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Thailand Portal

Report sees progress in fishing industry labour conditions

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By The Nation

Thailand's fishing and seafood industry has made some progress in regard to labour conditions, according to a report funded by the European Union (EU).

Released yesterday, the report revealed that there had been fewer instances of physical violence and a higher percentage of workers with written hiring contracts.

"Of fishers interviewed, 43 per cent have signed written contracts," the report said, "The percentage has gone up from four years ago."

Conducted in 2017, the report covered 434 workers – predominantly migrant workers – from a mix of large and smaller employers across 11 provinces so as to check recruitment practices, wages, houses, hours, safety and health, support services, complaint mechanisms, living conditions, forced labour indicators, and legal compliance levels.

According to the findings, there have been just a few workers under 18 years old. Some fishers have had higher average real monthly wages.

The EU had issued a yellow-card warning against the Thai fisheries sector in 2015. Thai authorities are now anxiously awaiting an EU review of the country's status on IUU – illegal, unregulated and unreported – fishing problems.

Various legal and other measures have been taken to tackle those issues in the hope that the EU will remove the yellow card in the near future.

Luisa Ragher, Charge d'Affaires of the EU Delegation to Thailand, said the EU welcomed the substantive and rapid progress made by the Thai government, in particular on the legal and regulatory framework, to create better working conditions in the fisheries and seafood sectors for migrant and Thai workers.

"Further challenges remain and the EU stands ready to assist the government in achieving its objectives," she said.

The just-released report from the EU-funded ILO Ship to Shores Rights project has still detected some persistently unsatisfactory labour practices in Thailand. For example, 34 per cent of workers reported being paid less than the minimum wage (before deductions). In addition, the report has uncovered a wide gender pay gap with 52 per cent of women reporting pay below the legal minimum. On top of this, 34 per cent reportedly did not have access to their identity documents.

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