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NAAC sacks a fifth of its assessors amid probe

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NEW DELHI: The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has removed over one-fifth of its 5,300 assessors based on the recommendations of a 10-member special committee formed after the arrest of seven NAAC officials by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in February, said Anil Sahasrabudhe, chairperson, NAAC executive Committee on Tuesday. The arrests were made in a ratings-for-bribes case.

Even before the bribery incident, NAAC had removed around 800 out of its 6,100 assessors, bringing the number down to 5,364, due to data discrepancies, protocol violations, and based on feedback from their peer assessors and college officials, Sahasrabudhe added.

In February, CBI arrested 10 individuals, including seven members of the NAAC peer team and three office-bearers of Guntur-based Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) in the corruption case, which pertains to allegations of bribes being paid to secure an A++ rating for KLEF in Andhra Pradesh

NAAC RECEIVED SEVERAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT GRADING DISCREPANCIES WHICH LED TO COLLEGES' REVIEW

during a NAAC inspection. The federal agency has claimed that KLEF officials sought favourable accreditation by bribing NAAC inspection committee members.

Later, NAAC debarred all seven arrested members from further visits to colleges and universities for evaluation.

On Tuesday, Sahasrabudhe sought to play down the potential fallout of the arrests.

"All seven members never went to any college together, and not even two of them together for inspection in the past one and a half years before the incident. The main accused did not go on any visit for the last one and a half years. Even in cases where a one of the remaining six accused went for a visit with other team members, NAAC peer team assessors observed nothing abnormal," Sahasrabu-

dhe told HT. The main accused is Samarendra Nath Saha, who was acting vice-chancellor of Ramchandra Chandravansi University, Palamu, Jharkhand, and chairperson of the seven-member NAAC peer team.

Following the incident, NAAC received several complaints about grading discrepancies which led to officials re-visiting and re-evaluating around 400 institutions including government ones where issues such as sudden grade jumps, unusually high first-time scores, or 30% gaps between the Data Validation and Verification (DVV) process and the onsite Peer Team Visit (PTV) were found, he explained, adding that in over half the cases, grades were subsequently lowered.

Established in 1994, NAAC evaluates the quality of education and infrastructure in universities and colleges using a grading system based on a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) from 1.51 to 4.00 and grades them for five years on a scale from A++ to C, while a D signifies no accreditation. CGPA is based on factors such as teaching, research, innovation, and infrastructure.