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PM Shehbaz praises US-Iran ceasefire progress, military leadership in cabinet meeting

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday chaired an important meeting of the federal cabinet, where members applauded his arrival and were served sweets during the session.

The cabinet decided to observe a day of gratitude and appealed to the nation to offer prayers for the success of the ongoing negotiations. Members also applauded Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir, whose efforts were praised by the prime minister, and extended congratulations to him and Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Ishaq Dar.

PM Shehbaz said Pakistan's stature on

the global stage had been enhanced and commended the constructive role of Field Marshal Munir and DPM Ishaq Dar. He added that the first phase of the ceasefire had been successfully implemented and expressed confidence that the next round of talks on Friday would also be fruitful.

PM Shehbaz, early Wednesday morning, announced that Iran and the US "along with their allies have agreed to an immediate ceasefire everywhere, including Lebanon and elsewhere, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY".

In a post on X, PM Shehbaz further invited the US and Iran's "delegations to Islamabad on Friday, April 10, 2026, to further negotiate for a conclusive agreement."



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs Federal Cabinet meeting.

NA opposition leader extends 'unconditional support' to govt for Middle East peace efforts

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Mehmood Khan Achakzai on Wednesday extended "unconditional support" to the government in its

efforts for peace in the Middle East.

Responding to Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar's speech, in which he requested the opposition to defer its protest planned for Thursday, Achakzai said that in his speech on Tuesday, he had called for former premier Nawaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and Imran to sit together in the current situation and move the country forward. He said that he, along with Opposition Leader in the Senate Allama Nasir Abbas, would convince Imran to engage in political dialogue.

"I had also said earlier that we should not point fingers at each other. At the very least, we should agree on democratic principles," he said.

"I don't know why you people think we are mad. Only a mad person would not be happy with today's success of Pakistan," he said, lauding the government's mediatory role in the Middle East crisis.

Trump halts Iran attacks after talks with PM Shehbaz, CDF Munir; US, Iran reach ceasefire agreement

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday announced that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America, along with their allies, had agreed to an immediate ceasefire, including in Lebanon, effective immediately, and invited their delegations to Islamabad on April 10 for talks aimed at reaching a lasting settlement of disputes.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the ceasefire in an early-morning post on X, welcoming the move and extending his "deepest gratitude" to the leadership of both countries.

Both sides had displayed "remarkable wisdom and understanding" and remained constructively engaged in furthering the cause of peace and stability, the prime minister said, expressing hope that the 'Islamabad Talks' would succeed in achieving sustainable peace and that more positive developments would follow in the coming days.

The prime minister, who helped mediate the ceasefire, also invited delegations from both countries to Islamabad on April 10 "to hold further negotiations towards a conclusive agreement to settle all disputes".

However, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said the US has not yet agreed. "There are discussions about in-person talks, but nothing is final until announced by the President or the White House," Leavitt said.

Islamabad Talks on April 10 as US, Iran ceasefire agreed everywhere, including Lebanon

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: As the United States and Iran have agreed to an immediate ceasefire across all fronts, including Lebanon, the stage is set for direct negotiations in

Islamabad on Friday, April 10, 2026, aimed at finalising a "conclusive agreement" to settle all disputes. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the breakthrough on Wednesday, that both Iran and the US, along with their allies, had agreed to an immediate ceasefire everywhere including Lebanon and elsewhere.

"With the greatest humility, I am pleased to announce that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America, along with their allies, have agreed to an immediate ceasefire everywhere including Lebanon and elsewhere, effective immediately," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. Warmly welcoming the "sagacious gesture" from both sides, he invited the delegations of the US and Iran to Islamabad on April 10 for further talks to achieve a "conclusive agreement." "We earnestly hope that the 'Islamabad Talks' succeed in achieving sustainable peace and wish to share more good news."

Qatar's Minister commends Pakistan's constructive role in fostering peace

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday spoke with Minister of State of Qatar, Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi.

On the latest regional developments, the deputy prime minister shared Pakistan's sustained efforts to promote dialogue and diplomacy for peace and stability in the region, according to a press release issued by the foreign office spokesperson.

Minister of State Qatar appreciated DPM/FM's efforts.

Afghanistan, Pakistan agree to avoid escalation during China-hosted talks: Beijing

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to avoid any escalation in their armed conflict, during talks hosted by China in recent days, Beijing said on Wednesday.

