

# Is India ready for free access to quality higher education?

## OPINION

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UNESCO has been championing the right to education at all levels, including higher education. It is convinced that making higher education freely accessible and guaranteed for all is essential. It believes that tuition-free public higher education is an important step in this direction.

Free access to quality higher education may have significant implications on the future means of production and distribution. The way the population on this planet works and lives would depend a great deal on their higher education qualifications. Free access to quality higher education for all appears imminent for realising the goals set by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 (SDG4) by 2030.

A recent policy paper by the UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and Caribbean (IESALC) argues that "the removal of tuition fees in higher education increases social demand for higher education and, ultimately, the level of educational attainment of the population".

### WORLD SCENARIO:

A survey of 146 UNESCO

member states (MS) spanning the Arab regions, Central and East Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbeans, North America and Western Europe, South and West Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, revealed that while 41 of them (29%) have already mandated by law to provide free higher education, 97 (68%) do not offer such a guarantee. The remaining 8 member states could not provide the data because such decisions were in the domain of the Sub National Government (SNGs) and did not fall under the purview of the national government.

### REGIONAL SCENARIO:

The survey further reveals that nearly half of the MS in Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean provide free public higher education to their people. In the Sub-Saharan region, nearly 30% of the MS had mandated free higher education for their people.

Even in North America, Western Europe, and South-west Asia, nearly 20% of the MS had been mandated by law to provide free higher education. Arab region and

East Asia presented a different case as the number of MS mandating free higher education were no more than 12 and 6 per cent, respectively.

### THE INCOME GROUP ANALYSIS:

Interestingly, only about 20% of the low-income and lower-middle-income countries were able to mandate free higher education compared to 40% of the upper-middle countries. In

*India has had a policy of providing higher education either through public institutions or through grant-in-aid institutions. Since they had no motivation to make a profit and the governments were willing to invest in higher education, they provided higher education at an affordable cost.*

contrast, only 10% of the high-income countries had mandated free higher education.

High-income countries have already achieved near-universal higher education. It is the low-income and lower-middle-income countries that need special global attention. Higher inequity in population with higher education would seriously impact the global development agenda.

### WHERE DOES INDIA STAND?:

India, too, provides free higher education to some select groups of persons. Most centrally funded technical institutions (CFTI) are mandated to provide tuition-free higher education to the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and

Other Backward Castes (OBCs).

Several states in India have mandated similar provisions for free higher education up to the postgraduate level for girls and socially deprived sections of their domiciles.

Participation rate in higher education, as reflected by the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is presently hovering at 28.4%. The new education policy (NEP 2020) targets to achieve a GER of 50% by

2035, five years after SDG4 ends. Notably, a few states have already achieved the targeted GER.

### AFFORDABILITY:

Universal access to quality higher education essentially hinges on the ability of the state to provide quality higher education at affordable cost, if not free. India has had a policy of providing higher education either through public institutions or through grant-in-aid institutions. Since they had no motivation to make a profit and the governments were willing to invest in higher education, they provided higher education at an affordable cost. This continued for nearly half a century since Independence.

The situation changed as the country moved toward

economic liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) as mandated by the structural adjustment policies. This led to slow but steady withdrawal of the state from higher education. This led to a rapid rise in the high fees charging higher education institutions. The process started with professional, technical and medical higher education but soon engulfed all kinds and types of higher education.

The trend now manifests in public higher education institutions as well. Self-financing courses, programmes and institutions, a euphemism for accelerated, if not full, cost recovery, are now more a norm than an exception.

### NEP 2020:

The new education policy alludes to universal access to quality education but only in the context of school education. In higher education, its articulation is limited to attaining the GER of 50% by 2035 and expression of interest to take investment in education to 6% of GDP or to 20% of the budgetary allocation. It also mentions that the commercialisation of higher education will be discouraged and that private higher educational institutions are

to be public-spirited, whatever the term may mean.

In the same breath, it also highlights the role and importance of private participation in higher education. It seeks to encourage entry and operation of foreign higher educational institutions in India with the freedom to charge fees to students. The new education policy has chosen to maintain a stoic silence on affordability barriers caused by the rising high education costs, except for the provision of loans and some fee waivers.

### THE GROUND REALITIES:

The ever-increasing cost, in private as well as public, becomes a real barrier to accessing higher education in India per capita income is not only low but also highly skewed. In 2021, the rich 3% of the households earned more than Rs. 30 Lakh. In comparison, more than half of households in the country earned no more than Rs. 1.25 Lakh. Another 15% of households earned much less. The fact that nearly 60% of the population is provided free food to survive and that only 2.97% of people pay income tax, affordability is a real challenge in accessing quality higher education.

