
PM declares 'education emergency' to enrol 26m out-of-school children

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ISLAMABAD:

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday declared an “education emergency” across Pakistan to enrol around 26 million out-of-school children and promote literacy to regain the country’s lost ground and develop it as one of the most educated societies in the world. “Today, with firm conviction and the support of provinces, we will address the challenge of 26 million out-of-school children. We will bring them back to school. I declare an education emergency throughout Pakistan from this moment onwards. As we did in Punjab, we will replicate it across Pakistan,” the prime minister said, addressing the National Conference on Education Emergency. He informed the gathering of federal ministers, parliamentarians, vice-chancellors, diplomats, and development partners that he would personally oversee the programme, meeting with all

chief ministers regardless of political affiliations, with the vision to march forward together, expressing hope that the provinces would also lend their support. “This concerns our children and our future... This is undeniably a daunting task. However, nations that have faced challenges and setbacks in the past have risen from adversity. Germany and Japan are prime examples. Why not Pakistan? I assure you, if we unite to reclaim our position, Pakistan will emerge as one of the most educated societies,” he remarked. The prime minister, recounting the achievements of the Punjab government during his tenure as chief minister, highlighted the increased enrolment rates, particularly for girls, through initiatives like the Zavar Taleem Programme, and the rescue of 90,000 boys from brick kilns to enrol them in schools. He also mentioned the outsourcing of 10,000 poorly performing schools to improve educational quality and the establishment of Daanish Schools, which offered free high-quality education and boarding for underprivileged children. He said that the Punjab Education Endowment Fund provided scholarships to hundreds of thousands of deserving students based on merit. The prime minister stated that the enrolment of 26 million out-of-school children and addressing stunted growth were major challenges facing Pakistan, requiring significant financial resources. “But the real challenge lies in the determination to act,” he commented, recalling Islamabad’s commitment to becoming a nuclear power despite international pressure, and the elimination of terrorism by sacrificing around

80,000 lives to establish peace in the country and globally.