Little progress in labour migration
Lack of mobility could undermine job demand in ASEAN, reports says

DT Asia Pacific

JAKARTA, Indonesia: A number of mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) have been signed between ASEAN member states in recent years with the goal of stimulating and regulating the migration of highly skilled professionals like dentists. A new report released by both the International Labour Organisation and the Asian Development Bank in Jakarta last week indicates that, despite the improved framework, labour mobility in these industries has not progressed much.

The main obstacles to the implementation of the arrangements remain different systems of education and professional recognition, the report states. It also suggests that some countries still favour filling certain positions with native labour rather than professionals from abroad. Language, culture and social acceptance appear to be further barriers to foreigners seeking to occupy certain positions in another country.

Multinational mutual recognition arrangements between ASEAN members exist for a number of professions, including engineers, architects, accountants and nurses. An agreement regulating the migration and foreign employment of dentists was signed in 2009 by ten ASEAN member states in 2009. According to the report, highly skilled workers are estimated to constitute only 1 per cent of the workforce in the entire ASEAN region. Combined with the lack of mobility, it predicts that they will not be able to satisfy demand, which is expected to grow by 44 per cent, or 14 million additional jobs, owing to the introduction of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

“National admissions and visa policies, the source countries’ policies on outward migration, and the recruitment policies and preferences of employers in the private sector are likely to weigh any changes to labour mobility that the AEC might introduce,” the report states.

Intended to establish a single regional market and to foster economic development, the AEC is anticipated to be fully established by the end of 2015.

Increased risk for cancer

In a study of almost 90,000 participants, Chinese researchers have found that the risks of oral cavity cancer, oropharyngeal cancer, and nasopharyngeal carcinoma were higher in patients with diabetes mellitus compared with participants without the condition.

According to the researchers, a number of previous studies have suggested that certain types of cancers are more common in people with diabetes mellitus. However, the link between the two diseases has not been well explored to date. In order to gain insight into diabetes patients’ risk of developing head and neck cancer, researchers at various scientific institutes in Taiwan and Taipei studied patient data dating until 2011 of 89,089 patients newly diagnosed with diabetes and control patients without diabetes.

Overall, head and neck cancer is the sixth most common type of cancer. It accounts for about 6 per cent of all cases, and for an estimated 850,000 new cancer cases and 550,000 cancer deaths worldwide each year.