

Newspaper Clips May 22, 2015

Irani accepts resignation of SVNIT director

[Yagnesh Mehta](#), TNN | May 21, 2015, 09.06 AM IST

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/surat/Irani-accepts-resignation-of-SVNIT-director/articleshow/47366114.cms>

SURAT: Ending months of student unrest in Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology (SVNIT), Surat, HRD minister Smriti Irani has accepted the resignation of director P D Porey.

TOI was first to expose negligence of top authorities of SVNIT in approaching court against the two dismissed faculties found guilty of sexual harassment of girl students. Senior-most faculty member S A Channiwala has been made officiating director, who is holding the charge since Porey offered his resignation and went on leave. S K Jain, director of IIT Gandhinagar, has been made in-charge director with immediate effect. HRD sources said it was found that Porey was involved in helping two faculty members who were accused of sexually harassing female students.

Ministry sources also said that retrieval of data from computers of Porey and registrar H A Parmar had revealed that the two were assisting the accused - Vivekanand Mishra and Ranjeet Roy. Parmar is also facing an inquiry and is on leave following student and faculty opposition against him holding the post. What added to the chaos in the institute is the manner in which the two accused got a stay from the court after the Board of Governors in March dismissed them on finding that they were guilty. The stay on their dismissal, granted by Gujarat high court, triggered a students' strike. "There was a perception among the students that administration was not alert so the two managed to get the stay. Strike became unmanageable. Porey resigned and went on leave. But Channiwala managed to get the stay vacated," one HRD official said.

Soon after Channiwala took charge as in-charge director the institute first changed their lawyer in high court and a team of faculty perused the legal battle even in Supreme Court.

The dismissed teachers then approached Supreme Court again seeking a stay on their dismissal. After much drama institute lawyers reached the Supreme Court and argued that the stay should not be granted. SC refused to stay on the ground that the matter is still pending with high court.

The HRD ministry will now initiate the process of recruitment of a new director.

"IIT-Gandhinagar director S K Jain has been given charge of director with immediate effect. He is likely to take charge soon," in-charge director, S A Channiwala told TOI.

Kanpur drain hurdle for clean Ganga, IIT roped in

RAISING A STINK

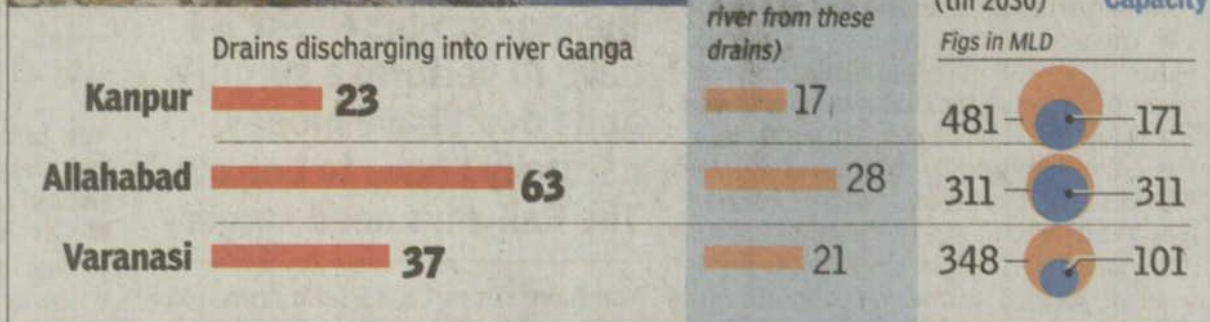
Status of drains and sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Kanpur, Allahabad and Varanasi



Drains are tapped (untreated water is not allowed to get discharged into the river from these drains)

Estimated Sewage Generation (till 2030) **Available Treatment Capacity**

Figs in MLD



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New Delhi: The Centre is now facing one of its biggest challenges in cleaning up Ganga — Kanpur’s Sisamau Nala, the dirtiest open drain of the stretch.

