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TOI
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Plan budget for higher education may be halved

Funds Given For First 3 Yrs Still Not Spent

Hemali Chhapia | TNN

Mumbai: Several ambitious projects launched by the UPA government under the 11th Five Year Plan may get delayed or axed as large spending cuts are likely to come into force. Thanks to the fact that the economy did not grow at the expected rate of over 9%, most ministries, barring two or three, are gearing up to shelve some of their projects.

For instance, the Planning Commission, which conducted a review of the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012), is likely to slash budgetary allocations for higher and technical education by nearly half the original amount.

This will have to be approved by the National Development Council, which is meeting on Saturday to discuss the midterm appraisal of the 11th Plan. A source in the Planning Commission said, ''The decision to cut funds was taken because the money allotted for the first three years of the plan period has not been spent. Despite making ambitious announcements, most schemes have not taken off.''

The fourth year of the 11th Plan has just begun. Of the Rs 84,000 crore allotted for higher and technical education in the plan, the ministry has not even spent Rs 30,000 crore. ''The infrastructural development of many of the new IITs and IIMs has not taken off,'' said an official in the Union human resource development ministry.

Poor Performance

Centre was to spend Rs 2.75 lakh cr on education during 11th Plan compared with Rs 62,238cr in the previous Plan

Rs 1.25 lakh cr was for elementary education, Rs 53,000cr for secondary, Rs 6,000cr for adult education and Rs 84,000cr for higher & tech education

With the fourth year of the Plan (2010-11) beginning, not even Rs 30,000cr has been spent on higher & tech education

The allocation for that section is now likely to be slashed by Rs 40,000cr

Govt defers 20 new IIITs

Mumbai: Wielding the axe on several ambitious projects launched by the UPA government, to cope with slower growth rate, the Planning Commission's argument is that most of these have not kept up with deadlines. As per the mid-term review of the 11th Plan, funds too have been grossly underutilized.

Already, the Union finance ministry has pushed back setting up of 20 IIITs to the 12th Plan. Heads in the just set-up Central universities say recruitments have been stalled too. ''Spending under school education has had a better track record; that will not be hacked much,'' said a source in the Panel. Justifying the move, a member said, ''One must also keep in mind the fact that the aggregate gross budgetary support was based on the assumption that India would grow at an average of 9%. But that wasn't the case.''

TESTING TIMES SOON?

HRD for mix-&-match plan for admission in UG courses
Akshaya Mukul | TNN

New Delhi: A concept note on the National Testing System moved by the HRD ministry has proposed that instead of a single methodology there should be a mix-and-match strategy for admission in undergraduate courses with sufficient autonomy to institutions.

As per the note, a student must appear for both aptitude and subject tests. While the aptitude test would

assess the ability of the student to analyse, comprehend, interpret, communicate and evaluate, the subject tests would be standardized so that there is uniformity across school boards and candidates get a level playing field. To deal with the stress factor, the note suggests that tests can be conducted at two levels — moderate and high.

A range of subjects in science, humanities and commerce have been listed in which tests will be conducted.

Even states can participate in these tests and conduct subject tests in social sciences and languages by tailoring them to suit the local context. A student can appear in a subject or a combination of subjects of his choice, depending on the institution in which the candidate is seeking admission. Tests can be based on multiple-choice questions as well as few short essay- type questions. The note has factored in affirmative action as well.

Those students, who come from disadvantaged sections of society, will get sufficient weightage for the educational background of their parents, family income and the nature of schools from which the candidates have passed their higher secondary examinations.

As mandated, under the proposed legislation on prohibition of unfair practices, every institution will have to declare its admission methodology in its prospectus.

The institution will also have the freedom to either opt for a state-administered or nationallyadministered examination in social sciences. The note also emphasises that though universities are entitled to have their own admission process, they can follow the proposed system as a standard reference while evaluating merit.

It proposes setting up of a National Testing Authority (NTA) through an Act of Parliament. The legislation will ask states to set up State Testing Agencies (STAs). STAs will not only conduct tests but also help NTA. NTA will have an executive body of whole-time appointees, who will report to a general council, that will have representation from all states as well as eminent persons.

Each district will have infrastructure for the testing authority. Initially, there will be computerised and paper-pen test, but eventually online facility will be followed.

