

Smriti Irani discusses educational consortium, mutual recognition of degrees on maiden China visit

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Beijing: Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani, on her maiden visit to China, broached the idea of establishing a consortium of higher educational institutions as part of greater collaboration between India and China besides mutual recognition of academic degrees.

Irani, 39, arrived in the eastern Chinese city of Qingdao on 22 May to take part in the 'International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education' organised by the Chinese Government and UNESCO on a four-day visit.



She held talks with top Chinese officials and discussed steps to follow up on agreements signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit.

The Minister held talks with her Chinese counterpart Yang Guiren on mutual recognition of academic degrees, collaboration in teacher's training besides establishing a consortium of higher educational institutions, an Indian Embassy press release here said.

The collaboration in teachers training helps both the countries to share their vast experiences in education, Irani told *PTI*.

The discussions focussed on establishing a consortium of higher educational institutions, and sharing experiences on their respective systems for ranking universities, it said.

Her talks have a significance as about 13,000 Indian students currently study in China, mostly medicine. Mutual recognition of universities were expected to pave the way for more educational exchanges.

The Indian medical students have to pass Medical Council of India examination to qualify to practice in India. Besides Yang, Irani also held talks with Chinese Vice Education Ministers Liu Limin and Du Zhanyuan.

Her talks focussed on the implementation of the new Educational Exchange Programme (EEP) signed during Modi's visit during which the two sides also agreed to expand cooperation to newer areas.

One MoU dealt with bilateral cooperation in the field of Vocational Education and Skill Development between India and China. Under the framework of the MoU, India and China agreed to work towards capacity development.

China will be the key knowledge partner in the Mahatma Gandhi National Institute for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship being set up in Gujarat. Under the MoU, China will provide curriculum in various trade and industry sectors.

According to officials, China has trained over 13 million people in skill development in focussed areas for better employment against a million by India.

Under the documents signed during Modi's maiden visit to China between May 14 to 16, the two sides had also agreed to set up the Centre for Gandhian and Indian Studies in Fudan University and setting up of a Yoga College in Yunnan University for which India provided the faculty.

This is the first time China had a centre for Gandhian studies and the Yoga college will have trained teachers to bring a standard Yoga education.

She also invited high-level Chinese participation to an international gathering of educationists the HRD Ministry will be organising in India as part of the process of revising India's National Education Policy, the press release said.

At the UNESCO conference, Irani spoke at length on Information and Communication Technology's (ICT) application for grassroot education. Irani said her emphasis on national resource compatibility to recognise the diversity of different countries has been received well.

The Minister said India being an IT software giant is ready to share its fund of knowledge in ICT with various countries as she underlined its critical importance in strengthening education systems in the effort to make education more inclusive and equitable.

"India boasts a global reputation in ICT expertise... A National Mission on Education through ICT systematically provides connectivity to universities and colleges, linking them to the National Knowledge Network," she said.

"Our National Digital Library with IT broadband in schools, colleges and universities will ensure availability of free and world class educational resources to every learner in India.

"India has developed virtual laboratories; we have spoken tutorials, and a very comprehensive enabler for 'Design' under the e-Kalpa Project," she said. The project aims at creating and developing new learning environments related to skills and creativity in 'Design', including in arts, crafts, culture and environment fields.

"Likewise, a programme is underway to improve the skills of technical teachers under the T10KT project, where teachers are trained simultaneously in different parts of the country using ICT. This has met with resounding success, and is growing exponentially," she said.

Irani said application of ICT was an absolute pre-requisite, offering the chance to examine decades of knowledge and experience by providing the advantage of high-speed delivery, wide outreach, individualisation of learning and interactivity.

She also explained the various initiatives recently undertaken in the education sector, which she said have been gamechangers, as the government seeks to integrate technology and democratise education across sectors.

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