

1 April 2009 - The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) reiterated the existing policy of banning labor deployment to Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Nigeria following an assessment of the security and labor conditions in said countries.

"The government maintains and reiterates the ban on labor deployment to these places. We ask the general public to respect the ban. Our purpose is to keep away our overseas workers from harm and avoid further risks to their lives," DFA Undersecretary for Migrants Workers' Affairs Esteban B. Conejos, Jr. said.

Undersecretary Conejos added that Filipinos who would like to seek employment abroad may consider alternative countries where their safety will not be compromised.

The security situation in Afghanistan, according to the DFA Undersecretary, remains unstable and volatile. Last March 20, a Filipino carpenter was killed and another injured in a rocket attack in Kandahar.

There is an existing labor and travel ban to Iraq due to continuing security concerns. Labor deployment to Nigeria is also on hold, especially to those working or traversing the Niger Delta, the hotbed of local militancy.

With the improved security situation in Lebanon, the lifting of the labor deployment ban is being considered given some progress in the conclusion of a bilateral labor cooperation agreement that will ensure the protection of the welfare of Filipino workers, specifically minimum wage, reasonable rest periods and decent working and living conditions. The Government issued the ban to Lebanon in 2006.

There is also a current ban in the deployment of household workers to Jordan.

"For Lebanon and Jordan, we are in the process of negotiating the bilateral cooperation agreements. We are coming closer to signing these agreements," Undersecretary Conejos said.

Undersecretary Conejos said the DFA, the Department of Labor and Employment, and other concerned agencies are continuously monitoring and assessing the situation in the five countries. Concerned Philippine embassies and consulates provide regular updates to the DFA. END