



Knowledge Economy Means Student Safety

Reputation matters. What happened last week when five students from several African countries, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan were reportedly beaten up inside Gujarat University for allegedly offering namaz may be an unfortunate flash in the pan. But the way foreigners make a snap judgement of a country based on their first experiences after stepping out of an airport, countries, too, leave a lingering impression by how foreign guests are treated on their institutions and campuses. So far, five perps have been arrested. MEA is in touch with the state government, and has promised strict action against all attackers. This is welcome and necessary.

India aims to enrol half a million international students in higher education by 2047 as part of its 'Study in India' programme. While quality of education matters, so does safety of students. Racist/communal attacks like the one in Gujarat hamper India's plan to be a knowledge economy. It also nixes deeper engagement that GoI is trying to craft with countries in Africa, Central and



Western Asia. Indian students also benefit from having persons from different cultures in their midst. This provides them a chance to know the world and make it their home one day.

The same way India expects its scholars to be treated with respect abroad, and campuses having a zero-tolerance for racist attacks in, say, the US or Australia, it, too, should be intolerant of racism and communalism in its learning centres. Being occasional victims must provide no excuse to provide room to be occasional perpetrators. Ensuring safe, open and diverse education campuses is central to liberal societies, especially those aspiring to be seen as 'developed'. Every university administration must ensure that *every* student is safe. *ETC*

Alta Cap Looking to Invest over \$1 b in India's Educational Infra

Investment firm plans to deploy capital across top cities over next 3-4 years, says top exec

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Mumbai: Investment and asset management firm Alta Capital is looking to invest more than \$1 billion in top cities across India over the next 3-4 years as it sharpens its focus on the country's rapidly growing educational infrastructure, said a top company official.

The firm has already invested over \$1 billion across warehousing, managed workspaces, student housing and educational infrastructure businesses in less than a year of operations till December, which also marked its purchase of education infrastructure development services company Cappella Educare for \$200 million. Alta Capital had earlier acquired Goldman Sachs' and Warburg Pincus' 100% stake in student housing platform Good Host Spaces for \$320 million in the largest-ever student housing deal in the country.

"We are planning to invest \$1 billion in India's burgeoning education infrastructure sector in the next 3-4 years. The market for quality education is worth \$16 billion in India and is growing at 10% annually given the importance attached to education

Catching them Young

\$1 billion already invested in warehousing, managed workspaces, student housing, etc

KEY DRIVERS

- 1 Rising population
- 2 Growing demand for quality education



The market for quality education is worth \$16 b in India and is growing at 10% annually given the importance attached to education and skill development

SIDDHARTHA GUPTA | Founder, Alta Capital

and skill development. This speaks volumes about the market size and need for private capital to shape the future of education," Siddhartha Gupta, founder and managing partner, Alta Capital, told ET.

There is a renewed interest in investing in the Indian educational sector. With a rising population and growing demand for quality education, both private and institutional investors are flocking to capitalise on this lucrative sector. Government initiatives to promote education and skill development

CURRENT ASSET PORTFOLIO

Educational infra across 6 major cities

Over 5m sq ft covered

Reaches 45k students



operating partner of Rava in India.

The firm's current asset portfolio in educational infrastructure spans six major Indian cities with over 5 million sq ft covering 45,000 students. Of this, Cappella has 13 schools in Bangalore and Hyderabad with 2 million sq ft assets with 25,000 students. Good Host Spaces has 3 million sq ft with 20,000 beds across four universities.

"One out of every five students going to school is an Indian in the current scenario. Around 500 million students are seeking educational support and of which, 300 million are receiving the same. Out of this, less than 1% or 2.5 million is our target market who seek quality education in private schools," Gupta said, highlighting the market potential.

Apart from focusing on educational infrastructure, Alta Capital will also continue to support its existing investment themes including warehousing and managed workspaces, he added.

It has so far invested \$200 million in Pragati Warehousing and \$325 million in managed workspace provider Table Space in addition to its acquisitions of Good Host Spaces and Cappella Educare. *eti*

BHAVIN G

have further fuelled the attractiveness of investing in educational infrastructure.

