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**Special Issue
on**

**PROMOTING RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND
EXCELLENCE IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES**

on the Occasion of

AIU South Zone Vice Chancellors' Meet –2019-2020

at

**Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Kumaracoil
January 06-07, 2020**

*Celebrating
90
Years of
University News*

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Table of Contents

Profile: Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Kumaracoil	5
1. Research and Innovation in Higher Education — <i>Mariamamma A Varghese</i>	12
2. Indian Research Performance: New Horizons — <i>M Anandakrishnan</i>	20
3. Revitalizing Agricultural Research in Uttar Pradesh for Enhancing Farmers' Income — <i>Rajvir Singh Rathore</i>	26
4. Promoting Research, Innovation and Excellence in Indian Universities: Efforts Required — <i>N Rajendran</i>	31
5. How Soon India Can Produce the Next Nobel Laureate? — <i>A Joseph Dorairaj</i>	35
6. Innovation Eco System in Indian Higher Education Institutions — <i>S Sivasubramanian</i>	37
7. Achieving Major Advances in Research through Innovation — <i>Nalin K Shastree</i>	43
8. Driving Innovation in Indian Institutions: The Missing Links — <i>G Srinivas and Salil S</i>	51
9. Scope of SCOPE in Indian Higher Education Research — <i>Chhaya Goel and Devraj Goel</i>	55
10. PhD Course Work in Indian Universities for Promoting Quality Research — <i>Benudhar Chinara and Kishwar Badakhshan</i>	60
11. Big Ideas of 2020: Opportunities for Research, Innovation and Excellence in Indian Universities — <i>Mercia Selva Malar</i>	65
12. CSR Funds Should be Allotted to Research and Development in Humanities and Social Sciences — <i>Praveen Ghodeswar</i>	70
13. Promotion of Excellence in Research at Higher Educational Institutes in India: Current Scenario and Road Ahead — <i>Kuldip Kaur and Amandeep Kaur</i>	71
14. Higher Education, Research and Innovation: Changing Dynamics of the Knowledge Society — <i>Ankush L More</i>	75
Convocation Address	
Quality Higher Education for All — <i>Renu Batra</i>	82
Campus News	86
AIU News	89
Theses of the Month (Humanities)	91
Advertisements	93

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Association

CSR Funds Should be Allotted to Research and Development in Humanities and Social Sciences

Praveen Ghodeswar*

The Central Government has decided to allow corporate India to use their mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for investments in publicly funded incubators and contribute to research efforts in Science, Technology, Medicine and Engineering at major institutions and bodies. Companies in the industry are obliged to spend two percent of their funds for social responsibility. It has now been removed. They have been given the option of donating this amount to central or state level research institutes. It is mentioned that, the funds will be available to the institutions falling under the central government's defence, electronics and medical departments. The companies will fund the basic science and applied research. Against this backdrop, some issues need to be discussed in relation to this decision, as follows:

1. Although business is the primary objective of generating wealth, business houses are not expected to make a profit only. So they also have a social responsibility. As part of this, the government has legislated to spend two percent of its profits under Corporate Social Responsibility. Due to this decision, the funds can no longer be used for activities related to the social issues. Is there no need to spend on social activities now?
2. In April 2018, the central government had urged companies to use CSR funds in at least one tribal district. What will happen now? No longer needing to work in tribal areas? Has the company done the expected work in tribal areas in the last one year?
3. This fund will be used for research on science and technology as mentioned above. So what about the research in Humanities and the Social Sciences? Will it not receive funding? Already, there is a dearth of institutions that provide funding for research in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. In fact, this funding should be given to institutes dealing with this area.
4. Will the funds be provided to colleges / institutions

in rural and tribal areas for the development of research on science and technology? Or will it benefit the institutions based in metro cities and cities only? Will Universities located at distant area of Maharashtra such as Gadchiroli, Jalgaon, Nanded, Amravati be the beneficiaries of this funds?

5. The businesses houses in our country are located in urban areas. So approach to them is not going to be easy. What will be the priority and criteria for allocation of the funds? Who and how it will be decided to provide these funds to particular institutes or organizations?
6. The universities and colleges need to have a separate mechanism for obtaining this funding. It requires a liaisoning officer to establish connections and rapport with business houses. Will the government help in setting up this mechanism? There is need to provide manpower for this. If universities can come across difficulties for obtaining this fund, colleges (even in small towns / rural / tribal areas) are unlikely to get this funding. Already, the universities and colleges are facing issue of shortage of human resources. How can this human resource be made available in such a situation?
7. Recently some industry groups have established their own private universities. Therefore, it is prudent to assume that they will give these funds to the government institutes or universities. Their funds would go in their own home only! So, would it be mandatory for government universities, organizations and institutes to fund a certain amount?

Given the above situation, it is difficult to comment now on the extent to which this decision will benefit research and development. Also, the closure of whatever social activities companies were doing through CSR cannot be considered a positive step. It's not like companies were doing a great job and sustainable work with CSR. But whatever was happening was not going to happen now onwards. In addition, companies are likely to be relieved of their social responsibility funds to specific institutes. □

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