

A phased plan of action has been put in place, to strengthen the NCTE, on the basis of the recommendations of the Justice Verma Commission, constituted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, to examine various aspects of teacher education in the country.

Irregularities in granting of recognition to institutions by AICTE

2900. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether AICTE grants permission or recognition to bodies wanting to start colleges or institutions;
- (b) if so, the criteria followed for granting such permission/recognition;
- (c) whether it has come to the notice of Government that corrupt practices are followed in AICTE in granting recognition to institutions; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government to prevent the corrupt practices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) grants approval for setting up of new technical institutions by Societies/Trust/Companies registered under section 25 of Companies Act, 1956/ Central Government/State Government etc. under the provision of Clause 10 (k) of AICTE Act, 1987.

(b) The criteria followed by the AICTE for granting approval are laid down in the regulation and Approval Process Handbook issued from time to time. The information is also available on the website at www.aicte-india.org.

(c) and (d) The Ministry is aware that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered some cases against institutions and AICTE officials. In order to streamline the process, AICTE has introduced an e-Governance- Approval process for greater transparency and clarity, easier and assured communication, fast processing and facility for tracking of application by the applicant. Emphasis is being laid on self - declaration by Institutions rather than inspection in the e-Governance process. A database of country - wide experts has been created and the experts are selected randomly by computer, thus avoiding manual/human intervention in the constitution of the expert committees. The composition of Expert

Committees at different stages of the approval process has been modified, incorporating High Court Advocates and practicing Architects and Professors as Members of the Committee.

A Public Notice under the caption "Vigilance Awareness" has been published in the leading newspapers to improve accountability, transparency while conducting expert committee visit for the evaluation of physical and academic infrastructural facilities. The public has been informed that if they have any complaint regarding any expert visit, they may send their feed-back/grievance at a dedicated email id *i.e. aictevigilance@gmail.com*.

Standard of education in Indian universities

2901. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the standard of education in Indian universities has been declining over the last two years;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor, including the response of Government thereto;

(c) whether Government has set up any expert group to look into the issue and to recommend remedial measures; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to improve the standard and quality in Indian universities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) and (b) There has been an impression in certain quarters that the quality and the standards of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) are going down. However, quality being a relative and subjective attribute, it is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion as to whether quality is declining or not. Some of the factors which might have contributed to the impression that standards are declining include the fact that an exponential increase in the number of institutions in the last decade, both in the public and private sector, has taken place. An unprecedented number of new central institutions was also created in the XI plan period by the Central Government. Some of the institutions may have taken time to put in place quality human and physical infrastructure. Accreditation is one of the most reliable and objective