Alta Capital will use the Good Host Spaces' platform to acquire new educational infrastructure assets with its planned investment. The investment will be made through global private equity firm Hillhouse Investments' subsidiary Rava Partners that raised a more than \$2.7 billion fund in 2023 to invest in real estate assets in Asia.

Founded by Gupta, former MD of Blackstone India, Alta Cap is the sole

MOB ON CAMPUS

Best universities in the world foster freedom. Attack on foreign students in Gujarat University belies NEP 2020's promise

ASTHE WORLD is becoming increasingly interconnected," says the National Education Policy (2020), it is the responsibility of institutes of higher education to "become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies". The attack on five foreign students on Saturday night at Gujarat University in Ahmedabad by a mob, reportedly for offering namaz during Ramzan, flies in the face of that commitment and promise. In videos of the incident, about 25 young men can be seen assaulting the students, two of whom were hospitalised. The response from the authorities has been two-toned. First, dealing with the crime itself, the breach of law and order on campus. Two people have been arrested and the Ministry of External Affairs has issued a statement saying it is in touch with the Gujarat government on the matter. The second response, unfortunately, appears to lay blame on the victims.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, Vice-Chancellor Neerja Gupta has assured the foreign students — from Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and African nations — that they will be moved to a different hostel. That this has become necessary for their safety is disturbing. But the VC's words also appear to rule out the possibility of an introspection on how and why the students were attacked: "They are foreign students and when they go to foreign countries there is a need to be culturally sensitive. From this incident it has emerged that there is still a need for cultural orientation." The onus of being "culturally sensitive", especially in terms of religious and cultural practices, has been put on the foreign students. It would seem, in this framing, that the mob that attacked them has been let off far too lightly.

The best universities in the world are spaces that, first and foremost, foster freedom. The quality of education they offer depends crucially on the liberty of thought and freedom of debate that they play host to. The mob and its violence bring an end to the free exchange of ideas and, by extension, the idea of the university. Gujarat University would do well to heed the advice of NEP 2020: To ensure "scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice", it is necessary to nurture a campus that has "full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all educational decisions". I-110

HC ASKS JNU TO FILE A REPLY TO THE PETITION WITHIN FOUR WEEKS

JNUSU poll age relaxation plea: HC refuses to grant interim relief

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court declined to grant interim relief to a student seeking permission to submit his nomination and participate in the upcoming JNU Students' Union election until his petition to raise the maximum age for contesting the poll is resolved.

Justice Sachin Datta observed that the deadline for nomination submissions had passed, and the election process had already commenced. He stated that it is not possible to reverse time and allow the petitioner to contest the poll.

The date for filing the nomination for the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) election, which is scheduled to be held on March 22, was March 15. The result will be declared on March 24.

Petitioner Sudhanshu Shekhar contested the decision of



the JNU vice chancellor, who rejected his request to extend the maximum age to contest the students' union election by two years, as a one-time measure in view of the fact that the election was not conducted for over four years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The high court has served notice and asked JNU to file a reply to the petition within four weeks.

The plea, filed through

advocates Azad Bansala and Prakriti Rastogi, said as a result of the pandemic, and for one reason or the other, despite several requests by student bodies, the election was not conducted for four consecutive years.

It said merely due to the delay and lethargy on the part of the university, the petitioner, who otherwise was eligible to contest election in both the years, 2020 and 2022, lost the opportunity to contest and cur-

Highlights

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rently is barred by age to file his nominations as he is 30 years and 6 months.

Due to no fault of his, the petitioner has surpassed the age bracket and hence, the university and the vice chancellor ought to have given an age relaxation, it said.

