

Education budget

Expenditure pattern is equally important

THOUGH successive governments laid great emphasis on educational uplift, the budgetary allocations for this sector have decreased over the years if we consider the GNP: education budget ratio. At present, only around two per cent of GNP is spent in this sector.

The question of increasing allocation to the education sector is often raised because it is believed to be performing well below the expected levels. We support the idea of pumping in more money to the sector, which is saddled with too many limitations and constraints; yet the pattern of expenditure is also very important. If payment of salaries and infrastructural overheads gobble up the bulk of the allocations, then issues like standard of learning, educational equipment, teacher training and research will never get due attention. Not that routine payments can be avoided, but the point is that if very little is left after meeting those expenditures, then the budgetary allocations are clearly not enough to bring about the desired changes.

We believe organisational matters like formation of management committees comprising honest, dedicated and competent people is basic to better educational administration. In other words, it is essential for ensuring proper utilisation of the allocated money. Then there are 'signboard' institutions which eat up money that could go to genuine schools or colleges. They have neither the teaching staff nor the infrastructure to call themselves educational institutions. Such schools or colleges will have to be either phased out or re-organised to prevent wastage of money and downslide in the standard of education. However, the authorities must tread carefully since the number of children not attending school is still high. They may fix the number of schools that can be set up in an area, depending on its population, to weed out those that exist only in paper.

In the ultimate analysis, a viable system cannot be developed unless there is regular monitoring, supervision and inspection of the different tiers of education at work. It is a relevant point because in our context constraints and limitations often snowball into insurmountable problems owing to mismanagement, corruption and inefficiency.