EDTECH REGULATION POLICY ON THE CARDS: EDUCATION MINISTER

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Education and related issues

Dharmendra Pradhan

The booming education technology sector, which has benefited from the disruptions in traditional education modes during the pandemic, is likely to come under regulation soon, with Union Ministries discussing framing of a common policy, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

At a virtual event to distribute coupons valued at Rs. 253 crore for over 12 lakh socially and economically disadvantaged students to get free access to EdTech courses, Mr. Pradhan said, "There is no place for exploitation or monopoly", in the sector.

False promises

"We have heard reports that some education technology companies are exploiting students with loans for fee-based courses. If someone wants to subscribe for these out of their own free will, there is no problem. But students should not be lured to take loans by false promises from them," Mr. Pradhan said noting that advisories had been issued late last month by schools and the higher education and skill development departments. "We are also having discussions with MeitY [Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology] and the Law Department on how to come up with a common policy," he said.

According to a September 2021 report from the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, there are more than 4,530 EdTech companies of which 435 have come about in the past two years.

Industry leaders such as Byju's and Unacademy have raised capital worth $2.32 billion and $354 million, respectively, in the first year of the pandemic alone. The burgeoning field of EdTech start-ups has faced little regulation by the government, similar to the bricks-and-mortar tuition and coaching services which they are slowly taking over.

"The Government of India does not want to place restrictions but we are firm on certain things," Mr. Pradhan said.

Large market

"We offer a large market and all are welcome to reach out to Indian students but there cannot be a monopoly. We have a welfare model. [The companies] can come and do business and create wealth. But simultaneously, you cannot exploit my students," he warned.

Repeated Internet disruptions and outage marred Monday's event held at the offices of the Education Ministry, illustrating some of the other challenges for educational technology firms seeking to reach students from poor homes, or in remote areas, with limited Internet connectivity.

"In this modern 21st century world, electricity and Internet have become essentials just like air, water, food, clothing and housing," he said.

[Our code of editorial values](#)