

## **The Situation of Migrant Workers, Child Migrants, and Dependants in Samutsakhon Province**

Samut Sakhon is the province where its Gross Domestic Production has reached the 6<sup>th</sup> rank of Thailand. It is also the province that houses a great number of migrant workers who work in the food export industries. Among these industries are seafood processing industry, and frozen seafood industry which have capacity to export their products and contribute to a huge sum of money from 90,000 to 100,000 million baht to the Country per year. Each year, the number of this business is increasing rapidly. From this phenomenon, it also implies that the demand for labours goes on exponentially.

Apparently, the problem of labour shortage is always expanding. This pull factor draws more migrant workers to migrate to Thailand continually by using service from brokers or agents from country of origin, country of transit, and country of destination. In response to the incident, the Government, by using the policy, encourages these unlawful migrants who have employers to come to register for the work permit year by year.

The Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation (LPN) has experienced working with migrant workers in Samut Sakhon province since 2004. We have analyzed the Thai labour policy since the past 3 to 4 years, and find that the State is making a great attempt to administer the issue of migrant workers from three nationalities; i.e. Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, by giving the priority to the security of the State. This attempt to reduce the number of labour migrants is somehow in contrast to another attempt of the State which is to boost up Country's economic by encouraging new investment in Country which will subsequently turns to the cycle of labour shortage. In fact, migrant labour is considered as cost of production. According this approach, it seems that the Thai Government cannot do something to meet the need of business owners. Subsequently, business owners are imposed to use unlawful migrants. As for these unlawful migrants, some of them have to seek way to avoid an arrest from State authority, others have to bribe the State officer by paying monthly fee to be free from arrest. In some case, they have to seek protection from some group of powerful people in order to stay and work in Thailand.

In 2010, it was estimated that there were 120,000 documented migrants in Thailand. However, the number of migrants coming into the country could be much more, approximately 300,000 to 400,000.

On 26 April 2011, the Government; however, passed the cabinet resolution to solve the problem of migrant labour system integrally. According to this resolution, it takes an effect on three groups of migrants. First, children upper 15 years of age can register for work permit. Second, children and dependants of labour migrants can register at the registrar office of Ministry of Interior for the House Registration or Thor.Ror. 38/1 from 15 June to 14 July 2011 (1 Month).

After registration period, it shows that there were 79,215 migrants coming to register for the work permit: 70,508 Burmeses, 4,490 Laotians, and 4,217 Cambodians. Apart from this there were 1,328 young migrants whose age is lower than 15 coming to register for the Thor.Ror. 35/1 as well.

When we sum up the number of migrants coming since 2010, the total number of documented migrants who have work permit would be around 120,000. According to the cabinet resolution, these migrants have to do nationality verification in order to obtain temporary passport which allow them to stay and work in Thailand for 4 years. Thus, this implies that about 200,000 migrant labours are permitted to work in Samut Sakorn.

As can be seen, the numbers of migrant labours' and their dependants are on the top of Country, and their man power helps promote economics in Thailand, particularly in seafood processing industrial area which makes more than 100,000 million baht each year in export product.

Hence, the most interesting issues regarding labour migrants which should be taken into account is to find the way to administer, control and protect of migrant labours effectively by not violating human rights and labour rights. At the same time, there must be the way to prevent any threats and intimidations, the way to promote basic rights of children (especially in education, healthcare, and child protection), and the way to integrate these migrants to live in harmony in Thai society.

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