

News Advisory
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POEA warns about victims of illegal recruitment and human trafficking used as drug couriers

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration warns Filipino workers against accepting offers of employment without proper work documents or using the "the easy way out" via the "no tourist visa" arrangement with ASEAN Member States such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, and Thailand.

Administrator Hans Leo J. Cacdac likewise warned that illegal recruiters and human traffickers have combined with drug traffickers, and would require their victims to carry or use packages or pieces of luggage not their own. Such victims end up becoming drug couriers or mules.

Administrator Hans Leo Cacdac said workers deployed through this scheme, if they are successful in not being detected carrying illegal drugs, would usually end up either stranded without work in a foreign country, or forced to accept low-paying household jobs or as farm hands in remote plantations or establishments used as fronts for prostitution.

Cacdac said human traffickers as well as drug traffickers can also make their recruits become seasoned drug mules by directing them to repeatedly carry drugs for a considerable amount of money. "The amount of money is used as bait for victims to commit the internationally-recognized crime of drug trafficking," Cacdac added.

"Remember that even if Southeast Asian destinations such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Hongkong, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei, and Thailand do not require visas for tourists, work visas or permits are still required in order to work in these countries or destinations," Cacdac said.

"Make sure that you are dealing with a licensed recruiter, and that you have a contract with a definite employer and a work visa or permit before leaving the Philippines," Cacdac added.

Those who have questions or complaints regarding illegal recruiters and human traffickers may approach or call any of the central and regional offices of the POEA, DOLE, DOJ, DFA, PNP, NBI, OWWA, BI, PDEA, or the web sites or Facebook/Twitter pages of these agencies.

Cacdac said recent studies on human trafficking in the Philippines indicated that most of the victims were travelers who were deceived by their recruiters about their real jobs or the conditions of their employment overseas. As for drug traffickers posing as recruiters, the practice of lending their bags for use of their recruits or requesting their recruits to bring a package for "pasalubong", unwittingly becoming couriers in the process, are just one of their common modus operandi.

"Hence, I would advise aspiring OFWs to be doubtful when recruiters offer tourist visas instead of working visas if planning to work abroad and never accept packages of unknown nature. Please be very, very careful and always check whether the recruiter, foreign employer, and the job order are in POEA records," Cacdac concluded. /END

