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Founded By:
(Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
Website: www.peakpoint.pk

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan



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Pakistan 'still far' from becoming a social welfare state: PM Shehbaz

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that Pakistan was "still far" from becoming a social welfare state, which he said was the original purpose of the country's formation.

The premier was speaking at an event in Islamabad to mark International Youth Day 2026, observed on August 12.

He also inaugurated several initiatives for the youth, including the Power Sector Innovation Programme, the National Youth Employment Policy and the Skills Ambassador Programme.

As part of the National Youth Employment Policy, the premier announced that a 35 per cent quota would be specified

for women in the labour force. Every year, a 10pc quota will be specified for startups as well to facilitate youth in starting their own businesses, he said.

In his speech, PM Shehbaz said that Daanish schools were a step towards making Pakistan a country where young people would have equal opportunities for advancement, irrespective of their financial status.

He said that during his tenure as Punjab chief minister, he had established Daanish schools to improve access to quality education for the poor. "How unfortunate is it that, on the one hand, there is a Pakistan for the children of the elite, who not only receive the best education in Pakistan but also attend the best international institutions in the UK.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with high achievers at the International Youth Day ceremony.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi briefs Iran's President Pezeshkian on Mecca Agreement

PEAK POINT



TEHRAN: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, who is presently on a visit to Tehran, on Wednesday met with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and took him into confidence on the

Mecca Joint Defence Agreement signed between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Minister conveyed to the president the message from Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz on the present situation in the region.

Naqvi is assisting the field marshal, who is in touch with the US, Iranian and Gulf countries' leaders to restore peace in the region. Naqvi, who arrived in Iran on Tuesday, held meetings with Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi and Petroleum Minister Mohsen Paknejad. The two sides discussed the promotion of bilateral relations and situation in the region. According to Iranian media, Naqvi also met with Iran's Petroleum Minister Mohsen Paknejad. During the meeting, the two sides discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation in the energy sector and ways to expand trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Iran. The two sides emphasized the need for strengthening trade.

US, Iran agree to extend ceasefire as Pakistan steps up mediation: report

PEAK POINT



WASHINGTON: The United States and Iran have "agreed" to extend a ceasefire ahead of the expiration of the 60-day deadline under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, Anadolu Agency reported on Wednesday, citing government sources in Pakistan.

"Both sides have conveyed their consent to the mediators to extend the deadline," a source told the Turkish news agency.

"However, the two sides are exchanging messages to decide on the extension period," the source added.

The Islamabad MoU is set to expire on August 17, the report said. Earlier, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi delivered a "special and important" message from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir to the Iranian leadership during his visit to Tehran, read a statement from the Interior Ministry.

Naqvi further informed his Iranian counterpart that Pakistan's Field Marshal was constantly in touch with Gulf countries, Iran and the US. On Tuesday, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif indicated that the US and Iran were close to reaching an arrangement that could ease tensions which have embroiled energy markets. "Things are shaping up again in favour of a peace arrangement or a deal," Asif told Bloomberg News.

"The signals in the last two, three days are that we are close to some sort of an arrangement."

Eight terrorists killed after explosive device detonates prematurely in Balochistan's Surab: ISPR

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: At least eight terrorists affiliated with Indian proxy Fitna al-Hindistan were killed when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive

device (VBIED) detonated prematurely while being prepared in the Surab district of Balochistan, the military's media wing said on Wednesday.

"The premature detonation during preparation resulted in [the] confirmed killing of eight terrorists with multiple injured," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

It added that the blast also triggered the detonation of other explosives stored at the site, resulting in the deaths of three nearby civilians and injuries to several militants.

Following the incident, security forces and Balochistan Police reached the area and launched a joint clearance operation to track down the perpetrators and their facilitators.

The military's media wing added that security forces detected the movement of fleeing terrorists during the operation and killed 10 of them.

Pakistan condemns Houthi attack in Red Sea that claimed lives of 3 nationals

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday condemned the attack by Yemen's Houthis on a commercial vessel in the Red Sea that claimed the lives of three Pakistanis and said Islamabad was in contact with the relevant authorities to ascertain further details. The attack targeted a Tanzania-flagged vessel Tihamah, causing deaths and injuries among its crew. Apart from three Pakistanis, an Indonesian.

