

'Authorities to blame for visa woes'

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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 services 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.