Right to Education Bill

Capital's 70,000 kids to go to school

Lawmakers ask provinces to make similar laws

The bill, presented by senators Dr Saeeda Iqbal, Shujaat Hussain, Najma Hameed and Farah Aqil, was passed unanimously in the upper house of parliament on Monday.

"I'm glad that for once we all discharged our joint responsibility. Though this bill is passed only for Islamabad, I am sure it will provide impetus for provinces to introduce similar legislation," said Iqbal.

Senator Haji Adee of the Awami National Party also appreciated the bill, saying that it was the moral duty of politicians to banish their political gains for such legislations. Prepared with the help of UNESCO, the legislation also calls upon private schools to admit 10% of underprivileged students in their classes.

Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD), which has been given the responsibility for the implementation of the bill, will establish schools in each neighbourhood within three years of the law's approval.

UNESCO representative Dr Kozue Kay Nagata congratulated the senators and termed the bill's passage as a historic milestone towards education for all in Pakistan.

"The entire process will set an example on how the elected representatives work for the betterment of the people," he said.

CADD Joint Secretary Prof Rafiq Tahir said the passage of the bill has been the quickest in history.

"I have seen these bills take ages in the National Assembly, but due to an understanding between political parties, it just took a few hours in the Senate," he said.

According to the Federal Directorate of Education, a total of 161,400 students in the capital city are currently enrolled in federal government schools and colleges, while another 42,000 are studying in model colleges. The bill, therefore, will improve the enrolment rate by nearly 35%.