

# Australia falls to bottom of the Indian class

**Phillip Coorey**

Chief Political Correspondent

**WELL-HEELLED** Indians with the capacity to travel to Australia or send their children here to study think less of the country since the attacks on Indian students.

A poll of wealthy people in India found a large majority thought Australia was racist, dangerous and not worth visiting after attacks on the students were made public and reports surfaced of their bad experiences in Australia.

The poll was conducted by the agency Blackbox in Singapore and UMR Research in Australia at the end of last month. UMR surveyed Australian attitudes to the problems that foreign students faced, and found they were nowhere near as pessimistic as those of the Indians surveyed by Blackbox.



There are 430,000 foreign students in Australia, more than 90,000 of them Indian. The sector is worth about \$15 billion a year, making it one of the nation's biggest export industries.

Attacks on Indian students, some of them racially motivated, have concerned the Indian Government for more than a year and receive blanket coverage in India.

The Blackbox poll found 99 per

cent of respondents had some knowledge of the attacks, and 61 per cent said they now had a worse opinion of Australia.

The nation was rated as one of the most unpopular of 13 listed in the poll – only above Pakistan and Israel, and on a level pegging with Indonesia. The Indian respondents preferred Singapore, Britain, Japan, New Zealand, Germany, the United States, France, China and Brazil.

Blackbox found 92 per cent of Indians were worried about the attacks. Almost half (47 per cent) believed they were racially motivated, compared with 27 per cent of the Australians surveyed by UMR.

Another 23 per cent of Indians thought the attacks happened because they were "easy targets for crime"; 32 per cent of Australians attributed the attacks this way.

Blackbox found only 22 per cent

of Indians thought Australia was a safe place for foreign students; 66 per cent thought the police had not done enough to stop the attacks, and 62 per cent said they were less likely to travel to Australia.

This month the Federal Government sent a delegation to India, comprising state and federal government officials, police and higher education representatives. They visited eight cities in nine days, met ministers, education authorities, parents and local media.

A UMR pollster, John Utting, said the findings vindicated that concern, especially as those surveyed had the capacity to visit Australia or send their children here.

The UMR poll found 57 per cent of the Australians agreed that racism was a problem in Australia, but 52 per cent believed Indians were also racist, citing the caste system.