

No need to rush for new passport

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SELANGOR: Immigration director-general Datuk Abdul Rahman Othman yesterday denied that the government would stop issuing the RM100 32-page passports.

He said there was no need for the people to panic or throng Immigration offices as the passports would continue to be issued.

"The government will not stop issuing the passports. This is nothing but rumours."

After the launch of the new passports which conform to International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) rules early last month, 33,936 Malaysians flocked to Immigration offices in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Putrajaya.

"Many believed the rumours and rushed to our offices, especially after the launch of the ICAO passports."

"They were under the impression that with the new version, the old ones would no longer be in use."

"This is not true as the old ones are still valid."

Apart from the 32-page passports valid for two years, Immigration issues 32-page passports that are valid for five years at RM300 and 64-page passports valid for five years at RM600.

On Feb 2, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein launched the ICAO passports to enable the authorities at border areas to monitor movements and facilitate detection of false documentation.

The ICAO passport is capable of protecting the identity of passport holders and minimising forgery.

The ICAO Malaysian passport is forgery-proof as it has a special security chip.

It will help the Immigration Department scan for high-risk travellers more effectively apart from facilitating the movement of genuine travellers.



Immigration officer Sophiana Simdie with the old passport (left) and the ICAO passport.

The shift from the current e-passport to the ICAO version was spurred by the need to secure the integrity of travel documents and put in place a standard travel document for ICAO member countries.

Holders of the new passport will be able to pass through Immigration checks smoothly as they can go through automatic gates in all airports in ICAO countries without going to Immigration counters.

On another matter, Rahman said Immigration would work closely with Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) to rid the city of illegal immigrants.

"We are serious about this and will intensify operations to ensure there are no more illegal immigrants in the city," he said.

The department is in the midst of "clearing out" its detention centres nationwide to prevent overcrowding.

There are, at present, 827 foreigners at the Sepang depot.

The department will ensure detention centres do not suffer overcrowding after the operations.

On the faulty autogate system plaguing Immigration checkpoints at the Kuala Lumpur International

Centre (KLIA) and the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine Complex in Johor Baru, Rahman said the problem would be rectified as soon as possible.

"The Home Ministry is evaluating the system."

Immigration, Security and Passport Division director Ibrahim Abdullah had said the 10-year-old system had been plagued by problems for some time now and that the department was aware of the issue.

There are 10 autogates and more than 80 manual passport processing counters at the KLIA.