FO says Naqvi's visit to Iran aimed at discussing bilateral relations, regional peace and stability

PEAK POINT

Naqvi was received in Speaking further on Tehran by his Iranian coun- Pakistan's mediation efforts



terpart, Eskandar Momeni, and later held talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iranian media reported. A diplomatic source had told Dawn from Tehran that the principal objective of Naqvi's visit was to follow up on the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding and Pakistan's mediation between Iran and the US.

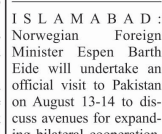
"offset spoilers using direct and indirect channels" and ensure the continuation of constructive dialogue to resolve outstanding issues.

Makkah pact reflects 'resolve for sharing burden of regional peace'

The FO spokesperson also spoke of the defence pact signed last week between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, which he said was "highlight of the week". The joint defence agreement, signed in Makkah on Friday, aims to strengthen collective deterrence and empowers its signatory states to treat an attack against one of them as an attack against all of them. He said the agreement reflected the three nations' "commitment to further strengthen their collective security, promoting peace security and promoting peace security and stability in the region and beyond".

Norwegian FM to visit Pakistan on Aug 13-14, first such visit in a decade

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide will undertake an official visit to Pakistan on August 13-14 to discuss avenues for expanding bilateral cooperation, trade and investment. In a statement, the Foreign Office (FO) said, "At the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Norwegian FM Eide will undertake an official visit to Pakistan on 13-14 August 2026." According to the FO, the visit to Pakistan will be the first by a Norwegian foreign minister in a decade.

During the visit, the FO said that Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Norwegian counterpart would hold delegation-level talks covering the full spectrum of Pakistan-Norway relations.

"The two sides will discuss avenues for further expanding bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade and investment, climate change, renewable energy, education and people-to-people contacts."



SPORTS



Babar Azam, Abdullah Shafique rise in ICC Test rankings



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan captain Babar Azam, opening batter Abdullah Shafique and several bowlers made notable gains in the latest ICC Test rankings following the national side's two-match series against the West Indies, which ended 1-1.

Babar, who was the leading run-scorer and Player of the Series with 193 runs in four innings, climbed five places to 10th in the Test batting rankings with 716 points.

Saud Shakeel, meanwhile, dropped two places to 26th with

634 points, while wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan slipped one place to 27th.

Abdullah made a major jump after returning to Test cricket and scoring a century in the second Test. The opener climbed 25 places to 32nd with 607 points.

Salman Ali Agha dropped six places to 38th, while former captain Shan Masood slipped three places to 39th. Left-handed opener Imam-ul-Haq also fell four places to 57th.

Aamer Jamal moved up one place to 99th with 301 points.

Australia's Travis Head retained the top spot among Test

batters, with England duo Harry Brook and Joe Root occupying

second and third positions, respectively.

In the Test bowling rankings, Pakistan spinner Noman Ali dropped one place to eighth with 800 points, while Mohammad Abbas also slipped one place to 18th.

Shaheen Afridi retained his 29th position with 611 points.

Sajid Khan, who impressed with eight wickets in the series, climbed five places to 30th with 605 points. Hasan Ali dropped one place to 39th, while Khurram Shahzad moved up one place to

51st.

Aamer Jamal slipped one place to 82nd, while Mohammad Ali, the leading wicket-taker in the series with nine wickets, made an eight-place jump to 85th.

Debutant spinner Ali Usman made the biggest leap among Pakistan bowlers, climbing 58 places to 97th.

India's Jasprit Bumrah retained the top spot in the Test bowling rankings, followed by New Zealand's Matt Henry in second and Australia's Mitchell Starc in third.

Afghanistan beat Ireland to seal 2027 World Cup berth



PEAK POINT

BELFAST: Rahmanullah Gurbaz top-scored with 71 as Afghanistan claimed a three-wicket victory over Ireland at the Civil Service Cricket Club ground in Belfast on Monday to take a 2-0 lead in their One-day International series. Last week's opening game in the five-match contest was washed out, and Afghanistan won Friday's second ODI in Breda by 92 runs. With this victory, Afghanistan secured automatic qualification for the 2027 World Cup, leaving twice champions West Indies to go through qualifiers for the third successive edition of the 50-overs tournament. The top eight teams in the One-day International rankings on Sept 30, excluding co-hosts South Africa and Zimbabwe, qualify directly for the event. Afghanistan's win ensured they will finish among those teams, joining Australia, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England and Bangladesh. The West Indies are ranked 10th and cannot make up enough ground to qualify directly despite having two ODIs against India left to play before the cut-off date. Ireland scored 206 in Monday's third match but three wickets apiece from Rashid Khan (3-44) and A.M. Ghazanfar (3-29) kept them in check after they were put in to bat.

