

Education to be accessible to all

By Mail Today Bureau in New Delhi

IN order to upgrade the education sector and make it competitive and intellectually sound, Prakash Javadekar, Union minister of human resource development stressed on the need to make education accessible to all, and announced that the government is working in that direction.

This issue was discussed at the ASSOCHAM (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) National Education Summit and Edu-shine Excellence Awards 2019, with the topic 'Making India Global Powerhouse: Catalysing Reforms and Innovations'. The event took place on February 21, in Delhi.

Speaking at the ASSOCHAM event through video conferencing, Javadekar said that students need exposure across all spectrums of education. "Introduction of affordable education, of over 1.3 million teachers, and improved schooling are some of the aspects that we have implemented across the country. We have studied and worked towards bringing a holistic approach to the Indian education system where handling of students at lower levels, ensuring pre and post matrix scholarships and increased exposure to research has been given priority. The transformation that has happened in the past four years has resulted in maximum enrolment and reduced drop outs. We have introduced a system that makes teachers accountable in terms of the outcomes of examinations and facilitating options for students in the events of failures."

Javadekar added that education should be holistic in nature. "There is a need to change the way education is perceived. We have included sports, life skills and values in the education system that would improve students in their personal lives. We have also started constructing technological labs, for schools and research, and sanctioned ₹33,000 crores for additional academic infrastructure. This way we will ensure quality at all levels and improve research and innovation. We have started social research, joint cooperation between foreign universities, and a Gyan-digital library with 18 mil-

lion books where anyone can be a member free of cost."

Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India, Suresh Prabhu, minister of commerce and industry, Uday Kumar Varma, ASSOCHAM secretary general, and other dignitaries were also present.

Pranab Mukherjee commented, "India boasts an ancient education system which now needs to excel at global

level. India's demographic dividend has the potential to add significantly to its GDP"

Suresh Prabhu stated that, "The purpose of education should be uniform in order to expose new areas of education to improve employability."

In his remarks Varma said, "We have the third largest education system in the world, which claims to have a turnover of 90 bil-

lion US dollars and is likely to cross 100 billion by 2020. With 44 central universities, 90 private, and 903 state universities including technical ones, the growth has been satisfactory. Now the focus should be on rural transformation through education and the skilling architecture."

"We have highlands of excellence but there is vast mediocrity. We can be on par with foreign varsities with flexibility and transparency in our education sector", Varma added.



ASSOCHAM secretary general Uday Kumar Varma (left) and former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, at the Edu-shine Excellence Awards.

There is a need to change the way education is perceived in India. It shouldn't be limited to only textbooks'

GST rate cut to benefit homebuyers

FE BUREAU
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WITH THE GST Council cutting the rate to 5% from 12% for under-construction units, and 1% from 8% for affordable housing with the denial of input tax credit (ITC), the big question is whether prices of such units would be reduced by the developers. While builders are non-committal on how much exactly will be the reduction in prices, they point out that the cut will be a benefit for the customer. They point out that the ITC, which was earlier available, has now been done away with which will increase cost for the builders and hurt margins, especially in the affordable housing segment. However, by reducing the tax burden on the end buyer, demand will improve unsold inventory will reduce thus improving the cash flow of the real estate industry.

"We estimate that the reduction in GST can potentially reduce the buyers payout by 6-7% on the overall purchase, depending on the category," said Shishir Bajjal, chairman & managing director, Knight Frank India.

Manoj Gaur, managing director, Gaur's Group, and vice-president, CREDAI National, said the GST cut is a decision for

the buyer and not the developer. He added that prices in Delhi-NCR have already bottomed out and there may not be much scope to reduce prices but in cities like Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Mumbai, some benefits may be passed on.

Pradeep Aggarwal, chairman, Signature Global Group, and chairman, Affordable Housing Council, Assocham, said a 7% cut in GST for a ₹45 lakh house comes to a reduction of around ₹3 lakh. He said that the benefit of the GST rate reduction will be seen more in tier II and III cities as the threshold level of prices is lower in those cities.

Naresh Sheth, partner, NA



Shah Associates, said the apparent tax reduction of 7% on residential properties will boost sale of under-construction houses and infuse life in the sluggish real estate market. "However, for next few weeks, homebuyers may defer to enter into transaction for flat purchase", he added. "Input tax is estimated at about 2.5-3% of sales price. Developer

will factor this loss of input tax credit in price of flat. Ultimately, under-construction residential flats might be cheaper by about 4-4.5% (7% tax reduction-2.5 or 3% additional ITC)", Sheth added.

Tax experts say it remains to be seen as to who benefits from the GST rate cut. AMRG & Associates said in a note, "Denial of tax credit for real estate sector would boost sales, however, it would warrant much lower margins for the builders. This change would force the sector to reboot the prices and find a high equilibrium price for the inventory. Time will tell as to who will benefit from this move, whether consumers or builders".



'Some players bidding beyond mineral need'

ASSOCHAM HAS SOUGHT amendments in the tender documents for the mines to be auctioned, saying there were some players bidding for blocks beyond mineral requirements for their end-use plants. "As you are aware that there is no restrictive clause in the MMDR (Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation) Act/Tender document as far as the eligibility of the bidder is concern, which offers an opportunity to bidders to indulge into hoarding and accumulating the resources," Assocham said in a letter to the mines ministry.

'Few bidders in mines auction beyond needs for end-use'

INDUSTRY BODY ASSOCHAM has sought amendments in the tender documents for the mines to be auctioned, saying there were some players bidding for blocks beyond mineral requirements for their end-use plants. "As you are aware that there is no restrictive clause in the MMDR (Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation) Act/Tender document as far as the eligibility of the bidder is concerned, which offers an opportunity to bidders to indulge into hoarding and accumulating the resources," Assocham said in a letter to the mines ministry.