



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, April 01, 2020

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

We are at war with COVID 19 an invisible enemy: Azeri first VP

Media industry's issues to be solved: Firdous



ICCI demands relief for small businesses



Briefs

Doctors ask Nawaz to stay in self-isolation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A fresh medical report of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has on Tuesday been submitted in an accountability court in Islamabad. It has been stated in the report that the erstwhile premier has been advised by doctors to remain in self-isolation in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The report says that Nawaz Sharif is likely to get affected by the epidemic due to age factor and he cannot be taken to hospital as well.

Pak Navy to contribute to PM's Fund

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy has decided to contribute to PM's Relief Fund for COVID-19. Naval Chief Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi will donate one month salary to the relief fund. The Vice Admiral, Rear Admiral and officers to the rank of Commodore will donate three days and all other officers two days salary to the relief fund. As per details, the Vice-Admiral, Rear Admiral and officers to the rank of Commodore will donate three days' salary, while all other officers will donate two days' salary to the relief fund. Earlier, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Jawed Bajwa also announced to donate his one month's salary in the fight against coronavirus. Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday announced the establishment of youth force and public fund during his address to the nation to fight coronavirus pandemic across Pakistan.

FO accepts responsibility of allowing pilgrims

"Pakistani government and embassy are in touch with Iranian government on pilgrims issue," Farooqui added. It may be mentioned here that the matter of allowing pilgrims from Iran generated heated debate and the opposition parties had blamed Zulfi Bukhari of granting permission to pilgrims

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Aisha Farooqui on Tuesday said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible to allow pilgrims from

Iran to enter the country.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, she said that facilities were being improved by Pakistan at the Taftan border, adding that the thousands of pilgrims were facilitated after the coronavirus outbreak in the Iranian city of

Qom.

The spokesperson said that the Pak-Iran border is closed, but it is our responsibility to allow our citizens to enter Pakistan, adding that Islamabad and Tehran is working with joint consultation on the issue of pilgrims.

"Pakistani government and embassy are in touch with Iranian government on pilgrims issue," Farooqui added.

It may be mentioned here that the matter of allowing pilgrims from Iran generated heated debate and the opposition parties

had blamed Zulfi Bukhari of granting permission to pilgrims. However Zulfi Bukhar in a statement denied this allegation.

He in fact has sued Khawja Asif for leveling what he termed baseless allegation against him.

NCA contribution to relief fund

FARUKH SHAHZAD

ISLAMABAD: To support national efforts in fight against COVID-19, Scientists, Engineers and employees of National Command Authority (NCA) and Strategic Plans Division (SPD) have contributed their salaries in COVID-19 Relief Fund as under:-

- Employees of Special Pay Scale 11-14 - 3 days
 - Employees of Special Pay Scale 8-10 - 2 days
 - Employees of Special Pay Scale 1-7 - 1 day
- General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee contributed one month's pay in COVID-19 Relief Fund.

Remittances to decrease by \$1-1.5 billion

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: Policy experts at an online Consultation called upon the government to facilitate thousands of overseas workers stranded in Pakistan due to COVID-19 pandemic across the world.

The online consultation titled: 'Migration/Border Management during COVID-19, was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, Kashif Ahmed Noor, Director-General, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Pakistanis, said the foreign remittances have already halved in these two months and are expected to decrease by \$1 billion to 1.5 billion per year if

the situation persists any longer. He said currently 10,000 to 11,000 households are estimated to be directly impacted.

He said: "there are around 60,000 people who were in the process of going abroad for their jobs. We are trying to negotiate with UAE and other countries to sustain them in these testing times."

He said the bureau will share its 3-month database with Overseas Pakistani Foundation and Benazir Income Support Programme to facilitate blue color workers. "We cannot leave them helpless," he added.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI Executive Director, said it's time to pay back to the migrant workers who would send millions of dollar remittances to Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs Cabinet meeting on Tuesday. – DNA

PM for package to IDPs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday issued directives to the government authorities to prepare a relief package for Afghan Refugees and internally Displaced People (IDPs) locked in lockdown due to Coronavirus epidemic. The PM issued directives on request of Shehryar Afridi, Minister Narcotics Control and Safran during the cabinet meeting today. Shehryar Afridi talked to a group of media personnel on issues faced by Afghan Refugees and IDPs. He said around 28 lac refugees are living in 52 refugee camps all across Pakistan, 80% of which consists of daily wagers.

Cabinet restores goods transport

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet, which met in Islamabad today (Tuesday) with Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair, decided to restore food goods transport in all four provinces keeping in view prevailing Coronavirus situation.

Briefing the newsmen following the cabinet meeting, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said Prime Minister Imran Khan has asked Pakistan Rangers to remove all hurdles in smooth flow of food goods transportation across the country. The Federal Cabinet also approved Prime Minister's financial stimulus package to deal with the adverse impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on the country's economy.

The Special Assistant said the Labour Ministry has been directed to prepare

a strategy of complete registration of Labour class in consultation with all provinces to ensure their social, health and job security.

Special Assistant on Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar briefed the Cabinet about mechanism of cash transfer worth 150 billion rupees to 12 million poor families across the country under Government's Ehsaas Programme.

Special Assistant on National Health Services Dr Zafar Mirza informed the Federal Cabinet's about government's measures to contain Coronavirus and decisions taken by National Coordination Committee on Coronavirus.

Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said the Prime Minister also directed to introduce reforms in PIA, FBR, and Pakistan Railways and to promote e-governance.

Terming Sukuk bonds vital for promotion of Islamic Banking, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said the government has decided to issue the bonds for three years duration.

