

JAPAN'S FOREIGN TALENT POLICY

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Executive Summary

1. The expected labour shortage arising from its rapidly ageing population has propelled Japan to initiate policies for foreign talent attraction.
2. The Abe administration is adopting a foreign talent policy as the country is also interested in white collar, highly skilled workers and individuals with skills that the country needs badly.
3. To bring in the desired number of high-skilled workers, Japan's authorities have adopted the points system employed by Western countries for evaluating immigration eligibility, based on criteria such as qualifications, language abilities, professional experience and so on.
4. From 2012, the Japanese point system for skilled foreign workers has been based on case-by-case biodata (e.g. age, salary, Japanese language proficiency and academic qualifications) to fast-lane proficient employees to become permanent residents.
5. Applicants with 70 points or more are eligible for permanent residency after five years, down from a decade waiting time in the past. In 2017, the five-year requirement is further reduced to three years for employees with 70 to 79 points and down to just 365 days for employees scoring 80 points and above.
6. Since April 2017, to attract and keep those who studied in Japan and/or who have been working in Japan, there is a fast track option for skilled non-Japanese workers: they are eligible for a one-year stay in Japan before applying for permanent residence.
7. Some foreign professionals in Japan groused that they had to pay compulsorily to the Japan's National Pension system (applies to all individuals between 20 to 59 years old residing in Japan).

8. According to domestic critics and the international media, a major obstacle in attracting skilled migrants is language as the working language and language medium of its education system is still Japanese.
9. To attract highly skilled foreign talents and their children, the government may have to create a 'Japanese dream' so that they can succeed multi-generationally and contribute their skills permanently.
10. Japan has good public order, high environmental standards, high-tech infrastructure and Japanese in general are known for being polite and cultured; their service industry has highly trained professional staff. These and other factors are enough to attract economic migrants and highly mobile global talents.