

Companies turn to rural BPOs to cut costs

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CHENNAI: Intended to train rural school dropouts for work in the BPO sector, the establishment of IT finishing schools by the Tamil Nadu government is in keeping with present industrial trends. According to K Purushothaman, regional director, Nasscom, companies are being encouraged to look at rural BPOs as they can cut down one-third of their costs.

"Since they can save on infrastructure and operational costs, we want companies to explore the possibility (of outsourcing work to rural BPOs). For this, however, we need to enhance students' knowledge of industry, language and communication skills. We suggested that ELCOT (Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu) set up IT finishing schools to address this need.

Companies such as **Adventity** and UDF have already given business to rural BPOs. We are showcasing the model to companies in Chennai and some are keen in looking at it. Considering the economic slowdown, companies from India and abroad will definitely be interested," he said.

Set to launch in the third week of February across 29 districts, the finishing schools would be modelled on the same lines as FOSTeRA (Fostering Technologies in Rural Areas), a successful BPO in Krishnagiri district. Set a target of training 6,800 rural candidates in six months, the programme sought to make youngsters employable, ELCOT managing director Santhosh Babu told TOI. "The Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing Corporation (TAHDCO), which has provided Rs 5 crore for the project, will supply a list of 500 candidates.

Of these, 250 will be selected from each district and trained by Sun iTech. After 216 hours of training, they will become conversant with computers. It will also be their ticket to English speaking, typing and soft skills."

"Our staff comprises students who have dropped out after class X. Their salary ranges from Rs 5,000 to Rs 12,000. It is a myth that only graduates can do voice operations because our employees speak beautifully and can do data entry operations as well. One must see it to believe it," said M R Ashok Kumar, CEO, FOSTeRA.