkan pembabitan dalam kalangan orang tempatan.

Naib Presiden Persatuan Kontraktor Binaan Malaysia, Datuk Seri Suffri Mohd. Zin berkata, keadaan itu amat menyedihkan kerana peluang pekerjaan yang terbuka luas dan menjanjikan gaji lumayan dalam sektor pembinaan tidak dimanfaatkan sepenuhnya oleh golongan belia di negara ini.

Beliau memberitahu, secara dasarnya, sektor pembinaan telah ditakluk oleh lebih 90 peratus pekerja asing pada ketika anak-anak muda tempatan lebih gemar memilih pekerjaan yang mudah seperti di kedai serbaneka.

"Saya mengambil contoh, jawatan sebagai pegawai keselamatan dengan sijil profesional. Mereka akan mendapat gaji sekitar RM3,000 hingga RM4,000 tetapi bagi kelulusan diploma pula dalam lingkungan RM1,000 hingga RM2,000. Namun, tiada siapa yang berminat sebabnya kerja sebagai pegawai keselamatan ini kotor dan di tengah panas.

"Dulu pada zaman saya ada sekolah vokasional yang melahirkan tenaga separuh mahir ini, tetapi sekarang saya tidak tahu apa sudah jadi," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian dalam sidang akhbar selepas majlis menandatangani memorandum persefahaman (MoU) antara Construction Labour Exchange Centre Berhad (CLAB) dan Cotrade Sdn. Bhd. (Cotrade) di sini hari ini.

Yang turut hadir, Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha (Operasi) Kementerian Kerja Raya, Sarani Dollah; Presiden Kontraktor Melayu Malaysia, Datuk Mokhtar Samad; Ketua Eksekutif CLAB, Abdul Rafiq Abdul Rajis dan Ketua Eksekutif Cotrade, Abdol Alim Yaacob.

MoU tersebut melibatkan kerjasama untuk membekalkan tenaga kerja asing dan tempatan bagi projek-projek yang dijalankan oleh Petrolia Nasional Bhd. (Petronas) antaranya, projek Pembangunan Bersepadu Kilang Penapisan dan Petrokimia (RAPID) di Pengerang, Johor serta projek di Sabah dan Sarawak.

Tegas Suffri, kerajaan telah melakukan yang terbaik untuk menggalakkan pembabitan orang tempatan dalam sektor pembinaan tetapi ia seolah-olah dipandang sepi oleh golongan belia di negara ini.

"Secara dasarnya, kerajaan tidak gagal dan tidak sesekali berputus asa untuk terus berusaha menarik



SUFRI MOHD. ZIN

anak-anak tempatan bekerja dalam sektor pembinaan. Walaupun kenyataan bahawa kita masih bergantung pada tenaga asing sebenarnya amat pahit tetapi ini adalah realiti yang kita semua harus hadapi," katanya.

Dalam pada itu, Mokhtar berkata, sektor pembinaan negara pada suku pertama tahun ini dijangka tumbuh lebih positif berbanding tahun lepas terutama dengan projek pembinaan semula rumah mangsa banjir yang musnah sepenuhnya dalam bencana tersebut.

"Ini secara tidak langsung memberi peluang kepada kontraktor-kontraktor kecil khususnya di daerah-daerah untuk terlibat dalam pembinaan semula rumah untuk mangsa banjir ini," katanya.

Kerajaan telah mengemukakan dua model rumah bagi pembinaan semula kediaman yang musnah 100 peratus akibat bencana banjir iaitu binaan terus di atas tanah manakala model kedua binaan di atas tiang setinggi 2.44 meter dengan keluasan 660 kaki persegi atau 61.31 meter persegi dengan nilai RM48,000.

Setakat ini, sebanyak 2,606 buah rumah mangsa banjir musnah 100 peratus dan daripada jumlah itu, 2,374 adalah di Kelantan.