IIT-Kanpur appoints overseas ambassador in US

Vanita Srivastava
vanita.srivastava@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur has appointed its alumnus Sanjeev Khosla mainly to promote the academic interest of the institute abroad, particularly in the US.

Khosla, who has been appointed for three years, will work closely with Dean of Faculty Affairs and other senior IIT-K officials to support faculty recruitment, promote research and development, and arrange overseas events. He will also raise financial resources and liaise with donors to the institute and promote all other aspects of academic interest for enhancing the international image of IIT Kanpur.

Khosla is involved in global commodities trading since the early '90s and while his main role has been as a trader, his specialisation has been complex derivatives structuring, hedging and trading especially in energy.

IIT Kanpur has recently established its overseas office in New York, essentially to tap academic talent for faculty recruitment.
A couple of weeks ago, the US News and World Report released their college rankings for 2014. Most of the media coverage of this dubious event has concluded that not much has changed, especially among the top 10 colleges. This is important to Indian students for whom US News is sometimes treated as a sacred text. Indian applicants’ focus is so narrowed on the top 10 (maybe 20) ranked colleges that it’s almost impossible to convince them to consider applying anywhere else. This is often blamed on a ‘status conscious’ or ‘brand-obsessed’ perspective. While I think this tendency is exaggerated, I offer some reasons why even more supposed practical reasons for sticking with the top 20 are unfounded.

The most obvious reason for strict adherence to college rankings is understandable – education abroad is expensive and families want a solid return on their investment. A student should attend a college where her earning potential after college is the highest. But when it comes to jobs, the top colleges are not necessarily the darlings of industry. In fact in a recent column by Alison Singh, a US-based lawyer and writer, she cited a Wall Street Journal study in which recruiters were asked which colleges prepare students best for satisfying, well-paid jobs with growth potential. Most of the colleges on the list were large public institutions and Cornell was the only US News top 20 college included (it should be noted that India’s favorite non-top 20 made it to the list — Carnegie Mellon).

Besides return on investment, Indian applicants also believe it is important to study at top 20 ranked US News colleges, because it will ease their way into top graduate programmes such as Harvard Business School or Yale Law or Duke Medicine or Stanford Engineering. But widely available data for these graduate programmes shows that they admit students with undergraduate degrees from a broad range of colleges. In fact if you compare rankings to rankings, Business Week’s top 20 MBA feeder school rankings and US News’s top 20 national universities have only 5 colleges in common (MIT, Penn, Wash U, Cornell, Notre Dame). It seems attending Boston College makes you more likely to end up in business school than if you go to Harvard (according to these rankings). That is, obviously not to say that you cannot go to business school if you attend Harvard, rather that you are just as likely to attend a great business school if you attend a lower-ranked college.

Of course, I’m being hard on the applicants that are stuck on the top 20. But I don’t mean to be. I mean to make the broader point that sticking to any list (even if it the top 100) is a mistake when it comes to applying to college, especially in the US. Every one of the 2,000+ four-year colleges in the US is unique and has a special ethos, culture and mission. I wish that each applicant would choose their college based on where these features fit into they want from their college experience, rather than what they think (based on rankings) the college will do for them.

I have seen students go to Ivy League colleges and get very little out of it as they pined for home and longed to once again be a big fish in a small pond. And I have seen students go to The University of Richmond and take advantage of every opportunity presented to them, build their résumés through service and extracurricular learning and take hold of opportunities they could have never imagined. At the end of four years, whose will impress a recruiter? It’s not what you get out of college that makes who you are after four years; it’s what you put in.

The author is a study abroad advisor and co-founder of The Red Pen. Email your queries to htspecialprojects@hindustantimes.com
A long road ahead

**WORK IN PROGRESS**

Indian institutes are taking stock of why they have slipped further in world university rankings. A look at their plans for reform, and areas that need change.

Amar Sanu

When Rohan Vairag graduated with an engineering degree in 2010 from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT-D), he decided to study abroad for his master’s course. “I chose a programme at the London Business School instead of one in India, under pressure from where I come,” he says.

“Discipline and pragmatism are well-embodied at the school, with qualitative research outcome, and therefore attract Indian students,” says Anita Ahuja, dean of academics, BMCC.

Earlier this month, Jaya Prakash’s team from the UK, one of the few Indian education ranking companies, released its list of the top 10 universities in the world for 2013, with six Indian institutes in the top 10 for the first time, while IIT-D scored 6th, Jodhpur 7th, and IIT-Dhaka even lower, at 23rd, down from 25th in 2012.

