

# Select colleges may grant degrees

## Centre plans law to grant them greater autonomy

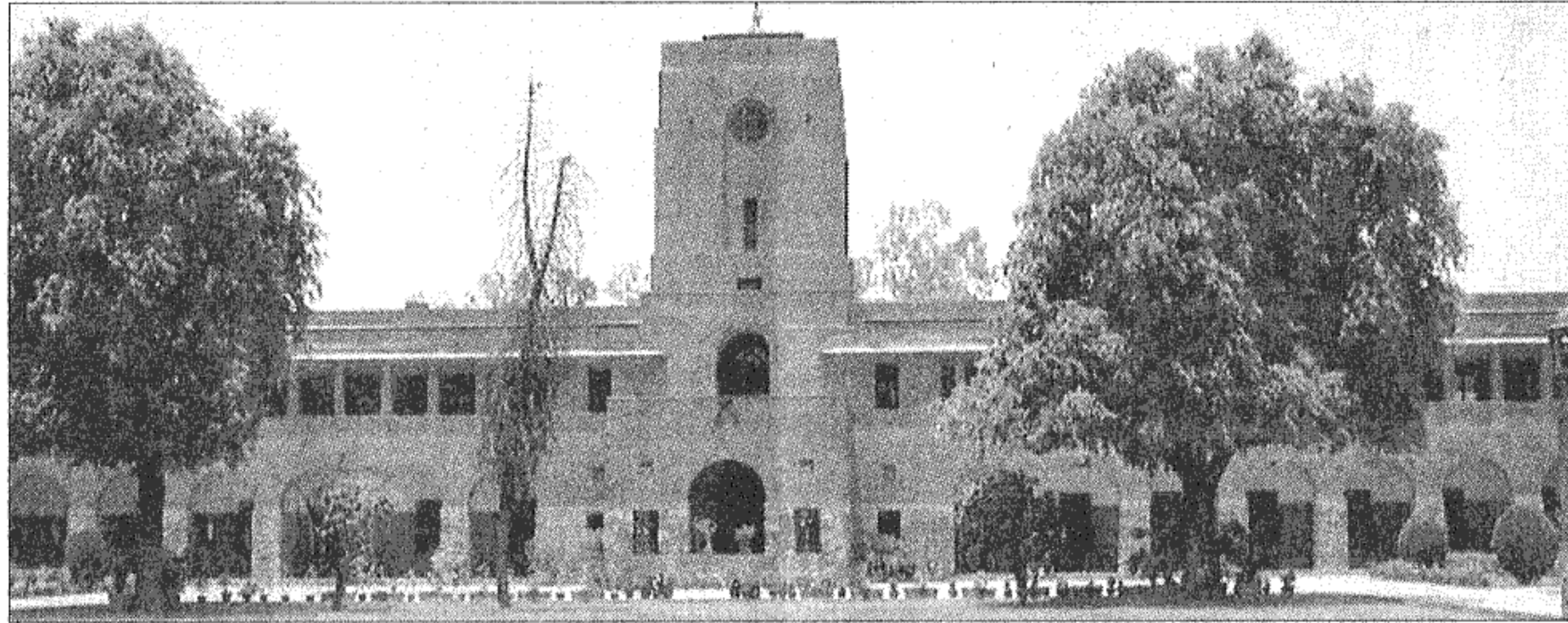
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**T**HE government is gearing up to pilot a legislation for ensuring greater levels of autonomy to colleges and institutes that have achieved a certain level of excellence.

Keen to have legal backing to the proposal, the Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry is learnt to have initiated the process of drafting a law that will allow reputed colleges such as St Xavier's, Mumbai, and St Stephen's, Delhi, among others to award degrees to their students — a sole prerogative of universities.

Though the ministry had been



St Stephen's, Delhi, is among the colleges that figure in the proposal.

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considering this proposal for a while, it has now decided that the plan must be backed by a law to ensure greater autonomy to institutes of excellence.

But the degree-granting powers will come with riders. Such institutes will have to follow certain academic standards and best practices,

encourage research, promote transparency in administrative and governance norms, etc.

Currently, colleges are affiliated to universities, which award graduate as well as post-graduate degrees.

Several colleges had raised the issue before and argued they should be accorded powers to

award degrees.

A recent report submitted by a committee constituted to evolve a comprehensive policy for the autonomy of central educational institutions supports the move.

This committee, headed by legal educationist Prof NR Madhava Menon, calls for greater autonomy

to colleges and their gradual upgrade to university status.

“The system of affiliation has let down academic standards both in the affiliated colleges and in affiliating universities. It is not conducive to continue the system in the present circumstances,” reads the committee report. “Given the need for increasing the number of universities, it is appropriate that established colleges with a good track record are elevated to status of universities in a phased manner giving them time to organise themselves for new challenges.”

The other suggestions include allowing IIMs to offer degrees, semester systems and choice-based credit courses as well as dual degree programmes across universities, freedom to central educational institutes to start any programme of study, establish centres and departments and create teaching positions, hire eminent faculty from across the world, etc.