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A science & tech bouquet from Belarus

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After Germany reopened its city window recently to woo top research students and young scientists from Calcutta, the Republic of Belarus has come calling with its "strong and affordable" advanced education bouquet in the fields of science and technology.

"Our universities offer highly evolved and reasonably priced courses in medical sciences. We want to explore possibilities of signing MoUs with

some local partners here to facilitate pre-selection of students for these and other streams," Oleg Laptenok, ambassador of the Republic of Belarus, told Metro on Thursday.

The envoy, in town to scout for collaboration possibilities with Bengal, met state higher education minister Satyashan Chakraborty during the day to spell out plans for "an elaborate academic-exchange programme".

The minister singled out Jadavpur University and Bengal Engineering and Science

University, Shibpur, as the possible partner institutions.

Belarus has already placed a draft proposal with the Centre for education and research programmes with Indian students through granting of mutual diplomas and certificates.

Underlining medical education as a core strength, Laptenok referred to the universities of Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev and Gomel as centres of excellence that are actively involved in training Indian students. The cost of medical studies in Belarus varies be-

tween \$800 and \$3,500 a year.

"I'm confident Calcutta can significantly contribute to the student traffic to Belarus, more so since most of our universities are attached to institutes of applied sciences. This enables students to make the transition from the academic to experimentation to the industry cycles seamlessly," the ambassador pointed out.

Not just medicine and technology, the former Soviet Bloc republic is keen to foster bilateral ties in management studies with IIM Calcutta and other

management institutes in the city. "We are among the 10 most open economies in the world and as a highly industrialised nation, need fresh blood all the time," Laptenok stressed.

Laser technology, optical equipment including night vision for the army, road construction and mining equipment, water dispersal machines and dump-trucks are other areas of possible cooperation with Bengal, according to Sitaran Sharma, honorary consul of Belarus in Calcutta. "We are also developing

our lesser-dimension shipbuilding industry and could offer Calcutta river-to-sea vessels to tackle the navigability issue precipitated by siltation," Laptenok said.

Nanotechnology, research in human genomes, integrated software development and development of agro-cities are other fields where Belarus can contribute, he added.

Belarus will hold an international science conference in India next year to mark the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.