The drain discharges the highest amount of untreated sewage (138 MLD) into the river. The river also passes through one of the most populated and congested areas here. Since it is flanked by residential colonies and slums, the authorities at the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) are at a loss over how to divert the dirty water to the nearest sewage treatment plants (STPs).

They cannot build any new STP closer to the drain as there is hardly any land avail-

able in the area. Though they have planned to divert dirty water from the drain to existing STPs at Bingawan and Jajmau, they have yet to figure out how to divert it without affecting the local population.

Looking for a unique solution for one of the biggest challenges on the most critical stretch (Kanpur-Varanasi) of the river Ganga, the Center has asked IIT Roorkee to suggest ways to tap the Sisamau drain. Experts of the institute will examine it and recommend the best options to the ministry of water resources. Though officials have zeroed in at a solution in the form of constructing a parallel ‘pipe drain’, they will wait for the best possible suggestion from the IIT Roorkee.

Elsewhere, options of ‘rubber dam’ (cylindrical rub-

ber fabrics placed across different tributaries of Ganga) will also be explored so that polluted water from such rivers can be diverted for treatment before being discharged into the river. Such dams are currently used in different parts of the world to divert water for irrigation and sewage retention/separation.

The issue of ‘rubber dam’ was flagged by the Uttar Pradesh irrigation minister Shivpal Singh Yadav during his meeting with Union water resources and Ganga rejuvenation minister Uma Bharti here on Thursday. Bharti is learnt to have told him that her ministry is ready to set up such dams in five-six cities across tributaries of Ganga and their ‘ghats’.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com

HT.COM ND 22.05.15 P-1

Govt's edu policy to miss Dec deadline

Brajesh Kumar

NEW DELHI: The Narendra Modi government's national education policy that aims to boot out the traditional one-size-fits-all approach towards academics is likely to miss its December deadline because a process of countrywide consultations to frame the guidelines has hit a massive backlog of meetings.

Sources said the human resource development (HRD) ministry's decision to invite suggestions from the country's grassroots, like village councils, will have to conduct about 250,000 meetings, with another

6,600 engagements at the block level and a further 676 at the district level. HRD minister Smriti Irani said last month that while a few academic experts, bureaucrats and politicians decided what the nation should study under UPA rule, her government's policy would be shaped by the views of India's 275,000 village education councils.

But, let alone organising the first-level of consultations, a number of states have not even appointed nodal officers to act as intermediaries. "The states are staring at a logistical nightmare, completing the consultations will be tough," an officer said.

Hindustan Times ND 22/05/2015 P-6

Education policy in consultation jam

Brajesh Kumar

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NEW DELHI: The Modi government's national education policy that aims to boot out the traditional one-size-fits-all approach towards academics is likely to miss its December deadline as a process of countrywide consultations to frame the guidelines has turned into a logistical nightmare for states.

Sources said the human resource development (HRD) ministry's decision to invite suggestions from the grassroots means village councils across the country will conduct

about 250,000 meetings, with another 6,600 engagements at the block level, a further 3,700 for urban local bodies and 676 at the district level.

HRD minister Smriti Irani said last month while a few academic experts, bureaucrats and politicians decided what the nation should study under UPA rule, her government's policy would be shaped by the views of India's village education councils.

But, let alone organising the first-level of consultations, a number of states have not even appointed nodal officers to act as intermediaries between them

and the ministry, officials said.

"The states are staring at a logistical nightmare and completing the three levels of consultations will be a difficult task," an officer familiar with the states' preparedness for the process told HT.

While several experts have backed the overhaul of the education system, some academics view the BJP-led government's efforts with scepticism, saying it could be part of a "saffronisation" agenda to teach the superiority of Hindu values and mythology at the cost of academic accuracy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Education policy in consultation jam

NONE OF THE STATES HINDUSTAN TIMES SPOKE TO HAD HELD ANY MEETINGS ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

None of the states Hindustan Times spoke to had held any meetings on the consultation process while some of them said they were yet to absorb the complex mechanism involved.

"I will soon come to Delhi and hold a meeting with the HRD ministry. The consultations at the gram sabha level will begin after that," Neera Yadav, Jharkhand's education minister, told Hindustan Times.

