



# Islamabad POST

Saturday, March 28, 2020

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

**Pakistan likely to get IMF support, says Kristalina**

**US ambassador assures Punjab of cooperation**

**No additional burden on gas consumers**

## Pakistan likely to get IMF support

The authorities have reaffirmed their commitment to the reform policies included in the current arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). These reforms are crucial to boost Pakistan's growth potential to deliver broad based benefits for all Pakistanis, especially the most vulnerable segments of the population

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is likely to approve funds for Pakistan in the wake of COVID 19 outbreak. Pakistan had requested the organization to approve special grant in order to meet its day to day needs as the COVID 19 outbreak had badly affected the economy. This assurance came from Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) who said on Friday "The authorities have continued their reform efforts to address Pakistan's economic challenges, but progress is

being threatened by the devastating effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and the deterioration in global economic and financial conditions. She further said, Prime Minister Khan and his government have swiftly approved an economic stimulus package aimed at containing the spread of the virus and providing support to affected families and businesses. Similarly, the State Bank of Pakistan has adopted a timely set of measures, including a lowering of the policy rate, new refinancing facilities to support the flow of credit, and temporary regulatory relief measures. "To support these efforts and ensure prompt and

adequate relief to the people and the economy, the Government of Pakistan has requested financial assistance under the Fund's Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI). This emergency financing will allow the government to address additional and urgent balance of payments needs and support policies that would make it possible to direct funds swiftly to Pakistan's most affected sectors, including social protection, daily wage earners, and the healthcare system. She said her was working expeditiously to respond to this request so that a proposal can be considered by the IMF's Executive Board as soon as possible. "In parallel, the authorities

have reaffirmed their commitment to the reform policies included in the current arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). These reforms are crucial to boost Pakistan's growth potential to deliver broad based benefits for all Pakistanis, especially the most vulnerable segments of the population. Kristalina Georgieva further said the Fund stands ready to continue to support the authorities' efforts to implement much-needed economic and structural reforms aimed at fostering strong and sustainable growth. Various business concerns of Pakistan have appreciated IMF statement and termed it a breather for the Pakistan economy.

## CHINESE SUPPORT

DNA



**KHUNJRAB PASS:** The Chinese side unloading the medical supplies arrived on Friday. The supplies will help Pakistan deal with COVID 19 disease. DNA

**US envoy assures Punjab of cooperation**

DNA

LAHORE: U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Paul W. Jones on Friday assured every possible cooperation to the Punjab government to deal with coronavirus. In a letter to Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, the ambassador said that his country stood with Pakistan in the fight against coronavirus and added the US had termed Pakistan as a priority country for emergency coronavirus assistance, said a hand out issued here. The US was providing assistance for overcoming epidemics, he further said. Chief Minister Usman Buzdar appreciated the US cooperation.

**China hands over medical equipment**

STAFF REPORT

GILGIT: Time tested friend China handed over medical equipments worth Rs 6.64 million to provincial government of Gilgit Baltistan to combat with Coronavirus. Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan Hafiz Hafiz-ur-Rehman received equipments at Pak-China border Khunjerab Pass on Friday. Force Commander Gilgit-Baltistan Major General Ehsan Muhammad Khan and Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Captain (R) Khurram Agha, high-ups and senior officials from China were present on the occasion. The CM Gilgit-Baltistan thanked the Chinese government for supporting Pakistan on this crucial time and said that China had always supported Pakistan in difficult times, that was the only reason we said that the friendship between Pakistan and China is deeper than the sea and higher than the Himalayas. On the occasion, officials from China said that whole world was passing through crucial time and together we could defeat the deadly virus. China was with Pakistan and would provide more relief supplies to cope with this pandemic, they added.

**Indonesian embassy officials visit IUI**

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the Embassy of Indonesia comprising of Defence Attache, Col. Dody Mukhtar Taufik and other senior officials paid a visit to the International Islamic University, Islamabad. The delegation met with Dr. Aqdas Naveed Malik, Acting President. The delegation appreciated the efforts of IUI in maintaining a secure and conducive environment for all foreign students including Indonesian students residing at the IUI Hostels. The delegation further assured of their confidence in IUI and also assured to extend any support for their students.

## Briefs

**British PM tests positive for COVID-19**

APP

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Friday that he is self-isolating after testing positive for COVID-19. "Over the last 24 hours I have developed mild symptoms and tested positive for coronavirus," he said on Twitter.

**Xinjiang sends more supplies**

APP

BEIJING: China's North-west Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region on Friday dispatched a truckload of medical supplies to Pakistan via Khunjerab Pass to help the local health authorities.

## Air Chief donates one month salary

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: As an earnest gesture towards a noble cause, Pakistan Air Force decides to contribute in the Corona relief fund. Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force would donate one month salary in the fund, which has been established by the government to fight the



pandemic. Keeping the precarious situation of the country in view, it has been decided

at the Air Staff level, that all rank and file of PAF would contribute in the fund. Besides the Air Chief, officers of the rank of Air Commodore and above would donate their three day salary; whereas, the officers of Group Captain and below ranks would donate two day salary in the national cause. Moreover, airmen and civilians would also chip in their one day salary in the Corona Relief Fund.

## All Pak nationals seeking to leave Iran are screened

All Pakistani and Afghan nationals seeking to leave Iran are screened and monitored for both coronavirus and other communicable diseases

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's deputy health minister, visiting the al-Ghadir camp in the city of Zahedan has said that Afghan and Pakistani sisters and brothers are guests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Many of the loved ones are currently

planning to return to their home country and the border crossings of Sistan and Baluchistan province are one of the centers of their passage to Afghanistan and Pakistan. All Pakistani and Afghan nationals seeking to leave Iran are screened and monitored for both coronavirus and other commu-

nicable diseases and are provided with necessary medical and health care if needed. These services are provided to both statutory and unauthorized persons who enter the country, but those who enter with identification documents also receive a health certificate.