England to have no curfew for Pakistan Tests, says captain Root



PEAK POINT

ENGLAND: England captain Joe Root said there would be no team curfew during next week's home Test series against Pakistan, backing players to act responsibly despite recent off-field incidents that have put the team's culture under scrutiny.

The 35-year-old's remarks come amid the intense scrutiny surrounding England's

dressing room culture over the past year under former coach Brendon McCullum and former captain Ben Stokes.

Root, England's all-time leading Test run-scorer, returned to the captaincy following Stokes' retirement in June amid the Test series against New Zealand, during which the all-rounder was suspended for a Test along with pacer Gus

"My view is that if players are expected to take responsibility on the field, they should be trusted as grown adults to make good decisions off it as well."

"That's something we, as a team, have to manage properly and police ourselves, alongside Stephen Fleming," he added.

England's team culture has been under scrutiny since last year's 4-1 Ashes defeat in Australia and a string of off-field incidents. Among them was an altercation involving Harry Brook and a nightclub bouncer in New Zealand. ECB chief executive Richard Gould said in January that players would be subject to stricter measures.

Pakistani Taekwondo fighters win five medals at Singapore Youth League



Arshad Nadeem to skip Diamond League for South Africa training after Glasgow debacle

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's star javelin thrower and Olympic gold medallist Arshad Nadeem decided to miss the Lausanne Diamond League as he will go to South Africa for a training stint.

Nadeem is currently undergoing intensive training at Punjab Stadium in Lahore. According to sources, the Olympic champion has decided to focus on overseas training following the Commonwealth Games rather than competing at the Lausanne event.

Nadeem's name was initially included in the entry list for the Lausanne Diamond League, scheduled for August 21. However, he will now miss the competition and travel to South Africa for a training camp.

The 28-year-old will train in Potchefstroom for two weeks, a venue where he

has previously completed two training stints.

Following his training camp, Nadeem is expected to compete at the World Athletics Ultimate Championships, scheduled to take place in Budapest

receives his visa.

Meanwhile, at the recently concluded Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games, Nadeem finished ninth in the men's javelin throw final with a best throw of 77.41 metres.



from September 6 to 14. He will then participate in the Asian Games.

Nadeem will travel to South Africa on the first available flight once he

Entering the competition as the defending champion, he was eliminated after the first three rounds of the final, failing to secure a place in the top eight.

Swiatek sets up Canadian Open semifinal clash with Svitolina





Trade deficit With China, Malaysia and Indonesia faces Parliamentary Scrutiny

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's continuing trade deficit with China and other free trade agreement partners faces serious scrutiny. A National Assembly committee demanded answers on why imports continue to outweigh exports and whether the country is receiving a fair economic return from its mineral resources. The committee also raised concerns over financial liabilities at the Trading Corporation of Pakistan and asked authorities to present a clear plan for resolving the issue. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce, chaired by Muhammad Jawed Hanif Khan, reviewed Pakistan's trade policies, exports, tariffs, major trade institutions and relations with important trading partners. The committee expressed serious concern over Pakistan's trade deficit with China and other countries with which Pakistan has free

trade agreements. Members called for a detailed study to determine the reasons behind the imbalance and identify steps that could improve Pakistan's exports. The committee also sought information about the Saindak project and mineral exports. It said the government should explain whether Pakistan was receiving an appropriate economic return from its mineral resources. The Ministry of Commerce was directed to provide detailed information on Pakistan's trade deficit with China, Malaysia and Indonesia as well as mineral exports. Another major issue was the financial condition of the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP). The committee expressed concern over outstanding markup liabilities faced by TCP. It directed that the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank of Pakistan should address the matter. The committee also sought a complete briefing on the outstanding amount

and the government's plan to settle the liabilities. At the same time, officials told the committee that around Rs 120 billion in tariff benefits had been passed on to industries. The government said the purpose was to reduce costs for local manufacturers and make Pakistani products more competitive in international markets. The Ministry of Commerce also told the committee that earlier tariff reductions had helped increase exports by an estimated \$1.27 billion. Chairman Muhammad Jawed Hanif Khan said tariff reductions should not simply be seen as benefits given to businesses. He said they should be viewed as part of a wider economic strategy to reduce excessive taxation, lower production costs and help Pakistani goods compete in global markets. The committee also reviewed major changes to the Export Development Fund. Members were informed that manage-

