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India slips in QS rankings, only exceptions IIT-B, IIT-Delhi

Mumbai, Pune universities go further down the ladder

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MUMBAI, JULY 8

MOST Indian institutes and universities have fared poorly in the QS Asian University rankings for 2012, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, and IIT Delhi being the only Indian institutes that have improved their overall rankings over last year. While IIT Bombay is up by four notches (from 38 to 34 in 2012), IIT Delhi is up from 37 to 36 this year.

QS is one of the world’s leading networks in career and education. Yet again, while no Indian institute has made it to the top 30 in overall rankings, only four have made it to the top 50 among 300 Asian institutes this year.

Last year, five had featured in the top 50. An analysis of rankings from 2009 to 2012 reveals that no Indian institute has made it to top 10 and only one ranked in the top 30 since then (IIT Bombay in 2009).

“It’s not that institutes or universities in India are not doing well. These rankings assess several factors and we tend to lose points on many of these indicators, which include international faculty and international students. Further, while the rankings look at various subjects, IITs and our universities will lose points on a specific subject like medicine,” said a senior academician.

This year, all the other five older IITs have slipped in their overall rankings. IIT Kanpur climbing down the most by 11 places from 36 to 47 this year. While IIT Guwahati is down from 82 to 89, IIT Kharagpur is down from 48 to 56. IIT Madras is ranked at 45, down by two places from last year and IIT Roorkee slipped from 56 to 65. Except Delhi University, no other Indian university, including Mumbai, Pune and Calcutta universities feature in the top 100. All the four have slipped in their rankings.

Mumbai University, for instance, has gone down the ladder steadily, from 96 in 2010 to 145 in 2011 and 151-160 this year. While Delhi University is ranked 78, it is down by one point from last year. Like Mumbai, Calcutta University too has come down gradually, from 99 in 2010 and 115 in 2011 to 143 this year. The worst show this year has been put up by Pune University which has been ranked between 191-200 this year.

Besides the overall rankings that crows several parameters like research and teaching, internationalisation, publications etc, QS also ranks the Asian universities by faculty (subjects) and by criterion (like faculty-student ratio).

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has retained the top slot this year in overall ranking, followed by the National University of Singapore in the second position and the University of Hong Kong in the third position.

An assessment of ranking by faculty for “engineering and technology” shows that six IITs are in the top 50, but all have slipped in their rankings. While IIT Bombay has the best ranking in this criteria at 14 among the other IITs, it is down by two positions over 2011 when it was ranked 12. IIT Roorkee has suffered the maximum loss of nine points, from 41 to 50 this year. Among the rankings by criteria, none of the Indian institutes could bag a slot in the top 200 for “international students” and “international faculty”. In “faculty-student” too, no Indian institute figures in the top 100. The Indian institutes have performed comparatively better in “academic reputation” and “employer reputation”.

For instance, in employer reputation, IIT Bombay is ranked seventh and IIT Delhi and University of Delhi 16th and 17th respectively. The other institutes in the top 50 are IIT Madras (22), Mumbai University (25), IIT Kanpur (28) and Pune University (48). In academic reputation, IIT Bombay (29), IIT Delhi (37), Delhi University (38) and IIT Madras (49) are among the top 50.
Record girl students in IIM-Lucknow

Lucknow, July 9

The Indian Institute of Management Lucknow has witnessed a record increase in the number of girl students in 2012-14, IIM-L said on Monday. “The key focus in admissions this year was to ensure gender diversity without compromising on merit. The institute witnessed a record increase in the number of girls — a total of 144 (35.4 per cent) female students have been inducted this year in the post-graduate programme in management and 23 (50 per cent) in agri-business management,” IIM-L said in a release. — PTI
RESEARCHERS DISCUSS MOBILE PHONE RADIATION AT IIT-B WORKSHOP

HT Correspondent

MUMBAI: Using a cell phone in a closed vehicle could expose you to 80% more radiation, according to readings recording by a Jalandhar-based researcher.

