

Nothing more tragic than closed mind

Md Asad

Nirupama's Tips To Students And Educators

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: Indian ambassador to the US Nirupama Rao fielded an array of questions from students, educators and mediapersons after her lecture on 'Education and Global Citizen: The Challenge and the Opportunity before India' here on Tuesday. Excerpts:

With primary education as a parameter, where do US and India score over each other?

There are advantages in both systems. Many of our students who go to the US for further studies have a solid foundation in Science. Americans have the ability to articulate with great confidence, to be critical and to question which helps them score over us. It would be an unbeatable mix if we have both. There's a great deal of admiration for Indian students in the US. President Obama too mentioned our talent. It has begun to register in the consciousness of Americans.

But only a minuscule of the Indian population goes



READY FOR QUERIES: Indian ambassador to the US Nirupama Rao

abroad for studies. We should be worried about the rest of the students here.

That's exactly what I was trying to communicate. These students have come to symbolize Indian education for an average US citizen. The principles of inclusiveness and equity are

important in education as much as in any other field.

How does industry help in US education?

Community colleges are a great hit. They are near industrial clusters and are well integrated with it. There's a lot of

We hope for early resolution of visa issues

Nirupama Rao says India and the US are in talks on a variety of issues:

- The US consulate in Chennai has stopped issuing visas temporarily in view of protests over the anti-Islam movie. Is there a serious threat looming? I don't know when it'll start issuing visas once again but as far as the Indian government is concerned, we're willing to give full security to the consulate and its staff.
- Indian L1 visa rejection rates are the highest in the US. IT companies are seeking more clarity... L1 and H1B visa issues have been a serious hurdle for quite some time. But we're in talks with the US government and hope to reach a favourable situation soon.

attention to skill development.

No Indian institute featured in the top 200 universities in the recent QS survey...

Yes. We need at least 3-4 institutions in that list. There's no point in breast-beating. We should find out why we're not there. We can do much more if we are open to things outside. There's nothing wrong in imitating better things and nothing more tragic than a closed mind.

What's your take on the medium of instruction debate?

In India, we have the capacity to be multilingual. UR Ananthamurthy once said he speaks Kannada in the kitchen, Tamil in the playground and English upstairs. To speak two or three languages is the characteristic of any Indian. We should retain that. My par-

ents could recite poetry in Malayalam and English but I cannot do it. We should regain the talent to think and speak in more than one language, if not to dream.

How much should children get into social media?

I don't know how beneficial it is for students. They're still growing and life cannot be expressed in 140 characters for a high-school student. I'm a bit old-fashioned. When you're growing up, there's nothing like holding a book and reading from printed paper. That's how you nurture a young mind. It's only after that you'll be able to take the right judgment and use that medium without causing damage to yourself.

Are you planning to write a book soon?

No. I wish I could.

India's youth is a killer app

Look Beyond Mere Jobs, Don't Think Small, Says Rao

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: "I am what my teachers made me."

That was Nirupama Rao speaking to a group of teachers in Bangalore on Tuesday.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of The Teacher Foundation, Rao elaborated on the subject 'Education and the global citizen: the challenge and the opportunity for India'. "My teachers awakened in me the sense of curiosity that I still possess. Schools of education should be as important as IITs. They should understand globalization. Schools should push agenda of innovation, promote critical thinking and teach ethics and the great tradition of the country," she said.

Awakening imagination of a child is what 'vidyarambh' should be about... Education should be about creating ethical, exceptional and entrepreneurial leaders.

"India's young population is a killer app which will help the country zip past China in growth. RTE is a watershed development. The challenge in RTE is not only about teaching the 3Rs but also the 3Ss—Sensitivity, security and spiritual and scientific temper. The final test of a school is the identity it creates," Rao said.

Advocating education that will create global citizens, she said students should be taught to look beyond the individualistic aim of getting a job. "We shouldn't be hostage to small

thinking. The youth should be sensitized to wider issues of environment, food security, simple living, social entrepreneurship, gender violence," she said.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Rao also recollected her college days in Bangalore and her days spent at the Cubbon Park library. To a question from the audience on what she dreamt of when she was 18 she said:

"I studied in Mount Carmel College. I wanted to join foreign service since the age of 12. Before that, I wanted to be an archaeologist. I was very fond of history. I used to live in Lucknow where my father was posted in the Army. My days there awakened my imagination. I used to read a great deal about the outside world.



ALL EARS: Teachers in rapt attention during Nirupama Rao's speech at Ten Talks, organized by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce and Teacher Foundation in Bangalore on Tuesday

During my summer holidays in my mother's ancestral house in Kerala, I did not go out to play. I used to spend my time reading. I had an uncle in Japan, from whom I used to hear about that country. I wanted to travel, to see the rest

of the world. We were not globalized then the way we are now. I was inspired to have a career in diplomacy, to know more about other countries. There were only a few magazines then, and few movies we could go for."