

Draft Education Act welcome. *It should not discourage private sector education*

WE heartily welcome the final draft of the country's first-ever Education Act that seeks to implement the guidelines provided in the National Education Policy-2010. The draft attempts to bring all private schools, colleges and universities under a regulatory framework.

Clearly, the aim of the draft Education Act is to restrain private institutions from charging unreasonably high fees. As stipulated in it, all private educational institutions, irrespective of their mediums of instruction, including the MPO-listed schools and colleges will have to receive the government's permission before fixing tuition fees and other charges. It also provides for stern punitive actions against those who will be found to act in violation of these rules. As it stands, the draft Act appears to be rather ambitious, though it largely reflects the expectations of common people who have always demanded government intervention in matters of excessive charging of tuition and admission fees by many private schools and colleges.

Having said that, we would like to caution that unless steps are taken judiciously in matters of tuition and other fees, its implementation may prove to be discouraging for the educational institutions in the private sector. The private sector has been playing a very important role in catering to the increasing demands of education services. We should not forget that if it was not for the quality education provided by some of the leading private universities of the country, we would not be able to keep a lot of students from going abroad. Therefore, in fixing various fees the genuine cost required by a good private educational institution, be it a school or university, must be taken into consideration along with rising inflationary pressures.

At the same time, the authorities concerned should take care that the draft Act in no way curbs the autonomy of the private and public universities.