

The Labour Ministry yesterday warned foreign migrant workers who have registered their employment that if they find work with another employer their work permits will be rendered invalid.

Somkiat Chayasriwong, permanent secretary of labour, said many foreign workers thought that once they had registered their employment their work permits would remain valid even if they stopped working for the employer named in the paperwork.

In fact, he said, foreign migrant workers who have registered their employment may not switch jobs. Changing employers automatically invalidates their work permits.

Several employers in provincial areas have complained lately that their foreign employees had left to work for other companies offering higher wages. As a result, many employers don't have enough staff.

Registered foreign workers may change employers only if their employers die, declare bankruptcy, violate the employment contract or physically assault them, Mr Somkiat said.

Employers whose foreign workers leave must inform the authorities. Otherwise, they can be held responsible if the workers are arrested for breaking the law.

Mongkhon Sukcharoenkhana, director of the Fishery Association of Thailand, and Kitti Kosonsakun, president of the Fishery Association of Trat Province, yesterday called on Mr Somkiat to investigate the problem.

They said registered foreign workers migrating to central provinces had caused serious labour

shortages among fishing boat operators. This has left the boat operators with no other choice but to replace them with unregistered workers.

To date, 1.9 million foreign migrant workers have registered their employment. The most recent registration period ended on July 14.

Suthatsanee Suepwongphaet, director-general of the Employment Department, said the department would crack down on unregistered workers and their employers, particularly businesses in border provinces.

Employers who illegally recruit foreign workers can face fines of between 10,000 baht and 100,000 baht per illegal employee, while the workers themselves face up to five years in jail and/or a fine ranging from 2,000 to 200,000 baht.

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