

'End renewal delays, not arrest bosses'

PUTRAJAYA: Immigration should rectify weaknesses in the renewal process for foreign worker permits, the Malaysian Employers' Federation said in response to the department's arrest order for 12 chief executive officers who allegedly harboured illegals.

They want clearer procedures on the interim period between the expiry of a work permit and approval of a renewed one.

This lack of clarity has caused misunderstanding between employers and the Immigration Department, MEF executive director

Shamsuddin Bardan told the *New Straits Times* after attending an MEF meeting to discuss employers' problems with Immigration regulations.

The meeting was called following the Immigration Department's announcement on Tuesday that 12 CEOs, including one from a public listed company, would be arrested for harbouring over 400 Bangladeshis without work permits.

"Companies, knowing that their workers' permits are due to expire, will submit renewal applica-

tions. But Immigration never states how long we can expect to wait. Who are we to tell the government to hurry up? Sometimes the wait can take months.

"In the meantime, the permits expire and the workers are technically illegal. Does the government want us to kick out these workers, who are temporarily illegal — and cause other social problems?"

Shamsuddin said that most employers take a risk by keeping the workers employed during the interim period until their permits

are renewed.

"This part of the process has to be refined. If Immigration says we should apply for extensions on special passes while waiting for new permits, then they should make that automatic with every renewal application."

Arresting CEOs of companies without solving procedural weaknesses would send the wrong message to investors, he said.

The MEF will be submitting its views to the Home Affairs Ministry and the Immigration Department soon.