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Danish National ID Centre

Birkerød Kongevej 2
DK-3460 Birkerød
Denmark

Phone +45 61 98 39 00
Email nidc@nidc.dk
Website www.nidc.dk

Malaysia: Malaysian ID cards and citizenship

Introduction

The following note describes the different Malaysian ID cards, their respective meaning and requirements related to the issuance procedure. The note also contains information about Malaysian citizenship and a short introduction to the prevalence of identity fraud.

The note is primarily based on an interview with the National Registration Department conducted in Putrajaya in Malaysia in October 2023.

For further information about the MyKad ID Card, see the document guide: “Malaysia – Short guide to the Malaysian ID card MyKad”.

For further information about document fraud trends and corruption in Malaysia, please consult the note: “Malaysia: Document fraud and corruption”.

National Registration Department

The National Registration Department (NRD) is a department under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The department is responsible for determining citizenship status and subsequently, the issuance of identity cards. In addition, NRD is responsible for registration of civil events such as birth, death, adoption, marriage and divorce.¹

NRD was established after the Emergency (Registration Areas) Regulations 1948 were enforced as one of the measures to counter security threats. These regulations require that all citizens register and obtain an identity card upon attaining the age of 12.²

¹ National Registration Department, 18 October 2023.

² National Registration Department, 18 October 2023.

ID cards in Malaysia

NRD issues six different types of ID cards: Five types for persons above the age of 12 and one type for children below 12 years.³

There are 212 offices in Malaysia where ID cards are issued. In 59 out of the 212 offices, ID cards can be personalised/printed. In these offices, the ID card is issued the same day as the application is submitted, if there is nothing raising concern.⁴

MyKad

NRD introduced the biometric MyKad system in 2001, replacing an earlier ID card.⁵ MyKad is only issued to Malaysian citizens and according to NRD; MyKad is proof of Malaysian citizenship. The background print is blue and the ID card is often referred to as the *blue card*. The current version of the MyKad card has been issued since 2012 but according to NRD, a new version is in the planning phase with unknown time horizon.⁶

According to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), MyKad shows an individual's name, address, biometric data including photograph and fingerprints and their religious status as a Muslim. The religious affiliation is shown by omission whereas an individual's status as a non-Muslim is noted. The main purpose of the MyKad is to provide proof of identity but it serves many other functions, including as an alternative driving licence, a health document storing medical records, and an ATM card.⁷

From the age of 12, it is mandatory to have a MyKad issued. The ID card must be renewed when the child turns 18 but after the age of 18, it is not required to have the ID cards renewed.⁸

There are no limitations on how many MyKads a person can have issued.⁹

The application procedure involving children between 12 and 18 years requires that the parent or legal guardian is present together with the child. The child's birth certificate together with the ID card for the parent or legal guardian are the required breeder documents. Live enrolment is mandatory and the child is photographed at the application centre.¹⁰

MyKid

MyKid is a non-biometric ID card for minors below 12 years and it is not mandatory to have it issued.¹¹

³ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁴ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁵ DFAT, 29 June 2021, p. 64.

⁶ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁷ DFAT, 29 June 2021, p. 65.

⁸ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁹ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁰ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹¹ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

MyPR

MyPR is issued to third country nationals with permanent residence in Malaysia. The card has red background print. It is not required for a person with a permanent stays to have a MyPR issued. MyPR can also be issued to people after a long-term stay in Malaysia without permanent stay. The current requirement is 15 years of legal stay in Malaysia. The required breeder documents are a valid passport and an entry permit. The approval for issuance is granted by the Immigration Department.¹²

MyPR is never issued to Malaysian citizens.¹³

MyKas

MyKas is issued to persons with temporary stay in Malaysia. The card has green background print. The ID card is also issued to persons born in Malaysia by parents where their citizenships are unknown/stateless (Malaysia does not recognise statelessness). Issuance requires a Malaysian birth certificate where the parents' citizenship are registered.¹⁴

