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News / Magazine / India's Best Universities / We aim to make our education more inclusive

We aim to make our education more inclusive

JNU vice-chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar, an electrical engineering professor from IIT Delhi who took charge in 2016, outlines what makes JNU a centre of excellence and the challenges it faces.

Kaushik Deka 🐦
New Delhi June 21, 2019   ISSUE DATE: July 1, 2019 | UPDATED: June 21, 2019 14:47 IST

Photographs by YASIR IQBAL

J awaharlal Nehru University, or JNU, has long been the country's leading university in the general category, but has often been in the national limelight for the wrong reasons. Seen as a stronghold of Left-leaning academics, the university has in recent years become an ideological battleground with right-wing thinkers now finding a space in the JNU universe. However, politics aside, the premier institute continues its journey of academic excellence. In an exclusive interview with Senior Associate Editor Kaushik Deka, JNU vice-chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar, an electrical engineering professor from IIT Delhi who took charge in 2016, outlines what

makes JNU a centre of excellence and the challenges it faces.

Students at the JNU academic centre

Q. What makes JNU the best university in the country?

A. JNU's success is due to the fact that there is an ecosystem that promotes academic excellence by encouraging faculty members and students to explore emerging areas of research, and also, by making administrative procedures more efficient and simple.

Story in Audio

Q. JNU is the best in India, but still not high up there in global rankings. Why aren't Indian universities meeting global standards?

A. The parameters global ranking systems use are not suitable for many countries, especially for countries like India. Our universities have larger objectives than just getting into the top 100. Here we need to look at how we can make our education more inclusive and accessible while at the same time striving for excellence. Most of these ranking methodologies focus on the number of Nobel laureates a university has produced or the volume of funds it receives. The size of the corpus of some of these universities could be higher than the national budget of some countries. We cannot have such a scenario in India. Our goal should be to build an ecosystem in our universities that provides high-quality education to people who come from different sections of society.

TOP **10** GENERAL
GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES

RANK	UNIVERSITY
1	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, New Delhi
2	UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD, Hyderabad
3	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, Aligarh
4	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad
5	UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, Kolkata
6	MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, Kottayam, Kerala
7	JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA, New Delhi
8	MANGALORE UNIVERSITY, Mangaluru
9	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, Kochi
10	ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, Visakhapatnam

Story in Audio

Q. What new initiatives have you introduced since taking charge in 2016?

A. The university has expanded its academic programmes with the establishment of the School of Engineering

and Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Special Centre for Disaster Research, Special Centre for National Security Students, Special Centre for North East India Studies and Special Centre for E-learning. To contribute our bit to the campus environment and to make commuting in the sprawling campus easier, we have introduced e-rickshaws. We are constructing a new hostel to provide more accommodation to students. From this year, we have introduced a computer-based entrance examination conducted by the National Testing Agency. We have delinked the MPhil and PhD programmes to enable students to directly join PhD programmes after completing their master's degrees. We are in our 50th year-no convocation was ever held till I joined. This August, we will be holding our third convocation.

Q. How do you plan to raise the bar for JNU?

A. I often tell our faculty members that there is no room for complacency. We may be the best in the country, but we still have miles to go. One of the biggest challenges is to recruit faculty members of international standard. It's easier said than done. It's also important to include students from diverse backgrounds and geographical regions. Diversity helps students think out of the box; else their thinking gets conditioned in a particular direction. Our challenge is to make our students think differently and question the teachers. That is when new thinking and new ideas emerge. We have not done that for far too long. A student must be able to stand up in the classroom and critically question his teachers. Most teachers expect obedient students in the classroom.

Story in Audio

2 UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NO. OF PATENTS LICENSED IN THE PAST 3 YRS

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY, Guntur	3
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN, Ajmer	1

5 UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NO. OF PhDs AWARDED

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PhDs
BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, Coimbatore	4,412
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	1,862
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, Kolkata	1,529
OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad	1,437
ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, Visakhapatnam	1,267

Story in Audio

5 UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NO. OF PG COURSES

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PG

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	COURSES
ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, Visakhapatnam	119
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, Aligarh	78
JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA, New Delhi	71
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, Kolkata	66
GAUHATI UNIVERSITY, Guwahati	56

The second objective is to build infrastructure. For that, the university must raise internal resources. Depending on the government is not sufficient. Is the university doing enough to encourage its faculty to g for sponsored research? In the past three years, our sponsored research funding has gone up to about Rs crore.

