SINGAPORE: Singapore's undergraduates have become the biggest group of foreign interns with India's Tata Group.

The Singapore Management University (SMU) and Tata recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to encourage greater collaboration in various fields. These include opportunities for training and research for SMU faculty, who will also work on case studies in areas such as product development.

In 2007, the $47.6 billion Indian conglomerate will hire 40 students from Singapore who will join one of its 96 operating companies for their university internships. Half of them will come from SMU.

"We have the capacity to take four times more (SMU students)," said Satish Pradhan, executive vice-president of group human resources for holding company Tata Sons. "It's a question of finding the quality."

The number of SMU interns rose from six last year to 15 this year, according to Today newspaper.

"Tata had been enjoying 'increasing receptivity and warmth' in Singapore," Pradhan said.

SMU impressed the company with the "enthusiasm and momentum generated by its newness and the freshness of its people and approach", he said.

SMU was officially incorporated in the year 2000, and holds the unique position of being Singapore's first private university funded by the government. Modelled after the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, SMU is home to over 3,800 students and comprises four schools offering five undergraduate degree programmes.