



Forward thinking: Foreign students attend a briefing session during a job fair Saturday in Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo, hoping to secure employment before their graduation in 2013. SATOKO KAWASAKI

Firms look to hire foreign students

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Hundreds of foreign students from Japan's top universities turned up at a career forum Saturday in Tokyo, hoping to secure a job before their graduation in 2013.

Clad in dark suits, the students flocked to Tokyo Dome City in Bunkyo Ward to attend briefings by 47 firms — including First Retailing Co., Sony Corp. and Mitsubishi Electric Corp.

A total of 1,560 students, mostly Asian, registered to attend the Tokyo event and a job fair in Osaka on Sunday, both organized by recruitment consultancy Fourth Valley Concierge Corp.

While only 12 companies participated in the inaugural event for foreign students in 2008, the number has quadrupled over the last four years as businesses increasingly look to expand their operations overseas, said Aki

Takeda, Fourth Valley's director.

"Companies' interest (in foreign students) is rising. ... More firms are moving to recruit top-notch students, regardless of their nationalities," Takeda said.

"They are hiring foreign students not only for their language skills but also for their business mindset and high potential. And (such talented students) tend to be foreign students," Takeda said.

Yuka Kawakami, who recruits students for Mitsubishi Electric Corp., said the firm plans to hire 10 to 20 foreign students in fiscal 2012. "We'd like to recruit more foreign students. ... They decided to study outside their home country and that alone shows their strong will," Kawakami said.

According to a poll held last August by career consultancy DISCO Inc., only 13.1 percent of 968 firms polled said they would recruit foreign students in fiscal 2011. But 24.5 percent said they planned to

hire foreign students in the next fiscal year, which starts April 1.

The rate was higher — about 46 percent — for major firms with more than 1,000 workers.

But at a time when even new Japanese graduates are finding it hard to land a job, foreign students who attended the Tokyo event said securing employment was by no means easy.

"People say more companies are recruiting foreign students now, and I think that's true. But the options we have are still far fewer than Japanese students," said Qiu Fei, a 23-year-old Chinese master's student at Kyushu University in Fukuoka.

"Other foreign students say the job-hunting environment is harsh," said Chinese doctorate student Lu Zhiyang of the University of Tsukuba. "I want to get a job at a top company, but considering the reality, I guess I would be happy if I get a job at any company."