

**W**ith over 1,100 universities and nearly 45,000 colleges catering to around 4.5 crore students, India continues to strengthen its position as one of the world's largest education hubs. The country also aims to achieve 50% gross enrollment ratio (GER) in higher education by 2035. To achieve this target, India must strengthen all areas of higher education. Government and private institutions are working towards this, through various initiatives such as the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS).

#### What is ONOS?

The scheme aims to provide nationwide access to major scholarly e-journals from prominent publishers across disciplines such as STEM, Medicine, Management, Social Sciences and Humanities. The UGC's Information and Library Network (INFLIB-NET) centre is to act as the implementing agency for ONOS. The scheme will give 6,400 institutions across the country (including central and state universities, colleges and research institutions) and 1.2 crore students, faculty, and researchers access to over 13,000 top journals including global ones such as *Elsevier*, *Springer-Nature*, *Taylor & Francis*, and *Wiley*. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act seeks to

boost research HEIs in smaller towns with plans for central funding to support Indian authors in paying Article Processing Charges for quality open-

access journals. However, private universities have been left out of the ambit of ONOS.

Before the 1990s, the higher education land-

scape was dominated by government-funded institutions. Economic liberalisation also led to various transformational measures including establishment of

private universities and colleges. As a result, today, around 80% of students pursue higher education in private universities and colleges. In the last two decades, the number of these colleges and universities has expanded in response to the increasing demand for higher education.

#### Research focussed

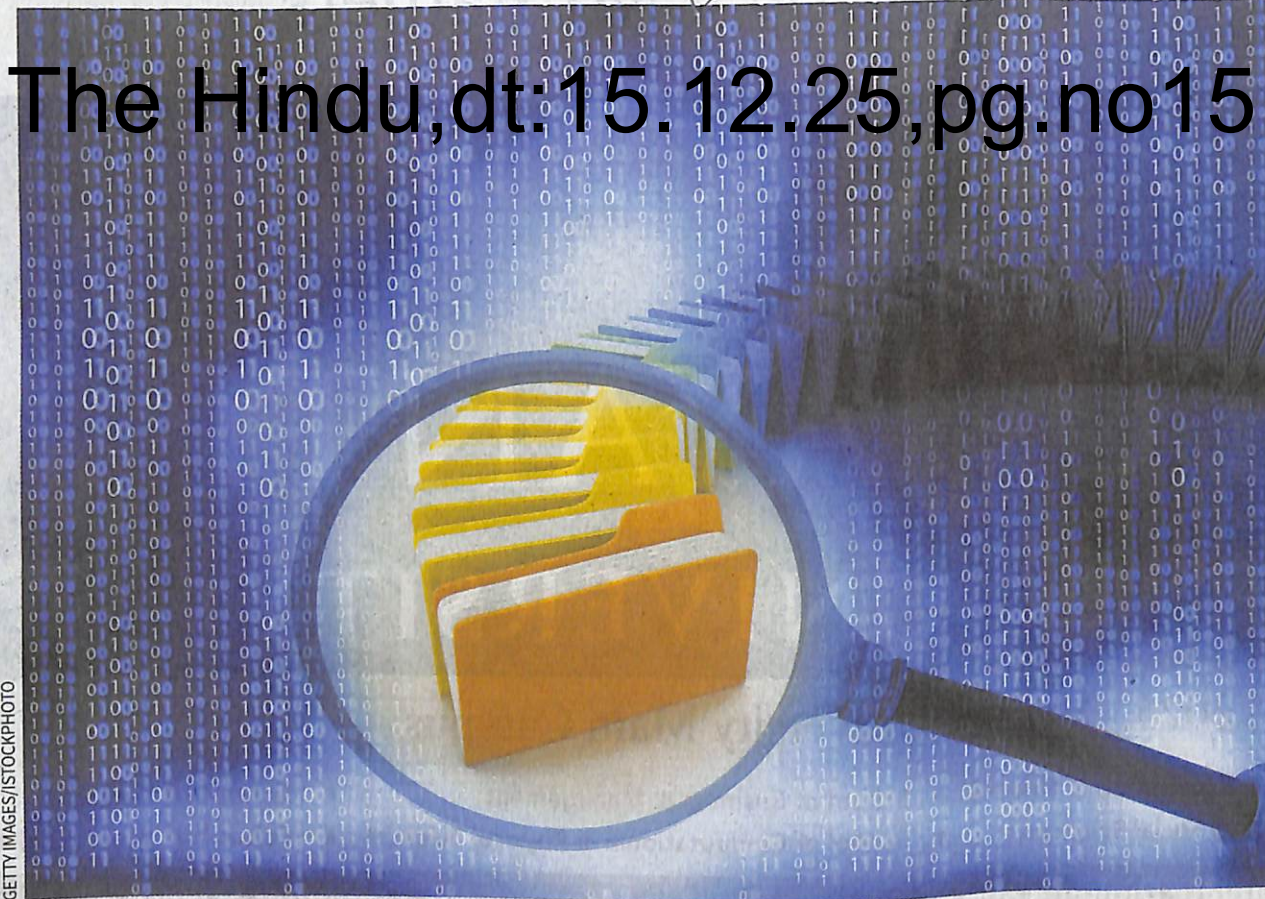
Apart from offering programmes in emerging fields such as Robotics, AI, Fintech, Precision Technologies, Cybersecurity, Design Thinking and more, they also offer international exposure, industry-

linked learning, interdisciplinary and flexible academic options and other benefits to students. Many of these institutions are located in urban and semi-urban areas and account for nearly 36% of the student population. Apart from this, many private universities have positioned themselves as research- and innovation-focussed, as Bansal et.al. (2019) note.

Some are very large with multiple campuses, modern infrastructure, and faculty members enabling them to compete with and match the research output of well-known government-funded institutions. Some even project themselves as the second-largest contributors to India's research output after the IITs. Quality publications, spending on faculty development and infrastructure creation, automation of libraries, including establishment of digital libraries, RFID, and other technological advances have all contributed to this.

Considering that private HEIs have made immense contributions to the education landscape and the growth manifested in many areas, extending ONOS to such institutions would help the country achieve the goal of a developed India by 2035. This will not strain the country's financial resources and will help India develop a robust knowledge economy.

The writer is the former rector of Reva University, Bengaluru; former Pro Vice-Chancellor of HITS, Chennai; and former Principal and Secretary of Madras Christian College, Chennai.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

# Fuel a knowledge economy

## Why the One Nation One Subscription should be extended to private universities and colleges

The Hindu, dt: 15.12.25, pg. no 15