



The New Indian Express

Monday, January 23, 2012

Mixed Response for Higher Edn Ombudsman

HRD ministry plans an Ombudsman in higher education institutions to check malpractices

by **Bharath Joshi**

Bangalore: Malpractices during admissions, exams and other aspects of a student's life in educational institutions are rampant.

Now the Union Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry seems to have found a solution to tackle this menace with the appointment of an ombudsman in higher education institutions to check on unfair practices.

"I certainly welcome this move, considering the fact that many universities have no grievance redressal systems in place. I would only say that the appointment of the ombudsman has to be transparent to ensure effectiveness, and he has to be independent in his functioning," opined former Bangalore University Vice-Chancellor Dr M S Thimmappa.

Every educational institution affiliated to a Central University and under control of a Central regulator such as University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is required to

have an Ombudsman.

The person will be concerned with admissions, non-observance of declared merit in admission, regulations for reservation, withholding of documents and non-refund of fees in certain cases, discrimination and other such matters concerning students.

It is said that the presence of an Ombudsman on the premises of educational institutions would pose a question on the sovereignty

EVERY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AFFILIATED TO A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY AND AICTE IS REQUIRED TO HAVE AN OMBUDSMAN

of the institutes.

"One must understand that it is not policing. We are only rising up to the occasion. It will be a boon to institutions, with the coming of foreign universities. There will be checks and balances and fine tuning of standards," said Prof A S

Chandramouli, Principal, Surana College.

Many argue that it is a move targeting private institutions, which have been accused in the past of practicing unfair admission and examination processes.

"Perhaps yes, but we must remember that enforcement of law has been futile in this country," he added.

"There is need for an Ombudsman in universities which are meant to serve the public. It is a good move that will bring in accountability. Our university abides by directives of regulatory bodies. If such a directive comes, we will follow it," said Dr Sandeep Shastri, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Jain University.

Meanwhile, Vice-Chancellor of Tumkur University Dr S C Sharma is critical of the move.

"I don't agree with the move. There are enough forums for students and transparency can be ensured even with a website. One redressal system will lead to another one, forming a vicious cycle. This move will only complicate things further," he said.