## Inside...

Sharp fall in value of rupee to further weaken economy: ICCI

Improvements in PM's package proposed

- Page 02

Xi tells Trump China and US must 'unite to fight virus'

Sherry appeals for protective kits for health workers

- Back Page

## Afghan govt unveils negotiating team for Taliban talks

AGENCIES

KABUL: The Afghan government has finalised a 21-member team - including five women - who will negotiate with the Taliban in upcoming talks aimed at ending Afghanistan's 18-year-old conflict, officials said Friday. The move is a crucial step in bringing the warring parties to the table and getting a floundering, US-led peace process back on track.

Under a deal signed by the US and the Taliban last month, the insurgents agreed to commit to starting talks with the Afghan government and discuss a possible ceasefire. Up until now, the Taliban has refused to meet with the administration of President Ashraf Ghani, calling him an American puppet. In return for starting talks and other commitments, the US and foreign partner forces will withdraw from Afghanistan over the

next 14 months. The negotiating team was supposed to be unveiled weeks ago, with the "intra-Afghan" talks with the Taliban meant to get underway March 10 in Oslo. But Kabul has been gripped by a fresh political crisis, with Ghani's legitimacy being challenged by his rival Abdullah Abdullah, who has also proclaimed himself president. The negotiating team will be led by former Afghan intelligence chief Masoom

Stanekzai, who as a Pashtun shares a tribal identity with the Taliban. While there was no immediate indication of whether Abdullah supports the team's composition, it includes Batur Dostum whose father Abdul Rashid Dostum - a former warlord - is a staunch Abdullah ally. In a statement, Afghanistan's peace ministry said Ghani "wishes the delegation success and call on them to consider, at all stages of negotiations,

the best interest of the country, the shared values of the Afghan people, and the principle stand of the country for a united Afghanistan". Among the five women delegates is Habiba Sarabi, deputy leader of the government's High Peace Council. Sarabi is a Hazara. Another woman delegate is Fawzia Koofi, an ethnic Tajik and a woman's rights activist who has been a vocal Taliban critic.



## AN APPEAL

TO THE PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN TO ANNOUNCE A FIVE-POINT RELIEF PACKAGE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF A FREE PRINT MEDIA

Your government announced an economic relief package on March 25 and has assured further reliefs to businesses which are critically affected by the present situation caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

We, as the representative body of the print media, invite your kind attention to the national emergency faced by the free press, which is the fourth pillar of Pakistani democracy.

We therefore feel it imperative to persuade you to announce a speedy 5-point bailout package for the print media.

1. The Federal Ministry of Information & Broadcasting should make special monthly allocations of Rs 1 billion per month for the next 3 months for print advertising that highlights public health awareness about the coronavirus and hardens our national resolve to defeat it.

2. The federal and provincial governments of Punjab and KPK should be instructed to immediately clear pending payments on account of the long outstanding advertising dues owed by the government to the print media - so that these may be disbursed by us against outstanding wage payments due to newspaper employees.

3. Increase the government's advertising rates by 100%. This overdue increase would still place government advertising rates at less than half of those paid by commercial advertisers.

4. Reduce NEPRA's tariff for the provision of electricity to newspaper premises and presses by 50%.

5. The FBR should be advised to exempt the 1.5% withholding tax on newspapers for the current fiscal year.

We believe that the above package of relief measures would help the print media to withstand this unprecedented crisis.





**CITY BRIEFS**

**All educational institutions to remain shut till May 31**

APP

ISLAMABAD: The federal government had announced the closure of all educational institutions in the country till May 31 following the situation emerged after coronavirus outbreak. According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training on Friday, it has been stated that all the public and private schools, colleges, universities, & madaris will be closed for next two months. The decision to this affect was taken on Thursday by the National Coordination Committee on the recommendations of Inter Provincial Education Ministers video Conference (IPEMC) held on the same day. The notification further stated that this closure of schools would be treated as summer vacations. As per directions given in the notification, all four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir(AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan(GB) were bound to follow the instructions. The IPEMC meeting was also attended by the Chairman Higher Education Commission(HEC) Dr Tariq Bnuri. However, Minister for Federal Education Shafqat Mahmood in a Tweet said that schools shall reopen in the month of June if the Corona situation improved in the country. Meanwhile, on the other hand the education ministry was making all out efforts to launch a national TV to broadcast the educational contents for the universities' students. According to a Tweet of Shafqat Mahmood, many students had raised question over the quality of online contents. However, Chairman HEC had assured to improve the quality of contents, he added.

**KP Govt developing "Ehtyat Corona" reporting system**

APP

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has started developing a comprehensive tracking and reporting system, named "Ehtyat Corona" for profiling of patients test results. This system was being developed by Performance Management Reforms Unit (PMRU) for tracking, monitoring and reporting system under "Ehtyat Corona" program, said an official statement here Friday. The system will have App and web access for all Governments, Non Government and Private officials working against the COVID-19, complete profiling of patients, travel history and path, symptoms, test results etc. It would be linked with call centers and all facilities in the province. This would enable policy makers in decisions making and introducing projects and reforms for patients welfare and prevention of the disease.