"Representatives from China, Afghanistan and Pakistan held a week of informal meetings in Urumqi, Xinjiang, from April 1 to 7," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

"The engaged in frank and pragmatic discussions in a positive atmosphere", she said at a regular news conference in Beijing.

and realising a return to normalcy in bilateral relations, agreeing not to take any actions that would escalate or complicate the situation".

The Foreign Office (FO) has not issued any official statement on the matter yet and declined to comment on the development when approached by Dawn.

Since Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil-Haq against terrorist hideouts in

Afghanistan in late February, diplomatic con-

tact between the two sides had largely ceased. The talks in China were held under a trilateral mechanism as tensions between Islamabad and Kabul remain elevated following recent cross-border security developments.

On April 2, FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said during a weekly briefing that while Pakistan was holding talks with Afghanistan to end

the conflict, Kabul must "demonstrate visible and verifiable actions".

He said Pakistan had sent the delegation to China "in line with its consistent position and longstanding practice of supporting a credible process that can lead to [a] durable solution ... to stop border terrorism from Afghanistan".

"Our participation is a reiteration of our core concerns," he stated. "The burden of real process, however, lies with Afghanistan, which must demonstrate visible and verifiable actions against terrorist groups using Afghan soil against Pakistan."

PTI delays April 9 rally at govt's request ahead of US-Iran dialogue in Islamabad

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday postponed its planned April 9 rally in Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh amid preparations for high-stakes US-Iran peace talks in Islamabad.

Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas announced the decision following successful negotiations between the federal government and opposition leaders at Parliament House in Islamabad.

A government delegation — comprising Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, and MNAs Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Naveed Qamar — met the opposition party leaders in Parliament House to request the postponement of the PTI rally.

SPORTS



PSL 11: Peshawar Zalmi defeat Hyderabad Kingsmen in low-scoring thriller

PCB talent hunt for women's cricketers to begin on 14th



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PEAK POINT

PEAK POINT KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi beat Hyderabad Kingsmen by four wickets in a gripping low-scoring clash of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Wednesday. Zalmi comfortably chased down the 146-run target, losing six wickets in the final over, thanks to solid contributions from skipper Babar Azam and Kusal Mendis.

The chase began on a shaky note as opener Mohammad Harris fell for 11 off six deliveries, including a four and a six, after playing a loose shot off Maheesh Theekshana, leaving the team at

17-1 in 1.5 overs. Babar and Mendis then stabilised the innings, forging a crucial partnership and guiding the team past the 50-run mark to lay the foundation for the chase. However, the 49-run stand was broken when Saim Ayub dismissed Mendis, who scored 27 off 23 deliveries, including one four and two sixes, leaving Zalmi at 66-2 in 8.2 overs.

Michael Bracewell joined Babar at the crease and the duo kept the scoreboard ticking, adding a valuable partnership that took the total past the 100-run mark.

Saim struck again to claim his second wicket, dismissing Bracewell for 25 off 19 deliveries, which included two fours and a six, ending the 38-run target and reducing Zalmi to 104-3 in 13.4 overs. Babar Azam was dismissed on the final delivery of the 15th over as Hassan Khan ended his innings of 43 off 37 deliveries, which featured six fours.

Zalmi came under pressure when Mohammad Ali removed Farhan Yousaf for 15 off 13 deliveries, including two fours, followed by Hunain Shah, who dismissed Abdul Samad for one, leaving the side at 125-6 in 17.1

overs. With 14 required off the final over, Hunain Shah conceded the remaining runs as Iftikhar Ahmed finished unbeaten on 15 off 10 deliveries, including a four and a six, while Aamer Jamal chipped in with six runs to seal the victory. Batting first, Kingsmen were bundled out for 145 in 18.2 overs. The innings got off to a promising start as openers Maaz Sadaqat and Saim Ayub added valuable runs early on. However, the 26-run opening stand was broken in the third over when Iftikhar Ahmed dismissed Sadaqat for 17 off eight balls, which included three boundaries.

