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CM Bugti vows to strengthen local government system in Balochistan

Says government can provide machinery and resources, but public cooperation and practical participation are also essential for improving sanitation system

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that practical measures are being taken to strengthen the local government system in Balochistan, provide better municipal services to the people, and modernize the sanitation system. In the first phase, all municipal committees across the province are being equipped with modern machinery and necessary equipment, while in the second phase, this facility will be extended to union councils, small towns, and rural areas. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held at the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) office on Monday for the provision of modern machinery to local government institutions under the Local Government Department's Municipal Services Initiative 2026. On the occasion, Chief Minister's Adviser on Local Government Nawabzada Baba Amir Hamza Zehri highlighted the features of the project. Provincial ministers Mir Shoaib Nosherwani, Mir Sadiq Umrani, Mir Saleem Khan Khosa, Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Haji Ali Madad Jattak, Mir Asim Kurd Gelo, Malik Naeem Bazai, Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Development Zahid Saleem, Balochistan Chief Minister's Adviser on Information and Political Affairs Shahid Rind, Director General PDMA Jahanzeb Khan, Secretary Local Government Rauf Baloch, secretaries of various departments, Commissioner Quetta, other senior officials, and distinguished guests attended the ceremony. The Chief Minister said that today is an important day for Balochistan, particularly for those colleagues who are working to serve the people of the province. He said this is the first initiative of its kind in Balochistan under which municipal committees are being provided with modern machinery so that the sanitation and municipal services system in cities can be improved. He said that a local government system exists in Balochistan and that the province is the only province in the country where local government elections have been held. The current term of local governments is ending in February 2027, after which local government elections will be held.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti addressing a ceremony for the provision of modern machinery to local government institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Mr. Tomasz Siemoniak, Minister, Member of the Council of Ministers, and Coordinator of Special Services of the Republic of Poland.

Balochistan to become hub of regional trade, economic activities: Governor

QUETTA, (APP): Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail on Monday thanked Prime Minister, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for directing the immediate launch of flights from Quetta to Jeddah, Iran, Turbat, and Gwadar in response to their request.

He said the government is committed to increasing air connectivity and the frequency of flights from Quetta to provide traders and industrialists with access to the economic markets of Iran and Central Asian countries.

Presiding over the 11th meeting of the Pakistan-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Governor Mandokhail commended the performance of outgoing cabinet of chamber of commerce and congratulated the newly elected office-bearers of the new cabinet.

The meeting was attended by office-bearers and members of the Chamber of Small Industries, including Haji Rafoogul Bareach, Naveed Yousuf Rajput, Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Javed Paracha, Ms. Sharmeen Younis, Farzana, and Attaullah Mengal. On this occasion, the Chamber of Small Commerce and Industries awarded a gold medal to Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and honored him for presiding over the annual general meeting of the Pakistan-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Governor Mandokhail mentioned the current government and Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan are supportive of the business and industrial communities.

He said if the business community presented serious and viable proposals, the government would take immediate action.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel addressing at Pak-Iran joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Pakistan participates in 8th Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan

MOSCOW, (APP): The 8th meeting of the Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan commenced in Moscow on Monday, bringing together Afghanistan and countries of the region to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and issues of regional concern.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov attended the inaugural session and addressed the participating delegations.



Pakistan is represented by a high-level delegation led by Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister/Special Representative for Afghanistan (SAPM/SRA).

The delegation also included Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Russian Federation, and Ambassador Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, along with other senior officials.

The consultations are focusing on regional peace and security, counter-terrorism, economic cooperation and connectivity, as well as continued engagement with Afghanistan.

Pakistan has consistently emphasized the importance of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan and sustained regional dialogue to address common security and economic challenges.

Nefarious designs of terrorist elements to be thwarted at all costs: President Zardari

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday paid tribute to security forces for eliminating three Khariji terrorists in an operation carried out in Dera Ismail Khan.

The president, in a statement, said that the effective operations by the security forces were playing a vital role in dismantling terrorist networks. Commending the operations by the security forces to purge Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of terrorism, he said that the actions against Fitna al-Khawarij under the vision of Azm-e-Istehkam would continue until the complete elimination of terrorism.

President Zardari reiterated that the nefarious designs of terrorist elements operating with external backing would be thwarted at all costs.

Khawaja Asif questions PTI's approach towards militancy

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday said terrorism, rather than politics, was the main issue between the federal government and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, urging the provincial authorities to address gaps in policing, counter-terrorism capacity and governance.

Around 6,200 terrorism-related incidents had been reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the past two years, resulting in around 1,200 fatalities, the minister said in a post on social media platform X.

He said that Afghan nationals had carried out 37 suicide attacks during the period, while 14 such attacks had taken place during the current year, with the majority allegedly involving Afghan nationals.

Khawaja Asif said the KP Police had a total strength of around 125,000 personnel, of whom 13,000 were deployed on VIP protocol duties, while 17,000 sanctioned posts remained vacant. He said the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in the merged districts was almost non-functional, with only 17 bulletproof vehicles and a total strength of around 3,300 personnel, adding that only 25 of them were permanent employees while the rest were working on contracts.

The minister said that political use of the Police Act had also affected the operational capacity of the police.

People should not become victims of protest politics: Muqam

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam on Monday said the long march planned by the PTI and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government would not be allowed to enter Punjab or Islamabad.

Addressing a press conference at the Kashmir Council alongside MNA Samar Haroon Bilour and Senator Zahid Khan, he urged the people of KP not to become "pawns" in what he termed the PTI's political agenda.

Muqam questioned the purpose of the long march, saying it was being organized for political and personal gains rather than the welfare of the people of KP. He alleged that the PTI government in KP was using protest politics to divert attention from poor governance and corruption in the province. The minister said terrorism was a national issue and required a united response, adding that the situation in KP was deteriorating due to the lack of effective governance.

He criticized what he described as the KP government's soft attitude towards terrorists, saying terrorism could not be eliminated without taking a firm position against militants.

Muqam said the KP chief minister had not openly condemned acts of terrorism. Referring to recent negotiations between the government and opposition, he said an agreement had been reached to issue a joint statement, but the process was disrupted after the KP chief minister announced continuation of the long march.

Political differences should not undermine collective efforts to combat terrorism: Danyal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry on Monday accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of deliberately sabotaging the government's efforts to resolve political differences through dialogue, saying the government had kept the doors of negotiations open to promote political stability, national unity and democratic reconciliation.

