Siam Legal Phuket Advises Foreign Workers and Employers on Work Permit Compliance as Operation X-Ray Crackdown Intensifies Across Phuket

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Siam Legal Phuket, a Thailand-based full-service law firm with more than 20 years of operation, is advising foreign workers and employers in Phuket to review their work permit and immigration documentation as provincial authorities intensify enforcement under the newly launched Operation X-Ray campaign.

Phuket authorities have begun a province-wide operation targeting illegal immigration and unauthorized foreign employment, deploying police, immigration officers, and labor officials across the island. The campaign is led by Deputy Governor Khetarat Chansilp, Provincial Police Commander Pol. Maj. Gen. Sinlert Sukhum, and Deputy Director of the Internal Security Operations Command, or ISOC, Phuket, Rear Adm. Praphan Srivipa. Officials have described the effort as intended to dismantle illegal labor networks, close down nominee businesses, and protect occupations reserved by law for Thai nationals.

On the first day of the operation, more than 2,000 individuals were screened, including workers from South Asian countries, and officials reported 39 violations ranging from unauthorized employment to immigration offenses. Following complaints from residents, enforcement teams conducted inspections at Malin Plaza, SB

Night Market, and Patong Beach, where foreign vendors had reportedly been selling goods openly. Officials found many stalls closed and vendors absent at the time of inspection, with most remaining sellers confirmed to be Thai nationals, and non-Thai workers found in violation were detained and referred for prosecution.

The enforcement effort also extended to the construction sector. On June 23, officials raided a construction project in Chalong, arresting 18 Chinese nationals and 4 Myanmar nationals. Investigators noted irregular patterns at the site, including Chinese nationals in supervisory engineering roles and a heavy reliance on imported materials, a pattern officials referred to as "Coin Center Construction," in which projects appear to be staffed and supplied almost entirely through foreign labor and resources. Police Commander Sinlert said Phuket hosts an estimated 140,000 migrant workers and that more than 2,000 foreign nationals have been arrested since October 2025 for offenses including illegal employment, drug-related crimes, and traffic violations, adding that enforcement will continue on a daily basis and that workers holding valid permits who comply with their permit conditions are not the target of the campaign.

"Work permit violations are rarely just a matter of paperwork. When authorities find a foreign national working outside the scope of their permit, or a business structured to mask foreign control through a Thai nominee, the consequences can include detention, prosecution, and complications with future visa applications," said Omar O Manee, Attorney at Law at Siam Legal Phuket.

Foreign nationals employed in Phuket, particularly in retail, hospitality, and construction along tourist corridors such as Patong, Kamala, and Cherng Talay, should confirm that their work permit lists their current employer, job title, and place of work. A permit valid for one employer or location does not automatically extend to work performed for a different business or at a different site, and this mismatch is one of the more common findings during inspections of this kind.

Employers in areas covered by the current sweep, including Chalong and other construction zones, are advised to review whether their staffing and ownership structures comply with Thai foreign business restrictions, particularly in cases where a Thai nominee shareholder or director may be used to obscure majority foreign control or day-to-day foreign management of the business. Nominee arrangements found during an inspection can expose both the foreign individual and the Thai nominee to legal liability.

The business lawyers in Phuket recommend that businesses employing foreign engineers, supervisors, or skilled construction labor confirm that each worker holds a valid work permit matching their actual role and duties on site, since a discrepancy between a worker's registered position and the work they are actually performing is a frequent basis for enforcement action. The firm also recommends that foreign nationals in Phuket who are uncertain about their current visa or work permit status seek legal review before continuing any work activity, as addressing a compliance gap voluntarily is generally more favorable than remediation after a violation has already been identified during an inspection.

Given that officials have indicated the campaign will extend to every district and police jurisdiction in the province, foreign residents and business owners in areas beyond those already inspected should not assume their location places them outside the scope of enforcement.

Siam Legal Phuket provides work permit, visa, and business structuring services for foreign nationals, employers, and investors in Phuket, including document review, compliance assessments, and representation before Thai immigration and labor authorities.

Siam Legal Phuket is a Thailand-based law firm serving foreign nationals, investors, property buyers, and expatriates in Phuket and the surrounding region. The firm provides legal services in property law, immigration, company formation, criminal defense, and related matters.

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Siam Legal Phuket

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