

Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' interacts through video conference with Vice Chancellors of Central Universities across the country in backdrop of spread of COVID-19

Union Minister emphasizes on continuing education of students through SWAYAM and other digital means

Committee to promote online education and give suggestions regarding online examination to be constituted under the chairmanship of Prof. Nageswara Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU - Union HRD Minister

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Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' interacted with the Vice Chancellors of all the Central Universities of the country today in the backdrop of spread of COVID-19. Following points were discussed during the meeting.

1. Measures to be taken regarding health of students residing in hostels and academic and non-academic staff of the university.
2. Proper adherence to social distancing and isolation instructions in the university.
3. Provision for testing of suspected cases of COVID-19 in the University.
4. Arrangements made to continue the education of students
5. Management to deal with mental health challenges of students.
6. Resolve the salary related problems of all employees (permanent, temporary and daily wage earners).
7. Initiatives related to COVID-19 to be informed through social media.
8. Research related to COVID-19 may be carried out.

During the discussion, all the universities assured that in the hour of crisis, they are prepared to meet the challenges. Proper care is being taken for the food and mental health of the students who continue to reside in

the universities . Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim university informed that they have created facility of 40-bed isolation rooms. Most of the universities continue to run courses digitally so that academic session is not delayed.

The Union Human Resource Development Minister has directed all the Vice Chancellors to motivate their faculty and students to use SWAYAM and SWAYAM PRABHA in mission mode and also through other online digital mediums to Continue the academic program. Shri Pokhriyal also informed that to promote online education and give suggestions regarding online examination a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Nageshwar Rao, VC, IGNOU has been constituted.

The decision to form an Academic Calendar Committee under the leadership of U.G.C Chairman was also taken by the Minister . The Committee will suggest measures to deal with the issue of delay in the academic session.

To ensure mental well-being of the students, the Union Minister announced the formation of a committee under the chairmanship of a Joint Secretary of the Ministry. The Committee will take care of the mental well being of the students of the school as well as of colleges and universities.

Union Minister directed the Vice Chancellors of Aligarh Muslim University and B.H.U that there should be no shortage of any kind in the hospitals run by them. Some universities have stated that they have done some research to fight COVID-19 which will reach the people after approval by authorized agencies. The Union Human Resource Development Minister requested that such research to be carried out at a fast pace. He assured all assistance to such research.

The Vice Chancellors of all universities told that salary allowance is being given on time for permanent, temporary and daily wage earners and at this time a provision has been made to pay salaries even on the days of their absence.

The Union Minister requested all the Vice Chancellors to contribute to the PM CARES Fund. At the same time, on the call of the Prime Minister, on 5 April 2020, at 9 pm, they should switch off the lights of the houses for 9 minutes and to light a lamp, candle or mobile flashlight to express solidarity.

Apart from this, Shri Nishank asked everyone to make full use of the ArogyaSetu app developed by the Government of India and emphasized to follow the guidelines issued by the Ministry of AYUSH from time to time to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Finally, the Union Minister instructed all the Vice Chancellors to take steps on the following points:

- (i) Efforts to increase Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) through online education.
- (ii) Reading - Efforts to raise the level of reading quality and standards.
- (iii) Appropriate measures to maintain discipline in university campus.
- (iv) Reasonable strategy to develop Central Universities into centers of knowledge and excellence.
- (v) Advance planning of academic calendar should be done for the smooth functioning after the restoration of normalcy.

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