Story in Audio

Another important aspect is the administrative machinery. Is the administrative ecosystem good enough to encourage faculty to go for collaborative research with the industry? There are so many bureaucratic procedures within the university. We are trying to simplify these bureaucratic hurdles by introducing technology. We are educating our administrative officials to become more pro-active while sticking to the rules. For instance, we have introduced the system of e-office, avoiding the movement of paper files. In the next one year, we are going to build an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for the entire university. People will become more accountable once the process is transparent.

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⬡5 UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NO. OF PG COURSES

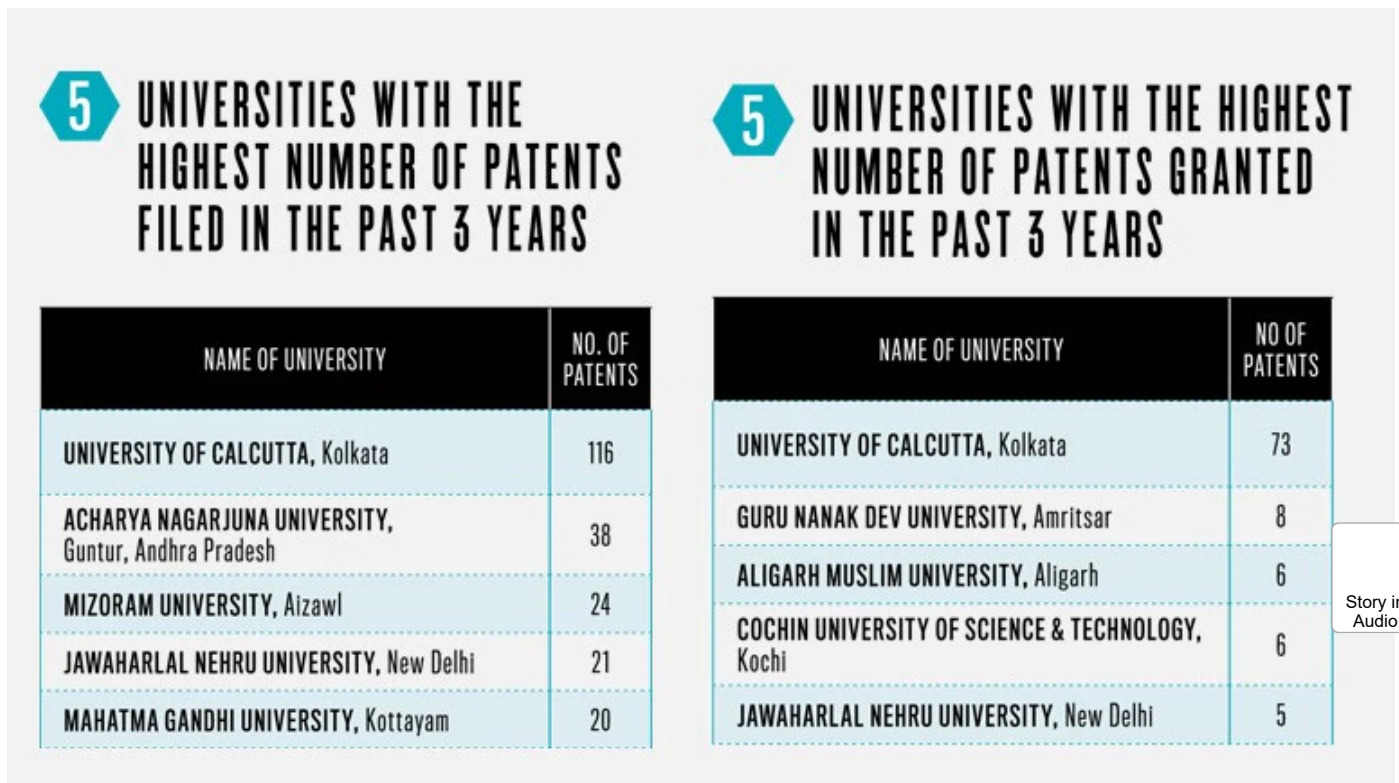| NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PG COURSES
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Story in Audio

Q. Many critics say Indian universities cannot compete with global ones in terms of research. Does JNU do things differently in terms of solution-oriented research?

A. For research, two things are required. If it is science-related, we need to build the infrastructure. That's a long process. The second thing is choosing the right candidate. There are many people who want a PhD but may not be inclined towards research. They may want to enrol for a PhD because of peer pressure or for better job opportunities. So, during the time of selection, we must spend enough time with the candidate to find out if he or she is cut out for research. Western universities have a very thorough selection process. I'm very optimistic about the research scenario in India.

