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Quality, not quantity

Narendra Modi missed the point about IITs, IIMs

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's idea to set up an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in every state of the country may earn him some political brownie points when he tours states that still do not house any of these institutes. Superficially, the idea appears great, since people in every state would have access to a world-class institute nearer home. But Mr Modi's advisors would do well to look at the state of the eight new IITs already set up by the United Progressive Alliance government between 2008 and 2009, and the six new IIMs set up during 2010-11. After over five years of existence, these IITs still await a permanent campus. And most have failed to fill up even half of the sanctioned posts for permanent faculty.

The story is no better on the placements front. All the new IITs put together achieved a relatively low placement figure of 79-92 per cent. At many IITs, students were given job offers for a salary as low as ₹3.5 lakh per annum, which is below the minimum annual pay package of ₹4 lakh even at some National Institutes of Technology (NITs). And in spite of all their chest-thumping, even their older peers have lost a lot of sheen. For example, they have failed to make the grade among top institutions in both the Times Higher Education and the QS World Asian University rankings. The lacklustre rankings reveal, yet again, that Indian universities fail, for most part, to offer world-class education, training and research-based knowledge creation. There are financial issues as well. Setting up a new institute of national importance would cost the government upwards of ₹250 crore without the land cost. If this money is pumped instead into improving the quality of existing institutions or is provided to them to hand out more attractive salaries to faculty members, much more can be achieved. The last one is the key, since even at the old IITs, 41 per cent of teaching posts are vacant. One way to raise the bar on quality education at the new IITs is to bring in top-notch faculty, but that is easier preached than done. A typical IIT assistant professor starts at about ₹75,000 a month — less than what many engineers from Tier II colleges get as their first pay cheques. The irony is that even trainers in some coaching centers for joint entrance examination for admission to IITs make six times as much, if not more.

A push towards research is another way to counter the faculty shortage. The Anil Kakodkar Committee of 2010, in its strategic recommendations for the IITs, set a target of 10,000 doctoral fellows being produced annually by 2020-2025, up from the current 1,000. The hope was that some of these PhDs would stay to teach at the IITs. But at present, half of the PhDs leave academics to join industry for better pay. The IIMs, which account for only three per cent of India's output of management students, are facing similar challenges. Autonomy, availability of more resources and enabling better-quality faculty are the key needs of the country's showpiece institutes. That, rather than mere geographical expansion, would be a better option.

Indian-origin scholar to head Harvard College

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Harvard University announced on Wednesday that Rakesh Khurana, the Indian-origin scholar who is currently a professor of leadership development at Harvard Business School (HBS) and professor of sociology in the faculty of arts and sciences (FAS), will be from July the new dean of Harvard College, which was established in 1636 when Shah Jahan ruled India.

An insider who has studied, taught, and administered in the famed school, Khurana will be the third dean of Indian origin in the Harvard system after Venky Narayanmurthi headed the Harvard College of

Engineering and Applied Sciences a decade back and Nitin Nohria was named dean of the prestigious Harvard Business School in 2010.

The prestige associated with Harvard College lies in the fact that it was the precursor to Harvard University, having been formed in 1636 by British colonialists, thus making it the oldest institution of higher learning in the US. Harvard is the world's wealthiest educational institution as well, with an endowment of \$32 billion, larger than the GDP of many countries.

Harvard president Drew Faust described Khurana as "a faculty leader who embodies the interconnectedness of Harvard", and said his experiences as a grad student, an award-winning teacher at HBS and as master of an undergrad House "give him a unique perspective on the university and his deep respect for the liberal-arts model and the residential education will serve him well."

► 'Khurana's skill', P 28

OTHER TOP DEANS

Soumitra Dutta – Cornell

Nitin Nohria – Harvard Business School

Sunil Kumar – Booth School of Business (Chicago)

Dipak C Jain – INSEAD

Venky Narayanmurthi – headed Harvard College of Engineering & Applied Sciences nearly a decade ago

Singapore university officials visit NIT-Trichy looking for tie ups

TNN | Jan 24, 2014, 02:35 AM IST

TRICHY: A two-member team from the [National University of Singapore](#) (NUS) on Thursday visited the National Institute of Technology - Trichy (NIT-T) and interacted with the students.

"Students in the top universities of India are brilliant. India is a world leader in many areas particularly in low-cost engineering. We have to learn a lot from India," said Peter YH Pang, assistant vice-president (university and global relations) NUS during his visit. Peter Pang was reciprocating the visit of the Indian academic team led by [NIT-T](#) director Sunderarajan in October last year to NUS, to explore the possibilities of academic collaboration.

Pang and NUS director (Asia) Koh Chin Yee will be going to [Kozhikode](#) on January 25 and then to Dell to meet the secretary in the ministry of human resource department.

Though the NUS vice-president was here to attend a two-day national workshop on innovation, sustainability, solutions, adoptions, implementation in energy environment ecosystem and human life, he took time off to visit a private 370 acre farm managed by 88-year-old Sadasevum, a renowned agriculturist who has developed the model farm near Sengipatti in Pudukkottai district.

NAAC accreditation is now mandatory: APSICHE Chairman

Special Correspondent

Assessment and accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of colleges, is no longer a voluntary affair, it has been made mandatory as per the University Grants Commission's (UGC) directive, said Andhra Pradesh State Council for Higher Education Chairman L. Venugopal Reddy.

Delivering the inaugural address at the two-day workshop on 'Assessment and accreditation a tool to enhance quality and excellence in higher education' at K.V.S.R. Siddhartha College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, here on Thursday, he said the colleges have to immediately fulfil all the criteria for NAAC assessment and go for accreditation. The workshop is being jointly organised by College Development Council of Krishna University and the APSICHE. There are about 144 colleges under the KRU and only 22 have got the NAAC assessment done, Mr. Reddy told *The Hindu*.

According to KRU Vice-Chancellor V. Venkaiah the workshop will educate the college managements on the assessment and accreditation norms and rules and also guide them to fulfil the requirements. He also added that not adhering to the directive could put the colleges or the universities into problem. "Drastic steps such as de-recognition or stopping of funds can take place," said Prof. Venkaiah.

On the status of Rashtriya Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Prof. Reddy said that the State government had given the consent to participate in the MHRD designed programme. "We are in the process of finalising the State action plan and will probably submit it to the MHRD by the month end. We have also informed about RUSA to the universities, aided and autonomous colleges concerned in the State," he said.

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