Replacing UGC with HECI

Why in news?

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Union government has proposed to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) with a Higher Education Commission of India.

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What is government’s plan on HECI?

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- HECI will be the new, apex regulator for university and higher education in India.
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- It has to set benchmarks for academic performance, ensure that institutions adhere to these and act against those that violate standards.
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- Draft legislation appears to be part of a stated overarching strategy towards greater autonomy in institutes of higher learning, including the premier Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management.
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- The broad thrust of the Higher Education Commission legislation is to separate governance from funding.
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- The proposed commission will focus on academic issues, such as course curricula, faculty standards and outcomes, leaving “monetary matters” to the ministry of human resource development.
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What is the reason behind government’s moves?

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- UCG found to be an inadequate regulatory structure for higher education that has resulted in a visible deterioration in standards.
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- The fund-granting process of the UGC and the technical education regulator All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has been plagued with allegations of corruption and inefficiency.
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- Union government senses that Creation HECI offers a tremendous opportunity for the government to take a giant leap towards fixing a broken system at a time when the quality of human capital is increasingly determining the success of nations.
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What are the concerns with government's plan?

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- Setting minimum standards such as faculty qualifications and infrastructure will be only one part of the commission's mandate.
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- The risk of political interference is the biggest challenge as the financial dispensation will, under the new scheme, be directly under government control.
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- In regard with IIT and IIM, both sets of institutions have been granted a greater degree of autonomy in terms of board appointments, fee structures and admissions.
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- But such autonomy went only so far; in January, the government proposed a new law establishing a Council of Institutes headed by the HRD minister.
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Source: Business Standard, Economic Times

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