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**CRICKET LEGEND WASIM AKRAM NAMED AS TB AMBASSADOR  
AS PAKISTAN LAUNCHES NEW HEALTH INITIATIVE**

27<sup>TH</sup> April 2004, Lahore – Sporting hero Wasim Akram has become Pakistan’s first ‘Ambassador for TB’. The announcement by the Federal Minister of Health, Mr Muhammad Nasir Khan sees the former national cricket captain taking a central role in fighting TB on all fronts. The position of TB Ambassador for Pakistan will see Mr Akram promoting patient treatments and tuberculosis awareness. He will also become the figurehead of ‘Stop TB Pakistan’, an initiative also launched today which brings together the nation’s leading TB experts and partners.

“This is a great honour for me, to represent the people of Pakistan, and become its first ever TB ambassador,” said Mr Akram. “Being the first means I can create the momentum and movement that will save thousands of lives. TB is curable and drug treatments are available. This is the important message I want to take with me as I tour the country in my new ambassadorial role and meet patients.”

TB kills more than two million people a year - with 50,000 Pakistanis dying from the bacterial infection. This is despite the availability of drugs that can cure the disease. Pakistan remains a key focus of the international community engaged in the fight to stop TB. The country ranks sixth in a table of high burden countries. One problem identified in the country is the stigma people attach to TB which deters many from seeking help or treatment.

“My success as ambassador will depend on the support I receive from the people of Pakistan,” added Wasim. “I need them to share in my passion to fight TB and spread the message that no one need die from this disease. I also want to get both public and private sectors to work together and share in this common vision of a TB-free Pakistan.”

The launch also today of ‘Stop TB Pakistan’ is another example of Pakistan's innovative approach to disease control. It is the first time such a group has been launched in a developing country. Canada and Italy are the only other countries with similar tuberculosis groups. All three groups work under the umbrella organization of the Stop TB Partnership, which is hosted by the World Health Organization in Geneva.

"This is an exciting development for all those engaged in TB control. We intend Stop TB Pakistan to make a difference and make an impact on the lives of ordinary and often neglected individuals who succumb to tuberculosis," said Dr Karam Shah, the National TB Programme for Pakistan who will be leading Stop TB Pakistan.

Stop TB Pakistan aims to go beyond the traditional health partnerships already in place in the country to create a effective national, regional and local response against TB. The organization will include stakeholders, partners such as private and corporate sectors, non-governmental organizations, patient representatives, academia and civil society. The forum will place TB on the health and development agenda more strongly, intensifying awareness and action to detect and treat many more patients.

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For more information about TB control in Pakistan please view  
[www.who.int/tb/publications/global\\_report/2004/en/Pakistan.pdf](http://www.who.int/tb/publications/global_report/2004/en/Pakistan.pdf)

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For more information about Stop TB Pakistan and its TB Ambassador Wasim Akram, please  
access [www.ntp.gov.pk](http://www.ntp.gov.pk)