Addressing a press conference here alongside Prime Minister's Coordinator Ikhtiar Wali Khan, he said the government had engaged the PTI in negotiations with sincerity and made repeated efforts to resolve political issues amicably, with several representatives of the party's leadership taking part in the process.

Pakistan committed to promote peace, stability in region: PM

Appreciates Poland's support to Pakistan on EU's GSP Plus scheme

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Monday, expressed satisfaction at the positive trajectory of growth in relations with Poland and reiterated Pakistan's desire to transform this historical friendship into a robust long-term multi-faceted partnership.

The prime minister took note of the recent interactions between the two countries and underscored the importance of leadership-level exchanges as a catalyst towards expanding bilateral relations.

The prime minister received Tomasz Siemoniak, Minister, Member of the Council of Ministers, and Coordinator of Special Services of the Republic of Poland, who is currently on an official visit to Pakistan, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He further underlined the need for both countries to encourage greater interaction between their respective business communities.

The prime minister appreciated Poland's support to Pakistan on EU's GSP Plus scheme and expressed his confidence that the two countries would continue to strengthen their ties in all sectors.

Both sides exchanged views on major regional and international developments, including the situation in the Middle East.

The prime minister stressed the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving regional tensions and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region.



Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses inauguration ceremony of Thar Coal Phase III in Thar

'Political orphans' bringing 'Zionist politics' to Sindh: Bilawal Bhutto

THAR, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Monday that if the argument that the system had failed was accepted, Islamabad should be handed over to the people of Tharparkar, saying they would fix it as they had transformed their own region. "An argument is being forcibly pushed in the country that the system has collapsed, so provinces should be created. I do not understand the logic, but if I accept this logic for even one minute, it means that if Islamabad has failed, then hand Islamabad over to the people of Tharparkar.

We will fix it," Bilawal said while addressing a ceremony in Tharparkar at the Thar Coal Phase-III Inauguration.

"We will have the children there topping every exam. We have just seen the condition of their hospitals; we will make their hospitals 100 per cent free and bring them up to international standards," Bilawal said.

He said the example of Tharparkar represented the success of Pakistan's system, the 1973 Constitution and the 18th Amendment. "We should tell Islamabad that they should also run things a little like Thar," Bilawal said. He said he had witnessed changes in Tharparkar's infrastructure, health and education sectors. "I can proudly say that the change I have seen with my own eyes here in Thar is not seen in the rest of Pakistan," he said.

Bilawal said Thar was producing 2,000 megawatts of electricity through public-private partnerships, accounting for 14 per cent of the national grid, and that the electricity was being generated at the lowest cost. "We were told that there was no need to extract our coal, that Thar coal was useless and that investing in it and extracting it did not make sense.

Today, we are saving $1.6 billion in foreign exchange because of Thar coal," he said. Bilawal also spoke about the performance of children from Thar in examinations. "If our children, the children of Thar, children from a backward area, are topping exams, then this is a matter of pride," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam Addressing a press conference at the Kashmir Council alongside MNA Samar Haroon Bilour and Senator Zahid Khan

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Interlinked crises

Across the Middle East, three main hotspots should remain cause for concern for the international community: the 'frozen' Iran war, the Lebanese conflict, and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. All these crises are interlinked as they involve either direct US military intervention or Washington-backed aggression by Israel. Therefore, in the interests of peace, America must refrain from further militaristic adventurism, while also restraining its bellicose ally Israel. Short of this, it is difficult to see these conflicts being resolved peacefully. Instead of external actors, such as the US, playing the role of imperial saviour and invading and bombing the affected countries into 'freedom', regional states should take the lead and resolve their differences themselves. The situation vis-à-vis the US-Israeli war on Iran remains tense, with hostilities likely to resume if the diplomatic process fails. Similarly, the ceasefire in Lebanon reached last month is a truce only in name. Israel has continued its aggression against the Arab state, while the pro-Iran Lebanese group Hezbollah has responded to Israeli attacks forcefully. In Gaza, the occupied Strip's people are still feeling the trauma from the Israeli genocide. The humanitarian situation remains appalling, but Gaza is no longer in the headlines with other regional conflicts taking its place. Yet nearly 1.4m people are living in squalid conditions, susceptible to rodent attacks, while the sanitation situation remains poor. The reconstruction and rehabilitation promised at the time of last year's ceasefire is nowhere to be seen. In all these situations, the international community has failed to hold the US and Israel to account for launching illegal wars, and causing massive humanitarian suffering.

We stand at a precipice. If this irresponsible behaviour continues, these wars may spread across the region, taking an even heavier human and economic toll. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has caused global pain. If the fighting spreads, the economic impact will be even greater, especially for countries that are struggling to hold their finances together. The other option before the US is to end its destructive interventions, and stop Israel from causing havoc in the region. America has plenty of options in its toolkit to ensure that Israel behaves itself — such as stopping the billions of dollars of aid it gives the Zionist state annually, and halting weapons transfers to it. Instead of these malign external influences, let the states of the region come together and reach a modus vivendi. For example, the Saudis and Iranians ended a running feud in 2023, thanks largely to Chinese facilitation. Even during the current hostilities, Riyadh and Tehran have kept diplomatic channels open.

It is time the Arab and Muslim states of the region took control of their destiny, and worked together to establish a lasting peace.

Pakistan's AI reckoning

Hassan Aslam

Pakistan is beginning to confront a question it can no longer defer: how to AI-proof its future. Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant ambition. It is an immediate necessity. In recent months, Pakistan has announced a nationwide AI training programme, committed $1 billion in investment by 2030, and outlined plans to train a large segment of its workforce in AI-related skills.

These commitments, reflected in the Islamabad AI Declaration unveiled during Indus AI Week 2026, signal that Pakistan is no longer merely observing the AI transition from the sidelines. Delay now carries consequences the country can no longer afford.

That recognition, however, is only the starting point. Pakistan's response remains primarily at the level of intent. AI, on the other hand, rewards preparation, speed and continuity. Intent has rarely been Pakistan's problem. It has been execution. Announcements create momentum, but only sustained implementation creates outcomes.

Pakistan does not suffer from a shortage of ambition. It suffers from a shortage of follow-through. And it is precisely at that point, between announcement and execution, that momentum in Pakistan has historically thinned out.

Pakistan has approximately 60 per cent of its population under 30, but this is not an advantage unless its youth are equipped and trained. Millions remain outside the education system, and many within it lack usable skills while at the same time, entry-level jobs are being automated or redefined.

