

Free education



could bring them at par with the students in private sector. More classrooms and enough allocations of budget are all the more important to make this decision a success. Otherwise, this move would also backfire as some other decisions of the government in the past had — casting a negative impact on the education sector rather than contributing towards its flourishing.

Hence, the educationists believed that the decisions were aimed at gaining political mileage and had no hint of seriousness about it. Muhammad Azam Butt, president All Pakistan School Teachers Federation said that the government had again refrained from asking the views of the stakeholders before embarking on educational reforms. He said that the government needed to pay attention to the deplorable conditions in government educational institutions where the buildings, furniture and grant-in-aids were not capable of providing quality education.

More so, the decision contradicted the stance of the previous regime, during which the

governor Punjab had often stressed that the government could not provide for the educational expenses of the students in public sector and hence, private sector had to be involved to play a due role in it. The Joint Action Committee (JAC) had also been raising voices in agitation, against these very decisions. The elected government, on the other hand, has reiterated its resolve to provide education facilities for the downtrodden.

Syed Nazim Husnain, president JAC, when contacted said that the decision was a victory of the logical demands of the JAC components. He did question that if the government could not provide for the educational facilities at higher education level then how would it be able to cope with the huge financial burden that the government had incurred by this decision.

The provincial education department, however, remained unflappable during all this criticism and vowed to continue with its plans of providing quality education at affordable

rates. The provincial minister for education in his speeches has said that the decision would cost an additional sum of Rs. 350 million on the annual budget of education. The government would take up with the federal government for an increase in annual allocation for the purpose.

The education department also entered into negotiations with the World Bank to invest in the education sector in Punjab. The terms and conditions for this investment are still to be decided, however, the education department would be making a final plan in this regard which would be later implemented.

The provincial education minister, Mian Imran Masood,

meanwhile, in a talk with TNS said that the decision was not politically maneuvered and the government had shown a sincere gesture of its commitment to the masses. He said that the government was considering a plan to provide relief in allied expenses to the common man for the education of children and a policy statement pertaining to it would be presented in the assembly shortly. He said that the department was willing to facilitate the education sector and to restore the confidence of masses in the educational institutions of government and for this purpose, the suggestions of stakeholders would also be considered in a sympathetic manner.