

Private bodies to rate education institutes

PLANS Besides outsourcing accreditation to agencies, govt has also decided to give full autonomy to top ranked institutes

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NEWDELHI: In a major reform, the government plans to outsource assessment and accreditation of the higher education institutions to private bodies and give full autonomy --- academic, financial and administrative --- to the top ranked institutions, Niti Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya told HT.

This is part of the higher education reform package being finalised by the National Institution for Transforming India (Niti) Aayog and the HRD ministry. The Prime Minister's Office in March had asked them to prepare a blueprint for higher education reform that breeds academic excellence in top institutions of the country.

"The reform package is almost ready," Panagariya said. "For this, we will have to amend or replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) law. The call will be taken by Parliament".

Reforms in higher education sector had been under discus-

MAJOR REFORMS

- The National Accreditation and Assessment Council has evaluated only 10% of about 10,000 higher education institutions in India and the government wants to bring all institutions under accreditation in the next three years. For this, proposal is to rope in private rating agencies
- The government plans to introduce a three-tier autonomy mechanism in which the institutions having ranked on the top by the HRD ministry will get full academic, administrative and financial autonomy
- Middle-ranked institutions will have higher autonomy than their current level
- The institutions ranked poor would remain under the government control
- The decisions are part of the higher education reform package being finalised by the National Institution for Transforming India (Niti) Aayog and the HRD ministry
- Sources said that the reforms are being anchored in the Prime Minister's Office and the changes are being made as suggested by the PM

sion for a long time but the government had failed to implement them because of resistance from within.

More than a decade ago, the National Knowledge Commission constituted by the UPA government had recommended slew of reforms including disbanding the two higher important higher

education regulators the UGC and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and proposed an overarching higher education regulator. But, the recommendations remained on paper because of opposition by the HRD and the two bodies.

Before introducing a higher education regulator, the

National Democratic Alliance government has decided to set in motion the reforms by making third party mandatory accreditation for all public and private higher education institutions to ensure transparency and quality.

"We want credible private agencies should assess institutions in private agencies," Panagariya said, adding that even sovereign rating in the United States is done by the private agencies. "The accreditation would be based on academic and research outcome".

The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) has evaluated only 10% of about 10,000 higher education institutions in India and the government wants to bring all institutions under accreditation in the next three years. For this, proposal is to rope in private rating agencies.

Autonomy of institutions is the next big reform the government would implement, Panagariya said.

The government plans to

introduce a three-tier autonomy mechanism in which the institutions having ranked on the top by the HRD ministry will get full academic, administrative and financial autonomy. It would mean these institutions will be free to introduce new courses and schools, revamp curriculum, appoint faculty including from foreign universities and approve research projects.

Middle-ranked institutions will have higher autonomy than their current level. It would mean they would be free to introduce new courses and appoint faculty but will have to take approval of the funding agency (HRD ministry) to start new schools and appoint foreign faculty.

The institutions ranked poor would remain under the government control.

Sources said that the reforms are being anchored in the Prime Minister's Office and the changes are being made as suggested by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the review in March 2017.