**5000 safety kits dispatched**

APP

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Disasters Management Authority (PDMA) KP has dispatched 5000 safety kits to the districts administration and other concerned departments including health workers aimed at combating coronavirus in the province. The kits include suit masks, surgical caps, gloves and other life saving equipment. The DG PDMA told media that 10,000 more kits would soon be provided to concerned departments. PDMA has already provided 750 litres sanitizers to the concerned departments. These facilities would help expedite relief operations besides improving the health delivery system in the wake of coronavirus spread.

**Fumigation carried out in mosques**

APP

RAWALPIND: In order to precautionary measures to deal deadly Crona virus, fumigation and sanitizing spray was carried out in different mosques of Murree to counter spread of Corona virus. According to a spokesman of rescue 1122, the spray was carried out under the supervision of In charge Emergency Officer, Kamran Rasheed in which the teams of Rescue 1122, officials of Tehsil Municipal Administration participated and department concerned participated. On the occasion, Kamran Rasheed urged upon masses to follow instructions issued by government in light of guidance given by Health experts that people should remain confined to homes as a protective measures against deadly corona virus infection.

**Man arrested for uploading pictures with weapons**

DNA

ATTOCK: Police arrested a man for uploading his pictures with sophisticated weapons. Police forces said that the accused Faisal Mehmood-a resident of Chaab has up loaded his pictures with sophisticated weapons consequently a case was registered against the accused and sent behind bars.



RAWALPINDI: Members of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry highlighting COVID 19 precautions. DNA

**Sharp fall in value of rupee to further weaken economy: ICCI**

*ICCI President said that already 25 percent population of the country was below the poverty line and devaluation of currency would push more people towards poverty*

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has shown great concerns over the sharp fall in the value of rupee against dollar as it would create more problems for business and industry apart from further weakening the economy. Muhammad Ahmed Wa-

heed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had provided a good relief to people by announcing Rs.15/litre cut in the price of POL products, but sharp drop of more than Rs.8 against dollar would nullify this benefit to the people and bring more inflation for them. He said that some industries were importing 70



percent raw material for their manufacturing activities and sharp rise in dollar would further push up production cost making our industry and exports more uncompetitive in the

international market. He said that due to coronavirus issue, trade and industrial activities were already suffering badly and further fall in the value of rupee against dollar would jeopardize the survival of businesses. ICCI President said that already 25 percent population of the country was below the poverty line and devaluation of currency would push more people towards poverty.

He said that the main cause of currency devaluation was sudden shortage of dollar from the market as people have started to withdraw investments from the stock market to purchase dollars. He called upon the Governor State Bank of Pakistan to take notice of this situation and initiate urgent remedial measures to bring stability in the value of rupee in order to save the economy from further troubles.

**Police conduct awareness campaigns about virus**

DNA

ATTOCK: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sohail Habib Tajik, and District Police Officer (DPO) Khalid Hamdani made separate visits to Attock's points of entry and exit to monitor the lockdown put in place in response to the novel coronavirus outbreak. RPO Tajik visited entry and exit points such as the Jehri Kass check post bordering Hazara and Attock Khurd with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He reviewed the enforcement of the lockdown ordered by the provincial government. He instructed deputed staff to wear safety gear and ensure that that section 144, imposed to restrict unnecessary movement between districts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, is implemented.

**Void left by Dr Rafiq's departure will not be easy to fill: Khurshid**

FIJAZ CHAUDHARY

ISLAMABAD: Veteran scholar, statesman and founding chairman of Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Professor Khurshid Ahmad has expressed immense grief on the demise of Professor Dr Rafiq Ahmed, former vice chancellor, University of the Punjab and vice chairman, Nazaria-i-Pakistan Trust.

In a condolence message issued on the occasion, Ahmad termed the demise of the globally renowned academician a national loss, maintaining that the late professor was an asset who will always be remembered for his exemplary services for the country, whereas the vacuum left behind by his departure will not be easy to fill. Shedding light on his own camaraderie and old

association with Dr Rafiq Ahmed, he said that both of them had been together over many years in different capacities and have jointly served in developing institutions such as Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore. He said that the deceased, who was an active member of Pakistan Movement in 1940s, was a true follow-

er of the nation's founder Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and should always be remembered as a passionate advocate of Pakistan's ideology. The former senator also extended his deepest sympathies to the bereaved family, praying to the Almighty to rest the deceased soul in eternal peace, while giving his family enough patience and strength to bear the loss

**People must maintain social distancing to contain spread of virus: DC**

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Ali Anan Qamar on Friday urged people to strictly observed social distancing and remain restricted to their houses to play their role in containing the spread of corona Virus.

Deputy Commissioner Ali Anan Qamar While talking to newsmen said that those coming from abroad must remain in self quarantine and in case of any symptoms of corona must contact health department. Sanitisers and masks are available in all the medical stores and if some one

feels any problems in this context must inform the authorities. He said that general stores and medical stores are open across the district and all type of edibles are available in abundance. He said that he himself and other officers were visiting different areas of the district to ensure im-

plementation of Section 144 and lock down. District Officer Industry Rabia Naseem who was also present on the occasion and told newsmen that availability of commodities was being ensured and those found involved in over charging and hoarding are dealt strictly.

**Command & Control Center set up for coordination**

APP

ISLAMABAD: The government has established a Command and Control Center to ensure effective coordination among the federal and provincial governments on control of COVID-19, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Friday. Qureshi, who attended the high-level meeting of National Coordination Committee chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan a day earlier, said the facility would work under National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). "The provinces have been asked to nominate their representatives so that they can work in tandem through a standardized mechanism," the foreign minister said in a briefing regarding the meeting. The National Coordination Committee also decided to put in place protective measures for health worker who remained a front-line defence during the challenge of Coronavirus, he said.