ment of the fund was moving towards greater participation by the private sector. Leading exporters were given a stronger role in deciding how funds should be used. The committee welcomed the move towards projects that could show a direct and measurable impact on exports. It said export development money should focus more on increasing exports instead of being spent mainly on traditional infrastructure projects. The committee also discussed financing available to small and medium businesses. It examined the decision to reserve 40 percent of the Export Finance Scheme portfolio for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Members said smaller businesses must receive fair and adequate access to export financing. The performance and investment strategy of Pakistan Reinsurance Company Limited also came under review. The committee was told that the company retains

around 30 percent of its insurance risk while approximately 70 percent is placed with international reinsurance markets. These markets include London, Dubai and Singapore. The chairman called for better use of the company's resources and asked management to explore ways to increase financial returns without taking unsafe risks. The committee also considered proposed changes to the Trade Organizations Act involving the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Members discussed the special status of KCCI and a proposal to exempt it from some district based requirements. The chairman directed the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Law and Justice to properly prepare the proposed legal changes before bringing the matter back to the committee. Pakistan's preparation for the upcoming GSP Plus scheme was also discussed. The com-

mittee was briefed about the transition period and requirements Pakistan would have to meet. The chairman asked the Ministry of Commerce to provide a detailed presentation explaining how prepared Pakistan was for the scheme. The ministry was also asked to explain the opportunities, possible problems and steps needed to gain maximum benefit from GSP Plus. For stronger parliamentary oversight, the committee ordered the Commerce Ministry to prepare detailed reports on the Export Development Fund, GSP Plus, Pakistan's trade deficit with China, Malaysia and Indonesia, and the country's mineral exports. The committee decided that its next meeting would be held in Karachi. Members will also visit the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan and the Trading Corporation of Pakistan to receive detailed briefings and examine their operations.

ICT admin intensifies anti-begging drive ahead of August 14 celebrations

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: As preparations for Independence Day continue across the federal capital, authorities are carrying out citywide efforts that include decorating public buildings and taking action against professional beggars

at major traffic signals.

During recent operations, additional beggars were detained and shifted to lock-ups as part of an ongoing campaign aimed at improving public spaces ahead of August 14.

The Islamabad district

administration has continued its operations against professional beggars across the city while Independence Day preparations remain underway.

Alongside the decoration and illumination of public buildings, authorities are

focusing on locations where begging has become common, particularly at busy traffic signals and major roads. Officials said that the campaign is intended to address issues affecting the appearance of public areas during national celebrations.

Assistant Commissioner City Maheen Hassan led operations at various roads and intersections in Islamabad. During the latest actions, several professional beggars were taken into custody and transferred to lock-ups. According to the district

administration, the campaign is being conducted on a regular basis and will continue in different parts of the city. Officials stated that action is being taken against individuals involved in organized begging activities at public places.

Opinion & Editorial

ISLAMABAD
DAILY PEAK POINT
ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN
Group Editor: 0333-5366814
SAMRA ATHAR KAKAKHEL
Resident Editor
NADIM TANOLI
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-7777874
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Redirected funds

There is something deeply troubling about a development programme designed to help some of Balochistan's poorest flood victims becoming the subject of a dispute over whether its funds should be diverted elsewhere. The World Bank's strong objection to the redirection of housing funds should not be dismissed as donor interference. Nor, however, should the government's broader development priorities be ignored. The real question is whether the two can be reconciled without making the province's most vulnerable people pay the price. The numbers explain why this matters. According to the World Bank, 119,049 verified and eligible households have been left without identified financing after the housing component was capped. These are overwhelmingly poor families as around 84% of eligible beneficiaries are classified as ultra-poor and vulnerable, while many depend on daily wages. That is precisely why the government needs to explain the decision to redirect funds. The World Bank is also right to flag the potential consequences of exclusion. The purpose of resilient reconstruction is not simply to replace a damaged roof with another structure. It is to prevent vulnerable families from being pushed back into the same cycle of deprivation every time a flood, storm, heatwave or any other disaster strikes.

