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## Skill dev must be high on national agenda - The New Nation

By

NEWS report said over two lakhs foreign workers -- mainly skilled workers and mid-level managerial people in garment, IT, leather and such other sectors -- are working in Bangladesh and the government has taken a new crash programme this time to train local manpower to reduce dependence on foreign sources. As per some conservative estimates they are sending home annually US\$ 1.0 billion, which is a handsome amount while local manpower, remains largely unutilized at high pay-out salary brackets. Experts and other stakeholders wonder why Bangladesh should lose huge resources annually in spite of having our diligent and promising workers in the country who can quickly take over the place with proper training and skill development. We welcome the new initiative to develop the local manpower with proper training to hold high-end jobs in domestic industries at a time the country's industrial growth is picking up making room for more skilled workers forcing local industries to hire manpower from countries like India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, China, Vietnam and South Korea to meet the efficiency gap. We know Bangladesh's skills gap in industrial sector has many reasons -- lack of skills of sector-specific experts, training workers and managers on job specific categories, adaptability problem with new machines and job innovations. More importantly, Bangladesh's poor institutional capabilities to meet such criteria is alarming to make it necessary to take up special learning programme to attain ability for higher capacity-building. Consequently foreign nationals are meeting the gap. It appears that the new crash programme adopted with special curricular course and adopted by the Finance Ministry titled as Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) has come at a right time and we must say it must be made totally successful with high degree of vigilance and standard of teaching and training methods. The country is working on a US\$ 50 billion export target by 2021 and it has a direct link to elevate the country to a middle-income nation. So there is no alternative to develop highly skilled manpower at this stage. But as it appears that the country lacks adequate number of training and teaching institutions related to promoting labour skills and development of managerial manpower. Only two public institutions such as Institute of Business Administration of the University of Dhaka and the Bangladesh University of Textiles (BUTEX) are teaching and imparting training in those fields. What we believe is that the government could take this skill development programme at broad-based level with similar broad policy-agenda in business development education and training. Industrial development and training of manpower must go hand in hand and in our view big industrial organizations including BGMEA must come forward to set up endowment for funding such programme under manifold public-private initiatives. But no good advice will mean nothing if the government remains terribly busy how to expand police activities for fighting terrorism.