Madhya Pradesh, too, said it will miss all the cut-off dates, while Manipur wrote to the HRD ministry that it will begin the panchayat-level consultations only after the state's district council polls next month.

"We hope to start work on this soon, but the April-May deadline for the panchayat-level consultations will have to be extended," said KK Singh, principal secre-

tary of higher education in MP.

Officials said while the states could have expedited the process, the fault does not lie with them entirely.

"The exhaustive consultation process involves not only holding more than 250,000 meetings, but also filtering the suggestions at each level and feeding them to mygov.in, a citizen-government engagement platform, which is quite a herculean task," a state official said.

For this to happen, states will need to devote a sizeable workforce, a difficult proposition for them, he added.

Hindustan ND 22/05/2015 P-12

आईआईटी के प्रोफेसर ने सीसीटीवी के लिए ईजाद की खास डिवाइस, 100 रुपये इंटरनेट का खर्च

घर में चोर घुसे तो ई मेल पर आ जाएगी फोटो



उत्तराखंड

रुड़की | नरेंद्र कुमार शर्मा

बैंक, ज्वेलर्स शॉप या फिर आपका घर बंद होने के बाद यहां किसी तरह की गैर वाजिब हरकत होती है तो सीसीटीवी कैमरा तत्काल उसकी फोटो खींचकर मेल पर आपको भेज देगा।

ऐसे में आप फौरन पुलिस की मदद से चोरी या दूसरी वारदात को रोक सकते हैं। बस इसके लिए

ऐसे काम करेगी डिवाइस

डिवाइस के साथ एक सेंसरयुक्त कैमरा लगाया जाएगा। डिवाइस में डोंगल से लाइन में इंटरनेट का कनेक्शन दिया जाएगा। साथ ही बिजली का कनेक्शन दिया जाएगा। डिवाइस में ईमेल आईडी फीड की जाएगी। इसके बाद डिवाइस काम करना शुरू कर देगी।

आपको अपने कैमरे को स्मार्ट बनाने के लिए एक डिवाइस की जरूरत पड़ेगी। आईआईटी के प्रोफेसर ने हाल ही में यह डिवाइस ईजाद की है। अभी

15 से 20 हजार की डिवाइस

डोंगल और सेंसरयुक्त सीसीटीवी कैमरे के साथ डिवाइस की कीमत करीब 15 से 20 हजार रुपये के बीच आएगी। इसे ईजाद करने वाले प्रो. कमल जैन ने बताया कि डिवाइस से खींची जाने वाली फोटो का साइज 10 केबी से भी कम है।

तक घरों, दुकानों, बैंकों और महत्वपूर्ण दफ्तरों में चोरी और आने जाने वालों पर निगाह रखने के लिए सीसीटीवी कैमरे लगाए जा रहे हैं

लेकिन इनकी लागत अधिक रहती है। साथ ही चोरी का खतरा बरकरार रहता है। यही नहीं किसी के आने की जांच करने के लिए रिकार्डिंग देखनी पड़ती है। इसके लिए रिकार्डर को सुरक्षित स्थान पर रखना जरूरी होता है लेकिन अब आईआईटी रुड़की के प्रो. कमल जैन ने एक डिवाइस तैयार की है जो दुकान या दफ्तर में आए व्यक्ति की हर हरकत की फोटो खींचकर आपकी मेल पर भेज देगी। शांति चोर इस डिवाइस को साथ भी ले जाए तो भी चोर की फोटो आपकी मेल आईडी पर पहुंच चुकी होगी।

Rashtrya Sahara ND 22/05/2015 P-9

आईआईटी बीएचयू बनेगा रेलवे तकनीकी विकास का नया केंद्र

विनोद श्रीवास्तव/एसएनबी

नई दिल्ली। भारत रत्न पंडित मदन मोहन मालवीय के अथक प्रयास से स्थापित बनारस हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय (बीएचयू) रेलवे के इस्तेमाल में आने वाली वस्तुओं के शोध और तकनीकी विकास का नया केंद्र बनेगा। बदलते समय

