For Indian students, Singapore is much more than a second home

SINGAPORE: It is the cost factor that first attracted them here for education, with the fee structure about one-third of that in the US or UK. But for Indian students, enrolled in educational institutes here, this cosmopolitan city state has become more than a second home.

"After living here for almost three years now, I have realised that it is a very safe place, safer than India. I feel extremely secure here and my parents back home do not have to worry for me," Anvi Shan, a Mumbaikar who is now pursuing a course in Hospitality and Tourism Management in East Asia Institute of Management said.

Cultural compatibility, proximity to the home-state are some of the other factors that are propelling many other students like Avni throng Singapore.

As per the 2007 records, Singapore has 86,000 students from 120 nationalities pursuing various courses here. Seventy-five per cent of the total student-population here is from foreign countries and Indian students are only second to their Chinese counterparts in numbers here.

"Initially, it was only the fees that attracted us to this place. After coming here, life seems to be so easy here. Finding an accommodation, or education loan, getting a student pass et al is not at a problem. Thanks to no red tape, we get our passports and visas renewed within minutes," Pankaj Khanna, from the Management Institute said.

"It is a good blend of the East and the West. Culture-wise the eastern part helps, while for us, the youths, Western part attracts," he added.

While there is no dearth of Indian food, culture and presence, Singapore also has a very vibrant night life, with a number of pubs and hang-out places. Some institutes like James Cook University has designated smoking zones for students in the campus itself.

No wonder, most of the students after studying in Singapore want to stay back.

Udai Joshi, a student from Singapore Management University, who is originally from Rooki, is one of them.

"As per the bond with the university, three-year work in Singapore is mandatory. It is only after the completion of our education that interest would start accumulating on the loan and our jobs basically would help us to repay the same," Udai said

"Singapore being a city of possibilities I would like to stay back here even after that," he added.

Some of Udai’s colleagues like Alysha Vazirally, however, still have plans to return back to India.

"Taking the brain drain from India into consideration, I have decided that after gaining good experience and international exposure here, I would go back home."

"That ways, I would be able to do some value addition to lives of people there," she added.
Does that mean everything is hunky-dory for the Indian students here? Well, no. There are complaints too.

"I just miss the winters here. The weather here is same round-the-year, boring," Diya Nayar, who would soon graduate from James Cook University, cribbed.