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## Hindi calling for US students

"I am going to be incredibly sad to leave. I felt like this programme was really great at making me feel at home with the language and the culture," an American student said in a feedback form after completing a course in Hindi at the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS).

AIIS's centre for the Hindi language programme in Jaipur is expecting probably its largest batch of students from the US this year. "We are expecting 63 American students this summer. Ever since Hindi was identified as a critical-need language by the US government in 2006, there has been a significant increase in the number of American students coming here to study Hindi," said A.N. Singh, head of the Hindi language programme at the AIIS, in Jaipur.

According to the US Embassy, 151 American undergraduate and graduate students traveled to India for intensive language training in the last two years. Of them, 74 were Hindi students. Since 2006, the US Department of State has sponsored 55 American undergraduate students to study in India for a semester or a year through its Gilman Scholarship programme.

"One purpose of bringing American students to India to learn Hindi is to encourage some of them to eventually reach a level where they can teach Hindi to Americans later in their careers," said Adnan Siddiqi, Counselor for Cultural Affairs, US Embassy, New Delhi.

In January 2006, U.S. President George Bush launched the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), a plan to dramatically increase the number of Americans learning 'critical' languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Hindi, through new and expanded programmes from kindergarten through university and into the workforce.

This has also led to a dramatic increase in the teaching of Hindi in the US. The most significant development being launch, in Bush's home state, of the National Flagship Language Program in Hindi and Urdu at the University of Texas (UT), Austin.

Over \$700,000 was expected in funding in 2006-07 for the launch of the 'Nation's First Hindi-Urdu Flagship Program,' according to news archives of UT.

Purnima Mehta, Director General of AIIS, said the teaching of Hindi was catching on in the US. "Instruction is expanding and many new programmes have begun in the past decade. There is now Hindi-Urdu instruction at probably 25-30 institutions in the US. Most American Universities with South Asia centres teach Hindi. Many intermediate and advanced students come from the large centres at the University of Texas, University of California, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia University."

There is good news for Hindi teachers in India too. "Nineteen Indian teachers have traveled to the US since 2006 under the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Programme funded by the US Government. Of the 19, 15 taught Hindi in American classrooms," said Siddiqi.

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