

Brazil wants to attract foreign workers

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BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) Brazil will change its immigration law to make it easier for foreign workers to enter the country and meet growing demands for labor, Strategic Affairs Minister **Marcelo Neri** said Thursday.

He said the country wants professionals from countries with "linguistic affinities" with Brazil, such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and countries in Latin America.

Foreign workers are needed because the current "situation of near-full employment" could jeopardize the country's future economic growth, he added. The unemployment rate in November 2013 was 4.6 percent, the lowest level since 2002.

Neri told foreign correspondents in the capital that the government will make it easier for highly qualified professionals such as engineers, doctors and technology specialists to work in Brazil.

Last year, Brazil launched a "More Doctors" program that resulted in the arrival of more than 5,000 Cuban doctors to work in impoverished areas where physicians and medical services are scarce.

Neri said the changes would include reducing the bureaucracy involved in obtaining a work visa for Brazil and allowing workers to change jobs without having to request a new visa.

A recent study conducted by the Fundacao Dom Cabral business school found that that 91 percent of the 167 companies surveyed said they face difficulties in hiring qualified technicians, administrators and project managers.

"The lack of qualified manpower has become a major bottleneck in Brazil and there is no sign that this situation will improve in the near or medium term," the survey's coordinator, Paulo Resende, told reporters this week.