

# Suspension of i-Kad leaves bosses in a bind

**NATION**

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**PETALING JAYA:** The i-Kad is no longer available for foreign workers, leaving employers in a bind about documentation for their workers.

All foreign workers are now required to carry their passport on them at all times.

Unfortunately, this has led to safety and security concerns not only for the workers but for employers.

The i-Kad is an identification card to help authorities verify personal information.

Launched in 2014, the i-Kad was meant to monitor migrant workers in Malaysia. But since July, the

issuance of the card has been stopped because of “technical issues”.

Immigration Department director-general Datuk Khairul Dzaimie Daud (pic) said the issuance of the card was suspended “temporarily”.

“This is to enable the department to resolve some technical issues. We are trying our best to solve the issues as soon as possible, but for the time being, foreign workers will have to carry their passport,” he said.

Employers now want the authorities to explain if the issuance of i-Kad for foreign workers has been ceased completely as this would mean that workers would need to carry their passport wherever they go to help authorities verify their employment pass.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said there has been no official announcement on the matter by the Immigration Department yet.

However, he said that bosses also face pressure from international clients who insist that employers should not hold the passport of their workers.

“The clients also send auditors to audit the suppliers and one of the requirements is that these suppliers should not hold the passport of the employees.

“Therefore, most bosses accede to the requirements and release the passport to their foreign workers,” he said.

“However, some employers are concerned because it is difficult for foreign workers in some industries to hold on to their passport,” he added.

“Bosses would also need to provide lockers for the workers but how safe are they?”

Shamsuddin said employers try to assist their workers by keeping the documents for safekeeping but that is done purely on a voluntary basis.

He said that workers have access to their travel documents around the clock and only need to inform their bosses should they require their travel documents.

He said replacement of the passport, should the workers lose or damage it, is costly.

“One Bangladeshi worker, who lost his passport, told me that he needed RM8,000 to get a replacement,” he said.

“This man works in Kuala Lumpur, imagine if he works in a different state and has no access to the embassy, he will need to come here and that would be an additional cost.”

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said employers are not allowed to hold the passport of workers.

He said lockers are provided for the workers to keep their passport when they are at the worksite.

“There is some physical inconvenience but the main thing is we need to comply with and follow international practice because these clients also do audits on local companies that export products to the United States and Europe.

“If the criterion is not followed they can be blacklisted,” he said.

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