





# A rural Limpopo teacher promotes global citizenship through technology

**S**ekhukhune East, Limpopo — In a rural classroom in the Sekhukhune East District, an innovative educator is demonstrating how technology can be harnessed to transform education and cultivate global citizenship among learners, despite persistent infrastructural challenges.

Working within the constraints of limited resources and inadequate facilities, the teacher has implemented digital platforms such as Classroom Skype to connect learners with peers and professionals across the world. The initiative seeks to promote values-based education while preparing students to engage meaningfully in an increasingly interconnected and diverse global society.

The programme enables learners to interact directly with students from different countries, cultures, races and religions. Through structured virtual exchanges, they explore topics including national symbols, traditional dress, languages, cuisine and cultural practices. In some sessions, learners exchange national anthems, discuss and debate shared global challenges, fostering dialogue rooted in mutual respect and understanding.

This approach aligns with the principles of global citizenship education and supports Sustainable Development Goal 16, which



promotes peace, justice and strong institutions. By facilitating intercultural dialogue, the initiative contributes to social cohesion and addresses issues of race relations within a broader global context.

The impact has been particularly significant for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially girls. Virtual guest lectures provide access to international role models and subject-matter experts, reinforcing the importance of education as a

pathway to opportunity. These engagements broaden learners' aspirations and expose them to career pathways that may otherwise seem inaccessible.

The initiative has not been without obstacles. The school has experienced poor facilities and, at times, the destruction of ICT infrastructure. Nevertheless, the teacher has adopted innovative strategies to sustain the programme, including improvising with a white cloth as a projection screen and downloading educational content to facilitate lessons and virtual interactions.

In addition to classroom implementation, the educator has influenced other teachers to integrate technology into their practice and establish international partnerships. These collaborations allow for the exchange of pedagogical approaches and create opportunities for learners to engage in constructive discussions about identity, belief systems and global issues.

According to observations within the school, learners participating in the programme have demonstrated improved communication



**Masweneng Mokolwane**  
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skills, enhanced critical thinking, stronger problem-solving abilities and increased confidence. The integration of technology has made learning more accessible and interactive, narrowing the gap between rural and urban educational opportunities.

The initiative illustrates how innovation and determination can overcome structural limitations. In connecting rural learners to a global network of peers and professionals, the Sekhukhune East teacher is expanding educational horizons and reinforcing the principle that quality education should not be determined by geography.

Through sustained commitment and creative problem-solving, this rural classroom has become a platform for global engagement—empowering learners to participate confidently in a diverse and interconnected world.

## CBSE canceled the Class XII board exam in the Middle East amid the Iran-Israel-US war

■ EJ - New Delhi

**T**he Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has cancelled all board examinations, including the previously postponed exams, in several Middle East countries amid the ongoing Iran-Israel-US war. The board exams were scheduled to be conducted from February 17 to April 10, 2026.

War tensions in the Middle East region have been continuing for several days. The latest escalation involved reports about the death of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which have been termed "fake" by his office.

According to an official notice released by CBSE, all board examinations scheduled to be conducted from March 16 to April 10 have now been cancelled in parts of the Middle East.

"All examinations of Class XII scheduled from 16.03.2026 to 10.04.2026 stand cancelled in case of students from Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE," the notice read.

The Class 12 board exams that were earlier notified to be postponed have also been cancelled.

"Examinations which were earlier postponed vide circular dated 01.03.2026, 03.03.2026, 05.03.2026, 07.03.2026 and 09.03.2026 shall also stand cancelled," the notice added.

# Reflections on Sustainability!

**T**here are moments in life that gently bring us back to where everything began — moments that remind us not only of our past, but also of the values that continue to guide our present. Recently, I had the privilege of attending the National Conference on Sustainable Business Practices at my alma mater, the School of Studies in Management, under the esteemed umbrella of Jiwaji University, in the historic city of Gwalior.

What began as a professional engagement soon transformed into a profoundly heartfelt reunion. Walking through the campus once again felt like stepping into a cherished chapter of my life — one that shaped my academic foundation, strengthened my character, and nurtured my aspirations. Returning to one's alma mater is not merely about revisiting a physical space; it is about reconnecting with the dreams we once carried with both uncertainty and hope. It is about remembering the early mornings reporting to the department, the late nights devoted to research, the nervousness before presentations, and the silent determination to prove ourselves. It is about standing in the same corridors where we first began to believe that our efforts could truly make a difference.

