

## Minutes of the First Meeting of Empowered Committee

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2006

Time: 1300 Hrs

Venue: UGC Office

The first meeting of the Empowered Committee was held on March 13, 2006 at UGC's Headquarters, New Delhi. Following were in attendance:

Prof. M.M. Sharma	...	Chairman
Prof. Goverdhan Mehta	...	Member
Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan	...	Member
Prof. P. Rama Rao	...	Member
Prof. Kota Harinarayana	...	Member
Prof. Mool Chand Sharma	...	Convener

Shri Sudeep Banerjee, Secretary, Department of Secondary and Higher Education, MHRD and Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat, Chairperson, UGC and Prof. V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice-Chairperson, UGC also participated in the meeting. Besides, Dr. (Mrs.) Renu Batra, Joint Secretary & In-charge, Major Research Projects, UGC and Co-ordinator of the Committee also attended the meet.

The terms of references for the Empowered Committee as proposed by the MHRD are to implement, monitor and render necessary guidance in expeditiously implementing the recommendations of *Task force for Basic Scientific Research in Universities* by the UGC.

The Chairman in his introductory remarks placed on record the gratitude of the Empowered Committee to Hon'ble Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Arjun Singh Ji and the Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Shri Sudeep Banerjee, for accepting in toto the recommendations of the *Task Force for Basic Scientific Research in Universities* and also for having designated the same committee as **Empowered Committee** with the mandate mentioned above. He also placed on record the appreciation of Committee for the services rendered by Prof. Ved Prakash & Dr.(Mrs) Renu Batra.

Prof. Mool Chand Sharma, Secretary, UGC, extended a warm welcome to all the invitees and expressed that it would be a privilege for him to work with the Committee which has experienced visionaries as its members. He also conveyed his thanks to MHRD for identifying UGC as the nodal agency for implementing the recommendations of the Task Force. He assured the full co-operation of UGC to the Committee in achieving its mandate.

Shri Sudeep Banerjee, in his address conveyed the commitment of the Government and the MHRD in enhancing the level of Basic Scientific Research in Universities. He requested the members to devise a strategy for the expeditious implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force. He also assured that funds will not be a source of impediment in implementing these recommendations.

Prof. Sukhadeo Thorat in his address, appreciated the recommendations made by the Task Force and also the initiatives taken by MHRD to transform the recommendations into reality. He also apprised the members that the MHRD is in the process of finalizing the *Plan Activities* for Central Universities for the year 2006-07 and informed that some of the recommendations of the Task Force is being contemplated to be included in their proposed plan of activities. He also assured the committee of the full co-operation of the Commission.

Prof. Rajasekharan Pillai informed the Committee that as a follow up action of the Report submitted by the Task Force, he has sought the views of various stakeholders for the effective implementation of these recommendations. The views thus expressed have been compiled in the form of a Report and the same has been submitted to MHRD.

While initiating the discussion, Prof. M.M. Sharma emphasized the necessity for improving the research output in the University system. He opined that since the

state funded universities constitute the major percentage of the universities in India, these universities require more attention. He also stressed for devising a Road-map with time line of implementation with mandate for outcome based deliverables. He emphasized that UGC should give adequate attention to the implementation of these recommendations and stressed that a separate Cell be established with an in-built innovative mechanisms for the fast-track in operationalisation of these recommendations. The Cell should function in such a fashion which is quite independent of the operation of existing programmes / schemes of the UGC. He then invited the other members to share their views.

Prof. Goverdhan Mehta in his address appreciated the efforts made by MHRD and expressed that it is a “dream-come-true” situation. He emphasized that this is a *life-time* opportunity for the revival of scientific research in universities and stressed that the Committee should work hard to deliver the goods in a fixed time frame. He also informed that the implementation part should be in partnership with various stakeholders so as to avoid raising the feeling amongst the universities that this is also another “fund releasing” and “utilization certificate submission” programme. He also hoped that collaborating with the universities will inculcate a feeling to produce some real and tangible result.

Prof. Rama Rao shared some statistical data pertaining to research and development scenario prevailing across the country. The data revealed that the R&D activities are confined only to select institutions of selected States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu and Delhi. He also informed that even in these states the creative component among the work force is declining. He also stressed that research output is a critical component for national prosperity. He emphasized that our efforts should be to spread the R&D activities across the country.

Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan informed that the recommendations of the Task Force had already attracted the attention of various stakeholders and opined that in view of this the role of the Committee has become more important to devise

appropriate mechanism to operationalize these recommendations. He, therefore, suggested that the committee may prioritize the implementation of the recommendations. He also suggested that some higher education institutions be selected and they be given autonomy in devising the mechanism for implementing the recommendations.

