

NIMHANS conferred a new status

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore has been conferred the status of an 'institute of national importance' after the Lok Sabha passed the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Bill, 2010 (NIMHANS Bill) with a voice vote on 4 September 2012. The Bill got a nod earlier from the Rajya Sabha on 13 August 2012. Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Minister of Health and Family Welfare introduced the Bill in the Rajya Sabha on 7 December 2010, which was then referred to the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare headed by Brinda Karat.

The Bill was introduced with the objective to list NIMHANS as an institute of national importance¹. The objects of the Institute are: (a) to develop patterns of teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education; (b) to bring together educational facilities for the training of personnel in important branches of health activity; (c) to be self-sufficient in meeting the country's needs for specialists and medical teachers; (d) to evolve innovative strategies to offer diagnostic and comprehensive therapeutic service facilities by utilizing the advances in information technology, and

(e) to make in-depth study and research in the field of mental health, neurosciences and allied specialities.

According to the statement of objects and reasons given by Azad on 12 November 2010, the Bill shall empower (i) the Institute to develop its own curriculum, (ii) set new trends in mental health and neurosciences, (iii) award its own degrees and (iv) enable it to have appropriate delegated administrative and financial powers.

The Bill in detail views the functions of the Institute in providing facilities for teaching, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, research in various branches of science like physical and biological sciences, in addition to modern medicine or other applied sciences and humanities.

Before being conferred the new status, NIMHANS was functioning under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with financial support from the Government of India and the Government of Karnataka. It was registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act, 1960 on 27 December 1974.

During the presentation² of the Bill in the Rajya Sabha², the Minister said that there was a need to focus on mental

ill-health as it imposes a huge burden on the society. Secondly, NIMHANS was the largest bedded hospital (852 beds) in South Asia. Listing it as an institute of national importance would further give an impetus to the development of mental sciences in the study of autism, epilepsy, neuro-rehabilitation and geriatrics. He also highlighted the shortage of human resources which prevails in the country. According to him, at present the Medical Council of India, a statutory body that regulates the medical colleges in the country, does not allow exceeding the number of seats. However, the new status would allow the Institute to increase seats, design curriculum and train manpower according to the present needs of the country.

1. The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, Bangalore Bill (NIMHANS Bill), 2010, Bill No. XCI of 2010.
2. Rajya Sabha Live television: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dIZHwMpMxg&feature=em-share_video_user

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