As a Research Scholar during 2009–2011, the School of Studies in Management was my laboratory of ideas and discipline. It was here that I learned to think critically, question constructively, and pursue excellence with humility. Walking into the conference hall this time — not as a student, but as an academic

*(Conferences are not just about presenting research papers. They are about building intellectual communities. They are about listening as much as speaking, reflecting as much as analyzing, and engaging as much as presenting.)*



professional — filled me with immense gratitude. Some institutions give you degrees; a few give you direction. This institution gave me both.

One of the most emotional highlights of the conference was listening once again to my respected Supervisor, Prof. Yogesh Upadhyay, who now serves as Vice Chancellor at ITM University Gwalior, and my Co-Supervisor, Prof. S. K. Singh, who is Proctor at Jiwaji University. Their presence and guidance remain pillars of my academic journey. Hearing them speak with the same passion and clarity reminded me that true educators continue to inspire long after formal supervision ends.

There is a beautiful truth in the saying, "We rise because

someone once believed we could." For the past fourteen years, as I have proudly served in the ITM Gwalior family, I have often reflected on how deeply my journey has been shaped by their mentorship. Their guidance extended far beyond research methodology; it shaped my values, ethics, and professional outlook.

I vividly recall a small yet powerful lesson shared years ago. While driving in Kashmir during a visit by Prof. Yogesh Upadhyay, he advised, "If the traffic signal shows more than 30 seconds, it is better to switch the car off." At that moment, it seemed like a simple practical suggestion. Today, I understand its deeper meaning. Sustainability begins with awareness. Leadership begins with responsibility. Small, mindful actions, practiced consistently, create meaningful long-term

impact.

The conference discussions further reinforced this idea. Distinguished dignitaries emphasized that sustainability is not merely an operational choice; it is a strategic commitment. Organizations aspiring to lead must integrate innovation with responsibility. Vision without sustainability is temporary, and growth without accountability is incomplete.

The concept of life-cycle thinking particularly resonated with me. Every action — whether in business or personal life — carries long-term implications. Sustainability is not confined to environmental concerns; it encompasses ethical decision-making, efficient resource utilization, and gratitude for the resources we are blessed with. When we value our resources, we naturally strive



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to protect and enhance them.

This message extends beyond corporations and policymakers. It applies equally to educators, researchers, students, and professionals. Sustainability is ultimately a mindset — a conscious effort to leave the world better than we found it.

Some conferences are attended; some are experienced; and a few are deeply felt. This conference belonged to the third category. On the final day, emotions overwhelmed me to such an extent that I ended up sharing my reflections twice on social media — a reflection of the deep attachment I feel toward my academic roots. I was also grateful for the opportunity provided by the organizing team to share my sincere feedback during the valedictory ceremony. Speaking on a platform where I once presented as a research scholar was both humbling and empowering. It reminded me that learning never truly ends; it simply evolves into sharing. While sharing my reflections, I also presented a simple

example of sustainability drawn from my own life. I spoke about my respected teacher, Prof. S. K. Singh, who was an integral part of the conference. For decades now, whenever I send him a message, he responds almost immediately — beginning with the warm words, "Dear Shahid." He always guides me, encourages me, and wishes me the very best. I shared with the audience that sustainability is not limited to environmental practices or corporate strategies. It is also about sustaining relationships, sustaining encouragement, and sustaining positivity. To consistently make someone feel valued, supported, and inspired over decades is, in itself, a powerful example of sustainability.

Through the conference, I realized once again that conferences are not just about presenting research papers. They are about building intellectual communities. They are about listening as much as speaking, reflecting as much as analyzing, and engaging as much as presenting.

My heartfelt congratulations go to all research scholars, participants, and especially to my dear friends and respected professors who served on the organizing team. Successfully conducting such a conference requires coordination, dedication, and a collective vision. Moreover, earlier conferences gifted me lifelong friendships. This conference has strengthened old bonds and created new ones. That is the beauty of academic ecosystems — they evolve over time yet remain rooted in shared purpose and values. While sharing my reflections, I took slightly more time than expected and offered an apology — but it was an emotional moment. Sometimes gratitude speaks

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## Dr. B. Suresh Bhojraj was awarded the first Lifetime Achievement Award of the IPA



■ EJ - Mumbai

Dr. B. Suresh Bhojraj, Pro-Chancellor of JSS University Noida, was conferred the IPA's Lifetime Achievement Award for Academic Excellence by the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) at the 11th Global Pharmaceutical Quality Summit (GPQS) held at JW Marriott, Juhu, Mumbai. Instituted by IPA to recognise outstanding academic leadership and to strengthen industry-academia collaboration in Indian pharma, this award acknowledges Dr. Bhojraj's decades-long contribution to pharmaceutical education, regulatory policy, quality culture, and global professional engagement.

