International push begins for ‘Safe and Fair’ treatment of women migrant workers in Asean

Delegates from the European Union, International Labour Organisation and UN Women are meeting in Myanmar today to introduce the “Safe and Fair” programme designed to promote safe and fair migration practices, including labour rights and an end to violence against migrant women.

They hope the programme can build on efforts by Myanmar’s ministries of Labour, Immigration and Population and the of Social Welfare, Relief and Settlement. Government authorities, embassies, labour groups, overseas employment agencies, community-based organisations, NGOs and UN agencies will outline a shared roadmap that will inspire the effort in Myanmar over the next five years.

The meeting will ensure that the project aligns with national priorities and those of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and international legal frameworks on migration, anti-trafficking, ending violence against women and promoting women’s rights.

The Consultative Dialogue is part of a series of 10 national consultations being held in each Asean member-country. Women migrant workers are contributing to the development and economies of both the country they work in and their homelands, sending significant amounts of money home and bringing back skills and contacts.

The Myanmar 2014 Population Census using backward-projection methods estimated that 4.25 million people (nearly 20 per cent of the Myanmar labour force) were living abroad.

Women make up nearly half the migrants in Thailand, China and Japan and just over half in Singapore.

Women work as domestic helpers, factory staff, sex workers and in agriculture and construction. According to the World Bank’s Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, Myanmar migrants remitted US$3.5 billion to Myanmar in 2015, nearly 5 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product.

Myanmar women continue to migrate for livelihood reasons, and migration can be a positive experience, in which they gain skills, find meaningful employment, and gain more opportunities for themselves and their families.

Through migration, women can inform and change social, cultural, political and gender norms and can influence positive change across households and communities.

Yet some women migrants find that they cannot access legal and social support when they face problems. They can also suffer from discrimination – both as migrants and as women – which can result in isolation, unfair working conditions or abuse and exploitation.

Women migrant workers can face sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence – at home before migration, during migration and upon return. Whether migrating through regular or irregular channels, women can face the risk of violence from intermediaries and employers, as well as from partners and others. Women who are in an irregular situation and women working as domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, violence, forced labour and trafficking due to their status and isolation.

Fear of being deported, reluctance to report abuses to legal authorities, language and cultural barriers are among the obstacles, women who have experienced violence face, when accessing services such as health care, justice, police or social services.
The positive experiences and contributions of women migrant workers can only be fully ensured if their safety, labour and human rights are fully protected and migration becomes a safe and fair process for them.

Source: The Nation
Published on August 30, 2018

August 31, 2018  Myanmar, Thailand

Myanmar migrant worker accuses Thai employer of mistreatment

A Myanmar man who was working at a car accessories factory in Lopburi province of Thailand was allegedly locked in a cage for more than five hours for demanding that fans be installed in the workplace, a Thai-based migrant rights advocate said Wednesday.

"We condemn these actions. We cannot accept such inhuman behaviour," said Ye Min, a senior member of the Aid Alliance Committee.

The group has provided shelter to the victim for the past five days since he fled the factory.

Worker Ko Tin Aye told reporters in a Facebook interview that he was locked in a cage by a manager and had been threatened by the factory owner's two sons.

"All the Thai workers laughed at me when I was locked in the cage," he said.

Although other sections of the factory had fans, the place where he was working had none, so he demanded that fans be installed because it was hot and dusty.

He was locked in the cage on August 22 after a factory official accused him of instigating unrest in the workplace. He and some fellow workers had stopped working the day before because of the heat. He added they had been demanding that the factory install the fans for three months.

Factory officials had threatened to send him back to Myanmar, so he decided to leave and seek shelter with the rights group, Ye Min said.

Ye Min said that his group informed the Myanmar embassy in Bangkok about the case on Tuesday.

U Aung Myo Thant, legal adviser of the embassy, said embassy officials and the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation in Thailand will visit the factory to try to verify the claims of the Myanmar worker.

He also said that the federation will seek a new job for Ko Tin Aye.

The factory owner has offered to rehire the worker many times, but the worker and embassy officials declined the offers, U Aung Myo Thant said.

Source: Myanmar Times
Published on August 30, 2018

http://www.mekongmigration.org/?cat=53
Govt told not to deport Myanmar-Muslim workers

THE PRESIDENT of the Songkhla Fishing Association yesterday called on the labour minister to find a way to prevent 370 Myanmar-Muslim workers from being deported.

Suradej Nil-ubol, president of the fishing association, said the 370 workers have been registered with the government and also hold a “sea book”, which allows them to work on Thai fishing boats.

They are capable members of the crew, but will be deported by the end of September, as they have no passports, he said.

The Myanmar authorities staffing the One Stop Service in Songkhla refused to issue passports for these workers because they are Muslim, Suradej said. The officials cited a Myanmar policy, which does not allow Muslims to hold a passport, he added.

Under the Thai law, all documented migrants must have their nationality verified and must hold a passport, so the 370 fishermen will be sent back home to get passports before they can return to work, Suradej explained. This would be a great loss for the Songkhla fishing industry, because it is suffering from a severe staff shortage, he said.

“I plead with the government to find a solution, so this group of workers can continue working in Thailand,” Suradej said.

Source: The Nation
Published on: August 23, 2018

Thai fishing industry wants up to 60,000 Myanmar workers

Thailand will recruit 60,000 Myanmar workers to fill jobs in its fishery industry, Thai Labour Minister Adul Sangsingkeo told reporters during visit to Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday.

“Our labour requirement in the fishing industry is 60,000. I came here to get help,” he said on the sidelines of a meeting with his Myanmar counterpart to discuss ways to strengthen protection of Myanmar migrant workers in the kingdom.

He said the plan to recruit Myanmar workers would be drawn up after the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries on the protection of fishery workers.

The two sides also discussed enhancing the two counties’ relations and cooperation, finding ways to legally send money back to Myanmar, assisting and caring for Myanmar seasonal workers and domestic workers in Thailand, and the safe repatriation of Myanmar illegal workers in the kingdom.

Myanmar Labour Minister U Thein Swe said the government wants to ensure that Myanmar fishermen have legal protection before sending them to Thailand.

Detailed discussions on the issue will be led by Thailand’s deputy secretary of Labour and Myanmar’s director general of Labour, Immigration and Population, said U Thein Swe.

More than 40,000 Myanmar citizens work in Thai fishing and more than 45,000 in related industries. Another 58,741 Myanmar work in marine product factories.
Myanmar and Thailand have reached an air service agreement and a memorandum of understanding on development of shrimp culture in Rakhine state, the official Global New Light of Myanmar reported yesterday.

The signing of the agreements took place following the 9th meeting of the Myanmar-Thai Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation in Nay Pyi Taw on Tuesday, co-chaired by Myanmar Minister of International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin and visiting Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai.

At the meeting, the two sides also touched on a wide range of issues relating to promoting bilateral relations, economic and cultural cooperation and enhancing the bilateral relations to the strategic partnership.

Their discussions also covered doubling the current bilateral trade by 2022, working for promotion and protection of the rights of Myanmar migrant workers, opening of the Second Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge, implementing of modern village projects for the development of Rakhine state and promoting people-to-people contact and tourism.

During his visit in Nay Pyi Taw, the Thai foreign minister also held talks with Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi on the same issues.

At a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Thailand, Suu Kyi said positive Myanmar-Thailand relations contribute to regional progress, while Pramudwinai said that the stability of Myanmar is the stability of Thailand.

The Thai foreign minister arrived in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday for the meeting of Myanmar-Thai Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation.

Source: Khmer Times
Published on August 16, 2018