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HT Chandigarh

BEN SOWTER

'Singapore, Korea new education powerhouses'

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Asia has a few key education powerhouses that India should learn its lessons from as more and more Asian students seek to identify countries in the region as education destinations. Ben Sowter, head of research at Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) talks about the 2014 'QS Asia Pacific University Rankings,' unveiled recently.

How do these rankings compare with the global rankings - and what are the most important findings of the survey this year?

The QS University Rankings: Asia was the first regional league produced by QS, back in 2009, in response to a demand from the region itself. We first designed the World University Rankings in 2003 and published them in 2004 because we realised that there was a growing community of international students who wanted to understand which universities were truly world-class. Institutions were also keen to understand how they compared with their peers in a global context.

Over the past decade, the students' mobility within the Asian region has increased exponentially year on year. A two-third of the international students are Asian and of them a significant proportion is now choosing to study outside their home country but to remain in Asia rather than go West. Such a trend prompted us to engage with academics in Asia to define the criteria for a ranking dedicated to highlight excellence in the region.

The methodology is still based on the four pillars that underpin our World University Rankings: teaching commitment, research impact, employability of graduates and international outlook.

The weightings have been adjusted to better reflect and capture the priorities of universities in the Asian context and their reality.

For instance, in the Asian rankings, we have included 'Papers per Faculty' as one of the research indicators – as measuring the research productivity in a region where there are many young universities is relevant - as is measuring the student exchanges. The comparison is in the boxes below.

Which country would you say is 'emerging' in terms of education excellence?

These rankings have highlighted the emergence of Singapore and Korea as the new education powerhouses, that are challenging more established countries such as Japan and territories like Hong Kong. If we consider the overall population and the economic size of certain countries, it is apparent that South Korea, with 46 universities ranked. is doing extremely well – as is Taiwan with 28.

Singapore's leading university, NUS – tops the table, while the other top local institution, NTU, ranks 7. China has 73 institutions ranked and Japan 68. Impressive numbers, but it is obvious that their dominance is challenged by other very competitive players.

The table above shows how many universities each country has in the ranges considered.

Which countries are included in the rankings and why?

For the sixth edition of the QS University Rankings: Asia, 491 institutions have been evaluated, 474 ranked and 300 published. We have included all the countries in Asia (excluding Central Asia and Asia Minor).

What are the challenges that Asian universities face in comparison to the top-ranked global institutions?

There are no quick fixes to rise to the top. Systematic and sustained performance improvement requires institutional autonomy, consistent institutional leadership without political intervention, a permanent culture of laying structural and financial foundations for future growth and a single-minded focus on identifying and nurturing the most carefully selected international partnerships. Fierce branding guidelines wouldn't hurt either.

As English-speaking and major international transit hubs, Singapore and Hong Kong enjoy some natural competitive advantages and have long dominated the top few places in this table. However, NUS taking the top spot this year has also been the product of its undeniable evolution to world-class with cutting- edge education and research.

TOP UNIVERSITIES IN ASIAN COUNTRIES

Country/Territory	Top 50	Top 51-100	Top 101-200	Top 201-300	Top universities by country
Bangladesh	-	-	1	-	1
Brunei	-	-	1		1
China - Mainland	9	13	25	26	73
Hong Kong	6		1		7
India	2	6	5	4	17
Indonesia	-	1	3	5	9
Japan	13	8	30	17	68
Korea (South)	9	10	12	15	46
Macau	-	-	-	1	1
Malaysia	1	4	2	11	18
Pakistan	-	-	5	5	10
Philippines	-	1	3	1	5
Singapore	2	-	-	-	2
Sri Lanka	-	-	-	1	1
Taiwan	6	6	5	11	28
Thailand	2	1	5	2	10
Vietnam	-	-	2	1	3
					300

HAL chair at IIT-Bombay

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. has said it is setting up an R&D chair at the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay to promote applied research, its fourth academic chair in recent times. HAL and IIT-B signed a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday. "This chair will initiate new academic programmes, identify research areas, provide technical consultancy to HAL and facilitate training programmes for HAL personnel," said HAL Chairman R.K. Tyagi The chair will support annual conferences to generate new ideas, innovations and technologies.