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board on Tuesday announced trials for U19 and emerging women's cricketers in nine cities from April 14 to May 1 as part of its talent hunt programme. Faisalabad's Iqbal Stadium will serve as the opening venue on April 14. The trials will then move to the LCCA Ground in Lahore on April 15, Imran Khan Stadium in Peshawar on April 16 and Abbottabad Stadium on April 17. The second phase begins at the Inzamam-ul-Haq High Performance Centre in Multan on April 21, followed by the Women Sports Stadium in Bahawalpur on April 23. Bugti Stadium in Quetta and the Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre in Karachi will host trials on April 27 and 30 respectively, before the conclusion of the trials at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on May 1. The U19 category is open to players born on or after September 1, 2007, with a minimum age of 12, while there is no age restriction for the Emerging category. Selected players will enter a structured development pathway ahead of forthcoming domestic and international assignments, which will be confirmed in due course.

PSL 11 moves to Karachi as Zalmi face Kingsmen in high-stakes opener

Zimbabwe women team to visit Pakistan for historic ICC Championship series in May

POINTS TABLE

Hyderabad Kingsmen	180
Peshawar Zalmi	158
Islamabad United	152
Quetta Gladiators	232
Multan Sultans	144

TOP 5 BATTERS

Maaz Sadaqat	180
Saim Ayub	158
Farhan Yousaf	152
Hunain Shah	232
Abdul Samad	144

TOP 5 BOWLERS

Maaz Sadaqat	6
Saim Ayub	6
Farhan Yousaf	5
Hunain Shah	8
Abdul Samad	5

Kingsmen are still searching for their first victory, adding urgency to the Karachi opener. The opening fixture in Karachi carries contrasting narratives. For Kingsmen, it is a battle for survival after three successive defeats exposed inconsistencies in both batting and bowling. Despite promising contributions from Maaz Sadaqat and Irfan Khan, the side has struggled to close out key moments. Their bowling attack, led by Riley Meredith and Maheesh Theekshana, has shown flashes of potential but lacks sustained control.



ITF Pakistan 3rd Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Jrs Tennis commences

PEAK POINT LAHORE: The HBL Pakistan Super League 11 shifts its spotlight from Lahore to Karachi, ushering in a decisive phase of the tournament as the National Bank Stadium prepares to host 22 matches from April 8 to 28. After an action-packed opening leg at Gaddafi Stadium, the league now arrives in the port city with heightened anticipation, beginning with a crucial encounter between Peshawar Zalmi and Hyderabad Kingsmen in the 15th match of the season. The transition comes after 14 matches in Lahore, where Multan Sultans emerged as early table-toppers with four wins in five outings, while Islamabad United and Lahore Qalandars remain in close pursuit, while Zalmi hover mid-table. The other end, Rawalpindi and



Pre-tournament meeting held for U-18 hockey Championship



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) on Wednesday held a comprehensive pre-tournament meeting with officials, umpires, team managers and coaches in connection with the Youth Under-18 National Hockey Championship, set to begin on Thursday at the Nasser Bunda Hockey Stadium. The meeting was chaired by the Tournament Director

of the Olympian Khawaja Muhammad Junaid, who briefed participants on the rules, regulations and organizational aspects to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. Before the meeting, a prayer was offered for the department's strict adherence to discipline to make the championship successful. The championship will continue from April 9 to April 19, featuring 16 teams from across the country competing for the title.

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) is pleased to announce that the ITF Pakistan 3rd Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Juniors Tennis Championship 2026 (Leg-1) commenced here at the PTF Tennis Complex. A total of 24 boys and 15 girls from 14 countries including Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Japan, China, Australia, Russia, Poland, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Thailand are participating in the championship. This International tournament is dedicated to the memory of Zainab Ali Naqvi, a talented young tennis player from Karachi, who tragically passed away on February 12, 2024, after suffering a heart attack while competing in an ITF Junior Tournament in Islamabad.

Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President-PTF, along with Secretary General Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail and the PTF management, paid a heartfelt tribute to Zainab Ali Naqvi. They stated that this championship serves as a meaningful way to honor her legacy and keep her memory alive. They also expressed their sincere condolences and prayed for strength and patience for Zainab's family in bearing this irreparable loss. The Pakistan Tennis Federation warmly welcomes all participating players and wishes them the very best for the tournament.

