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AMNESTY OFFER FOR ILLEGAL WORKERS IN BAHRAIN

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Bahrain announced its implementation of a six (6)-month general amnesty for workers staying in Bahrain illegally. The Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LRMA) announced that during the amnesty period of 01 July 2015 to 31 December 2015, a worker can either leave the country without paying fines or has the option to find an employer ready to hire him/her so he/ she can stay in Bahrain.

There will be no blacklisting for all those who voluntarily depart the Kingdom, and there is possibility of returning regardless of their previous legal status.

Foreign nationals who wish to stay in Bahrain should find a suitable employer and apply at the National Passports and Residence Affairs for an extension of their stay. The worker should then fill in an Intention to Transfer Form and submit it to his/her new employer, who will upload the document and apply for a work permit through the LRMA's online portal.

An illegal worker does not need the consent of the previous employer to get legal employment during the amnesty period. The previous employer cannot stop these workers from taking up new jobs and LRMA will assist companies to hire them in case they require additional work permit.

Those who have court cases against them, including travel ban for outstanding debts, are not covered by the amnesty.

Illegal workers whose passports are withheld by their employers should immediately contact their respective embassies who will issue emergency certificates that will allow them to leave the country without any penalty being applied.

LRMA aims to remove as many people as possible from the vulnerable position of being illegal and subject to exploitation and give them the opportunities to a new start without financial or legal costs.

LRMA further warned of middlemen collecting money from workers who promise to rectify their legal status, as this is often a scam. It is illegal to collect money from workers for the services offered by the amnesty.

(SGD) HANS LEO J. CACDAC
Administrator
