



FAMILY FRONTIERS

Persatuan Kebajikan Sokongan Keluarga Selangor & KL (PPM-011-10-24072020)

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Press Statement

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Family Frontiers Welcomes Move to Resolve 11,725 PR Applications, but Are New SOPs Sufficient to Fix the PR System?

Family Frontiers welcomes the Immigration Department's commitment to resolving the remaining 11,725 Permanent Residence (PR) applications by June 2025. We appreciate this positive step towards streamlining PR application procedures and strengthening policies that safeguard non-citizen spouses in Malaysian binational families and their children.

As stated by the Director-General of Immigration, Datuk Zakaria Saaban, the 11,725 applications have been delayed since 2014. This reflects the inconsistencies, systemic barriers and prolonged delays in processing the PR application after submission, and a 10-year wait is too long. **According to research conducted by Family Frontiers, 67% (97 out of 145)—have been waiting for the results of their PR applications for between 2 to 8 years. Alarmingly, 19% (26 out of 145) have been waiting for more than 8 years, with 7% (10 out of 145) waiting for over a decade.**

Despite meeting eligibility requirements for Permanent Residence, many spouses who have successfully submitted their applications endure years—sometimes over a decade—of uncertainty, with no clear updates on their status, or the outcome of their interviews with the Immigration Department and the Police, followed by non-defined years of review by the Ministry of Home Affairs, which further extends the already lengthy process. Applicants have also reported lost or misplaced files, further diminishing their chances of approval and exacerbating the hardship they face.

These prolonged delays have profound consequences on the well-being and stability of Malaysian binational families. PR status provides security, access to employment, banking facilities and the ability to live without fear of sudden disruptions to one's residency. Without it, families are left in limbo, facing financial strain, emotional distress, and constant anxiety over their future in Malaysia.

New SOPs for non-citizen spouses – are they enough?

The Government's announcement of a new policy for PR applications offers hope for more consistency in information, criteria, and timelines. However, significant gender disparities persist between non-citizen husbands and wives. While non-citizen wives of Malaysian men can apply for PR after three years of marriage and at least one year on a Social Visit Pass, non-citizen husbands of Malaysian women face stricter conditions, including a minimum of five years of marriage and a point-based assessment that is ambiguous. This disparity

creates an unfair emotional and financial burden on Malaysian women with non-citizen spouses.

PR policy inequalities often force Malaysian women into the role of sole breadwinner, as their non-citizen husbands—despite being qualified professionals in many cases—struggle to secure employment without PR, which has become increasingly difficult to obtain. Those on Long-Term Social Visit Passes (LTSVP) face work restrictions, and while the Immigration Department allows work endorsements, many employers are unwilling to navigate the complex process or employ a person with discretionary short-term visas. Additionally, non-citizen spouses are barred from licensed professions such as medical practice, engineering, pharmacy, finance, and law unless they obtain PR, adding further strain on binational families.

The point-based system also disproportionately affects lower-income families. Criteria such as education level, income, and employment status—though relevant to national interests—unfairly penalise families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly those in the B40 income group.

No guarantee of approvals despite meeting all requirements?

“... Countless documentation required, checked online and in person at regular intervals on progress but no satisfactory information given. Received a blunt letter saying refused. No reason given. I am 69, married for 46 years with 3 Malaysian children all living in Malaysia. I am retired as is my Malaysian husband - we have good pensions and are financially stable. Why was I refused?...”

“...Have been married for 13 years, have a kid, pay taxes, fluent BM and still rejected...”

These are a few of the many grievances received through research conducted by Family Frontiers regarding the inconsistent PR approval criteria. Even after extended waiting periods, approvals are not guaranteed—rejections have been observed across all waiting time categories, including those who waited for 4-10 years. This lack of consistency and transparency raises concerns about the criteria used to evaluate applications and whether applicants are receiving fair assessments.

How can we ensure that our PR frameworks are truly inclusive?

- 1. Make PR policies for non-citizen husbands the same as the new policies for non-citizen wives** to eliminate gender-based discrepancies and ensure a fair and equal application process.
- 2. Provide clear reasons for rejections**, so that applicants receive clear explanations and opportunities for reconsideration, rather than being left in indefinite uncertainty.
- 3. Provide a clear and transparent appeal process for PR rejections** and a portal for checking status to improve transparency and efficiency.
- 4. Provide PR pathways for widowed, divorced, and abused non-citizen spouses** to prevent their forced separation from their Malaysian children and ensure they can remain in the country with dignity.

5. **Implement Article 15(1) of the Federal Constitution**, which allows non-citizen wives of Malaysian men to apply for citizenship after two years of residence, removing PR as a prerequisite.

Family Frontiers is committed to work with the Government and the Immigration Department towards transparent, inclusive, and fair PR processes for the wellbeing of Malaysian binational families in Malaysia.

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