The independent jury comprised distinguished leaders from regulatory authorities, global pharmaceutical operations, international excipient councils, and strategic consulting, reflecting the stature and credibility of the recognition. Dr. Bhojraj has played a transformative role in shaping pharmacy education and professional standards both in India and glob-

ally.

- At the national level, he has:
  - Served in key leadership roles in the Pharmacy Council of India, contributing significantly to regulatory reforms and modernization of pharmacy education.
  - Participated in various national policy and advisory bodies aligned with healthcare education and professional standards.
  - Advocated for competency-based pharmacy education, continuous professional development (CPD), and integration of regulatory science into curricula.
- At the international level, he has:
  - Contributed to global discussions on pharmacy education quality, accreditation, and harmonisation.
  - Engaged with international professional and academic bodies to strengthen India's global positioning in pharmaceutical education.
  - Promoted cross-border academic collaborations and global

benchmarking in quality and regulatory science.

Through sustained leadership, Dr. Bhojraj has consistently championed the idea that India's pharmaceutical growth must be anchored in quality, ethics, and knowledge-driven innovation.

In his remarks, Dr. Bhojraj expressed deep gratitude to His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, Chancellor of JSS University and Pontiff of Suttur Math, for his visionary guidance and unwavering support.

He acknowledged that the spiritual and value-based leadership of His Holiness has been instrumental in shaping JSS institutions into centres of excellence rooted in service, discipline, and societal commitment.

"This recognition," Dr. Bhojraj noted, "is not an individual honour, but a reflection of the collective ethos and blessings that guide the JSS educational movement."

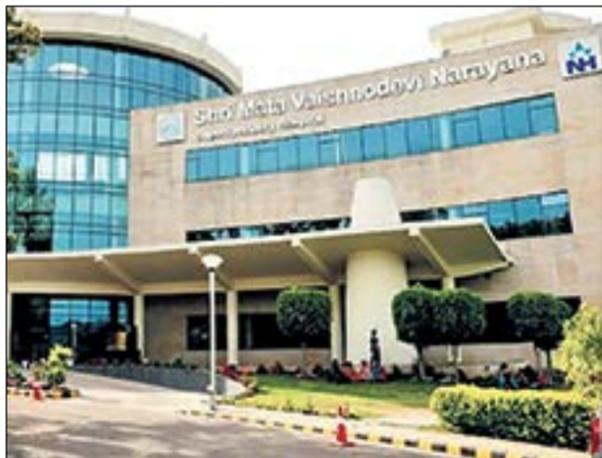
Receiving the award, Dr. Bhojraj reiterated the importance of structural collaboration between industry, academia, and regulators.

He emphasized that:

- Quality culture must begin in classrooms.
- Regulatory science must become integral to academic training.
- The next generation of pharmacists must be equipped not only with knowledge but with ethical conviction and technological competence.

He reaffirmed his commitment to India's journey toward global pharmaceutical leadership.

## Vaishno Devi college seeks govt nod to restart MBBS course after controversy



■ EJ - Srinagar

Two months after being derecognised, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME) in J&K's Reasi has reapplied to the National Medical Commission (NMC) seeking recognition and a Letter of Permission (LoP) to start an MBBS course for 50 students from the academic year 2026-27. SMVDIME's LoP was withdrawn for allegedly failing to meet essential standards amid controversy over the admission of Muslim students.

A faculty member of the medical college told this newspaper that the SMVDIME has again approached the NMC for seeking the LoP for starting an MBBS

course for 50 seats beginning next academic year, 2026-27. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board manages and funds the SMVDIME.

"The SMVDIME has completed all formalities and submitted a new application to the NMC in February only. We have also paid a mandatory inspection and processing fee between '5 lakh and '10 lakh to the NMC," the faculty member said.

On January 8, the NMC cancelled the LoP granted to SMVDIME in September 2025 to run a 50-seat MBBS course for the 2025-26 academic year, citing shortcomings. The decision came amid controversy over the admission of 42 Muslim

students and one Sikh in the first MBBS batch of 50, triggering protests by Hindu groups who argued that admissions should be restricted to Hindus as the institution is funded by offerings from Hindu devotees.