The varsity issued a circular on March 7 reiterating the guidelines laid down by the Lyngdoh Committee and modified by the Supreme Court according to which the maximum age limit prescribed remained 30 years for the research scholars. *mil*

Yeongdeok City Mayor visits University of Delhi, extends invitation to VC

OUR CORRESPONDENT

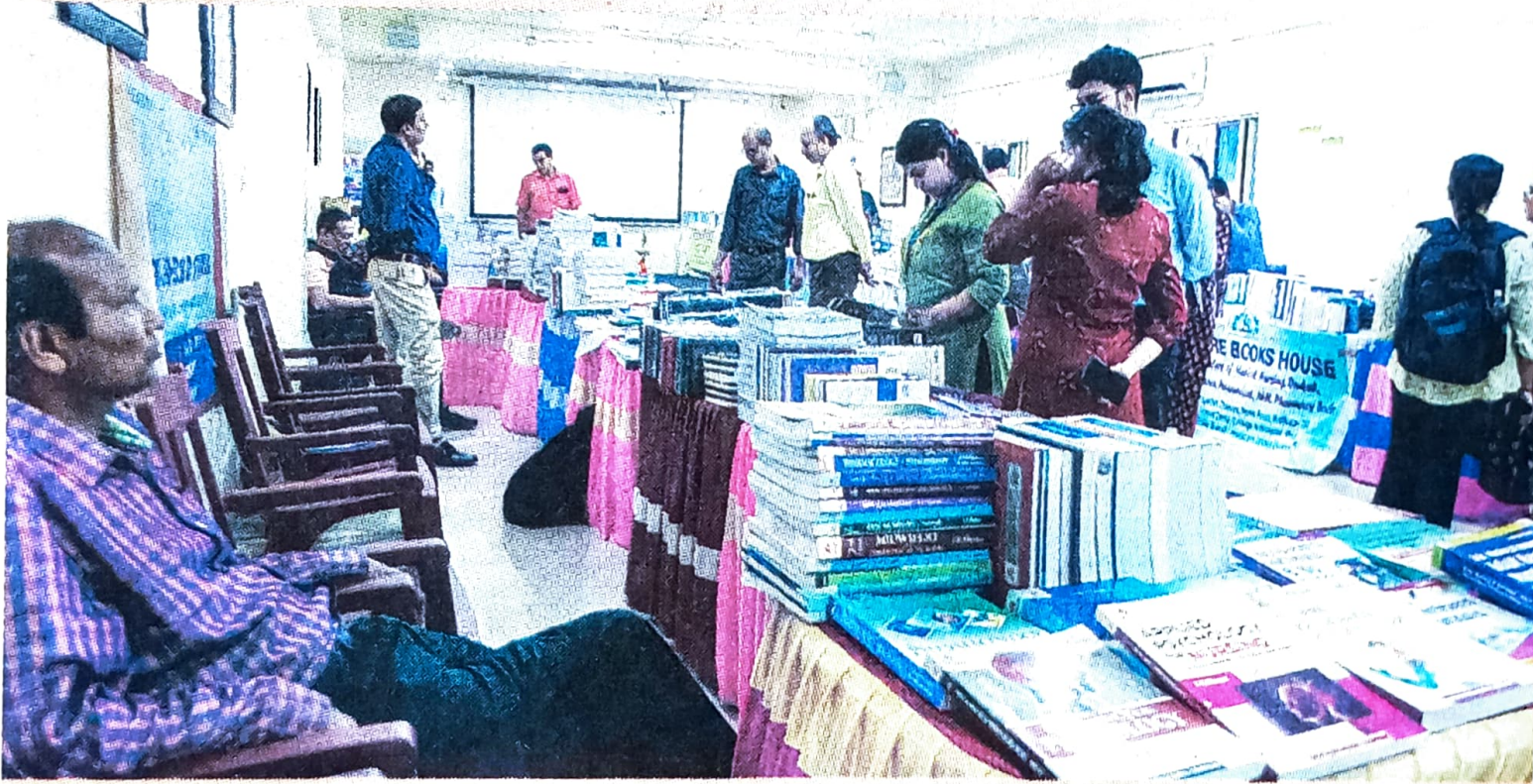
NEW DELHI: The University of Delhi welcomed the Mayor of Yeongdeok City, Korea, Kwangyeol Kim, and his delegation on Monday.

They visited to express gratitude for a donation made by the University's Vice Chancellor during his attendance at the Hi-Wellness FESTA 2023 in Korea.

During the visit, Mayor Kwangyeol Kim invited the Vice Chancellor to the Opening Ceremony of the "Yeongdeok International Hi-Wellness FESTA 2024" on October 3, 2024, an event combining traditional Korean Medicine with Indian Ayurveda.

