

Literacy & basic education dept summary ready

Lafore
12.8.02
Dawn

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE, Aug 11: Functions of the proposed Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department (L&NFBED) have been finalized, making its launch possible anytime in near future, it is learnt.

The new department and its functions will be given a legal cover by incorporating them in the Punjab Government Rules of Business, 1974. A summary in this regard is being sent to the Punjab governor by the services and general administration department (S&GAD).

Official sources told *Dawn* that the tasks of the proposed department were approved recently in the light of proposals forwarded by the Punjab education and the social welfare, women development and literacy departments.

After launch, the L&NFBED will be responsible for the promotion of literacy through non-formal means, research and development to achieve objectives for higher literacy rate, adult education, training of teachers and material development for non-formal education.

It would also deal with service matters except those entrusted to the S&GAD, and have powers to purchase of stores and capital goods.

According to sources, the provincial education department would no more handle the adult education (literacy) as it had been proposed for the L&NFBED.

They said the Punjab finance department had, in the meantime, agreed to create 43 posts for the new department and allocate Rs4.6 million for its establishment.

According to rules of business of the department, it will work to eradicate illiteracy from the province through partnership with private sector, civil society, NGOs, philanthropists and any or all concerned, and focus on out-of-

school, drop-out and left-out children. It will work closely with the internal, external and donor agencies, believing in poverty alleviation and literacy as a first step to development.

The department will motivate and mobilize urban and rural community to promote literacy among all age groups by using local initiatives and resources, especially for women, children in distress and the disabled.

It will have powers to control, supervise and guide all executive district officers (Literacy) in all activities, particularly in non-formal basic education for early childhood, universalization of primary education, basic literacy and vocational education. The department will coordinate and link district literacy departments with distance learning institutions and donors for improving the status of life of the learners through 'continuing education'.

It will be required to conduct or facilitate provincial level workshops and seminars on literacy and education for all (EFA). It will also devise and develop learning material of all kinds and requirements for literacy and non-formal basic education and its dissemination at all levels.

The department will coordinate with the federal government and other allied departments regarding literacy and EFA. It will prepare, execute, supervise, control and implement schemes and projects of literacy and non-formal education in the province.

It will be authorized to provide accreditation and equivalence certification to the graduates of literacy and NFBE for higher level of learning at federal, provincial and district levels.

The department will coordinate and keep liaison with the district governments to start literacy programmes with their own budgets

and resources. It will also conduct campaigns to inform citizens about the benefits of education and literacy through walks, seminars, workshops, print and electronic media.

It will collect, compile and maintain the statistical data regarding literacy, dropout and EFA, pre-qualify firms to provide literacy and EFA consultancy, research and literary material to the government.

The department will cater for early childhood education of children of 3-5 years age group and primary education of the dropouts, leftouts through non-formal education system in collaboration with NGOs, CBOs, civil society and private sector.

It will also arrange for training of NGOs teachers, supervisors and officers working in the field of literacy and non-formal education.

The department will liaison with the education department to conduct examination of NFBE students and use of infrastructure for literacy and EFA programmes.

The department will also implement the policies given by the governor, who is also chairman of the Punjab Commission for Literacy and Education for All, regarding uplift of literacy and EFA.

It may be mentioned that the Punjab governor had approved the establishment of a separate administrative literacy department on March 27 this year to focus and launch independent efforts to enhance the literacy rate.

The governor had shown his 'deep concern' over the alarming situation of illiteracy and high rate of dropouts in the province. He had also directed the minister to fix a literacy benchmark of at least 40 per cent everywhere in the province and direct all districts to achieve it in shortest possible time.