

UGC autonomy notice sparks fear of fee hikes

Teachers' associations criticise move, warn of commercialisation of higher education

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI

The government's move to offer more autonomy to 60 quality higher educational institutions has led to criticism from teachers' associations, who point out that this will pave the way for fee hikes.

However, the Centre has rebutted the charge saying the move will not lead to fee hikes in public institutions.

The JNU Teachers' Asso-

ciation (JNUTA) said in a statement that allowing these institutions to start new programmes/schools/centres, opening off-campus centres, skill courses, incubation centres, and research parks without approval from the UGC was a "co-deword

for commercialisation and blatant privatisation of public education with differential fee structures, compromising the questions of equity

and access, which are the founding principles of public higher education institutions like JNU."

The Academics for Action and Development (AAD) in Delhi University also criticised the move.

'Teaching shops'

"In the name of autonomy, existing institutions will be transformed into teaching shops, running market-friendly courses through

their off-campus branches and distance education outlets," said an AAD release. "The so-called autonomous institutions will have market oriented fee structure ...soaring up to lakhs."

Caveat on funds

According to the UGC's February 2018 notification, quality institutions will get the freedom to start their own courses, departments, centres and schools, provid-

ed they generate their own funds and not depend on the government.

However, Secretary (Higher Education) R. Subrahmanyam said autonomy would not mean a fee hike in public institutions and there would be no dearth of funds for good proposals which could be budgeted for.

"We are not in the business of transferring responsibility from universities to students," he said.