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# The Best of Asia 2010

*It's impossible to capture Asia's diversity, but we try. Our annual guide to the region's best experiences for mind, body and soul represents a mere fraction of what makes Asia special — and every year, our correspondents realize just how much remains untold. That's how it should be. One of the best things about Asia is that we'll never get the better of it*

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## Do the Math

By JYOTI THOTTAM Thursday, May. 13, 2010



The teacher Kumar in action  
ANNE SCHONHARTING / OSTKREUZ

### Best Cram School

Patna, India

Every year, some 230,000 students take the notoriously difficult exam for a spot in one of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology, but only 5,000 pass. Last year, 30 of them came from one coaching center in Patna, capital of the impoverished north Indian state of Bihar. That may not seem like many, but for the Super 30 center, it's a pass rate of 100%. What makes that feat even more remarkable is that these students are the poorest of the poor, who would otherwise never be able to afford full-time coaching.

Super 30's founder, local mathematician Anand Kumar — who himself missed a chance to study at Cambridge because he didn't have enough money — gives full

scholarships, including room, board and travel, to every batch of 30 students he accepts. They pass a competitive test just to get into Super 30 and then commit themselves to a year of 16-hour days. Since 2003, 182 of a total 210 students have made it to one of the institutes.

For them, it's more than just an academic accomplishment. "People who never acknowledged us before started smiling and nodding at us," says Rahul, the son of a print worker and a successful Super 30 alumnus. The project has even won the notice of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who met with Kumar in February to hear his plan to launch a national program for talented rural children. In a country that has struggled to offer those students even basic education, Super 30 is an example of what's possible when human potential is tapped. It's a lesson Kumar teaches his students every day. "Education is their only weapon," he says, "to rid themselves of poverty and social exploitation."

Watch TIME's video "To See India, Take the Train."

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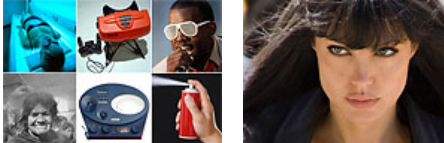
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