MyTentera

MyTentera is a silver card issued to persons in the military. When resigning from the military the person will have to change the card as it is not possible to have two cards at the same time.¹⁵

MyPOCA

MyPOCA is issued to Malaysian citizens in prison. This card is not issued to foreigners in prisons.¹⁶

Verification and control of ID cards

The five cards (not including MyKid) all carry a chip with biometric data of fingerprints, iris, and facial image. In order to verify an ID card, the fingerprints in the chip and in the database are checked against the person's fingerprints.¹⁷

When an ID card is lost, there is a fee of 1,000 MYR (approx. 200 €) in order to have a new card issued. When an applicant have lost two ID cards, a police report is required when applying for a new ID card.¹⁸

Personal ID card number

MyKad contains a 12-digit personal ID card number, which is generated when MyKad is issued.¹⁹

¹² National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹³ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁴ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁵ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁶ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁷ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁸ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

For further information about the MyKad ID Card including the personal ID card number, see the document guide: “Malaysia – Short guide to the Malaysian ID card MyKad”.

Citizenship

The below table shows how Malaysian citizenship is inherited. One thing to notice is the importance of whether or not the marriage is legally valid and registered according to Malaysian law before the birth of the child as this in some cases is decisive in the granting of Malaysian citizenship.²⁰

Overview of process of determining citizenship in Malaysia			
Citizenship		Correctly registered marriage, prior to childbirth	Child's citizenship status
Father	Mother		
Citizen of Malaysia	Citizen of Malaysia	Registered or not	Citizen of Malaysia
Foreigner	Foreigner	Registered or not	Foreigner
Foreigner	Citizen of Malaysia	Registered or not	Citizen of Malaysia
Citizen of Malaysia	Foreigner	Not registered	Foreigner
Citizen of Malaysia	Foreigner	Registered	Citizen of Malaysia
Permanent resident	Permanent resident	Registered or not	Citizen of Malaysia
Foreigner	Permanent resident	Registered or not	Citizen of Malaysia
Permanent resident	Foreigner	Not registered	Foreigner
Permanent resident	Foreigner	Registered	Citizen of Malaysia

Image 1: NRD, unofficial translation by NIDC.

Identity fraud and corruption

According to DFAT, in-country sources report it is more common to see genuine Malaysian documents obtained through bribery or fraudulent means than counterfeit Malaysian documents. DFAT is aware of reports of immigration officials being bribed to obtain genuine passports, to secure passage at border crossings and to facilitate release from immigration detention centres. In some cases, citizens from the Philippines and Indonesia have reportedly entered Sabah legally, disposed of their documentation after arrival, and bribed officials to obtain a Malaysian passport while citing a different ethnicity.²¹

According to DFAT, Australian authorities have reported identifying a number of individuals who have attempted to enter Australia with genuine Malaysian passports obtained through using another person's identity. The passports were most likely obtained through using the other person's MyKad card, possibly with the collusion of immigration authorities. DFAT understands the number of fraudulently obtained genuine passports decreased in 2018 following the arrest and prosecution of immigration officials involved in corruption. A number of immigration officials involved in the fraudulent issuance of genuine passports were convicted and imprisoned.²²

²⁰ National Registration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²¹ DFAT, 29 June 2021 p. 66.

²² DFAT, 29 June 2021 p. 66.

According to DFAT, in-country sources advise it would be more difficult to fraudulently obtain a MyKad card as the Ministry for Home Affairs crosschecks personal identity and other records. DFAT notes, however, that there have also been incidences of corruption involving officers from the National Registrations Department who have assisted in the corrupt issuance of MyKad cards to foreign nationals. In September 2019, media reported that six people, including a National Registration Department officer in Penang, had been charged in the Sessions Court with faking and selling birth certificates and MyKads. In October 2019, media reported that a special task force involving the RMP, Immigration Department and NRD had been set up to investigate the issuance and sale of MyKads and birth certificates to foreign nationals.²³

²³ DFAT, 29 June 2021 p. 66.

References

Oral sources

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