

HRD panel for scrapping UGC

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New Delhi: One of the first committee set up by HRD minister Smriti Irani to review the working of the University Grants Commission has said that the regulator not only has "failed to fulfil its mandate but also has not been able to deal with emerging diverse complexities."

Headed by former UGC chairperson Hari Gautam, the committee has said any "reshaping or restructuring" of UGC "will be a futile" exercise and so will be amending the UGC Act.

Therefore, it has recommended setting up of National Higher Education Au-

thority through an act of Parliament. It has also prepared a draft of the bill but

said that till the time such a body is set up, HRD ministry can bring about many changes through executive order.

For instance, it has suggested a national research aptitude test for admission to PhD and doing away with 10 years as professor criteria to become vice-chancellors. It has also emphasized teaching of yoga and transcendental meditation.

ministry sources said, "Recommendations are far-reaching and will be looked into seriously." The two-volume report submitted to the ministry says UGC is "plagued in the main by reductionism in its func-

tioning." The report also states, "It (UGC) has side-stepped its function of being a sentinel of excellence in education and embraced the relatively easier function of funding education."

It has specifically pointed out that the UGC staff is unhappy as only "few find favour and are delegated with powers to perform in important areas while many of them are left out with hardly much to contribute." "It is said they are pushed around through an element of fear and threat. The overall impression is that there is a man-made crisis which seems to be cause of unhealthy ambience and poor performance of UGC," the report said, adding there should be pay parity with central government employees. Advising reform from the top, the committee has said UGC chairperson "should be advised to strictly keep a vigilant track of the various performance areas of the UGC and assess the contribution at all levels."

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The committee set up by HRD minister Smriti Z Irani to review UGC functioning