

criteria. These international ranking systems use different values, indices and parameters which are neither universally accepted nor recognised and are therefore contestable due to the subjective processes adopted by them. Some of these parameters are not relevant for Indian higher educational institutions and therefore these rankings cannot constitute the basis for benchmarking of Indian institutions. Different institutions can be placed at different positions on quality continuum. While Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are recognised the world over as high quality institutions, some others may not fare so well on quality parameters.

(b) Improvement of quality of higher education is a continuous process. A substantial increase in Plan allocation is proposed in the XII Plan aiming at improvement of quality of higher educational institutions. Quality of higher education in the country is also planned to be further improved through various legislative initiatives which include making the accreditation mandatory for all higher educational institutions.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) implements various schemes for improving quality of higher education, such as Universities with Potential for Excellence, Colleges with Potential for Excellence, Special Assistance Programme, Assistance for Strengthening of Infrastructure for Science and Technology, Assistance for Strengthening of Infrastructure for Humanities and Social Sciences, Fellowship Programmes for Research students as well as orientation and refresher programmes for newly appointed and in-service teachers through its Academic Staff Colleges. The UGC has also taken up various measures for educational reforms, including introduction of semester system, regular updating of curricula and credit transfer. Improved pay package for teachers in universities and colleges has been announced by the Central Government in order to attract and retain talented persons in the teaching profession. It has also been decided to make National Eligibility Test (NET)/State Level Eligibility Test (SLET) compulsory for appointment as teachers at entry level in the universities and colleges, except for those who have obtained Ph.D. degree from universities following the norms prescribed by the UGC in its regulations regarding registration, course work and evaluation process.

Aakash-2 tablets for college students

1190. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is planning to distribute Aakash-2 tablets among college students;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether any criteria has been set by Government for distribution of the tablets and its beneficiaries; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) and (b) So far, under National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) scheme, a project was sanctioned to IIT Rajasthan for achieving following deliverables after acquiring the LCADs for teacher empowerment:

- (i) Acquisition and testing of low cost access cum computing devices; and
- (ii) Hardware and software optimization of low cost access cum computing devices.

A Low Cost Access-cum-Computing Device (LCAD) named Aakash has been launched on 5th October, 2011. In the first phase of 1,00,000 tablets were targeted to the students in Higher technical education institutions so as to further ascertain technical feedback on its operation and usability.

(c) and (d) Since these tablets were for the purpose of testing, no criteria for distribution of tablet to students were laid down. Once the production capacities are built up, criteria for distribution of the tablets and its beneficiaries would get developed.

Autonomy for universities

1191. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of Universities that have been granted autonomy;
- (b) the number of Universities that have applied for autonomy;
- (c) whether Government is monitoring their activities; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) Universities are autonomous bodies established by the respective legislations under an Act of Parliament or the State Legislature and are governed by their respective Acts, Statutes and Ordinances. Government does not interfere in the functioning of the Universities. Universities enjoy complete autonomy in respect of their governance, administrative and academic activities, subject to regulations issued by University Grants Commission (UGC), for maintaining and coordinating standards of higher education. There is no programme or scheme under which autonomy is granted to a University.

Tie-up of Delhi University with DRDO

1192. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Delhi University has tied up with Defence Research Development Organization (DRDO) for setting up a Centre of Excellence in Delhi