A power plant by accident

Abdul Rehman
IN February, Nepa slashed — from around Rs26 per unit to as little as Rs8-11 — what new rooftop solar owners are paid for the electricity sent back to the grid under a new 'net billing' regime, ending a decade of crediting imports and exports equally. Fortunately, existing consumers were spared after public disapproval and reported government intervention. The government's point is that solar owners, mostly well-off, avoid the fixed and capacity charges embedded in everyone else's bill, leaving other consumers to cover them. That transfer reached roughly Rs159 billion by 2024 and could pass Rs4 trillion by 2034 if nothing changes. But buried in that logic is a striking admission that ordinary Pakistanis have quietly built something large enough to unsettle the grid and its economics.

They have built roughly 38 GW of distributed solar, more than 90 per cent of the country's grid capacity. Solar power systems were installed rooftop by rooftop, 96pc funded by the people who installed them. In FY25, they generated an estimated 51 TWh, about 38pc of what the grid sold in the same period. The net billing debate has framed all of this as a liability to be contained by paying owners less. The more useful question is the one no one is asking: what if we stopped treating it as a problem and ran it as a power plant?

Right now, the 38 GW cannot be run as a power plant because they answer to no one. Millions of systems inject power when the sun is high and disappear when it sets. The load data shows it: between July 2024 and July 2025, midday national demand fell nearly 2,000 MW as rooftops did the grid's daytime work, then everyone rushed back at dusk. This is the 'duck curve', which has broken the economics of thermal generation. Some 11.3 GW of RLNG and imported coal sat largely idle throughout FY25, yet had to be paid for. Capacity payments — the fixed charges that plants earn merely for existing — reached Rs1.8tr, which is over 60pc of the power purchase price. Net billing compounds this, pushing solar owners to add batteries and self-consume. Each step takes them closer to leaving the grid entirely, which makes it worse.

There is an established alternative that does the opposite of pushing people away: a virtual power plant. A VPP is not a building; it is software. It aggregates thousands of small assets, from rooftop solar, home and industrial batteries and EV chargers to air conditioners and agricultural tube wells. It then coordinates them so that they act as a single dispatchable plant for the grid. Charge batteries and vehicles during the midday solar glut; discharge them into the evening peak, when prices are highest and the system is

most strained. At scale, Pakistan's rooftops and driveways become a peaking plant, supplying the evening capacity that the country currently pays thermal plants huge charges for, whether or not they are operating.

The government is cutting what rooftop solar owners earn for a problem that better coordination, not lower payments, would solve.

This is not theoretical. In the UK, Octopus Energy runs a VPP of 150,000 enrolled EVs that shifts 1 GW of flexible load, enough for two cities on a typical evening, while saving participants around £600 a year. American utilities show how such schemes mature. Duke Energy offers a flat monthly subscription in return for managing a household's charging. Colorado's Xcel Energy goes further by using charging that follows a price signal published a day ahead. These remain the pilots of a few hundred to a couple of thousand vehicles, a reminder that this is early, deliberate work, not a leap of faith. This progression is a template that Pakistan can follow, and it need not start with the most sophisticated version. A sensible first step is a pilot within a single Disco, enrolling households that already own solar and batteries and run occasional but clearly signalled events. As smart meters and time-of-day tariffs spread, a subscription-style managed model becomes possible.

Courtesy Dawn

Unbundling or Bundling Up?

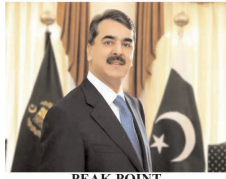
Haron Rashid Siddiqi

Pakistan is once again engaged in an intense debate about creating new provinces or smaller administrative units to bring governance closer to the people and improve efficiency, transparency and accountability. The argument is simple: when an administrative structure becomes too large, smaller units may improve performance. The same principle, in a different setting, lies at the heart of the proposed restructuring of Pakistan's gas sector. I shall restrict myself to the gas sector, where the question is whether unbundling two giant organisations can deliver what decades of reform rhetoric have failed to achieve.