HAL has set up chairs at IITs of Roorkee, Kanpur and Kharagpur and at the National Law School of India University, Bangalore. — Special Correspondent

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HT Chandigarh

HEALING TOUCH

PAU scientist creates medicinal cloth for asthmatics

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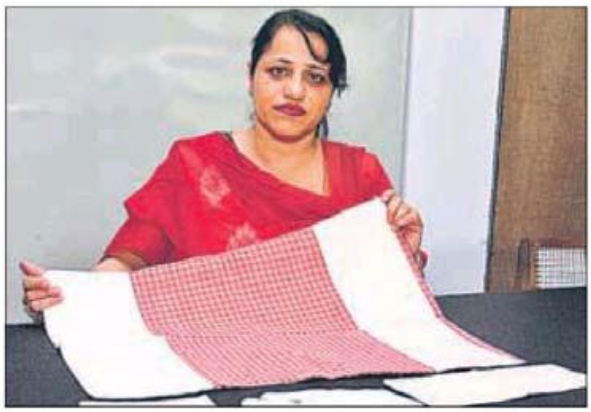

Devinder Kaur, a senior scientist at Punjab Agricultural University, showcases her innovative product in Ludhiana on Tuesday. JS GREWAL/HT

LUDHIANA: To naturally help asthmatic patients and those suffering from severe joint pain, Devinder Kaur, 42, a senior scientist and professor at Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), has created a medicinal fabric through her research that she carried out for three years (2009-2011).

Having completed her education in clothing and textile from the same university, she maintains that her sensitive mind galvanised her for the research. "The rising number of asthmatic and joint pain patients influenced both my mind and heart. So, through my education, especially through clothing, I decided to make this effort," says Kaur, who after reading various special columns related to her research and with the advice of various experts from the university, mainly used essential oils extracted from lemon, eucalyptus, pine and jasmine to add medicinal value to the cloth.

The oil that is finely extracted is coated on to the cotton fabric with the help of microencapsulation, a scientific technique through which the cloth successfully absorbs the oil and dries up.

As of now, she has created a pillow cover, a handkerchief and a pair of gloves for asthmatic patients in which she used lemon and pine oils while for joint pain patients she has come up with knee and elbow covers in which eucalyptus and jasmine oils have been used.

She holds the view that body heat and abrasion help release medicinal effect from the respective product used. If the products are regularly used as per the patient's need, one can get rid of expensive medicines and ointments, she says, claiming that she along with the university has tested these products in various hospitals on various patients.

Though her created products have proved beneficial to patients, she wants to increase their shelf life before launching them in the market. "As per my latest experiment, these fabrics can lose their medicinal value if they are washed for about ten times. But, I wish these products should sustain their value for a longer time.

So, I will continue with this research before launching my work in the market," she says.

Apart from publication of the research in the PAU's Journal of Research, it also got published this March in an international journal, ISOR Journal of Polymer and Textile Engineering. The research scholar has presented papers on her research in various international textile conferences held in the PAU, New Delhi and New Zealand.

She also intends to make neck collars to save those suffering from spondylitis and head bands for those who suffer from headaches or migraine. SS Gosal, director of research, PAU, says, "It is a laudable effort by the scientist which can naturally benefit the asthmatic and joint pain patients. We may soon launch it commercially if we notice a high demand for this work in the market."

Indian Express ND 22/05/2014 (Express Newsline) P-1

CITY ANCHOR STUDENTS CAN STILL OPT FOR AS MANY COURSES AS THEY LIKE, WITH THE COURSE CHOICES DETERMINING THE COLLEGE HE/SHE WILL BE ADMITTED TO

DU backtracks: Students can no longer choose colleges for UG courses

SHIKHA SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 21

STUDENTS applying to DU will no longer have the option to choose a college. Back-tracking on its decision to allow students the choice of both course and college while filling up admission forms, Delhi University on Wednesday said it will remove the 'college selection' option from both its online and offline admission forms.

Students can still opt for as many courses as they like, with the students' course choices now determining the colleges he/she will be eligible for admission.

According to DU officials, the decision was taken after "careful consideration" and "keeping the interest of the students in mind".