The global conversation surrounding AI has already shifted. Unesco insists on embedding AI literacy across education systems. The ILO warns about large-scale reskilling. UNDP emphasises a widening capability gap. Taken together, these are not isolated concerns but signals of a shared direction. Without sustained intervention, inequ-a-lity is likely to deepen. This is not just a technological transition. It is a reordering of skills and opportunity, and its effects will not be evenly distributed.

Pakistan needs to ensure that AI is integrated into the national ecosystem.

To its credit, Pakistan is no longer absent from this conversation. Its National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework approved by the federal cabinet in July 2025 signals initiative. However, a closer look reveals structural weaknesses. One assessment described the policy as ambitious but lacking legal teeth and overly reliant on optimism. In effect, Pakistan's framework gestures in the right direction but stops short of creating binding obligations.

Another gap emerges in Pakistan's legal and regulatory landscape. The Prevention of Ele-c-t-r-onic Crimes Act provides a baseline for cyber offences, while the proposed Personal Data Prot-ection Bill remains pending. The State Bank of Pakistan's digital banking regulations cover some automated processes such as fraud detection and onboarding, but the underlying legal foundation dates back to 2007, well before generative AI. This leaves unanswered questions around liability and accountability. These are not peripheral. They sit at the core of how AI systems will operate.

Then there is the question of what to do with the bodies already created to manage AI such as the National Centre of Artificial Intelligence, set up in 2018, which functions as a hub for research, training, and knowledge transfer.

However, as a non-regulatory institutional initiative, it does not possess enforcement powers. More recently, institutional mechanisms introduced under the National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025, including proposed coordination and oversight structures, have begun to emerge, but their regulatory authority and practical impact remain limited and are still evolving. Questions of liability further complicate matters. Pakistan's legal system rests on actus reus (guilty act) and mens rea (guilty mind). Autonomous systems disrupt both. When an AI system produces harm, the act is identifiable, but the mind behind it is not. The question then becomes who bears liability. The developer, the deployer, or the institution relying on the system? Pakistan's laws offer no coherent answer. Without clear standards, business innovation slows and responsibility diffuses.

Education — and by extension AI education — is now a provincial subject after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution.

A long war?

Maleeha Lodhi

It is becoming increasingly uncertain how long the Iran war, now in its third month, will last. Until recently, it seemed American and Iranian interests aligned in wanting to avoid a protracted conflict, although Israel's didn't. That impression gained strength when they held their first, and so far only, face-to-face talks in Islamabad last month.

After that the peace process faltered and a second round of negotiations proved elusive, despite intense efforts by Pakistan, supported by key regional states. Pakistan's active mediation subsequently involved exchanging messages and negotiating proposals between Tehran and Washington. That process continues.

The ceasefire has held, which is positive. But it is a precarious truce in a volatile environment. The hardening public postures of both sides have impeded the search for an off-ramp from the crisis. President Donald Trump has oscillated between threatening to restart military operations and signalling openness to talks.

This has made it difficult to ascertain what he really wants. It is one thing to use threats to mount pressure, but quite another when actions such as aggressive US enforcement of the blockade heighten the risk of renewed military confrontation. It also doesn't help when he makes disingenuous claims such as Iran telling him it is in a "state of collapse". Trump turned down the Iranian offer of a three-step plan to end the war as it sets aside the nuclear issue at the start to be addressed later. He has also rejected Tehran's revised proposal.

Meanwhile, Iran has used its leverage of control of the Strait of Hormuz to raise the costs of the war for the US, its Gulf allies and for the global economy. It has demonstrated it can wage an effective asymmetric war and absorb a high degree of pain from US-Israeli military strikes.

Both the US and Iran are reluctant to demonstrate flexibility lest the other side construes that as weakness and a 'win' for itself. This is a recipe for the diplomatic impasse to persist and presents an obstacle for a swift way out of the conflict. If both sides perceive they have more to lose in showing accommodation than by continuing with the present fraught situation this diminishes chances of an early end to the war. Both sides should have a common interest in averting a protracted conflict but the impasse persists.

Washington and Tehran have given different time frames for ending the war. President Trump has often declared it would end in a few weeks, even days. But more recently, he ruled out an "early" end, saying four weeks of war is nothing compared to the long conflicts in Vietnam and Iraq. Iranian leaders have said they are prepared to end the conflict but want guarantees against future aggression. So, while both say they want the war to end, they have set terms the other side have so far found unacceptable.

It is hard to say which of the two has an incentive to prolong the war. Some analysts have argued that Iran does. Writing in the Financial Times, Edward Luce suggests that by keeping the strategic waterway closed for a long time, Iran can impose greater costs on the US, especially as Trump has made reopening the strait his principal war goal.

It can also be argued that Iran believes time is on its side and by holding out, roiling global energy markets and raising the political and economic costs for Trump, it can secure a better deal in negotiations down the road. A prolonged conflict will, however, compound Iran's economic troubles. Inflation is already at a record level. While its threshold for pain may be high Iran's declining capability to export oil will cost it dearly.

As for the US, Trump believes Iran can be forced to agree to a deal on his terms by prolonging the blockade. He has repeatedly said he intends to continue this for months as it will compel Iran to negotiate. This would rule out an early end to the conflict.

Washington's assumption is that gunboat diplomacy would economically strangulate Iran, prevent it from exporting oil and create shortages of everyday commodities. Tehran will then have no choice but to capitulate to US demands. But dragging out the blockade will be contrary to Trump's key goal of keeping fuel prices and inflation down at home.

So, while the nature of the conflict has changed to acts of economic coercion by both, neither side seems ready to back down yet although it should be in their economic interest to swiftly end the war. The danger is of prolonged confrontation, with no active hostilities, except when reignited periodically, but no resolution of conflict. This would make for a highly unstable situation, prone to miscalculation by either side and with the heightened risk of relapsing into full-scale war. Israel would, of course, welcome a return to hostilities. The economic consequences of a protracted conflict will be far-reaching for the global economy and countries across the world, especially in the Global South. Energy markets have been in turmoil from what is described as "the biggest oil supply shock in history". Oil prices have surged amid concerns of prolonged supply disruption and dwindling of global stockpiles. Shortage of liquified natural gas has driven up prices.