Discussions also focused on potential collaboration in traditional medicinal systems between the two countries, with plans for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the institutions in the near future. *mil*

Tribute to 1st Indian librarian of NL



Brainware University Library organised a two-day book exhibition-cum-sale on 21-22 February. The event was inaugurated by chancellor Phalguni Mookhopadhyay with some insightful and thought-provoking remarks.

“Embracing technology is key and we’re diving into how artificial intelligence can revolutionize our library,” he opined.

In this event, Brainware University proudly launched the book “Smriti Bismritite Harinath Dey”. This was an initiative taken by the university library to pay homage to an esteemed scholar, polyglot and the first Indian librarian of the then Imperial Library (now National Library of India).

Unable to be present at the event, Professor Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri sent

his warm wishes through a heartfelt video.

Dr Asitabha Das, former librarian at Kalyani University, Dr Partha Sarathi Das, assistant library and information officer from the National Library; and Arnab Nag were present at the event along with Dr Sankar Gangopadhyay, vice chancellor; Gour Krishna Pattanayak, pro-vice-chancellor and Mahua Pal, registrar.

The university recently held a meeting which was a ground-breaking initiative to explore the intersection of health, environment, biotechnology, and entrepreneurship. The CSIR-sponsored Green Bio-Merge 2024 held its 1st international conference at Brainware University, Kolkata. Distinguished experts, researchers and academicians from around the globe took part in the meeting.

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Being excluded or truant from school leads to mental health issues

AASE VILLADSEN

In the aftermath of the pandemic there has been a substantial increase in the number of students who are absent from school in the UK, and children are reporting higher levels of mental ill health than ever before.

Research has previously shown that exclusion (a child being removed from school) and truancy are linked with poor mental health.

Now, I have carried out research with colleagues to examine whether mental health leads to exclusion and truancy, or whether exclusion and truancy are in fact contributing to poor mental health in children and adolescents.

We found that the connection goes both ways. Children who struggled with their mental health were more likely to later be excluded from school and to truant. And we also found evidence that exclusion and truancy could increase their mental health difficulties.

A VICIOUS CYCLE

Missing out on school is detrimental not only to children's educational achievement but also to their wellbeing and overall development. These children miss out on important formative interactions with their peers and teachers.

Being excluded from school can have a long-term – even life-long – impact. Research suggests that children who have been excluded are more likely to be unemployed and to go to prison, as well as to have mental health difficulties.

In our study we used nationally representative data from more than 15,000 children born in the UK between 2000 and 2002. The survey collected extensive information on participants during their childhood and teenage years, including information on behavioural problems, such as aggressive behaviour, and emotional problems involving symptoms of anxiety and depression. It also included information on children's experience of school exclusion and truancy.

Our analyses revealed that mental health difficulties in primary school left children more vulnerable to exclusion and truancy later



when entering secondary school. More specifically, increases in emotional problems heightened a child's chances of being excluded in their early adolescent years, and their chances of being truant from school.

Primary school children with worsening behavioural problems were also more at risk of being excluded when they reached secondary school. But, we found no evidence that behavioural problems increased children's probability of truancy.

In our study, we also discovered that truancy and exclusion may in turn be exacerbating mental health problems. We showed that some of these detrimental effects differed according to the child's gender. And while some affected mental health only in the short-term, others had a

longer lasting impact.

For example, boys – but not girls – who had been excluded in secondary school went on to have higher levels of depression and anxiety, with effects lasting even into late adolescence after they had left school. Both boys and girls who had been excluded also went on to have worse behavioural problems in early adolescence but not later in adolescence. Truants went on to have greater long-term emotional problems, and short-term their conduct problems were also higher.

CHANGING THE PATTERN

Our study very clearly demonstrates a cycle of disadvantage, where children who were struggling with their mental health went on to be truant or be excluded, but at the same time truancy and being excluded further exacerbated their problems, sometimes into late adolescence.

This new knowledge emphasises the need for prevention and intervention for child mental health problems. This could reduce the number of vulnerable children missing out on educational opportunities and also reduce further

damage to their mental health.

School-based social and emotional learning programmes may have an important role to play as these have shown success in reducing both behavioural and emotional problems. Sports-based programmes may be another promising avenue for keeping children connected to school. More awareness of child mental health is also vital, even as young as primary school age. Many children may slip through the net: they need better and early access to mental health services.

