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DU completes digitization of admission data

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Delhi University's undergraduate admission process has 80 lakh data. The dean of students welfare office (DSW), which completed the scanning and digitization of the data, revealed this on Wednesday.

Deputy dean of students welfare, Gurpreet Singh Tuteja said, "From this year, the admission data and results CDs will be shared with all the colleges so that students and colleges need not approach the DSW for verifications." Therefore, no matter where one submits OMR forms, he or she can go to any DU college, submit the application number and get the details of his admission status and names of colleges where he can go for counselling and admission. Similarly, the colleges will also get to know about students and the courses to which they are eligible.

Sharing the data for physically challenged and SC/ST category, Tuteja said, "We have received 18,894 applications in the PH and SC/ST category, the highest ever. We received 15,406 applications in the year 2009, 12,126 in 2008 and 11,826 in 2007."

To make things more convenient, the notification of admission list, issue of admission slip and admissions will be conducted on the same day this year that is on June 23.

ALL IN THE PAST

Tainted univ gets UGC nod to rope in 7 more colleges

Akshaya Mukul / TNN

New Delhi: Even as CBI investigates allegations of capitation fee demanded by Sri Ramachandra University, University Grants Commission has gone ahead and allowed it to bring seven more institutes under its ambit on ex post facto basis.

Last year, TOI-Times Now had done the expose against the Sri Ramachandra University. Incidentally, HRD ministry's review committee on deemed universities had put Sri Ramachandra University among the 44 deemed universities that need to take corrective measures in several criteria for satisfying the deemed university status.

But on June 7 when the UGC met neither the CBI case nor its borderline quality was under consideration before bringing more institutes into its ambit. The meeting was also attended by higher education secretary Vibha Puri Das. Minutes of the meeting assessed by TOI shows how UGC found a way out to help the university. "This matter had been deferred twice by the UGC due to CBI inquiry pertaining to capitation fee. Vice-chancellor of deemed university has clarified that the CBI inquiry is against an official of the university and not against the university," the document says.

The commission accepted the report of expert committee, constituted by UGC chairperson to look into the ambit proposal of the university, and ex-post-facto approval was given. Seven of the institutes brought under the ambit of the university are engineering and technology institutes.

Ministry's report on deemed universities had found the university failing on the parameter of governance and admission process and award of degrees. Ambit system allows a private deemed university to bring its constituent institutions under its direct control. It allows a deemed university to retain control over all its institutions as well as saves them from spending money on affiliation from any other university. The range of institutions under the ambit of private deemed universities vary from five to 50.

HRD panel to look into autonomy issue

New Delhi: Acknowledging that autonomy of central educational institutions was more of a myth, where heads of these institutions had to rush to HRD ministry for even small decisions, the ministry has set up a subcommittee to look into the issue and suggest measures.

The autonomy issue came up for discussion in the meeting of HRD ministry's roundtable on higher education on Monday. There was an overwhelming view that institutions should have flexibility to hire talented people at higher salaries and spend money without seeking the ministry's approval. There was also a demand to replace the current system of funding with normbased funding.

The roundtable, comprising industrialist Hari Bhartia; Central University, Orissa, vice-chancellor Surbhi Banerjee, IIM-Kozhikode director Debasis Chatterjee and IIT-Madras director M S Ananth, also discussed issues like introducing separate accounting practices for educational institutions.

Experts said that CEIs, which are autonomous institutions, are not able to appoint faculty or officials without the permission of the HRD ministry. Besides, appointments are made purely on government rules which at times can become a deterrent in attracting talented faculty. They said institutes should enjoy the power to appoint faculty with higher salary packages.

Private bodies, which want to donate funds for educational institutions, should be able to do so, experts said. They could start special chairs in institutions which could provide funds towards recruitment of faculty at higher salary, experts said. This model will not add any financial burden on the institutions or government but help them attract good faculty who want better packages. TNN

INDIA SHINING

A liability cap that leaves room for tech enterprise

BY AMBUJ SAGAR

New technologies hold the promise of benefits for society but they also carry risks. Public policy is supposed to weigh these risks and benefits and ensure that the latter outweighs the former, although this is a hard judgment to make. An important way of managing the risks is to hold companies liable for their activities — if they have to pay for resulting damages, they are less likely to engage in unduly risky actions. At the same time, it is argued that the liability should not be so high that it acts as a barrier to the use of new technologies. The exact liability cap is a difficult question to resolve a priori in the case of what are termed as low-probability, high-impact events, where both the probability and magnitude of the impact are difficult to assess.

