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Russian Factories Hired Nearly 50K Foreign Workers in 2024 – Labor Ministry

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Russian factories hired 47,000 foreign workers in 2024 as the industrial sector sought to stave off deepening labor shortages, the Vedomosti business daily reported Monday, citing Labor Ministry data.

According to the data, the number of foreign workers recruited to work at factories exceeded the government-set quota of 40,500 workers by 16%.

These workers predominantly came from China, India, Turkey, Serbia and other countries whose citizens need visas to travel to Russia, a ministry representative told Vedomosti.

The latest data comes as Russia grapples with a shrinking domestic workforce, a trend accelerated by demographic decline and the exodus of skilled professionals following the invasion of Ukraine and ensuing Western sanctions.

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Recruiting workers from abroad becomes "objectively necessary" when suitable candidates cannot be found in Russia, the ministry representative told Vedomosti.

Demand for foreign laborers is especially high for professions like welders, concrete workers, finishers and food and agricultural staff, said Dmitry Lapshinov, managing director of the recruitment agency Intrud.

Labor shortages in the construction, manufacturing and technology sectors are linked to the war in Ukraine and import substitution policies, economic researcher Viktor Lyashok told Vedomosti.

Dmitry Zemlyansky, another economic researcher, said foreign workers are most needed in sectors where laborers have transitioned to the defense industry.

"Construction continues to face the most acute shortages, in part due to a reduction in migrants from visa-free countries," Zemlyansky said. "In recent years, new mining projects, especially in the Far East, have increasingly relied on foreign workers in regions with persistent labor shortages."

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