The University of Mumbai ranked number 305, almost at the end of the list. Similarly, the IIM in Ahmedabad came 319th, slipped below the top 300 for the first time, and the IIMs in Bangalore and Kolkata are ranked 390th and 438th, respectively.

“Many factors influence the rankings, but it is disappointing to see our universities slip in areas we think they should excel,” says Vairag.

**Q5 PARAMETERS**

The QS World Rankings feature parameters like academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty-student ratio, citations per faculty, and if the university is located in an urban area.

**REALITY CHECK**

Experts say that while the ranking system should be taken with a pinch of salt, it may not be fair to club Indian institutes with the world’s best in certain parameters used, which are beyond India’s current capacity.

“Some parameters such as the number of international students and faculty members don’t apply to Indian colleges currently, which brings down our ranking,” says Vairag.

Moreover, Indian colleges must cater to students who are at a different level than Western counterparts. “In some cases, even the top institutes do not attract the best students,” says Vairag.

**REASONS FOR LOW RANKINGS**

1. Cash-starved institutes: Colleges need much more funding and investment. “Institutes who are ranked perform well and serve the global economy. But how do they perform in their own country?” asks Aditya Pathak, principal of Jai Hind College.

2. Sub-par curriculum and faculty: “There is an imbalance in the faculty of Indian institutes, with high-quality professors in their early 40s,” says Wijaya. “Students want to learn from experienced teachers, and become teachers themselves.”

3. Politics in education: “Experts say that reservation in the education sector is in direct conflict with the merit of students,” says Pathik. “If reserved candidates are allowed to pass, it’s not possible to hold others accountable.”

**IF RESERVATIONS ARE ALLOWED...**

If reserved candidates are allowed to pass, it’s not possible to hold others accountable. This is why Indian institutes...
RADIO GAGA

Students of IIT-Bombay promote indie music through their online radio; website has a repertoire of over 850 artistes and 2,500 songs

Nirmika Singh
nirmika.singh@industrialesse.com

Unlike the west, online radio stations for independent music caught on in India fairly late in the day. And although there are only a handful of websites that play alternative genres — which, in India, may mean anything that isn’t non-Bollywood — one initiative stands out. BC Radio (www.bc.radio.in) is the brainchild of IIT-Bombay students who felt a need to promote original talent — both established and upcoming.

“It started out with three guys discussing how there were hardly any platforms for sharing music. Since we were actively part of Mood Indigo (IIT-B’s annual cultural festival), we were in contact with many bands. And that’s how we roped in some big names, such as Farokhina and Pentagram, to support us by contributing their music,” says Saksham Jain, a student of metallurgy and materials science, IIT-B, who handles artiste management and public relations for BC Radio.

The initiative started with a repertoire of 100 bands and now has more than 850 artistes and around 2,500 songs in its catalogue.

BC Radio also features music by Sri Lankan percussion ensemble, Naadro, among many other Indian artistes.

The website has also sorted their vast range of music into genre-based categories. “We are putting together our mobile app too,” Jain informs.

Besides providing an online platform to artistes, BC Radio also helps upcoming bands in getting a chance to perform at festivals. “We have tied up with Sea Rock (annual rock competition at BITS-Pilani Goa) and Mood 1. We also assist bands with registrations for both,” adds Jain, who is part of the four-member team that currently handles the operations of the project. Apart from artiste management and PR, the three other lines of responsibilities comprise business development, web and design, each of which is handled by one student. Ask him how challenging it is to maintain the website while juggling studies, and he says, “It is very time-consuming but after being at it for some time now, we can see that it has made a difference.”
Do we need approval?

Students of Indian IIMs are managing the affairs of top MNCs and proven themselves to be at par with any foreign graduates.

By Ashwani Mahajan

International ranking agency ‘Quacquarelli Symonds’ (QS) has recently published a list of top ranked 200 universities globally, which does not include even one university from India. A university from Singapore, namely National University of Singapore (NUS) comes in the 24th position in this list. Interestingly, most of the universities included in this list are from the USA and Europe.

However, in the list of top 200 Asian universities, four Indian universities find place. In case of other institutions 38th position goes to IIT Delhi. IIT Mumbai, IIT Madras, IIT Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur and IIT Roorki are at 39th, 49th, 51st, 88th, and 66th positions respectively. University of Delhi comes in 80th position, while other three universities – Universities of Mumbai, Kolkata and Pune are at 140th, 143rd and 181st positions respectively.

If we accept these rankings, it puts a question mark on the legitimacy of top institutions and universities in the country. It is notable that there has been a significant development in the field of education after independence. Today there are more than 400 universities and 20,000 institutions of higher education in the country, where more than seven lakh teachers are working, imparting education to more than 150 lakh students.

