Executive Summary

Universities are pivotal in ensuring access to higher education and provide strong foundations for research and innovations. In Delhi, Higher Education Department (HED), Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) through Directorate of Higher Education (DHE) and Training and Technical Education Department (TTED), GNCTD through the Directorate of Training and Technical Education (DTTE) administer technical and non-technical higher education and formulate policies for the universities to implement. They also provide grants-in-aid to the universities functioning under them.

There are eleven universities under the jurisdiction of the GNCTD, out of which we selected three Universities *viz.*, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) which is an affiliating body, Delhi Technological University (DTU) and Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences & Research University (DPSRU) for detailed audit covering the period from April 2018 to March 2023. DTU and DPSRU are primarily technical institutions, while GGSIPU offers a broader range of general courses. The academic activities of these Universities are governed by the Guidelines, Regulations and Circulars issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and other regulatory bodies in the higher/technical education sector.

Why was this audit undertaken?

This Performance Audit (PA) on Functioning of Universities under Government of NCT of Delhi was taken up on the request of Department of Higher Education (DHE) and Department of Training and Technical Education (DTTE) under the Government of NCT of Delhi.

The main objectives of the audit were to ascertain whether: (i) the GNCTD and the selected Universities planned and executed their academic functions effectively to ensure quality education; (ii) creation and development of human resources and infrastructure facilities were adequate and as per norms; (iii) the financial management of the selected Universities was efficient and effective; and (iv) the internal control mechanism was adequate and effective.

What we found?

We noted several issues in the field of Academic and Administrative matters, Accreditation of Universities and the Affiliation Process, Human Resource Management, Infrastructure facilities, Financial Management and Internal controls.

Both DHE and DTTE had Citizens Charters and vision/mission statements. As per these documents, DHE was to promote the cause of higher education and to prepare comprehensive policy for higher education whereas DTTE was to provide trained technical manpower for the technological up-gradation of industrial

production, services, productivity and innovation. Audit observed that neither DHE nor DTTE had formulated comprehensive policies to fulfil their visions/missions. Thus, there was an absence of systematic and well-defined policies to promote higher and technical education in Delhi.

Audit noticed delay in revision of policy guidelines and constitution of Admission Regulatory Committee (ARC) and State Fee Regulatory Committee by the GNCTD. Policy guidelines were effective till the year 2018-19. But these were not revised till 2022-23. Admission Regulatory Committee was formed with delay of 16 years, in April 2023.

There were no long term or short term plans in the sampled Universities for achieving the goals stated in their respective vision documents. DTU, however, prepared its first vision document called 'Strategic Plan 2019-30' in 2019, it contained only long-term goals to be achieved by 2030 and there were no medium-term or annual plans aimed at achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan. We also noticed that the three sampled Universities and affiliated colleges functioned for three to six years without mandatory NAAC/NBA accreditation as required under UGC and AICTE Regulations. GGSIPU lacked both NAAC and NBA accreditation from 2018 to 2023. DTU functioned without NAAC accreditation between 2015 and 2019, and without NBA accreditation from 2018 to 2023. DPSRU did not have either NAAC or NBA accreditation for the period of 2020 to 2023.

The process of affiliation through Joint Assessment Committee (JAC) inspection mechanism to ensure availability of required physical and academic infrastructure in affiliated colleges was found inadequate, as there were cases of favourable grading by JAC, non-compliance of recommendations of JAC reports, inadequate student-teacher ratio, appointment of faculty with lower than prescribed qualification and absence of facility for persons with disabilities in sampled affiliated colleges. There were also delays at every stage of the annual affiliation process.

Audit noted that all the three Universities suffered from shortage of classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, non-utilisation of available infrastructure and equipment etc. Deficit in seating capacity against enrolled students was 26 *per cent* at Dwarka Campus of GGSIPU, 41 *per cent* at Rohini Campus of DTU and 59 *per cent* at DPSRU. DPSRU had seating capacity of only 1,157 for enrolled 2,800 students. This would have adversely affected quality of education.

