

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 421
ANSWERED ON 23.03.2026**

Integration of Lakhpati Didi Initiative in Higher Education

*421. Shri Rajmohan Unnithan:

Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government proposes to integrate 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative into higher education ecosystems, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether any of the Kerala Universities have been shortlisted for global education hub development, if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to strengthen regional equity in the expansion of higher education?

**ANSWER
MINISTER OF EDUCATION
(SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN)**

(a) to (c): A statement is laid on the table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (A) TO (C) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 421 FOR REPLY ON 23.03.2026 ASKED BY SHRI RAJMOHAN UNNITHAN, HON'BLE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT REGARDING INTEGRATION OF LAKHPATI DIDI INITIATIVE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

(a): Lakhpati Didi initiative is an outcome of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme being implemented by Ministry of Rural Development in partnership of States and UTs (except Chandigarh and Delhi), with the objective to improve the livelihoods of poor rural households in country, and organise rural households into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for their social and financial inclusion. Lakhpati Didi initiative is to empower and enable Self-Help Groups (SHG) Women to earn a minimum income of Rupees one lakh per annum on a sustainable basis, for at least 4 agricultural seasons and/or business cycles. It is a community-based livelihood programme implemented through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and complements the ecosystem indirectly by promoting practical, non-formal learning and enterprise skills.

UGC has issued "Guidelines for Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India" in December, 2022 to the Vice-Chancellors, Directors, Principals, faculty members and students of the HEIs. It aims to promote rural exposure, studies development programmes, analyses poverty causes, and applies classroom knowledge to real-life situations for improved learning and solutions.

Centrally administered Higher Education Institutions like Central Universities, IIMs, etc. are taking initiatives to nurture women-led self-help groups and women entrepreneurs.

Ministry of Education also runs a flagship programme namely 'Unnat Bharat Abhiyan' (UBA). It aims at connecting higher education institutions in the country with the society and villages in particular so that students and faculty learn from the practical exposure to natural, physical and social attributes of the field, understand realities of rural life, and also enrich their knowledge with traditional wisdom of rural folks, in addition to academics in classroom. 4806 institutions are participating in UBA and are working ~23000 partner villages.

(b): Union Budget 2026-27 has announced setting up of 5 University Townships in the vicinity of major industrial and logistic corridors by supporting States, through challenge route. These planned academic zones will host multiple universities, colleges, research institutions, skill centres and residential complexes.

The detailed structure of the scheme, including its implementation model, key components, priority sectors, and institutional arrangements, will be finalised through a consultative process. Broadly, the proposed university townships are envisaged to provide world-class academic and research infrastructure including innovation and incubation facilities, industry partnerships and sustainable urban amenities.

Selecting of locations will be dependent on factors such as availability of suitable land, connectivity, regional educational needs, potential for industry linkage, balanced regional development and environmental sustainability.

(c): Education is in the concurrent list. Both the Central Government and the State Governments are equally responsible for providing quality education to all. The Central Government has taken

various measures to strengthen regional equity in the expansion of higher education such as opening of more HEIs, since 2014, 16 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIIT), 8 Central Universities (CU), 8 Indian Institute of Management (IIM), 7 Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), 2 Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), 1 National Institute of Technology (NIT) and 12 new AIIMS have been established; Implementing various Scholarship and Fellowship schemes for providing financial assistance to students including from underserved regions; Allowing well performing HEIs (based on NAAC and NIRF ranking) by University Grants Commission (UGC) to offer full Open Distance Learning/Online Programmes based on quality parameters; Providing much-needed flexibility and appropriate Exit as well as entry options in the Higher Education system, to facilitate students to choose their learning trajectory; Allow pursuing two Academic Programmes simultaneously; Permitting HEIs for two admission cycles in an academic year; Providing anytime, anywhere learning opportunities for all learners through Study Webs for Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) platform, which provides high quality structured online courses in multiple disciplines; Permitting up to 40% credits in regular courses using SWAYAM platform; and Conducting JEE, NEET (UG) and Common University Entrance Test (CUET) Exams in 13 languages, and making available Text Books in Indian Languages to facilitate students, particularly from vernacular/rural background.

In alignment with NEP 2020, the Government has launched the third phase of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in June 2023 in the form of Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) with an outlay of Rs. 12926.10 crore for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26 to cater to needs of educationally unserved/ underserved areas. Under PM-USHA, priority is given to Focus Districts. The focus districts are identified by the concerned States/ UTs based on various criteria including low Gross Enrolment Ratio, Gender Parity, population proportion and enrolment proportion for females, transgenders, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, Aspirational/ Border Area/ Left Wing Extremism prone district, etc.

In pursuance of the Budget announcement 2025-26, Government has approved expansion of academic and infrastructure capacity including creation of Research Park of five new IITs which had been established in the State/UT of Andhra Pradesh (IIT Tirupati), Kerala (IIT Palakkad), Chhattisgarh (IIT Bhilai), Jammu & Kashmir (IIT Jammu) and Karnataka (IIT Dharwad) with a total outlay of Rs. 11,828.79 crore, which would facilitate education for additional 6500 students. Besides the above the Government has approved a total of Rs. 1942 crore for expansion of academic & hostel infrastructure, and development of Research Park for IIT Jodhpur, IIT Patna, IIT Indore through Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA).

According to All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)'s portal, number of University / University Level Institutions, Colleges and Stand-alone Institutions in the Country rose to 1395, 53197 and 16577 respectively. State-wise data about Higher Education Institutions reported on AISHE portal is available at <https://dashboard.aishe.gov.in/hedirectory/#/hedirectory> .
