

## Bangladeshi maids may work in Hong Kong from June

Bangladesh is getting the paperwork done as potential domestic helpers receive job training, with the first batch to arrive in June

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Acting Consul General of Bangladesh Mirana Mahrukh. Photo: Jonathan Wong

The Bangladesh consulate in Hong Kong is processing applications for its citizens to work in the city as domestic helpers, with the first batch expected to arrive in June.

But the recruitment agency that filed the paperwork said the initiative would not be a quick fix for the maid shortage, as it would take time to attract more Bangladeshis to move here.

Acting consul-general Mirana Mahrukh confirmed the consulate had received 10 applications.

"The applications are being processed and it will take some time," she said.

Afterwards, the consulate will pass the applications to the Immigration Department in Hong Kong.

She said the Bangladeshis had been trained in the culture and food of the city to help them adapt to their new life.

"We will also try our best to make sure they are treated fairly here. I think the Hong Kong government will co-operate with us," she said.



The first wave of applications are from the Technic Employment Service Centre.

Managing director Teresa Liu Tsui-lan, also vice-chairwoman of the General Chamber of Hong Kong Manpower Agencies that represents 300 agencies, said the government in Dhaka approached her chamber in June last year.

After months of discussion with the country's Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, the chamber reached a deal about two months ago.

Liu said the bureau had provided a training centre in Bangladesh for Technic Employment, which is one of the biggest agencies in the city.

It has been training 50 to 60 Bangladeshis at the centre in Cantonese, English and cooking.

So far, more than 20 have been hired by Hongkongers. The agency had submitted 10 applications to the consulate and would make the rest of the submissions soon, she said.

"I hope to bring 100 to 150 Bangladeshi maids to Hong Kong each month later this year," Liu said.

In addition, 18 smaller agencies are preparing to run another training centre, which has just been renovated in Bangladesh.

Together, these agencies hoped to bring 200 domestic helpers to the city each month, Liu said.

She said Hongkongers' response to Bangladeshi helpers had been enthusiastic, mainly because the recruitment costs were lower than those from other countries.

Although the statutory minimum wage, at HK\$3,920, is the same for helpers from any country, the one-off fee paid to the agencies for items such as insurance and plane tickets varies.

Technic Employment charges about HK\$8,000 for Filipinos and Indonesians, but just HK\$3,980 for Bangladeshis.

The Bangladeshis are being recruited at a time when the Society of Hong Kong Accredited Recruiters of the Philippines, which represents about 100 Philippine agencies, stopped sending maids to the city.

The moratorium began on February 27 to protest against the Manila government's policy of no placement fees, which stops agencies collecting a month of a maid's salary in Hong Kong for each new placement that is secured.