Sources said it is unclear if any changes will be made to the admission process if recognition is restored. "There is no clarity yet whether there will be any quota system or whether the admission policy will be different from before".

They, however, said the institute is now preparing for a possible inspection by the regulatory body. "The faculty members and staff members have been asked to prepare for the NMC inspection, which may likely take place in April-May". As per regulations, a team of four assessors from NMC would visit the campus for inspection.

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## UPSC CSE topper Anuj Agnihotri scores 1,071 marks; here's how much AIR 1 to 10 scored in Mains



■ EJ - New Delhi

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on March 10 released the marks obtained in the Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2025 by the recommended candidates. The PDF list containing the marks obtained by the selected candidates comprises the roll numbers, names, categories, marks obtained in UPSC CSE mains and marks obtained in UPSC personality test.

The Commission on March 9 announced the cut-off for UPSC CSE 2025 preliminary examination, mains and final result.

In the final result, which combines marks obtained in the Mains examination and the Personality Test, the final cut-off

for the General category stands at 963 marks. The final cut-off is 926 for EWS, 931 for OBC, 905 for SC, and 902 for ST candidates.

In the UPSC CSE 2025, a total of 958 candidates have been recommended for appointment to services such as IAS, IPS, IFS and other central services.

In cases when two or more candidates have scored the same aggregate marks in the examination, the candidate securing higher marks in the compulsory papers of the written examination — essay, general studies 1, general studies 2, general studies 3 and general studies 4) along with the personality test is ranked higher. If the tie still persists, the candidate with higher marks in the compulsory written papers

alone is given preference, the Commission said, adding that if the marks remain equal even after these criteria, the candidate senior in age is ranked higher.

In the UPSC CSE 2025, as many as 958 candidates have been recommended for appointment to services such as IAS, IPS, IFS and other central services. The UPSC CSE 2025 result was declared on March 6 and the marks obtained by candidates in UPSC CSE 2025 will be available on the website within 15 days from the date of the declaration of the result, meaning within March 20, the Commission said, while announcing the result.

As per data shared by the UPSC, as many as 9,37,876 candidates applied for this examination, out of which 5,76,793 candidates actually appeared in the UPSC CSE prelims examination. A total of 14,161 candidates qualified for the UPSC CSE written (main) examination. Of them, 2,736 candidates qualified for the personality test of the examination. A total of 958 candidates (659 men and 299 women) have been recommended by the Commission for appointment to various Services. Among the finally qualified candidates, the top five comprise one woman and four man candidates.

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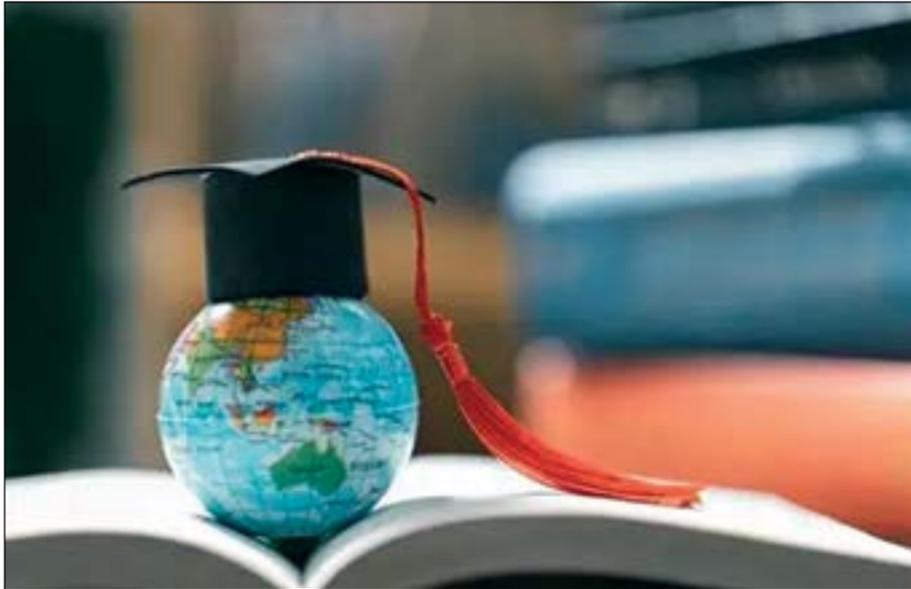
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# India emerges as global education hub, sees 8% rise in foreign students annually



■ EJ - Agency

India is on course to become a major international education destination, with inbound student numbers forecast to grow by around eight per cent annually through 2030, according to the latest Global Student Flows: India report published by UK-based QS Quacquarelli Symonds.