**Citizens urged to adopt precaution**

APP

RAWALPINDI: President Cantonment Board Brig. Ijaz Qamar Kiani has urged the people to adopt preventive measures against the corona virus. During his visit to Rawalpindi Cantonment Board he appreciated the work of special 136 teams constituted to conduct anti-coronavirus spray in residential and commercial areas of the cantt. He briefed the teams about precautionary measures. The President Cantt Board said, the people should follow instructions of health experts and adopt precautionary measures which would help prevent spread of corona virus. According to RCB spokesman, the disinfection process would be completed in all wards of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board and urged the residents to extend cooperation to RCB teams. He informed that the teams have conducted anti-coronavirus spray in 115 mosques, 11 imam barghas, 57 dispensaries and Cantonment General Hospital. The leaves of the staff of RCB sanitation branch had been cancelled, he said adding, the officials concerned were briefed about preventive measures.

**Improvements in PM's package proposed**

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that reduction in petroleum prices is insufficient while keeping power and gas prices intact is shocking

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's relief package is a welcome move but there is a lot of room for improvement in it which will improve lives of people, a business leader said. Payment of Rs3000 per month to labourers is a good decision but the country lacks such a mechanism therefore part of it should be earmarked to waive utility bills, said Shahid Rasheed Butt former President ICCI. He said that paying cash grant would raise questions about

transparency while bureaucratic inertia will also be a problem which must be streamlined. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that reduction in petroleum prices is insufficient while keeping power and gas prices intact is shocking. He said that interest rates should be brought down to four percent; sales tax should be reduced to single-digit while sales tax on food items and medicines should be waived to provide relief to masses. He said that exchange rate erosion should be stopped, NIC condition should be deferred for

one year and business community should be provided relief in repayment of loans and interest. The business leader said that exports could slide by four billion dollars for which measures should be taken immediately while tax collections target should be relaxed. He said that package for the business community should be linked to the job security in the firms receiving help to save millions from unemployment, masses should be given interest-free loans and food prices should be reduced as the number of people living below poverty line has

been estimated to double soon. He said that the economy can be improved by suspending IMF programme for one year or its conditions are put on the back-burner and at least ten billion dollars of loans are secured from international institutions. He said that the US has allocated an amount equalling to 40 percent of its federal budget to tackle crisis and others are following suit but experts are terming it insufficient therefore our government should also boost funding to ward off an economic meltdown and human catastrophe, he said.

**UNHCR steps up efforts to support Pakistan**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency is dispatching core relief items in support of the Government of Pakistan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The relief items include medical supplies and sanitation products such as sanitary clothes, soap and disinfectants. They will be provided to health facilities in support of refugees and host communities in

Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. On Thursday, four trucks carrying some of the many items left from UNHCR's central warehouse in Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; destined for Balochistan. More items will be delivered next week. "UNHCR is committed to supporting the Government's COVID-19 prevention and response measures," said the UNHCR Deputy Representative in Pakistan, Mr. Iain Hall.



Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Vol: 01 Issue: 06

Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

## Pompeo's high-stakes gamble on Afghan unity

IT is hard to overstate the significance of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's surprise visit to Afghanistan on Monday. With his country in the throes of the coronavirus, and no one – not even senior officials – traveling anywhere, Pompeo boarded a plane and took the long flight to Kabul. It was his first announced trip outside America in nearly a month and his first outside Washington since a brief trip to New York in early March.

Pompeo went to Kabul to try to help end an ugly political spat between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his main rival, Abdullah Abdullah. Ghani was last month declared the winner of the Afghan presidential election, which was held in September. Abdullah rejected the result, declared himself the winner and followed up on a threat to set up a separate government. He held a presidential inauguration for himself on the same day as Ghani's.

This crisis has prevented the launch of formal peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. These talks were meant to begin soon after the inking of a Feb. 29 troop withdrawal deal between the US government and the Taliban. But the Ghani-Abdullah spat has prevented the formation of the inclusive negotiating team that is necessary to hold talks with the Taliban. A dispute between Kabul and the Taliban over the release of Taliban prisoners – a stipulation in the US-Taliban deal – is the other major obstacle to launching talks.

Why would Pompeo leave America during its most serious crisis in years and try to end a political spat in a faraway nation? The answer is simple: The Trump administration badly wants a peace deal in Afghanistan – or at least the launch of peace talks.

The risk of deploying your most potent tool of leverage is that, if it doesn't work, you will likely have nothing else in your toolkit, and you will be out of luck. If the Ghani-Abdullah spat continues, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad, who has essentially been camped out in

But if none of these options break the Ghani-Abdullah stalemate, the pressure will be on for an American withdrawal in the absence of peace or peace talks – the very option that Washington seeks to avoid.

The window of opportunity for launching peace talks may soon be closing. Coronavirus is rapidly spreading across Afghanistan and an already capacity-constrained Afghan government will need to deepen its focus on curbing it before it gets out of control. This will leave little bandwidth or policy space to redouble efforts to end the Ghani-Abdullah impasse.



## Economics in a race with coronavirus

WITH the coronavirus devastating one economy after another, the economics profession – the underpinning for sound policymaking and crisis management – is having to play catch-up. Of particular concern now are the economics of viral contagion, fear and “circuit breakers.” The more economic thinking advances to meet changing realities, the better will be the analysis that informs the policy response.

That response is set to be both novel and inevitably costly. Governments and central banks are pursuing unprecedented measures to mitigate the global downturn, lest a now-certain recession gives way to a depression. As they do, we will likely see a further erosion of the distinction between mainstream economics in advanced economies and in developing economies.