The nation is proud of hosting 17 IITs and 3 IIMs whose products (students) have proven their worth internationally in the fields of science and technology (especially software) and management; ex-students of IIMs are managing big corporate (both in India and abroad). Today Indian doctors and engineers are making India stand apart in these fields. According to All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) in 2006 there were 1,268 engineering colleges, which had increased to 3,346 in 2012. However, it is also a fact that we are not able to absorb all our engineering graduates.

We may agree to the point that despite this huge educational infrastructure a majority of our students do not stand up to expectations. We need to learn from the world’s top universities. But there is no need to be overtly disturbed by the rankings as published in ‘QS’ report. If somebody wants to examine the level of education of any educational institution, they must look at the international performance of the students of those educational institutions.

Today our doctors are working in large numbers in almost all developed countries, especially in the USA and Europe. Their expertise is well recognised worldwide. In the USA more than 40 per cent doctors are from India. Our IT graduates have proven their worth globally in the field of computer software. Students of IIMs are managing the affairs of top MNCs and proven themselves to be at par with any foreign graduates, if not better.

Chosen few

Even then if international rating agencies put Indian institutes on the second grade position, we can understand that there is a chance of ‘bias’ or ‘design to malign our educational institutions. Commercialisation of education has increased. In the era of liberalisation and globalisation country is flooded with private sector technical and other educational institutions. Now the government is trying to bring in foreign universities directly or from back door. It is notable that not more than 5 per cent of households have more than Rs 2 lakh of annual income. Therefore benefits of private educational institutions will remain concentrated with only a chosen few. Government today is talking about reaping the demographic dividend, thanks to our youth population. But even today a majority of our youth is deprived of appropriate education facilities.

Commercialisation of education will create further problems in universalisation of education. Therefore, while not discouraging private sector in education, government needs to make investment in education (at all levels). The condition is deteriorating at primary and secondary levels of education. We have failed to create appropriate infrastructure. We may even have to link education to industry, so that skill developed through education could be directly useful for industry. However, we need not obtain certificate from international ranking agencies.

It is fact that there is no system in place for ranking of our universities and education institutions. However there is a bill pending in Parliament with a view to constitute a regulatory authority, in the name and style of ‘National Accreditation Regulatory Authority’ (NARA). According to this proposed legislation, NARA would be established, task of which would be to regulate accreditation agencies. Evidently, the bill is not a step in the right direction, as the provision of higher education will have to get itself accredited with one of the agencies, which would undertake the task to certify the academic standards of the respective institution.

Our leadership thinks in an extremist fashion, as it has a mindset that anything foreign is good. They feel that any world level project of skill development can run only by inviting foreign educational institutions, which is merely an illusion. Although a bill to allow foreign universities to set up their institutions in India is still pending in Parliament, the government is trying to allow these universities from back door. Many universities in the developed countries who are unable to sustain themselves due to economic meltdown are dreaming of trying their luck in our country inhabited by nearly 124 crore people. Government of India is giving them a red carpet welcome. This endeavour of the government is not going to benefit the nation.

In fact if the government provides more funds for education, in tune with the global practices and develop educational infrastructure, it may yield better results. It is notable that public spending on education in India is hardly 3.3 per cent of GDP, while it is 5.4 per cent in US, 5.6 per cent in UK and 6 per cent in South Africa. If we want to bring about improvement in our education sector, we can achieve the same, only by coming out of the western mindset.
IIM-A sees 8 per cent drop in maximum salary package offered

Deepa Nair
Nivedita Ganguly
Mumbai, Sept. 24
The economic slowdown seems to have had an impact even on placements at India’s premier B-school, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

This year, in terms of salary packages for the post-graduate programme, the maximum earning potential for domestic recruitments dropped by eight per cent to Rs 37 lakh. Last year, the figure was about Rs 40 lakh.

The maximum earning potential is the total of the fixed yearly component, one-time cash benefits, maximum possible performance-linked compensation during the first year and all other salary components.

The minimum earning potential, too, fell 13 per cent to Rs 6.5 lakh from Rs 7.5 lakh last year.

In addition, international hiring at IIM-A nosedived 65 per cent. Of the 360

recruiter, having picked seven students for roles in financial markets as well as quantitative strategy,” said IIM-A, in an official statement.

The maximum salary package for domestic placements came from the banking and financial services sector, with a total guaranteed cash payment of Rs 35 lakh. The median for the domestic salary package (mid-point between highest and lowest salary) was Rs 16 lakh this year.

Banking and financial services, consulting and the IT sector companies offered the highest salary packages.

