

Traffic department turns away residents without ID

Many residents were being turned away at the Abu Dhabi Traffic Department yesterday since they did not have the ID card.

- By Rayeesa Absal, Staff Reporter
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Abu Dhabi: Hundreds of residents were caught unaware as Emirates ID cards, issued by the Emirates Identity Authority (Eida), became mandatory to access any traffic and licensing services nationwide, Gulf News has learnt.

Many residents were being turned away at the Abu Dhabi Traffic Department on Monday since they did not have the ID card.

Those turned away included people scheduled to appear for a driving test, those trying to renew cars or driver's licences, register cars, change ownership of vehicles and seekers of an array of similar services offered by the department.

Those who had applied for ID cards, but have yet to receive them from Eida were able to produce the receipts and complete their procedures, officials said.

The Interior Ministry issued a statement on Friday announcing that applications submitted to the Traffic Departments in the country will be rejected in the absence of an ID card from Sunday.

Low awareness

However, public awareness was so low that few staff members were specially deployed close to the entrance of the Traffic Department to inform people about the decision.

This was done so that people would not waste their time trying to reach the counter only to discover they would not be able to complete procedures, an official said.

Over the past months, authorities have been repeatedly warning of possible denial of services, but without mentioning exact dates.

"It's a big problem. Hundreds or even greater numbers of people had to be turned away at the counter since they did not have the ID card," a counter staff said.

"Most people only found out about the decision once they reached here."

The department is accepting those who produce receipts to show they have applied, so many people went to Eida right away and came back with receipts, she added.

Although Eida has a counter at the Traffic Department itself, only one person is manning it, making it impossible for him to meet the sudden overwhelming demand.

"I can only process up to 20 applications in a day, since the procedures take time to complete," said the Eida official.

For each application, he has to verify details written on forms, take prints of each finger and photograph the person, in addition to printing the card.

Several were dismayed at the short notice prior to the denial of services, they said.

"I came to appear for my driving test yesterday and found out that I had to get the ID card first. It's too short notice..." said Kamran Khan, a Pakistani engineer.

Expanded

Kieron, a US citizen who preferred to be identified only by his first name, also said that he heard the decision only on reaching the department.

Since November last year, residents of Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Ajman and Umm Al Quwain — both nationals and expatriates — were required to produce the card to access traffic services.

From Sunday, officials extended this decision to cover the remaining three emirates — Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah.

The Law of Population Register and Identity Card makes it obligatory for all citizens and residents of the UAE above the age of 15 to obtain the ID card for identification in conducting a wide array of transactions.

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