

# Delhi open to overseas campuses for top schools

BY RAVI VELLOOR  
SOUTH ASIA BUREAU CHIEF

**NEW DELHI:** India has no objections to its famed Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) or Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) setting up campuses overseas, including in Singapore.

"In principle, I am not opposed to it," said Mr Kapil Sibal, Minister for Human Resources Development. "The issue came up at the last meeting with IIT boards and I said as minister I am not opposed to the IITs moving out, including to Singapore."

Mr Sibal, who was at the first Singapore Symposium held here on Wednesday, was responding to a question from former Singapore high commissioner to India See Chak Mun, a popular figure in New Delhi.

Singapore has been keen to get an IIT or IIM to set up a campus on the island as part of its vision to be a global schoolhouse. However, Mr Sibal's predecessor, Mr Arjun Singh, had balked at giving the go-ahead.

That attitude has changed since Mr Sibal took over the post, and several foreign governments, including some Gulf states, are keen on getting an IIT or IIM to be located in their countries.

The Singapore Symposium, jointly organised by the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) and the Confederation of Indian Industry, was organised around the themes of infrastructure, education and governance.

Capped by an audience interaction with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, the event was widely acknowledged as a huge success and ISAS chairman Gopinath Pillai said he

intended to make it an annual affair.

Mr Lee returned to Singapore yesterday after a four-day visit to India.

India is rapidly building up its education sector to cater to the needs of its swiftly expanding economy. One evident shortage is skills. More than 220 million students pass out of the school system every year, but the current enrolment rate at the tertiary level is a mere 12.5 per cent of that cohort.

India wants to increase the tertiary enrolment rate to 30 per cent. But to do that, it needs not only new universities but also technical institutions that can cater to those who do not go to university.

"We need a whole lot of investments from abroad and we are open to foreign education providers," Mr Sibal said. "We are setting up 14 new universities. One of them

could be set up in collaboration with Singapore."

A presentation that drew rapt attention was one by Mr Philip Yeo of Spring Singapore. In 1992, when he was chairman of the Economic Development Board, he was a pioneering force behind the Singapore-built Bangalore Industrial Park, an iconic project that has since helped Singapore architects and builders find massive amounts of business in India.

Mr Yeo said he used some of the Bangalore experience, such as building multi-use structures, as he set about constructing Biopolis and Fusionopolis to position Singapore as an innovation hub with deep strengths in research as well as enterprise.

"I believe the future is in science-based enterprise," he said. "If a scientist stays in the lab, he doesn't create jobs."