



NEWS RELEASE

March 23, 2007

Brion maintains status quo on “wakkala” system

Secretary Arturo D. Brion clarified today that pending official confirmation of the alleged new authorization (“wakkala”) system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Department of Labor and Employment will maintain a status quo in policies and procedures in the recruitment and deployment of workers to that Kingdom. The clarification was made in the wake of a news item that came out yesterday in the GMA News TV attributing to the Philippine Labor Attaché in Riyadh a statement that the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment will be following new rules on visa endorsements for Saudi-bound Filipino workers.

Secretary Brion said that the Labor Attaché in Riyadh, in a memorandum dated March 21, 2007, disclaimed the statement attributed to him. The labor attaché in Riyadh, made the clarification that what they disclosed is that they are monitoring how the alleged new rule is being implemented with regard to Filipino workers and will abide by the guidelines of the Philippine Department of Labor.

Allegedly, the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia received a “circular “ issued by his Royal Highness The Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 16 December 2006 addressed to all Saudi Arabian Embassies not to accept authorizations or authentications for recruitment purposes that authorize non-Saudis. Under the alleged New System, Saudi establishments or companies that have secured visas should authorize either one of its Saudi employees or any Saudi recruitment agency, with respect to all types of visas except household workers.

Secretary Brion indicated that he will be meeting with the Saudi Ambassador to the Philippines on the matter, as soon as the latter returns to his Post from foreign travel. He reiterated that until all matters are confirmed from first - hand official sources, a status quo is the order of the day. Meanwhile, the POEA and industry leaders are already studying the possible implications of the alleged new system in the Kingdom.