New JNU complexes to ease facility crunch

Three new academic complexes and one more hostel building will soon be ready to ease the burden on pre-existing infrastructure in this premier university

Neeraj Jha | TNN

The year 2007 saw the fight for 27% OBC reservation in central educational institutions coming to a successful end when the UGC sanctioned the universities across India for erecting more infrastructures to make room for the extra huge number of students. In JNU the strength used to be 5204 (as per the data available with the last students union election committee) before the implementation started.

Now there are over 7000 students this year in the university. Many academic buildings didn't have the capacity to accommodate this increase in the number of students. Hence, the university administration decided to come up with three new academic complexes and one more hostel. The three new complexes are — School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies (annex), School of International Studies (annex) and School of Social Science- III. Besides, a new hostel named Koyna-II is also under construction. It was only last year when Koyna-I was built and inaugurated.

Giving details, Jagdish Singh, Administrative Officer (Engineering Deptt), JNU said, "Koyna-II is being built at an estimated cost of Rs 12.5 crore and the other three annex buildings at a cost of Rs 26 crore. All the four buildings' construction is expected to be completed by December this year."

Though on a different note, Vismay Basu, a student of International Economy at SIS, criticizing the administration said, "The administration should have started this work earlier as the new buildings were needed to accommodate the extra number of students. But, more importantly, the administration should look into the issue of maintenance."

Asked why, Basu alleged, "The very new Koyna-I hostel has started showing signs of damages that means funds were misused and the issue involves largescale corruption." Reacting to Basu's allegation, Prof Kumar, special advisor to VC, said, "It doesn't come under my jurisdiction, I can't comment on it."

Whatever be the allegations or denials, the moot point which students put up is that they are happy with the new structures as this will only facilitate their studies without any hindrance and interruptions.

Sharmishtha Chaudhury, who has been selected for a course in Arts and Aesthetics here, said, "More infrastructures means more facilities for students and an institution must focus on overall development whereby

students can benefit from these and excel in their career. Living on campus is always an exciting thing to happen and the new hostel will ensure that more and more students can be accommodated on campus."

Koyna hostel (above) and SIS hostel (below) under construction

July 26

IIT CONFERS AWARD

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, one of India's globally acclaimed technology institutes, awarded the Honoris Causa Doctorate of Science (DSc) to Shiv Nadar, Founder, HCL and Chairman, HCL Technologies and Shiv Nadar Foundation - for his outstanding contribution to computer hardware and software domain in the country. The award was presented to Shiv Nadar on the 56th annual convocation ceremony of IIT Kharagpur by the Union Minister of HRD, Kapil Sibal, amidst distinguished science and technology luminaries. With this award, Shiv now joins the league of luminary recipients including APJ Abdul Kalam, Mother Teresa, Ratan Tata and Satyajit Ray, who have been conferred this award earlier. The Honoris Causa Doctorate by IIT is meant to acknowledge and felicitate distinguished personalities in the country who have made commendable contributions in the field of science, engineering, entrepreneurship and academics. Shiv Nadar's name was selected by the senate, the Board of Governors and the President of India, the visitor of IIT Kharagpur due to his commendable contribution as engineer entrepreneur.

Australia-India Institute

THE Australia India Institute is being established by the University of Melbourne with the assistance of an $8 million grant from the Commonwealth Government and some funding by the university. The University of New South Wales and La Trobe University are also founding members.

The objective of the institute is to undertake practical collaborative research in a range of disciplines in order to strengthen relations between Australia and India and to promote a deeper understanding of trade, scientific, political, cultural and social issues between the two countries. The institute plans to attract international and Australian experts on India and build on the three universities' existing expertise and relationships. It will develop strong partnerships with business, governments and academic institutions in both countries, and provide leadership in public policy, research and postgraduate training for the benefit of India, Australia and the broader Asia Pacific.

Its priority research areas will include:

• Resource management including energy, food, water and environment

• Regional issues including political, economic, financial, trade and security relationships

• Health including public health, biomedical and pharmaceuticals

• E d u c at i o n , especially policy reform which is under way in both countries.

A low-cost computing device

THE human resource development minister Kapil Sibal unveiled a low-cost computing-cum-access device. The price of the device exhibited is expected to be around $35 per piece, gradually dropping down to $20 and ultimately to $10 a piece. Since this effort of continuous reduction in price and enhancement in capabilities would require a constant endeavour for R&D, IIT-Rajasthan and some other IITs and technical institutions are setting up research teams to cover a wide range of issues in achieving ultimate goal in terms of price and quality.

