

Australia welcomes influx of new Indian migrants to Australia

SYDNEY, SEP 11. Indians have emerged as the fastest-growing group of migrants entering Australia. They are now the third-largest immigrant group behind the British and New Zealanders.

The Indians bring with them the expertise that Australia's booming economy desperately needs, amid a chronic skills shortage.

Engineers, accountants and health professionals are all making the move as India's reputation for producing a talented workforce continues to grow.

Shantanu Chakraborty moved to Sydney from Mumbai five years ago and is having the time of his life in his adopted homeland.

"They do value me (at work) because within two years of joining them they've given me a partnership offer in the firm, which is brilliant," the 32-year-old IT expert told the BBC. "If you are good at your work, opportunities are there."

It can be hard, though, for migrants to climb the career ladder.

Shantanu's wife, Nishita Bhansali, is a designer who has found it tough getting on at work. "The interior design and architecture field here is fairly saturated. There's always someone out there who's maybe not as skilled but willing to work for less money," she explained. Most



Indians find it easy to settle here. Many of the newcomers spent time studying in Australia before applying for permanent visas.

Former government adviser and newspaper columnist Gerard Henderson says it is vital that Australia does well in this global competition for skilled labour.

"The word has got out that Australia's looking for well-educated migrants with good English, and Indians fit that. So the question is whether those who want to leave India want to come to Australia or the United States or Britain or Canada," said Henderson.

Dr Wise says accepting migrants is not a long-term answer "There's almost full employment in most parts of Australia and we're after workers for key industries."

Trade unions have complained that importing so many foreign workers does not address the root causes of Australia's skills shortage.

Dr Amanda Wise from Macquarie University says recruiting migrants might not be a long-term solution. "There is some argument from the unions that it's actually a bit of a quick fix, that the government should be investing in Australian residents," Dr Wise



Dr Wise

explained. "Should we just be going overseas to import skilled workers which is the cheap way for an employer to do it rather than training and education?" she asked.

Indians make up around 10% of new settlers here and that figure is expected to rise. They are now surpassing the Chinese and the Vietnamese as well as the Italians and Greeks.

Dr Prabhat Sinha from the United Indian Association believes there are simple reasons why so many immigrants from India have done so well in Australia.

"Indians are very motivated people, it doesn't matter what profession they are in. Even in (the) business sector they're doing very well," he stressed. "They are very



Dr Prabhat Sinha

understanding about the needs of a country, may it be business or whatever field it is."

Researchers point out that this can, however, be a lonely place for new migrants from India.

Social isolation and discrimination at work can pose problems. But for most newcomers the migration experience is a positive one. The fact is Australia's vibrant economy simply cannot do without them.

Nishita and Shantanu are shining examples of the type of people Australia would like to attract. "I think Australia's a great place to live and moving here is probably one of the best decisions we've both made in our lives," said 30-yr Nishita enthusiastically.