



Headline: Get paid to study

Source Courtesy Of: The Times of India, Bangalore Edition

Website: <http://www.timesofindia.com>

Byline: Geetha Rao

Date: Friday, 28 Dec 2007

Singapore: How would you like to be paid to study? Ask Vibin Aravindakshan, Vinay Kumar and Sumit Gupta, Indian students in Singapore, studying at the National University of Singapore (NUS), and they'll tell you they couldn't have had it better.

All three have been granted the Singapore-MIT Alliance (SMA) fellowships, which means they get a handsome allowance every month. They pay no fees at all. Simply put, they are paid to study.

A unique scholarship from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), NUS and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is giving wings to students' dream to pursue top-notch education in premier universities.

Take Vinay Kumar, from Gaya, Bihar, who did his B Tech from IIT Kharagpur, took up teaching before he joined NUS as an SMA Fellow and is pursuing studying Computational Engineering. Ditto with Sumit Gupta, from Himachal Pradesh, who did his BE from RV College of Engineering, Bangalore, worked for two years and now studies Manufacturing Systems and Technology.

But the road to SMA was not an easy one. They braved two entrance tests by MIT and NUS before applying for the SMA fellowship. At the end of the course, they get dual degrees -- from MIT and NUS/NTU.

SMA is an alliance between three universities namely, MIT, NUS and Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, offering masters and PhD programmes. So, you get to study at MIT as well as either NUS or NTU. For the direct PhD programme, students can spend up to two semesters at MIT.

Said Sumit Gupta: "The first summer term starts in Singapore, then students leave for MIT in August to start their masters programme. After returning to Singapore they take their MIT classes from Singapore through remote/virtual classrooms developed by MIT. So sitting in Singapore, we learn from an MIT professor in the US."

But it's not an easy task for them. "It's tough because MIT emphasizes on assignments-based-courses and not examination-based courses. There has never been a class where a professor does not relate his lecture to some industry," remarks Sumit.

What's more? SMA offers a monthly allowance of 1,500 Singapore dollars for its fellows in the masters programmes; and 2,000 Singapore dollars for those in the PhD programmes. The fellowship fully subsidises the tuition fee, provides a round-trip airfare to MIT and pays an additional monthly living allowance of 1,000 US dollars for up to a maximum of 6,000 US dollars, during residency at MIT.

As Vibin and Vinay put it, "Besides studies, we have travelled a lot around here and in the US because of this."

(This correspondent was in Singapore on the invitation of Singapore Education, Singapore Tourism Board)

SMA has so far had 736 students passing out.



SMA alumni (clockwise from top): Vinay at the Student Atheneum, Sumit at a Sentosa gathering and Vibin at the SMAAC Dinner & Dance.