The energy disruption is fuelling global inflation, will dampen economic growth and threatens a recession. Global supplies of other key commodities have also been disrupted, which include fertiliser, helium, aluminum and petrochemicals. This is having a damaging impact on global food production and will increase food prices particularly in poorer countries. Rise in fuel and food prices will drive millions into poverty, according to a UN report. The US economy is not immune to the economic fallout of prolonged conflict. Fuel prices have already risen to create inflationary pressures while slower growth is forecast. This ahead of mid-term Congressional elections can exact a political price for Trump whose public approval ratings have plunged in the wake of cost-of-living anxieties. Only 30 per cent of voters approve his handling of the economy while the latest Washington Post-Ipsos poll found 61pc of people believe attacking Iran was a mistake.

One of the immutable lessons of history is that wars are easy to start but hard to end. The Iran crisis is the latest testimony to that.

Out with the old

Zarrar Khuhro

I know you've heard this before but the old is really, truly and comprehensively dead now and the new is literally being born before our eyes, with its little head, crowned in blood, passing the geopolitical cervix.

You can mourn the passing of the old and/or celebrate the coming of the new, but know that this is as natural a process as death and birth themselves; everything comes with an expiry date: be it people, nations, empires or international organisations. One of those organisations, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Companies, was dealt a body blow when its third largest oil-producing member, the UAE, acrimoniously exited the cartel, pledging to go its own way and pump oil unhampered by the Saudi-led OPEC's quotas, which Abu Dhabi has long bristled at. The UAE has been building its oil production capacity for years now and certainly has made the calculation that they are better off going their own way and exporting all the oil they want before the inevitable global energy transition takes place. While this has been promoted by some quarters as a boon for a global economy choked by the closure of Strait of Hormuz and the US blockade, the fact is that there is no way for this excess oil to reach the global markets anytime soon; the Fujairah bypass is indeed working but that's a drop in the global barrel at best. Nor are the UAE's only motivations financial or economic; the timing of the move, coming as it does during the war on Iran and in the backdrop of rising UAE-Saudi tensions, makes it clear that this is yet another manifestation of the UAE's 'never back down but rather double down' approach to foreign policy. By exiting OPEC, to the approval of US President Donald Trump, the UAE has clearly signalled that it sees itself at the heart of a new Israel-centric regional order and has gone all in on the vision of a Middle East (and beyond) dominated by Israel, the US and the UAE, with India likely being the Asian pole of this alignment. Called the 12U2 partnership or the 'West Asian Quad', this aims to be the dominant force in a region increasingly looking for local alignments underpinned by one or more of the great powers. Once useful organisations will be replaced by other systems. In doing so, the UAE has also dealt a blow to the increasingly ineffective Gulf Cooperation Council, which now looks to be going the way of the OIC or even, dare I say it, Saarc, which could not survive Indian hostility to Pakistan. In much the same way the GCC will likely not survive the Saudi-UAE clash or the contradictions and divides the war on Iran has laid bare. After all, Oman — which is closest to Iran amongst all the Gulf states — was conspicuously absent in the latest GCC meeting. This is, of course, the natural course of things. The League of Nations collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions and ineffectiveness, to be replaced by the United Nations in which the winners of World War II were granted a special status (and veto powers) by being made permanent members of the Security Council. Now, that very organisation stands largely moribund and ineffective, no longer serving the needs of the times or adequately reflecting the changes that have taken place since the fall of Berlin.

Workplace skills

Neda Mulji

An interesting conversation recently revealed the common belief in our society that academic progress has nothing to do with workplace skills. To us, academic progress means success in exams, pocketing certificates and chasing opportunity. Assessments are the primary focus of all teaching and learning across our schools while the rest of the world has moved on to thinking about what students can do rather than what they are learning.

Demonstration of learning outcomes is monitored closely in societies that view education as an experience of the real world. When math is taught, progress is tracked not only through conceptual understanding but skills that are embedded in math teaching — logic and reasoning, problem-solving and data analysis, decision-making, etc. These are skills that can translate into marketable competencies at work and they start from the get-go. We don't have to wait for specialist degrees at the higher education level to build foundational skills for life. It's not a surprise that we fail to prioritise skills. Schools do not ignore skills intentionally. The system rewards grades, especially as financially burdened parents want to see value for the money they invest in their child's education. The larger society values compliance and discipline. Hence, the pathway of rules is set for a rigid prescription of regurgitating what is taught. Any kind of thought process off the beaten path finds no leverage within the power structures of board exams, top positions and parents' expectations.

Our students coming through these systems find innovation risky. There hasn't been enough room for exploration and discovery, mistakes and failure. There hasn't been sufficient opportunity to go beyond the curriculum. Thinking processes, behavioural patterns and the will and ability to execute depends on what was learned on the breeding ground. How are students who have always been told what to do expected to act without instruction or approval? The nexus that produces straitjacketed thinking is the one that demands results as these students step into professional lives.

As students enter the workplace, ideas won't be enough.

A common fear among schools in exam-driven systems is that focusing on skills will dilute academic rigour and bring down results. In fact, the opposite is true: skills-based learning, when intentionally designed, boosts conceptual understanding and improves exam performance. Skills and exams need not be rivals. When aligned thoughtfully, skills become the vehicle through which academic content is mastered more deeply, retained longer and applied more accurately in exams, and later, at the workplace. Content can be taught through skills. Students need skills to examine content on their own.

There are easy steps teachers can use to gauge success in skills. A critical question to ask is 'how well are the students engaging with content?' This can be encouraged through communication skills — students can be asked to explain their thinking out loud, write short reasons for critical thinking questions, and justify their conclusions in discussions with their peers.

Turkiye pursuing determined goal of becoming strong, respected global space player: Erdogan

