

Sibal good news for teachers?

SALARY Over 4.5 lakh teachers will get long overdue pay bonanza if Centre funds cash-strapped states

ht SPECIAL

Charu Sudan Kasturi

charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Over 4.5 lakh teachers across India's state universities and affiliated colleges are set to finally receive a long overdue pay bonanza with the Centre preparing to drop a controversial norm preventing it from financing fund-strapped state governments.

The human resource development ministry will move the

Cabinet on Thursday to allow it to pay state governments 80% of the additional financial burden imposed by hiked University Grants Commission teacher salaries, top government sources have told HT.

The HRD ministry is seeking Cabinet sanction to dump a controversial norm in the UGC pay package, which was notified on December 31, 2008, and has been implemented across India's central universities but eludes state varsity teachers.

The norm the ministry wants

to junk allowed the Centre to financially assist only those states that raise the retirement age of their college and university to 65 years. Different states at present have different retirement ages.

Paying all states up to 80% of the additional cost for salary hikes could run up a Central bill of up to ₹8,000 crore a year, officials said. "But this is the same amount we were earlier too preparing to pay — except that now we are not insisting on raising the retirement age," an official said.

MINISTRY WANTS TO DUMP UGC NORM THAT LINKS CENTRAL AID WITH RETIREMENT AGE OF TEACHERS

Education ministers from most states — both those ruled by the Congress and those ruled by Opposition parties — had asked HRD minister Kapil Sibal at their meeting on June 18, 2010 to retract the norm insisting on hiking the retirement age

to 65 years to entitle them to Central funds.

Some states like Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh have argued that hiking the retirement age would hurt young aspiring teachers — an argument rejected by the HRD ministry citing the massive vacancies in universities that in fact forced the hike in superannuation age.

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have argued that teachers in their states were a part of the government cadre and that their retirement age could not

be raised selectively without hiking the age of superannuation of other government employees.

Kerala and West Bengal have argued that teacher retirement age is solely a state subject and have questioned central attempts to link the financial assistance package to the retirement age hike.

The HRD ministry has also received several petitions from state university teacher groups pleading the Centre to aid states financially to facilitate their salary hikes.