

PHICHIT : The Labour Ministry is overhauling regulations in an effort to tackle the long-standing problem of illegal alien workers.

Speaking during an inspection tour here, Labour Minister Paitoon Kaewthong yesterday said new rules governing alien workers should be in place by early next year.

The new policy calls for business operators to procure alien workers through the Labour Ministry, making it the sole supplier of non-Thai workers.

The ministry will sign labour employment agreements with neighbouring countries to ensure no alien workers enter the workforce in Thailand illegally, he said.

Illegal workers already in the country will be allowed to register from July 1 to 30. After that a crackdown will be mounted.

"This will be the final opening for them. Those in hiding should step forward and get registered," Mr Paitoon said.

"A crackdown will certainly follow. We will not allow them to beg on the streets like we see them doing these days.

"The law will be strictly enforced."

Once registered, the alien workers would be allowed to stay in Thailand until the end of February 2010, after which they would be required to undergo national identification if they wish to continue their stay and remain employed in the country, he said.

If their national identities were endorsed by their governments, they would be issued a two-year work permit, Mr Paitoon said.

Work permit holders would then be eligible for standardised wages and social welfare and social security coverage, which are now being studied.

But he said pregnant workers would not be allowed to give birth in Thailand. Bringing in family members to join them also would not be tolerated.

"We will not encourage them to have families or get pregnant while they are working here.

"Two months before they are due, they will be required to return home to give birth," he said.