Government launches Covid-19 service on WhatsApp

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Government has launched "Coronavirus information service" on Whatsapp to create awareness and deliver updates about the coronavirus pandemic. According to the Prime Minister Office, people can get all coronavirus related information on the latest statistics and nearest labs by sending a message writing 'Hi' at 0092300111166.

The Coronavirus information service provides information in Urdu and six regional languages, including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi and Kashmiri. The confirmed coronavirus cases in Pakistan has reached 1,865, according to the National Command and Control Centre.

According to the report, there are 652 cases in Punjab, 625 in Sindh, 221 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 153 in Balochistan, 58 in Islamabad, 148 in Gilgit Baltistan and six cases in Azad Kashmir.

The number of patients recovered from the virus stands at 57, whereas, 25 Pakistanis lost their lives and 11 remain critical in different hospitals, according to the national dashboard.

Residents face severe shortage of edibles

DNA

ATTOCK: The residents of district facing severe problems of food shortage due to Corona Virus lockdown, the administration only busy in Photo sessions and notifications to control the situation.

Due to incompetence and the unwillingness of the bureaucracy the flour rate surged to 1200 to 1400 per 20 Kg.

2100 people screened

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK, MAR 31 (DNA) - Health department Attock has so far screened more than 2100 people belonging to different areas of Attock District, Incharge Coronavirus Control Attock Dr Asif Niazi said this while talking to this journalist.

While giving details he said that those screened include 1668 persons coming back from different countries and more than 500 hundreded suspects with having no travel history.

He said that during this screening exercise 21 persons were found suspects and were shifted to Isolations wards in Attock, Pindigheb and Hasanabdal.

After shifting them to isolation wards their swabs samples were sent to NIH. Dr Asif said that the results of 18 patients were found negative.

COVID 19: Mehriban Aliyeva says we are at war with an invisible enemy

We are all going through difficult days. The epidemic of coronavirus, a new and dangerous disease previously unknown to science, has disrupted our usual way of life

DNA

BAKU: First Vice-President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mehriban Aliyeva has made an Instagram post dedicated to Azerbaijan's medical workers.

In a post on her official Instagram page, Mehriban Aliyeva said: "We are all going through difficult days. The epidemic of coronavirus, a new and dangerous disease previously unknown to science, has disrupted our usual way of life.

The modern world has never been faced with such crises before and has not had to adopt such large-scale quarantine measures. The coronavirus pandemic is proving to be the most challenging test for the modern healthcare system. Even many advanced and developed countries cannot cope with it successfully.

These days, the fight against coronavirus is already being compared to war. This is a war indeed, a war, literally, with an invisible enemy.

Azerbaijan, like many countries, has to take emergency measures, shut its borders and introduce a strict quarantine regime. The fight against invisible danger is going on in many directions today. It

requires hard work, difficult and responsible decisions from many people of different professions. But the most important and most difficult task today is being solved by our medical workers, our



doctors, nurses, technical personnel, scientists and laboratory assistants. They are at the forefront of the fight against the epidemic. Their up-to-the-minute decisions, their professional knowledge and skills, their dedication and compassion are our main weapon and hope.

These days, we are rediscovering the fact that the medical profession is called a sacred mission. Indeed, it has always required profound knowledge and refined skill.

But today our medical workers are also required to display great personal courage. And they are passing this difficult test with dignity. An entire army of our medical workers has joined the fight against the epidemic. Among them are men and women, the experienced and very young, recognized luminaries and recent graduates of medical universities, nurses, technicians and orderlies only making their first steps in the profession. They are all saving our fellow citizens – those infected with the coronavirus and those who have avoided meeting this deadly danger.

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CITY BRIEFS

EAP countries must act now to mitigate economic shock of COVID-19: WB report

APP

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) in its latest report urged the East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) countries to act now to mitigate the economic shocks of Covid-19, which now caused a global shock. According to East Asia and Pacific in the Time of COVID-19, the World Bank's April 2020 Economic Update for East Asia and the Pacific, the virus that triggered a supply shock in China has now caused a global shock. It said that the developing economies in East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), recovering from trade tensions and struggling with COVID-19, now face the prospect of a global financial shock and recession. Sound macroeconomic policies and prudent financial regulation have equipped most EAP countries to deal with normal tremors, but an unusual combination of disruptive and mutually reinforcing events is being witnessed there. Growth in China is projected to decline to 2.3 percent in the baseline and 0.1 percent in the lower case scenario in 2020, from 6.1 percent in 2019. Containment of the pandemic would allow for a sustained recovery in the region, although risks to the outlook from financial market stress would remain high. The COVID-19 shock will also have a serious impact on poverty, the report added.

Girl students prefer technical, vocational education: Study

APP

ISLAMABAD: Majority of the girls students give preference to get admission in any technical and vocational institution. According to a research study conducted by a private organization, the trend of technical and vocational education by female students was on rise in the country to avail better job opportunities in future. It said that this trend was prevailing in mainly urban areas due to lack of job opportunities for those who spend their sixteen years in education but fail to get any job while on other hand those who get study from technical institutions avail job importunity easily. The study claimed that the perception in girls youth of safe future from technical education compelled them to get admission for two or three year long technical course or six month short course and than start earning for their family. It said that these days female are more inclined towards technical education comparatively to other fields so that it could be beneficial for them to be able to do something productive in society for livelihood for their family. The report said that this trend was making a tremendous impact on the quality of life of women folk.

ICTA starts disinfection operation in Islamabad

APP

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory Administration (ICTA) started a disinfection operation in the areas most affected by Covid-19. ICT, DC Hamza Shafaqat while talking to APP, said that the Kot Hathiyaal, Kiyani Road, Janjua Town, Torab Town were amongst the areas cleaned on Tuesday. He said that the staff of the ICTA and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) participated in the cleanup operation, including three fire brigade vehicles, 12 water bowers. Moreover, 40 hand spray machines were used to disinfect small streets. ICTA has also decided to install 20 sanitising walk-through gates at different prominent locations of the city to control the spread of coronavirus. Initially, two such gates would be installed at Sabzi Mandi, three at Pakistan Secretariat, eight at different slums, four at shelter homes and other public places.