The three cardinal principles of the education policy viz, access, equity and quality could be served well by providing connectivity to all colleges and universities, providing low-cost and affordable access cum computing devices to students and teachers and providing high quality e-content free of cost to all learners in the Country. National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT) encompasses all the three elements. Connectivity to universities and colleges has already started. Nearly 8,500 colleges in the country have already been connected, high quality e-content in various subjects is being created and under the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), nearly 500 web based and video courses are available and uploaded on sakshat, YouTube and NPTEL portals and another 1,100 courses in various disciplines of engineering and science are getting generated in four quadrant approach.

The ministry started its efforts, subsequent to lukewarm response from known corporates in this sector, by holding discussions on this concept with a group of professors/experts at IISc, Bangalore, IIT-Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur, IIT-Madras and IIT-Bombay. The BTech and MTech students were guided to produce the mother board for such low-cost devices with ample flexibility to change components. One mother board design was generated under ministry's guidance in the BTech project of a student at VIT, Vellore. The cost of bill of material worked to $47 at that point of time. The PCB of the mother board got fabricated at IIT-Kanpur. It could be seen that by customising the device to the needs of learners across the country, and utilising the processor capabilities of processors suitable for the purpose, it was possible to substantially reduce the prices of such access-cum-computing devices. Then started a wave of collaboration with such interested partners.

A number of teams have been moving back and forth independently but constantly interacting with the HRD ministry and improving upon design parameters and customisation guidance for Indian students. The efforts of some of the teams working with those design philosophies were presented. The aim is to take such devices to the students of colleges and universities and to provide these institutions a host of choices of low cost access devices around Rs 1,500 ($35) or less in near future.

Incredible India

Game-Changing Low-Cost PC

IT PROMISES to erase the phrase digital divide from collective memory, and how. The personal computer unveiled by HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Thursday is a sleek touchscreen device that's Wi-Fi enabled for internet access and has all the regular applications available on PCs. And it costs an incredible Rs 1,500! The path-breaking innovation points at a world of possibilities for dramatic, technology-aided development and universal access to information and knowledge. Being wired and connected would be doubly advantageous for a youthful society like ours. But in tandem, what's required is governance reforms to shore up social and physical infrastructure, particularly in the rural hinterland. Without quality power supply, modern roads and housing, our human resource potential would remain unrealised and suboptimal. Also, to leverage the huge societal potential of efficient but lowcost computing, the general neglect of public education — teacher absenteeism, lack of basic facilities et al — particularly at the primary and secondary levels need to be set right. Nevertheless, the tablet PC, developed by teams at the famed IIT, is remarkable for cost-effectiveness and is a feather in the cap for India's technological prowess.

The tablet PC is ultra power efficient as well, requiring just 2-watt supply or battery backup via solar cells. The device has no hard disk, and instead makes use of a 2-GB memory disc, the storage capacity of which can be upgraded. Further, users would have access to Microsoft Office suite-equivalent applications with open-source Linux software. Reportedly, the government is keen to subsidise half the computer's cost for institutions. So, for schools and colleges, the PC would be available for Rs 750. With scale economies, it should be possible to reduce overall costs to, say, Rs 1,000. And after discount, the PC could be available for as low as Rs 500! Ubiquitous computer and internet access would have much scope for proactive policy. The National Mission on Education through information and communication technology now needs to fast-forward development of high-quality e-content.

NABARD Supports IIT, Kanpur for Biometrics Project

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has extended grant support of Rs.33.09 lakh to IIT, Kanpur out of its Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) for a research project to study the method of interoperability of fingerprint stored in minutia by different vendors

Innovation varsities unlikely to have seat reservations

Urmi A Goswami NEW DELHI

HRD ministry's radical higher education experiment, innovation universities, may not to be required to follow the country's reservation laws.

In the draft Universities for Innovation Bill, currently being circulated for comments from experts, there is no mention of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Tribes and OBCs.

The innovation universities will be set up under the proposed law through memorandum of agreements. These universities can set up as public, private or public-private partnerships. The memorandum of agreement for each university will have to be placed before Parliament. Given this the innovation universities move into uncharted territories on the issue of reservation.

