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Ministry of Labour Briefs Thai, Foreign Journalists About Thailand's Anti-trafficking Policy

M.L. Puntrik Smiti, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Labour, says the Ministry of Labour is determined to legalize migrant workers and provide them protection in according to human rights and international standards.

Speaking at a press conference about Thailand's human trafficking situations, attended by Thai and foreign journalists, M.L. Puntrik said the Ministry of Labour has carried out two missions to address human trafficking problems and to protect the victims. The first concerns child workers aged between 15-18 years, and the second focuses on forced and bonded workers. The ministry is responsible for labour protection in the U.S. TIP Report. It is working with several agencies, including the Royal Thai Navy, the Thai Marine Police, the Department of Marine and the Department of Fisheries, in planning labour inspection to ensure their protection.

The press conference was jointly held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Royal Thai Police and the Thai Frozen Foods Association at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Narathip Hall.

M.L. Puntrik said there are three types of jobs that Thai workers tend to avoid. They are difficult, dirty and dangerous jobs. The country, therefore, needs to migrant workers to fill in the positions. The Ministry has a memorandum of understanding importing migrant workers through government-to-government deal with Lao, Cambodia and Myanmar. Some 400,000 migrant workers have been imported to Thailand. The industrial sector also needs migrant workers and there are 2.2 million of them working in the sector legally. Several other ten thousands of migrant workers are undertaking national verification. All documented migrant workers will be entitled to legal protection, social security benefits and welfares as other Thai workers are.

M.L. Puntrik said the Ministry of Labour now focuses on solving human trafficking in the fishery and related sectors. It has setup coordination centers for fishery workers in seven piloted provinces. Such centers will set up in all 22 coastal provinces. The centers are tasked to administer fisheries workers and register them. They will work with other agencies in trawler registration, labour protection, training and rehabilitation for trafficking victims. Interpreters specialized in three languages are hired to help communicate with migrant workers.

M.L. Puntrik said the Ministry of Labour has inspected over 40,000 trawlers and if they are found to operate illegally, the ministry will try to legalize them. The inspections focus on wages. At present, the minimum wage in Thailand is at 300 baht per day but could be higher in some areas.

M.L. Puntrik said the Ministry of Labour is determined to legalize migrant workers in line with the policy of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), human rights and international standards.

M.L. Puntrik also denied rumors that the military has a policy to crackdown and arrest migrant workers. She said authorities will follow steps to legalize migrant workers. The Ministry of Labour has notified to workplaces nationwide about the false rumors. If an exodus of workers occurred or any workplace faced labour shortage, it should notify the ministry so it can import migrant workers through the government-to-government deal to fill in the shortage.