It is interesting that school exclusion was found to increase emotional symptoms in boys, but not in girls, in both early and late adolescence. These symptoms generally increase much more in girls during this developmental period. Additional focus might be needed on finding alternatives to excluding boys from school.

It is particularly poignant that despite behavioural problems not leading to truancy, these types of problems increased following truancy. Children's bond with their school seems key to reversing this trend.

Programmes that focus on transforming the school environment by developing student commitment to learning and creating a sense of belonging in the school, as these can reduce truancy, could make a significant difference here. And later mental health problems may also be avoided.

No-Detention Policy Scrapped For V, VIII

Students Must Score 25% In Mid-Term, 33% In Final Exams; No Change For Other Classes

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New Delhi: Directorate of Education (DoE) has removed the 'no-detention policy' for classes V and VIII from the academic session 2024-25.

According to the new rule under the 2022 promotion policy, the students of classes V and VIII must score 25% marks in the mid-term exams and 33% in the annual exams to get promoted to the next class. The students who fail to pass can take a re-exam. Those who can't secure 25% marks in the re-exam, too, will be held back in the same class, the guidelines stated.

After Parliament abolished the no-detention policy through an amendment to the Right to Education (RTE)

Act 2009 in Jan 2019, Delhi govt implemented its 2022 promotion policy last year. On Friday, DoE instructed all heads of govt, govt-aided and unaided recognised private schools in the city to follow the new norms. The students of all other classes will still come under the 'no-detention policy'.

"The purpose of the policy has failed, hence its withdrawal was necessary. Teachers were expected to conduct comprehensive assessments, but there was a failure on the part of both govt and teachers," Ashok Agarwal, advocate and RTE activist, told TOI. "This failure contributed to dropouts, leading to child labour," he claimed.

Sudha Acharya, princi-

The students who fail to pass can take a re-exam. The students who can't secure 25% marks in the re-exam, too, will be held back in the same class, states Directorate of Education guideline

pal of ITL Public School, however, said, "Students were not truly focused on education as they believed they would be promoted to the next class regardless of their performance. This led to complacency among parents, students and even teachers, reducing accountability."

She added, "It is not true that the removal of the no-detention policy will increase

dropouts. Instead, now that students of classes V and VIII must score at least 33% marks to be promoted, they will feel incentivised to strive towards excellence." Acharya also underlined the importance of support classes and vigilance for low-achieving students, along with improvement tests.

Regarding the admission norms, the revised guideline states, "A child will be admitted to an age-appropriate class based on the age criteria/age relaxation" as per a 2016 circular. According to it, a child may be admitted to Class VI if he/she possesses a valid marksheet and school-leaving certificate/transfer certificate/migration certificate issued by his/her

school. A child, who is 10 to 12 years old and has not studied in Class V at any recognised school, may also apply for admission to Class VI under RTE Act to the head of a school near his/her residence, who must ensure age compliance and assess the foundational literacy and numeracy levels of the applicant. The child may then be admitted to Class VI or placed in Class V, subject to availability.

There will be no alteration in the existing admission norms for classes VII and VIII for 2024-25. The circular stated that the admission criteria for Class VII from the 2025-26 session and for Class VIII from the 2026-27 session will be based on the above criteria.

ENGLISH, IN ANY OTHER TONGUE

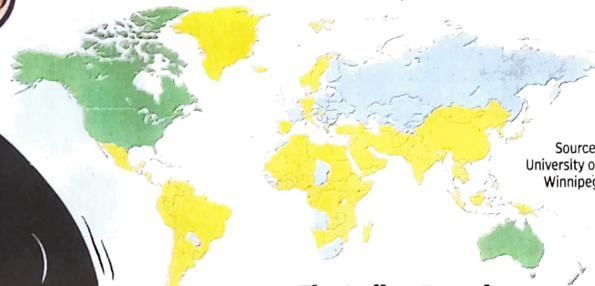
TOI Explains

It's the world's most widely spoken language, but that doesn't make it any easier for non-native speakers learning English. Tenses can make you tense. Some grammatical friends are 'false friends'... and that's just two of the many mysteries of English. Little wonder the secret to speaking and writing 'perfect' English is unknown, even to most native speakers.