Number of COVID-19 cases reaches 221 in KP

APP

PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP chief minister on Information, Ajmal Wazir, has said that with the confirmation of 29 more cases the total number of coronavirus patients in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has reached to 221. According to a statement issued here on Tuesday, the highest number of cases are registered in Peshawar followed by five in the pilgrims arrived from Taftan and three cases in Dir Lower district. Similarly, one each fresh cases have also been reported in Bajaur, Bannu, D I Khan, Mardan and Mansehra.

No shortage of wheat flour in Attock: DFD

APP

ATTOCKThere is no shortage of wheat flour in Attock as all the 38 flour mills working across the district are being provided wheat as per the prescribed quota. A spokesman of District Food Department said this while talking to APP. He said that on daily basis 52000 flour bags weighing 20 kg each were being supplied to Flour Dealers and there was no chance of flour shortage in the near future . While replying a question about inflated rates of flour being charged by Atta Chakee owners he said that the reason behind this was that they were purchasing wheat from the open market.



ISLAMABAD: Senior citizens and women in queue outside a bank to receive Ehsah Program fund at Khana Pul area. – APP

ICCI demands relief package for SMEs and corporate sector

ICCI President appealed to Raza Baqir, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan to consider announcing a relief package for industrial units and corporate sector to save them from default

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has welcomed the federal government's relief package announced to cope with the turmoil caused by the outbreak of coronavirus and hoped that it would contribute in mitigating the impact of the current crisis on the country's poor people

and the economy. Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that business community was fully supportive of the government's relief package, however, he said that the relief package announced by the SBP has targeted retail SMEs while industrial units and corporate sector have not been given due attention. He said that due to coronavirus is-



sue, manufacturing activities have come to a halt, but industrialists have to pay markup on loans besides paying wages to idle labor, which was becoming difficult. ICCI President appealed to Raza Baqir, Governor, State Bank of Pakistan to consider announcing a relief package for industrial units and corporate sector to save them from default. He said that developed countries have announced bailout packages

es for their SMEs and corporate sectors by freezing their installments of loans and markup. He said that SBP should also freeze installments of loans and markup for SMEs and corporate sector at least for 6 months to keep them afloat in these difficult circumstances. He hoped that SBP would give sympathetic consideration to this proposal in order to save the economy from falling into further troubles.

Youth role urged to spread COVID 19 awareness

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Punjab Minister for Revenue Anwar Khan said that the role of Youth holds key importance in creating awareness among the masses about Corona Virus epidemic and convincing them to adopt the precautionary measures by utilizing the plant forms of social media. While talking to a newsman here on Tuesday. Minister Anwar Khan said that the nation especially youth generation should exhibit discipline and avoid indulging in panic situation. Minister said that collective efforts were needed to control the further outspread of the Corona Virus and to facilitate the effectees of the pandemic and their families. The Punjab Minister said Youth have a great national responsibility to play their part and create awareness amongst their relatives, neighbors in order to provide best possible help to wipe out COVID-19. Anwar Khan appreciated the Prime Minister Imran Khan, Federal government and also Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar efforts to increase resting capacity enable to facilitate every one who was symptoms of the Coronavirus. Punjab Minister said The government has ensured that every Corona Virus patients should go into Quarantined and treated well. He said government is taking corrective measures to deal with any situation.

Govt response to virus challenge lauded

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Tuesday lauded the government's response to the challenges in the wake of coronavirus outbreak. Lauding the approval hefty relief package by the Economic Coordination Committee, it said that the efforts of the government to provide relief to the masses should be redoubled without any delay. Chairman of PEW Brig. Muhammad Aslam Khan (Retd) said in a statement that it is very encouraging to note that the government is in fast-track talks with the different international institutions to gear up for its fight with the coronavirus. The lockdown is taking a toll on trade, industry, and masses who must be protected though extraordinary measures including improved social protection and healthcare provision, he added.

HEC offers Australian awards scholarships for working professionals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced Australian Awards Scholarships 2021 for Pakistani working professionals. According to the official sources from HEC, the scholarships have been offered for working professionals in sectors that support Pakistan to achieve sustainable development with particularly focus on

the empowerment of women and girls, agriculture, infrastructure, water security and inclusive economic development. HEC urged the deserving professionals to apply for the opportunity till 30th of April, 2020, they added. These scholarships are prestigious international awards offered by Australian Government to the next generation of global leaders for development, the sources added. Through the study and

research, the students would be able to develop the skills and knowledge to drive change and help build enduring people to people link with Australia, they remarked. Australia awards align with the focus of its development assistance to Pakistan, targeting human resource gaps in identified priority sectors and enhance awardees' skills and knowledge to contribute to inclusive sustainable economic and social development.

Transgender community demands help against Covid-19

APP

ISLAMABAD: The transgender community has started an awareness campaign called "CoronaLetUsLive" with the help of different organizations, said Transgender's rights activist Nayab Ali here on Thursday. Talking to APP on Tuesday, she said their community is raising awareness regardless of the fear of COVID-19. She said, "We have provided 75 Food packages, masks etc to our needy

transgender persons recently. She urged that their community needs support in current pandemic situation so the government should also focus to take care of transgender community. She added that around 35000 transgenders including 500 transgender people in Islamabad and around 3000 in Rawalpindi, all of them belong to vulnerable sector of society thus needed awareness and support with regard to their fight against Covid-19 in such critical hours, she added.

