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INDORE

Grand Central

An IIT and an IIM in the same city is just one reason for Indore becoming a melting pot of students

By Ishani Duttgupta

Vidhi Jain recently moved from Udaipur to Indore with her mother to enrol as a first-year undergrad student at Shri GS Institute of Technology and Science (SGSITS). Jain is studying for a bachelor's in computer engineering at what is one of Indore's oldest educational institutions, set up back in 1952.

"I selected this college not just for the quality of education, but also because it scores high on the employability index with students getting 100% placements at the best of corporates. Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities too are focus areas," points out Jain.

SGSITS achieves almost 100% placement for undergrad students in the third year, claims Rakesh Saxena, director of the institute and a professor in the electrical engineering department. "There are a lot of small and medium scale industries in Indore and we have also linked up with other industrial hubs in MP such as the Pithampur auto cluster through our industry partnership cell for internship, training and placement of our students," Saxena told ET Magazine.

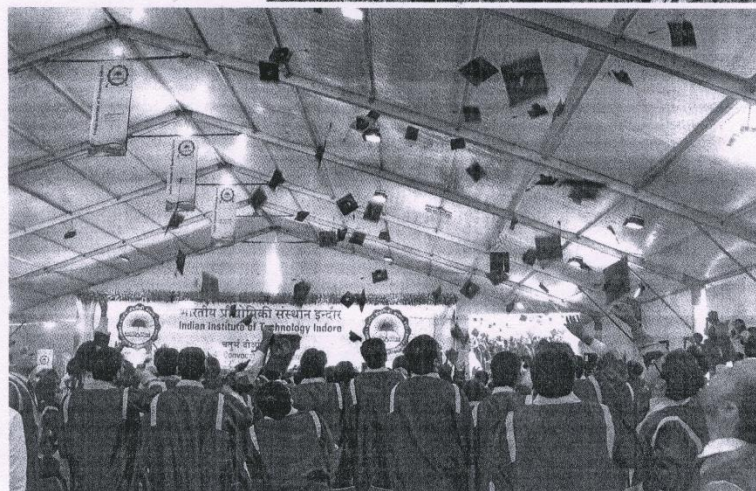


"IIT & IIM Indore are collaborating in the area of entrepreneurship and jointly organise an annual entrepreneurship summit which is likely to lead to discussions, collaborations and even setting up of joint start-ups by the students"

Dr Rishikesh T. Krishnan, IIM-Indore director

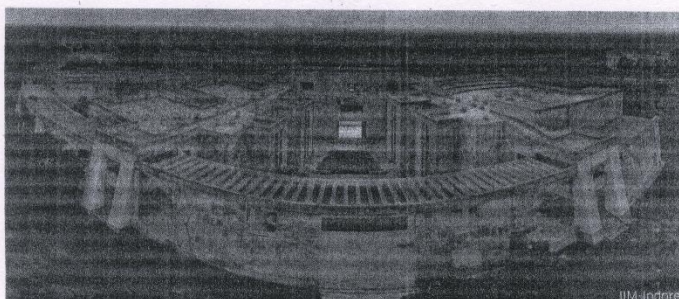
Indore is pretty much a melting pot when it comes to student mix, as Ramesh Balaji from Bengaluru will testify. A third-year computer science student at the Indian Institute of Technology-Indore (IIT-I), Balaji points out that even in the student accommodation on campus there aren't two people from the same city; the hostels are styled as apartment units (in the first year) and individual two-storey terrace cottages (for the other years), each unit shared by around eight students. The campus itself is a model of regional – and gender – diversity, with a few exchange students from overseas as well. "Indore is often referred to as mini Mumbai. The diversity is not just limited to our campus but extends to the city as well," says Balaji. "Some of the top institutions in the country are located here including Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT), which has one of the best research facilities in the country and an MoU with IIT-I. RRCAT hosts a good number of our students for projects and internships," Balaji says. A bonus at IIT-I: undergrads can pursue a minor degree along with a major with unconventional courses such as 'history of early cinema' and 'Gandhian thought'.

And then there's the Indian Institute of Management (IIM). In the first week of November when Rajesh Agrawal, deputy mayor of London for business, visited IIM-I as part of British PM Theresa May's team, he was upbeat about the city's growth as an educational hub. Agrawal, who is from Indore, studied business administration at the city's Prestige Institute of Management and Research, before moving to Britain.



STRENGTH: A cosmopolitan mini-Mumbai in the middle of India	WEAKNESS: Poor connectivity isolates students from other educational hubs
THREAT: Lack of coordination between top institutes	OPPORTUNITY: An IIT and an IIM in the same city

FROM THE STUDY:
 Indore is among the top 10 Indian cities in overall rankings as well as among the education magnets that attract students from other places



Indian Institute of Te



Today, Indore is the only city in India that's home to both an IIM (established in 1996) and an IIT (2009) which, for good measure, are within 25 km of each other. IIM-I, located atop the picturesque Prabandh Shikhar hill, is among the first six IIMs set up in India; it now has 1,600 students on roll on campus. Add to this the IIT, a central university (Rajiv Gandhi Proudyogiki Vishwavidyalaya), a state university (Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya) and a host of medical, engineering and management colleges, and it's easy to see why Indore is a hub of a diverse student population.

Powerhouse Performers

A question that haunts people like IIM-I director Rishikesh T. Krishnan is whether Indore is making the most of the IIT-IIM combo, along with the advantage of being centrally located. "To create synergies and a common

ecosystem a lot of efforts are needed and it's not something that happens on its own. The new IIT campus is finally ready but almost an hour away from here. To overcome the physical distance, we need to look at options such as doing courses at each other's institutes," Krishnan told this writer when she caught up with him at his office on campus.

On the bright side, the two premier institutions are collaborating in the area of entrepreneurship and jointly organise an annual entrepreneurship summit called i5. The endeavour is to get IIM and IIT students to collaborate and even startup together.

Aakash Billawa, a member of IIM-I's entrepreneurship cell, is part of the team that runs JAM, a non-profit restaurant for students on campus. "While our target is to only break-even, we still run a professional business set-up," says Billawa, who is from Mumbai where he worked in the private sector before joining IIM-I.

IIT-I has been reaching out in a big way to other academic institutions, non-governmental agencies and industry in the region with its teaching and research resources. "We have an active industry-academia culture in the form of an annual conclave where stalwarts of industry are invited to interact with faculty and students. There's also an innovation centre, which facilitates exchanges that lead to placements and internships and research partnerships for our students and faculty researchers," IIT-I director Pradeep Mathur said. ■