

UGC lists 23 Indian varsities as fake, states puzzled over their 'existence'

AILING SYSTEM Officials in UP, which has most illegal varsities, say they were offering degrees for getting jobs

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NEW DELHI: The Indian higher education regulator has listed 23 universities as fake — not approved to grant degrees or diplomas. But most state governments wondered why these names were on the list since the institutes either don't exist or have closed down.

The UGC releases a list of fake universities across India before the start of the academic session every year. It serves as an advisory for students because degrees or diplomas issued by these institutes are not suitable for higher education or jobs.

Universities can be set up through a law by the Centre or the state government, and only then can the institute award degrees. Several institutes come up without meeting the requirements and offer degrees.

That amounts to cheating, the UGC said, asking the state governments to initiate action.

But the fake list has triggered a controversy. Bihar's higher education council (SHEC) vice chairman Kameshwar Jha accused the UGC of tarnishing the state's image by putting on the list Maithili University or

THE HRD MINISTRY WILL SEND REMINDERS TO ALL STATES TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN AGAINST FAKE UNIVERSITIES

Vishwavidyalaya, Darbhanga.

He said no such university existed in the state for over two decades, and including the name of a non-existent institution on the list is equivalent of maligning the state.

"When the institution was declared illegal over two decades ago, I don't see any point in mentioning it on the fake list year after year. It only earns Bihar a bad name," he said.

Bihar is struggling to clear its image after incidents of mass cheating, especially after it got engulfed last year in an exam fraud that was exposed when its class 12 toppers failed to answer questions during a media interaction.

Officials in Uttar Pradesh, another state notorious for high instances of education frauds, have said nine universities on the fake list don't exist but were offering degrees.

They admitted that no probe was done on the UGC alert.

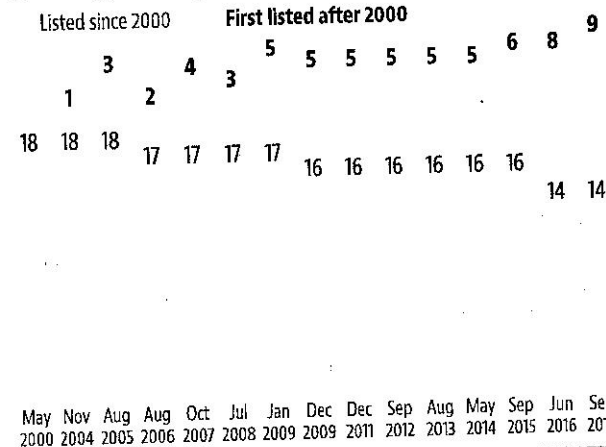
The lone bogus university in Maharashtra — Raja Arabic University in Nagpur — is a residential madarsa or Islamic seminary. "We run a residential madarsa with 240 students," said Maulana Mehmood Rizvi Khan, who heads the institute. He had apologised to the UGC for naming the seminary as a university.

Similarly, St John University in Kerala has been functioning for the past 15 years in Kishan-nattamk, a place that does not exist.

"We have no idea about this. And nobody has registered any compliant," said an education

Bogus universities on UGC list

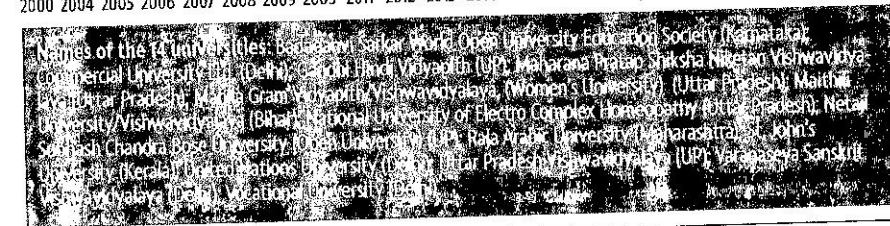
Most of them were named in 2000 and the list grew in the following years. At present, the country has 23 fake varsities



Fraudsters on the prowl

Uttar Pradesh tops the list of states with bogus institutions

- Uttar Pradesh: 18
- New Delhi: 6
- Odisha: 2
- West Bengal: 2
- Bihar: 1
- Karnataka: 1
- Kerala: 1
- Maharashtra: 1



ministry official. The UGC had sent reminders about this university. Of the two sham institutes on alternative medicine in West Bengal, one is running with a different name and the other is functioning.

The Indian Institute of Alternative Medicine has apparently morphed into the Indian Board for Alternative Medicine after its name was mentioned on the UGC's 2009 list.

The state government has made no effort for its closure. "We received a notice from UGC last year, but before we could reply our name was on the list," said Jayanto Bhattacharji, founder of the Institute of Alternative Medicine and Research, which is on the list.

The institute was affiliated to the Kolkata-based Alternative Medical Council, he said.

The Union human resource

development ministry plans to send reminders to all states to submit a report on actions taken against fake universities and technical institutions.

Mahendra Nath Pandey, junior HRD minister, said: "We have been sending letters to the states as fake institutes are jeopardizing the careers of students." UP, which has the highest number of unapproved universities, will be asked to expedite action.