So, how does most of the world learn English? Do learning difficulties vary from country to country? What's happening in India? And is the English vs mother tongue debate false?

Status Of English As A Subject In Schools

■ Optional
 ■ Mandatory
 ■ English-speaking country
 No info country



Source: University of Winnipeg



Illustration: Uday Deb

Catch 'Em Young

Non-native English learners are in the game mostly because it's the language of global commerce and knowledge. So, in most non English-speaking countries, lessons in English begin early, often compulsorily, in schools. And they continue till students pass out. Some countries can insist on English lessons at the college-level as well.

Country (Dominant language)	Duration for which English is taught	Proficiency Level (score on index)	Some hurdles a student may encounter
Germany (German)	Most states start teaching it as a compulsory foreign language by age 8/9, some from age 6/7	VERY HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > German doesn't have the 'th' sound > Punctuation rules are stricter, so English writing style can seem rigid
France (French)	Schools offer subject to students aged 11, but some introduce lessons from nursery	MODERATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 'False friends': words that have similar spelling but different meanings, eg. 'librairie', which is French for bookshop > There are sounds in English that French doesn't have
Spain (Spanish)	Most schools start lessons at age 6	MODERATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Spanish speakers can be confused by 'y' and 'j' and 'b' and 'v' sounds > Use of prepositions is a tricky area
Portugal (Portuguese)	Taught compulsorily by most schools from age 8/9	VERY HIGH	Unlike English, Portuguese does not use auxiliaries for questions ('you like it?', instead of 'do you like it?'). That's because questions are conveyed by the tone of voice. Also, tenses are an issue. There is no 'present perfect' in Portuguese, so 'I have stayed here all my life' will become 'I stay here all my life'
China (Mandarin)	Most students get first lessons from age 8/9	LOW	Mandarin relies on tone to convey meaning. English, too, uses tone, but for conveying emotion rather than meaning
Saudi Arabia (Arabic)	State schools start lessons from age 9, pvt schools can start in KG	VERY LOW	Punctuation rules are less severe in Arabic. Words generally sound as they read, unlike in English. So, English spellings can be a problem area
Japan (Japanese)	Mandatory in elementary school, lessons begin in grade 3/4	LOW	Japanese learners can get 'r' and 'l' sounds mixed. The language doesn't have an 'l' sound. Japanese mostly doesn't use pronouns, which are an essential part of English

Proficiency score source: EF English Proficiency Index

The Indian Experience

The first English grammar book was published in 1586. Less than 300 years later, the English Education Act of 1835 formally established English as the medium of instruction for schools teaching the modern, western curriculum in India. But close to two centuries later, the number of English speakers in the country hovers at around 10%. In absolute terms, India leads the world in the number of English speakers, but the average Indian's proficiency level has been found to be moderate.

Although most schools, govt and private, begin English lessons in primary classes, learning outcomes leave a lot to be desired. According to the ASER 2023 report on rural schools, a little over half (57.3%) of the students in the 14-18 age group can read sentences in English. Three out of four students who can read in English also know the meaning of what they were reading. But that still leaves a quarter of students who can read English but not understand what they're reading.

So, effectively, India's overall proficiency in English is less than, say, Germany's or Scandinavian countries'.

Mother Tongue Helps

The endless debate over English vs mother tongue is a misplaced one. A person's mother tongue does not have to be a hurdle to learning the language of science and business. Educationists across the world have come around to the point of view that, for children, learning in the mother tongue is the most effective means of grasping a subject.

But what about English? Mother tongue helps here, too. A 2019 article in The Economist cites an example from Cameroon. A study of 12 schools found that kids who were taught in the local language outdid their English-medium counterparts after three years of schooling. And, after five years, "they even outperformed English-medium children in English".

Foreigners & Us

Treating international students with respect and goodwill is an ethical-practical imperative

What do we feel when Indian students are mistreated on foreign soil, in any way? The incidents are usually one-offs. We take solace from the fact that mistreatment is not systemic, and also from swift and rigorous application of law. These are reassurances we too must offer to students we host. Police must act against *everyone* involved in the Saturday night assault on some international students, at Gujarat University.