Now in its eighth edition, the report analyses international student mobility related to India using QS flow-mapping technology, insights from the QS International Student Survey 2025, and World University Rankings data. It examines both inbound and outbound student trends while outlining three potential scenarios for the future of India's higher education landscape.

India currently hosts an estimated 58,000 international students as of 2025, with growth expected to accelerate amid tightening

visa regimes and rising education costs in traditional Anglophone destinations. These global shifts are redirecting many students toward more accessible and affordable study destinations.

## Regional demand driving growth

South Asia remains the largest contributor to India's international student population, accounting for nearly half of all foreign enrolments. Nepal and Bangladesh together make up more than 30 per cent of arrivals, with Nepal projected to see annual growth of around 11 per cent.

Afghanistan, however, is expected to grow at less than one per cent annually due to visa approval constraints, reducing its share of India's international student cohort.

Demand from Sub-Saharan Africa is also increasing. Student numbers from the region are forecast to grow by approxi-

mately six per cent per year, supported by large youth populations, limited domestic higher education capacity, and India's relative affordability.

Zimbabwe is highlighted as a rapidly growing market, with projected annual growth of around 11 per cent, moving it from the seventh-largest African source country for India in 2024 to sixth by 2030.

Meanwhile, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to contribute steadily to India's inbound flows. Students from the United Arab Emirates are expected to account for roughly 5% of India's international student population by 2030.

## Government reforms supporting expansion

Policy reforms have played a central role in improving India's attractiveness as a study destination. The Study in India

programme has simplified admission processes and lowered financial barriers for international applicants.

The National Education Policy 2020 has also enabled foreign universities to establish campuses in India and expanded supernumerary seats for international students. Under University Grants Commission rules, institutions can reserve up to 25 per cent additional seats specifically for overseas applicants.

India has also set a long-term ambition of hosting five lakh international students by 2047. However, the report notes that achieving this goal will require sustained policy implementation alongside substantial investment in infrastructure and student support.

## Outbound mobility becoming more diversified

India remains the world's second-largest source of international students, with more than eight lakh Indians studying abroad as of 2024.

However, enrolments in the traditional "Big Four" destinations — the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia — are projected to decline slightly, at an average rate of 0.5 per cent annually through 2030.

Instead, Indian students are increasingly exploring alternative destinations including Germany, France, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in search of more affordable and accessible education pathways. Indians already form the largest international student group in both Germany and the UAE, reflecting a broader diversification of outbound mobility.

## Challenges around reputation

## and employability

Despite the positive outlook, the report highlights several structural challenges facing Indian institutions.

While universities in India have improved in employer reputation — with the median Employer Reputation rank rising by 61 places since 2017 — academic reputation has seen little progress. Prospective students from regions such as the Middle East and the United States continue to cite institutional reputation as a key decision factor.

Another challenge relates to graduate employability. According to a 2025 Mercer-Mettl report, only 42.6 per cent of Indian graduates are considered employable.

The QS International Student Survey 2025 also found that half of prospective students globally want universities to communicate more clearly about work placements and industry partnerships.

The report further warns that rapid growth in international enrolments without parallel investment in housing, campus facilities, and student support services could undermine the student experience that currently drives India's appeal.

"India has long been central to global student mobility — as both a major sending market and an increasingly influential destination," said Ashwin Fernandes, Chair QS India and Vice President for Strategic and International Engagement at QS.

"The conditions are shifting in India's favour, from government policy and affordability to regional demographic pressure. But sustaining this momentum

will require institutions to close the gap between reputation and real-world graduate outcomes."

Three potential futures for 2030. The report outlines three possible scenarios for India's higher education sector by 2030.

Under a "Regulated Regionalism" scenario, geopolitical fragmentation strengthens regional student mobility, positioning India as a key hub for students from South Asia, Africa, and the Gulf.

A second scenario, "Hybrid Multiversity," envisions technology-enabled blended learning transforming where and how students study, with India emerging as a centre for digitally connected and internationally recognised credentials.

