

National Knowledge Commission

875. SHRI BIRENDER SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Knowledge Commission was set up by Government and, if so, the progress in this regard;

(b) the priorities before Government for rejuvenation and renovation of higher education;

(c) whether Government is contemplating to bridge the gap between general education and professional education in view of recent trends and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps Government has contemplated for improving quality of education with the expanding role of private sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) Yes, Sir. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was constituted on 13th June, 2005 with a time-frame of three years, from 2nd October, 2005 to 2nd October, 2008. Its term was extended upto 31st March, 2009. The NKC was given a mandate to guide policy and direct reforms, focusing on certain key areas such as education, science and technology, agriculture, industry, e-governance etc. The NKC has submitted around 300 recommendations to the Government in 27 focus areas.

(b) The major decisions taken by this Ministry for rejuvenation and renovation of higher education, some of which are based on the recommendations of the NKC are; launching of a National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) to create a skilled and productive work force; enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009; introduction of a Bill to create a National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER), to create an over-arching body to maintain and coordinate the standards in higher education in the country; a Bill to make accreditation of higher educational institutions mandatory and another one to prohibit certain unfair practices in the higher education sector; a Bill to establish Universities for Research and Innovation, which would set benchmarks for excellence for other institutions of higher learning; a Bill seeking to regulate the entry and operation of foreign educational providers in India; a scheme of interest subsidy for student educational loans for pursuit of professional education has been introduced; implementation of a National Translation Mission, to propagate Indian languages and literature through high quality translation; launching of the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT); 16 new Central Universities have been established under the Central Universities Act, 2009. The Government had substantially increased the Plan allocation in the Eleventh Plan aimed

at improvement of quality and infrastructure in the existing technical educational institutions and for setting up of new quality institutions Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Indian Institutes of Information Technology and Schools for Planning and Architecture etc.

(c) The main objective of Higher Education and Research Bill is to treat the entire higher education as a single universe of learning and prevent fragmentation of knowledge. The gap between professional and general education can be bridged only by creating a facilitating policy framework that promotes inter-disciplinary, cross-disciplinary learning, which is what the Higher Education and Research Bill intends to do. The existing regulatory bodies to regulate professional and general education separately are to be subsumed to create an over-arching regulatory body which regulates all branches of higher learning. In addition National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) has been launched with the objective to create a skilled and productive work force that matches international standards of quality and productivity through integration of vocational education and training with main stream education. Apart from this, a revamped programme of Finishing Schools to enhance the employability of engineering graduates is being implemented.

Mandatory accreditation is the key to ensure quality of education in higher educational institutions, including private institutions. A Bill to make accreditation mandatory has been introduced in Parliament. In addition, a Bill prohibiting certain unfair practices, which would apply to all higher educational institutions including private institutions, has also been introduced. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued the UGC (Establishment of and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities) Regulations, 2003 for regulating and maintaining standards of education in private universities. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has issued the AICTE (grant of approval for starting new technical institutions, introduction of courses or programmes and approval of intake capacity of seats for the courses or programmes) Regulations, 1994, amended in 1997 and 2000, which cover private institutions as well.

National Skill Development Corporation

†876. SHRI RAMCHANDRA PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to many shortcomings in the education system of the country a need to enhance the efficiency at national level is being felt;

(b) if so, Government's reaction in this regard;

(c) whether a few years back Government had established National Skill Development Corporation in this regard;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.