Reciprocity of tolerance | Reports say that the assault took place on the university's hostel premises, set off merely by some international students offering namaz, that too during the holy month of Ramzan. A student from Sri Lanka, one from Afghanistan and another from Turkmenistan had to be admitted to a hospital. India's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion to every citizen. When Indians go abroad to study and work, they count on similar freedom. Reciprocal tolerance is both an ethical and practical imperative.



Wealth of nations | America to Australia, rich countries have been becoming richer from international students and workers they attract.

The enrichment is economic and cultural, and also geopolitical. Foreigners' campus experiences ultimately build up to enduring diplomatic benefits. Recognising its soft power shortfall on this front, China has been pouring big subsidies into attracting foreign students, who now total nearly half a million. This is a number India hopes to achieve by 2047, from only around 50,000 right now.

Collabs of the future | Student travel circuits are built over time and in significant part by word of mouth. Research and partnerships of university years seed leaderships from startups to governance. However significant such transformations are on the macro scale, they are even more acutely felt at individual, intimate levels. Communication and collaboration skills gained in internationalised classrooms, are priceless in the new knowledge economy. We must remember this.

भारत-तिब्बत में रहे हैं घनिष्ठ संबंध

सुभारती विवि

मेरठ, प्रमुख संवाददाता। सुभारती विवि में 'भारत-तिब्बत भू-सांस्कृतिक संबंध' विषय पर हुए व्याख्यान में दोनों के संबंधों पर चर्चा हुई। सुभारती बुद्धिस्ट स्टडीज, सुभारती लॉ कॉलेज एवं राष्ट्रीय सेवा योजना प्रकोष्ठ के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में हुए कार्यक्रम में आरएसएस के क्षेत्र कार्यकारिणी सदस्य सुशील कुमार, निधि बहुगुणा एवं डॉ. रवींद्र कुमार मौजूद रहे।

सुशील कुमार ने कहा कि भारत और तिब्बत के बीच भू-सांस्कृतिक संबंध घनिष्ठ रहे हैं। दोनों क्षेत्रों के बीच ऐतिहासिक, धार्मिक और सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान की लंबी परंपरा रही है। भारत-तिब्बत के ऐतिहासिक संबंधों की शुरुआत गुप्त वंश के समय से ही है। बौद्ध एवं हिन्दू धर्म का तिब्बत पर गहरा प्रभाव रहा है। गौतम बुद्ध के शिक्षाओं का प्रसार तिब्बत में हुआ और वहां बौद्ध धर्म का एक महत्वपूर्ण केंद्र



सोमवार को सुभारती विश्वविद्यालय में व्याख्यान के दौरान मौजूद अतिथि। • हिन्दुस्तान

भारत-तिब्बत भू-सांस्कृतिक संबंध विषय पर अतिथियों ने की चर्चा

बना। गुरु-शिष्य परंपरा ने तिब्बती धर्म, संस्कृति को प्रभावित किया है।

सुशील कुमार ने कहा कि भारत और तिब्बत के बीच सीमा विवाद होने के बावजूद दोनों देशों के बीच व्यापार, पर्यटन और सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान के लिए नेतृत्व के स्तर पर समझौते होते रहे हैं। डॉ. हीरो हितो ने कहा कि

आज तिब्बत के लोगों के साथ भारतवासियों को खड़ा होने की जरूरत है। सांस्कृतिक एवं धार्मिक रूप से दोनों क्षेत्रों में आपस में गहरा संबंध रहा है और आगे भी रहेगा।

निधि बहुगुणा ने लदाख एवं तिब्बत संबंधित सीमाओं का इतिहास बताया। प्रो. एससी थलेडी, प्रो. वैभव गोयल भारतीय, डॉ. रवींद्र कुमार, डॉ. सीमा शर्मा, डॉ. मनीषा त्यागी, समीर सिंह, डॉ. श्रीधा झा, डॉ. प्रवीण, डॉ. विवेक, डॉ. संजय, विमल बोधी, डॉ. प्रीति सिंह, राम प्रकाश तिवारी मौजूद रहे।

