

TECHNOLOGY

Taiwan bets on Vietnam, Indonesia for future chip-industry talent

Government, employers and schools seek 320,000 international students by 2030



Minghsin University of Science and Technology boasts cutting-edge semiconductor equipment, thanks to support from Taiwan's government and businesses. (Photo by Hideaki Ryugen)

HIDEAKI RYUGEN, Nikkei staff writer

March 26, 2024 03:54 JST

TAIPEI -- As a falling birthrate threatens to shrink Taiwan's pool of high-tech talent, the island has turned to Southeast Asian students as a source of workers for the semiconductor industry.

On the outskirts of Hsinchu, a city nicknamed Taiwan's Silicon Valley, students at the **Minghsin University of Science and Technology** train on the kind of equipment used in real-life semiconductor factories.

Students can also intern at leading chip companies like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., ASE Technology Holding and Powertech Technology.

MUST's Semiconductor School -- dubbed a "mini TSMC" -- aims to produce specialists who can become immediate assets to future employers. Nearly 700 of the roughly 2,300 students come from Vietnam.

One Vietnamese student in a master's program chose to study in Taiwan to learn from its world-leading semiconductor industry. The 23-year-old plans to work for three or four years at a Taiwanese company after graduation to gain experience.



Mingshin University of Science and Technology opened an office in Ho Chi Minh City in July 2023 to recruit Vietnamese students. (Mingshin University of Science and Technology)

Programs like this reflect fears of a talent shortage among Taiwanese technology companies.

"We need tens of thousands more workers," said Chang Ho, dean of MUST's Semiconductor School. "Companies and universities need to work together to foster talent."

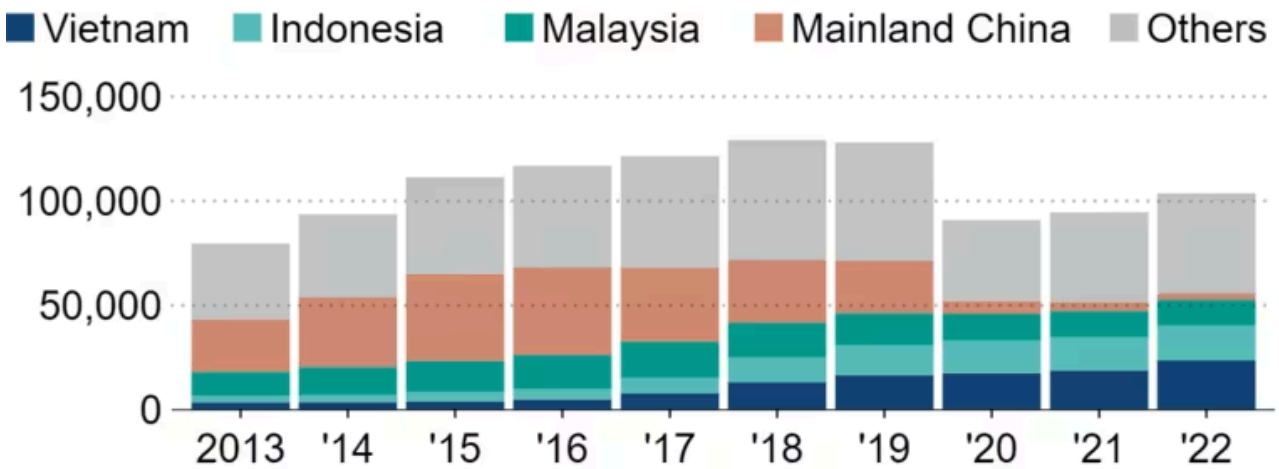
廣告



Stagnating wages, rising property prices and other pressures have pushed down Taiwan's birthrate in recent decades. Annual births fell to a record low of around 135,000 in 2023 from more than 300,000 in the 1990s.

Taiwan is attracting more Southeast Asian students

(Number of students by nationality)*



*Universities and technical schools. Includes exchange students.
Source: Ministry of Education

Meanwhile, competition for talent in the semiconductor industry has only increased. TSMC alone now hires more than 6,000 workers a year.

Demand for chips is expected to continue growing amid advances in generative artificial intelligence and other technologies. Given Taiwan's reliance on the semiconductor industry, government, businesses and educational institutions here face pressure to come up with long-term strategies for securing workers.

Foreign students from Southeast Asia and elsewhere are seen as part of the solution. Taiwan announced plans last year to spend 5.2 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$163 million) by 2028 to attract 320,000 foreign international students by 2030, with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math. This means taking in students at as much as double the pace of before.

Taiwan also launched a new framework this year whereby the government and employers provide financial support to foreign students in exchange for their working in Taiwan for a certain period after they graduate.

The goal is to have around 70% of international students work in Taiwan after graduation, up from the current 40% to 50%.

Southeast Asian students are a major target of this push. Recent recruiting programs have popped up in Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines and elsewhere in the region to attract students.