Masses not benefitted from crashed commodity prices in int'l market

Likewise, the prices of pulses have also collapsed globally while prices of different varieties of pulses have increased by Rs20 to 50 per kg in Pakistan which is unjustified

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Black sheep in the business community are behind an artificial price hike which should be dealt with an iron hand, a business leader said Tuesday. The prices of edible oil, pulses, tea, and many other things have crashed in the international market after pandemic but people in Pakistan have not seen any

relief due to lust for the profits by businessmen, said Shahid Rasheed Butt, former President ICCI. He said that the profiteers and hoarders are cashing in on declining international prices and a surge in demand in Pakistan due to coronavirus fears. He noted that palm oil prices have come down by seventeen dollars per tonne in the international market but masses in Pakistan were not given any relief.

The price of tea has crashed by \$230 per tonne with no impact locally. Likewise, the prices of pulses have also collapsed globally while prices of different varieties of pulses have increased by Rs20 to 50 per kg in Pakistan which is unjustified. He said that the businessmen who are creating artificial shortages leading to panic buying are enemies of the public who should be hanged publically.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that many businessmen have left their employees high and dry after closure of their businesses forgetting that their fortunes are built with the help of these people and that they are inviting the wrath of Allah Almighty. Many goods transporters have not reduced fares after oil price reduction which should be noticed as it is stoking inflation across the country. He said that those who lost their

lives to the virus should not be dubbed as dead but martyrs. He said that media should not be victimised and this important sector should also be bailed out. Borders should be totally sealed and national unity should be promoted abandoning politics of vendetta. NAB should try to reclaim lost credibility and avoid polluting the political environment while FBR should improve its attitude, he demanded.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Vol: 01 Issue: 09

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Thailand's tourist elephants face crisis

UNDERFED and chained up for endless hours, many elephants working in Thailand's tourism sector may starve, be sold to zoos or be shifted into the illegal logging trade, campaigners warn, as the coronavirus decimates visitor numbers. Before the virus, life for the kingdom's estimated 2,000 elephants working in tourism was already stressful, with abusive methods often used to 'break them' into giving rides and performing tricks at money-spinning animal shows.

With global travel paralysed the animals are unable to pay their way, including the 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of food a day a captive elephant needs to survive. Elephant camps and conservationists warn hunger and the threat of renewed exploitation lie ahead, without an urgent bailout. "My boss is doing what he can but we have no money," Kosin, a mahout – or elephant handler – says of the Chiang Mai camp where his elephant Ekkasit is living on a restricted diet. Chiang Mai is Thailand's northern tourist hub, an area of rolling hills dotted by elephant camps and sanctuaries ranging from the exploitative to the humane.

The lack of cash is limiting the fibrous food available to the elephants "which will have a physical effect", he added. Wages for the mahouts who look after them have dropped by 70 percent. Theerapat fears the creatures could soon be used in illegal logging activities along the Thai-Myanmar border – in breach of a 30-year-old law banning the use of elephants to transport wood. Others "could be forced (to beg) on the streets," he said.

Chinese visitors, who make up the majority of Thailand's 40 million tourists, plunged by more than 80 percent in February as China locked down cities hard-hit by the virus and banned external travel. By March, the travel restrictions into Thailand – which has 1,388 confirmed cases of the virus – had extended to Western countries. With elephants increasingly malnourished due to the loss of income, the situation is "at a crisis point," says Saengdewan Chailert, owner of Elephant Nature Park.

Her sanctuary for around 80 rescued pachyderms only allows visitors to observe the creatures, a philosophy at odds with venues that have them performing tricks and offering rides.

For those restrained by short chains all day, the stress could lead to fights breaking out, says Saengdewan, of camps that can no longer afford medical treatment for the creatures. Calls are mounting for the government to fund stricken camps to ensure the welfare of elephants. "We need 1,000 baht a day (about \$30) for each elephant," says Apichet Duangdee, who runs the Elephant Rescue Park.



Virus stoking xenophobia, hate and exclusion

A UN rights expert has warned against exploiting coronavirus-related fears by groups and politicians to scapegoat minorities, saying it is leading to an alarming rise in verbal and physical abuses against Chinese and other minorities, with some even being denied access to health care and information about the pandemic.

"COVID-19 is not just a health issue; it can also be a virus that exacerbates xenophobia, hate and exclusion," Fernand de Varennes, the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, said in a statement issued on Monday. He reported that politicians and groups are exploiting fears surrounding the disease to scapegoat certain communities, leading to a rise in violence against them.

This has included physical attacks against Chinese and other Asians, hate speech blaming Roma and Hispanics for the spread of the virus, and calls by some political leaders for migrants to be denied access to medical services. De Varennes said countries need to show that the human rights of all people must be protected, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized. "Combating the epidemic requires tackling its darker sides. Firm actions by States and all of us to safeguard the human rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized, including minorities, indigenous communities and migrants, are urgent and necessary", he stressed. More than 200 countries have reported cases of the new coronavirus disease, which first emerged in Wuhan, China, last December. There were 638,146 cases globally as of Sunday, and more than 30,000 deaths, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO). "The coronavirus outbreak endangers the health of all of us, with no distinction as to language, religion or ethnicity. But some are more vulnerable than others", said Mr. de Varennes.

He urged people everywhere to resist the rise in discriminatory and hate speech against Asian and other minorities by using the hashtag #IAMNotAVirus on social media. Meanwhile, authorities are being urged to consider measures to mitigate COVID-19 risk in places such as prisons, immigration detention facilities, closed refugee camps and psychiatric institutions. The UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture issued the advice on Monday, in a call to protect people deprived of their liberty during the pandemic. "Governments have to take precautionary measures necessary to prevent the spread of infection, and to implement emergency measures to ensure detainees have access to appropriate levels of health care and to maintain contact with families and the outside world", Sir Malcolm Evans, the Committee Chairperson, said. Measures include reducing prison populations by allowing early or temporary release of low-risk offenders, and extending the use of bail for all but the most serious cases.