सभी धर्मों का आदर हो

अहमदाबाद में गुजरात यूनिवर्सिटी हॉस्टल में घुसकर जिस तरह स्थानीय निवासियों की भीड़ ने नमाज पढ़ रहे विदेशी छात्रों पर हमला किया, वह घटना तो गंभीर है ही, उससे निपटने के तरीकों से जुड़ी शुरुआती सूचनाएं भी कुछ सवाल खड़े करती हैं।

बुनियादी तथ्य | यह देश की अंतरराष्ट्रीय छवि से जुड़ी संवेदनशील घटना है। सबसे पहले घटना से जुड़े बुनियादी तथ्यों को समझने की



विदेशी छात्रों को मिले पूरी सुरक्षा

जरूरत है। शुरुआती सूचनाओं के मुताबिक हमलावर भीड़ बाहर से आई थी। जिन विदेशी छात्रों पर हमला हुआ वे अपने कमरे से बाहर, लेकिन हॉस्टल परिसर के अंदर नमाज पढ़ रहे थे। भीड़ ने उन्हें रोकते हुए कहा कि नमाज पढ़ना है तो मस्जिद में जाएं। इसके बाद दोनों पक्षों में कहा-सुनी हुई और भीड़ ने कमरों में घुसकर तोड़फोड़ की।

तुरंत गिरफ्तारी | अच्छी बात है कि पुलिस ने कार्रवाई में तेजी दिखाई। दो व्यक्तियों की गिरफ्तारी हो चुकी है और पुलिस का कहना है कि बाकी आरोपियों को भी जल्दी ही गिरफ्तार कर लिया जाएगा। इस मामले के मद्देनजर न सिर्फ राज्य के गृहमंत्री ने पुलिस के आला अधिकारियों के साथ बैठक की बल्कि यूनिवर्सिटी प्रशासन ने भी अतिरिक्त सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करने वाले कदम उठाए।

घटना की पृष्ठभूमि | फिर भी कुछ बातें गौर करने की हैं। गुजरात यूनिवर्सिटी में स्टडी एब्रॉड प्रोग्राम (SAP) 2005 से ही चल रहा है, लेकिन इस तरह की यह पहली घटना है। जैसा कि यूनिवर्सिटी प्रशासन का भी कहना है कि ऐसी घटना रातों-रात नहीं हो सकती। निश्चित रूप से इसकी पृष्ठभूमि पहले से तैयार हो रही होगी। आगे ऐसी घटना फिर से न हो, इसके लिए उन हालात पर भी विचार करना जरूरी है, जो इसके लिए जिम्मेदार हैं।

सही नजरिया जरूरी | इस तरह की जांच सही नजरिए के साथ किए जाने की जरूरत है, तभी सही नतीजे मिलेंगे। यूनिवर्सिटी प्रशासन की तरफ से मीडिया में आए कुछ बयानों में कहा गया है कि विदेशी छात्रों को सांस्कृतिक तौर पर ज्यादा संवेदनशील होने की जरूरत है। ऐसा बयान न सिर्फ अनावश्यक है बल्कि जांच की सही दिशा को लेकर भ्रम भी पैदा कर सकता है। ध्यान रहे, इस घटना में विदेशी छात्रों की तरफ से किसी तरह के उकसावे का कोई संकेत नहीं मिलता।

अति संवेदनशीलता | देश के अंदर कुछ हिस्सों में पिछले कुछ समय से धर्म को लेकर जिस तरह की असहिष्णुता और अति संवेदनशीलता देख रही है, उसे नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जा सकता। पहली नजर में यह घटना उसी का एक उदाहरण लगती है।

सर्व धर्म, सम भाव | कानून व्यवस्था से जुड़ी एजेसियों को तो दोषियों के खिलाफ कड़ी कार्रवाई के जरिए इस मामले को मिसाल के रूप में पेश करना ही चाहिए, राजनीतिक, सामाजिक और धार्मिक संस्थाओं को भी अपने स्तर पर सक्रिय हस्तक्षेप के जरिए यह सुनिश्चित करने की जरूरत है कि समाज में सभी धर्मों का आदर करने की भावना कमजोर न हो।