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# CENTRE SLASHES ALLOCATION FOR EDUCATION, UGC FUNDING CUT 61%

Fareeha Iftikhar

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**NEW DELHI:** The interim budget presented on Thursday set aside ₹1.2 lakh crore for education, a roughly 7% decrease compared to the revised estimate number for 2023-24, even as the allocation for the University Grants Commission (UGC) was slashed by 61%, the largest ever cut in at least five years.

According to the budget document, of the total outlay, the Union government has set aside ₹73,008.10 crore for schools, a marginal 0.73% dip from the revised estimate for 2023-24, while higher education was earmarked ₹47,619.77 crore, down by a sharp ₹9,600 crore (16.8%).

However, the Union ministry of education claimed that the school education budget has increased by 19.5% as the overall revised estimate was different from what is mentioned in the budget document released by the finance ministry. "The revised estimates mentioned in the budget document have been added to it. However, it should be calculated without it," said a senior ministry official.

No changes were made in the budget document by the time this report was filed.

Experts raised concerns over decrease in UGC budget. Rajesh Jha, an assistant professor at Delhi University said, "The drastic cut in UGC fund has deleted G (Grants) and reduced it to merely a regulatory agency. This will further encourage universities to start more self financing courses which will be an additional burden on students. It will also make universities more dependent on loans from Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)."

On the other hand, the budget estimate grants for central universities shot up 28% to ₹15,928 crore from the revised estimate of ₹12,394 crore last year. The budget estimate in last fiscal year's document was ₹11,528 crore.

# Supreme Court reserves verdict on minority status of Aligarh Muslim University

PARMOD KUMAR

NEW DELHI, 1 FEBRUARY

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved verdict on a batch of petitions seeking the recognition of Aligarh Muslim University as a Muslim minority educational institution by virtue of being founded by the Muslims and the successor of the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College (MAO College), protected under Article 30 of the constitution guaranteeing the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

The Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College was established by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan way back in 1875. On the

importance of AMU for the Muslim community, the court was told that Muslims have just 1.7 per cent presence in the institution of higher learning like IITs which is far behind the presence of the lowest strata of the society in the educational institutions.

A seven-judge constitution bench comprising Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice Surya Kant, Justice J.B. Pardiwala, Justice Dipankar Datta, Justice Manoj Misra and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, reserved the order on the conclusion of the hearing that was spread over eight days – starting from January 9 and concluding today – 1 Febru-



**The Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College was established by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan way back in 1875.**

ary 2024. The core questions for determination by the constitution bench are whether Aligarh Muslim University was founded by the Muslims and when the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was transformed into AMU in

1920 by the AMU Act, did it also carry with it the tag of (MAO College) being a Muslim minority institution.

The AMU Act was enacted in 1920 by the Central Legislative Council under British rule.

The 7-judge constitution bench hearing, relating to the minority character of AMU, arises from two earlier top court references of 1981 and 2019 for a relook at the correctness of the 1967 judgment by a five-judge constitution bench that had ruled that AMU was a central university and did not have a status of a Muslim minority educational institution.

In their rejoinder arguments, senior advocates Rajeev Dhavan and Kapil Sibal, told the constitution bench that all through its existence right from 1920, the AMU's administration starting from University Court, academic council and the executive

council had the predominant presence of Muslims and even the 'Visitor' who, during British period was Governor General, later Governor of Uttar Pradesh acted on the advice of the University Court. The constitution bench was told that the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the AMU were appointed by the University Court. Mr Sibal questioned the arguments advanced by the Central government and others, opposing the recognition of the minority character of the AMU, that non-Muslims were administering the AMU.

Mr Sibal wondered what was the basis of such an argu-

ment.

He said that Article 30 of the constitution guarantees "the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions" but does not mandate that all its faculty and administration be packed with Muslims only.

Mr Sibal said that if one were to accept such a position, then no institution in the country would have a minority character. He said that St. Stephen college in Delhi University has not more than five per cent Christians in its faculty and even in the administration.

Dwelling on the importance of AMU for the Muslims, Sibal told the bench that Muslims have just 1.7 per cent presence

amongst the student's in the institutions of higher learning, which is far short of the presence of SC/ST and the OBCs. He said by designating AMU as an institution of national importance with no minority status, 50 per cent of the seats would go to SC/ST and the OBCs and 10 per cent to the EWS, thereby leaving nothing for the Muslims.

