

President of India as Visitor to IIMs will increase collaboration with government bodies - EducationTimes.com

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The central government has recently issued new regulations under which the President of India will act as Visitor to Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and hold the authority to appoint the chairperson of the Board of Governors and appoint or terminate directors. The new rules will lead to the smoother implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), and the appointment of academically accomplished directors, however, it may also reduce the autonomy of IIMs and lead to the board of governors becoming risk averse, say experts.

Under new rules, the President of India will appoint the chairperson of the Board and dissolve the Board if it fails to discharge its duties properly or disobey the Visitor. The director shall be appointed by a panel recommended by a committee consisting of the chairperson of the Board, one member nominated by the Visitor, and two members chosen from among eminent administrators, industrialists, educationists, scientists, technocrats and management specialists. The regulations also state that candidates aspiring to become IIM directors must have an excellent academic record with first-class degrees in

both bachelor's and master's, and PhD from a reputed institute.

Increased support and resources

IIM directors are of the view that the involvement of the highest office in the country will increase accountability in the decision-making process at IIMs. “The President of India being a Visitor will ensure a close alignment of IIM leadership with the national vision for education. The Visitor will elevate the national recognition of IIMs, underscoring their pivotal role in the country's educational landscape. Such recognition may translate into increased support and resources for IIMs. Aligning with the President's office creates an avenue for closer collaboration between IIMs and various government initiatives. The move will lead to a huge social impact as it will help in better implementation of NEP 2020,” says Ram Kumar Kakani, director, IIM Raipur.

The latest regulations for the selection of the director will help in getting academically brilliant directors to India's premier management institutions, “Their decision-making abilities will improve the quality of education. Good institutions should be ready to evolve, and policy changes help them evolve,” says Kakani.

IIMs were set up by the government of India, and the ownership lies with the government. “It is a privilege that Visitor is connected to the IIMs, earlier the Visitor was connected to the central universities and IITs. It enhances the credibility of an institution,” says Dr Bhimaraya Metri, director, IIM Nagpur, dismissing the fears that the new regulations will lead to reduced autonomy. “The director is considered the CEO of the institute and has full authority which has not been curtailed by

the new regulations,” he says.

While the latest rules might enhance the institutional credibility of IIMs, they may also prompt the IIM boards to shun long-term goals. “It’s important that the institutes get more autonomy; the latest guidelines send a negative signal to the institutions. The government is inviting the foreign institutions and giving them complete autonomy, it should give more freedom to institutions that have delivered, maintained quality and rankings in India,” says Janat Shah, former director, IIM Udaipur.

Educational excellence needs long-term goals; the boards will need the freedom to decide the long-term strategies. “Research focus and developing global linkages will need long-term investments and planning, without complete autonomy, the boards will only make short-term plans. The opportunity to be globally recognised may be affected by the lack of autonomy as boards might become risk averse,” he says.