

TIME TO TAKE THE NEXT BIG LEAP

Indian universities must focus on research and innovation to compete with their global counterparts



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

DELHI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON CAMPUS



By Kaushik Deka

In terms of ranking, this year's India Today Group-Nielsen survey of India's best universities hardly throws up any surprises. While University of Delhi (DU) stays comfortably placed at the top for the third consecutive year, University of Kerala takes a remarkable leap—it has jumped 17 positions to rank ninth this year. In 2014, it was placed at number 26. Kurukshetra University has also moved five ranks to occupy the 10th position while Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has been showing consistent improvement over the years, ranking fourth this time. The Vice Chancellor of AMU, Zameeruddin Shah, has already vowed to grab the top position by 2017. He has an even bigger dream—to be among the top 200 universities in the world by 2020.

The significance of this dream can be understood from the fact that not a single Indian university could make it to the list of top 200 universities that are a part of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. While there are nine Indian universities among the top 100 Asian universities, none of them could find a place among the top 10. Among the top 100 Asian universities, China leads with 21, Japan has 19 and South Korea

has 13. Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea have three universities each in the Asian top-20 list along with two Chinese universities.

These results have come as a shock to Indian universities. Especially so when you consider the findings by Ernst & Young: with nearly 140 million people belonging to the college-going age group, one in every four graduates in the world will be a product of the Indian higher education system. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world and ranks second in terms of student enrolment. India's higher education sector has seen huge expansion in recent times—by 2011, the country was home to more than 35,500 colleges while a decade earlier, the figure stood at 12,800.

The country also has nearly 700 universities, but sadly, there has been little focus on original research works, innovation and breakthroughs in science. These have been highlighted in a recent speech by President Pranab Mukherjee, who also happens to be the Visitor of central universities. "Unless we focus on research, it is not possible to improve the quality of education," he said. As many experts involved with the Times ranking point out, Indian universities fare badly in this survey because they give merely 30 per cent weightage to research work.

TOP 10 UNIVERSITIES

OVERALL 2015 RANK	2014 RANK	2013 RANK	UNIVERSITY
> 1	1	1	University of Delhi
^ 2	3	4	Banaras Hindu University
^ 3	4	3	Jawaharlal Nehru University
^ 4	6	8	Aligarh Muslim University
^ 5	7	7	Osmania University
v 6	5	6	University of Hyderabad
^ 7	8	9	Jamia Millia Islamia
^ 8	10	12	Andhra University
^ 9	26	19	University of Kerala
^ 10	15	13	Kurukshetra University

PUBLIC TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

- 1 University of Delhi, Delhi
- 2 Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
- 3 Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi
- 4 Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
- 5 Osmania University, Hyderabad

PRIVATE TOP 5 UNIVERSITIES

- 1 Christ University, Bengaluru
- 2 Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani
- 3 Symbiosis International University, Pune
- 4 Banasthali Vidyapith, Banasthali
- 5 Jain University, Bengaluru