“Every Second Household Poor”: Parliament alarmed as poverty figures double

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s poverty crisis has taken a dramatic turn as lawmakers were told that poverty levels have sharply worsened, with figures nearly doubling over recent years, prompting alarm in Parliament and raising serious questions about the effectiveness of government policies. During a meeting of the Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming, officials revealed that poverty headcount figures have surged from 3,757.85 in 2018-19 to 8,483.8 in 2024-25, alongside a 7 percent increase in the poverty line. The data triggered

strong reactions, with the committee warning that nearly every second household now appears to be living below the poverty threshold. Chairperson Dr. Nafisa Shah described the figures as “extremely painful and deeply disturbing,” calling for an immediate explanation from the government on the sharp rise in poverty and demanding practical, result-oriented solutions rather than policy statements. The discussion quickly turned into a broader critique of governance and policy delivery, with members highlighting that rapid population growth, weak institutional coordination and ineffective service

delivery have collectively worsened socio-economic conditions. Lawmakers warned that the widening gap between resources and population needs is pushing more households into vulnerability. Concerns were also raised over the government’s response mechanisms, with members questioning whether departments tasked with poverty alleviation are delivering meaningful results. The performance of major welfare programs, particularly the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, came under scrutiny as lawmakers demanded clear data on how many beneficiaries have actually moved out of

poverty. Officials presented details of poverty measurement methodologies, including the Cost of Basic Needs framework, and emphasized the use of gender-disaggregated data for policymaking. However, lawmakers signalled dissatisfaction, arguing that data alone is insufficient without visible improvements on ground. The committee also flagged external pressures, including global economic uncertainty and climate change, as key factors that could further intensify poverty levels. Members stressed that climate impacts on livelihoods and food security are disproportionately affecting vulnerable

populations, particularly women and rural communities. The debate highlighted serious gaps in data transparency and policy targeting, with lawmakers calling for a standardized and region-sensitive poverty assessment system to ensure accurate identification of affected populations, especially in remote areas. In a sign of growing concern, the committee decided to conduct field visits to assess the actual impact of poverty alleviation programs and formed a sub-committee to further investigate the issue and submit concrete recommendations. A senior participant, speaking anonymously,

described the situation as “a silent economic emergency where poverty is rising faster than policy responses, while another observer warned that “without urgent intervention, the current trajectory could lead to deeper social and economic instability.” The committee directed relevant ministries to provide detailed explanations and actionable strategies to address rising poverty, improve coordination and ensure that welfare programs deliver measurable results. Further briefings and field assessments will be conducted to strengthen oversight and accountability.

Pakistan must pivot to renewables, storage to shield economy from global energy shocks, Experts urge

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Energy experts, economists and academicians on Wednesday called for urgent and decisive action to secure Pakistan’s energy independence, warning that the ongoing global turmoil triggered by the Strait of Hormuz crisis has laid bare the country’s dangerous exposure to international fossil fuel markets and supply shocks. The call was made at a high-level consultative dialogue, “Beyond the Barrel: Making

Pakistan Energy Secure in an Era of Geopolitical Shocks,” convened by the Pakistan Renewable Energy Coalition (PREC) in collaboration with the Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy (ACJCE) and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), said a press release.

Speakers unanimously stressed that Pakistan can no longer afford to treat energy security as a question of fuel imports alone and must urgently redirect public



resources towards renewables, storage and grid modernisation. Delivering the opening remarks, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI, cautioned that successive energy shocks are intensifying inflationary pressures and eroding the

fragile gains made under the ongoing IMF programme. He warned that if international oil prices breach US\$105 per barrel, domestic inflation could once again surge into double digits, squeezing household budgets and social safety nets. Dr

Suleri strongly opposed any move to impose fresh taxes on solar panels and batteries, arguing that such measures would penalise the very consumers who have cushioned the national economy against global volatility. “Taxing solar panels and batteries at this juncture would undermine both energy security and consumer protection,” he said. Framing the geopolitical backdrop, Engr Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Head of the Energy Unit at SDPI, noted

that the global energy system was built on a silent assumption that shipping lanes, terminals and supply chains would always hold. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, he said, has shattered that assumption and exposed the fragility of an economy heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels. He observed that rising international fuel prices are not only pushing up generation costs but also feeding directly into the cost of essential services.