ISTANBUL, (Agencies): Türkiye will resolutely stick to its space ambitions until it becomes a strong, respected player in the global space ecosystem, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday.
Speaking at the opening of the 77th International Astronautical Congress in Antalya, on the Turkish Riviera, Erdogan highlighted Türkiye's progress in satellite technologies and lunar exploration while calling for broader international participation in space activities.
"We will not deviate from our goal until we make Türkiye one of the strong and respected actors in the global space ecosystem," he said. Never allowing itself to lag in the space race, Türkiye has made significant progress in a short time despite hurdles and difficulties, Erdogan said.
He announced that production, assembly, and integration activities for the lunar spacecraft developed under Türkiye's Lunar Research Program have been completed. The spacecraft weighs about 3.5 tons and has a domestic production rate exceeding 80%, which Erdogan called "a source of great pride."
The president also highlighted Turksat 6A, Türkiye's domestically developed communications satellite.
"Turksat 6A has also affirmed Türkiye's engineering capabilities, industrial infrastructure, human resources, and confidence in space technologies," he said.
Erdogan said TEKNOFEST, Türkiye's major aerospace and technology festival, which just wrapped up last week in the southeastern city of Sanliurfa, had drawn applications from more than 730,000 teams from across the country's 81 provinces and 97 countries worldwide.
Turning to Türkiye's spaceport project in the African nation of Somalia, one of Ankara's allies, Erdogan said it aims to strengthen the country's access to space while contributing to the development of Africa's space ecosystem. Space race cannot be confined to few countries
Erdogan stressed that the space race cannot be a competition of only a few countries and criticized efforts to weaponize space.
"Space is not made up of spoils to be seized by whoever gets there first," he said. "Weaponizing space and turning it into an instrument of an arms race, in particular, is profoundly wrong."
Erdogan voiced hope that the congress, which Türkiye is hosting for the first time, would benefit participating countries and humanity's shared future.
The gathering brings together the international space community in Antalya through Friday. Anadolu serves as global communication partner for the event.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaking at the opening of the 77th International Astronautical Congress in Antalya, on the Turkish Riviera.



KHAN YUNIS, GAZA, PALESTINE: Two injured children, receive treatment after taken to Nasser Hospital for treatment following an attack by Israeli forces targeting civilians with an armed Israeli drone in the al-Mawasi area

EU disburses $175M to Moldova as sides reaffirm path toward bloc membership

BRUSSELS, (Agencies): The European Union and Moldova reaffirmed their "strong partnership and shared commitment" to Moldova's EU accession on Monday, as the bloc announced the disbursement of €157 million ($175 million) funding to Chisinau.
The announcement came during the 10th meeting of the EU-Moldova Association Council in Brussels, where the two sides reiterated that Moldova's future is firmly anchored in the European Union, according to a statement. The European Commission said the latest payment followed Moldova's "successful" completion of 18 reforms during the most recent reporting period. The disbursement brings the total amount of performance-based EU financing paid to Moldova under the EU Growth Plan Facility to around €661 million.
During the meeting, the EU and Moldova also "strongly" condemned what they described as "increasingly frequent violations of Moldovan airspace by Russian drones and missiles."

Tanker hit in Hormuz as Iran warns no military solution to end war

TEHRAN, (Agencies): Atanker was attacked in the Strait of Hormuz Monday, a British maritime agency said, hours after Tehran warned there was no military solution to the Middle East conflict and the key waterway would remain closed until its conditions were met.
Iran has sought to impose control over the vital shipping lane since the start of its war with the United States and Israel.
It has repeatedly targeted vessels in the waterway that it accuses of transiting without its authorization, while the United States has struck ships allegedly attempting to skirt a counterblockade of Iranian ports.
An "unknown projectile" struck the ship but the crew were unharmed, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre (UKMTO) said.
No environmental impact had been recorded from the attack, it added. The agency did not specify the date of the incident, the vessel's origin or destination, or whether it was an oil tanker or LNG carrier.
The Strait of Hormuz, through which about one fifth of the world's oil and gas transited before the war, remains a key sticking point in negotiations between Iran and the U.S.
The latest attack came just hours after Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said the Strait will not reopen until seven Iranian conditions set out in a June interim agreement are met, Iran's Nournews reported.
"The Americans, who say something different in the media, have recently put forward proposals through a mediator. But they must understand that the period of dragging out the process and dictating one-sided demands is over," Ghalibaf was quoted as saying.
"The position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is completely clear and firm, and the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened until our seven conditions, based on the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, are met."
Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said separately Monday there was no military solution to his country's conflict with the United States, with talks on ending the war apparently at an impasse.
"If our enemies again choose the path of military confrontation, our response will be stronger than before, and we will defend ourselves with even more force," Araghchi said at a gathering of foreign ambassadors.
"There is no military solution, nor any solution based on new sanctions," he continued, adding "only negotiations based on justice and fairness" could end the conflict.
After a U.S.-Israel campaign of heavy bombardment failed to bring a decisive close to the war, Washington in recent weeks has dialed back military operations in favor of economic pressure.
The two sides agreed a memorandum of understanding in June aimed at providing a framework for a permanent resolution, but the deal collapsed, largely due to disagreements over Hormuz.
Iranian and U.S. officials last week held indirect talks on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

Saudi-backed Yemeni forces launch ops to retake Bab el-Mandeb

SANAA, (Agencies): Saudi-backed Yemeni government forces on Monday seized key positions on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, military sources said, in an effort to reverse Houthi advances and clear the vital waterway.
The government forces have taken large parts of Dhubab district, which overlooks the strait and are asserting full control over the area with heavy air support from a Saudi-led coalition, three military sources and one government source told Reuters.
Houthi-aligned media earlier denied that government forces had made advances in the area, describing such claims as "completely untrue."
Meanwhile, the Houthis late Sunday advanced onto sections of the mountain road to the major city of Taiz, besieging government forces there, according to five government sources. One other government source denied the road had been cut.
Fighting has raged along several front lines in Yemen for weeks after a dormant civil war erupted in a spillover from the U.S.-Iran conflict, with the Houthis seeking to control the vital Bab el-Mandeb Strait and firing missiles and drones at Saudi cities and infrastructure. With Gulf energy exports already restricted by Iran's closure of the Hormuz Strait, the fighting in Yemen has threatened another major oil export route, pushing up global prices and raising new risks in a region already aflame.
The internationally recognized Yemeni government announced Sunday the launch of its offensive to recapture territory, with President Rashad al-Alimi swearing to fight "until the country is liberated from the grip of the terrorist militia."
Saudi Arabia, which arms and trains Yemeni government forces, is backing the military campaign with air power and has sought logistical help from allies to push back the Houthis, restore free traffic in the Red Sea, and end the group's attacks on its territory.
Riyadh said Monday it had attacked hundreds of targets in Yemen to provide air cover for the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and Yemeni ground forces.
The Yemeni government said it had launched attacks on several fronts including in the province of Sanaa, the Yemeni capital.
While the war has raged on several front lines in Yemen, the heaviest fighting has been in the southwest, both in the coastal area near the strait and in the hills around Taiz, where the Houthis have been battling to surround government forces.
Last week, Houthi attacks damaged a culvert on the Taiz-Aden road, making it impassable.
On Sunday night the group's fighters made new advances into the town of al-Turbah, sitting atop a high promontory on the road, five government military sources said, though another government source denied this.
A Houthi-run news agency Monday meanwhile cited a military source as saying that the group had driven government forces from the al-Mawasit district of Taiz province, reaching the home of Alimi, head of Yemen's presidential council.



