Canadian universities line up for India

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Toronto: Many Canadian universities and colleges are likely to enter India after the Indian parliament passes a bill to allow foreign educational institutions to set up independent campuses in the country. Currently, universities and colleges from Canada and the US run 26 collaborative projects in India with local universities and colleges.

"The Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce, the Canada-India Business council and we have been lobbying Canadian universities to open campuses in India," Husain Neemuchwala of the Canada-India Business Council education committee told media, labelling the proposed bill a "welcome step". The Indian cabinet on Monday cleared a proposal to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India, a step that is expected to provide quality education in the country and reduce the flow of Indian students abroad.

"This is a milestone, which will enhance choices, increase competition, and benchmark quality," Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said after a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Because of visa and other problems, less than 4,000 Indian students come to Canadian universities and colleges each year, as compared to 80,000 going to the US, 50,000 to Britain, and 40,000 to Australia.

"The Indian bill solves all these problems. Now Canadian universities will go there and impart world-class education. All visa hassles will be over for Indian students," said Husain who was part of an education mission by the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce to India last month.

Quite a few Canadian universities already run programmes in India. Among these, Toronto-based York University is the coordinating institution for education linkages and exchange programmes with various Indian institutions.

"York has just started its prestigious Schulich MBA programme in India in collaboration with the S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research in Mumbai. Under this programme, students will complete the first year in Mumbai and then come to Toronto to complete the second year. So Indian students will have the best of both the worlds," said Husain who also heads the Toronto-based International Centre for Education.

Apart from going to India with ministerial delegations and educational missions, presidents of many Canadian universities have undertaken independent trips to India to sign exchange agreements with universities and research institutions.

Roseann O'Reilly Runte, president and vice-chancellor of Carleton University, was in India last week to seek support for its Centre of Excellence for Indo-Canadian Relations. "As India continues to be a significant player on the world stage, it will become more important to develop greater expertise in the Canada-India relationship," she said during her India trip.

Well-known Canadian colleges such as Sheridan, Pickering and Quest here are also eager to forge ties with India through collaboration and campuses. (IANS)