

NON-LEGISLATIVE ROUTE UGC expected to ready draft regulations for setting up education hub to host foreign varsities

Foreign Univs May Get Entry Via UGC Route

Anubhuti.Vishnoi@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With the Centre having to hold back the Higher Education Commission of India Bill that would have enabled the entry of foreign universities into India, plans are now afoot to bring them in by way of University Grants Commission regulations instead, ET has gathered.

Discussions on fresh proposals, including one to create an education hub, have started as the Centre explores options to facilitate the entry of overseas universities.

On the agenda is a proposal to create an education city or hub—a special education zone—where foreign institutes can set up campus without being subject to red tape and overregulation.

One probable site for the proposed education city is Rishikesh in Uttarakhand, which falls in human resource development minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank's parliamentary constituency and home state.

The UGC is expected to draw up the enabling draft regulations for the entry of foreign universities by next month, those in know told ET.

Section 25 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, allows scope for the UGC to do so. It states that the Central government may, by notification in the official gazette, make rules to carry out the purposes of the act.

The HRD ministry's proposed legislation—the Higher Education Commission of India Bill, 2018, with a clause enabling foreign institutes to operate in the country,



NOD FROM PMO



The Niti Aayog and Prime Minister's Office have also been positively inclined to the idea

was to have been introduced in the ongoing winter session of Parliament.

However, the bill, which proposed setting up a single higher education regulator and repeal of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, was withdrawn because its provisions were not in line with the New Education Policy. The bill is now back on the drawing board to incorporate the policy's recommendations and could take longer to be brought to Parliament.

Meanwhile, there's been a rene-

wed push to facilitate the entry of foreign institutions in India. The commerce ministry once again wrote to the HRD ministry recently, advocating a special education zone-like structure to allow unfettered access for campuses of foreign universities in India. It has been pitching the SEZ plan since 2015.

Niti Aayog and the Prime Minister's Office have been positively inclined to the idea. The New Education Policy also recommended that top global institutes be permitted to set up campus in the country.

The previous UPA government under Manmohan Singh had prepared the Foreign Education Providers Bill, which, like other reform-centric proposals, could not pass muster in Parliament and was dropped.

The Kapil Sibal-led HRD ministry under the UPA toyed with the idea of bringing in foreign institutes through the non-legislative route but the plan did not take off.