

Standing Committee Report Summary

The Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013

- The Standing Committee on External Affairs (Chairperson: Mr. Ananth Kumar) submitted its report on the Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013 on December 17, 2013. The Bill was introduced by the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Salman Khurshid, in Rajya Sabha on August 26, 2013, and subsequently referred to the Committee. The Bill seeks to amend the Nalanda University Act, 2010.
- The Act establishes the Nalanda University in Bihar as an international institution in the area of philosophical, historical and spiritual studies. The Bill seeks to improve the governance structure of the Nalanda University as established under the Act, and help speed up its establishment.
- The Standing Committee accepted the amendments proposed by the Bill subject to some recommendations. It suggested that efforts should be made to include the traditions of the ancient Nalanda University (between sixth and 12th century A.D.) in the new initiative. With regard to implementation of the Act, the Committee noted that there has been delay in establishment of the University. It recommended that the University should draw a timeline for completion of short, medium and long term activities, and adhere strictly to schedule.
- **Governance structure:** The Bill provides that the Governing Board of the University will include: (i) five members, one each to be nominated by five member countries of the East Asia Summit (selected by central government), (ii) five persons of eminence to be recommended by the members of the Governing Board, and (iii) two members from the academic faculty. The Registrar of the University will be the Secretary of the Board.
- The Committee recommended that the Board should include two representatives from countries other than those which are members of the East Asia Summit to make it more global. Also, among the five persons of eminence, there should be three renowned academicians, and two persons from other fields. Fields of activity of each of these persons should be mentioned in the Act. Also, in line with international practice, the Vice Chancellor should be the Secretary of the Board.
- **Financial resources:** The Bill provides that the central government may meet capital and recurring expenditure of the University. The Committee approved this provision, but suggested that the government should continue to make an effort to garner resources from other possible sources of revenue. In this regard, the Act should provide for constitution of an International Advisory Committee and the Endowments Committee which will have the responsibility of mobilising resources.
- Further, the Bill and Act clarify that the University may borrow funds. The Committee recommended that the specific sources of borrowings should be mentioned in the law.
- **Privileges and immunities:** The Bill provides that the University shall enjoy privileges and immunities under the United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947 from the date of commencement of the Nalanda University Act, 2010. These privileges and immunities are related to legal processes, financial controls, taxes, etc. As the central government agreed to extend such privileges and immunities to the University in a July 2013 agreement, the Committee recommended that this provision should be applicable from the date of the agreement (and not the date of commencement of the Act).

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