Higher Education Commission of India Bill

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Why in news?

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- The draft Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill is now in the public domain.
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What is the bill on?

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- It proposes to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) with a Higher Education Commission of India.
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- This is to provide for more autonomy and facilitate holistic growth of this sector.
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- It is also to offer greater opportunities to Indian students at more affordable cost.
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- The new commission will cover all fields of education.
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- This is however except medical, agriculture and institutions set up under Central and State Acts.
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- The exemption does not cover institutes of national importance.
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What are the provisions?

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- It proposes a clear separation between academic and grant-giving functions.
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- Academic functions would be discharged by the HECI.
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- The academic functions include
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i. promoting the quality of instruction
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ii. maintenance of academic standards
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iii. fostering the autonomy of higher education institutions
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- The HECI will be bestowed with comprehensive and overriding powers.
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- This includes ordering the closure of institutions, in all academic and related matters.
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- The grant-giving function will be by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) directly.
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What is the need?

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- **Multiple regulators** - The regime of multiple regulators started in the mid-1980s.
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- Various professional bodies also started asserting themselves as regulators from early 1990s.
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- It marked a galloping growth of the education sector with the setting up of many private universities.
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- Multiple bodies in addition to the existing ones came in to cope with the increasing complexity.
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- E.g. UGC, All India Council for Technical Education, professional bodies like the Bar Council of India and Council of Architecture.
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- **Quality** - The heavy hands of multiple regulators have not yielded the desired dividends.
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- Uneven and deteriorating standards in the quality of student output was witnessed.
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- This was against the requirements of the job market.
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- It is in this context that the need for a single regulatory body arose.
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Source: The Hindu

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