



ASIA PACIFIC MISSION FOR MIGRANTS (APMM)

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SK's new policy will only create more undocumented migrants

More problems, not solutions.

This is what the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants stated as it expressed concern over the new policy of the South Korean government for migrant workers.

Taking effect on August 1, the policy entitled "Measure for Improvement in Foreign Workers' Change of Workplaces and Prevention of Broker Intervention" while posing a positive tone violates the migrant workers' freedom of movement and choice of employment as enshrined in South Korean law and several international conventions.

In the previous Employment Permit System, or EPS, migrant workers can change workplaces or employers three times for the first three years and two times in the remaining years. They were also provided a list of employers or companies to choose from. Under the new policy, however, it will be the employers and companies who will receive the list of workers and shall decide then who among them they shall employ.

By restricting migrants to change workplaces or companies, the new policy puts migrant workers at the mercy of employers. Such a condition can only breed more exploitation and violation of labor rights on the part of employers and consequently, the ballooning of undocumented migrants in South Korea.

"Where will the migrants go should their employers choose not to give them salary, put them in slave-like work conditions, deny them food? The new policy only reinforces a modern-type of slavery where migrant workers are shackled to their employers and companies," said Ramon Bultron, managing director of the APMM.

According to Bultron, the unfair migrant labor conditions in South Korea have only created a huge phalanx of undocumented migrants. Further to that, state-instigated crackdowns and criminalization of undocumented migrants did not resolve the said conditions but only aggravated the problems faced by migrants.

While South Korean laws are supposed to accord the same rights and privileges to both local and migrant workers, the South Korean government further denies migrant workers such rights and freedoms that push the latter in greater risk of exploitation.

The APMM has sent a letter of concern to the Ministry of Employment and Labor to express concern on the matter and called on its partner organizations as well as members of the International Migrants Alliance to do the same.

Lastly, APMM called on sending country governments not to keep mum on the issue but instead raise diplomatic concerns on the possible impact that the new policy will have on their citizens working in South Korea.