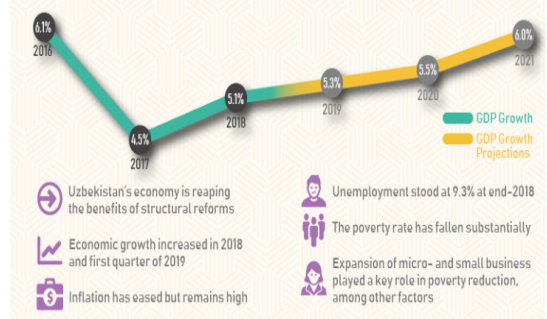
Uzbekistan's Economic Reforms: A Story of Inclusive Growth and Progress

Lt. Col. Khalid TaimurAkram (Retd)



The success of Uzbekistan's massive efforts to modernize its economy has relied significantly on reforms occurring concurrently in the sphere of governance

THE President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency ShavkatMirziyoyev, has declared 2020 the year of science, education, and economic development. In this context, Uzbekistan is implementing ambitious market-oriented economic reforms. A surge in investment and a pickup in consumption has boosted GDP growth to 5.5% in 2019 and is expected to reach 6% in 2020 and 2021, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF). During the year, Uzbekistan has raised 26 positions in the 2020 Index of Economic Freedom and now ranks 114th out of 186. Dramatic changes have occurred in Uzbekistan during ShavkatMirziyoyev's era. Over just the last two years, reforms in Uzbekistan have captured global attention.



Several changes have come in the form of legislative acts of the Oliy Majlis, Uzbekistan's parliament. At no other time since Uzbekistan's establishment as an independent state have more innovations been introduced, or with greater speed. A large-scale economic transformation has occurred in Uzbekistan which is the manifestation of sound institutional progress and comprehensive implementation mechanism. In February 2017, Uzbekistan adopted a 2017-2021 National Development Strategy, which has identified five priority areas:

1. Reforms in public administration
2. Reform in the judiciary and strengthening the rule of law
3. Economic development and liberalization
4. The social area reforms
5. Security and foreign policy

Following this strategy, President Mirziyoyev has signaled new directions in both foreign economic relations and domestic economic policy. As a result of these reforms, Uzbekistan is making progress and numerous steps have been taken to standardize the lives of ordinary citizens and to make business operative and easier. **President Mirziyoyev's Economic Reform Strategy** The reform agenda in the economic sphere, just as in other spheres, has been comprehensive and very ambitious, and well-articulated in multiple public and private



sectors. Following the 2017-2021 "National Development Strategy", the government has drafted the development strategy framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan by 2035. In terms of economic development and liberalization, the Strategy includes five priority directions: The primary priority aspect is the further strengthening of macroeconomic stability and the maintenance of high rates of economic growth. The second aspect includes the upsurge of competitiveness of the national economy by deepening structural reforms, and by modernizing and diversifying its leading industries. The third direction is the modernization and intensive development of agriculture. The fourth is the continuation of institutional and structural reforms aimed at reducing the state's presence in the economy, further strengthening the protection of rights and private property, and stimulating the development of small business and private entrepreneurship. The fifth feature contains comprehensive and balanced social and economic development at all levels.

Economic Development and Liberalization The success of Uzbekistan's massive efforts to modernize its economy has relied significantly on reforms occurring concurrently in the sphere of governance. All of these reforms are interrelated. In 2017, Uzbekistan launched an ambitious program of market-oriented reforms that are unprecedented in the country's modern history. Following these suggested priority reforms, Uzbekistan is stirring towards a more inclusive, integrated economy.

Strengthening Macroeconomic Stability and Economic Growth The government of Uzbekistan to further strengthen the macroeconomic stability and economic growth has drafted various measures to acquire desired outcomes. The policy has aimed to ensure high growth rates of gross domestic product through maintaining macroeconomic balance, the extension of structural and institutional reforms through the implementation of medium-term programs. It contains a balanced state budget at all levels while maintaining the social orientation of expenses, improving inter-budgetary relations, focusing on raising the revenue part of local budgets. Further improvement of monetary policy also includes in the policy reforms concerning monetary regulation and ensuring stable currency rates. The Republic of Uzbekistan has maintained policies of reducing tax burden and simplification of the tax system, improving tax administration and expanding the incentive measures.

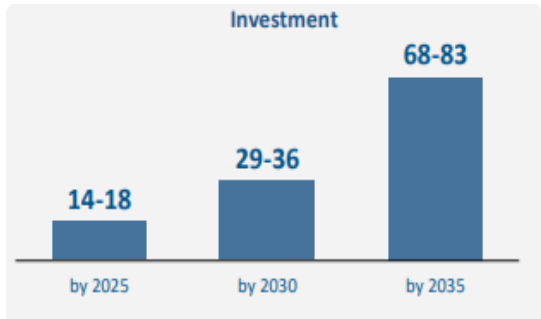
In accordance with the implementation of deep structural transformations in the economy, by 2035, gross domestic product (GDP) of the country will grow to \$ 479 billion. Growth is projected to rise to 6 percent in 2021, supported by market reforms to address production bottlenecks and liberalize the economy. The reform strategy comprises the concrete actions to stabilize the banking system, the level of capitalization and deposit base of banks and strengthening their financial stability and reliability, expansion of lending to promising investment projects as well as small and medium enterprises. The expansion of the volume of insurance, leasing and other financial services through the introduction of new types of services and improving their quality, development of financial markets as an alternative source of capital attraction and investment by enterprises are included in the reforms charter. The government has focused on expanding international cooperation with leading

international and foreign financial institutions, upholding of prudent external borrowing policy, using foreign investments and loans effectively.