Such a change is sorely needed. With evidence of massive declines in consumption and production across countries, analysts in advanced economies must reckon with a phenomenon that was hitherto familiar only to fragile/failed states and communities devastated by natural disasters: An economic sudden stop, together with the cascade of devastation that can follow. They will then face other challenges that are more familiar to developing countries.

Consider the nature of the pandemic economy. Regardless of their desire to spend, consumers are unable to do so, because they have been urged or ordered to stay home. And regardless of their willingness to sell, stores cannot reach their customers.

The immediate priority, of course, is public health, which calls for social distancing, self-isolation, and other measures that are fundamentally inconsistent with how modern economies are wired. As a result, there has been a rapid contraction of economic activity.

As for the severity and duration of the coming recession, all will depend on the success of the health-policy response, particularly on efforts to identify and contain the spread of the virus, treat the ill and enhance immunity. While waiting for progress on these three fronts, fear and uncertainty will deepen, with adverse implications for financial stability and prospects for economic recovery.

When thrust out of our comfort zones in such a sudden and violent fashion, most of us will succumb to some degree of paralysis, overreaction, or both. Our tendency to panic lends itself to still deeper economic disruptions. As liquidity constraints kick in, market participants rush to cash out, selling not just what is desirable to sell, but whatever can feasibly be sold.

# Azerbaijan continues its stride towards prosperity

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti



*Elections to bring further prosperity and development in Azerbaijan; youth zealously take part in the entire process; international observers term the exercise transparent and up to the mark; Pakistani tourists must visit these sites especially Noah's tomb and seven sleepers cave as Quran has made an elaborate mention of this happening in Surah Qaf.*

PEOPLE of Azerbaijan exercised their voting rights in the recently held parliamentary elections on February 9 as a result of which new government came into being. These elections were important in many ways. For the first time a greater number of youths participated in the elections both as voters and candidates. The new parliament that emerged after the elections has vowed to carry forward agenda of President Ilham Aliyev that seeks to gear up reforms process in the country.

According to results, the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) won 69 seats in the parliament, the

independent candidates – 41 seats, the United Azerbaijan Party – 3 seats, Party for Democratic Reforms – 1 seat, the Great Creation Party – 1 seat, the Popular Front Party of Whole Azerbaijan – 1 seat, the Azerbaijan Democratic Party – 1 seat and Civic Solidarity Party – 3 seats.

During the process, a total of 76,000 surveys were conducted, with approximately 640-650 surveys at each constituency, said Birnbaum. The margin of error at each constituency was 3.6 – 3.9 percent. 19 political parties freely participated in the elections. Chief Election Commission of Azerbaijan remained neutral and impartial which instrumented to uphold the true spirits of international standards pertaining to fair, free and transparent election in the country. According to official statistical data total voters were 5.3 million in which 6189 voted for the first time. Moreover, 79 percent were males and 21 percent females candidates in the election which also highlighted positive development in the political system of Azerbaijan, the pioneer of secular democracy in the region and rest of the Muslim world since 1918.

Azerbaijan, an important transcontinental country with a population of around 10.14 million inhabitants, steadily continues its journey towards development and modernization after declaring its independence from Soviet Union in 1991. The architect of the Republic Heydar Aliyev incurred upon himself the onus of driving the nascent republic to a modern and forward looking state where people of all nationalities, religions and faiths could co-exist happily. After passing away of Heydar Aliyev his son Ilham Aliyev stepped into shoes of his father with a view to not only furthering his agenda of development and harmony but to make Azerbaijan a leading regional and global player. And his efforts ostensibly bore fruit thus making Azerbaijan one of the leading political and economic players.

The incumbent government of President Ilham Aliyev ever since its establishment has been focusing zealously on improving the lot of especially those who do not have access to state of the art technologies. That is why those living in remote areas such as Gabala and Quba—two wonderful cities of

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan under President Ilham Aliyev continues its march towards progress and prosperity. The govt top priority appears to be better facilitation of people by providing them all basic necessities of life. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation has been actively participating in building a new society and contributing to the social and economic development of the country, by implementing various projects in spheres such as education, public health, culture, sports, science and technology, environment, and social and other spheres.

President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation is Azerbaijan's First Vice President, First Lady, UNESCO and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mehriban Aliyeva, under whose guidance the Foundation has undertaken a number of humanitarian projects in Pakistan as well. The Foundation immediately started relief work after the deadly earthquake in Pakistan. Since then the Foundation has established a number of schools, especially in Kashmir where mostly the needy children get education. The humanitarian work of this Foundation has not only won laurels for Azerbaijan at home but abroad also.

Both Pakistan and Azerbaijan share common views on many issues including Kashmir and Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia forcibly annexed the Azerbaijani territory Nagorno-Karabakh in early 90s despite the fact that the international community declared that the area was a legitimate part of Azerbaijan. As a result of war hundreds of Azerbaijani people lost their lives while tens of thousands were left homeless. Nevertheless both countries are holding peace negotiations on regular basis after ceasefire announced in 1994. Pakistan wholeheartedly supports Azerbaijan on this issue and has not recognized Armenia only because it continues to occupy Azerbaijani territory. Similarly Baku supports Pakistani's stand on Kashmir and believes in settlement of the dispute as per the UN resolutions.

Relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan are constantly on the move. The respective Azerbaijani ambassadors have contributed greatly towards strengthening of bilateral relations but during the

tenure of Ambassador Ali Alizada bilateral relations have been given new dimensions. Besides exchange of high level bilateral visits, trade and economic activity has also seen marked surge. Tourism happens to be yet another area where both countries have made huge strides in past few years. A 12-member observers' delegation from Pakistan, which happens to be one of the biggest, is a clear manifestation of close and brotherly relations between the two countries. Bilateral relations for sure will remain on the same positive trajectory even in the prospect.