Mr Sibal said that it would be a sad day if AMU is stripped of its minority character for the reasons that have no sanction of the constitution and the law, that too when AMU is adhering to all the rules and regulations governing the functioning of the universities across the country.

# Cut in outlay for higher education

UGC funding down by 60% | Grant for IIMs slashed again | Marginal hike for schools

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 1

The Education Ministry sees a hike of 6 per cent in the budget allocation. The ministry has been allocated Rs 1,20,627 crore in FY 2024-25, up from Rs 1,12,898 crore for 2023-24.

Even as the outlay to school education has seen a marginal increase of over Rs 500 crore or 6.1 per cent, the grant for higher education has been reduced by over Rs 9,600 crore from the previous fiscal's Revised Estimate (RE).

The Department of School and Literacy has been allocated Rs 73,008.10 crore against the previous fiscal's RE of Rs 72,473.80 crore.

Of the total funds for school education, a major share of Rs 6,050 crore has been allocated to PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI).

The allocation for higher education has dropped from Rs 57,244.48 crore (RE) to Rs 47,619.77 crore. Though the government had allocated Rs 44,094.62 crore in FY 23-24, it was overshot by Rs 13,150 crore.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has faced a budget cut this year with the Centre reducing its grant by over 60 per cent from the previous year's RE of Rs 6,409 crore to Rs 2,500 crore.



However, the support grant for Central Universities has increased by over 28 per cent.

The allocation for Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) has been slashed for the second consecutive year. Last year, the budget for IIMs was slashed from Rs 608.23 crore (RE) to Rs 300 crore. This year, the budget

has been brought down further to Rs 212.21 crore from the RE of Rs 331 crore.

The budget for Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) has also seen a marginal dip to Rs 10324.50 crore from the RE of Rs 10,384.21 crore last year.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "Our pros-

perity depends on adequately equipping and empowering the youth. The National Education Policy 2020 is ushering in transformational reforms. PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) are delivering quality teaching and nurturing holistic and well-rounded individuals."

"The Skill India Mission has trained 1.4 crore youth, upskilled and reskilled 54 lakh youth and established 3,000 new ITIs. A large number of new institutions of higher learning, namely seven IITs, 16 IIITs, seven IIMs, 15 AIIMS and 390 universities have been set up," she added. (with PTI inputs)



A large number of new institutions of higher learning — seven IITs, 16 IIITs, seven IIMs, 15 AIIMS and 390 universities — have been set up since 2014 while 3,000 new ITIs have been established, says FM



# Changing gender dynamics in higher education



**PERSPECTIVE**

**BHARTESH SINGH THAKUR**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 1**

A report by the Union Ministry of Education released on January 25 says the number of women enrolling for higher education in Haryana is much higher than men. The All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22, however, also points out that this high enrolment does not reflect in faculty numbers, as there are more male professors and associate professors than women educationists.

Against the estimated enrolment of 5.62 lakh women in various higher education courses in the state, 5.42 lakh men applied for PhD, MPhil, post-graduation, under-graduation, diplomas, certificate courses and integrated/dual degree programmes.

The number of women students has generally remained higher in recent years. Only in the preceding year (2020-21), the number of male students was more: 5.18 lakh against 5.11 lakh women. In 2019-20 as well as in 2018-19, women outnumbered men.

The AISHE report says the trend of more women students in 2021-22 is reflected across almost all courses. For PhD, 2,385 women got enrolled against 1,784 men, while in post-graduation courses, the number of women is almost twice at 98,973 against 57,199 men. At the under-graduate level, too, there are 4.17 lakh women against 4.05 lakh men.

It is only in PG diploma and integrated degree courses that the number of male students is higher. In diploma courses, the men's

(63,957) enrolment is twice that of women (31,839).

The number of male students is higher in polytechnics, while more female students have sought admissions in nursing institutions. Besides Haryana, female enrolment in higher education is significantly more than males in Kerala, Telangana, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Haryana has 56 universities, including one Central University, five institutes of national importance, 20 state public varsities, 24 private varsities, and three deemed universities (government and private). Besides, there are 1,090 colleges and 258 standalone institutions.

Both Haryana and Punjab have 33 colleges per lakh population (2021-22), which is much lower than neighbouring HP (47).

