


EducationTimes.com**Island Country****Sri Lanka to collaborate with India to strengthen education sector**

With the end of the civil war and peace returning to the island country, Sri Lanka is keen to strengthen its higher education sector through collaborations and exchanges.

Sri Lankan institutions such as the University of Colombo, University of Peradeniya and Moratuwa University want to attract international students. "The state of higher education in India stands at an exalted position and we are looking for a symbiotic partnership with India," says Ranjith Senaratne, vice chairman, University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka, who was recently in Bangalore to explore collaborative opportunities with institutes in India.



Sri Lanka is looking to collaborate with universities to develop entrepreneurship education. "We have invited Jain University to set an entrepreneurial cell to incubate successful entrepreneurs," says Senaratne. The country has also tied-up with other universities in India to strengthen the academic curriculum in areas such as maritime, alternative energies, disaster mitigation, aerospace, transportation and logistics, nano- and agro-technology and fire engineering. "We are also looking to develop our translation software and develop our school of computing," adds WK Hirimburegama, vice chancellor, University of Colombo.

Sri Lankan officials have been scouting to partner with various Indian institutions in the last few years to increase student exchange programmes and to forge academic and research ties. "Through student exchanges," says Hirimburegama, "we want the Sri Lankan youth to be multi-culturally enlightened and globally well-rounded graduates." He adds, "It will also be good for the youth across the world to benefit from what Sri Lanka has to offer." Sri Lankan government has announced 100 scholarships for foreign students.

Courses to pursue

The universities are keen to attract foreign students by offering scholarships and on fee-paying basis. "Studying in Sri Lanka is not only inexpensive, but also enriching," says Senaratne. Given Sri Lanka's ecological diversity, courses in 'tropical forestry,' 'conservation farming,' 'fisheries biology,' and 'hydraulic civilization' are very popular. The Chinese maritime silk route left a lot of ship-wrecks and this allows student of 'marine archaeology' to benefit from the underwater heritage.

International students can also opt for courses in 'marine engineering' and 'offshore engineering.' The long civil war has also stirred interest in 'peace building and conflict studies,' shares Hirimburegama. There are also many courses in 'Pali and Buddhist Studies'.

Fact Sheet**Known courses**

University of Colombo: STEM cells, medical cancer

University of Peradeniya: Social studies and GIS

Moratuwa University: Engineering, esp. solar engineering

Cost for international students studying at the UG level:

Social studies: US \$ 1000

Law: US \$ 1500

Medicine: US \$ 12,000

Engineering: US \$ 8000

Scholarship

Foreign students receive a full scholarship to study medical, management, law, engineering or arts degrees. Under the scheme, students will also be assisted with living expenses, and the government will pay airfares and visa fees.