Former German Chancellor and co-chair of the North-South Development Policy Commission Olaf Scholz (L) and former Costa Rican President and ENSK co-chair Laura Chinchilla Miranda (C) hold a press conference at the Federal Press House in Berlin, Germany



TEHRAN: Civilians receive training on the use of long-barreled firearms, multiple rocket launchers and air defense systems during drills.

Italy's Meloni reveals plan to ban burqas, niqabs in schools

ROME, (Agencies): Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has said she will soon propose measures to cap the number of foreign students in classrooms and ban burqas and niqabs in schools.
Meloni told the youth wing of her nationalist conservative Brothers of Italy party on Monday that the measure would also make Italian language lessons compulsory for parents of foreign students having "serious difficulties integrating into the school system." "For us, anyone who comes to Italy and wants to build their future here must learn our language, understand our culture, and respect our rules," she said to a standing ovation at the Gioventu Nazionale national festival in Rome. "It is the only serious way to welcome them." Meloni specifically referred to a ban on the burqa and niqab, modest dresses worn by some Muslim women. But Meloni didn't mention the hijab, the headscarf worn by some Muslim women.
Once approved by the government, the measure would need parliamentary approval within 60 days to pass into law. Meloni, who has political roots in the far-right, has consistently been hawkish on migration. But she has evolved politically over her tenure as prime minister, shifting from a nationalist outlier to an establishment figure among European Union politicians. However, she's also keen to boost her popularity before a general election next year and is introducing a string of policies that achieve that aim, including an exemption from a hated property tax on small- and medium-sized cars and scooters. Earlier this month, Meloni's conservative administration became Italy's longest-serving uninterrupted government since World War II.

US intends to 'live by' security pact with Saudi Arabia: Rubio

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): The US intends to uphold its bilateral security commitments with Saudi Arabia amid renewed military confrontations involving Houthi forces in Yemen, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Monday.
"The United States has a defense and security agreement with Saudi Arabia, and we intend to live by it," Rubio told reporters ahead of a European tour including Iceland, Greece, and Portugal, declining to elaborate on operational specifics.
Rubio said that in the face of continuous Houthi attacks, Riyadh has "a right to defend themselves," adding that Yemeni allied forces are trying to recover areas lost during previous clashes. Addressing control around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Rubio said Saudi and Yemeni troops oppose Houthi domination near the maritime corridor, describing local counter-offensives as an expected development. The remarks follow Monday's announcement by Rashad al-Alimi, the chair of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, of the launch of a military operation to retake the capital Sanaa with the support of the country's "brothers and friends" and restore state institutions from the Houthis, who have controlled the city since 2014. Yemeni army units reported securing the Dhubab district and strategic positions along the strait. Washington has so far rejected direct participation in kinetic strikes in support of the campaign.

French president vows Paris' 'full support' for Ukraine, help to 'intercept drones'

PARIS, (Agencies): French President Emmanuel Macron reaffirmed France's "full support" for Ukraine on Monday and said Paris would help Kyiv "intercept drones" following a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
"I have just spoken with President Zelenskyy to reiterate France's solidarity and full support for Ukraine in defending itself against Russia's war of aggression," Macron said on US social media company X.
Macron said Russia was "obstinately" refusing calls for a ceasefire and had chosen to intensify strikes on infrastructure and civilian targets, "in violation of the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law."
"France and Europe will continue to take responsibility to support Ukraine and seek every opportunity to spare civilians, reduce hostilities and advance the idea of a just and lasting peace," he said.
Macron said he and Zelenskyy discussed "the concrete support we can provide to help Ukraine intercept drones and counter Russia's aggression."
"We will yield neither to Russia's intimidation nor its escalation, which must not be mistaken: time is working against it," he added.



Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni gestures during the press conference after the Council of Ministers in Rome.

Nationalists eye win in Bosnia elections marked by low turnout

SARAJEVO, (Agencies): Preliminary results from yesterday's election show a Bosniak moderate, a pro-Russian Serb nationalist and a Croatian nationalist leading races for Bosnia's tripartite presidency, the election commission said early Monday. The results were largely in line with expectations and with projections by the Poliwave tracking platform, although voter turnout was low at a combined 42.02% in Bosnia's two entities, the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb republic (Republika Srpska). Voters also cast ballots for the national parliament, alongside regional races in the two entities. Voter frustration has grown over an economic slowdown, the slow pace of EU entry talks and a lingering political crisis in which ethnically based dominant parties from the two entities have repeatedly stalled decisions by the weak central government that links them.
Denis Becirovic, a Bosniak of the Social Democratic Party (SDP-BiH) and part of the current tripartite presidency, garnered 26.78% of votes in the Bosniak-Croat Federation, ahead of the candidate for the center-right Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA). The two had been considered favorites in the election. Also leading in the Bosniak-Croat Federation was newcomer Darijana Filipovic of the nationalist and pro-European Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ-BiH), with 13.89% of the vote.

Israel 'progressively asphyxiating' Gaza, continues genocide: MSF

GAZA, (Agencies): Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said on Monday that Israel was continuing its genocide in Gaza and was "progressively asphyxiating" the region, urging governments to take immediate action.
In a statement, MSF said the conditions for the people's survival were being "systematically destroyed" through sustained violence, "deliberate" blockade of essential supplies and the destruction of healthcare as well as infrastructure.
"In the past year, the physical trapping of people in Gaza has been made increasingly definitive by the establishment of Israel's Yellow Line," the French medical charity said.
Recalling that it was originally presented as temporary, MSF noted that the line is now reinforced by military positions, berms and ongoing demolitions while it has continued to move west, "squeezing people into a smaller and smaller area."
MSF said people risk being shot by Israeli forces when approaching the area, while its teams continue to treat those wounded by gunfire nearby.
"The Yellow Line cannot be treated simply as a line on a map," said Amande Bazerolle, MSF head of emergency response in Gaza. "It has become a mechanism of encirclement and ethnic cleansing, while cutting communities off from the infrastructure, healthcare, water and other essentials they need to survive."
MSF said violence was not only confined to the areas around the "Yellow Line," reporting having treated over 1,200 cases of violent trauma across Gaza in June and July alone.
It recalled that MSF teams treated more than 200,000 trauma cases over the past three years while Israel's military offensive killed over 74,000 people.
The organization said overcrowding and limited access to clean water, sanitation, shelter and healthcare are contributing to the spread of disease. Its teams also treated over 11,000 skin disease cases and 1,500 chickenpox cases in June and July.
It also pointed to the dramatic deterioration of access to healthcare over the past three years as hospitals run out of basic supplies and patients unable to access essential medicines and treatment.