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Haryana is just 33.3 per cent — 37 per cent among women and 30.3 per cent among men. This GER is almost 10 points lower than HP (43.1), while Punjab's GER stands at 27.4. The GER in higher education is calculated as the total enrolment in higher education, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official population aged between 18 and 23 years.

## Teacher ratio

When it comes to teaching, the number of male faculty members is higher, particularly at the level of professors and associate professors. In the professors' category, there are 1,219 women against 2,519 men.



Women outnumber men across colleges and universities in Haryana. TRIBUNE PHOTO

## WOMEN'S NUMBERS RISING

“We are seeing more women as assistant professors. In the coming years, the number of female faculty members will rise and they will outnumber male teachers at the level of professors and associate professors as well. — Prof Som Nath Sachdeva, VC, KURUKSHETRA UNIVERSITY

## FACULTY FIGURES IN HARYANA

PROFESSORS	ASSOCIATE PROFS	VISITING FACULTY	ASSISTANT PROFS
Men: 2,519 Women: 1,219	Men: 2,179 Women: 2,020	Men: 253 Women: 220	Men: 12,993 Women: 15,770

In the associate professors' category, the number of males is 2,179 against 2,020 female faculty members. In the visiting faculty category, the number stands at 253 men and 220 women. This is attributed to the earlier trend of a higher number of men opting for higher education. As a result, more were eligible for teaching positions.

The trend is changing slowly. Now, among assistant professors, the number of women is higher at 15,770 against 12,993 men. Among

associate professor after years of experience. However, as we are seeing more women as assistant professors, in the coming years, the number of female faculty members will rise and be more than male teachers at the level of professors and associate professors as well. In MDU, women comprise about 60 per cent of faculty at the level of assistant professors”.

“Women are outnumbering men in several courses. Performance-wise, too, they are ahead. Out of 30 toppers in life sciences departments at MDU, 26 are women. There are 350 slots for PhD in MDU and 80 per cent of these have gone to women,” adds Prof Singh.

Prof Som Nath Sachdeva, Vice-Chancellor of Kurukshetra University, echoes similar sentiments. “Most of the merit positions are being grabbed by women. So, more and more women are getting recruited as assistant professors. Recently, we recruited 40 teachers and most of them are women. Those at the positions of associate professors and professors came into the profession 15-20 years ago. In the next 10 years, women will outnumber men at these top positions too,” says Prof Sachdeva.

## Low SC representation

Scheduled Caste candidates have much lower GER (26.5) in Haryana, with women at 29.2 per cent and men 24.2. The enrolment of SC students at 1.86 lakh in higher education is just 16.8 per cent of the total enrolment against 20.2 per cent SC population of the state, as per the

2011 Census.

There are 2,823 SC teachers in the state, comprising 6.9 per cent of the total faculty. The number of teachers belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in the state is only 50.

The representation of Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in the faculty is 12.1 per cent at 4,970, while the OBC students' enrolment at 2.53 lakh forms 22.9 per cent of the total.

## Minority students, teachers

As per the 2011 Census, the Muslim population of the state is 7 per cent. However, just 10,961 students enrolled for higher education in 2021-22 — 3,092 women and 7,869 men — forming only 1 per cent of the total enrolment. In 2019-20, 12,877 Muslims got enrolled in higher education. The number fell to 10,445 in 2020-21. Their representation in the faculty is equally low. At 748, Muslim teachers comprised only 1.8 per cent of the total faculty in 2021-22.

“Earlier, there used to be scholarships for Muslim students to encourage them for higher education. These have been discontinued in the past few years. We need to start these scholarships again. More higher education institutions should be opened in Nuh (a Muslim-dominated district). We have been demanding a university there. Presently, the educational institutions in Nuh do not have the required faculty. Teachers are sent here on punishment posting,” claims Nuh MLA Aftab Ahmed, who is also Deputy CLP leader in the Legislative Assembly.

AISHE report by the Union Ministry of Education points to a peculiar trend, which may see a change in the coming years.