The third scenario, "Talent Race Rebound," suggests countries may compete more aggressively for international talent. In this environment, India could strengthen its position by streamlining student pathways, aligning academic programmes with high-demand sectors, and expanding credible post-study work opportunities.

Together, the report concludes, these trends highlight both the scale of the opportunity for India's higher education sector and the structural reforms needed to fully realise its potential as a global study destination.

## 43 Medical...

increasing undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) seats. Applications are submitted online and evaluated within the same academic year for which they are filed.

Assessments are carried out by the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) under the NMC. The board determines the mode of inspection before granting approval. This may include verification of digital documents, Aadhaar-based attendance records, hospital management information system (HMIS) data, photographs, video feeds, or surprise physical inspections and video conferencing. Based on the assessment, the commission issues either a Letter of Permission (LoP) or a Letter of Disapproval (LoD) in accordance with regulations governing the establishment of medical institutions and minimum standards for UG and PG courses.

The ministry also highlighted the centrally sponsored scheme for establishing new medical colleges attached to existing district or referral hospitals, aimed particularly at underserved regions and aspirational districts. Under the scheme, 157 medical colleges have been approved in three phases with a total cost of Rs 41,332.41 crore.

Of this, the Centre's share is Rs 26,715.84 crore, out of which Rs 23,246.10 crore has already been released, the ministry told the Rajya Sabha. The funding pattern is 90:10 between the Centre and states for northeastern and special category states, and 60:40 for other states.

The ministry added that it regularly engages with the NMC to ensure timely processing of applications and appeals related to medical seats, and that approved seat matrices are made available before the commencement of counselling.

## Google opens applications for Summer 2026 Public Policy Fellowship; who all can apply?

■ EJ - New Delhi

Google has opened applications for its US Public Policy Fellowship for Summer 2026, offering students a paid opportunity to work at public interest organisations in Washington DC on internet and technology policy issues. The deadline to apply is April 9, 2026, at 12 pm ET.

The Google Public Policy Fellowship programme offers students interested in internet and technology policy the opportunity to spend the summer working on these issues at public interest organisations based in Washington, DC.

Fellows will be assigned a lead mentor at a host organisation and will have the opportunity to work with several senior staff members over the course of the semester, contributing to public dialogue on tech policy issues. Fellows are expected to make contributions, including conducting policy research and analysis, drafting reports and white papers, attending government and industry meetings and conferences, and participating in other advocacy activities.

## Who can apply?

Students from all majors and degree programmes are encouraged to apply, provided they demonstrate commitment to internet and technology policy, have an excellent academic record, and possess strong analytical, communications, research, and writing skills.



## What about international students?

International students can apply and participate, but must be eligible and authorised to work in the country of their fellowship.

Google has clarified that it cannot provide guidance or assistance on obtaining the necessary documentation to meet this criterion. This effectively means

## Reflections...

longer than planned.

With humility, I would like to suggest that presenters, especially research scholars, avoid leaving immediately after delivering their papers. Staying back to attend other sessions multiplies learning and fosters deeper academic connections. Knowledge grows through participation, not isolation.

I carried with me not just conference materials, but renewed inspiration. No matter how far we advance in our careers, it is our roots that anchor our resilience. Institutions build careers. Teachers build character. Experiences build perspective. And gratitude builds legacy. I feel blessed to have returned, grateful for the journey, and inspired to continue contributing toward innovation, sustainability, and responsible leadership.

international students in certain visa categories in the US will need to independently verify their work authorisation before applying.

## Timeline of the programme

The Summer 2026 Fellowship will begin in June 2026 and run through August 2026. Google recommends that all fellows be in-person in Washington DC; however,

## Analysis suggests...

facility and the school building.

Satellite imagery from 2013 showed that the school and the IRGC base were once part of the same compound. But images from 2016 revealed that a fence had been erected to separate the school from the rest of the base, and that a separate entrance to the school had been built. In December 2025, imagery showed dozens of people in the school's courtyard, apparently playing in what appears to be a court for ballgames. N.R. Jenzen-Jones, a munitions expert and the director of Armament Research Services (ARES), told CNN that the satellite imagery and videos "paint a picture of multiple simultaneous or near-simultaneous strikes" hitting both the IRGC compound and the school.

Initially, speculation swirled online that the blast at the school could have been caused by misfiring Iranian air defenses, as the IRGC tried to repel incoming air strikes.

