

‘Authorities to blame for visa woes’

Stakeholders should have been consulted before launching new systems, says MEF

By **P. ARUNA and FARIK ZOLKEPLI**
aruna@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: The authorities made no attempt to engage with stakeholders before implementing the mandatory new online systems for hiring foreign workers, according to the Malaysian Employers Federation.

"This (resistance to the new systems) is exactly the result of one-way decision-making," said MEF executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan.

"If stakeholders had been consulted and feedback was sought

before the introduction of the new procedures, the acceptance would be much better than it is now," he pointed out.

Shamsuddin was referring to the recent outsourcing of foreign worker permit renewals to MyEG Services Bhd and the mandatory use of Bestinet Sdn Bhd's Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS) to process the Visa with Reference (VDR) or "calling visa" for foreign workers.

Even if new systems were introduced, Shamsuddin said, they should not be made mandatory.

"On paper, the system looks very

impressive and commendable, but many of our members have complained that it is inconvenient.

"While previously we could just provide information at the Immigration Department counters, now companies have to manually key in all the workers' information into the system.

"There doesn't seem to have been enough thought put into this – it has actually made the process more complicated," he said.

On Wednesday, 30 business associations and chambers of commerce jointly issued a strong statement against the outsourcing of the ser-

vices by the Home Ministry.

In **Putrajaya**, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said he would let Immigration director-general Datuk Mustafa Ibrahim explain issues concerning FWCMS.

"As these come under the department's operational matters, I will let the director-general answer and clarify them," he said at a press conference yesterday.

In a statement, Asosiasi Perusahaan Jasa Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Apjati), which represents over 500 recruitment agencies in Indonesia, said it was not against FWCMS.

It said that it was only against the "exorbitant fees" charged by a company called Omni Sarana Cipta based there, which handles the collection of the visa fee for the Malaysian authorities.

The recent increase of RM230 in the visa fee caused an uproar among recruitment agencies there, adding that their workers were being exploited.

Apjati has since 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.

Wee: Govt already has system to process foreign worker visas

CYBERJAYA: The Government does not need to outsource the processing of foreign worker visas and renewal of their permits as it already has the means to do so internally, said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong.

Dr Wee said outsourcing the services would lead to controversies related to costs as well as claims of monopolistic practices.

He added that the Government had a computer system that was now used by the Human Resources Ministry in handling foreign worker-related matters, and the Cabinet was studying if it could be used for these purposes.

"Since we already have the system to handle these procedures, I don't see why we have to outsource them," he told a press conference

after opening the Tech Talk 2015 here yesterday.

Dr Wee was responding to complaints from small and medium enterprise operators, who have to pay more to renew their foreign worker permits after the Government outsourced the service to the MyEG portal.

The businessmen also opposed the steep hike in the visa-processing

fee for Indonesian workers.

The fee was increased from RM15 to RM250 after the service was also outsourced to a private company recently.

"Your grievances have been heard. Give us some time. We are in the midst of finding the best solution," he said, adding that Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paul Low had been assigned the task.

Earlier, Dr Wee said about three-quarters of the 665,000-odd SME operators were not information technology savvy.

He encouraged these entrepreneurs to pick up the skill and expand their businesses via the Internet.

"They have to be realistic and understand that most of the businesses will be conducted online in the future," he said.

Tekam: Online renewal the way to go

New system easier and cheaper than counter applications, says association

By **HANIS ZAINAL**
haniszainal@thestar.com.my

SUBANG: The shift to online processing of foreign worker permit renewals will ultimately benefit the employers, says the Malaysian Association of Suppliers and Employees Management of Foreign Workers (Tekam).

Tekam president Dr Yusof Hashim said the association supported the Government's move

to have the process online.

"We welcome it as we see this as the Government's effort to introduce innovation to the process," he said, adding that the shift towards the new system eased the process and made it cheaper.

"With counter applications, we need to use more resources, such as manpower (to deliver the documents) and transportation costs to and from the Immigration offices.

"By doing it online, anyone can do it at

anytime," he said, adding that any innovation would be good for the industry.

Yusof said many countries had the renewal process fully online, including the United Arab Emirates.

Tekam's legal body committee member Param Muthusamy said the shift to online processing also minimised corruption as it eliminated the need for middlemen.

"With the present over-the-counter renewal, employers need to queue as early as 4am to

get their numbers. Often touts will get there first and employers will have to buy the numbers from them," Param said.

"By making the process online, there will be no more such cases."



Snap me for a video on interviews with Tekam members
Get The Star Mobile App now!