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Faculty quota leeway for IIMs in bill

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New Delhi, Feb. 9: The government today introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha to empower the Indian Institutes of Management to offer degrees while leaving enough leeway for the B-schools to continue avoiding reservation in faculty appointments.

The Indian Institutes of Management Bill, 2017, did touch upon an affirmative policy while hiring teachers but experts said it was too mild to enforce a quota-based system.

The bill, introduced by human resource development minister Prakash Javadekar, has a provision that expects the institutes not to discriminate anybody on grounds of "sex, race, creed, caste or class... (and) religious belief".

It also says the institutes are free to make "special provisions" for recruiting people from the socially and educationally backward classes.

P.S. Krishnan, an expert on reservation issues, said the government had given the IIMs enough leeway to avoid implementing the reservation policy - 15 per cent for Scheduled Castes, 7.5 per cent for Scheduled Tribes and 27 per cent for other backward classes - while hiring faculty.

"To expect the IIMs to make special provisions for recruiting faculty from socially disadvantaged sections without any binding order may not be of much benefit for the socially disadvantaged," Krishnan, a former secretary to the Union government, added. "The institutions will cite lack of merit to escape the expected affirmative actions."

Two IIM directors admitted that the Centre did not want the institutes to introduce standardised reservation through the roster system of keeping certain posts reserved for specific social categories. If suitable candidates are not found, these posts remain vacant.

The IIMs have been avoiding reservation in faculty recruitment since their inception, citing a government order of 1975 that exempted scientific and technical posts from the quota ambit.

While IIM Ahmedabad has officially adopted this order, other IIMs have merely taken advantage of it, claiming that management as a subject came under the category of science and technology.

The IITs, too, had been enjoying exemption from reserving faculty seats but introduced quotas in 2008 following a directive from the HRD ministry. Since then the premier tech schools have been implementing reservation in assistant professor-level posts in science and technology subjects and at all levels - assistant professors, associate professors and professors - in other streams like humanities and management.

While the ministry has issued advisories to the IIMs, no binding order has come on enforcing affirmative policies.

Sources said the ministry had recently discussed a move for issuing a binding order to the IIMs, but Javadekar is learnt to be against such directives.

The IIM bill tabled today said: "Every Institute shall be open to all persons irrespective of sex, race, creed, caste or class, and no test or condition shall be imposed as to religious belief or profession in admitting or appointing members, students, teachers or workers or in any other connection whatsoever."

Another provision said "nothing in this section shall be deemed to prevent the Institute from making special provisions for the employment or admission of women, persons with disabilities or for persons belonging to any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and, in particular, for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes".

The bill, however, said the IIMs would continue to reserve seats while admitting students for the Post-Graduate Programme (PGP).

The director of an IIM said the provisions had been drafted keeping in mind lack of suitable SC/ST and OBC candidates. "If you implement reservation and create a roster system, some posts may remain vacant for unavailability of suitable candidates. That would not benefit either the institute or the society," the director said.

The director of another IIM said the B-schools had informally agreed on an affirmative policy under which SC/STs and OBCs would be given preference in recruitment if a candidate had the same merit level as a general category candidate.

"You cannot compromise on quality. You can relax the bar for admitting students but that is not possible in teacher recruitment," the director added.

Once the IIM bill is passed, it would enable the institutes to offer MBA degrees in place of the PG Diploma now and PhDs in place of fellowships.