Our university is known for basic research and has won several national awards. The challenge now is to take basic research to applied research and applied research to the market. We have established a School of Management and Entrepreneurship. We have modified our IPR policy and registered a Section 8 company. Our faculty can now set up start-ups within the campus. We already have two start-ups and another seven or eight are coming up. We have identified 10,000 square feet area for this.

Our top areas of research include environmental chemistry, nano-sciences, cancer biology, infection biology, vaccine development, computational linguistics, ig data analytics, sociology, history, politics and international studies. JNU has research collaborations with major institutions within India as well as abroad. One such collaboration is with the Heidelberg University in Germany to conduct a joint PhD programme.

5 UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS FILED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, Kolkata	116
ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh	38
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY, Aizawl	24
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	21
MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, Kottayam	20

5 UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS GRANTED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO OF PATENTS
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, Kolkata	73
GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, Amritsar	8
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, Aligarh	6
COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, Kochi	6
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	5

Story in Audio

Q. You have talked about choosing the right candidate for a PhD but what about the right subject? Do we do enough socially relevant and solution-oriented research?

A. In the past decade or so, so many issues have become global in nature. It could be the water crisis, infectious diseases or climate change. When we do research, it must lead to some practical solutions to the challenges we are facing. Our research must be relevant to societal issues. This is where social scientists, scientists, doctors and technical experts must work together. For too long, we have worked in silos. That is why when we started a School of Engineering in JNU, we introduced a unique dual degree. For the first four years, a student can study, for instance, computer science or any other engineering subject. In the fifth year, he or she can specialise in Korean studies or arts and aesthetics or comparative linguistics and several such subjects. There is a rethinking on this even from the funding agencies, which are asking-what's the use of your research to society?

Q. In recent times, JNU has often been in the news for the wrong reasons. It's seen as a hub of Left intellectuals. Several media groups and right-wing activists call it the home of the tukde tukde gang...

A. Right from the time I joined, I have promoted and encouraged diverse views. Conflicting thought processes must co-exist in the university. Only then will new ideas emerge and innovation happen. In the past three years of my tenure, I have encouraged all kinds of thought processes in the university and it will continue. Any

years of my tenure, I have encouraged all kinds of thought processes in the university and it will continue. Any system, when it is used to certain processes, will resist change.

TOP 36 INDIA'S BEST GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES

OVERALL RANK 2019	NAME OF UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUC-TURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTUAL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
		208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
1	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	173.2	186.8	155	143	184.7	842.7	994.3	1,837
2	UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD, Hyderabad	160.5	164.8	145.1	113.9	157.7	742	954.8	1,696.8
3	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, Aligarh	167.5	163	138.4	99.3	156.4	724.6	969.9	1,694.5
4	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad	170.6	155.2	148.3	111.8	156.4	742.3	938.7	1,681
5	UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, Kolkata	165.2	162.3	93	88.2	188	696.7	957.4	1,654.1
6	MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, KERALA, Kottayam	158.5	173.7	132.7	115.3	115.7	695.9	931.9	1,627.8
7	JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA, New Delhi	154.2	163.1	129.5	100.1	144.7	691.6	935.1	1,626.7
8	MANGALORE UNIVERSITY, Mangaluru	146.5	163.2	125.4	87.1	156.5	678.7	921.7	1,600.4
9	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, Kochi	157.1	161.7	128.6	108.1	134.3	689.8	888.2	1,578
10	ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, Visakhapatnam	164.1	158	99.3	76	143.7	641.1	925.1	1,566.2
11	GAUHATI UNIVERSITY, Guwahati	154.9	142.8	91.6	89.2	137.9	616.4	847.4	1,463.8
12	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, Coimbatore	146.2	157.7	119	80.1	88.6	591.6	871	1,462.6

Q. Two of JNU's alumni are in the Union Cabinet. What does it mean for the university?

A. We are always proud of our alumni. They have contributed significantly in diverse fields such as politics, academics, bureaucracy and media. Last year, we decided that it is important to recognise such contributi and instituted the distinguished alumni award. So, last week, our executive council decided that in our nex convocation in August, we will honour Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and S. Jaishankar with the distinguished alumni award. We are in the process of identifying many more such contributions.

Story in Audio

Q. The draft National Education Policy 2019 is out. How do you think it will impact university education in the country?

A. The National Education Policy 2019 is a very comprehensive document. But the challenge lies in how we work out a timeline and action plan to implement the same. This is where academicians, universities and higher educational institutes should come forward. We expect the government to do everything. Can't the universities take the initiative and tell the government this is what we want to do? Often we seek greater autonomy. But when autonomy is granted, we don't make enough use of that.

