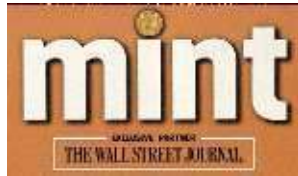


News monitored for: ISB



ORIENTATION CAPSULE

# Legislators to get policy classes at ISB

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NEW DELHI

In an initiative aimed at improving legislative debate in India, around 50 lawmakers from various states will take a crash course on public policy-making at the Indian School of Business (ISB).

"We have carried out courses for several sections of society on a variety of subjects and thought why not MLAs (members of the legislative assembly), who are key to bringing change in public life," deputy dean Savita Mahajan said.

Hyderabad-based ISB will conduct the course in partnership with PRS Legislative Research, a policy research centre. The three-day, free capsule course will be conducted in January, Mahajan said.

The course duration and the number of participants could be increased in later iterations.

"We don't know how to ask good questions in the assembly during a debate and answer properly on relevant subjects, or adjust ourselves vis-a-vis public aspirations and government's limitations," said Rajesh Dharmani, an MLA from Himachal Pradesh who will be attending the course.

"I am a first-time legislator. There was no orientation, no training for us. There should be capacity-building training for us," said Dharmani, a Congress MLA from Ghumarwin assembly constituency. "I think all MLAs should go for such courses to become successful people's representatives."

Mahajan said the MLAs will be taught to access information and disseminate them with a focus. "Sometimes, legislators do not know the minute details

or (the) implications of some issues," she said. "Here we will tell them how to handle it; how research is an important aspect for preparing for issues."

The participants will be from Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Orissa.

The legislators were approached individually through PRS Legislative Research.

"Since we are going to a leading business school like ISB, we expect them to give us an exposure on relevant issues and broaden our vision," Dharmani said.

"Capacity-building or orientation programmes at any leading institute, either in India or outside, are important," said Santosh, a project director with Transparency International, who uses just one name. "More than formal education, such courses are important as they give input on public policy-making and work as a bridge between the ground reality and the policy formulations vision."

However, Anand Kumar, a social scientist and a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, was sceptical of the move.

"There is a need for change in the mindset of politicians. They start their career with ambition for power and money, and end with it," Kumar said. "Their hunger for money never dies; hence, no amount of academic exposure will help. To be honest, politicians have outsourced public agenda to NGOs."

The ISB is also setting up a public policy institute in partnership with Bharti Enterprises. It has also signed an agreement with US-based Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy for furthering research and academic programmes in public policy-making.