

Foreign Workers in Japan Quitting, Govt. Review Underway



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Japan is increasingly relying on foreign workers with a record high of more than 1.8 million last year, but thousands part of one program are quitting their jobs because of low wages, high fees, and poor working conditions. It's prompted the government to launch a review. NHK World's Ueno Yamato reports.

To Thi Hue is working for a new company. She was originally part of the technical intern trainee program. Like many others, she found her first job in Japan through a broker and an agent in Vietnam. Their fees, along with other moving costs, put To about 7,000 dollars in debt. Then the corona virus pandemic hit, reducing her shifts.

Life in Vietnam is hard. I wanted to send money, but my salary was low, so I'm sorry but I had to quit.

She was able to obtain a short-term stay visa and got a part-time job at a farm. Numata Yoshitsugu helped her with that. He heads an organization that supports some of the thousands of trainees quitting their jobs. Numata says some brokers in Japan give former trainees illegal work in factories and farms in rural areas. Workers are sometimes lured through social media with the promise of high pay. But some jobs end up providing less than minimum wage. It's still a win-win for workers and their employers because they neglect paying taxes and insurance premiums.

Workplaces with poor working conditions tend to be short staffed, so many of them use illegal residents like the trainees who have quit. I don't think this problem will go away.

Last week police searched this factory north of Tokyo. Two brokers have been arrested. Investigators say the suspects forged resident cards and have helped nearly 300 people, including trainees,

work in Japan illegally since 2016. The government launched a panel last year to review the trainee program. Korekawa Yu is on it. He says finding ways to reduce fees charged by brokers in Vietnam is on the agenda, among other topics.

The Japanese labor market needs to establish a system that recognizes workers' skills and gives them appropriate wages.

With the government projecting the labor force will decline by more than 22 million over the next 30 years, foreign workers are becoming more essential. The challenge is making sure they want to stay.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What are some problems that will happen if Japan doesn't attract more foreign workers?
2. Can you think of any legal win-win situations for foreign workers and their employers?
3. Have you heard of any other problems with the technical intern trainee program?
4. What types of jobs do you think will lack workers in the future?
5. How can Japan make sure the workers want to stay?