Azerbaijan government, after the parliamentary elections, has vowed to persevere the reform agenda with full force. The newly elected members of parliament while talking to Pakistani media delegation expressed strong resolve to work for the betterment of the country irrespective of their political affiliations. They supported the reform process and assured that once implemented, fate of people shall be changed altogether. They said present government under President Ilham Aliyev was fully alive to problems faced by people and assured an early resolution of these problems.

On the sidelines of the elections drill, the delegates were also taken to other cities of Azerbaijan. Pakistani delegation chose to visit Cave of Seven Sleepers in Nakhchivan and some other historical sites such as tomb of Noah and salt mine. The city of Nakhchivan is enriched with cultural and religious heritage and attracts hundreds of tourists every year who come here to witness these sites. The government of Nakhchivan has taken all measures to preserve and look after these sites besides providing all sorts of facilities to tourists.

Religious tourism is yet another sphere where both countries can cooperate. Pakistani tourists must visit these sites especially Noah's tomb and seven sleepers cave as Quran has made an elaborate mention of this happening in Surah Qaf.

*The writer is Editor-in-Chief daily Islamabad POST, CENTRELINE Journal and Diplomatic News Agency (DNA). He recently visited Azerbaijan for coverage of parliamentary elections. He can be reached at [centrelinemag@gmail.com](mailto:centrelinemag@gmail.com)*

# Cornerstone of Pakistan Navy's Capability Development and Operation Direction

Salman Javed

*While India would want to retain its 'status' as a regional maritime power but it should remind itself the need to maintain the Indo-Pak crisis stability. That implies India must reduce the regional entropy by avoiding to present Pakistan incentives leading to reduction of crisis stability*

RESPONSIVITY, in generic terms, means a degree to which something is responsive, i.e., it can respond to various stimuli. Technically, the term is used in the systems' study where it describes the ability of a system to adjust quickly to suddenly altered external conditions and maintain stable operations flawlessly. It denotes, here, Pakistan Navy with a capability to respond to existing and emerging threats – persistent or morphing – by maintaining a steady and consistent disposition, not showing lack of organizational and combat potential to respond. The compound phrase ‘responsivity continuum’ means respon-

siveness across the spectrum of conflict, tailored with the right set of skills and capabilities that can be brought to bear in relatively less reaction times. It signifies that Pakistan Navy's developmental and operational strategies would be responsive in a continuum (within range or a band) of challenges and threats without taking a lot of time in evaluation and adaptation. Why Pakistan Navy is adopting, as it seems, the theme of ‘responsivity continuum’ is the question answered in this note.

Pakistan Navy believes that threats are swiftly mutating, within both the traditional and non-traditional domains. Indian Navy's capability-based forward planning and existence of maritime terror and non-state actors' violent agenda are substantially influencing Pakistan Navy's operational choices. Pakistan's traditional rival, India's military modernization, in recent years, has conspicuously altered the Pakistan's threat perceptions.

Indian ambitions to dominate the region have caused India to undertake a highly expensive militarization. This is most apparent in the maritime domain in the conventional and non conventional buildup of forces such as acquiring more aircraft carriers, submarines as well as working on a functional nuclear triad. It is through this endeavor that India believes it will finally be able to dominate Pakistan once and for all. However, as yet, it has not been able to achieve success as was apparent in the largely lackluster performance of its naval fleet during the post Balakot crisis with examples such as the failed infiltration bid of its submarine on 4th

March 2019.

Changing mosaic of the Indian naval threat is a stimulus, stronger of all extrinsic factors, which has necessitated Pakistan Navy to follow, what Alvin Toffler once called, ‘unlearn-learn’ model and adapt to transformed threats. Resource scarcity means Pakistan Navy cannot opt for a ‘quantity-matched’ response; but it has to have ‘quality-matched’ mechanics mounted on superior operational art. Pakistan Navy's operational transition from ‘time-centric’ to time & space-centric’ construct is reflective of one of the responsivity strands, where the surface combatants have been reorganized and relocated as ‘surface task groups’ along the Pakistani coast.

This ‘organo-operational’ shift is also indicative of what the Pakistani Naval Chief, Admiral Zaffar Mehmood Abbasi, asserts is ‘leveraging the operational geography’. He believes spatial distribution of naval ships is appositely configured to orchestrate naval action against Indian sea lines of communication in the West while delivering required lethality in the East. This reminds me of the Russian approach, which James J. Schneider calls the ‘distributed operations’.

A crucial aspect of responsivity continuum is the ability to deliver all domain firepower. Precision, reliability and lethality of weapon systems that would determine operational responsiveness of Pakistan's Navy, have frequently been trialled, during last two months. Pakistan Navy reported to have test fired, successfully, various surface, subsurface,

air and land based missiles. Live weapon firings, it appears, has now become an integral part of major maritime activities of Pakistan Navy, which would help establish itself as a dependable professional force able to function under myriad threats and diverse security situations. Pakistan Navy's coastal command, comprising mainly of Marines, has also tested its ground based air defence weapon on airborne platform. Shore-based, Zarb anti-ship missile system, has already been tested and handed over to a naval missile unit that stewards Pakistani coast with a kill range of over 300 km. Cumulatively these weapons enable Pakistan Navy stand a fair ground against its enemy, the Indian Navy.

While India would want to retain its ‘status’ as a regional maritime power but it should remind itself the need to maintain the Indo-Pak crisis stability. That implies India must reduce the regional entropy by avoiding to present Pakistan incentives leading to reduction of crisis stability. These incentives may range from provocative maneuvers by Indian ships to frequent operation and later detection of India submarines close to Pakistani coast. Seeing Pakistan Navy's obvious posture of ‘responsivity continuum’ the next Indian submarine detected off Pakistani waters may not be as fortunate as the previous 209 and Kalvari class boats that came within strike range of Pakistan naval aviation but were allowed to go back to India.

