

Fresh Challenges Ahead for the Foreign Workforce In Singapore

By Franca Ciambella, Managing Director, Consilium Law Corporation and Spencer Chew, Legal Associate



Photo source: www.mom.gov.sg



The workforce in Singapore totals 3.4 million workers, of which 1.1 million, or approximately one-third encompasses foreigners on Employment Passes (EP), 'S' Passes (SP), and Work Permits (WP), according to statistics shared by Minister for Manpower Mr. Lim Swee Say at a dialogue on 9 March 2018 organised by the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF).

Mr. Lim further revealed that given its present trajectory, there is a distinct possibility that the local workforce would slow down to 0% growth within the next 10 years, while Singapore's foreign workforce remains on an upward trend. As such, the Ministry of Manpower has taken steps to moderate the intake of foreign human resources. The minimum qualifying salary for EP was raised from \$3,300 to \$3,600 from 2017. Steps are also being taken to raise the minimum salary for a SP, from \$2,200 presently, to \$2,300 in 2019 and \$2,400 in 2020.

However, flexibility for companies to bring in foreign professionals with in-demand skills that are lacking locally, remain.

The pilot Capability Transfer Programme (CTP) is one such scheme which may assist companies. The CTP aims to facilitate the transfer of capabilities from foreign specialists to locals, by, for example, recruiting a temporary foreign expert in the industry for a transitional period, to train the local workers within the company, thereby plugging local capability gaps.

These are some of MOM's latest measures targeted at retaining a strong local core, with a foreign workforce to enhance and compliment this by striking a "fine and dynamic balance" in the authorities' foreign manpower policy. As emphasised by Mr. Lim, "our door remains open to foreign professionals, especially those with the skills needed for businesses to transform, and at the same time have skills which are in short supply in Singapore."



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Contact:
Franca Ciambella, Managing Director
Email: fcambella@consiliumlaw.com.sg
Tel: +65 6235 2700
Website: www.consiliumlaw.com.sg