"The university had received a lot of complaints in the past, where students who secured very high percentages were denied admission because they only opted for 2-3 colleges in their admission forms. And once the cut-offs were announced, they failed to get admission anywhere, because they had limited their choices. So we reconsidered the issue and decided to keep things open. No one can claim that they were denied admission," Malay Neerav, Joint Dean of Students' Welfare, Delhi University, said.

Neerav said the absence of the college selection option would also help keep cut-offs in check, since there was a possibility that indicating a college choice could "skyrocket the cut-offs".

AMIT MEHRA

Students who came for the Open House in DU on Wednesday

The choice of selecting a college in the admission forms was removed last year after the DU introduced the four-year undergraduate programme. However, when admission guidelines were introduced earlier this month, DU said students would be able to choose their colleges too so that colleges have more information while preparing their cut-off lists. Last year, seats in some colleges remained vacant even after the 10th cut-off list was announced.

"We have just simplified the process and made it easier for students so they do not face problem," J M Khurana, Joint Dean of Students' Welfare, said. The process of admission to DU undergraduate programme begins June 2.

Forms for BTech Humanities to be available from June 24

FORMS for enrolling in BTech Humanities and BTech in Innovation with Mathematics will be made available from June 24. "Entrance test for the courses is expected to held on July 26," Neerav said. The two courses, sought after by many students, are offered by the Cluster Innovation Centre at Delhi University.

DU OPEN HOUSE

FIRST DAY A HIT

THE FIRST day of Open House at DU was a huge hit, with more than 1,500 students attending the session. The session saw DU officials addressing queries of students and parents on various topics related to admissions in DU, apart from student volunteers presenting detailed presentations to students on the four-year undergraduate programme. Keeping in mind the large number of parents and students who attended the session on Wednesday, DU plans to have two simultaneous sessions during Open House on Thursday. "In one hall, we'll have presentations and officials will address questions from the audience. In the other hall, parents and teachers would be able to interact with teachers on a one-on-one basis," Malay Neerav, Joint Dean of Students' Welfare, said. ENS

Times of India, ND 22/05/2014 P-17

Glaciers in Tibetan Plateau shrinking rapidly: Report

Beijing: Glaciers in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, home to several Himalayan rivers, have shrunk by 15% in the past three decades and the situation could worsen in future due to global warming, Chinese scientists say.

The Qinghai-Tibet plateau in western China has seen its glaciers shrink by thousands of square kilometres (from 53,000 to 45,000 sq km), according to a report by the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). As the highest place in the world's mid-latitude regions, the plateau is more likely to get affected by global warming, they said. Tibet is the home of several Himalayan rivers including the Brahmaputra.

Tibet is home to several Himalayan rivers, including the Brahmaputra

"Glaciers in the plateau have been shrinking since the 20th century and sped up since the 1990s," said Kang Shichang, a state laboratory director with a CAS institute. He added that "more and bigger cracks" have appeared in ice on Mount Everest, a sign of "rapidly melting glaciers".

China has more than 46,000 glaciers, mainly in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The plateau covers the area China calls the Tibetan Autonomous Region as well as highland parts of neighbouring provinces.

They are a reliable indicator of climate change, and easy for scientists to observe, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Kang said retreating glaciers have impacted meltwater rivers and led to more glacier-lake outbursts.

"It can increase water flow of major rivers in the short term, but in the long run, a continuation of the retreat will eventually deplete the glacial ice and substantially reduce or eliminate runoff," Shichang said. AGENCIES

Stress on making NIT Silchar a global institute

Correspondent
http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may2114/state07

SILCHAR, May 20 – It is not enough to restrict the developments within the campus or the region and even the national frontiers; rather there is the great need to expand the horizon to international destinations. Only then the 'Look East' policy of the government will be strengthened.

This was what Ashok Thakur, Secretary, Higher Education, Ministry of HRD, Government of India, said while addressing the 12th convocation of the National Institute of Technology Silchar on Sunday as the chief guest. "NIT Silchar is located at a place which is strategically vital. It cannot only cater to the students of the Northeast but also can attract students from Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia and become a hub of technical education," he said.