Improving Competitiveness through Diversification of Leading Industries

President Mirziyoyev has introduced the structural competitiveness of the economy through the deepening of structural reforms, modernization, and diversification of its leading industries. He has made intensive efforts to create a balanced national economy by increasing the share of the services sector and small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) in economic structure. President Mirziyoyev has carried out an active investment policy aimed at modernizing technical and technological renovation of production, implementation of production, transport-communications and social infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the diversification of industry through up-gradation aimed at the development of high-tech-industries, primarily for the production of finished products with high added value based on deep processing of local raw materials, has been implemented dynamically. Strong emphases have been given to create a competitive environment for industries. The gradual reduction of the monopoly at commodity and services markets, promotion of production of new types of products and technologies, ensuring the competitiveness of domestic products in foreign and local markets have made possible.

To reduce energy consumption and resource management, the government has introduced energy-saving technologies and renewable energy sources. The creation of new as well as improve the existing free economic zones, techno-parks, small industrial zones has comprised in the ambitious strategy. To enhance the development of the tourism industry and accelerating its role and contribution to the economy, the diversification, quality improvement of tourist services, upgrading of tourism infrastructure have been adopted. Liberalization and simplification of export activities, diversification of the structure and geography of exports, expansion, and



mobilization of the export potential of industries and territories have implemented as well. The development of road and transport infrastructure, Information and communication technologies (ICT), and command and control system have been adopted.

Intensive Development of Agriculture Sector

Uzbekistan has excellent conditions for the development of agriculture, including land, water, favorable climatic conditions, and skilled human resources. Following the reform strategy, the government of Uzbekistan has adopted an inclusive mechanism to achieve rapid development of agricultural production, through ensuring food security, and expansion of production of eco-friendly products, which have increased the export potential of the agricultural sector.

The government has adopted and encouraged favorable conditions for the development of farms, especially the multi-disciplinary ones, which have engaged in agricultural production and processing, preparation, storage, marketing, construction works, and provision of services.

The easy and cheap access has given to farmers for gaining modern agriculture equipment, fertilizers, and transportation facilities. The improvement in irrigation facilities, widespread guidance for agricultural production through intensive methods, especially modern water and resource-saving agricultural technologies, using



high-performance agricultural machinery are prominent aspects of the economic reform initiative.

Reducing State Presence and Encouraged Small Business and Private Entrepreneurship

The government has taken initiatives to reduce state presence in the economy and further strengthening the protection of rights and priority role for the private property by encouraging the development of small business and private entrepreneurship. Certain measures have been taken to protect the rights of private property for the promotion of private entrepreneurship and small business formation through creating a favorable business environment. Improvement of investment climate, active attraction to the economy and provinces of foreign investment, especially foreign direct investment has also taken into consideration. The Government aims to transform Uzbekistan into an industrialized, upper-middle-income country by 2030, for that reason it has announced plans to modernize the agriculture sector, reduce its ownership of state-owned assets and enterprises, and address constraints in the financial markets.

Trade and Tourism Policy: Modernization in Action

The success of Uzbekistan's massive efforts to modernize its economy depends significantly on reforms occurring concurrently in the sphere of governance. The World Bank took notice of these changes and named Uzbekistan a top reformer in both 2012 and 2015 and a "top improver" in 2017. Greater openness to trade, foreign economic relationships, and international investments is an important component of President Mirziyoyev's reform agenda. As part of his new emphasis on foreign trade and investment, President Mirziyoyev has assigned economic policy a central place in his overall diplomatic efforts. This extensive diplomatic effort has brought about the emergence of new dynamics in Uzbekistan's foreign economic relations which led to increased trade with other Central Asian countries.

Uzbekistan has also simplified its visa regimes for approximately 85 countries to promote the tourism industry and boost its economy in terms of tourism. In the year of 2018 Uzbekistan has received 5.3 million tourists, the export of tourism services amounted to 1 billion 557 million dollars. Tourism, which can attract foreign investment, create jobs, and generate income, has been designated a strategic priority in Uzbekistan's economic development. A large-scale economic transformation has occurred in Uzbekistan which is the manifestation of the sound institutional progress apprehended by the Strategy 2017-2021. the government has wholly and courageously clinched on to the United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are devised to promote growth that is fairer, stronger, and more environmentally sound. These reforms will fabricate a higher-skilled workforce and advance companies' overall performance. In turn, the amendments will bring much-needed foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country.

Conclusion

With ongoing reforms and undervalued economic assets, Uzbekistan presents an attractive opportunity for foreign direct investments. The government is creating a set of incentives in agribusiness, energy and tourism sectors, and with a continued course of liberalization, Uzbekistan may become a magnet for the investments from different parts of the world, bringing much-needed jobs, management, and technological advancement, and ultimately prosperity for the citizens of Uzbekistan.

The writer is Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad

Briefs

'We treated like animals

APP

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Occupied Kashmir, the family members of Tangmarg resident, who passed away on Monday, have said that they are treated like animals at Chest Diseases Hospital, Srinagar. Riyaz Ahmad Sofi, son of the deceased Tangmarg resident, told media that they were treated like animals at CD Hospital and neglected by the doctors and paramedic staff, Kashmir Media Service reported. Sofi said on March 28, his father was referred to CD Hospital from the SMHS Hospital. "Without any protective gear, we were asked to go inside the coronavirus ward for setting nebulizer to provide medicines to the patient," he said and added that they visited the ward 5-6 times without any protective gear. "He died due to medical negligence as he was not treated well at the hospital," Sofi said.. The family of the deceased has been put in quarantine in Baramulla where their test reports are awaited.

