

India's talent crunch

Our industries are hobbled by a workforce that is falling short in quality and quantity

The irony is inescapable. India today has millions of job opportunities strewn all over but there is a serious shortage of talent. Employers are tearing their hair, as the educated young are actually unemployable. Many do not have even basic skills. The education system they went through was obsolete and not engineered to deal with the new economy.

Employers have scant respect for degrees and high percentages, as they no longer need youngsters who are good at learning by rote. They want talent that can innovatively think and creatively deliver. Former president APJ Abdul Kalam recently said that only 25 per cent of graduating students were employable as the rest were poor on technical knowledge, English proficiency, and the critical thinking that the IT and IT-enabled services industry wanted for the emerging Knowledge Process Outsourcing sector.

Sam Pitroda, chairman of the National Knowledge Commission says that of the 90,000 MBAs that come out every year, only around 10,000 are worth employing. Kiran Karnik, former NASSCOM president, puts the blame at the door of India's education system, saying that only 25 per cent of the country's engineering graduates deserve jobs. No wonder companies today have to invest heavily in training fresh graduates, helping them to unlearn and pick up skills. As there are dramatic changes in politics and business as well as international scenarios, there is a need to keep updating the syllabus almost every year. Manohar Chellani, Secretary General, Education Promotion Society for India, New Delhi, points out that there is tremendous scope for improving the quality of education in India, and delay in doing it will cost us heavily.