UN chief to visit Pakistan for talks with top leadership

Guterres to meet President, Premier, Foreign Minister and Army Chief during Oct. 6-8 visit, his 1st trip to Pakistan since devastating 2022 floods

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): Outgoing UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will visit Pakistan this week for talks with the country's top leadership and to review its disaster preparedness, officials said Monday.

A UN spokesperson said on US social media company X that Guterres was departing for the previously scheduled trip and was expected to arrive in Pakistan on Tuesday morning.

During his visit, Guterres will meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said Guterres will visit the country from Oct. 6-8 at Dar's invitation and will also meet Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Guterres will visit the National Disaster Management Authority to review progress in disaster preparedness and resilience since the devastating 2022 floods.

It will be his first visit to Pakistan since Sept. 2022, when he toured flood-hit areas and called for greater international support for the country.

He will also visit the Islamabad headquarters of the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, or UNMOGIP.

The UN spokesperson said the visit would also include discussions on Pakistan's diplomatic and mediation efforts between the US and Iran.

The Foreign Ministry said the visit would provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional and international developments and reaffirm Pakistan's "longstanding cooperation" with the UN.

Guterres, whose second and final term as UN chief ends on Dec. 31, is expected to return to New York on Thursday.



Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani participating in a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Geopolitical Group held on the sidelines of the 153rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Arusha, Tanzania



Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar arriving in Madinah Munawwarah ahead of his meeting in Riyadh today under the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement.

Successful operations against Fitna al-Khawarij heavy blow to terrorist networks: PM

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday paying tribute to security forces for eliminating three Khariji terrorists in Dera Ismail Khan, said that the successful operations against Fitna al-Khawarij were a heavy blow to terrorist networks.

The prime minister, in a statement, said that the operations by the security forces would continue until the eradication of terrorism.

He said that the security forces were resolved to purge Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the country of terrorism as the state remained steadfast in its resolve for the complete elimination of Fitna al-Khawarij.

Gilani for collective parliamentary action to address regional issues

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday underscored the importance of stronger parliamentary engagement and coordination among Asia-Pacific countries to address shared challenges and promote common interests. Participating in a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Geopolitical Group held on the sidelines of the 153rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Arusha, Tanzania, he highlighted the need for collective parliamentary action on issues affecting the region, particularly climate change and its far-reaching socio-economic consequences.

The meeting considered key matters relating to the Asia-Pacific region and deliberated on important items before the Assembly, including vacancies, emergency items and nominations for the Drafting Committee.

The participants considered a proposal to include climate change and its effects as an emergency item in view of the increasing frequency of climate-induced disasters, environmental degradation and their impact on communities and economies across the region.

The meeting also discussed matters relating to the ASEAN+3 Group and other issues concerning the forthcoming Assembly proceedings. The Chairman Senate was accompanied by members of Pakistan's parliamentary delegation, including Senators Amir Waliuddin Chishti, Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur, Anusha Rahman Ahmad Khan and Agha Shazaib Durrani.

President highlights teachers' role in shaping Pakistan's future

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari extended his greetings and appreciation to teachers across Pakistan and around the world for their contribution to education, human development and nation-building.

In a message on World Teachers' Day (5 October 2026), he said, "Teachers are central to every education system.

They impart knowledge, nurture curiosity, shape character and help young people develop the skills and values they need to become responsible and productive members of society. Their influence extends beyond the classroom and is reflected in the lives of families and communities."

"This year's observance is particularly significant as it marks the 60th anniversary of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers. The theme, "Standing with teachers: 60 years of protecting the profession, advancing its status and shaping our futures," draws attention to the need to recognise the importance of teachers and provide them with the professional support and opportunities they need," he added. He said, "For Pakistan, strengthening the teaching profession is essential to improving the quality of education and expanding opportunities for our children and young people. We must continue to invest in teacher education, professional development and supportive learning environments so that teachers are equipped to meet the changing needs of their students." "The rapid development of technology, including the growing use of artificial intelligence, is also changing the way education is delivered. Technology can support teaching and learning, but it cannot replace the human qualities that teachers bring to the classroom, including empathy, mentorship, ethical guidance and the ability to understand and inspire their students. Our teachers should therefore be supported in using new technologies while keeping the human relationship between teacher and student at the centre of education," he remarked.

The President particularly acknowledged the dedication of teachers serving in remote, underserved and challenging communities.

"For many children, the quality of their education depends directly on the commitment of the teacher in their school. Ensuring that such teachers have the training, resources and working conditions they need is essential to giving every child a fair opportunity to learn and progress," he said and called upon governments, educational institutions, parents, communities, civil society and the private sector to work together to strengthen and respect the teaching profession. Supporting teachers is an investment in the education and future of Pakistan.

He paid tribute to all Pakistani teachers for their dedication, patience and service. Their work shapes the knowledge, character and aspirations of the generations that will build our country.



QUETTA: Former vice chancellor Balochistan University Brigadier (R) Agha Ahmed Gul called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Immunization services to be further enhanced in Balochistan

QUETTA, (APP): A two-day progress review meeting of Gates Foundation-funded immunization projects in Balochistan conducted on Monday to assess programme progress, address implementation challenges and strengthen vaccination services across the province.

The meeting reviewed key achievements, field-level challenges and future strategies for improving routine immunization and vaccination coverage.

Secretary Health Balochistan Mujeeb ur Rehman, National Coordinator for Polio Anwar-ul-Haq, EOC Coordinator Balochistan Inam-ul-Haq and EPI Coordinator Balochistan Dr Aftab Kakar participated in the meeting.

Michael Galway, Deputy Director, Gates Foundation for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Brigadier Abu Al Hassan, Altaf Bosan and Dr Rana Safdar, Senior Advisor for Polio CDC, also attended besides representatives of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, WHO, Aga Khan University and other development and implementing partners.

The participants reviewed progress of Gates Foundation-supported projects, vaccination coverage, programme coordination and operational challenges affecting immunization activities across the province.

The meeting also discussed measures to strengthen routine immunization, improve programme implementation and enhance efforts to reach children in underserved and high-risk areas.