After this, individual recommendations were taken up for discussion to devise the action plan for implementation. Individual recommendation and the decided action plan is as follows:

S.No.	Recommendation	Proposed Action Plan
1.	There are a large number of sanctioned faculty positions in Universities that have been lying vacant for a prolonged period. These positions should be expeditiously filled in by inducting talented faculty with a view to strengthening the research base.	Request the MHRD to expedite the initiative under their consideration.
2.	1000 positions of Research Scientists at various levels equivalent to that of Lecturer, Reader and Professor need to be created. These positions may be filled in through a rigorous selection procedure in a phased manner over a period of five years. Performance of these scientists be reviewed after every five years by a duly constituted expert committee. In order to ensure enabling environment on a continuous basis for these prospective scientists, an MOU should be signed between the state Universities and the implementing agency.	<p>Action may be expedited to fill up 200 positions of Research Scientists at the equivalent cadres of Lecturer, Reader and Professor. The ratio suggested for each cadre is 40:40:20 respectively.</p> <p>These positions are meant for all branches of Sciences, Engineering &amp; Technology. However, disciplines of Agricultural and Medical Sciences will also be considered for those conventional universities which have these disciplines / departments.</p> <p>Centralized selection will be done by the UGC adopting two tier system of selection. First level screening by subject experts and final selection by inter-disciplinary Core Committee.</p> <p>Along with those who have applied, candidates who have been nominated will also be considered.</p> <p>Prof. G. Mehta was requested to devise the detailed methodology/scheme.</p>

		Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan was requested to draft the MoU which is to be signed between the University and the UGC.
3.	There is a need to create 10 networking centres in Basic Sciences (two centres each in Physical Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Life Sciences, Material Sciences and Mathematical Sciences) in leading Departments of Universities in different parts of the country to promote collaborative research, access to advanced facilities and imparting training in frontier areas. These centres should be supported on a long term basis in a substantial manner to enable them to realize internationally competitive status.	A broad consensus was arrived at identifying 20 universities across the country to be strengthened as networking centres in Basic Sciences. This could include the 9 universities presently identified by UGC as Universities with Potential for Excellence (UPE) and the remaining 11 to be identified from the states where, as of now no university has been given the status of UPE. Dr. S.P. Thyagarajan was requested to prepare the basic charter of norms as requirements for these networking centres. A workshop will be organized where the identified universities will be invited so as to familiarize them with the charter of norms.
4.	Formal linkage between the Universities and national level institutions including CSIR laboratories be promoted through joint research projects and training. Linkages of Universities and their faculty with industries and user organizations should be encouraged. There should be a provision for joint appointments/visiting professorship to stimulate collaborative research.	It was decided to discuss this recommendation in the next meeting.
5.	The system of both Winter and Summer Schools must be supported. Each subject area of Basic Sciences may offer up to ten programmes a year. There should be a provision for visiting Fellowships for faculty within the Country.	Dr. S.P. Thyagarajan was requested to prepare the guidelines for this activity.
6.	In order to promote quality scientific research in Universities, infrastructural facilities ought to be	It was decided to discuss this recommendation in the next

	upgraded by providing development grants for modern laboratories, physical infrastructure including uninterrupted power supply, water, safety requirements of international standards, high level equipment with built-in maintenance mechanism, exclusive research students' hostel and a research starter fund etc.	meeting.
7.	<p>The number of Ph.Ds from Indian Universities should increase five-fold within a span of ten years with proper standards. This should be seen in the context of extremely low fraction of Ph.Ds in India in relation to M.Sc/B.Tech., as compared to what it is in USA, UK, Germany, Japan, etc.</p> <p>The emphasis for research will clearly emerge if we have Universities with only Departments and separately Universities having affiliated colleges.</p>	It was decided to discuss this recommendation in the next meeting.
8.	An empowered autonomous body headed by an eminent scientist/academician with an Advisory Board comprising scientists and engineers shall be set up by the UGC for the purpose of implementing the aforesaid initiatives.	MHRD has already appointed the present Committee as the Empowered Autonomous Committee.

As regards to the action plan on the facilitating recommendations, it was decided that except for the recommendation reproduced below the remaining will be discussed in the next meeting:

S.No.	Facilitating Recommendation	Proposed Action Plan
1.	In addition to Research Fellowship awarded by different National Funding Agencies, every university shall be provided, for pursuing Doctoral research, 50 fellowships in Basic Sciences based on past performance of Departments. Post-	Universities/Departments will be identified based on the past performance in terms of Ph.D. produced and research publications for the allotment of fellowship Chairman, UGC and Chairman of

	doctoral Fellowships should be introduced for a maximum period of two years on a highly selective basis.	the Empowered Committee will identify the universities/departments.
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Finally it was also resolved that the UGC should establish a separate Cell with an in-built innovative mechanisms for the fast-track operationalisation of these recommendations. The Cell should function in such a fashion which is quite different from the operation of the existing programmes / schemes of the UGC.

It was also resolved that the MHRD should earmark Rs.600 crores, exclusively for the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force. It should not be made a part of other grants which are released to UGC from time to time.

It was decided to hold the next meeting of the Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 at 11.00 a.m.

Meeting ended with vote of thanks to the Chair.