

“To All Stakeholders”

The news item that appeared on November 16, that the University Grants Commission (UGC) had issued letters of closure of off-campus centers to several reputed Institutions including ourselves, took us by surprise, as it must have each one of you. The letter from the UGC, since received, is based on the premise that the law required BITS Pilani to take prior approval from them, for setting up the Goa and Hyderabad campuses. In our considered view, no such approval was required, or contemplated by law, prior to the Deemed University Regulations of 2010.

This communication is to apprise all concerned of the facts, our position in the matter, and the action that is being contemplated for protecting your interest and for protecting the Institution’s rights and reputation.

BITS Pilani, among the earliest Deemed Universities:

Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani was declared as an Institution Deemed to be a University under section 3 of the UGC Act in the year 1964, one of the earliest to be so recognized. Ever since, in keeping with its traditions, the mandate given by its Founding Chairman, and with its status as an Institution Deemed to be a University, BITS Pilani has pioneered a number of visionary initiatives in higher education, and has established an impeccable and formidable reputation nationally for excellence.

As an integral part of its mission of providing education of the highest quality to greater numbers of aspiring students, BITS Pilani established full-fledged campuses in Dubai in 2000, in Goa in 2004 with the full support of the State Government, and in Hyderabad in 2008 at the request of and with full support of the State Government. Common academic and governance structure, and shared processes have ensured that the same high standards of excellence are adhered to uniformly across the University. This is evidenced by the uniform quality of student input, long list of illustrious alumni from each campus, the highly accomplished faculty body in each campus, and the respect commanded amongst recruiters, industry, peer Institutions, and other Institutions of higher learning in India and abroad.

Accreditation and Ratings:

Rated as A***** (A Five Star) by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 2000, BITS Pilani volunteered for re-accreditation by NAAC, and in 2009 was declared as Grade A with a CGPA of 3.71 on a 4 point scale. The Dubai and Goa campuses were a part of this re-accreditation, and indeed the NAAC team visited the Goa campus as part of its process of assessment. The Institute has been consistently ranked among the top technical Institutions in the country in the rankings as published in the popular media, and recognized as the number one such private Institution. In the QS rankings 2015, BITS Pilani has been placed at number 95 among Universities in the BRICS countries, and as being between 201 and 250 among Universities in Asia.

It is pertinent here also to mention that the Prof. P N Tandon committee set up in 2009 , to review existing Institutions Deemed to be Universities, placed BITS Pilani in the highest category of 38 Institutions (of a total of 130), satisfying most of the criteria for the Deemed University status, with a score of 41 on a maximum of 45, with 43 being the highest score accorded (one Institution received a score of 43, and six including BITS Pilani a score of 41).

The uniformly high quality of education provided by the Institute in all of its campuses is unquestionable.

UGC Guidelines and Deemed Universities Regulations 2010:

While UGC had issued Guidelines in 2000 and 2004 in respect of opening of off-campus centers by deemed universities, these Guidelines were beyond the legislative competence of UGC and had no force of law, and BITS Pilani had addressed letters to UGC requesting UGC to withdraw the Guidelines, the same being discriminatory and unconstitutional. However, without prejudice to our views, and keeping in mind the future of thousands of young students, and in line with our philosophy of maintaining the highest standards of education, BITS Pilani voluntarily filed an application with the UGC for recognition of these two campuses in 2009.

Thereafter, the UGC (Institutions Deemed to be University) Regulations 2010 were notified on 21 May 2010. Despite several communications and regular follow up with UGC and concerned bodies, visits by officials of UGC and A grade accreditation by NAAC, UGC has not responded formally to our applications for recognition of the Goa and Hyderabad campuses, but has indicated that BITS Pilani must comply with the above mentioned Regulations 2010 before these applications will be considered. In several communications to, and meetings with officials from the UGC and the MHRD, we have expressed our reservation on many of the provisions in these regulations, these being of regressive and discriminatory nature, potential impediments to innovation and progress, and infringing on the autonomy of Deemed Universities and further that the regulations can have no retrospective application to BITS' off-campus, which were set up prior to the coming into effect of the regulations. We have not received a response to any of our submissions in this regard. While in our view the regulations do not apply to BITS off-campus, in any event the regulations itself have been struck down as unconstitutional by the Karnataka High Court and are sub-judice in the Supreme Court.

Our position:

The communication now received from the UGC states that our campuses in Goa and Hyderabad have been established in violation of the UGC Guidelines and the Deemed Universities Regulations 2010, and asks that we close down these campuses. Given that the Guidelines had no statutory force, and the establishment of our campuses pre-dates the regulations in question, which are prospective in nature, and further that the validity of these regulations is itself sub judice, it is beyond the legal power of the UGC to issue such a notice. BITS Pilani is shocked by the precipitate action of such a notice by the UGC, without considering BITS' application, in ignorance of BITS' previous submissions, and without providing an opportunity for fair hearing.

Due to this arbitrary action on the part of UGC the management of BITS Pilani has made a detailed representation to UGC and if no positive response is received from UGC, BITS Pilani will initiate

necessary legal action in the matter to ensure that the issue is resolved speedily and favorably. We would like to reassure students, their parents and guardians, faculty, alumni, and all well wishers alike that there is no cause for anxiety.

The UGC has sought to issue this notice to BITS Pilani (and similar notices to other Institutions of a high standing, it might be added) on rather tenuous grounds of non-adherence to procedural clauses in a set of regulations of questionable legality. There is no perceived shortcoming in the standards of education or the quality of the support. It must be reiterated that BITS Pilani has been always, and is committed firmly to upholding the highest standards in education, and unimpeachable integrity in its practices.

We trust that this note will have answered many of the questions you might have. We will keep you abreast of all developments in the matter. If you do have any specific questions, you may address them to queries@hyderabad.bits-pilani.ac.in

Regards,



Prof V S Rao

Acting Vice Chancellor

BITS Pilani