

'Brand Canada' needs working on

AJIT JAIN
in Toronto

Indian High Commissioner R L Narayan was among the keynote speakers at a high-profile symposium titled 'Canada-India: A Synergy in Education', organized by the Canada-India Business Council July 19.

"Education is an important area, an area where more can be done, and more needs to be done by India and Canada," he noted. Narayan mentioned that, of the 125,000 Indian students who go abroad each year for higher education, a small percentage comes to Canada. He attributed this to lack of promotion and branding by Canada.

Last year, 5,400 Indian students came to Canada; in contrast around 36,000 Chinese students were admitted. The difference in numbers could be attributed to the slow processing of students visa applications in India. "Student visas may be another factor," Narayan said. "We do tell the Canadian government about it and they are trying to improve the situation."

Jean-Phillippe Tachdjian, Deputy Director and Trade Commissioner, International Education and Youth Division, said 35 percent of students visa applicants were granted visas.

Jennifer Donald, analyst, International Division, at the Immigration Department, who also participated in the symposium, said 40 percent student visa applications were approved.

But symposium organizers claimed the rejection rate was 84 percent, which means only 16 percent of Indian student applicants who want to study in Canada receive their visas.

Narayan referred to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's recent visit to India where a large number of academics formed part of his delegation and signed a number of MOUs with Indian universities.

One such MOU, he said, was the 'Maharashtra-Goa-Ontario' agreement that deals with the exchange of 50 students — 25 Indian students will now come to study in Ontario universities and 25 Ontario students will study in universities in Maharashtra and Goa. "It is a good start," he said. "But we would like more Canadian students to come to study in India."

He also gave an overview of Indian education. There are



■ Indian High Commissioner R L Narayan at the education symposium organized by the Canada-India Business Council

342 universities, of which 18 are central universities, 207 state universities, 13 universities of national importance (including 7 IITs), 17,000 colleges, 35 medical colleges, 49 engineering, and 8 law colleges.

Narayan said about 10 million students study in institu-

tions of higher learning and the country has 450,00 teachers.

"Brand Canada is not known in India and brand India is not known in Canada," he said. "So, we really need to work on this at various levels." However, he added, this did not imply education opportunities in Canada were not known in India.