

PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

**PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF HRD
MINISTRY HELD**

**DISCUSSIONS HELD ON LEGISLATIVE REFORMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION
New Delhi: September 29, 2011**

The meeting of the Consultative Committee of Parliament for the Ministry of Human Resource Development was held here last evening. The subject of discussion for the meeting was **“Legislative Reforms in Higher Education”**. A presentation was made to the Members of Parliament by the Department of Higher Education on the vision and contours of these legislative initiatives. The Union Minister of HRD, Shri Kapil Sibal underlined the need for reforms. He pointed out that with the Right to Education having been enacted, a much larger number of children will reach the higher education stage. For that, capacity needs to be created and systems and regulations also need to be put in place.

The Members of Parliament expressed their appreciation for these envisaged reforms particularly praising the Prohibition of Unfair Practices’ Bill. A number of concerns were also raised by the Members of Parliament. One area of concern common to many Members of Parliament was that the envisaged expansion of higher education should not result in a heightened rural/urban and rich/poor divide as also a divide among those who can speak English and those who cannot. A concern was also raised that till the secondary and higher secondary education sector, especially in government schools is not improved the poorer sections will not be adequately prepared for good quality higher education.

Another concern was on the poor teacher-student ratio in colleges and declining standards of college education. A suggestion was made by some Members of Parliament that the Centre should set up a centrally run college in every district of the country in the manner of Kendriya Vidyalayas or Navodaya Vidyalayas. A few Members of Parliament also expressed unhappiness on the NAAC being located in one place (Bangalore) and having no other branches, which inconveniences people. A concern was also raised regarding a number of engineering seats being left vacant as in some parts of the country there appear to be more engineering colleges than required.

Regarding the Tribunal Bill and other Bills which envisages committees, it was suggested by an MP that these committees must have at least one SC/ST/OBC member and also ladies as members. A concern common among a number of MPs was regarding the advertisements put out by educational institutions which at many times are patently false and dupe students.

The Minister addressing the concerns stated that the Ministry has asked the AICTE to write to those State Governments where there is a surplus of vacant seats as to whether recognition should be given to more engineering colleges from these states. This would help address the issue of excess engineering capacity observed in some regions. The Minister also pointed out that the Government is already funding secondary education to the amount of 75 percent through the RMSA which is an intervention to improve the quality of secondary education so that the rich-poor and urban-rural divide in education is bridged. He said that a common entrance test for engineering institutions is being envisaged which seeks to give greater and more equitable access to all through a formulation which is being worked out. Regarding the Tribunals Bill, the Minister explained that the Bill envisages one third lady member/members in the state as well as National Tribunal. He also said that in the last session of Parliament, an amendment was introduced to the Bill which makes a provision for SC/ST representation in the selection committees for the Tribunal members.

The Members present from the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha include: Shri Jose K. Mani, Shri Jagdanand Singh, Dr. Nirmal Khatri, Shri G.M. Dudhgaonkar, Dr. M Thambi Dorai, Smt. Rama Devi, Shri Lalji Tandon, Dr. Ranjan Prasad Yadav, Shri Ishwar Singh, Shri Mohammad Shafi, Shri G.N. Ratanpuri, Shri Javed Akhtar, Shri D. Raja, Shri Avinash Pande and Dr. Tarun Mandal.. Also present were Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Smt. Vibha Puri Das and Secretary Department of School Education and Literacy Smt. Anshu Vaish, besides other senior officials of the HRD Ministry.

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