

## **NKC wants national standard for school education**

NEW DELHI, Feb. 17: The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has recommended creation of a national body to monitor the quality of education in both government and private schools.

In his recent letter to the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, the NKC chairman Mr Sam Pitroda has said the proposed national body is required to ensure minimum standards are met in government and private schools in terms of learning outcomes. “Currently there is no systematic and continuous feedback on the actual impact and outcome of various educational schemes and initiatives, or the actual quality of education imparted in schools. There is a strong case for a testing body at the national level for quality assessment of schools,” the letter said.

For the formation of the national body, the NKC has suggested results-based monitoring framework with due process indicators and outcome indicators. “This should be based on a short criteria list that can be monitored. These should include fixed infrastructure requirements, enrolment and attendance, as well as outcome indicators such as learning levels achieved in certain basic areas such as language skills and numbers. Such a process of assessment needs to be applied to all schools ~ both public and private,” Mr Pitroda told the PM.

The NKC is, however, against use of topics or questions that provide any incentives for rote-learning in the assessment process of students. “The tracking mechanism should ideally be concerned with the profile of skill attainment of each student,” Mr Pitroda’s letter stated.

“The role of this testing body will simply be to provide information on the results of its assessments, with the state governments free to act upon this information. The results of such regular tests must be made publicly available in a format accessible to all, including websites,” the letter said.

The NKC chairman also said monitoring of private schools is required in terms of ensuring a transparent admissions process, regulation of fee structures, while meeting minimum set standards for quality of teaching and infrastructure also requires attention. “There is currently no exact data on the numbers and enrolment of unrecognised private

schools in the country, their fee structure or admissions policy, or their standards of infrastructure and quality. Private schools should become the subject of regulation and inspection within a set framework which is universally applicable,” Mr Pitroda said. The NKC is a high-level advisory body to the Prime Minister with the objective of transforming India into a “knowledge society”.

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