At present, all central education institutions have by law to provide reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Private institutions are not required to provide any reservation. The law is not clear on reservation policy in public-private institutions.

Technically then at least the publicly funded universities for innovation would be required by law to provide reservations to specified categories. The draft bill describes "publicly funded" innovation university as those where the entire capital investment is provided for directly or indirectly by the central government. This would make these universities central education institutes, thereby bringing them under the purview of the Central

Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006.

The draft Universities for Innovation Bill goes through a round about way to deal with the intent of providing reservations. It does suggest that these universities shall be 'open' to "all persons irrespective of nationality, gender, caste, creed, disability, ethnicity, social or economic background."

The draft bill also states that admissions will be based on merit " assessed through transparent and reasonable criteria disclosed through its prospectus." Next, it suggests that each of these universities, " not being a publicly-funded university for innovation," shall specify criteria for admission to account for "disparities in educational attainments arising from social or economic background of any class or category of applicants for admission."

This is put out in Section 2 clause 7 of the draft Bill. It is not clear if the ministry proposes to have a separate reservation policy in the publicly funded innovation universities. The question of reservation becomes more complex as these universities are mandated to ensure that at least 50% of the students are Indian citizens.

Sibal wants inclusive agenda

AFTER fulfilling all promises in his 100-day agenda, HRD minister Kapil Sibal wants to make some fundamental changes in the education system. He wants to lay ground work for an inclusive agenda for education, he tells Urmi A Goswami in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:

How will innovation universities change higher education?

We have not adopted a topdown approach, ours is a bottomup one. So far we have spoken of inclusive agenda of development, we are now thinking in terms of an inclusive education agenda. The idea is to empower institu tions at the base of the pyramid. State universities are the foundation of higher education segment. State universities need to have greater freedom so confirm to realities of 21st century. The Centre is willing to give a helping hand.

Is that all required to improve institutions?

There is proposal to help state universities, which make up bulk of higher education segment. The Centre can help by giving more funds to strengthen these universities. This would help build infrastructure and quality. But state governments need to step up and provide policy framework. This framework will give universities more freedom. UGC can make grants beyond what it already does. But state governments must allow for more freedom so that state universities can transform themselves.

Are state only expected to provide for a more liberal policy framework?

Over the years, the Centre's share of expenditure in public education has increased, while states' share has come down. This mismatch should be corrected.

Many institutions suggest quality can be improved with freedom in admissions policy…

There should be democracy. An institution should have the right to decide on what basis it wants to admit students. At the same time there should not be unnecessary pressure on students. So some institutes can decide to admit on the basis of Class XII results — on the basis of merit. While other institutes could admit on the basis of the national aptitude test, or look at the aptitude test as an add on. There is also the option of add on subject tests. So the class XII results determine subject knowledge, aptitude tests will assess raw intelligence, and add on tests will assess special knowledge. So each institute can determine the basis on which they admit, rather than doing so through individual entrance tests. The idea is to reduce tests, while still giving each institute the freedom to admit students that fit in with the specific focus of the institute. Let me give an example, what is the difference between Yale and Harvard law Schools. Yale is focused on research while Harvard is more business minded, so corporate law is a focus. So in their admissions policy they would show a preference for those who fit in to their respective focus areas.

Will this make the education system more inclusive?

Right now we have entrance exams to exclude students, to keep some people out. I want to reduce stress for students, but also exclude exclusion. If we were a more mature system, I would say that interviews would be the final basis of deciding who gets admitted and who doesn't. But we are not mature enough. Allowing for discretion would not help. So I want to put in place a system that doesn't give space for discretion.

IE

Teacher trouble: HRD ropes in CSIR

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI I JULY 24

CONCERNED about the increasing faculty shortage and the diminished demand for the teaching profession among youngsters, the Round Table on Higher Education — constituted by the Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry —has decided to create a national corps of outstanding fellows and rope in the CSIR to help promote research in higher education institutions.

While higher pay packets for teachers after the Sixth Pay Commission are a key incentive already in place, the Round Table members felt more needed to be done to make the teaching profession attractive. A committee, which has HRD Ministry Additional Secretary Sunil Kumar, CSIR DG S Brahamachari and consultant Sunil Maheshwari on board among others, will be looking into the issue.