Q. What are the three qualities that you seek in a student aspiring to get into JNU?

A. Keep that flame of curiosity burning within you. That's the first ingredient. Develop the habit of critical thinking. And, finally, explore your potential to the fullest. Even though we may know what our inner potential is, we often don't function to the fullest of our potential.

BEST GENERAL UNIVERSITY / GOVERNMENT   JNU

TOP INDIA'S BEST GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES

TOP 36 INDIA'S BEST GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES

OVERALL RANK 2019	NAME OF UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTUAL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
		208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
13	THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN, Bardhaman, West Bengal	154.4	133.9	120.3	57.2	152.3	618.1	844.2	1,462.3
14	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh	140	154.1	127.9	83	127.3	632.3	816.9	1,449.2
15	UNIVERSITY OF KERALA, Thiruvananthapuram	161	162.3	139.2	66.9	65.3	594.7	852.3	1,447
16	TAMIL NADU AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Coimbatore	93	158.4	133.2	92.3	136.2	613.1	825	1,438.1
17	GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, Amritsar	157.8	134.2	110.5	59.4	133.4	595.3	827.2	1,422.5
18	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN, Ajmer	117.5	157.7	139.1	101.4	104.6	620.3	798.8	1,419.1
19	THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad	142.7	131.8	112.2	71.3	136.6	594.6	803.9	1,398.5
20	GOA UNIVERSITY, Panjim	131.1	129.6	112.4	93.2	132.4	598.7	782.1	1,380.8
21	MIZORAM UNIVERSITY, Aizawl	149.7	142.3	112.4	63.7	89.8	557.9	659.9	1,217.8
22	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH BIHAR, Gaya	117.8	117.9	137.4	46.4	136.5	556	661.7	1,217.7
23	ASSAM UNIVERSITY, Silchar	121.1	129.4	105.7	67.8	111.7	535.7	677	1,212.7
24	VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY, Midnapore	115.3	135	96.3	52.7	97.4	496.7	715.5	1,212.2
25	KUMAUN UNIVERSITY, Nainital	122.6	107.1	95.8	56.2	135	516.7	672.7	1,189.4
26	UNIVERSITY OF KOTA, Kota	90.2	118.8	98.2	56.7	99.9	463.8	649.6	1,113.4
27	RAJMATA VIJAYARAJE SCINDIA KRISHI VISHWAVIDYALAYA, Gwalior	87.8	124.4	135.8	65.8	107.7	521.5	577.8	1,099.
28	UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, Raichur	86.7	147.4	119.7	53.5	89.7	497	514.6	1,011.
29	MAHARAJA SURAJMAL BRIJ UNIVERSITY, Bharatpur	81.1	103.7	95.2	44.8	83.2	408	514.9	922.9
30	PROF. JAYASHANKAR TELANGANA STATE AGRICULTURE UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad	96	130.4	128.4	55.1	137.5	547.4	354.8	902.2
31	JUNAGADH AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Junagadh, Gujarat	104.7	146.6	106	101.4	105.9	564.6	319.3	883.9
32	DR Y.S.R. HORTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Venkataramannagudem, Andhra Pradesh	85	122.1	114	45.3	143.4	509.8	307.9	817.7
33	VIJAYANAGARA SRI KRISHNA-DEVARAYA UNIVERSITY, Bellary	65.3	115.6	95	45.2	80.7	401.8	378.2	780
34	BABA GHULAM SHAH BADSHAH UNIVERSITY, Rajouri, J&K	76.4	132.2	115	70.5	88.4	482.5	254.8	737.3
35	KARNATAKA FOLKLORE UNIVERSITY, Gotagodi, Karnataka	72	119.8	100.6	85.8	98	476.2	253.7	729.9
36	INDIRA GANDHI UNIVERSITY MEERPUR, Rewari, Haryana	51.2	75.5	61.3	23.2	34.9	246.1	47.4	293.5

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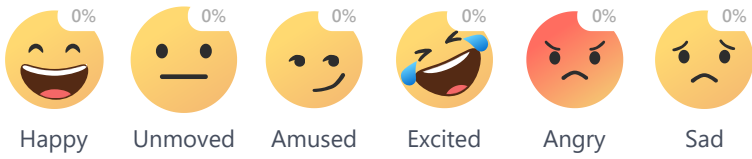
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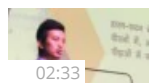
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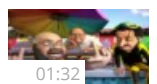Watch: Rajasthan netas blame social media, TVs and mobiles for rapes
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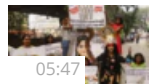
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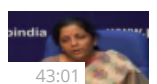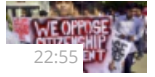Citizenship Bill dangerous, not in interest of people of Sikkim: Bhaichung Bhutia
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