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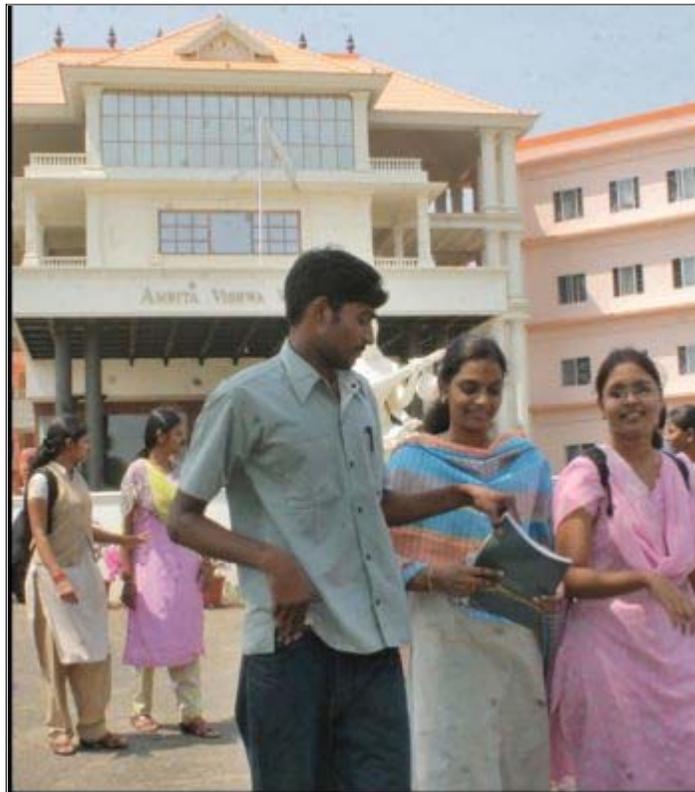
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SPECIAL FEATURE: COIMBATORE

Options in education

K. ANANTHAN



At the Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Coimbatore.

IN the field of education, Coimbatore presents a mixed picture: reputed universities, a ranked deemed-to-be university, some deemed universities that are apologies for institutions of learning, efficiently run aided engineering colleges, and self-financed engineering colleges with pathetic infrastructure.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) is on a mission to increase the production of pulses in the State. "We have worked out a scheme," said Murugesu Boopathi, the Vice-Chancellor. Among the university's other accomplishments are a memorandum of understanding with Cornell University, U.S., to enable its postgraduate students to get a dual degree and another with Nova Scotia University, Canada, for a dual undergraduate degree in environmental horticulture.

The Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham University, a deemed-to-be university with campuses in Bangalore, Coimbatore, Kollam (at Amritapuri), Ernakulam and Mysore, has been placed in the highest "A" category by the National Accreditation and Assessment Council. The university offers more than 120 courses ranging from engineering and medicine to arts

and science programmes. P. Venkat Rangan, its Vice-Chancellor, said the university, was collaborating with the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in an e-learning project awarded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the two institutions.

Under another project of the Ministry, Amrita University and IIT Delhi are creating virtual laboratories for colleges that do not have well-equipped science laboratories. Amrita University is working with IIT Kanpur on creating a system of resource planning, which will enable universities to manage their administration well. Amrita University plans to start a five-year integrated law programme at its Coimbatore campus. The university is collaborating with the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, under which a student can graduate with an MBA from Amrita University and an M.S. from SUNY. Students can also graduate with an M.Sc. from Amrita University and an M.S. from SUNY in Embedded Systems.

Mechanical and civil engineering were the most preferred courses in the last two years. However, electronics and communication engineering is back in the lead this year, according to V. Selladurai, Principal, Coimbatore Institute of Technology. The CIT is an aided institution affiliated to Anna University, Coimbatore and was founded in 1956 by the V. Rangaswamy Naidu Educational Trust to provide education in science, engineering and technology.

The CIT, in collaboration with IBM, has opened a centre of excellence in high performance computing. Under an MoU between the CIT and Robert Bosch India Limited (RBIL), the RBIL staff will teach auto electronics to CIT students. The CIT has signed MoUs with Texas Tech University and Oklahoma State University in the U.S., for the CIT faculty to do research and consultancy work there. The institute is also collaborating with IIT Bombay in embedded and real-time systems to develop robots and their control.

With the PSG Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Coimbatore, celebrating its silver jubilee this year, the institute is concentrating on research, especially interdisciplinary research. "We want more and more students to enrol for PhDs and take to teaching," said C.R. Swaminathan, chief executive, PSG Institutions.

If GEM (Gastro-enterology Medical Care) Hospital and Research Centre earned worldwide recognition by pioneering keyhole surgeries to combat cancers of the pancreas, food pipe, liver, stomach, windpipe and rectum, it is now on a different wicket – obesity reduction surgery. "We have done 500 surgeries to reduce obesity. The patients' weight will slowly come down," said Dr C. Palanivelu, chairman of the hospital. "We are now doing surgical cure for diabetes," he said. GEM Hospital and Research Centre offers super speciality courses in gastrointestinal surgery, medical gastroenterology and minimal access surgery.

K.P.R. Mill, Coimbatore, one of the largest companies in India in manufacturing knitwear, founded two colleges near Coimbatore in 2009: the KPR Institute of Engineering and Technology, and the KPR School of Business. "We are planning to set up a job-oriented institution like an ITI. Ultimately, we want to become a university," said D. Dhanapal, chief executive officer, KPR Educational Institutions.

T.S. Subramanian

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