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening immunization services in Balochistan and ensuring that every child is reached with life-saving vaccines.



In Spain, the PSOE, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, convened its Federal Executive Board in Madrid to determine its election strategy following the decision to hold early general elections.

Pakistan faces annual shortfall of 200,000 houses: Musadik

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik on Monday said the National Housing Policy 2025 sought to enable people to own homes at instalments comparable to their existing rent, protect poor settlements from demolition and promote climate-resilient housing.

Speaking at the launch of the National Housing Policy 2025 here at NUST University, the minister said the country needed around 500,000 houses annually but only about 300,000 were being built, leaving around 200,000 people homeless in one way or another each year.

"If 2,00,000 people do not have homes and there are six people in a household, according to your own statistics, 1.2 million people are entering every year without a roof over their heads," he said, adding that around 10 to 12.5 million people were currently living without adequate shelter.

Musadik Malik said the government's policy had been framed to address the shortage of housing finance, noting that banks provided only a small proportion of the financing required for house purchases in Pakistan.

Under the "Apna Ghar" scheme, he said, the government had decided that an applicant would contribute 10 per cent of the cost while banks would provide 90pc financing.

He said the 90pc financing would be available at a fixed rate of 5pc for 10 years. A loan of Rs 2.5 million, he said, would carry a monthly installment of around Rs 16,500, while a Rs 5 million loan would entail an installment of around Rs 30,000 to Rs 31,000.

"The idea is that if you are paying Rs 16,000 to Rs 30,000 in rent throughout your life, you should now be able to use that amount to own your own house," he said. The minister said the policy also aimed to protect low-income settlements, particularly those where families had lived for generations.

Govt. authorises Rs220.721bn PSDP funds in FY2026-27 Q1

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The government authorised development funds amounting to Rs220.721 billion during the first quarter (July-September) of fiscal year 2026-27 under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), against a total PSDP allocation of Rs1 trillion.

According to the latest Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives data, the PSDP 2026-27 allocation comprised Rs682.485 billion for federal ministries, Rs312.515 billion for corporations, Rs4 billion for project liabilities and Rs1 billion for new initiatives under CPEC 2.0. Against the total allocation of Rs1 trillion, Rs220.721 billion was authorised and Rs61.320 billion was spent during July-September 2026.

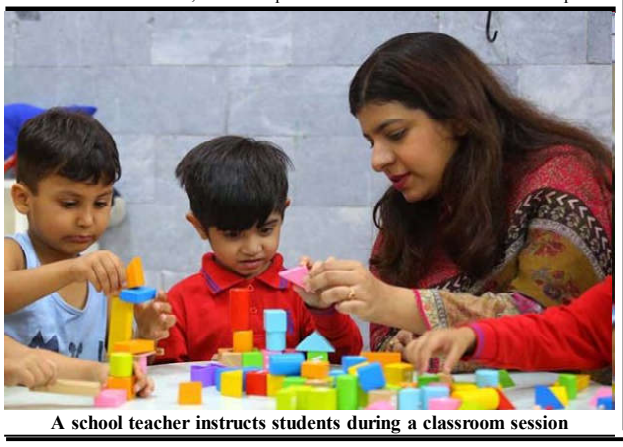
Among the federal ministries and divisions, the highest authorisation was made for the Water Resources Division, amounting to Rs86.517 billion, followed by the Cabinet Division with Rs30 billion and the Provinces and Special Areas with Rs22.150 billion. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) was allocated Rs46 billion, of which Rs7.162 billion was authorised and Rs2.741 billion spent, while the Federal Education and Professional Training Division was allocated Rs36.312 billion, with Rs9.078 billion authorised and Rs6.033 billion spent.

The Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division was allocated Rs22.626 billion, against which Rs2.785 billion was authorised and Rs1.561 billion spent.

The Railways Division received an allocation of Rs40.658 billion, with Rs5.005 billion authorised and Rs2.347 billion spent.

The Information Technology and Telecommunication Division was allocated Rs19.580 billion, including Rs9.801 billion in foreign assistance, against which Rs2.410 billion was authorised and Rs418.34 million spent.

The Interior Division had an allocation of Rs21.825 billion, with Rs3.274 billion authorised and Rs345.98 million spent.



A school teacher instructs students during a classroom session

Laws very important when it comes to regulatory framework: Sherry

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Senator Sherry Rehman here on Monday called for a transparent and incentive-based Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework in Pakistan, stressing that ESG could not remain a matter of voluntary reporting or corporate image-building and must translate into measurable improvements in environmental performance, social responsibility and governance. Addressing the launch of the Pakistan ESG Policy Report 2026 as chief guest, Senator Rehman said that ESG required a much broader conversation than one confined to the corporate sector. "We have to talk about ESG not in isolation, but in terms of climate, political and legal frameworks," she said, stressing that the country needed to bring together the people who understand the technical, regulatory and legislative dimensions of the issue. Senator Rehman said that the fundamental question was no longer whether Pakistan needed ESG, but what kind of framework it wanted to build and what consequences would follow from it. "Laws are very important when it comes to a regulatory framework, especially when that framework has to interoperate with international stakeholders."

Referring to Pakistan's existing corporate practices, she pointed to the significant gap between awareness of ESG and actual implementation.



QUETTA: Adviser on Local Government Nawabzada Baba Amir Hamza Zehri presenting a shield to Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

ECP pushes provinces, federal govt to expedite local elections preparations

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday directed the federal and provincial governments to expedite legal and administrative measures for holding local government elections across Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad and cantonments, as it reviewed preparations and stressed the need to remove remaining hurdles to ensure timely polls.

Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja chaired the special meeting, attended by ECP members Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Shah Muhammad Jatoi and Justice (retired) Ikramullah, Secretary ECP and senior officials.

Regarding Punjab, the commission was briefed that it was ready to conduct local government elections and had already sent a draft election schedule to the provincial government.

The ECP has also sought lists of District Returning Officers, Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers from the Punjab government to facilitate their appointment.

The commission asked the provincial government to respond to the draft election schedule at the earliest. For Islamabad Capital Territory, the commission was informed that delimitation had been completed. However, the Islamabad Capital Territory Amendment Ordinance 2026 had expired. The ECP decided to approach the federal government, pointing out that the relevant legislation had already been approved by the Senate Standing Committee and urging completion of the legislative process without delay. The commission said that if the required legislation was not enacted, it would proceed with local government elections under the existing Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government Act, 2015.

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