For decades, Pakistan's gas industry has revolved around two giant integrated companies, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL). They perform almost every downstream function, from transmission and distribution to delivery and billing. Domestic gas reserves are declining, imported LNG is increasingly important and the sector remains burdened by inefficiencies. The proposed unbundling seeks to change this architecture. It means separating the highway from the traffic that uses it. A national transmission company would operate the high-pressure network as a common carrier, transporting gas for whoever has the right to use it and charging a regulated wheeling fee. Distribution would be separated into smaller entities along provincial or regional boundaries, while trading and marketing would be opened to private participation. The logic is compelling. An integrated monopoly can conceal inefficiencies because good and bad operations disappear into the same balance sheet. Once transmission and distribution are separated, performance becomes easier to measure. The same applies to Unaccounted-for Gas, or UFG, the difference between gas entering a system and gas properly accounted for.

Courtesy Tribune

Healthy mothers, children foundation of healthy, resilient Pakistan: Chairman Senate



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Wednesday said that the health and well-being of mothers and children is fundamental to national development, stressing that investment in maternal, newborn and child health is an investment in Pakistan's human capital and future.

Addressing the launch ceremony of the National Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Social and Behaviour Change Communication Campaign as Chief Guest, the Chairman congratulated the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and

UNICEF Pakistan, and appreciated the contributions of development partners, healthcare professionals, academia and civil society. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said healthy mothers and children are the foundation of strong families, productive communities and a resilient Pakistan.

He noted that Pakistan has made progress in key health indicators, with infant mortality declining to 47 per 1,000 live births and the maternal mortality ratio improving to 186 per 100,000 live births. However, significant challenges remain in ensuring timely, affordable and quality maternal and newborn healthcare. Highlighting the newly launched campaign, he said it promotes three simple but potentially life-saving behaviours: timely antenatal care, skilled birth attendance and essential newborn care.

"The right information, delivered at the right time, can save lives," he said.

The Chairman stressed that awareness must be complemented by

quality healthcare services, trained health workers, effective referral systems and affordable treatment.

He also highlighted the importance of initiatives such as the Benazir Nushonuma Programme, particularly for pregnant and lactating women and children during the critical first 1,000 days of life.

He underscored Parliament's role in strengthening maternal and child healthcare policies, legislation and oversight, with special attention to women and children in remote and underserved areas and those affected by poverty, displacement and climate-related emergencies.

Commending UNICEF Pakistan for its continued partnership and technical support, the Chairman called for coordinated efforts by government institutions, development partners, healthcare professionals and civil society to ensure lasting improvements in maternal and child health. "When we protect our mothers and give our children a healthy start, we invest in the health.

Ahsan calls for national mission on nutrition, early childhood development

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday called for treating nutrition and early childhood development as a national emergency and mission, stressing that the health, nutrition and early experiences of children would determine Pakistan's human capital and national development in the coming decades. Addressing a policy dialogue on "Accelerating Multi-Sectoral Nutrition & Early Childhood Development in Pakistan: From Strategy to Scale & Impact," the minister said nutrition and early childhood development were deeply interconnected and could not be addressed through isolated projects or a single sector.

He said around 40 per cent of children in Pakistan had been affected by stunting over the past



four decades, describing it as a serious national concern requiring coordinated and sustained action. "This is not a matter of a project, but a question of a national emergency and a national mission," he said, stressing that the issue was directly linked with the country's future capacity, productivity and national strength. The minister said the world had entered an era in which the quality and creative capabilities of human resources were decisive factors in national success. Inadequate nutrition and weak early childhood development, he noted, could adversely affect children's.

President calls for strengthening political, economic ties with Libya

E.G. REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Wednesday, asked Pakistan's Ambassador-Designate to Libya, Maj. Gen. (R) Mumtaz Hussain, to work towards strengthening high-level political engagement and expanding economic, trade and investment cooperation between Pakistan and Libya.

The president, while congratulating Maj. Gen. (R) Mumtaz Hussain, who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding and cordial relations with Libya, based on shared faith, mutual respect and common values. He emphasised the scope for enhanced cooperation in defence, energy, information technology, healthcare, education, agriculture and human resource development, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release. The president also stressed the importance of greater interaction between the business communities of the two countries and highlighting investment opportu-

nities in Pakistan under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The president said Pakistan would continue to support Libya's sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and efforts for lasting peace, stability and national reconciliation.

He asked the ambassador-designate to accord priority to the welfare of the Pakistani community in Libya. He also expressed hope for continued cooperation with Libya at the United Nations, the OIC and other multilateral forums on issues of mutual interest, including Palestine and Jammu & Kashmir. The president conveyed his best wishes to the ambassador-designate for a successful and productive tenure and asked him to convey his warm greetings to the Libyan leadership and people.