Opposition should play role to defeat corona

APP

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Fayyaz-ul-Hassan Chohan said on Tuesday that as soon as Shehbaz Sharif returned from London, it was expected that he would play a positive role in fighting out dreadful coronavirus but he as usual continue to object every anti-corona measure by the government. In a press statement, he said that instead of giving a positive input in government's strategy to cope with the virus, unfortunately, the opposition was criticizing the government steps against coronavirus and even resorting to poisonous propaganda at a time when the nation needed more care, safety and encouragement, and "I think, such approach of the opposition in this tribulation is more dangerous than COVID-19 itself."

G20 ministers to hold virtual talks

APP

RIYADH: Finance ministers and central bankers of the Group of 20 major economies will hold a second round of virtual talks Tuesday to push ahead the coronavirus response, the Saudi hosts said. G20 leaders last week pledged a "united front" in the fight against the pandemic, saying they were injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy to head off forecasts of a deep recession. Saudi Arabia, which holds the group's rotating presidency, said the ministers and bank governors will convene for the second time to "advance a coordinated global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its human and economic implications".

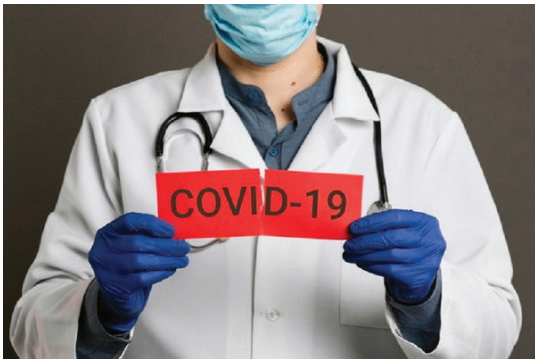
Diplo missions of Uzbekistan support its citizens abroad

Under the current difficult conditions, both for employees of diplomatic missions and for our fellow citizens abroad, it is important, not aggravating the situation, to make the best possible decisions that do not contradict the laws of foreign countries, as well as common sense

DNA

TASHKENT: As previously reported, on the instructions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a special Republican commission to prepare a program of measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country in order to ensure sanitary and epidemiological welfare of the population decided to completely stop air traffic and suspend all airports of Uzbekistan from 00:01 hours on 30 March 2020 to 00:01 hours on 20 April 2020. However, this does not mean that citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan who are abroad will be left without the support of their state. In the current difficult situation, the oper-

ational headquarters established during the diplomatic missions of Uzbekistan are taking active measures to protect the interests of our citizens abroad. Currently, for citizens of Uzbekistan located in a number of foreign countries, issues of extending the legal period of stay have already been resolved. So, for Uzbeks who cannot leave the UK due to travel restrictions and who expire to stay in the country, the visa will be extended until 31 May 2020. To extend the visa, they need to contact the immigration service by e-mail CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk and provide the necessary information about themselves (full name, citizenship, number of the previous visa) and briefly explain the rea-



son for the impossibility of leaving the UK (for example, border closure). A confirmation of receipt of the request will be sent to the applicant and information on visa extension will be provided. In addition, by 31 May, you can also apply online for a long-stay permit while in the UK. The diplomatic missions of Uzbekistan in Turkey are closely cooperating with local authorities on the issue of extending the

these countries. In order to quickly resolve issues of visa extension for citizens of Uzbekistan temporarily residing in the United States, the Embassy of our country is actively negotiating with the State Department and American lawyers in the field of immigration. At the same time, our diplomatic missions (Embassy in Washington and the Consulate General in New York) are in constant contact with the diaspora organizations of Uzbeks and community activists in the USA and Canada to identify the facts of the possible infection of our compatriots with coronavirus and timely provision of practical assistance to them. The operational headquarters at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Moscow worked out the

issue of extending the period of temporary stay and labor patents of our compatriots in Russia without leaving the country, worked with the relevant Russian ministries and departments on the subject of not evicting Uzbek students from hostels of Russian universities despite the quarantine measures. Under the current difficult conditions, both for employees of diplomatic missions and for our fellow citizens abroad, it is important, not aggravating the situation, to make the best possible decisions that do not contradict the laws of foreign countries, as well as common sense. By acting together and supporting each other, the Uzbeks will be able to overcome all the difficulties that people around the world are experiencing now.

Fawad demands diagnostic kits verification

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhary emphasized on Tuesday that diagnostic kits and equipments must be verified by concerned departments to protect precious lives. Talking to a private news channel he said the issue of diagnostic kits being wrongly tested by the laboratories was viral on social media, healthy were pronounced corona carriers and positive with the novel virus were declared perfectly negative, while adding he said, which was a dangerous sign. "Before corona spread only China was manufacturing testing kits but now everyone is claiming to make or donating thousands diagnostic kits, moreover those unverified kits are being provided to labs as well," he mentioned.