A National Corps of Outstanding Fellows would be created to give incentives to those excelling in the teaching profession. Besides goodies like free train tickets among other things, the Round Table members also suggested that a media campaign should be started to position teaching as a worthwhile career choice.

More autonomy to universities is also being considered, according to sources.

In order to encourage research, the CSIR DG proposed that their scientists could work with varsities to that end. The HRD Ministry also gave an assurance that the proposal would be taken up soon.

Sibal on the high table for US, UK

UNION HRD Minister Kapil Sibal has earned a prime place for education. If Yale wants to sign an MoU with his ministry ahead of US President Barack Obama's visit to India, the British Prime Minister David Cameron, who will be visiting New Delhi this week, also has an interaction with Sibal on his itinerary. Cameron brings a high-powered delegation with him comprising Oxford University Vice-Chancellor, Imperial College London Vice-Chancellor, president of universities, UK, and the next in line to be appointed as Cambridge University Vice-Chancellor.

IIT-K student's death: Panel to submit probe report in 2 weeks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KANPUR JULY 23

THE four-member committee, constituted by the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K) to probe the death of first-year MTech student Rakesh Kumar Thakur, will submit its report within two weeks.

Rakesh (22) had died of a cardiac arrest in a city hospital on July 7. He was allegedly suffering from acute psychiatric disorder. While the institute and the nursing home claimed that he had died a natural death, his family held the negligent attitude of the IIT-K authorities and medical negligence responsible.

The committee, formed late on Thursday night, will include Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Memorial Medical College Principal Anand Swaroop, head of IIT-K Mechanical Engineering Department Nalinaksh S Vyas, the institute's counselling service convener and medical advisor. Sanjeev S Kashalkar, IIT-K Registrar, said: "We have included medical experts and senior faculty of the mechanical engineering department in our committee."

The institute has received a letter from Rakesh's father Vinay Kumar Thakur on Thursday. "A copy of the letter, along with Thakur's medical reports, has been handed over to the committee," said Kashalkar.

On Thursday, despite several attempts, Rakesh's relatives could not meet IIT-K Director Sanjay Govind Dhande. "He was busy with official work," said uncle Shristi Kumar.

On a complaint lodged by Rakesh's family, Kanpur DIG Prem Prakash has instructed ASP (Kanpur West) Mohit Gupta to probe the matter. The statement of Rakesh's father was recorded on Friday morning.

HC seeks replies from Centre, UP govt on Aman's death

LUCKNOW: The Allahabad High Court has sought replies from the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh government on a PIL regarding an eight-year-old boy, Aman, who died as he could not receive medical help on time due to security restrictions during the Prime Minister's visit to IIT-Kanpur on July 3.

The Lucknow Bench, comprising Chief Justice Ferdino Inacio Rebello and Justice Devi Prasad Singh, has directed the governments to file their replies within four weeks. The PIL, filed by a local NGO, has sought that a well-equipped ambulance should be kept ready to meet any need of the common people when traffic restrictions are enforced during visits by VVIPs.

Aman's mother Usha Sharma and father Tasdud Hussain had alleged that they were stopped from taking Aman — who sustained head injuries after falling from a height at their home — to hospital by security personnel, who had barricaded all major roads for the Prime Minister's visit to IIT-Kanpur.   PTI

The dream lives

The $35 laptop is a reminder that ingenuity in India is driven by the need to stretch every rupee

IT started as a dare. When MIT Media Lab visionary Nicholas Negroponte promised to bring affordable computing to children in developing countries with the One Laptop Per Child project, India's HRD ministry rejected the idea. We didn't need the largesse, because we had the smarts and economies of scale to make a $10 laptop, it claimed. Of course, India's $10 boast was laughed off, especially after the ministry unveiled a pointless little device that would need a projector to be used, the price of which soared to $54 anyway.

Now, the unfazed HRD ministry has relaunched its "computing-cum-access device", with help from IIT Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. If nothing else, this further refined $35 device is a feat of ferocious cost-cutting (helped by the fact that hardware costs continue to fall — the number of transistors that can be placed inexpensively in an integrated circuit has doubled approximately every two years.) Entirely open-source based, it has a browser, a pdf reader, an open office suite, video-conferencing and multi-media capabilities — which, if they all function adequately, means a lot in a time when most digital transactions are migrating to the Web. Of course, the same questions linger — is a dinky personalised device the best way to ensure that all India's children can keep up with the "digital natives" of their generation around the world? Can a simple infusion of technology bridge educational disparities?