Maj. Gen. (R) Mumtaz Hussain said that his priority as ambassador would be to work on matters concerning the Pakistani community in Libya and to promote and increase bilateral trade between Pakistan and Libya.

Pakistan's youth playing key role in shaping country's future: Tariq Fazal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Wednesday paid tribute to Pakistan's conscious and hardworking youth on the occasion of International Youth Day.

In a statement posted on X, the minister said the country's youth were giving new hope to Pakistan's future through their hard work, talent and determination. "Young people are not merely the heirs of tomorrow; they are the true architects of building Pakistan today," he said. The minister said Pakistani youth had demonstrated their capabilities in education, research, technology and entrepreneurship.

He added that young Pakistanis were also making significant progress in sports and other fields. "We have complete confidence in the immense potential and passion of our younger generation," the minister said.

He stressed that with proper guidance, quality education and modern skills, young people could take.

PTI cannot distance itself from worker who attacked security forces: Talal Chaudhry

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry on Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership could not distance itself from a party worker who attacked security forces, arguing that political leaders had a responsibility to examine how their supporters were "trained" and what ideas had been instilled in their minds.

The worker being referred to was identified as Muhammad Hussain, who allegedly opened fire on security forces on Mall Road in Rawalpindi on Tuesday, injuring a patrolling officer before he was killed in retaliatory firing, according to police.

The Rawalpindi police said Hussain belonged to a "specific



political party". PTI, however, rejected the allegations, with Islamabad Region President Aamir Mughal saying the party believed in a "peaceful and unarmed political struggle" and should not be blamed without evidence.

Addressing a press briefing, Chaudhry said the incident should serve as "a very big lesson" and warned that politics based on "hatred, division and violence" could have dangerous consequences.

Motorway Police continues legal action against crimes

WAJIIHA TAMSEL MIRZA

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Police arrests suspects. According to the initial report, Duty Officer Inspector Muhammad Usman Shabbir noticed suspicious movement around the motorway during his patrol. On seeing the police, the suspects fled to nearby fields taking advantage of the darkness and dense crops. About 05 meters of stolen guard rail was recovered from the spot. Motorway Police identified the main accused through community policing, informant network and intelligence efforts and registered a case at Chak Jhumra Police Station. Motorway Police shared information about the case with



the district police. Under the supervision of SDP Nishatabad Rana Nadeem, Punjab Police arrested both the accused and also recovered the stolen fence and road furniture. Both the accused have criminal records. Further investigation and legal action is underway. Public Relations Officer M4 Sector One Muhammad Hafeez Qamar.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting Pakistan's Ambassador-Designate to Libya MJ, Gen. (R) Mumtaz Hussain at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif awarded Shaharyar Memon a special award

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif awarded Shaharyar Memon a special award in recognition of his services as the focal person for the Prime Minister's Youth Program, particularly for empowering young people, especially young entrepreneurs. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program, was also present at the ceremony. This honor from the Prime Minister is being regarded as acknowledgment



of Shaharyar Memon's efforts in guiding the youth, promoting their entrepreneurial skills, and providing them opportunities. After receiving the award, Shaharyar Memon said in his statement that being recognized as a self-made entrepreneur by

Pakistan's esteemed Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is a matter of pride for him. He added that the recognition he received as the focal person of the Prime Minister's Youth Program is proof of appreciation for his hard work, vision, and perse-

verance. Shaharyar Memon said that he is deeply grateful for this honor and will continue his efforts to provide opportunities for young people to move forward. According to him, Pakistan's youth is a valuable asset of the country, whose potential, when utilized, can further strengthen the nation's economy and development journey. He expressed his determination to play an even more effective role in empowering young entrepreneurs, introducing them to modern business opportunities, and highlighting their talents.

Senior Columnist presents newly written book to Governor KP

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Senior columnist and renowned writer, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi (Sitara Imtiaz) met Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi and presented his new book 'Yaqeen-e-Mukham' to him. The book 'Yaqeen-e-Mukham' is a collection of 100 selected columns written on various important national, political, social, economic and public topics during his writing journey. The author, while analysing the current situation in his columns, has highlighted



national and social problems as well as their possible solutions and reform aspects. Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi new book is an important collection of his long journalistic and literary services, which combines his observations, experiences and intellectual analyses on situations and events.