

India to be important source of professionals SEA nations

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India will become an increasingly important source of professionals for Southeast Asian countries but its elite group are staying home to work for multi-national corporations (MNC) on better terms, says a book.

It is also becoming increasingly difficult for Southeast Asian companies to source Indian professionals from major metros.

This is due to unattractive remuneration packages when compared to wages, bonuses and incentives given by the MNCs, said the book's co-author during the launch today.

As such, more and more Southeast Asian companies were seeking professionals from second and third tier India cities, albeit on cheaper terms, to fill the gap of professionals, said Dr Faizal Bin Yahya, the co-author of the book "The Migration of the Indian Human Capital – The ebb and flow of Indian professionals in Southeast Asia".

Arunajeet Kaur, a Phd student at the Australian National University, is the co-author of the book with Dr Faizal, a Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

The Southeast Asian companies, unlike MNCs, have always considered Indian professionals as cheaper source of management expertise, he pointed out.

But this was no longer the case as professionals emerging from India's IITs and IIMs, have better options and MNCs were now locating to India to tap their expertise, he told PTI after the launch of the book at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

Even if these top professionals stay back to work in India, they have a better environment with "gated houses and several servants" while it becomes a challenge to secure a domestic maid when working in places like Singapore or Malaysia, Dr Faizal pointed out.

Asked if professionals from the two and three tier cities would continue to be a source of professionals for the Southeast Asian companies for a long time, he said it was not likely to be so.

In fact, competition comes from the MNCs which are locating their operations in India to recruit the best brains and appoint them in their global operations.

Top Indian professionals also preferred to work in developed economies, especially the United States and Europe.

The next best option for them was in the Middle East and the Gulf countries where wages and re-numeration are higher than those offered by the Southeast Asian companies, Faizal said.

The book also dubbed elite professional Indians as "Global Indians" with expertise and knowledge to work for any international company anywhere in the world but dedicated and committed to remain Indians with plans to return to their home country.

According to Dr Faizal's conservative estimates, there are about 2,00,000 Indian professionals in Singapore, the most preferred place in Southeast Asia for its transparent and non-corrupt practices with clear immigration policy and offer of permanent residency.

Indonesia is the next best place for Indian professionals, which already have some 50,000 of them working in the country.

The Indian presence in Indonesia is backed by investments by heavyweight Indian corporations, such as Aditya Birla Group, Mittal Steel and Indorama Group.

Resource-rich Indonesia is a large market for Indian companies which would deploy more Indian professionals, he added.

Malaysia and Thailand have 20,000 Indian professionals each but their presence in these countries remain limited due to restrictive employment contracts and immigration terms, said Dr Faizal.