

SKILLS SHARPENER

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Linking right jobs with the right people

The first in a series of skills-cum-jobs fair seeks to connect knowledge with employable skills

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BANGALORE

Every person can be made employable. That's the government's pledge as it rolls out a series of skills-cum-jobs fairs that allow employers and training institutes to make their plugs to a captive audience.

The first such fair, sponsored by the ministry of labour and employment that takes care of the country's labour policy and legislation, concluded earlier this week after a five-day run.

After Karnataka, the labour ministry intends to hold similar fairs in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

"Industry says that only 15% of graduates are employable. Through this fair, we are trying to build a connectivity between knowledge and employable skills," said S.J. Amalan, regional director of apprenticeship training, a division of the ministry that deals with vocational training.

That belief is how the Modular Employable Skills fair got its tag line: Every person can

be made employable.

About 4,000-5,000 people turned up over five days, part of a formal skill development initiative, set up to address the lack of marketable skills in the Indian labour force. Finance minister P. Chidambaram announced the initiative in last year's budget and allotted Rs550 crore with a target to test, certify and provide jobs to one million people over five years.

But from the experience of its debut skills and jobs fair, it might be an uphill climb. Said B. Shivashankar, senior manager at **JK Tyre and Industries Ltd**, "We are not satisfied with the fair. There were not enough people visiting it."

The tyre maker was looking to fill 60 positions in production activities and 100 apprenticeship vacancies in Mysore. "Only 15 diploma holders turned up, and we were able to shortlist merely five candidates during the fair," said Shivashankar.

Apart from skills and jobs, the fair also offered certificates for people with skills, but no formal training. About 3,000 were tested, assessed and certified at the fair. "The people who clear the test will be given nationally accepted certificates by the National Council for Vocational Training," said Amalan.

On the skills front, new courses from process instru-

mentation to banking are being designed and curriculum being finalized.

Apart from hard skills, the fair included soft skills training institutes such as ThinkVarsity and the recently set-up Laqsh. Bangalore-based ThinkVarsity offers a month-long communications course for Rs5,000.

"It's a good thing that this fair is going to repeat every two months. So, even if someone is unemployable after a few cycles, anybody can be made employable," said Karthik Padmanabhan, head of student relations at ThinkVarsity.

Besides JK Tyre, the jobs side saw companies such as retail chain Big Bazaar owned by **Pantaloon Retail (India) Ltd**, recruiting firm **TeamLease Services Pvt. Ltd**, business process outsourcer **Firstsource Solutions Ltd** and the consumer goods firm **Eureka Forbes Ltd**.

The event also attracted the likes of people such as Mohammed Hamid, who couldn't make it into German industrial corporation **Bosch Ltd** last year, since he had no formal education or certificate—despite repairing power tools for 25 years.

Travelling from Mysore to Bangalore to take part in the fair, Hamid was confident that he could be certified. Asked if he would then consider Bosch, he remained blunt about what lures. "I will, if the salary is good," Hamid said.