But whether this remains an ego project or becomes widely used, the $35 device is a reminder of India's own mojo. As Pranav Mistry (of the wondrous Sixth Sense wearable computing device) has said, unlike lavishly funded labs in the West, ingenuity in India is driven by the need to stretch every rupee — technological experiment is tempered with a strict economy. More power to that.

IIT-B tech will help blind see Taj Mahal

Mihika Basu

⊞ Enlarge Image

A visually challenged person cannot see the beauty of the Taj Mahal. But now he will be able to feel the beauty of the monument by touching the exteriors of a scaled-down model of the Taj.

Sounds unreal, but a team from IIT-Bombay believes that the use of haptic technology — in simpler words, the science of touch — can make this a reality.

"The department of science and technology (DST) has commissioned the Indian digital heritage project to several institutes across the country. It aims to build a platform or an interface to digitally capture heritage structures and enable visually challenged people to get a feel of them through touch and audio-visual in virtual reality. IIT-Bombay is working on the touch aspect," Subhasish Chaudhuri, professor of electrical engineering department, said.

For some years now, Chaudhuri has been working on haptic technology with Sreeni KG, a PhD student. The duo has developed an application which allows users to feel games in virtual reality — something not possible at play stations or in front of a computer.

"At play stations, we can only hear and see. But we cannot feel the force at which we are, for instance in the case of snooker, hitting the ball. Our technology allows to you to do that," Chaudhuri said. This technology will help users feel the force every time they hit the ball.

The IIT-Bombay professor said, "Gaming is just one application of this technology. Since we have already built this interface, we will now use the same technology in the DST project. There will be the other IITs, and other institutions as well, to capture the 3D model, take pictures, define material properties (say stiffness) of surfaces, etc. We can then build the interface, say a kiosk at a museum, where the visually challenged will feel as if they are actually touching the heritage structure."

The project costing several crores is expected to be completed in three years.

IIT-Bombay will use haptics for another project, a national programme on perception engineering, sanctioned by the ministry of communications & information technology (MCIT).

Several application areas are being explored, including medical studies. "The technology can be used to train doctors wherein they can actually see, hear and feel the tele-operation being performed, in virtual and in actual life," Chaudhuri said.

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HRD ministry dumps idea of quota in private colleges

Vineeta Pandey NEW DELHI

Before a fresh student outburst and controversy could put it on the backfoot, the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) has quietly dumped the idea of reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in private and unaided colleges.

Already facing criticism on issues of price rise and Maoist attacks, it is clear that the government is in no mood to invite fresh trouble.

MHRD sources told DNA that with Kapil Sibal at the helm of affairs, the controversial bill may not see the light of the day. "The proposed bill had enough potential to trouble the government, which is why it has been put on hold for an indefinite period," an official said.

Sibal is the first cabinet minister to openly voice his displeasure against the reservation policy when former education minister Arjun Singh introduced it in 2006 in government institutions of higher education, including IITs and IIMs.

"The world is looking towards India and we should not do anything that has an adverse impact on this positive sentiment. No policy should be taken, which will dilute the levels of excellence in our research and development and educational institutions," Sibal had said at that point of time.

When he took over as the next HRD minister Sibal targetted reforms and expansion of education while cautiously keeping the reservation word out of his office. So much so that even the proposed Foreign Education Providers Bill doesnt have any mention of quota.

"The government is at present focusing on reforms and expansion of higher education. The reservation bill is certainly not on the priority list for the ministry, which is why it has been put aside for the time being," minister of state for HRD D Purandeshwari said.

The draft bill on Private Professional Educational Institutions (Regulation of Admission and Fixation of Fee), 2005, has a provision for reservation of seats under which private aided and unaided institutions would reserve seats for SCs, STs, socially, educationally and economically weaker sections in general category to such an extent as notified by the UGC. Under it even deemed universities would have to reserve 50% seats for students of the state where it is located.

The private institutes had protested against such policy saying it was an encroachment on their functioning and may affect their performance, quality of education and economic health besides discouraging private organisations to open new institutions.

Sources said that having enabling provisions doesnt mean reservation in private necessarily would happen. Not at least in the near future.