Opinion & Editorial

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Pakistan’s Quiet Diplomacy and a Defining Moment in Global Peacemaking



In an era marked by fractured geopolitics and fragile alliances, moments of responsible statecraft stand out. The recent escalation between Iran and the United States, which brought the Middle East to the brink of a wider conflict in early 2026, was one such moment. As the specter of a broader war between major and global markets trembled particularly energy corridors vital to the world economy, the need for a credible mediator became urgent. In that critical hour, Pakistan emerged not with fanfare, but with focus. Rather than amplifying tensions or aligning with competing power blocs, Islamabad adopted a posture of principled neutrality and proactive engagement. This approach often difficult to sustain in polarized times proved to be Pakistan’s greatest strength, enabling trust-building across divisions that had otherwise hardened into hostility. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spearheaded a sustained diplomatic initiative, engaging global leaders and emphasizing dialogue over confrontation. His outreach was not merely symbolic; it reflected a calibrated effort to create diplomatic space at a time when rhetoric elsewhere was rapidly escalating. At the heart of this effort stood Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Shyed Asim Munir, whose leadership

added strategic depth and credibility to Pakistan’s diplomatic posture. His stewardship of critical backchannel engagements ensured that lines of communication between Washington and Tehran remained open at the most precarious juncture. In moments when miscalculation can trigger catastrophe, such quiet, disciplined statecraft becomes indispensable. His role was not only facilitative but stabilizing, projecting Pakistan as a serious, reliable, and composed actor in a volatile environment. The outcome a mutually agreed pause in hostilities and the deferral of a potentially large scale military strike was not accidental. It was the product of consistent, quiet diplomacy. While global powers weighed options, Pakistan helped shape outcomes. Equally significant was Pakistan’s ability to leverage its balanced relationships with key regional and global actors, including China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. These ties, built over time, enhanced its credibility as a neutral interlocutor capable of facilitating dialogue rather than deepening divisions. What distinguishes Pakistan’s role further is the context in which it acted. The conflict had direct economic implications for Pakistan, particularly through disruptions in oil supply routes and rising global uncertainty. Yet, Islamabad chose to prioritize collective stability over immediate self-interest an approach that signals diplo-

matic maturity. It is also important to recognize that such outcomes do not emerge overnight. Pakistan’s evolving foreign policy anchored in balance, connectivity, and conflict avoidance has gradually repositioned it from a reactive state to a constructive diplomatic actor. Where once it faced challenges of international isolation, today it is increasingly viewed as part of the solution. That said, the path ahead remains uncertain. Temporary pauses in conflict, while encouraging, are inherently fragile. Without sustained engagement, underlying tensions can quickly resurface. Pakistan’s challenge now is to maintain momentum transforming tactical de-escalation into strategic stability. Nevertheless, this episode marks a significant inflection point. It demonstrates that middle powers, when guided by clarity of purpose and strategic restraint, can influence outcomes even in conflicts involving major global actors. Pakistan’s role in easing tensions between Iran and the United States is not merely a diplomatic success it is a statement of intent: that it seeks not just relevance, but responsible international order. If sustained, this trajectory could well redefine Pakistan’s place in global affairs not as a peripheral player, but as a principled advocate for peace in an increasingly turbulent world.

Iran war and the toll on Asia

Shahid Javed Burki

Asia is paying a heavy price for the war launched on February 28 by US President Donald Trump. Countries belonging to the Asian continent buy 90 percent of the Liquefied Natural Gas, LNG, that the Middle East produces. That flow of LNG has been severely disrupted by the war in the Middle East. This disruption will show little sign of easing until at least 2028, when a wave of US gas production is expected to bring new supplies. Asia’s biggest economies – China, Japan, South Korea, India and Pakistan – and emerging markets like Vietnam and Thailand – all rely significantly on LNG for power. This unexpected disruption threatens the region’s industrial and agricultural output and may undermine its willingness in the future to rely on this fuel to power its growing energy needs. Most affected on the continent would be the area’s very poor citizens. Donald Trump, not given to deep thinking, did not reflect on these developments when he decided to attack Iran. Signs of a squeeze are already appearing. Countries across the continent that can be switching to oil and coal-powered electric generation, and in some cases, aggressively curtailing consumption. Some nations with ample coal-fired power plants can pivot relatively quickly. A Wood Mackenzie analysis shows that in South Korea, which imports almost a fifth of its LNG from the Middle East, increasing use of its coal plants allows it to fill its entire gas gap until the coming summer. In Japan, coal could offset up to 70 percent of gas-fired power generation. The retreat to the use of coal as a source of energy risks derailing decarbonisation timelines and climate goals. Coal releases twice as much carbon dioxide as natural gas. India is another large importer of Middle Eastern LNG that is likely to convert to the use of coal, which is abundantly available in the country. Courtesy Tribune

