

Persons with disabilities: Capital to get PWD-friendly degree college



ISLAMABAD:

Approximately 15 per cent of the world's population lives with some form of disability, which means they are the "world's largest minority", according to the United Nations' Development and Human Rights for All campaign.

In order to provide persons with disabilities (PWD) in Pakistan more opportunities for socioeconomic equality, Capital Administration and Development Minister Nazar Muhammad Gondal announced that a degree college for PWDs will be established in the capital along the pattern of model colleges.

This was announced on Monday at an event held in connection with the International Day of PWDs at Al-Farabi Special Education Centre. At the event, which was held in collaboration with Special Education Directorate and Helping Hand, the minister committed to ensure the two per cent job quota and other facilities for PWDs are provided. Gondal also announced a Rs50,000 cash award for children with special needs who performed songs and tableaus on stage.

"Society must play its role as a whole to help persons with disabilities as they have ability and talent to excel if they are given the right tools. Education is the most powerful tool a person can have and we need to give this to children with special needs. That is why we will enrol students from the coming session so they have access to an independent life," said Gondal. Students at the event were excited by the announcement and agreed that with access to facilities, support, and education, they will be able to flourish.

Al-Farabi Special Education Centre Director Munir Qureshi told *The Express Tribune* that building schools for children with special needs is extremely pertinent if we are to ensure that PWDs



don't fall in to the vicious cycle of poverty, as such individuals usually remain at the margins of society. "Even if you take our streets as an example, most beggars are disabled in some way. We must make sure that such individuals are given a chance to break out of that way of life," said Qureshi.

There is a certain amount of controversy attached to disabilities and beggary, as it is believed that many beggars pretend to be disabled for more sympathy, and the more harrowing aspect is that some children are forcibly crippled by their guardians to ensure higher returns. However, Qureshi noted that either way, society's reaction of pity towards PWDs needs to be replaced by understanding, support and empowerment.

Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal Managing Director Zamrud Khan thanked the minister for allotting a building in I-8 sector for a Pakistan Sweet Home orphanage. He assured the minister of his fullest support to help children with special needs. Senior Joint Secretary Abdul Latif Laghari, Special Education DG Ghayoor Sultana and other senior CAD officials also participated in the event.