

OVERSEAS OVERWHELMED

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Abroad Perspective - SARS forces school closures in Hong Kong, Singapore

School closures in both Hong Kong and Singapore were implemented immediately after the first news of SARS (or Atypical Pneumonia) broke out. Hong Kong schools are set to re-open on April 22, 15 days later than the original date of April 06. Singapore's Ministry of Education (MOE) is implementing a phased approach with junior colleges and centralised institutes opening on April 09, followed by secondary schools on April 14, and primary schools on April 16.

The Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) and Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), which take place annually from April to May, will not be affected as the Education and Manpower Bureau (Ministry of Education equivalent) requires that examination centres make arrangements for students to complete the tests. In Singapore, this year's GCE 'O' and 'A' Level Mother Tongue Language examinations will take place between June 02-09, one week later than is usual.

For more information, visit the Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau at <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.asp> and the Singapore MOE at <http://www.moe.gov.sg/sars/> •

Over The Counter - Lax standards in Japanese universities

After failing to track 205 international Chinese students, Sakata University has been rocked by scandal, and on the verge of collapse, is no longer accepting applications for next year. Sapporo University in Japan is under police investigation after an international student from China was arrested for involvement in a gang shooting. The university is suspected as being a front for the illegal flow of migrants from China, but administrators deny this and claim that they have no way of screening for fraudulent documents.

In a 2001 World Competitiveness Report issued by the Swiss Institute for Management and Development (IMD), Japan placed 49th out of 49 countries in the category of quality of tertiary education.¹ Japan's institutions of tertiary education are often said to be complacent in maintaining academic integrity. The criticism is leveled at universities and colleges that are not equipped to capitalize on the pool of international students in the face of Japan's falling birth rates.

1 <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan006061.pdf>

Sources: www.japantoday.com/e/?content=kuchikomi&id=235 and www.japantoday.com/e/?content=kuchikomi&id=235 •

Let's Go Canada - International options for Sri Lanka's students

While the 2002 UNDP Human Development Report finds that the literacy rate for Sri Lanka is 91.7%, the country is suffering from a weak infrastructure, and a higher education sector that is slow to catch up to the high number of students looking to advance their studies. According to Agnes von dem Hagen, Higher-Edge representative who was recently in Sri Lanka, university seats are limited and admission is therefore quite competitive. She spoke with one high school principal who reported that students with 75% on all their courses were still unable to gain admittance into a Sri Lankan university.

Locals who want to expand their options may decide to study at the country's international schools. These students, however, fall into the "international" rubric, and are subject to the 2% cap on university admissions for international students. Sri Lanka's international school students, therefore, are nearly 100% likely to go abroad for higher education.

The new Higher-Edge report on the Sri Lankan International Education Market "From Colombo to Kandy" is now available. For more details, visit <http://www.higher-edge.com/sl.htm> •

Globe Tipping - Traveling with a mobile

Looking to beat the cost of international calls from a hotel and bypass the hassles of shopping for international phone cards? Consider renting a cell phone for travel overseas. Certain providers (see below) will post cell phones to a customer's country of origin, while another option is to rent phones upon arrival. Most hotels can provide assistance, and some international airports will have rental kiosks.

Rental fees and per-minute charges varying widely with each provider, but 24-hour customer support is commonplace. In some cases, one may also order an adapter that would allow for Internet and fax connections. In addition, Avis and Alamo are examples of companies that are making cell phones available with car rentals overseas.

Examples of some providers are: <http://www.abroad-phone-rental.com> and <http://www.cellhire.com> •

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