



Thailand Expands Labour Protection Beyond the Traditional Workplace

Thailand's Cabinet has approved a package of four labour measures designed to close gaps in existing protections for seafarers, home-based workers and state enterprise employees. The package comprises two draft legislative amendments and two regulations, reflecting changes in employment models as well as the legal consequences of Thailand's marriage equality law. The proposed amendments concern the Maritime Labour Act and the Home Workers Protection Act, while the regulations would revise welfare terminology and entitlements for state enterprise employees.

Under the proposed draft amendment to the Maritime Labour Act, employers would be required to enrol qualifying seafarers directly in the social security and workers' compensation systems, extending access to all seven categories of social security benefits and protection for work-related accidents. The draft would also restrict shipowners from allowing seafarers under 18 to work between 10pm and 6am, subject to limited exceptions for training or legally permitted duties. The measure, which would apply to workers on transport vessels rather than fishing boats, is intended to bring Thai law into closer alignment with the International Labour Organisation's Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

The proposed draft amendment to the Home Workers Protection Act addresses a different regulatory gap created by the expansion of non-traditional and platform-enabled work. Coverage would be extended to work obtained through online platforms and would encompass industrial, commercial, agricultural and service-sector activities. The draft would set a minimum working age of 15, prohibit workers under 18 and pregnant women from hazardous work, and impose significant penalties for employing children below the minimum age. It would also introduce fair remuneration standards and require employers that fail to pay workers or delay returning security deposits to pay annual interest of 15%.

The remaining measures respond directly to the implementation of marriage equality. Two regulations governing state enterprise employees would replace gender-specific references to “husband” and “wife” with the gender-neutral term “spouse”. As a result, legally married spouses of all genders would have equal access to compensation, medical benefits and funeral assistance, with the changes applying retroactively from the date the marriage equality law took effect. This illustrates how marriage equality is producing consequential amendments beyond family law, requiring employment and welfare frameworks to be reviewed for provisions that continue to distinguish benefits by gender.

From a legal and business perspective, the package demonstrates a broader effort to modernise Thai labour protection around the reality of how people now work and form legally recognised families. Employers and businesses engaging seafarers or home-based and platform-connected workers may need to reassess social security registration, remuneration, working conditions, age restrictions and payment practices once the relevant amendments are enacted. State enterprises will likewise need to update benefit administration to recognise spouses equally regardless of gender. More broadly, the measures suggest that businesses should expect labour compliance obligations to extend increasingly beyond conventional employer-employee arrangements as Thai law adapts to platform work, informal employment and wider social reforms.

Should you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact us via info@bgloballaw.com

