



BRAIN GAIN

NO LONGER DOES 'INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION' REMAIN RESTRICTED TO OUTBOUND MIGRATION. IT'S TIME NOW FOR INDIA TO ATTRACT ITS FAIR SHARE OF FOREIGN STUDENTS AS WELL. **MANISHA DHINGRA** TAKES STOCK

IT'S reverse brain drain - of a sort. Close on the heels of a decade spent agonising over the effects of losing out on bright young minds, India may just be getting ready to welcome the first generation of a totally different breed of youngsters altogether. A generation - composed largely of foreigners - willing to explore the heady combination of ethics and evolution that a few representatives of the Indian education system are beginning to offer.

"We already have students from 22 countries on our roster," beams TP Vasanth, managing trustee, Indus In-

ternational School, Bangalore, "the idea is to offer quality education leading to an increase in student diversity."

Fair enough. And with the encouraging initial response, the trend is catching on, with dozens of such 'international schools' already dotting the countryside from Kolkata to Dehradun, Mysore, Bangalore...you name it. "Students from well-off families sometimes develop a sense of arrogance that impedes the learning process," maintains Padma Bhushan award-winner litterateur UR Ananthamurthy, "that is why the education

process should integrate the elite with the masses." Dr Ananthamurthy was speaking at the inauguration of Jnanasarovara International Residential School in Mysore last month, that has simultaneously launched Jnananidhi, a school for less privileged children on the principle that each new student would sponsor another in the second school as well.

Clubbing a bouquet of academic options ranging from CBSE to ICSE or even International Baccalaureate (IB) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education, UK (IGCSE) cur-

riculum, what's unique about these new-age institutions is their emphasis on extracurricular activities like swimming, horse riding, etc. Not surprisingly, some campuses even boast of trees neatly tagged and labeled as per their scientific names. As Lt General (ret'd) Arjun Ray, chief executive, Indus points out, "Our aim is to equip students with an overall world view and learning remains a constant wherever they turn. That's the reason we offer so many activities - both academic and those related to sports - on campus. So far as curriculum is con-

cerned, students can choose from either IB or the IGCSE, both of which conform to international standards and can thus gel with higher education opportunities from all around the globe."

But with a number of me-too institutes flooding the market, how does one define what actually constitutes an 'international' school? By and large, agree educationists, international schools are those academic institutions that follow international curricula such as that prescribed by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), for example.

KP Gopalkrishna, one of the pioneers of the IB curriculum in India has been quoted as saying that IB is the most sought-after exam today because it develops the student's thinking, analytical and presenting skills and equips him with adequate life skills. "Today, the best universities in the world look out for students with the IB diploma," claims the academician.

This factor, coupled with relatively lower fees (as compared to schools abroad) and an ever-increasing number of infrastructure facilities, is proving to be the major draw for expatriates, NRIs and foreign citizens alike.

That's why "we are looking at attracting students from all parts of the globe," agrees Sudhakar Shetty, chairman, JIRSM.

However, part of this global vision may perhaps stem from the fact that the number of such schools, especially in south India, is escalating by the dozen - at last count, Bangalore alone accounted for over 12 such schools. Besides, studying here doesn't come cheap since fees start from at least Rs two lakh upwards.

Well, for those who can afford it, the floodgates to 'experiential learning' are just opening up. Interested? Simply head south then!