Risky experiment

The SBP’s recent decision to allow teenagers as young as 13 to open and operate bank accounts entirely on their own is meant to create an opportunity for children to gain financial literacy early and through hands-on experience. The new child account category is a fully functional digital wallet with almost identical usability to a standard account, except that it does not allow chequebooks, which even adults rarely use in this day and age. Though well-intentioned, allowing children who have barely hit puberty to operate bank accounts with no oversight is a reckless gamble that goes against international norms and common sense. Financial literacy is best taught through guidance from parents and teachers, and through public awareness. Pakistan’s decision is in contrast with practices in most developed and emerging economies. In the US, individuals must usually be at least 16 to open an account, and require close scrutiny if they do not have parental authorisation. Similarly, in the UK, 16-year-olds can open accounts, but parental consent and oversight are the norm for younger children. The pattern holds across Asia and the EU, with Japan, Singapore and Germany among the developed nations that require people to be 18 or have parental consent.

Health sector, key pillar of agenda under URAAN Pakistan initiative: Ahsan Iqbal



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday, said that the health sector is a key pillar of the government's development agenda under the URAAN Pakistan initiative. The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Ahsan Iqbal, said a

release issued here. The meeting reviewed and considered a range of development initiatives aimed at strengthening key sectors of the national economy and accelerating the government's reform agenda, said a release issued here. During the meeting, the forum approved seven development projects worth Rs. 24.385 billion under the URAAN Pakistan Initiative, aimed at strengthening the country's development and promoting sustainable economic growth. The meeting was attended by the Chief Economist, Vice Chancellor

PIDE, Members of the Planning Commission, Federal Secretaries, heads of Provincial Planning & Development Departments, and senior representatives from relevant federal ministries and provincial governments. The agenda included projects from all the sectors, including Education & Training, Governance, Health, Physical Planning & Housing and Governance. These projects are aligned with the government's broader development vision and reform agenda under URAAN Pakistan, which focuses on strengthening human capital, modernizing governance, improving infrastructure, and promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

A new project related to the Environment sector was presented in the forum, namely "Air Quality Monitoring Network for Air Quality Management Improvement in Sindh," worth Rs. 1418.400 conditionally approved by the forum with the directions of DCPC to coordinate with EAD for the required funding for this project.

World steps back from brink of catastrophe: Sherry Rehman

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Central leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Sherry Rehman, on Wednesday said the world had stepped back from the brink of a devastating conflict, describing the recent situation as one in which "humanity had come dangerously close to catastrophe."



Speaking in the Senate on a motion to discuss the prevailing regional situation, she said the world had pulled back from the edge of a major crisis, warning that the consequences could have been far more severe for the entire region and beyond.

of Pakistan's leadership and its diplomatic engagement, saying the country had played a role in helping steer the situation towards de-escalation.

She also expressed appreciation for international efforts, including those by Iran and the United States, in moving towards a ceasefire and dialogue.

She said global tensions had reached an alarming level, adding that the situation could have seriously impacted not only Muslim countries but the entire world.

Sherry Rehman stressed the need for sustained diplomatic engagement to ensure lasting peace.

She warned that any escalation could have led to unimaginable consequences.

Pakistan's diplomacy averts wider war: Masood Khan

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's decisive diplomatic intervention has helped bring a halt to a dangerous 40-day conflict involving the United States, Iran, and Israel, preventing what could have escalated into a full-scale regional and global war, Sardar Masood Khan, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United Nations said Wednesday.



The outcome, increasingly being referred to as the "Islamabad Accords," reflects Pakistan's emergence as a credible peacemaker and a net stability provider at a moment of unprecedented geopolitical volatility, he said. Khan, who also served as Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States and China, has

underscored that while the conflict rapidly intensified among major powers, Pakistan remained steadfastly engaged in shuttle diplomacy, maintaining contact with all key stakeholders, including Tehran, Washington, and Gulf capitals. These sustained efforts, backed by support from major international actors including China, Russia, and European partners, created the conditions necessary for a ceasefire and a pathway to structured negotiations.

