

Equal importance to be given to transgender students for enrolment in institutes: Punjab govt

The Punjab government's School Education Department has issued special instructions in relation to the enrolment of transgender students "on an equal basis" across educational institutes in the province.

The instructions to school administrations for dealing with transgender children have been issued in order to "recognize/protect the rights of transgender children in Pakistan under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 (Act No. XIII of 2018)", says a letter by the department, dated August 8. The bill was passed by the National Assembly on May 8.

"The [transgender students] must be treated on equal basis and in the column of gender, their real status (transgender) may be mentioned at the time of admission," the letter reads, also directing that during annual enrolment and retention campaign, "equal importance may be given for boys, girls, and transgender in order to achieve 100% enrolment and retention targets".

The letter, addressed to education authorities in the province, is to be implemented in all government and private education institutes in Punjab as "top priority".

Bill passed

The National Assembly passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2018, aimed at ensuring rights of transgender persons, on May 8. The bill, which had already been passed by the Senate, was moved by Syed Naveed Qamar of

the PPP.

Under the law, transgender persons can register to obtain driving licence and passport. They have the option to get their gender changed in the National Database and Registration Authority's record.

Harassment of transgender persons has been prohibited in and outside their homes. An important part of the law was that they would not be discriminated against by educational institutions, employers, in trade and health services, and when using public transport and buying or selling or renting property.

The bill had suggested to the government to establish a safe house for transgender persons, and provide them medical and educational facilities and psychological counselling. In addition to all basic rights, they would be entitled to inherit property.

The bill had stated that anyone found guilty of forcing a transgender person to beg would be sentenced to six months in prison and served a fine of Rs50,000.