

From homemakers to corporates, thousands volunteer for Games

By Azera Rahman

New Delhi, Feb 21 (IANS) There is a buzz around the imposing Commonwealth Games Organising Committee Headquarters near Connaught Place these days as scores of excited students, professionals, homemakers, ex-servicemen, teachers and people from the corporate world flock to it to join as volunteers for the Oct 3-14 Games.

The aspiring volunteers, both boys and girls, await their turn for a one-on-one interview for being part of the 30,000 needed for the Games, though the number of applicants is several times that number.

Sudhir Mital, the special director general looking after the Rs.180 million (Rs.18 crore) image-building volunteers programme Delhi United, said the response was so overwhelming that receiving applications online had to be discontinued for a while.

"To make the programme socially inclusive, we have categorised applicants under different heads. For 5,000 volunteers in the general category, our portal has received a whopping 29,000 applications, forcing us to discontinue the service," Mital told IANS.

It is amazing to find the kind of people who want to be associated with the Games in some form or other -- from specialist volunteers to generalist. They know that a tourist will carry home the cheerful, helpful image of a volunteer and that's exactly what they want.

"We have a number of applicants from top corporate houses. They are willing to take off from their work to join the Games," Mital said.

The rest of the 25,000 volunteers will be recruited from the tourism ministry, Delhi University, National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS), and sports and physical training institutes. The vetting and selection process will go on till April end.

"The volunteers will be the most visible face of the Games. From the moment a visitor lands at the airport and till the time he leaves the national capital, he will be interacting with volunteers the most. Therefore, the volunteers programme is a key component in the Games framework," Mital said.

"There are three things that we are looking for in the volunteers -- commitment, communicative skills and availability of time. A volunteer should be able to give at least 10 days for the event," he added.

A volunteers' job is not just escorting guests; there are as many as 120 specific roles with specific skills like handling accommodation, accreditation, protocol, medical support, press operations, compiling results and working on ambulances.

"We have special management software that categorises volunteers into specific roles, going by the skills they have mentioned in their application forms. Whether a candidate fits the bill or not for a specific role is decided at the interview," Mital told IANS.

Rukhsana Bee, a student of Sri Venkateswara College, said: "I am doing my B.Sc. in life sciences, and also doing a 21-day course in hospitality management. So I am most probably going to be slotted in the hospitality sector."

"I am quite satisfied with my interview. The questions were simple and predictable, like what do I know about the Games and why I want to be a volunteer. I had done my homework, and my answer was that I want to be part of this show and that the experience will add to my CV," Bee told IANS.

Similarly, Rajesh Jain, a physical fitness trainer, said: "I want to be part of the sports administration team. I train in a physical fitness training institute, but during the Games I will take leave to be part of the great spectacle."

Mital said a special training academy will impart training for the volunteers.

"The training will begin in April at the venues provided by Delhi University. First, there will be a general training and then role-specific training," he said.

"To motivate the volunteers, we will also give awards and recognition to those who show exemplary performance," Mital said.

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