के साथ तकनीकी विकास की रफ्तार में रेलवे आईआईटी बीएचयू के साथ मिलकर शोध और तकनीक के विकास के लिए नया अध्याय शुरू करेगा। यहां शोध और तकनीक विकसित करने से बनने वाली वस्तुएं रेलवे के लिए विभिन्न कार्यों में काम आएगी। इसके लिए रेलवे और आईआईटी बीएचयू ने मिलकर

मालवीय चेयर की स्थापना की है। आईआईटी बीएचयू शोध और तकनीक विकसित करने के लिए रेलवे एकमुश्त धनराशि मालवीय चेयर के नाम जमा करेगा। इस धनराशि पर बैंक से मिलने वाले ब्याज से ही शोध और तकनीक विकसित करने का कार्य किया जाएगा।

गौरतलब है कि मौजूदा समय में वाराणसी कई मायने में महत्वपूर्ण हैं, क्योंकि बीएचयू के संस्थापक पंडित मदन मोहन मालवीय को भारत रत्न मिला है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी भी वाराणसी से सांसद हैं और रेल राज्यमंत्री मनोज सिन्हा भी आईआईटी बीएचयू से इंजीनियरिंग कर चुके हैं। लिहाजा आईआईटी बीएचयू में रेलवे के लिए उपयोग में आने वाली वस्तुओं के नवीन शोध और विकास के लिए नया केंद्र स्थापित करना भी महत्वपूर्ण है। इसके लिए रेलवे आईआईटी बीएचयू के साथ मिलकर मालवीय चेयर स्थापित करेगा। इस सेटअप के जरिए आईआईटी बीएचयू

और रेलवे दोनों अपनी विशेषज्ञता का इस्तेमाल रेलवे के लिए उपयोगी वस्तुएं बनाने में करेंगे। हाल ही में अनुसंधान, अभिकल्प एवं मानक संगठन (आरडीएसओ) में बैठक आयोजित की गई थी, इसमें इसरो और कई आईआईटी के निदेशक तथा अन्य उच्च शैक्षिक संस्थानों के विशेषज्ञों ने भाग लिया था। सभी का मत यह था कि मालवीय चेयर के

जरिए रेलवे अपनी बुनियादी जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए नई तकनीक और वस्तुओं की खोज करेगा।

इस सिलसिले में जून में मालवीय चेयर की स्थापना आईआईटी बीएचयू में हो जाएगी। आईआईटी बीएचयू की फैकल्टी, रिसर्च आदि का इस्तेमाल रेलवे करेगा। वास्तव में यह एकेडमी

■ आईआईटी बीएचयू में मालवीय चेयर के नाम से स्थापित होगा केंद्र

■ मालवीय चेयर का संचालन चेयर कोर कमेटी (सीसीसी) के जरिए होगा

और तकनीकी विशेषज्ञता का संगम होगा। मालवीय चेयर के लिए जून में एक समझौता ज्ञापन पर हस्ताक्षर किए जाएंगे। इसमें रेलवे की ओर से मालवीय चेयर के लिए बनाई गई सीसीसी के चेयरमैन और रेलवे बोर्ड के सलाहकार आरके वर्मा और आईआईटी बीएचयू के निदेशक हस्ताक्षर करेंगे। रेलवे इसके लिए पांच करोड़ रुपए मालवीय चेयर नाम से जमा कराएगा। इस धनराशि पर बैंक से मिलने वाली ब्याज की धनराशि से शोध और तकनीकी विकास का खर्च पूरा किया जाएगा। मालवीय चेयर सीसीसी के चेयरमैन आरके वर्मा के अलावा आरडीएसओ के कार्यकारी निदेशक (शोध), कार्यकारी निदेशक (वित्त) के अलावा आईआईटी बीएचयू के दो अधिकारी होंगे, जिन्हें आईआईटी बीएचयू के निदेशक नामित करेंगे। दोनों के बीच समझौता ज्ञापन (एमओयू) होने के बाद परियोजनाओं पर शोध और तकनीक विकास का कार्य शुरू हो जाएगा।

HT.COM ND 22.05.15 P-6

IIM-L launches new programme

IIM Lucknow has launched a postgraduate programme in sustainable management, which will be a two-year full-time residential course. Admissions will be done based on CAT scores, group discussion and personal interview.

