

University of Peace seeks potential partnerships with Indian institutes

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RECOGNISING INDIA as a key player in global efforts for maintenance of international peace and security, University of Peace (UPEACE), UN mandated university based in Costa Rica seeks potential partnerships with Indian institutes.

To invite different constituencies in India to engage more actively with UPEACE as the academic wing of the UN, a high level delegation led by the Rector of the University was here in New Delhi recently and had meetings in the ministry of human resource development and ministry of external affairs.

Talking to *FE* during his first visit to India, Dr Francisco Rojas Aravena, rector of the University, said, "We presented a concept note to the government for sponsoring 30 students from India and from SAARC countries or Least Developed and Small Island Countries to study at UPEACE. We met with the minister of human resource development Prakash Javdekar, Rakesh Ranjan (JS for International Cooperation in the HRD ministry), Manish Chauhan (JS, MEA) and JS of UGC Sandhu."

Aravena was accompanied by Mihir Kanade, head of the Department of International Law and Human Rights, and India Coordinator of UPEACE, Syed Ali.

In this regard, it is also pertinent to mention that since India is a state party to the International Agreement Establishing UPEACE, Indian students benefit from an automatic 30% tuition waiver for their studies at UPEACE.

During meetings with Vice Chancellors of various Universities including Jamia Millia, OP Jindal, and Ashoka Universities and the president and vice-presidents of South Asian University the delegates explored options for dual degree programmes, student exchanges, faculty exchanges and joint research.



Being a leader in South-South Cooperation, the government has placed significant importance to higher education, a field that lies at the heart of the mandate of UPEACE. Since the launch of the revitalisation programme in 2000, over 40 students from India have graduated from the University.

Despite this, the engagement of Indian students and scholars in the academic wing of the UN has remained low as compared to several other countries. As a result, in 2015, UPEACE launched the 'India Initiative' focusing on greater engagement with students, professionals and universities in India.

"The initiative includes the establishment of a summer school programme for Indian students at its main campus in Costa Rica, the first of which was successfully offered in June, 2016. This initiative also seeks to explore the potential areas of collaboration and cooperation within India with relevant constituencies including universities, think -tanks, foundations,

and professional organisations," said Mihir Kanade, UPEACE's very first doctorate degree holder.

The UPEACE is the academic wing of the United Nations mandated to award Master and Doctorate degrees in fields related to peace studies. It was established as a Treaty Organisation with its own Charter in an International Agreement adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 35/55 of 5 December 1980.

Headquartered in Costa Rica, it has Centres in Addis Ababa, The Hague, Vienna, and New York. China has committed to establishing a Centre in Beijing from 2018. The secretary general of the UN is the honorary president of the university.

Though the true potential of relationship with UPEACE remains untapped, India acceded to the International Agreement Establishing the University for Peace on 3 December 1981. The studio of the University is also entitled 'The Mahatma Gandhi Studio'. In the past faculty members from Benaras Hindu University, Islamic

University of Science and Technology in Srinagar, and Jamia Millia University, on International Peace Studies have been trained.

As per Article 15 of the Charter, UPEACE is mandated to offer programmes focusing on the study of peace, education for peace and human rights, leading to Master's degrees and doctorates. Since the Revitalisation Programme for the University initiated by former secretary general Kofi Annan in 2000, UPEACE has expanded its work programme substantially.

The university is offering one year master's degree programmes in several disciplines, including MA in International Peace Studies, Gender and Peace building, International Law and Human Rights, International Law and the Settlement of Disputes, Environment, Peace and development; Responsible Management and Sustainable Development; Peace Education; Media, Peace and Conflicts; online course in sustainable peace in the contemporary world.