

Frequently Asked Questions-Answers on Revised Draft of 'The Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2025'

Q1. What is the justification for proposed repeal of the ISI Act, 1959, and introduction of the draft new legislation (ISI Bill, 2025) and incorporation of ISI?

The Indian Statistical Institute was declared an Institution of National Importance (INI) in 1959 through an Act of Parliament, namely the Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959. However, the Institute continues to sustain the status as a registered society. Of more than 160 INIs, only two legislations follow this structure, one of these exceptions is the India Statistical Institute, Act, 1959.

Under the existing review framework of the Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959, four Review Committees (RCs), from time to time, have examined the functioning and progress of ISI. It has emerged from these reviews that the governance structure of ISI is characterized by many legacy issues. The 4th ISI Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. R A Mashelkar, which submitted its Report in 2021 identified several structural issues in the governance of the ISI which allude to institutional inefficiencies, lack of accountability, and resistance to reform.

Unlike IITs and IIMs, where small-sized empowered bodies such as the Board of Governors as well as executives such as Directors exercise direct powers of day-to-day administration as well as long-term policy formulation, ISI continues to follow the governance-model of a typical society, wherein, significant control is exercised by the large General Body of members of the society, which currently has more than 1,000 members. In fact, it emerges that a significant section of the General Body comprises of current and former employees of ISI.

An important aspect of the control exerted by the General Body is that any amendment to the regulations and the Memorandum of Association must be carried out with the approval of the General Body. Only those changes which are approved by three-fourths of the members voting are to be adopted. Since the regulations are prescriptive, even small reforms require the approval of the General Body. In the past fifty years, no significant changes have been introduced in Society instruments towards reforming the Institute. Thus, the existing society-based governance model has limited potential for institutional reform and growth.

The large size of ISI Council as well as excessive internal representation and large number of elected members in it hinders decision-making, as even a small group of dissenters can effectively block important decisions. The second, third and fourth RCs have suggested reduction in size of the council. On the other hand, the size of the Governing Council, which is the governing body of ISI, has actually increased from

time to time and has now become 33. At present, there are 13 employees of the ISI within its Council, in addition to the Director and three General Body members who are closely associated with ISI. This means that 17 out of 33 members of the Council are internal. Council discussions are heavily influenced by internal interests, preventing independent governance. Moreover, the ISI governance system is heavily reliant on elections, with multiple positions filled by internal voting rather than appointments based on merit.

The legislative proposal is for incorporation of ISI into a statutory body corporate, upscaling and strengthening its legal status and providing a more robust and contemporary governance framework, in line with peer INIs such as IITs, IIMs. A new legislation is required to frame comprehensive provisions, which can only be done by introducing a new Bill and repealing the old Act.

Thus, the ISI Bill is prepared to introduce a comprehensive new legislation, for upscaling the existing legislation ISI Act, 1959 to the level of governing legislations of other peer INIs such as IITs/IIMs with the objective of overhaul and modernization of the Institute's governance framework by enhancing its autonomy and accountability.

All assets, liabilities, employees, and ongoing academic programmes of the existing society are expressly preserved and transferred to the new statutory Institute with continuity of service conditions and protections.

Q2. Was the decision to release the draft Bill taken by MoSPI after providing public reasons and following wide discussion and consultation with the members/ committees of the Institute, and other stakeholders?

Under the existing review framework of the Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959, four Review Committees (RCs), from time to time, have examined the functioning and progress of ISI. It has emerged from these reviews that the governance structure of ISI is characterized by many legacy issues. The second, third and fourth RCs have suggested reduction in size of the ISI Council. On the other hand, the size of the Governing Council, which is the governing body of ISI, has actually increased from time to time and has now become 33. The fourth RC also identified structural and legacy issues including large internal representation in ISI Council and excessive reliance on election and it has recommended restructuring of the Council and discontinuance of elections for certain posts. However, these reformative recommendations were not implemented by the ISI/ General Body.