There are more women students pursuing higher education in the state, but men dominate when it comes to posts of professors and associate professors



# स्कूली शिक्षा के बजट में 534 करोड़ रुपये की वृद्धि

जागरण ब्यूरो, नई दिल्ली : अंतरिम बजट में स्कूली शिक्षा के बजट में पिछले साल के मुकाबले इस बार 534 करोड़ रुपये की बढ़ोतरी की गई है। पिछले साल स्कूली शिक्षा का बजट 72,473.80 करोड़ था, जो इस बार 73,008.10 करोड़ रुपये कर दिया गया है। वहीं यूजीसी को दी जाने वाली वित्तीय मदद में 60 प्रतिशत से अधिक की बड़ी कटौती की गई है। इसे पिछले साल दिए गए 6,409 करोड़ रुपये के मुकाबले इस बार 2,500 करोड़ पर समेट दिया है।

इस बार उच्च शिक्षा के लिए 47,619.77 करोड़ रुपये का आवंटन किया है, जबकि पिछले वर्ष उच्च शिक्षा के लिए 57, 244.48 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए थे। इस दौरान आइआइएम के बजट में भी कटौती की गई है। पिछले वर्ष आइआइएम को 608.23 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए थे, जबकि इस बार बजट में उसे सिर्फ तीन सौ करोड़ रुपए ही दिए गए हैं। आइआइटी के बजट में भी कमी की गई है। पिछले वर्ष आइआइटी का बजट 331 करोड़ था जो इस बार 212.21 करोड़ कर दिया गया है।



## स्किल इंडिया मिशन से 1.40 करोड़ युवा प्रशिक्षित

स्किल इंडिया मिशन के तहत 1.40 करोड़ युवाओं को प्रशिक्षण दिया गया और उन्हें कुशल बनाया गया। यह मिशन अल्पकालिक और दीर्घकालिक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमों के माध्यम से कौशल विकास, पुनः कौशल विकास पर केंद्रित है। सरकार 20 से अधिक केंद्रीय मंत्रालयों/विभागों के माध्यम से देशभर में विभिन्न कौशल विकास योजनाएं लागू कर रही है। पीएम स्कूल्स फार राइजिंग इंडिया (पीएम-श्री) भी गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा दे रहे हैं। हमारी समृद्धि युवाओं को पर्याप्त रूप से सक्षम और सशक्त बनाने पर निर्भर करती है।



# DU: UG के लिए इसी महीने आ सकता है इंफर्मेंशन बुलेटिन

विशेष संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली

दिल्ली यूनिवर्सिटी में नए सेशन के लिए अंडरग्रेजुएट कोर्स में एडमिशन की तैयारी शुरू हो चुकी है। यूनिवर्सिटी ने एडमिशन 2024-25 के लिए 9 मंबर की एडमिशन कमेटी बना दी है। कॉमन यूनिवर्सिटी एंट्रेंस टेस्ट (सीयूईटी) यूजी के फॉर्म भरना इसी महीने शुरू होने की उम्मीद है। नैशनल टेस्टिंग एजेंसी की सीयूईटी यूजी की रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रक्रिया शुरू होते ही डीयू अपने सभी यूजी कोर्स के लिए इंफर्मेंशन बुलेटिन जारी कर देगी। सीयूईटी के बाद यूनिवर्सिटी अपना कॉमन सीट एलोकेशन सिस्टम (सीएसएस) लॉन्च करेगी।

डीयू डीन एडमिशन प्रो हनीत गांधी ने कहा 'सीयूईटी की रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रक्रिया शुरू होते ही हम यूजी कोर्सों के लिए अपना इंफर्मेंशन बुलेटिन जारी करेंगे ताकि जो स्टूडेंट्स एडमिशन चाहते हैं, वो पसंद के कोर्स की एलिजिबिलिटी देखकर सीयूईटी का फॉर्म भरे और जरूरी सब्जेक्ट के एंट्रेंस दे सकें। अगर फरवरी में रजिस्ट्रेशन शुरू



यूनिवर्सिटी की एडमिशन कमेटी बनी, सीयूईटी रजिस्ट्रेशन का इंतजार

हो जाते हैं, तो इसी महीने बुलेटिन जारी होगी। सीयूईटी होने के बाद हम अपना पोर्टल रजिस्ट्रेशन के लिए खोलेंगे, यानी कॉमन सीट एलोकेशन सिस्टम (सीएसएस) लॉन्च

करेंगे।'

2024-25 के सीयूईटी कैलेंडर के हिसाब से सीयूईटी यूजी 15 मई से 31 मई तक होगा। तीनों लिस्ट में से स्टूडेंट्स 9 की बजाय 10 सब्जेक्ट चुन सकेंगे। डीयू का एलिजिबिलिटी क्राइटेरिया पिछले साल की तरह रहने की उम्मीद है।