

Govt's roadmap for education

By Our Correspondent

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THE government has form a roadmap to promote research and innovation in applied disciplines, devise market-oriented programmes in universities according to international standards and to make the modern means of science and technology compatible with local needs.

A meeting held here Tuesday between the governor Punjab, Khalid Maqbool and the Vice-Chancellors of all concerned universities was informed of this development. The Chairman Higher Education Commission, Dr Atta-ur-Rehman and provincial education minister, Mian Imran Masood also attended the meeting. The focal point of the meeting was to identify requisite reform initiatives in public sector universities.

The first session of the meeting started with a presentation by PU Vice-Chancellor, Arshad Mahmood, in which he gave details of the seminar on higher education held last month at the

PU, and the new programmes introduced by the University. Afterwards, a discussion was held, in which the other Vice-Chancellors spoke about the initiatives being taken in their universities for revamping the higher education sector. The VCs of newly established universities in Faisalabad and Sargodha, however, complained about the lack of resources and infrastructure. They were directed to prepare PC-1 of the required projects and send it to the government for necessary action. They were also asked to recruit the qualified retired teachers on contract basis to make for the shortage of quality staff.

After the break, Dr Atta-ur-Rehman spoke about the initiatives taken by the HEC to restructure the higher education sector. While deploring that only 1500 teachers out of a the 7000 teaching in various universities were PhD adding that the roadmap envisaged to raise the number of PhD teachers to 80 percent in the next two years.

The HEC had released a total grant of Rs 4.30 billion to public sector universities as development budget during the current fiscal year, and the universities had matched this amount from their own resources for faculty development, he said. The existing development budget had almost been doubled during the next two years, he added. The amount, he said, would be Rs 6.25 billion for the fiscal year starting from July 2003, while in the next phase in 2004-05, it would be enhanced to Rs 8.60 billion, he said.

Dr Atta also spoke about spending the resources to provide incentives to the university teachers. He said that a proposal was in the pipeline to give Grade-18 to the lecturers in universities and added that the teachers should be hired on five-year contract instead of one or two years. He stressed quality in education sector with high-tech laboratories, use of Information Technology and scholarships for the students along with account-

ability. The universities should also strive and establish links with international universities to attain international recognition, he said. An open debate was held in which the governor asked the Vice-Chancellors to make suggestions. The governor questioned them about the possible initiatives, which could be taken for reforming education sector in true sense. He said the institutions of higher learning should focus on their aims and objectives in the light of the roadmap.

He said the universities should serve the purpose as the centres of excellence to produce experts in all fields and maintained that the meetings of Inter-University Vice-Chancellors Committee would be held regularly in future to ensure implementation of the roadmap for reforms in higher education. The education minister endorsed the efforts initiated by the governor as Chancellor of all public sector universities of the province.

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