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Model labs for 28 tribal schools

T. Nandakumar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE) has started work on a project to equip 28 tribal schools with model science laboratories.

The project will be taken up in collaboration with the Department for Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the Sastraposhini programme aimed at improving the quality of science education. Executive vice-president of KSCSTE E.P. Yesodharan said the department had agreed to fund the joint project. "Our officials have visited 13 tribal schools to assess the existing infrastructure. They will propose necessary improvements," he said.

As many as 114 government schools have already been provided with model laboratories under the Sastraposhini programme launched in 2003. The programme is expected to lead to improved enrolment in science courses, develop better competitiveness among science graduates and encourage students to seek a career in science.

Teachers are also encouraged to carry out innovative projects in science education for children. Students are provided hands-on training in performing experiments.

The model science labs are being established at a cost of Rs.3 lakh each. Labs are built to specifications in size, furniture, lighting and apparatus. The KSCSTE will fund the labs for the first two years, after which they will be handed over to the Education Department.

Management committees comprising school authorities and representatives of teachers and parents act as a review forum. Teachers handling the labs are encouraged to interact with each other and share their experiences.

According to R. Prakashkumar, Principal Scientific Officer, KSCSTE, the Nodal Officer for the Sastraposhini scheme, the model laboratories had generated excitement among students and provided an element of fun in learning. The extension of the project to tribal schools will boost the quality of education in backward regions and help arrest the dropout rate.

“Our initial assessment revealed that children in tribal schools can make use of good laboratory facilities to learn science better,” he said.

The council is also embarking on a project to set up district science parks for children on the lines of the Science and Technology Museum in Thiruvananthapuram. While the council will fund the parks to be set up in Kollam and Kozhikode, the Revenue Department has agreed to finance the park in Thrissur in the first phase.