

India, Japan sign pact on movement of 'skilled workers'

Consultations on rollout of scheme for 14 sectors to start soon: officials

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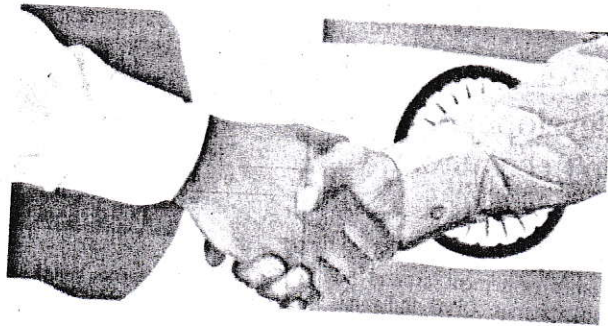
India and Japan have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on a basic partnership framework for operation of the 'specified skilled worker' (SSW) system under which the Japanese government accepts foreign nationals who have a certain level of expertise and skill.

"The two governments will hold consultations in the near future to prepare for the implementation of the SSW system with India," a Japanese official told *BusinessLine*.

The memorandum was signed by Japanese Ambassador to India Suzuki Satoki and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Monday.

SSW is a new status of residence created in Japan in April, 2019, to accept foreign nationals who have a certain level of expertise and skill. Indian nationals with certain professional and language skills will be eligible to work under the SSW system.

"There are 14 specified in-



Indian nationals with certain professional and language skills will be eligible to work in Japan under the new system

dustry fields that fall under SSW and workers and professionals in those sectors could be eligible," the official said. These are: nursing care (care-giving); building-cleaning management; machine parts and tooling industries; industrial machinery industry; electric, electronics and information industries; construction industry; shipbuilding and ship machinery industry; automobile repair and maintenance; aviation industry; accommodation industry; agriculture, fishery & aquaculture; manufacture of food and beverages; and food service industry.

No fixed quotas

Interestingly, there are no fixed quotas for each country

under the system. "The contract is made on a business-basis and it is difficult to say how many Indian nationals can come to Japan under SSW as of now. They need to satisfy the minimum required criteria," the official said. Vietnam, at present, has the highest number of nationals working under the SSW system in Japan, he added.

"...Prime Minister Narendra Modi has placed high priority on quickly operationalising this MoC. I am also informed that Prime Minister Suga (Yoshihide), when he was Chief Cabinet Secretary, was one of the prime movers of the SSW programme to address the needs of Japan's skilled labour market. With an early operationalisation of

this MoC, both our countries can synergise our strengths and have mutually beneficial outcomes," Shringla said at the signing ceremony.

Can stay for 5 years

Also speaking at the ceremony, Satoki said the MoC will open new opportunities for Indian nationals to get employment in Japan.

The MoC sets a framework between the governments of Japan and India to allow information sharing and problem solving in order to protect Indian nationals coming to Japan as SSW and facilitate a smooth implementation of the SSW system, the official said.

"Once foreign nationals get the status of SSW, they are entitled to stay and work in Japan up to five years. As the foreign nationals are expected to have a certain level of expertise and skill as well as basic language proficiency, only those who pass relevant exams are entitled. Accordingly, the two governments will hold consultations," the official added. Japan is already running a scheme called 'Technical Intern Training Program' with India since October 2017 for training and skill development.

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