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India's entry into Washington Accord club to help engineers

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NEW DELHI: There is a fairly good chance that India can become a member of Washington Accord in June this year. A membership to the Accord will help in the mobility of Indian engineers and professionals at an international level.

"Although the final decision would be known only after the meeting in June, I am hopeful that India will become a member of the Accord. We helped India to set up a system which is in tune with the requirements of Washington Accord," says Lock Kai Sang, who is a Washington Accord Mentor to the National Board of Accreditation.

"The new accreditation process is more outcome-based, unlike the earlier input-based structure."

A three member interna-

WHAT IT MEANS FOR PROFESSIONALS

- The Washington Accord, signed among six countries in 1989, is an international agreement among bodies responsible for accrediting engineering degree programmes
- A membership to the Accord will help in the mobility of

Indian engineers and professionals at an international level

- A three-member team has submitted their review and the final decision will be taken at the next meeting of the Accord in June 2014

tional team had visited India in December to review the ongoing accreditation of two colleges. The team submitted its report which will be used for the take the final decision at the next meeting of the Washington Accord in June 2014.

"India has many different institutes offering engineering programmes. This will help the engineers become more globally mobile," Agrees Michael K J Milligan, executive director of

fABET an international accreditation agency. Iring Wasser of a German accreditation agency adds: "Besides improving the quality of the engineering programme and allowing more professional mobility this will open the doors for better employment."

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INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

Govt won't interfere in work of education accreditation agencies

BY PRASHANT K. NANDA
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NEW DELHI

The government will not interfere in the work of the country's two education accreditation agencies, which will be run independently by competent experts.

"Today, we have made the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) totally autonomous, and we are in the process of making the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) independent," higher education secretary Ashok Thakur said on Monday in New Delhi while addressing a world summit on accreditation.

While the NBA was earlier with the All India Council for Technical Education, the NAAC currently functions under the University Grants Commission (UGC). The NBA accredits courses and the NAAC accredits institutions.

"The government should learn to restrain itself on doing professional work of accreditation," Thakur said. "The government should create only broad, enabling conditions."

The government may rope in private firms to assess and accredit educational institutes, *Mint* reported on 24 February,

citing UGC chairman Ved Prakash. The secretary confirmed the development.

Thakur said the government is setting up a new authority, which will be "an arm's length body" away from direct government interference to facilitate and coordinate the work of accreditation with little influence from UGC or other agencies. He said the new body will short-list competent entities including private ones to do the job of assessment and accreditation.

"More agencies to accredit will make life easier for institutions," said Gouri Shankar Bramha, assistant professor with the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, a deemed university in Hyderabad.

India has 723 universities, including institutions of national importance, 37,204 colleges and 11,356 professional schools offering diplomas. Overall, about 28.6 million students are pursuing higher education, according to official data. Less than 25% of these institutions are accredited.

When the country is talking about the demographic dividend, maintaining a certain standard in higher education is important and to manage the huge network, multiple agencies should shoulder the responsibility,

Thakur said.

All these agencies should not be manned by either "politicians or people from pure bureaucracy", the secretary said, adding that government has made accreditation mandatory and linked funding of higher educational institution with it.

Colleges and institutions without accreditation may not get funding from UGC or under the new scheme called the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). Under RUSA, India will spend some ₹99,000 crore over the next eight years to fund educational institution under state governments.

India is likely to become a permanent member of the Washington Accord, an international treaty for equivalence of engineering degrees among the top 15 countries including the US, and mobility of engineers among these countries. "We hope the good news comes by June 2014. This will help our engineers get jobs in these countries, too," Thakur said. India has been trying for permanent membership since 2007, he said.

The authorities of the Washington Accord have reviewed the accreditation process in India and have submitted a draft report, according to Surendra Prasad, chairman of NBA.

IIT-Kgp celebrates Women's Day

For the first time, IIT-Kharagpur celebrated the International's Women's Day on the campus. The programmes for the day were arranged with the understanding that the celebration of womanhood is not just about our own empowerment, but also about taking the responsibility of enabling others to achieve the same. Using this as a key concept, a session of invited lectures was arranged in the morning where speakers included Alokanda Roy and IPS officer Bharati Ghosh. In the afternoon, several sensitisation events were organised. Dr M Choudhury, paediatrician, talked about health of mother and child to mothers from nearby villages. Undergraduate girl students staged a choreography on honour killings at the end of the afternoon session.



IIT-B celebrates foundation day

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MUMBAI: IIT-B celebrated its 55th Foundation Day on Monday. Professor [Spenta R Wadia](#), professor and director [International Centre for Theoretical Sciences](#) of TIFR, was the chief guest. He gave away distinguished alumni awards to 10 alumni. Four young alumni achievers were also felicitated. Professors S C Bhattacharya from department of mathematics and Soumen Chakrabarti from the department of computer science and engineering were given excellence in research awards in pure sciences and applied sciences respectively.