ECC approves key TSGs; endorses betel nut import reforms

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet met on Wednesday at the Finance Division under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb.

nut), a widely consumed commodity with significant commercial importance in the domestic market. The revised framework, including pre-shipment inspection and enhanced regulatory oversight, has been introduced, under approval by the Prime Minister, to ensure compliance with phytosanitary and food safety standards, minimize disputes, and facilitate trade in line with international best practices.

The ECC approved a summary submitted by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination for a Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) amounting to Rs. 2.8 billion in favour of the Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI), said a press release.

The Committee further approved a Technical Supplementary Grant of Rs. 306 million in favour of the Airports Security Force (ASF) under the Defence Division to meet essential obligations, including payments under the Prime Minister's Assistance Package, encashment of Leave Preparation Reserve (LPR), and Travelling and Daily Allowances.

The Committee was informed that the FDI remains a key national programme aimed at immunizing over eight million children against vaccine-preventable diseases, and the grant will support continued pooled procurement of vaccines, syringes, and Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform (CCEOP) in coordination with the provinces.

The ECC also approved a summary submitted by the Federal Education and Professional Training Division for allocation of Rs. 2 billion through a Technical Supplementary Grant. The Committee noted that the funds have been generated through adjustment within the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

The ECC also approved a summary submitted by the Commerce Division regarding amendments to the Import Policy Order (IPO), 2022 for the import of Areca nut (betel

Shaza Fatima praises PM for role in ceasefire efforts

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for helping mediate a ceasefire, saying Pakistan's positive diplomacy has shown strong results at the global level. According to a statement by the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, she also thanked Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his role in the process, adding that Pakistan's commitment to peace, dialogue and regional stability has once again been highlighted. She said Pakistan played an important role in helping bring about a ceasefire between Iran, the United States and their allies, and noted that this success reflects wisdom, patience and strong leadership.

Shaza Fatima said Pakistan's constructive diplomacy has been recognised worldwide and suggested that the country deserves the Nobel Prize for its efforts to promote global peace and effective diplomacy.

Calling the Islamabad talks an important step towards lasting peace.

Pakistan emerges militarily, economically strong: Haroon Akhtar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan said here on Wednesday that Pakistan had emerged as a leader during the crisis, becoming stronger both militarily and economically under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.



Addressing a conference at the FPCCI Chamber House, he said the prime minister had demonstrated exceptional leadership during challenging times, remaining actively engaged with cabinet members and closely overseeing key issues, including energy management, export pro-

duction, and import containment. He said the prime minister kept the cabinet alert and fully involved, even holding consultations at odd hours to ensure effective decision-making and timely response to emerging challenges.

Haroon Akhtar highlighted that the government's coordinated efforts had helped stabilise the economy and safeguard macroeconomic indicators.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet at the Finance Division.

Minister emphasizes investment in ECD at International Conference

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, underscored the critical importance of investing in Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a foundation for building human capital and ensuring Pakistan's long-term prosperity. He made these remarks while addressing the 5th International Conference on Early Childhood Development, held on Wednesday at Allama Iqbal Open University. Addressing a distinguished audience of

development partners, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, the minister stated that ECD is not merely a social sector priority but a strategic national investment. He highlighted that the early years, from birth to age eight, are essential for shaping cognitive abilities, emotional well-being, health, and lifelong learning outcomes. Minister emphasizes investment in ECD at International Conference. The minister drew attention to Pakistan's demographic landscape, noting that a large proportion of the population consists of young children,



while the country continues to face significant challenges such as under-five mortality, stunting, learning poverty, and a high number of out-of-school children. He emphasized that these interconnected issues require a

coordinated and multisectoral response. He acknowledged the progress made since 2017 through collaborative efforts among key national institutions and international partners, which led to the development of the National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework. This framework provides a comprehensive roadmap to promote nurturing care across health, nutrition, early learning, child protection, and social protection sectors. While recognizing these achievements, the minister stressed that policy frameworks must be effectively implemented to ensure that every child, regardless of geographic or socio-economic background, has access to quality early childhood services. He reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to strengthening Early Childhood

Education by expanding access to pre-primary education, improving the quality of classrooms, enhancing teacher training, and aligning curricula with international standards while remaining responsive to local needs. The minister further emphasized that education alone cannot address the challenges of early childhood development. He called for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, integrating efforts across health, nutrition, sanitation, and community engagement to create an enabling environment for children to thrive.