

## Shanghai rankings 2016: poor performance of Indian universities

Shanghai rankings of global universities<sup>1</sup>, publisher of Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), started its activity in 2003. Balaram wrote an editorial<sup>2</sup> with a clear warning to our educational planners: 'I found the Shanghai rankings provocative and disturbing. It is clear that academic ambience of our large institutions is decaying. The government which funds these institutions, and the bodies that govern them need to take a long, hard and critical look at the higher education scene in India.' I published a letter<sup>3</sup> in response to this editorial.

A critical analysis of Shanghai rankings 2016 reveals some interesting trends. Out of topmost 100 universities ranked globally, 40 belong to USA, 29 to Europe (including 9 of UK), 8 to China (including Hongkong and Taiwan), 6 each to Canada, Japan and South Korea. In comparison to 2004 rankings, USA slides down from 58 top positions to 40; European universities have moved up the ladder but retained its number at 29; both Canada and Japan improved their numbers; however, there is a quantum jump in rankings of universities of China and South Korea in 2016. In 2004, none of

the universities from China and South Korea ranked among top 100. Surprisingly, NTU Singapore occupies the 10th position in ARWU list and Tsinghua University, China is at 13th position ahead of universities from Germany and France.

What about Indian universities? In 2004 rankings, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore was ranked among the top 251–300, and IITs at Delhi and Kharagpur were both ranked among top 451–500. In 2016 rankings, IISc has shown a slight improvement by moving up to position 225, and IIT Kharagpur moving up to position 226 in ARWU. The IITs at Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur and Madras are rated with positions at 448 to 451 respectively. However, it is most disappointing that none of Indian Universities could secure a position among top 600 in the ARWU list.

In subject-wise ranking, IISc occupies a slot among top 51–75 in chemistry, 101–150 in computer science, 151–200 in science and engineering, and 301–400 in environmental engineering. Punjab University, Chandigarh occupies a slot among top 151–200 in physics. IIT Madras is rated among top 151–200 in engi-

neering. The other rankings are as follows: IIT Bombay is ranked between 301 and 400 in electrical and electronic engineering but in material engineering, IITs at Delhi, Kanpur, Bombay and Madras are ranked together at 401–600. But none of Indian universities (Central, State, Private and Deemed) occupies any position in overall or subject-wise ranking; except Punjab University. In the subjects of economics, life sciences and medicine, India's track record is so poor that none of our institutions qualified in top 200 of the world. Indian universities and IITs have lost ground in ARWU rankings to China, South Korea, Singapore, Hongkong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Brazil.

1. <http://www.ShanghaiRanking.com/>
2. Balaram, P., *Curr Sci.*, 2004, **86**, 1347–1348.
3. Virk, H. S., *Curr. Sci.*, 2004, **87**, 416.

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## Coping with disability – suggestions to institutions

The Guest Editorial on 'Rare diseases need our attention' by Katoch *et al.*<sup>1</sup> struck a sympathetic chord with me, as I have been physically disabled during the last couple of years on account of a rare progressive neuro-degenerative disorder. I have received kindness and support in abundant measure from doctors who have treated me, colleagues, students and, of course, family. That has enabled me to continue with my scientific and related academic activities, although at a slower pace. In spite of the strong protective ring around me, the physical and emotional stress resulting from the disability has been substantial. The stress would be much worse for those disabled persons who are not fortunate to have a protective ring like I have.

I endorse the suggestions made in the guest editorial. In addition, I would like to suggest the following simple measures to help persons with certain kinds of disabilities.

1. Provide ramps with rails wherever necessary.
2. Provide rails, preferably on both sides, wherever there are steps and inclinations.
3. Install lifts in buildings with two floors or more. Simple lifts are nowadays available, which need not be part of the main structure.
4. Provide copiously grab bars and brackets in bathrooms, toilets and passages leading to these facilities.

I must confess that I became aware of the problems of disabled only when I became one. However that should not discourage me from sensitizing others about the problems. I hope authorities in scientific and educational institutions and the concerned central agencies would sympathetically consider the suggestions given above, and indeed those made in the guest editorial.

1. Katoch, V. M., Majumder, P. P. and Bhat-tacharya, A., *Curr. Sci.*, 2016, **111**, 7–8.

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