The programme has 45 seats and it will be conducted at IIM Lucknow's Noida campus.

Specifically, the programme will focus on environmental, social and economic sustainability aspects; change management preparation; critical perspectives on policy and institutions; cross sector collaborations; systemic linkages among environmental, social and economic issues.

The course will help students



■ The programme has 45 seats and will focus on environmental issues and sustainability. FILE

think in a holistic way about different aspects of sustainability challenges in the business environment. Visit iiml.ac.in for details.

Smriti Irani to Attend UNESCO Conference in China

<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/smriti-irani-to-attend-unesco-conference-in-china-765091>

Beijing: HRD Minister Smriti Irani would join about 40 education ministers from across the world in China this week at a UNESCO conference to deliberate on how information and communication technologies can be leveraged to support the achievements in education sector post-2015.

Achieving universal primary education goal was one of the eight targets set by UN to be achieved by this year under the Millennium Development Goals.

The conference on 'Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Post-2015 Education' would be inaugurated by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova in Qingdao city in east China on May 23.

Effective pedagogical use of ICT to ensure quality of learning, opening up potentials of online content for knowledge creation and benchmarking and monitoring the roles of ICT in post-2015 education would be among a host of issues to be discussed at the meet, officials said.

The conference, jointly organised by UNESCO, the Ministry of Education of China and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, will also be attended by leaders of ICT industries, senior representatives of UN agencies and international organisations, eminent researchers and practitioners.

B-schools demand level playing field with IIMs

They say with the IIMs allowed to award MBA degrees instead of diplomas in management, it might jeopardise the credibility of their PGDM programmes

http://www.business-standard.com/article/management/b-schools-demand-a-level-playing-field-with-iims-115052100543_1.html

Institutes offering a postgraduate diploma in management (PGDM), the same certificate offered by the Indian Institutes of Management, (IIMs), have decided to demand a level playing field with the IIMs.

Directors, deans and chairmen of PGDM institutions of nearly 50 B-schools met in New Delhi to express their apprehension on the IIM Bill and approach the Ministry of Human Resource Development with regard to the issue.

PGDM institutions said they will face a crisis of identity. They say with the IIMs being empowered to award master of business administration (MBA) degrees instead of diplomas in management, it might jeopardise the credibility of their PGDM programmes.

"Outside and inside India, there will be doubts about credibility, validity and acceptability of these programmes among recruiters, admission seekers and foreign universities," said H Chaturvedi, Alternate President, Education Promotion Society of India (EPSI) and Director, BIMTECH.

"MHRD can think of granting Deemed to be university status to all those PGDM institutions, which fulfill the criteria for getting this status," he added.

The Bill, placed before the Cabinet and proposed to be introduced during the monsoon session by the MRHD, will allow the IIMs to offer degrees.

For the last 50 years, 300 PGDM institutions are contributing to the national economy by producing one lakh talented managers every year. In teaching, research, consultancy, executive training, these self-financed institutions are competing with IIMs. In all leading rankings of B-Schools, 75 to 80 per% positions are occupied by PGDM institutions.

Institutes that offer PGDM include XLRI, SP Jain Institute of Management and Research, TA Pai Management Institute and Goa Institute of Management.

In India, management education has two career-oriented qualifications — PGDM (diploma) and MBA (degree). MBA degrees are offered by universities or colleges affiliated to universities, while a PGDM is offered by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)-approved institutions. While the curriculum for MBA is designed by universities, for PGDM courses, it is determined by the institution concerned.

IIM directors said the idea behind an IIM Bill was to turn these institutes into statutory bodies to offer master's degrees and doctorates, instead of diplomas and fellowships. Currently, IIMs cannot award degrees, as they have been set up as societies, under the Societies Registration Act.