While concluding, the 4th Review Committee was of the view that ISI can rise to its true potential and effect a turnaround, if it can bring in certain fundamental changes, some of which are not just incremental, but truly radical in its structure, systems and processes backed up by much higher aspirational levels, from top leadership, down to every worker. ISI must reimagine, reinvent and reposition itself to regain its

leadership position and remain relevant in changing times and as ISI reaches its centenary year in 2031, it should aim to create a new ISI@100 vision, transitioning from the current good to the very best, one of the foremost institutes globally.

A brainstorming session was organized by the MoSPI in collaboration with the ISI on 5 July 2025 at Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru under the Chairpersonship of Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, Chairman, ISI Governing Council to deliberate on pathways that can transform Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) into a world-class centre of learning and research, as it completes 100 years in 2031. Eminent persons and academicians including President of the ISI Society, Chairman, National Statistical Commission, Vice-Chairman, Niti Aayog, Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India, former Director of ISI, former Directors of IIT/IIM, Director of IISc, ISI Alumni deliberated on the matter. *Inter alia*, the issues raised by second, third and fourth Review Committees including recommendations on restructuring of ISI's Governing Council and the roadmap ISI@100 were shared with stakeholders/ participants. Most of the participants felt that to achieve the ISI@100 Vision, reforms should be built upon four pillars viz. Excellence, Autonomy, Accountability and Effective Governance and accepted the view that this might require a new legislation to align ISI's legal framework with that of other Institutes of National Importance (INIs), address specific challenges faced by ISI, and support the development of the ISI@100 Vision.

In view of all the above, the ISI Bill is prepared to introduce a comprehensive new legislation, for upscaling the existing legislation ISI Act, 1959 to the level of governing legislations of other peer INIs such as IITs/IIMs with the objective of overhaul and modernization of the Institute's governance framework by enhancing its autonomy and accountability. The new Act reiterates the declaration of Indian Statistical Institute as an Institution of National Importance, and provides for incorporation of Indian Statistical Institute as a body corporate, and also introduces framework of statutory bodies for effective governance.

Further, as per pre-legislative consultation policy, comments/ suggestions from public on the draft Bill were invited and the timelines have been extended as per the requests of various stakeholders. The revised draft 'The Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2025' has been placed on Ministry's website for submitting further comments/ suggestions by the public and other stakeholders by 05.01.2026.

Q3. Does the draft Bill impact internal representation in governance and affect academic autonomy by reducing the Academic Council—from its current composition of all Professors and representatives of Assistant and Associate Professors—to a small nominated body with only a recommendatory role?

The ISI Bill 2025 is intended to enable ISI to emerge as a globally recognised centre of excellence in statistical and allied disciplines. The draft legislation is founded upon the guiding principles of Excellence, Effective Governance, Autonomy and Accountability. The statutory authorities of the Institute namely the Visitor, the Board of Governors, an Academic Council, the Director, Centre-Directors and the Registrar and their roles and responsibilities have been incorporated in the proposed statute.

In the revised Bill, the Board of Governors will be an empowered body consisting of 11 members and having a balanced representation of external and internal members including two members of the Academic Council. There would be only one government nominee, five external experts (including Chairperson) and five internal members of the Institute. This would provide academic and governance autonomy to the Institute.

The revised Bill includes all full-time faculty at the level of Professors and a defined number of other full-time faculty as members of the Academic Council. This makes the Academic Council broader and more representative, and entrenches the participation of senior faculty in academic governance. The Academic Council would be the principal academic body with wide-ranging responsibilities for courses, eligibility, examination systems and promotion of interdisciplinary research. Collectively, these provisions strengthen the academic autonomy.

The Academic Council's core functions—organisation and modification of courses, eligibility norms, selection procedures, and evaluation systems—remain central and are mandatory in nature. Recommendatory functions are separately mentioned.

Centers are also given administrative and academic autonomy and will be functioning through their respective Management Councils.

Q4. Whether any proposal exists to alter the status of ISI or shift the location of its headquarters from Kolkata?

