

NEP panel flags concerns over autonomy

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NEW DELHI: A panel tasked with preparing a New Education Policy has flagged concerns over vested interests influencing the functioning of educational institutions, motivated by political and commercial factors.

The panel headed by K Kasturirangan, former chief of the Indian Space Research Organisation, said governance and leadership of educational institutions (HEIs) are "deeply influenced and controlled by external bodies and individuals."

"Often these external influen-

ces have vested political and/or commercial interests in the HEIs. Public institutions are often operated as extensions of government departments," the committee said in the draft new education policy that has been put up in the public domain for feedback.

"Public institutions are often operated as extensions of government departments. There is significant external interference in the selection and functioning of leaders of public institutions; this is all too often starkly visible in undeserving and inappropriate people as leaders of HEIs, appointed through corrupt or arbitrary practices that are not

merit based," the report said.

After receiving feedback from the public, the human resource development ministry will send the final draft of the New Education Policy to the Union cabinet for approval. The ministry has already received over 50,000 suggestions on various recommendations of the Kasturirangan committee, constituted in 2017.

"HEIs are not empowered to manage their own teams, and often have little or no influence on compensation, progression of faculty, and appointments. Internal governance structures have thereby become dysfunctional," the committee said in the draft

report. It called for a system of independent boards of governors which can run all higher education institutions, both public and private. "For any idea to fructify in this country, it has to be politically acceptable, socially desirable, technologically feasible, financially viable, administratively doable and judicially tenable. How do we expect a person who is enjoying all the authority to give it up. It is like saying transfers of IAS [Indian Administrative Service] officers should be done by an independent board. The politician will say what am I here for....," said Anil Swarup, a ex-school education secretary.