

14 States yet to join Centre's flagship education scheme

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Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are among the 14 States and Union Territories which are yet to sign a crucial memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Union Education Ministry, which mandates the implementation of the National Education Policy, 2020 to get funds of almost ₹13,000 crore for the next three years under the Centre's flagship scheme for State-run higher education institutions.

Officials from several non-BJP-ruled States told *The Hindu* that they have raised concerns about the MoU, given that 40% of the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) budget must be borne by the States themselves, and no extra funds have been earmarked for NEP reforms. The Centre says it is holding discussions to iron out differenc-

Focus districts

Under the PM-USHA, focus districts should be identified to improve the overall quality of higher educational institutions

The challenge method of selection of districts involves 3 stages:

■ **First stage:** The States and Union Territories sign an MoU with the Union Education Ministry with commitments on implementation of the New Education Policy reforms



■ **Second stage:** The State governments will shortlist universities, colleges, and districts

■ **Third stage:** The Ministry will evaluate the proposals and then send them for approval by a project approval board

es with dissenting States.

PM-USHA is the new name for the Ministry's scheme to improve the quality of higher education in State universities – through curricular and programme changes, teacher training, physical and digital infrastructure, accreditation, and enhancing employability – while ensuring equity, access, and inclusion. It provides an outlay of ₹12,926.1 crore between 2023-24 and 2025-26.

The MoU is being signed

to show the willingness of the States and Union Territories to participate in the PM-USHA scheme and it will help in the better implementation of the scheme, University Grants Commission Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar told *The Hindu*. "As on date, 22 States/UTs have signed the MoUs," he said, adding that discussions are in progress with the 14 remaining States and UTs.

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