The US, for example, set a \$75 million cap on liability from damages from offshore drilling spills. But the unprecedented BP oil spill is now leading many to question the wisdom of such a low cap; in fact, there have been calls for raising the liability cap to \$10 billion. (There also exists an Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, which covers an additional \$1 billion in economic damages. Note also that operators are liable for the full cost of the cleanup.)

In the case of nuclear power - an issue much under discussion in India — not all countries believe that operators' liability should be capped. Operators in countries such as Japan and Germany have unlimited liability, although other countries have set limits. The US, for example, requires operators to get the maximum amount of insurance available against nuclear incidents — currently \$375 million. But importantly, under the Price-Anderson Act, it also requires all operators to contribute a certain amount in case of an accident. This "insurance pool" (currently about \$10 billion) acts as a supplemental (and significant) potential source of compensation.

And if the impacts of an event far exceed what are seen as reasonable estimates? In the case of the BP spill, US President Barack Obama has stated emphatically that "(we) will make BP pay for the damage their company has caused"; as a response to the political pressure, the company has agreed to waive the liability cap and set up a \$20 billion fund to pay damage claims. In the event of a nuclear incident that results in damages that exceed coverage by existing mechanisms, the US Congress can take further actions, including appropriation of funds. Therefore, even with liability caps, there is an assumption that in extreme cases, the government will act - as it

should — as the protector of the public interest.

So what are the lessons for India in terms of the civil nuclear liability? One, the cap for an individual operator must be high enough to offer a disincentive to engage in risky activities. For this, we have to look at global benchmarks. There is no reason for an operator to have less liability in India, for a similar technology/plant design, especially when the damage — at least in human terms — is likely to be higher in a country such as India. Two, we should explore the possibility of an insurance pool that provides additional coverage — given our ambitious plans for nuclear power, there should be a sufficient number of operators that we can build a reasonable-sized fund. Three, the government should reserve the right to ask for greater compensation, in the case of extraordinary events.

Yes, such steps might raise the cost of nuclear power, but as with other power technologies, there is no reason to provide hidden subsidies, especially when these costs are often borne by the already disadvantaged who do not share to any significant extent in the benefits being provided by new technologies. The Bhopal case has also shown that the Indian government is not always effective in protecting the public interest — the government must tackle this ‘trust deficit’ and ensure it does indeed protect the public interest (and avoid an inequitable distribution of risks and benefits) in the case of nuclear power and other emerging technologies.

(The author is professor of policy studies at IIT Delhi)



BITTER LESSONS: Bhopal gas tragedy, 1984

ET

More seats for SC, ST students at central univs

Our Bureau NEW DELHI

THE government has cleared amendments to Central Education Institutions (reservations in admission) Act, 2006 that will allow certain central educational institutions to give higher reservation to SC and ST students than what is stipulated under law.

As per the clearance given by the cabinet on Thursday, these universities could also get exemption from implementing 27% quota for OBCs in admission as required under the Act and instead give higher reservation to SC and ST students.

These universities, most of which are located in the North-East, will be able to continue with 15% reservation for STs even though the CEI Act stipulates 7.5% reservation for them. The CEI (Amendment) Bill 2010 will be introduced in the coming session of Parliament, information and broadcasting minister Ambika Soni said.

In another decision, the cabinet allowed the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to start an academy that will enable it to award post-graduate and doctoral degrees from this year.

The CSIR will set up an Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR). Currently, scientists pursuing research in any of the 37 laboratories of CSIR across the country have to register themselves at different universities.

IE

Cabinet nod for CSIR's educational arm this week

THE Union Cabinet will this week mull on amendments to the Central Educational Institutes (Reservation in admission) Act to fine-tune its provisions keeping northeastern demographics and implementation issues in mind and also accord its approval for an CSIR — Advanced Institute of Scientific Training (AIST).

With its headquarters in Noida or Faridabad, the AIST is envisaged as a setup that will network between the 40-odd CSIR laboratories and pool resources and faculty across these. CSIR has also proposed that besides PG courses, it be allowed to run UG courses in both sciences and humanities. The objective is to stem the shortage of skilled manpower in the science and technology industry and the dwindling numbers of PhDs per annum.

About 2,200 junior and senior research fellows work in these laboratories while pursuing their PhDs. To obtain their PhDs they have to enrol themselves at universities, often causing logistical difficulties.

Realising this, former director general of CSIR R A Mashelkar mooted the proposal for granting deemed university status to the CSIR laboratories in 2002. The then Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal had backed the plan fully even though the Arjun Singh-led HRD Ministry was disinclined to allow a deemed varsity tag to the institute. With Sibal taking over from Singh in 2009, the project finally got a much needed push.