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Yale to expand academic programs about India



By John Christoffersen, Associated Press Writer | November 17, 2008

NEW HAVEN, Conn. --Yale University will expand its academic programs on the culture and society of India, saying its \$75 million plan will make the school a leader in the study of the country and surrounding region.

The plan will foster India-related study in liberal arts and sciences, as well as Yale's professional schools of architecture, environmental studies, law, management, medicine, public health and nursing.

"The rise of India since the 1990s into a nation of global economic and geo-political consequence compels Yale to provide a deep and rich curriculum covering all aspects of Indian civilization -- its languages and literatures, religions, and history, as well as its politics, economics, and society," Yale President Richard C. Levin said in a statement Monday. He announced the plan at a ceremony in New Delhi.

Yale said its effort would include intensified student recruitment, faculty and student exchanges, research partnerships and leadership education.

Among those who have contributed to the effort, officials said, is Nandan Nilekani, co-chairman of India's Infosys Technologies Ltd. He has been active on Yale's President's Council on International Activities, the school said.

The plan stemmed from a recognition of India's growing importance in world affairs as well as interest on the part of students and donors, said George Joseph, assistant secretary for international affairs at Yale.

"It is very much a broad-based demand for this kind of program," Joseph said.

Yale now has about 10 faculty whose principal focus is South Asia and about 40 courses focused on the region, Joseph said. He predicted those numbers would double in the next few years.

The plan does not call for a specific degree in Indian studies, but students would be able to have a focus on India or South Asia, Joseph said.

Yale has about 130 students from India, the second largest contingent of international students behind China, Joseph said.

Other universities also are stepping up their ties to India. Duke University President Richard H. Brodhead last month made the first trip to India by a Duke president, and Duke's business school announced a plan in September to create a network of campuses around the world, including New Delhi, to conduct research and teach. Duke said that plan would be expanded to other parts of the university.

Many universities are limiting their efforts to recruiting students from India, study abroad programs or a special focus by one or two departments, Joseph said. Yale's effort will be university-wide, he said.

"I can't think of anybody that has made this kind of big investment," said Madeleine Green, vice president for International initiatives at the American Council On Education. "This is a huge effort." ■