Degrees can only be awarded by universities and institutes such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), set up by Parliament or legislatures, and those declared deemed-to-be-universities under the University Grants Commission Act. Currently, the 13 IIMs issue certificates stating their PGDM programme is equivalent to an MBA degree.

Kanpur drain hurdle for clean Ganga, IIT roped in

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Kanpur-drain-hurdle-for-clean-Ganga-IIT-roped-in/articleshow/47378062.cms>

NEW DELHI: As the Centre moves to untangle the complexities involved in Ganga cleaning, it has now come across one of the biggest challenges of this gigantic task at Kanpur where the dirtiest open drain - Sisamau Nala -- of the entire stretch exists.

The nala not only discharges the highest amount of untreated sewage (138 MLD) into the river but also passes through heavily populated and congested areas. As it is flanked by residential colonies and slums, authorities at the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) are at a loss on what to do to divert its dirty water to sewage treatment plants (STPs).

They cannot build any new STP close to the drain as there is hardly any land available in the area. Though they have planned to divert dirty water from the drain to existing STPs at Bingawan and Jajmau, they have yet to figure out how to divert it without affecting the local population.

Looking for a unique solution to one of the biggest challenges on the critical stretch (Kanpur-Varanasi) of the Ganga, the Centre has asked IIT-Roorkee to suggest ways to contain the Sisamau drain. Experts of the institute will examine it and recommend the best options to the ministry of water resources.

Higher education policy lacks direction, say academics

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20150521173238702>

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014, many academics were hopeful about the future of India's higher education system after years of seeing the quality of university education steadily undermined by political and bureaucratic interference.

One year on, however, there is disappointment at the lack of a clear higher education direction and concern over the government's repeated attempts to take control of some of India's best institutions, undermining their institutional autonomy, and centralising control of higher education.

When Modi appointed Smriti Irani – his government's youngest minister and a former actress with little previous experience of government – as the Human Resource Development, or HRD, minister which includes responsibility for higher education, many academics preferred to wait and watch rather than judge her on her lack of educational qualifications and political experience.

However, according to Dr Devesh Kapur, director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India at the University of Pennsylvania in the US, the trajectory of the Modi government's education policy has been "disappointing and makes one apprehensive".

"I don't see any fundamental change in a view – common to our Left and the Right [wings of politics] – that somehow, higher education is something to be controlled, centralised," Kapur said in an interview with a local media group.

"Yes, I am disappointed. Because I think that Modi's vision of taking the country forward is not possible without the right human capital," he said.

Indecisive minister

Irani has been shrouded in controversy. Her appointment came as a surprise to many, even within the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, whose members say the HRD minister's post has always been held by political heavyweights. Even with all their experience, past ministers struggled with the portfolio, said a BJP member not wanting to be named.

Arjun Singh, who was HRD minister under a previous government in 2004-09, faced immense resistance when he brought in higher education quotas for lower castes, the disadvantaged and tribal groups. He also came under fire over the so-called 'Deemed University' status for private for-profit institutions, often seen as low quality institutions.

Even heavyweight Kapil Sibal, who under the previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance of centre-left political parties' coalition formed after the 2004 elections, promised a series of much-needed education reforms, but could not generate enough consensus within his own party to enable the passage of his bills through parliament.

Sibal's proposals to set up 'Innovation Universities' and roll out the red carpet for prestigious foreign universities to set up campuses in India have fallen by the wayside.

Irani lost little time in announcing that a new National Policy for Education will be formulated, with consultations to begin soon.

She has set up committees to look into the functioning of the higher education regulatory body, the University Grants Commission, which oversees universities, the All India Council for Technical Education which oversees business and engineering schools, and the National Council for Technical Education, among others.

Yet she is seen as indecisive because she is sitting on a pile of files and has delayed key appointments, including appointing the head of the National Council of Educational Research and Training, or NCERT, a key body for extending vocational education which is a central plank of Modi's promise to increase youth employment, and the head of the Central Board of Secondary Education.

