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Rs10bn Malala fund yet to be utilized

ISLAMABAD: Though projects are often delayed for years due to unavailability of funds, the participants of an event on Thursday were surprised to know that the \$10 million 'Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education' could not be utilised even after the passage of over a year.

During the event, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Education and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to utilise the fund. Minister for Education Balighur Rehman and Director General UNESCO Irina Bokova signed the MoU.

It may be recalled that on December 10, 2012, during his visit to France the then President Asif Ali Zardari announced that 10 million dollars would be allocated for promotion of girls education in the name of Malala Yousufzai who was shot and injured by Taliban in October 2012.

It was also announced that through the Malala Fund donations of billions of dollars would be raised to ensure that all girls go to school by 2015 in line with the United Nations Millennium Goals.

Then Education Minister Waqas Akram signed the agreement with the UNESCO head, Irina Bokova.

An officer of the Ministry of Education requesting not to be identified said:

"The fact is that during the three months of the PPP government, another two months of the caretaker set-up and seven months of the incumbent PML-N government even the modalities of the fund could not be finalised."

"A VVIP would have inaugurated the fund today, but as it was launched by the former president the event remained in a low profile," he said.

Balighur Rehman told mediapersons that under the agreement UNESCO would spend the \$7 million in Pakistan and the remaining three million would be deposited in the Global Fund.

"Foreign donors will be requested to donate in the 'Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education'. The funds will be used for girls' education in a safer environment.

Missing facilities in the girls' schools will also be covered under the programme. Moreover, teachers and students will be equipped with peace education and conflict management and resolution skills," he said.

“The activities under the programme will be implemented by UNESCO in a close coordination and collaboration with the ministry of education. A steering committee, comprising the representatives of the government and UNESCO, will monitor and coordinate the overall implementation of the programme,” he said.

Speaking to the mediapersons, Ms Bokova said in many cases girls remained deprived of education in Pakistan.

“Education brings peace. If there is no peace there will be poverty and other problems. Attacks on girls’ schools are condemnable,” she said.

Ms Bokova said 60 per cent of the population of Pakistan consisted of youth which was a big opportunity and the government should equip them with skills.

Mr Rehman while talking to Dawn said the previous government should have decided the modalities of the fund and made it functional.

“After coming to power, the PML-N government took the programme seriously and put in place all the modalities for its utilization. Hopefully, more donations will come in the fund which will be used for the education of girls,” he said.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1085460/rs10bn-malala-fund-yet-to-be-utilised>