*Salman Javed is a graduate of National Defense University, Islamabad and a member of Board of Directors, Maritime Study Forum*



# Xi tells Trump China and US must 'unite to fight virus'

Xi said Sino-US relations were at a "critical juncture", CCTV reported, adding that cooperation was mutually beneficial and "the only right choice."



APP

BEIJING: China and the United States should "unite to fight" the deadly coronavirus pandemic, President Xi Jinping said in a call with Donald Trump on Friday, as he called for the US to improve relations. The two countries have clashed in recent weeks over the virus, and Chinese state media said Xi told Trump he hoped the "US will take substantive actions to improve Sino-US relations." He also called for the two countries to work together

to tackle the virus and said Beijing "wishes to continue sharing all information and experience with the US", according to state broadcaster CCTV. Trump sounded a positive tone, tweeting that he had a "very good conversation" with Xi, and that both leaders discussed the pandemic "in great detail". "China has been through much & has developed a strong understanding of the virus. We are working closely together. Much respect," he wrote. Trump and his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo angered Beijing this month

by repeatedly referring to "the Chinese virus" when discussing the COVID-19 outbreak first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Trump has since dropped the term amid accusations of racism, in another small sign of easing tensions between the two world powers. Earlier this month a foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing also suggested in a tweet that the US military brought the virus to Wuhan. This prompted Trump to accuse China of spreading misinformation, and the US president repeatedly attacked China's lack of transparency and the slowness of its initial response to the outbreak. Xi said Sino-US relations were at a "critical juncture", CCTV reported, adding that cooperation was mutually beneficial and "the only right choice." Friday's call also took place as the US overtook China as the country with the most confirmed coro-

navirus cases - the pathogen has now infected more than 82,400 people in the world's largest economy. During the call, Xi said China had shared information about the epidemic with the World Health Organization and other countries including the US in a "timely" manner throughout. "Infectious diseases are the common enemy of mankind, and do not recognise borders or races," said Xi. Some provinces, cities and companies in China have provided medical supplies and support to the US as well, Xi added. At an emergency video-conference chaired by Saudi Arabia Thursday - which both Xi and Trump joined - G20 nations pledged a "united front" in the fight against the coronavirus. The group said they would inject \$5 trillion into the global economy to counter the pandemic amid forecasts of a deep recession.



LALALMUSA: A vendor selling masks. DNA photo Khurshid Nadeem

## Two corona victims recover

APP

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Minister for labour and culture of KPK sharing a good news that two confirmed corona cases were fully recovered from the disease, masses should maintain the social distance and adapt self quarantine. Talking to a private news channel, he stated that it was not possible to test all the residents of the area but to examine the close relatives and friend circle of any confirmed or suspected victim. He further stated that total 123 were confirmed cases out of 704 reported cases. "People only need to maintain social distance to stay safe from the novel virus, it is highly contagious," he said.

## Russia to close restaurants, cafes from Saturday

APP

MOSCOW: The Russian government has ordered all cafes and restaurants to close for a week from Saturday to stem the spread of the coronavirus infection. Russian regions are to "halt the activities of public food service organisations," except for delivery services, a government decree said on Friday.

## Sherry appeals for protective kits for health workers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: While highlighting the current COVID-19 crisis in Pakistan and commenting on the capacity of the state of our healthcare system to withstand a pandemic, PPP Parliamentary Leader in Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said that, "Our healthcare system needs urgent help and upgradation. According to open source information only 215 of our current 7,600 medical facilities have isolation facilities, while beds are under 3000. Sindh is doing its part by creating many more facilities but we all need to come together and pitch in." She said, "Our doctors go beyond the call of duty



and we must stop ignoring their calls. Doctors in many public sector hospitals are not even being provided with the basic N95 masks or gloves. They need tests kits and ventilators to fight this virus. Doctors and nurses from PIMS, who were tasked with screening coronavirus patients threatened to walk off the job this week if the government didn't provide them with basic equipment like masks and

gloves. They should be provided with protective gear or we will not have doctors left to fight this". "Considering the health emergency, we are facing, there is no justification for the federal government to not have a daily coordination meeting with the provinces. In this moment of crisis, politics must be set aside and all provinces must be on the same page in containing the COVID-19 pandemic", the Senator added. "If we don't take proactive measures to contain the virus, we may end up seeing a much bigger crisis of capacity as our healthcare system simply cannot accommodate the rising numbers. It is alarming that more than 170 COVID-19 patients are fighting for one intensive care unit bed.

## People must cooperate in combating pandemic: Masood

ADNAN YOUSAF

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan on Friday expressed satisfaction over the coordinated efforts of various government departments and the state institutions to contain COVID-19 pandemic in the liberated territory. He reiterated appeal to the people to extend full cooperation to the state government and the law-enforcement agencies in making the preventive

measures a success. "In all 83 suspected patients of COVID-19, 59 of them have been tested negative, two positive, and the test reports of 24 suspected cases are yet to receive," he added. The president expressed these views while talking to AJK Chief Secretary Mathar Niaz Rana who called on him at Awan-e-Sadr here on Friday, and briefed him about the measures taken by the government to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.