There is no such proposal under consideration to shift the location of ISI's headquarters from Kolkata. In the revised draft Indian Statistical Institute Bill 2025, the location/ registered office of the Institute has been clearly indicated in the long title. The proposed legislation upscales and strengthens the governing framework of ISI, reiterates the declaration of ISI as an Institution of National Importance, and provides for incorporation of ISI as a body corporate, and also introduces framework of statutory bodies for effective governance. Moreover, the Bill enables the Institute to set up centres and campuses in India and abroad to expand its academic and research reach.

Q5. Does the provisions of Centres and the Management Councils create anomalies in the governance structure?

No. The revised ISI Bill 2025 provides a statutory status to the Centres and strengthens their governance. It provides a detailed structure, including clear provisions on Centres, their establishment, autonomy in day-to-day functioning, financial independence to the extent possible, and their functioning through Management Councils.

It also introduces a specific section on Management Councils, defining their composition (including a Chairperson, Director as Vice-Chair, Centre-Director, Dean of the Centre and a nominee of the Academic Council) and confirming that they function subject to the Act, Rules and Regulations.

The Director is expressly designated as the Chief Executive Officer of the Institute, responsible for leadership, administration, discipline and implementation of the decisions of the Board and Academic Council. As chairperson of Academic Council, the Director will be academic head of the Institute.

Centre-Director shall be responsible for effective functioning of their Centre.

Thus, the governance architecture lays down clear roles and creates a balanced distribution of authority between and Director and Centre-Directors.

Q6. Does the draft Bill provide autonomous process for appointment of the Director, ISI?

Yes. As per the revised draft of the Bill, the Director shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Board, on such terms and conditions of service as may be determined by rules.

This is in line with legislative framework of IIMs and prevailing provisions of the ISI.

Q7. Does the draft Bill emphasize revenue generation through student fees and commercialization of research?

The Bill explicitly provides that the Institute shall be a not-for-profit legal entity and that any surplus shall be used only to further its statutory objects. Provisions relating to revenue-raising—through fees, consultancy, sponsored projects, IP, start-ups and donations—are enabling, not mandatory, and reflect practices already prevalent in premier public institutions to diversify funding sources and enhance sustainability.

Q8. Does the draft Bill propose any change in fee structure of ISI?

There is no proposal in the bill to change the fee structure of ISI. The same would remain within the purview of regulation making powers of the Board.

Q9. ISI's traditional courses are not only free, their students are supported by stipends. Does the draft Bill seek to preserve and strengthen this inclusive model?

The draft ISI Bill, 2025 is a framework statute; it does not prescribe any change to the existing fee or stipend regime. The clauses on revenue generation do not mandate higher fees; they enable the Institute to mobilise external resources so that it can continue to sustain and even strengthen its inclusive support systems for students.

In fact, the Bill contains provisions for fellowships and scholarships to cater the needs of meritorious and weaker sections and thus enables inclusive education.

Further, the Bill reiterates that ISI will remain open to all irrespective of gender, caste, creed or class and recognises it as a Central Educational Institution for the purposes of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006, thereby affirming the commitment to equity and access.

Q10. Is there a need for bringing a new legislation since most of the recommendations of the Review Committees were implemented by ISI in consultation with the Government of India?

While many of the operational and academic recommendations of the Review Committee may have been implemented, several transformative and structural recommendations such as restructuring of the Council, discontinuation of the election and empowering Council for better decision making have not been implemented. Major recommendations that have not been implemented over the decades include the following:

- The second RC recommended that the Council should consist of a much smaller number of members, say, 12 of whom about two-thirds should be external members. However, these recommendations were not implemented.
- The third RC suggested downsizing of the Council from then 30 to 23, which was not implemented.
- Owing to large size and greater internal representation, the fourth RC sweeping modifications for restructuring/ downsizing of the large-sized Council. The fourth RC also recommended discontinuance of elections for Heads of Divisions and Dean. These have however, not been implemented.

The new legislation therefore is required for bringing the existing framework to the level of that of peer INIs such as IITs/IIMs. In addition, the draft Bill *inter alia* intends to address structural and legacy issues identified by Review Committees over the past decades.
