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Kamal Nath can take his Chhindwara skill training programme nationwide

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AS THE new government prepares to fulfil its manifesto promise for a nation-wide skills development programme, Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh can help set the template for its execution. For, it is here that the initiative has been tried and tested by local MP and minister for surface transport Kamal Nath, bringing success in the form of lucrative job offers for the unemployed in the backward district.

The skills development institute in Chhindwara may today boast of a training faculty from corporate A-listers, including Larsen & Toubro, as well as placement of its students with Cisco, but four years ago, it was just another job skills training school churning out passouts who seldom landed jobs involving the skills taught.

The turning point came when Mr Nath, in his efforts to help the employable youth of his constituency find jobs, approached Wipro chairman Azim Premji with 100 job applications of the men trained at the local skill development institute. Wipro went through each application meticulously and rejected all 100. Fortunately, the story did not end there. Mr Premji walked the extra mile to explain to Mr Nath why exactly Wipro had to spike all applications. He enlisted the skills being looked for by his company in prospective employees, something that had not been taught at Chhindwara institute. The minister heard him carefully and concluded that the need of the hour was to reorient the



THAT'S THE WAY

- **The skills** development institute in Chhindwara today boasts of training faculty from corporate A-listers like Larsen & Toubro as well as placement of its students with Cisco
- **Big companies**, including Wipro, helped this institute from Kamal Nath's constituency enlist specific skills that corporates look for in their prospective employees
- **Kamal Nath** himself became a franchisee of NIIT's computer skills development centre set up in Chhindwara. Cos, then, were asked to outline their specific requirements

skill development syllabus to suit the corporates' requirements.

Soon after, Mr Nath approached NIIT's Rajendra Pawar to set up a computer skills development institute in Chhindwara. Mr Pawar, however, said NIIT could only help a franchisee set up such an institute. Not the one to step back, Mr Nath graciously offered to be a franchisee himself. A knowledge centre was started in his constituency and the placement cells of big corporates asked to define the skills they were looking for in their prospective employees.

Once the companies outlined these skills, the knowledge centre incorporated them in its training syllabus. The youth of Chhindwara were duly trained in these skills and started getting

picked up by the corporates. The CII, too, set up an office in the district, while heavyweights like L&T started showing interest by sending their faculty to train the students in skills like operation of heavy-duty machines. For corporates, it was a profitable venture to be involved in skill development of its prospective employees. The larger involvement of corporates has fortunately also taken care of the funding needs of the institute.

The Chhindwara experiment can now serve as the perfect model for implementing the proposed nation-wide skills development programme. With its implementation a top priority for the Manmohan Singh government, the Centre need not look too far.