## US tops world in virus cases and logs record unemployment

APP

WASHINGTON: The United States now has more COVID-19 infections than any other country, and a record number of newly unemployed people, as the coronavirus crisis deepens around the world. Healthcare systems in even the most developed nations are being stretched to breaking point with grim warnings they could soon be overwhelmed - and a prediction that 1.8 million could die from the disease this year. China, which appeared to have broken the back of its outbreak, will bar foreigners from Friday as it frets over a surge in imported cases, illustrating the difficulty of containing a virus in an interconnected world. The move comes as Wuhan, the city where the new coronavirus first emerged late last year, readied to ease severe movement restrictions in place for two months. That lockdown has now been aped around the world, with three billion people told to stay indoors. More than 530,000 people globally have been sickened by the disease, one sixth of them in the US, which on Thursday edged out Italy as the worst-affected nation. "We are waging war on this virus using every financial, scientific, medical, pharmaceutical and military resource, to halt its spread and protect our citizens," US President Donald Trump said.

## India extends ban on 4G internet in IOK

APP

ISLAMABAD: In Indian occupied Kashmir, the authorities have extended the ban imposed on 4G internet services across the territory till April 03 even as there has been a growing demand for restoration of the service in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. According to Kashmir Media Service, an order to this effect was issued by Principal Secretary, Home Department, Shaleen Kabra. The order said that after taking note of the overall situation in the territory and the latest reports of the law enforcement agency, particularly with regard to speed related restrictions on mobile data services, the internet speed shall be restricted to 2G only up to April 03. It said that internet would not be available on prepaid mobile phone connections. Narendra Modi-led Indian government had suspended the internet and mobile phone services in occupied Kashmir.

## Spain death toll hits 4,858 as 769 die in 24 hours

APP

MADRID: The death toll in Spain soared over 4,800 Friday after 769 people died in 24 hours, in what was a record one-day figure for fatalities, the government said. Health ministry figures showed the number of deaths reaching 4,858, while cases jumped to 64,059, although the rate of new infections appeared to be slowing, registering a 14 percent increase compared with 18 percent a day earlier.

## No additional burden on gas consumers: Firdous

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan Friday ruled out any increase in gas tariff. In video message after a high level meeting on energy sector chaired by the Prime Minister, she said the PM has a clear stance that no additional burden would be shifted to the gas consumers, rather steps

would be taken to facilitate them under recently announced economic relief package. The prime minister directed the Energy Minister not to put the burden of gas prices on consumers and defer any such increase in the tariff. She said the meeting decided that reforms would be introduced in gas sector and various steps would be taken to resolve problems of the gas consumers.

She said the meeting decided to introduce institutional reforms in the gas sector. The Energy Committee was directed to present reform agenda in ECC meeting. She said the PM issued directives for ensuring uninterrupted supply of gas to the consumers. Dr Firdous said it was decided that the gas supply to industrial and commercial sector would be provided from other sources including LNG and LPG.

## Building of strategic oil reserves

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan should not stop oil import altogether in this period of historically low oil prices in international market. Instead, this opportunity should be used to build up country's weak strategic oil reserves. This is suggested by Policy Pak, a policy-research

and advocacy organisation in Islamabad. Irfan Shahzad Takalvi, CEO of the organization says while crude is selling at \$23 per barrel in international market, this is an ideal time to increase Pakistan's oil stocks to be used in difficult times. He further adds that Saudi and UAE's oil facility on deferred payments must be utilized for this

purpose. While stopping oil imports may help contain trade deficit and Current Account Deficit (CAD), beefed-up oil reserves would prove to be a much better gamble in the long run, he added. Policy Pak's recommendation is based on research output of a pool of seasoned researchers and experts.

## Embassy to encourage businesses, investors, says Czech Republic Ambassador Tomas

ATHAR JAVED SUFI

KARACHI: The Ambassador of Czech Republic Tomas Smetanka has assured that Czech Embassy would try its best and strive hard to provide as accurate information about Pakistan as they can to the Czech businesses, investors and anyone who might have slight interest in Pakistan's market with a view to promote trade and investment ties between the two countries. "It is something which is missing. We do receive what the world press occasionally writes about Pakistan but people and investors in Czech Republic are not very sure about how safe or not safe is Pakistan. Our intention is to be as reliable and as accurate as possible", he added while exchanging views at a meeting during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry. President KCCI Agha Shahab Khan, Senior Vice President Arshad Islam, Vice President Shahid

Ismail, Honorary Consul General of Czech Republic in Karachi Ansari and KCCI Managing Committee members attended the meeting. Czech Ambassador mentioned that during the last three to four years, the trade exchange stood at around US\$200 million per annum, of which one third was Czech exports to Pakistan while two-third was Pakistan's export to Czech Republic. "It means we get more from Pakistan than we export which is partly because of the GSP Plus that has facilitated Pakistan's exports

to European Union. The next step will be to raise our exports to Pakistan and we will also be enhancing cooperation with the business community of Karachi Chamber to promote trade", he added. Identifying some areas of cooperation, the Envoy said that Czech Republic has been producing a lot of sophisticated machineries, weapons, passenger cars, transport system etc. but a very small portion of this huge production was being exported to Pakistan which needs to be focused.

He said that Czech Republic's industrial ratio to overall GDP was the highest not just in European Union but the highest in the world. "We have the highest industrial production and are very much an export oriented country. We can also help Pakistan in effective water management, water purification, environmental technologies, green technologies and waste management which are quite important for Pakistan." Tomas Smetanka was of the opinion that as Karachi was the hub of businesses and entrepreneurship, he will be looking forward to repeatedly visit this city to seek business community's input and get something implemented to promote trade and investment. President KCCI Agha Shahab Khan, while commenting on bilateral trade between Pakistan and Czech Republic, appreciated Czech Republic's its invaluable and unstinting support extended to Pakistan for its graduation to the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus Status.