The findings of the researcher Amarjot Dhami, currently unpublished, were presented at a daylong workshop at the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay on Monday. The event was organised to discuss the effects of radiation related to cell phones and phone towers. It featured researchers, affected citizens and telecom industry professionals.

Last week, a committee appointed by the department of science and technology (DST) to conduct a study on the effects of exposure to radiation, held its first meeting. Cell phone tower radiation limits are prescribed at 4,500 milliwatt per metre squared.

“The DST study will be the credible basis for taking this forward,” said Rajan Mathews, director general of the Cellular Operators’ Association of India, during his presentation.

While telecom professionals said there was no conclusive evidence linking radiation to cancer, citizens expressed their concerns about the proliferation of towers, especially near residential buildings.
UK unveils new visa rules to catch bogus students

London: Britain on Monday announced a targeted interview system for student visa applicants from India and other non-EU countries to prevent abuse and to ensure that they are refused visas if immigration officials have doubts about their genuineness as students.

The new measure follows a pilot scheme carried out in India, Pakistan and 11 other countries, which revealed that some applicants could not answer basic questions in English without an interpreter, but had claimed in forms that they had the ability to study at UK universities. During the pilot, over 2,300 interviews were conducted at application stage between December 2011 and February 2012.

It revealed that almost half (45%) of applicants from Myanmar would have been refused visas if they had been interviewed.

The figure for India was 29%, and 38% for Bangladesh, the home office said.

"Under the current system UK Border Agency officers are unable to refuse some applications even if they have serious concerns over the credibility of the student — we are toughening up the system," immigration minister Damian Green said. The pilot analysis mentions case studies of three Indian applicants whose responses during interviews raised doubts about their credibility and genuineness. PTI
Girls suffer from maths anxiety more than boys

London: Girls often fail to do just as well at math as boys because of heightened fear and apprehension over number problems, a new study has claimed. The study, published in the journal Behavioral and Brain Functions, found that a number of school-age children suffer from mathematics anxiety, but girls' maths performance is more likely to suffer than boys as a result.

Mathematics anxiety is a state of discomfort associated with performing mathematics tasks and is thought to affect a notable proportion of both children and adults, having a negative impact on their mathematics performance.

In the study, researchers from Cambridge University in the UK investigated 433 secondary school children whether mathematics anxiety has any effect on mathematics performance on boys and girls. The researchers controlled for test anxiety, a related construct, but which isn't typically controlled for in mathematics anxiety studies.

They found children with higher mathematics anxiety have a lower mathematics performance, and girls showed higher levels of mathematics anxiety than boys.
Washington: The claim by Nasa scientists that they have discovered a new form of bacteria which thrive on arsenic has been disapproved by two new studies, which say the bugs can't substitute arsenic for phosphorus to survive.

Two scientific papers, published in the journal Science, refuted the 2010 Nasa finding that bacterium called GFAJ-1 not only tolerates arsenic but actually incorporates the poison into its DNA, swapping out phosphorus. “Contrary to an original report, the new research clearly shows that the bacterium, GFAJ-1, cannot substitute arsenic for phosphorus to survive,” the journal said.

“If true, that finding would have important implications for our understanding of life’s basic requirements since all known forms of life on Earth use six elements: oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, phosphorus and sulphur,” it said.

If an organism on Earth were found to survive without one of these building blocks, it could mean that life on other planets (as well as our own) is more adaptable than expected. Felisa Wolfe-Simon, who led the Nasa study, acknowledged very low levels of phosphate within their study samples but, they concluded the contamination would’ve been insufficient to allow GFAJ-1 to grow.

Now, the two separate studies find that Wolfe-Simon’s medium did contain enough phosphate contamination to support GFAJ-1’s growth. It’s just that GFAJ-1, a well-adapted extremophile living in a high-arsenic environment, is thrifty, and is likely capable of scavenging phosphate under harsh conditions, helping to explain why it can grow even when arsenic is present in its cells, the new studies claimed.