Delays in remittance of funds, instituting scheme for financial assistance to meritorious students and release of scholarship and avoidable tax liability of ₹ 25.59 crore under Delhi Higher Education Scholarship Fund (DHESF) and Delhi Knowledge Development Foundation (DKDF) were also noted.

There was acute shortage of teaching staff during 2018-23 ranging from 38.77 *per cent* to 44.84 *per cent* in GGSIPU, 21.77 *per cent* to 54.43 *per cent* in DPSRU and 55 *per cent* to 60 *per cent* in DTU. Three-fourth posts of the Professors and Associate Professors in DTU remained vacant during the audit period 2018-23. Similar shortages were also observed in non-teaching and technical staff in these Universities.

Crucial administrative posts like Registrar, Controller of Finance, Controller of Examination in GGSIPU and those of Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Controller of Finance in DTU were held either as additional charge or officiating basis by retired Government servants hired as consultants in the absence of regular incumbents. We also observed delay in recruitment, recruitment without sanctioned posts and engagement of ineligible persons.

The Board of Management of GGSIPU approved (August 2021) creation of 144 teaching posts and 168 non-teaching posts and filling up 50 *per cent* total teaching posts in first two years i.e. 2021-23. Despite the shortage of staff faced by them, the University made recruitment to only 32 posts of Assistance Professors in October 2022 and took no action for recruitment to the remaining sanctioned posts as of December 2023. Further, DTU could recruit only 51 Assistant Professors against 167 vacancies in various disciplines advertised in July 2019 whereas no recruitment was made against another 87 vacancies of Assistant Professors advertised in the same month. In fact, the recruitment process took 16 months to complete (November 2020) against the time of six months prescribed by UGC. DTU also did not take any action for recruitment of Professors and Associate Professors despite facing severe shortage in these cadres as of March 2023.

UGC recommended (January 2017) that the curricula of all academic departments in universities should be reviewed and revised at least once every three years focusing on skill sets to make the students employable. Audit observed that out of 62 programs in the University Schools of GGSIPU, syllabi of six curricula were not revised in the last three to five years, and three curricula in the last five to 11 years. Similarly, the syllabus of 51 out of total 109 programs (i.e. 47 *per cent* of the courses) offered by affiliated colleges of the University were not revised by the Board of Schools of Studies of GGSIPU.

As per guidelines for Students' Entitlement issued by UGC, "the students are entitled to timely conduct of examination and declaration of results as specified in the academic calendar in the Prospectus". Audit observed that GGSIPU did not have any specific schedule for declaration of results and during 2018-22 (for which information was provided by the University), GGSIPU declared results of 368 examinations out of which results of 199 examinations i.e. 54 percent of the results were declared with delays. In three cases in 2019-20, the delay was up to eight months. Similarly, in DPSRU, no timelines were fixed for the declaration of results. The number of days taken for declaration of results ranged beyond

200 days during 2018-19 and 2019-20, although it significantly reduced to 34 days in 2022-23.

In compliance of the UGC guidelines of March 2022 for the establishment of "Research and Development Cell" in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for promoting quality research, aligned with the provisions of NEP-2020, the GGSIPU renamed its Directorate of Research and Consultancy (DRC) as "Research and Development Cell" (RDC) and constituted (November 2022) four committees/Council to strengthen the existing research activities across various departments and faculties. Audit noted that the Research Council did not hold any meeting, and the Product Development, Monitoring and Commercialization Committees held only one meeting in November 2022. None of the four committees/Council submitted any research activity reports to the Vice Chancellor.

Government of India launched (October 2013) *Rashtriya Uchchtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA),* a centrally sponsored scheme, for improving access, equity and quality in higher education. The Scheme was to be implemented with equal contribution from the Centre and the State. Audit observed that DHE, GNCTD received funds of ₹ 3.04 crore (₹ 1.52 crore from GoI in September 2015 and ₹1.52 crore from GNCTD in April 2016) for the same. However, the Scheme was not implemented and the funds were lying unutilized with DHE as of March 2024 as the required Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of India and GNCTD was not signed.

