



BUSINESS

‘Innocent’ foreign workers face crackdown

Permits are even required for volunteer work, say lawyers

■ A SIZEABLE number of foreigners may be breaking Thailand’s strict labour laws without realizing it, according to a leading Bangkok law firm.

Work permits are required for all kinds of business activities, however temporary or innocuous they may seem. These can include charity and volunteer work, music gigs and even attending business meetings and seminars.

The Alien Working Act defines the term ‘work’ as any activity whereby one exerts energy or uses knowledge, whether or not in consideration for wages or other benefits.

Experts from Tilleke & Gibbins warn: “Most foreigners who enter Thailand for a short business trip of one or two days are not aware that the purpose of their trip requires a work permit in

accordance with Thai laws.”

Penalties for working in Thailand without a work permit include a fine of between 2,000 and 100,000 baht, imprisonment of up to five years and deportation. In some cases, the violator may be prohibited from re-entering Thailand, adds Tilleke & Gibbins’ attorneys-at-law Penrurk Phetmani and Waewpen Plemwichai.

Authorities have recently been more active in pursuing those who work in Thailand without permission, add the lawyers, and the number of foreigners arrested has increased markedly.

Given the severity of the penalties, Tilleke & Gibbins advises foreigners who wish to work in Thailand, permanently or temporarily, to spend the time and relatively minor financial effort to apply for a proper work permit.