

Global Immigration alert

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Malaysia

Malaysia implements automated photo validation feature for all online Single-Entry Visa applications under Visa with Reference category

Executive summary

Malaysia has introduced an automated photo validation feature for all online Single-Entry Visa (SEV) applications submitted under the Visa with Reference (VWR) category through the [MYVISA](#) portal, effective 1 July 2026.

The change is expected to affect foreign nationals applying for immigration categories that require a VWR prior to travel to Malaysia, including expatriates and accompanying dependents.

Background

Under Malaysia's VWR framework, certain foreign nationals must obtain a Single-Entry Visa (SEV) from the relevant Malaysian consular office (Embassy/Consulate-General/High Commission) after receiving immigration approval and before traveling to Malaysia. While some foreign nationals may enter Malaysia visa-free for tourism or business purposes, they may still be required to obtain a SEV for employment-related purposes or to obtain dependent-type passes tied to principal applicants who hold employment passes. Following immigration approval, applicants typically apply for a SEV through the MYVISA platform.

As part of the SEV application process, applicants must enter their immigration approval reference number on the MYVISA platform, which automatically populates their personal data, including the passport-sized photo featured in their existing immigration approval.

Key developments

Effective 1 July 2026, all photographs submitted as part of online SEV applications under the VWR category through the MYVISA portal are subject to automated photo validation checks.

According to the MYVISA portal, acceptable photographs must:

- Have a plain white or blue background without gradients, patterns, textures or objects.
- Contain no shadows or reflections on the background.

Photographs that do not meet these requirements will not pass the automated validation process. In such cases, the application must be referred to the relevant VWR issuing office, which may require a compliant photograph to be uploaded to the relevant Malaysian immigration portal that issued the VWR approval or, for manually submitted cases, updated in the Malaysian immigration database, which will delay the online SEV process.

Impact on employers

Employers sponsoring expatriates and accompanying dependents requiring a VWR should ensure that photographs submitted throughout the immigration process comply with the updated Malaysian immigration photo specifications.

Applications that fail the automated validation process must require intervention by the relevant issuing office, resulting in additional administrative steps and potential delays in eVISA issuance. Employers may therefore verify photo compliance at an early stage to help minimize disruptions to planned travel and employee mobility timelines.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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