

<p>◆Sunday - 23 July

2006</p><p>PUTRAJAYA: Employers hiring Indonesian maids since last month will not be allowed to renew their domestic helpers' work permits unless a contract of employment has been signed between the two parties.◆ </p><p>Employers must also open a savings account to deposit the helper's monthly wages and buy a mandatory annual insurance policy to protect the maid.◆ </p><p>If they fail to do so, the Government will not renew the annual work permit.◆ </p><p></p><p>There are currently 320,000 households with foreign maids in the country but the new ruling applies only to those hiring fresh Indonesian maids.◆ </p><p>Labour Department director-general Datuk Ismail Abdul Rahim said employers who started hiring fresh maids from Indonesia since June would be required to produce the maid's bank passbook when applying to renew the work permit.◆ </p><p>Under the new ruling, deductions to the maid's wages would not be allowed unless permitted by the Labour Department.◆ </p><p>◆If deductions are done without the approval of the department, employers can be fined up to RM10,000 as provided for under Section 99A of the Employment Act 1955,◆ he said.◆ </p><p>The ruling follows the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Malaysia and Indonesia last month promising better working arrangements for Indonesian maids.◆ </p><p>◆The terms and conditions should stipulate the monthly salary, working hours and leave while other terms can be included as agreed by both parties,◆ he added. .◆ </p><p>He said that a copy of the signed contract form must be given to the maid.◆ </p><p>◆Employers need not engage third parties, including lawyers, to draft the contract,◆ he said, adding that sample contract of employment forms were available.◆ </p><p>Ismail said the forms plus additional information on the new ruling could be obtained at the Labour Department here and at all the 38 district-level departments in the peninsula. ◆ </p><p>With the contract, Indonesian maids can now take grievances against employers to the Labour Court, where employers are liable to a fine and jail if they do not abide by the contract.◆ </p><p>On deduction of salary, Ismail said the department would allow it only if the employer showed proof of incurred expenses during the process of bringing the maid into the country.◆ </p><p>◆Even if deductions were allowed, they should not be over 50% of the monthly salary and the necessary receipts must be presented to the department," he told The Star.◆ </p><p>Previously, at least five months of a maid's salary were deducted for expenses incurred by the maid agency for bringing in trained maids, which sometimes also included the service charge imposed on employers by the agency.◆ </p><p>◆It is best to get a savings account without an ATM card and for the employer to keep the savings book in a safe place to prevent maids from running away,◆ he said, adding that the account would give the maids some privilege to withdraw their money anytime but with the employer's approval.◆ </p><p></p>