



GCC STATES PROPOSE RESTRICTION ON STAY OF EXPATRIATE WORKERS

The labor ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council have proposed the restriction of the length of stay of expatriate workers to six years. This was announced by Saudi Labor Minister Ghazi Al Gosaibi during the labor summit held in Abu Dhabi in December 2005.

According to Minister Al-Gosaibi, the labor ministers have no objection to allow expatriate workers to stay as long as the workers and their sponsors desire. However, if they seek naturalization, the government will limit their stay to six years only. The proposal, which was based on a study conducted by Bahrain and the Office of GCC labor ministers, was neither approved nor rejected by the summit leaders, as the restriction is a precautionary measure aimed at preventing demand for naturalization.

Minister Al-Gosaibi cited that it was quite difficult to naturalize the large number of expatriates working in the GCC Countries, namely: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. He said it was because the expatriate workers come for a specific purpose and specific contracts and not as immigrants, like in the United States and Europe. He added that the GCC states felt that naturalization would have economic, social, demographic, political, and security consequences.

The number of foreign workers in Gulf countries is estimated at 12 million, and this has increased by five percent every year. The number is expected to reach 18 million in 12 years.

Bahrain Labor Minister Majeed Ibn Mohsen Al Alawi said that the Gulf region had become a huge region where foreign workers outnumber the local population.