



NATIONALISATION OF NLUS

SHOW OF SOLIDARITY ON 69th NATIONAL LAW DAY

Originally envisaged as ‘islands of legal excellence to create a generation of ‘social engineers’ for ‘nation-building’, the National Law Universities (‘NLUs’) today are inefficiently administrated educational institutions that failed the cause of legal excellence in India. They have been unable to provide basic facilities like decent faculty, proper classrooms, proper residential areas, a functional library, hygienic environment and other such necessities despite charging a substantially high tuition fee from the students. Till date, student bodies of almost **ten** NLUs have come down in protest against their respective administrations for issues relating to poor infrastructure, stringent academic regulations, administrative irregularities, arbitrary actions and a continuing lack of transparency. More than **half** the NLUs do not even have NAAC accreditation.

One of foremost reasons for it has been the sheer lack of funds. NLUs are state universities and are formed under a statute passed by the respective state legislature. This means they rely primarily on their home states for funds and in absence of sufficient assistance from the same, run primarily on student fees and occasional UGC grants.

This lack of funds is further coupled with increasing state government interference in the administration of NLUs. In the recent years, almost all NLUs have witnessed a trend wherein state governments are increasing the domicile quota through state amendment bills. Today, **ten** NLUs have **50%** state reservation and **seven** others have **20% or more**.

The remaining older institutions like National Law School of India University, Bangalore and National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata have also recently been at the receiving end of such amendments. Last year, the Karnataka legislative assembly unanimously passed the National Law School of India (Amendment) Bill 2017 which proposes to reserve 50% seats in the premier institution for students who are residents of the state. Similarly, the West Bengal legislative assembly through an amendment bill (‘the Bill’), passed on November 20th, 2018, proposed to create a state reservation for a minimum of 30 per cent of seats in NUJS, Kolkata to ‘bring it in consonance with other National Law Schools’. The Bill also undermines the institution’s autonomy by conferring the power on the state government to determine the fee-structure and allow admissions on the basis of a qualifying exam, bypassing the nationally instituted Common Law Admission Test (CLAT). Given NUJS is a founding member of the CLAT consortium, such a provision could possibly set-off a similar trend among other NLUs to opt out of the CLAT framework. Such developments are not only alarming but also antithetical to the idea of National Law Universities.

Demands made by NLUs against such actions and state of affairs have also been repeatedly ignored by the state governments. It is in this context that we affirm to seek the change exogenously. To promote legal education in India, it is high-time that NLUs, being the premier institutes of the country in the field of law, be conferred with the status of national institutes.

On *this twenty-sixth day of November (70th National Law Day)* we, the students of all the NLUs, renew and reaffirm our call for reforms in legal education in India by urging the Union Government to take cognizance of the abysmal state of affairs and bring parity in the administration of NLUs, to make them at par with other national institutes. Being comparable to IITs, NITs, IIITs and IIMs (added earlier this year) in every respect, granting NLUs the status of ‘Institutes of National Importance’ (INI) must also be considered specially to tackle the perpetual lack of funds and issues faced by students.