## CBSE class...

tion paper sets appeared to contain the wrong QR code.

However, CBSE clarified that the issue does not indicate any breach of exam security.

"It is hereby confirmed by the Board that the question papers are genuine. The security of the question papers remains uncompromised," the statement said. While asserting that the authenticity of the question paper is not in question, the board added that it has taken the matter seriously. Authorities are examining the issue and necessary steps are being taken to ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future.

The clarification came amid heightened scrutiny of board examinations, where even minor irregularities can quickly trigger widespread concern among students and parents.

The issue was also raised by Congress's Kerala unit, which shared a student's video on X, sharing the story.

"The QR code on the CBSE 12th Standard Mathematics question paper to a Rickroll video on YouTube.

All institutions are under the control of Modi slaves, who are not qualified to run these institutions.

This is purposeful destruction of India by OG CIA agent and his gang," the post said. Rickrolling is an internet slang term for a prank where a user clicks a link disguised as something appealing but is instead directed to the music video for Rick Astley's 1987 hit, Never Gonna Give You Up.

# Canada and India launch joint innovation and talent push



■ EJ - Agency

According to a Canadian government release, the new strategy, jointly introduced by Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada and representing more than 20 Canadian institutions, is built on four pillars: embedding Canadian capability in India's priority sectors, translating knowledge and talent into economic outcomes, rebalancing the talent relationship, and delivering results quickly. "This strategy includes 13 new agreements on research, hybrid campuses, and AI centres of excellence. It will create new opportunities for students and researchers, drive economic growth, and strengthen the ties between our two countries," said Anita Anand, Canada's minister of foreign affairs, who was in Mumbai to witness the agreements being signed.

The 13 MOUs signed between Canadian and Indian universities include agreements between the University of British Columbia and O.P. Jindal Global University to facilitate student and faculty exchanges and research.

They also include a nursing dual degree program between Dalhousie University and SRM Institute of Science and Technology supporting a potential pathway to nursing practice in Nova Scotia; and a collaboration between the University of Toronto's Temerty Centre for AI Research and Education in Medicine and the Indian Institute of Science, which will support a centre of excellence (CoE) in AI research and talent development.

Further initiatives include an innovation campus involving Dalhousie University, the Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati and the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Tirupati, alongside an AI CoE led by McGill University to support joint research and talent development between India and Canada.

## CBSE class XII Math's exam paper QR code leads to song, board says paper security uncompromised

■ EJ - New Delhi

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Tuesday assured that the Class 12 Mathematics question paper was genuine, after a QR code printed on some question papers led to the music video of Never Gonna

The strategy will also facilitate up to CAD\$25 million in funding for more than 274 scholarships for Indian students in Canada, administered through the University of Toronto.

During talks, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the Indo-Pacific Scholarships and Fellowships for Canadians program, under which more than 85 Canadian graduate students and researchers from 11 institutions will travel to India to collaborate with local academics in areas including AI, climate resilience and clean hydrogen.

Moreover, an MOU was signed between India and Canada to promote collaboration and exchanges in the performing and visual arts, music, books, entertainment technologies and other creative industries. An agreement between the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Mitacs will also expand the Globalink Research Internship program, enabling around 300 Indian undergraduate students each year to undertake research placements at Canadian universities.

The spate of MOUs follows a delegation visit by 21 Canadian institutions led by Universities Canada earlier last month, which met Indian universities, government and industry leaders to discuss partnerships.

Carney's visit to India from February 27-March 2, marking 79 years of bilateral ties, also encouraged offshore campuses for Canadian institutions in India, and the revival of the Joint Working Group on Higher Education.

"This is a new chapter in a very important relationship, and it demands a new partnership on higher education and research, which is vital to the future of both our countries," said Gabriel Miller, president and CEO of Universities Canada, which will lead development of the strategy with partners in India and aims to present recommendations within six months ahead of the next G20 meeting.

Give You Up by British singer Rick Astley.

In a press release issued on March 10, the board acknowledged the concerns of security breach that had emerged after students were 'rickrolled' by misprinted QR codes on the paper.

QR codes are included on CBSE

Canada's strong pivot to transnational education and research comes as the country has seen a record over 60% dip in new international student arrivals, particularly affecting its largest source market, India.

Though over 400,000 Indian students were reported to be studying in Canada as of 2025, high study visa refusals and processing delays following policy changes aimed at reducing international students are now prompting a shift from "volume-driven student mobility to structured academic collaboration" with India.

