

# 'Allow employers to hold maids' passports'

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Employers should be given some choices over maids' days off and holding their passports for peace of mind, Association of Foreign Maid Agencies (PAPA) president Alwi Bavutty said.

"It would be better if employers are given options. It is not a problem allowing the maids to keep their passports but employers may have a hard time worrying about them. Employers should be granted the alternative of keeping the maids' passports for safety purposes."

Alwi said some employers might not want their maids to go out on their days off.

"Giving the maids a day off would be all right, but if the employers are uncomfortable with the maids going out, they should have the option of paying overtime or an allowance."

He said allowing maids to leave their working premises would tempt more of them to abscond.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan felt that the new agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia would put employers at greater risk

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unless maids could be guaranteed to stay to the end of their contracts.

"We already have a good number of maids running away, under the current situation where there is no official day off and their passports are held by the employers.

"With the new regulations, the maids will be

able to plot schemes to run away, since their passports are no longer held by the employers and they are free to go out once a week."

He also said that Malaysians should not be over-dependent on their maids and suggested that more community child care centres be set up nation-wide.

"Most employers rely on their maids to care for their children as they have to pay rather hefty prices for sending their children to child care centres.

"By setting up child care centres in residential areas, parents would be able to send their children there instead of relying on maids."

Andrew Chuah, a maid agency operator, felt that households still needed maids.

"If the law stipulates it, then the contract will definitely state that there will be one day off per week and that the passport will be held by the maid.

"Clauses can also be added in, allowing, for example, the maid and employer to sign an extra agreement stating that the maid expressly permits the employer to keep the passport and to pay her an extra allowance at a certain rate, should they choose to work on their days off."