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**ASSAM'S FLOATING CLINICS ARE SHIPS OF HOPE**  
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**HOT LEGS... LO THOMAS IS 3RD IN UNIVERSE SINGA**  
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## GIIS turns 10

Academic excellence and awards spur the Global Indian International School to expand its brand across the region

**SHEELA NARAYANAN**

**F**ROM a lone campus in Mt Sophia with barely 50 students to 20 campuses in seven countries... it has been a very busy decade for the Global Indian International School (GIIS). And resting on its laurels will have to wait as GIIS takes its brand and its vision across the region.

Recently the Global Schools Foundation (GSF) – which oversees the 20 GIIS campuses in Singapore, India, Malaysia, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Japan and Vietnam – added another Indian campus with the launch of its Whitefield school in Bangalore.

In an interview with tabla!, GSF co-founder and chairman Atul Temurnikar said the highlight of the last decade has been the school's ex-

**When you have an expansion there is a tendency to dilute on quality... for us it has been a significant increase in the quality levels.**



– Co-founder and chairman Atul Temurnikar (left) on the GIIS style of education

pansion around the region while still keeping to its vision of academic excellence: “Generally, when you have an expansion, there is a tendency to dilute on quality. But, for us, it has been a significant increase in the quality levels... to the extent we have 17 awards right now.”

The awards that he is referring to are the national and international awards received annually since 2008 from various bodies like the Asia Pacific Quality Organisation for excellence in education.

Mr Temurnikar is also very proud of the fact that the GIIS students have come out tops in the various curricula it offers from the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), CBSE International (CBSE-i) – which was launched by CBSE in 2010 to cater to overseas Indian students – the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) by Cambridge International Examinations and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB).

In the 2012 CBSE and CBSE-i Class 10 examinations, 32 per cent of GIIS students scored a grade point average of 10 (the highest) which is considered a record for the school. For the Class 12 CBSE results, 38 per cent of the student

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body scored 90 per cent and above while the IGCSE Class 10 examinations saw 75 per cent of the cohort scoring A\* and As.

Mr Temurnikar attributes this academic success to the system of core values that the GSF dubs as the MAHATMA and the Global School Nine Gems model, which is an all-round approach to nine areas of learning, from academics to developing leadership skills.

"When we started, we wanted to combine the best of East and West. The Eastern education tends to be academically rigorous while the Western education is very much focused on all round development. We said let's understand what are the best things in the Western education and what are the best things in Eastern education and put those things together in a blueprint. That's when we got Nine Gems," he said.

The model, he added, encourages GIIS students to exceed their potential in every aspect of their lives, academically as well as in their extra-curricular activities.

"Academics is very important but they learn to live with the fact that academics is not the only thing. You have to excel in sport, in co-curriculars, in speech and drama. We are stretching them out. Not everyone is a topper in all these areas, but they have been fine grained into these values. That is the way we are stretching them out," said Mr Temurnikar.

First-year IB student Anirbaan Banerjee, 15, has been in GIIS Queenstown campus for about five years and loves the environment.

"The teachers here are a lot more interactive than in my old school in India. They are always available for a discussion or helping me with a query after classes, which I thought was fantastic. And I found it easier to make friends at GIIS," he told tabla!

Fellow IB student Monisha Jain, who attends the GIIS Queenstown campus, agreed, adding that the en-

vironment is "open, interactive and non-judgmental".

Perfect 10... former president of India Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam unveiling GIIS' 10th year special logo with some of the staff and students.

PHOTO: GIIS

vironment is "open, interactive and non-judgmental".

"At GIIS I have been given many opportunities to prove myself in many competitions and leadership programmes," she said.

And the school's vision and core values have trickled down to the students' parents as well.

Mr Pramod Ponshe picked GIIS for his children when he moved from Tokyo - where he was working for 16 years - to Singapore six years ago because he wanted them to be exposed to an Indian environment.

"At the time GIIS was opening the school in Tokyo and I was quite impressed with the whole package," he said, adding that he is now impressed with how open the Singapore school's administrators are in receiving feedback from parents.

Just as crucial for the school is the belief in integrating with the local community it is based in. GIIS students have participated in major Singapore events such as the Chingay Parade, the President's Star Charity and the Youth Olympic Games. In addition, they have worked with local charitable organisations through the multiple community service efforts by the students.

GSF deputy chief executive officer Kaustubh Bodhankar said: "GIIS' one decade of establishment is a celebration of distinguished academic results of GIIS students in CBSE, CBSE-i, IB and IGCSE exams.

"As a leading school with students shining in several aspects of personality development, we take pride in our students' successes. We begin the next decade of a journey far more significant, with our students taking a lead to add to our illustrious record."

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**The teachers here are a lot more interactive here than in my old school in India... and I found it easier to make friends at GIIS.**

— First-year IB student Anirbaan Banerjee

## Stretching out across the region

DEVELOPING a niche for good affordable international schooling is GIIS' strength, according to its chairman Atul Temurnikar (below).

"The origins of the school are best described by the initiative to provide high quality education on an affordable basis," he said.

"When we look back, this particular concept seems to have a lot of niche. I would say to some extent it is similar to the consumer strategy in the 1970s and 1980s that happened with Japanese electronics."

He acknowledged that producing schools that offered a good quality international education that was affordable was a complex thing to deliver. But deliver they did; and, as the Indian community grew in Singapore, so did the demand for an affordable international school.

Mr Temurnikar and his team started with a one-school vision, but as the situation evolved and demand grew, they realised that it was a concept that could expand in the region.

For the first five years, the team focused on building the three campuses in Singapore. The first venture outside the island was in Malaysia, followed by Japan and Thailand.

"Through various community link-ups, we found out there was a good demand in Japan, Malaysia and Thailand," he said.

The foundation has also tailored the curriculum to suit the system in Japan and Thailand where local languages and culture are integrated into the system, he added.

Another thing that the school is proud of is the use of technology to link up students' parents and teachers on the GIIS network while creating its own software to track students and teachers' progress.

While Singapore remains its regional headquarters - Mr Temurnikar refused to comment on the possibility of a fourth GIIS campus in Singapore, saying "we will talk about it at a right time" - the current focus is on expanding the brand in the Asia-Pacific region.

The recent investment of \$25 million in Global Schools Foundation, which manages the GIIS schools, by the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group in July, will enable the foundation to set up more schools in Indonesia, Vietnam and

India. Mr Temurnikar accepted that the investment will help the foundation to expand faster in these regions.

There is also a separate strategy to develop schools in the Middle East, which has a high concentration of private schools, with a plan to set up 15 schools in the region.

"We have just opened an office in Dubai and we are exploring the various markets there. In particular, we are looking

at Oman, Qatar, Saudi, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait."

And next stop, the world?

"Let's see," said Mr Temurnikar, with a smile.