Carney's visit focused on several areas beyond education, including a 10-year nuclear energy deal and progress toward a free trade agreement by the end of 2026, as Canada and India seek to repair ties after both countries expelled diplomats following allegations by the Canadian government that Delhi was linked to the killing of a known Canadian Sikh activist.

Under Carney, the tone has shifted, with the Canadian government stating it sees no current link between India and violent crimes or threats in Canada, at a time when it is seeking to reduce dependence on the US amid an unpredictable Trump-led administration.

"There have been more engagements between the Canadian and Indian governments in the last year than in more than two decades combined. This is not just a renewal of the relationship, it is the expansion of a valued partnership with new ambition, focus and foresight. A partnership between two confident countries charting our own course for the future," stated Carney in his remarks at a joint briefing with Modi.

"The most ambitious projects in clean energy, the digital economy, biofuels and the next generation of AI talent are all here in India. Canada shares this ambition and purpose."

question papers as a security feature designed to help verify their genuineness in case of suspected breaches.

According to the board, the Mathematics exam for Class 12 was conducted as scheduled on March 9, and only a few ques-

>> Contd. p.4..

# Trump visa changes squeeze rural schools relying on int'l teachers

■ EJ - Washington

Like many school systems facing teacher shortages, South Carolina's Allendale County has looked overseas for help. A quarter of the teachers in the rural, high poverty district come from other countries.

The superintendent praises the international educators — mostly from Jamaica and the Philippines — for their skill and dedication, but she is preparing to lose some of them as the Trump administration reshapes visa programs.

Facing higher visa sponsorship costs and uncertain immigration policies, Superintendent Vallerie Cave said it feels too risky to extend some international teachers whose contracts are up or bring on others. "Some of my very best teachers are having to return to their countries," Cave said.

For rural schools especially, President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown is pinching a pipeline used widely to fill staffing shortages that worsened during the COVID 19 pandemic. Rural districts can struggle to attract American teachers to remote areas that lack plentiful housing, shopping and services such as health care, especially for lower salaries than some bigger districts offer. Cave is hoping to hire local teachers to fill the gaps left by several teachers' impending departures. If she can't, she may expand the district's use of online teachers. Elsewhere, districts are consider-



ing hiring uncertified instructors, combining classes or dropping course offerings.

In September, the White House announced a \$100,000 fee on H-1B visas, which allow highly skilled foreign workers to be employed in the US. The Trump administration argued American employees were being replaced, particularly in highly paid roles at tech companies. Critics have argued the fee will worsen labor shortages outside of tech. More than 2,300 people with H-1B visas work as educators across 500 school districts, according to an analysis by the National Education Association teachers union. In a December lawsuit challenging the fee, a coalition of 20 states argued that the fees would effectively prevent school districts from hiring international teachers.

The Trump administration has provided a form to request exemptions on the fee, and educa-

tors and advocacy groups have argued it's in the public's interest for teachers to be exempted. Teachers also can come to the US on the more common J-1 visa, which allows short-term stays for cultural exchange programs and is not subject to the new fee.

In rural Oregon, the Umatilla School District recruited two teachers from Spain for math and science instruction. The teachers were "phenomenal," Superintendent Heidi Sipe said, but they returned home in the summer.

"Unfortunately, due to some things at home and then the stress of the unknown, they did choose to go back," Sipe said. The district did not look for international candidates to replace them because of the cost and uncertainty, but it was able to advertise early and found local candidates for the openings, Sipe said.

## 43 Medical Colleges added; 11,682 MBBS seats cleared for 2025-26: Health Ministry

■ EJ - New Delhi

The Union government has approved 11,682 MBBS seats and 8,967 postgraduate (PG) seats for the academic year 2025-26, while 43 new medical colleges have been established across the country, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare informed the Rajya Sabha.

In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Health

Anupriya Patel said the data was shared by the National Medical Commission (NMC). The figures include seats in medical colleges as well as institutions such as AIIMS and other Institutes of National Importance (INIs).

According to the ministry's data placed in Rajya Sabha, India's medical education capacity has expanded significantly in the past decade. The number of

medical colleges has increased from 387 in 2014 to 818 at present. During the same period, UG (MBBS) seats rose from 51,348 to 1,28,976, while PG seats increased from 31,185 to 85,020.

The ministry said the NMC processes applications from medical colleges every year for setting up new institutions and

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