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## New Category 3 applications on case-by-case basis

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### NATION

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**PETALING JAYA:** New applications for Category 3 expatriate employment passes for jobs paying below RM5,000 will only now be accepted on a case-by-case basis with priority given to technical jobs, said the Immigration Department.

This comes on the heels of a recent announcement by Human Resources Minister M. Kulasegaran that the government is phasing out Category 3 and Category 2 expatriate employment passes in a bid to open up more job opportunities to locals.

Immigration Department's newl-minted director-general Datuk Khairul Dzaimie Daud confirmed that it was now processing applications for Category 3 expatriates on a case-by-case basis, especially for technical positions.

"General management posts like sales manager, accountants and finance will be rejected. The reason is that it (the jobs) can be done by local talents especially local university graduates," he said yesterday.

When asked if jobs for foreign chefs, writers and translators would be protected, he reiterated: "They will be considered case-by-case."

The Category 3 employment pass covers foreign nationals working in Malaysia for up to one year and this pass may be renewed twice.

However, it was unclear whether the new policy affects renewals for Category 3 employment passes as well or only new applications.

It was also unclear whether employers and applicants have been briefed of the recent changes as some employers claim they are in the dark.

As for Category 2 expatriates, Khairul Dzaimie said there was no decision on stopping the processing of their employment passes as of now.

"No decision on Category 2," he said.

Employers are voicing their concerns particularly for the Human Resources Ministry's proposed abolishment of the Category 2 expatriate employment passes.

The Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said Category 2 expatriate workers contribute specific expertise and know-how that local talent might not possess yet.

"Those expatriate workers in Category 2 will be more difficult (to replace) as they provide technical expertise which may not be available locally," he said yesterday.

There would be a time lag before vacancies left behind by such workers could be filled up by local talent, he said.

"A longer period of time will be required to ensure that our local talent is fully trained and capable of filling up the vacancy left by these expatriates.

"If no local talent is available, the government should allow the expatriates to remain until locals are ready to take up the positions," he said, adding that many of the Category 2 jobs were in areas such as big data and engineering.

He, however, said that abolishing Category 3 of expatriate workers should not pose a major headache for employers.

"They are of a lower category and would be competing with our fresh graduates," he acknowledged.

There are three categories of expatriate employment passes.

Category 1 refers to jobs paying RM10,000 and above, Category 2 is for salaries between RM5,000 and RM10,000, and Category 3 is for jobs paying below RM5,000.

Last year, there were a total 117,000 expatriates working under several sectors, with 2,158 expatriates working under Category 3.