Addressing media industry's issues Govt priority: Firdous

APP

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan has said that addressing issues related to the media industry was top priority of the government. She was talking to a delegation of All Pakistan Newspapers Society, Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors and Pakistan Broadcasters Association here late night. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government firmly believed in the fundamental democratic right of freedom of expression and it would continue to provide all possible facilities for the promotion of free and

responsible journalism, she said. The SAPM said that freedom of media and democracy were interlinked. The delegation discussed a special relief package for the media in the context of the problems being faced by the media industry and the challenge of coronavirus with the Special Assistant. Firdous said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has issued clear instructions for payment of outstanding dues of media houses. She said steps were being taken to ensure that there should be no delay in this regard. Appreciating the media's performance at this time of pandemic, she said journalists and media workers were playing a role in the

fight against Coronavirus. The well-being of journalists and media workers was one of our priorities, she emphasised. A separate meeting will be convened to address the issues of newspaper hawkers, she added. The SAPM appreciated Secretary Information Akbar Durrani for running the affairs of the ministry in a smooth and professional manner. Khushnood Ali Khan, Mehtab Khan, Sarfar KHAN Niazi, Duraid Khan, Mohsin Bilal Khan, Khawar Ghumman, Akhtar Waqar Azeem and Tikka Khan attended the meeting. Principal Information Officer Tahir Hassan was also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: People stand in queue to enter a Bank. – Khurshid Nadeem

S Waziristan starts supply of flour

APP

ISLAMABAD: District Administration of South Waziristan has started supply of subsidized flour to locals at their doorstep from various flour mills located within the tribal district. Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan Hameedullah Khan said in a statement that owing to lockdown and social distancing, "we have started supply of subsidized flour to locals at their doorsteps in all the three subdivisions of South Waziristan". He said that ADC Faheedullah Khan had been deputed to check flour availability in the mills. The official said the area had been locked down for the last eight days.

FM speaks to OIC Secretary General about COVID-19, developments in IOJ&K

APP

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Tuesday stressed that the Covid-19 posed a grave challenge to the entire humanity, including OIC member States, and endorsed the OIC Secretary General's call on Members to bring together governments, scientists and research institutions to contribute to efforts for finding solution. The Foreign Minister had a telephone conversation with Secretary General OIC, Dr. Yousef A. Al-Othaimeen and the exchange covered the situation arising out of pandemic, OIC's responses,

and developments in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K). The Foreign Minister further underscored that, as already called for by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the current crisis made for a compelling case for debt relief and restructuring for developing States, as a means to enable them to divert resources to save lives and shore up economies. The OIC, together with the Islamic Development Bank, needed to play an effective role in helping members cope with the challenges. The Foreign Minister highlighted the implications of the rising wave of "Hindutva ideology" in India, as reflected in the systematic violence

and targeted killings of Muslims in New Delhi in February 2020. With regard to IOJ&K, the Foreign Minister highlighted that continued restrictions on communication and movement in IOJ&K were preventing unfettered supply of medicines and other essentials, as well as dissemination of information needed to combat the disease. In this context, he noted the significant number of coronavirus affected persons and two deaths reported in IOJ&K. The Foreign Minister highlighted concerns regarding the possibility of spread of Covid-19 among the large number of Kashmiri youth incarcerated by India.

Wuhan sees second newborn Pakistani baby girl

APP

BEIJING: The second Pakistani female citizen gave birth to a healthy baby-girl, on Friday at Maternity and Child Healthcare Hospital of Hubei Province in Wuhan. Ashaq Ali, a doctoral student in Virology at the Institute of Virology Wuhan University, the father of the newborn daughter beamed with happiness while holding her daughter in his arms at the hospital. Talking to China Economic Net, Ashaq Ali said that he and his spouse cannot ignore the role of the local community that provided them pick and drop services to the hospitals and deliver them

food and other stuff at their door in this crucial time. "Special thanks to local foreign affairs office and community that they facilitated me for my wife routine checkup, counseling with hospital and provide transportation. They also facilitated me in baby shopping when there was virtually no possibility," Ashaq stated. He said that as a field expert he had learned a lot from China, Chinese approaches towards disasters like the Covid-19 and indeed China sets an example around the globe, the world needs to follow the footprints of China how to combat this pandemic. "I am the only Pakistani who worked throughout this pandemic in my lab at Wuhan Institute of Virology".

HEC, WB invited research proposals to address COVID-19

The RAAPID research and innovation initiative will support applied research, product innovation and development, and commercialization of potential solutions.

APID Research Grants will support ideas for applied research

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC), with assistance of the World Bank has invited universities, technologists, and researchers to submit research and innovation proposals that could help address the challenges created by the Coronavirus pandemic. Country Director World Bank in Pakistan, Illango Patchamuthu, in a tweet, on Tuesday asked the researchers, universities and all other concerned

to benefit from this lucrative offer supported by the Bank by actively taking part in HEC's RAPID Research and Innovation Initiative and submit their proposals by the deadline of April 03, 2020. The amount of funding for each proposal will depend in its nature and proposed duration as well as the approved budget, but will not exceed the maximum amounts offered in each category. Maximum fund per proposal under RAPID Research Grant would be Rs 15 million and the



research period would not exceed by 12 months. Similarly, under RAPID Technology Transfer Grant, max-

imum funds per proposals would be Rs 7.5 million and the maximum period for this research would be 6 months whereas under RAPID innovation Seed Fund, maximum fund per proposal would be Rs 5 million and maximum period of research would be 6 months. The RAAPID research and innovation initiative will support applied research, product innovation and development, and commercialization of potential solutions. APID Research Grants will support ideas for applied research.

RAPID Technology Transfer Grants was intended for supporting research needed to assist the private sector to provide solutions. Whereas RAPID innovation seed fund was also intended to support innovation in commercializing their ideas. The specific themes include, Infectious Diseases Surveillance Systems using AI and Big Data, Analysis of success and weakness of alternative epidemic control measures, disease epidemiological modeling, immune patterns of COVID-19.

Chinese Group donates face masks

DNA

LAHORE: Chinese Energy Engineer Group "Jiangsu Power Design Institute Company Limited" has donated 10,000 Medical Face Mask for NTDC Employees to keep them safe / protected from novel Corona Virus while performing their duties. In this regard a three-member Chinese delegation led by Mr Xia Zhi-hao visited NTDC House.