Laying emphasis on the need for internationalisation of higher education, Thakur said that one of the reasons why no Indian institution of higher education features in the top 200 universities in the world is because there is dearth of international exposure which is very crucial. He asked Prof. NV Deshpande, the director of NIT Silchar to take steps towards reaching out to these southeast Asian counties.

Thakur, however, expressed concerns about the digital divide in the country, saying that despite phenomenal progress in the field of IT, it is important to promote the use of computers through the medium of Indian languages in order to achieve optimum potential of the nation's human resource. "Our NITs should endeavour to develop technologies that can display, translate and understand all Indian languages," Thakur said.

Prof. Rajat Moona, Director General, C-DAC, Ministry of Communications and IT, Government of India said the year 2014 will be remembered in the history of NIT Silchar because of its achievements. From the inauguration of 11th C-DAC centre in the country to the establishment of super-computing facility, this institute has seen it all in this calendar year. In his speech, Prof. Deshpande highlighted the activities and achievements of NIT Silchar, saying efforts will be made to make it one of the most preferred institutes in India.

In the convocation degrees were conferred on 626 students who have successfully completed their programmes in BTech, MTech, MSc, MBA and doctoral courses. Joydeep Roy from the mechanical engineering department was awarded the institute gold medal. Later, the chief guest and the other dignitaries took part in a tree plantation programme. The day also saw the installation of a smart card-based 'access control system' at an institute hostel for enhancing the security.

‘Science losing good students to IT’

Special Correspondent

‘India can catch up with developed world only if investment in education sector is increased’

Students during an interaction with eminent scientist C.N.R. Rao at a programme in Udupi on Wednesday.

“If you want to achieve success, take the lonely road and not the crowded one,” said eminent scientist C.N.R. Rao here on Wednesday.

He was speaking at a students’ interaction programme, organised at Poornaprajna Institute of Management, here. The 45-minute interaction with the 80-year-old scientist was engaging and insightful. He also had the audience in splits while answering a few questions.

Dr. Rao said that he was attracted to science after reading a book ‘The Nature of the Chemical Bond and the Structure of Molecules and Crystals’ by Nobel laureate Linus Pauling (1901-94). His first inspiration was Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman (1888-1970).

When he (Dr. Rao) was just 11 years, C.V. Raman had visited his school — Acharya Patashala in Bangalore. He had also taken him (Dr. Rao) around the labs at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

“Science is a way of life for me. It keeps one absorbed day and night. It keeps one young and delighted. Show me another profession, which gives you so much joy,” he said.

He said the way chemistry was taught in schools in the country was “terrible”. “Chemistry is now a highly inter-disciplinary subject,” he said.

To a question by Aditya, a student, on qualities required in a scientist, Dr. Rao said that if students were in interested in any one subject, they should pursue it. Information Technology was taking many good youngsters from science, he said.

Investment in education sector should be increased. That was the only way India could catch up with other advanced countries. Educational curriculum should be made flexible, Dr. Rao said.

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Business Standard

World's smallest, fastest nanomotor created

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Researchers have built the smallest, fastest and longest-running tiny synthetic motor to date.

The team's nanomotor is an important step toward developing miniature machines that could one day move through the body to administer insulin for diabetics when needed, or target and treat cancer cells without harming good cells.

With the goal of powering these yet-to-be invented devices, UT Austin engineers focused on building a reliable, ultra-high-speed nanomotor that can convert electrical energy into mechanical motion on a scale 500 times smaller than a grain of salt.

Mechanical engineering assistant professor Donglei "Emma" Fan led a team of researchers in the successful design, assembly and testing of a high-performing nanomotor in a nonbiological setting.

The team's three-part nanomotor can rapidly mix and pump biochemicals and move through liquids, which is important for future applications.

With all its dimensions under 1 micrometer in size, the nanomotor could fit inside a human cell and is capable of rotating for 15 continuous hours at a speed of 18,000 RPMs, the speed of a motor in a jet airplane engine. Comparable nanomotors run significantly more slowly, from 14 RPMs to 500 RPMs, and have only rotated for a few seconds up to a few minutes.

To test its ability to release drugs, the researchers coated the nanomotor's surface with biochemicals and initiated spinning. They found that the faster the nanomotor rotated, the faster it released the drugs.

The study has been published in the journal Nature Communications.