DHE also launched a scheme named "Delhi Higher Education & Skill Development Guarantee Scheme" in 2015-16 to provide a guarantee to banks for loans taken by students of Delhi for pursuing higher education in Delhi. Audit noticed that the number of applicants and beneficiaries consistently decreased during 2017-23 and it stood at nine in 2021-22 and only two in 2022-23. There was nothing on record to show that DHE reviewed the Scheme to ascertain the reasons for the decline so as to increase its reach amongst the students and fructify the purpose of the scheme.

In March 2008, DTTE established the Delhi Knowledge Development Foundation (DKDF) as a society to work as a think tank dedicated to knowledge, to capture and disseminate new approaches for governance of higher and technical education. DKDF released grants amounting to ₹ 43.76 crore to six Universities during 2020-22 for the execution of eight projects relating to the creation of a Centre of Excellence. However, it was observed that the Universities had neither submitted the progress of the projects nor Utilisation Certificate.

On the directions (May 2021) of the Deputy Chief Minister, GGSIPU designed (June 2021) a two-week New Certificate Training Course for preparing 5000 Health Assistants given the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed utilization of ₹ 5 crore lying with the GGSIPU for remittance to DHEAT. As of October 2023,

GGSIPU had made a payment of ₹ 2.44 crore for the certificate course, leaving an unspent balance of ₹ 2.56 crore with GGSIPU. Thus, Utilization of funds, meant for financial assistance to meritorious students from weaker sections of society, for the other purpose i.e. conducting the above course was irregular.

Audit noticed under-utilisation of the intake capacity of students in all the three universities selected for detailed audit. In GGSIPU, the under-utilisation of available seats ranged from 14 to 32 percent during 2018-23. The unfilled seats especially in 10 programs were significant and ranged up to 100 *per cent*. Two Institutions affiliated to GGSIPU surrendered (January 2023) their affiliation with the University and opted for affiliation with another University, as student intake in the B. Tech and B. Arch programs run by them had been decreasing every year. In DTU, vacant seats in UG programs ranged from eight to 10 *per cent* during 2018-23 and in PG programs ranged from 17 to 32 *per cent*. In DPSRU, the overall percentage of vacant seats during 2018-23 ranged from 11 to 24 *per cent* whereas in nine programs of the University Schools, the vacancy percentage ranged from 42 *per cent* to 100 *per cent*.

Audit examined financial aspects of the selected three Universities and found that investment of Contributory Provident Funds by GGSIPU was not in accordance with the pattern of investment specified by the Government, with delay in investment of surplus funds leading to loss of potential interest. Most of the sampled self-financed colleges have not implemented the recommendations of 7th Central Pay Commission.

We noticed that the Internal Quality Assurance Cells of sampled Universities did not meet at prescribed intervals and conduct of Academic and Administrative Audits and their follow up, to identify and address weaknesses in various processes and procedures, was inadequate.

What we recommend?

The Government may:

- *formulate comprehensive policies on higher and technical education in Delhi, aligned with the vision of the government.*

The Universities may:

- *prepare long-term and annual plans to achieve the objectives stated in their vision documents and review them periodically to assess the level of achievement.*

- *fix timelines for obtaining NAAC/NBA accreditation for the programs under them, strengthen the mechanism for granting affiliation and fix timeline for notification of fees.*

- *undertake regular revision of the syllabi to align with new developments/industry needs and timely declaration of results/award of degrees.*

- *formulate road map for instituting consultancy/research projects aligned with the requirements of the society and industries.*

- *complete recruitment process of teaching, non-teaching, technical and administrative staff in a time bound manner by filling up critical post identified on priority.*

- *fix points of responsibility for coordination & monitoring in creation of infrastructure, such as classrooms and hostels for students, and timely utilization of assets created.*

- *conduct Academic and Administrative Audits regularly to mitigate weaknesses in various processes and procedures.*

****