Newspaper Clips
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HT Chandigarh

BEN SOWTER

‘Singapore, Korea new education powerhouses’

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 2006, 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, research, citations, industry income, and international outlook. The new Asia Pacific University Rankings are selecting the top 40 universities in Asia.

Most of the top universities in the world are from the Asia Pacific region. In fact, the Asia-Pacific region is home to the largest number of universities in the world, with 10 countries having more than 100 universities ranked in the QS World University Rankings. These universities are not just in China and Japan, but also in Thailand, Korea, and India.

The table below shows how many universities each country has in the rankings.

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<tr>
<th>Country/Territory</th>
<th>Top 50</th>
<th>Top 51-100</th>
<th>Top 101-200</th>
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<th>Top universities by country</th>
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The QS Asia Pacific University Rankings 2014 shows that China has 74 institutions ranked and Japan is 68. Impressive numbers but it is obvious that their dominance is challenged by other very competitive players.

Which countries are included in the rankings and why?

For the sixth edition of the QS University Rankings: Asia, 491 institutions have been evaluated, 743 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.

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

STUDENTS applying to DU will no longer have the option to choose a college. Backtracking 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 Nesarov, Joint Dean of Students’ Welfare, Delhi University, said.

Nesarov 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”.

Students who came for the Open House in DU on Wednesday help keep cut-offs in check, since there was a possibility that indicating a college choice could “skyrocket the cut-offs”.

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 problems,” J M Khurana, Joint Dean of Students’ Welfare, said. The process of admission to DU undergraduate programme begins June 24.

Forms for BTech Humanities to be available from June 24

Forms for BTech in Humanities and BTech in Innovation with Mathematics will be made available from June 24. “Entrance test for the courses is expected to be held on July 24,” Nesarov said. The two courses, taught after by many students, are offered by the Centre 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 1,005 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 on 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 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 Nesarov, Joint Dean of Students’ Welfare, said.
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.

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.

"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".

"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 interdisciplinary subject,” he said.

To a question by Aditya, a student, on qualities required in a scientist, Dr. Rao said that if students were 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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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.