

[AS PASSED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY]

A
Bill

to reserve special seats for deserving persons in Universities and Higher Education Institutions

WHEREAS, it is expedient to make a law to provide for the allocation of special seats in universities, which would be established under the Act of Parliament, to deserving persons, including those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, minorities, and other underrepresented groups, to promote equitable access to higher education and ensure that the benefits of higher education are accessible to all segments of society;

It is hereby enacted as follows: -

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Act shall be called the Reservation of Special Seats for Deserving Persons in Universities Act, 2025.

(2) It shall extend to those universities and higher education institutions that have been established under an Act of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament).

(3) It shall come into force at once.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

- (a) "Universities" refers to universities and higher education institutions established under an Act of Parliament;
- (b) "deserving persons" includes individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic or religious minorities, persons with disabilities and other groups identified as underrepresented or marginalized; and
- (c) "special seats" mean to reserved seats allocated specifically for deserving persons.

3. Allocation of special seats.- (1) The Universities shall reserve at least fifteen percent of the seats in capacity for undergraduate and postgraduate programs as under special seats for deserving persons.

(2) The University shall ensure that the students enrolled against the special seats shall fulfil one of the following criteria namely:-

- (a) financial need;
- (b) social or ethnic background;
- (c) disability status;
- (d) academic merit, where applicable; and
- (e) other criteria as determined by the university's admission policy.

4. Admission Process.- (1) The Universities shall establish a transparent process for the reservation and admission of deserving persons to special seats.

(2) The Universities shall,-

- (a) publish clear guidelines and eligibility criteria for special seats.
- (b) ensure that the application and selection process is accessible to all eligible candidates; and
- (c) provide assistance and support to applicants from deserving backgrounds to complete their applications.

5. Full Education.- (1) The Universities shall grant full scholarship including fee waiver and any other related academic expenses to the students admitted on special seats.

(2) The Universities shall establish financial aid programs to cover any incidental costs associated with education for students enrolled against special seats.

6. Monitoring.- (1) The Higher Education Commission shall oversee and monitor the implementation of this Act to ensure compliance by the universities.

(2) An annual report shall be submitted to Parliament detailing the reservation, admission, and performance of students admitted through special seats.

7. Power to issue guidelines.- The Higher Education Commission may issue guidelines from time to time to carryout the purposes of this Act.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Reserving seats for deserving individuals in universities established under an Act of Parliament and providing free education, is a crucial measure to promote social equity and justice. Such reservations will address inequities and disadvantages faced by marginalized communities, ensuring that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds have fair access to higher education. This practice supports equal opportunities and contributes to building a more inclusive society, where every person, regardless of their socio-economic status, has the chance to succeed academically.

Furthermore, these reservations and the provision of free education would foster diversity and inclusion within the academic environment. By ensuring a diverse student body and eliminating financial barriers, the universities enrich the educational experience for all students, exposing them to a variety of perspectives and experiences. This diversity not only enhances the learning environment but also promotes social cohesion and mutual understanding among students from different backgrounds. A more inclusive campus culture ultimately leads to a more supportive and enriched educational experience for everyone involved.

In addition to social equity and inclusion, reserving seats and providing free education aligns with national development goals. It supports the creation of a skilled and educated workforce, addressing regional and socio-economic disparities while promoting social mobility. By complying with constitutional and affirmative action policies, universities help empower individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, contributing to both individual and national progress. This approach ensures that talent is nurtured and that educational opportunities are accessible to all, thereby supporting broader social and economic development.

Sd/-
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