In terms of volumes, the consulting sector offered the maximum number —114 — of jobs. Boston Consulting Group was the top recruiter, having picked 15 students. Among the new sectors, 27 graduates bagged offers from online services and real estate companies.

deepa.nair@thehindu.co.in
nivedita.ganguly@thehindu.co.in
Indians, Chinese keep US B-schools in biz

FULL TIME’S UP, PART TIME DOWN

> 31% MBA programmes globally received second most applications from India
> 1.21 lakh or 36% of all applications came from women for 2013-2014. Year before, 40% were women
> 39% Indians in 2011-12 borrowed money to fund their MBA dream
> 22% received financial grants

“14%,” said Michelle Sparkman Renz, director of research communications for GMAC.

Globally, the full-time two-year MBA programme received about 41 applications for each available spot, whereas the full-time one-year programme had around 2.7 candidates vying for each seat.

In 2008 and 2009, early in the Great Recession, there was impressive growth in the share of full-time MBA programmes showing application increases,” said Lawrence Rudner, GMAC vice president, research and development. “In 2010 and 2011, there was a decline, but full-time programmes began to rebound in 2012 and look stronger today.”

Of all forms, executive MBA—which promises a climb up the corporate ladder—had the most dismal year, with every second college reporting a fall in the application count. The uncertainty of the times, increasing work demands, depleting savings, and fears of the next round of layoffs—all dictated this.

The latest GMAC survey released globally on Tuesday revealed that fewer professionals wanted to invest time and energy in further education. A fall in international students once again kept the growth of European business schools slow, with just 38% of full-time one-year MBA programmes witnessing an increase in applications. Close to 64% of European programmes reported a decline in their foreign candidate pool.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com

Women form 36% of applicants

40% of students take edu loans

Mumbai: Nearly four in 10 Indian students took loans in 2011-12 to fund his or her MBA dreams, data collated by the Graduate Management Admission Council shows. Many B-schools come to the rescue of students in this uncertain economy. Twenty-two per cent of Indian aspirants received financial assistance in the form of scholarship or grant. Among the rest, 17% took the help of parents, 15% stuck to personal savings and around 13% looked for other options of funding.

More master’s in management programmes (67%) offered scholarships than other specialized master’s or MBA programmes, although full-time two-year MBA programmes had the highest average percentage of student scholarship recipients (48%) across all programme types.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com

Spinning CDs to clean sewage water

Washington: Wondering what to do with your obsolete audio CDs? Researchers have come up with a practical application: they can be used to break down sewage.

“Optical disks are cheap, readily available, and very commonly used,” said Din Ping Tsai, a physicist at National Taiwan University. Close to 20 billion disks are already manufactured annually, the researchers noted.

Tsai and his colleagues used the large surface area of optical disks as a platform to grow tiny, upright zinc oxide nanorods about a thousandth the width of a human hair.

able to spin quickly, contaminated water that drips onto the device spreads out in a thin film that light can easily pass through, speeding up the degradation. The team’s complete water treatment device is approximately one cubic foot in volume. The device also consists of a UV light source and a system that recirculates the water to further break down the pollutants.

The team tested the reactor with a solution of methyl orange dye. After treating a half-litre solution for 60 minutes, they found that over 95% of the contaminants had been broken down.
Moon 100 million years younger than believed?

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

London: Earth’s moon may actually be 100 million years younger than what is believed at present. A new analysis announced in London on Monday at the Royal Society shows that the moon is between 4.4 to 4.45 billion years old.

American geochemist Richard Carlson of the Carnegie Institution of Washington studied the age of lunar rocks collected during the Apollo missions using radioactive dating.

“We know that the solar system is 4.568 billion years old. So the Earth may have had two phases of its life — one before the giant impact and another modified by the impact,” Carlson said.

The daily and monthly rhythms of the moon have guided timekeepers for thousands of years. Its influence on Earth’s cycles, notably tides, has been charted by many cultures. The moon moderates Earth’s wobble on its axis, leading to a relatively stable climate over billions of years.

Nasa says the leading theory of the moon’s origin is that a Mars-sized body collided with Earth approximately 4.5 billion years ago, and the resulting debris from the impact accumulated to form the moon. The newly formed moon was in a molten state. Within about 100 million years, most of the global “magma ocean” had crystallized, with less-dense rocks floating upward and eventually forming the lunar crust.

Carlson said, “There are several important implications of this late moon formation that have not yet been worked out. For example, if the Earth was already differentiated prior to the impact, would the impact have blown off the primordial atmosphere that formed from this earlier epoch of Earth history?”