Appointments stymied

A huge backlog has arisen in the appointment of vice-chancellors and other vacant senior posts in publicly funded universities. Controversially, the Prime Minister's Office, or PMO, in March rejected "on a technicality" the appointment of physicist Sandip Trivedi as the new director of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.

Academics said it is the first time in the history of the country's premier scientific research institution that a director's appointment has been vetoed by the PMO, which also vetoed an appointment committee's choice of director for the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research in Bangalore, which has not had a director for over a year now.

Ministry interference led to the resignation in March and its subsequent withdrawal by Anil Kakodkar, chairman of the standing committee of the IIT Council, the governing body of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology or IITs, and the tendered resignation in December 2014 of Raghunath K Shevgaonkar, director of IIT Delhi, after a bruising politicised disagreement with the HRD ministry over the choice of an IIT head.

According to a director in the ministry, many high-level university appointments are stuck because they have not been cleared either by the PMO or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS – the Hindu nationalist grassroots organisation, of which the ruling BJP is the political wing.

Some feel the RSS is pushing its nationalist education agenda through Irani.

The HRD Ministry's controversial appointment of RSS-linked Y Sudershan Rao in July 2014 as chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, or ICHR, received much flak from academics who said he was unknown to the community of professional historians. They claim he has never published a peer-reviewed paper.

Under Rao, the ICHR in a surprise move this month disbanded the editorial board and advisory committee for its prestigious in-house journal *Indian Historical Review*. Speaking out days after she was removed from the journal's advisory board, eminent historian Romila Thapar said the move was detrimental to the quality of an esteemed institution such as the ICHR.

Thapar told *University World News* the new government was pursuing "reckless reforms".

"The centralisation of the education system will reduce universities and colleges to teaching shops and coaching centres. The government is deciding on these reforms without involving professionals and teachers in dialogue," she said.

She was referring to the proposed Central University Act that seeks to replace the existing acts of the central universities with one single Act that would require all universities to follow a common admission process, and a common syllabus along with transferable faculty. Critics say the Act eats into university autonomy.

“The government is promoting uniformity, which is the opposite of innovation and excellence. If this is implemented, no university will have the freedom to experiment with teaching-learning methods, research, or invest in academic excellence,” Thapar said.

Vacancies

The Modi government announced it would set up new institutes of excellence, such as new medical institutes, IITs and Indian Institutes of Management, or IIMs, in less prosperous states such as Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Assam. But the challenges, including availability of land, building infrastructure and recruiting quality faculty, remain.

The HRD Ministry oversees more than 40 central universities, 16 IITs, 30 National Institutes of Technology, 13 IIMs and more than 1.4 million schools.

There is a huge challenge of rising faculty vacancies – a 38% vacancy rate in premier institutions such as the IITs, and 30% to 40% in central universities. These top institutions are also failing to make it to the world's top 200 universities.

“The government has done a few good things such as launching a programme that allows us to invite people from abroad at the government’s expense. This has made it easy for universities to invite foreign faculty,” said Sudhir Kumar Sopory, vice-chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. “But we have not seen much enhancement in budgetary allocation and resources continue to be a constraint.”

Earlier this year, the government formalised the Global Initiative of Academic Networks, or GIAN, during US President Barack Obama’s visit to India. GIAN aims to bring up to 1,000 US-based academics to India each year for short periods to teach, explore avenues for collaborative research and other academic activities.

“The irony is that GIAN has been set up for our academics and students to learn best practices from US-based faculty. However, our government officials have as much to learn from the Americans, as well as from others, about how to run public universities,” said Assistant Professor Pushkar from the department of humanities and social sciences, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani-Goa.

“In the US, as in most countries around the world that have robust higher education sectors, public institutions are not government-controlled. Ministers do not have the power to approve or reject the appointments of vice-chancellors and directors.

“Our universities will not realise their full potential unless the government stops meddling in matters it has no business messing with,” Pushkar said.

For Irani and perhaps Prime Minister Modi, the massive task of fixing India's education woes and overhauling the system seems to be more than they bargained for. According to academics, to fix an already broken higher education system, the current administration needs to encourage academic autonomy and innovation, not throttle it.