



# Islamabad POST

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Relief package to help overcome problems, says Imran Khan

Kazakhstan takes measures to deal with virus

Polls in Nagorno Karabakh illegal, says Ali Chohan

## Briefs

### Food markets defying Section 144

**MUNIR FAISAL**

ATTOCK: The fruit and vegetables markets of attock remained open on Monday despite strict lockdown orders from the government. The markets remained open even after Section 144 was imposed in the city. Not more than four people are allowed to stand outside on the roads. On the other hand, security measures against Corona Virus were also not taken by the shopkeepers and buyers. Nobody was wearing masks or gloves. A lockdown was imposed after the number of Coronavirus cases across the country increased.

### No Flour shortage in Attock

**DNA**

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Ali Anan Qamer said that there is no shortage of Flour in the district and supply of Flour have been increased every day on in view of demand of the people. While talking to the newsman at attack on Monday. DC said that trucking points has also been set up in attock for convenience of the people. He said that across the district and price megastars were visiting shops of daily used items on daily basis to monitor prices of essential items.

### CDWP clears 6 projects

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) Monday approved two projects worth Rs 466.264 million and recommended four projects valuing Rs 133 billion to Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) for consideration.

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Industrialists demand deferment of banks mark up for few months

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# Hefty Rs1.2 trillion package

*The special Package for providing relief to the poor through cash assistance under the Ehsaas Program was also approved by the ECC. The package shall provide cash grants to 12 million families under the regular “kafalat program” and Emergency Cash Assistance on the recommendation of the district administration ECC approved Rs. 200 billion of cash assistance for the daily wagers working in the formal industrial sector*

**ANSAR M BHATTI**

ISLAMABAD: The govt on Monday approved hefty Rs 1.2 trillion fiscal stimulus package with a view to helping mainly those affected by COVID 19 impacts. The package was announced during a meeting chaired by Dr. Hafeez Shaikh and approved by the Cabinet. Prime Minister Imran Khan, during his speech on the national hook-up said the package would help the poor people make their both ends meet. He further said all our efforts would be made to reach out to those who really need govt support. He also called upon the philanthropists to come forward and help people for this was the best time to serve their fellow countrymen. Earlier, adviser to the Prime Minister

on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh chaired a special meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet. ECC approved Supplementary Grant of Rs. 100 billion for the “Residual/ Emergency Relief Fund” in terms of article 84(a) of the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan for provision of funds for mitigating the affect of COVID-19. The special Package for providing relief to the poor through cash assistance under the Ehsaas Program was also approved by the ECC. The package shall provide cash grants to 12 million families under the regular “kafalat program” and Emergency Cash Assistance on the recommendation of the district administration. The assistance will be provided for four months and besides the BISP beneficiaries it will

be one time dispensation, the cash will be provided either in one installment of Rs 12000 through Kafalat partner banks i.e Bank Alfalah and Habib Bank Limited after biometric verification or it may be provided in two installments of Rs. 6000/- each. After Ministry of Industries and Production presented a comprehensive proposals regarding the targeting parameters , implementation mechanism, cash assistance per family per month and financial phasing of the program, ECC approved Rs. 200 billion of cash assistance for the daily wagers working in the formal industrial sector and who had been laid off as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. It was estimated that around three million workers will fall in this category and they will have to be paid a minimum wage of Rs.17500 per month.

ECC approved Rs. 50 billion for Utility Stores Corporation to provide essential food items to the vulnerable section of the society at subsidized rates. USC has prepared an initial plan to deliver 9 essential food items @ Rs 3000 for a family of 2+4 people through Pakistan Post Foundation Logistics Division. USC has further planned to procure essential items within 2-3 weeks. it was directed that USC may engage with BISP to obtain data for targeted assistance and again come back to the ECC for a detailed proposal for reaching out to the poor families for the effective use of this package before making any expenditure from this amount. ECC also approved Rs.75 billion for FBR to enable them to payback the sales tax and income tax refunds, duty drawbacks and customs duties which is due for the last 10 years. The amount

shall help approximately 676055 beneficiaries by improving their liquidity position. ECC also allowed to reduce different taxes and duties on import and supply of different food items for alleviating the adverse impact of COVID -19 on different sections of the society. Rate of advance tax on the import of different pulses was reduced to 0% from 2%. individuals and associations of persons providing tea, spices, dry milk and salt to USC without a brand name will pay 1.5% withholding tax instead of 4.5%. Individuals and AoP receiving payments from USC for supplying ghee, sugar, pulses, and wheat flour shall be charged 1.5% withholding tax instead of 4.5% earlier. ACD (additional customs duty) @ 2% on soya bean oil, canola oil, palm oil and sunflower oil (and on these four oil seeds) has also been exempted.

## Zulfikar sends notice to Kh Asif

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Syed Zulfikar Bukhari has decided to undertake legal proceedings against PMLN's Khawaja Asif for levelling allegations against him. According to details, Zulfikar Bukhari has sent Asif a legal notice and sued him for Rs1 billion for wrongly holding him responsible for pilgrims coming into Pakistan from Taftan. The defamation notice

also demands that the senior politician pleads guilty to his wrong doing and unfounded allegations against a government functionary and apologizes to Zulfikar Bukhari. The notice give Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz stalwart and current member of the National Assembly, Khawaja Asif 14 days to come clean on the matter or face court proceedings. Zulfikar Bukhari's notice entails that the accusations levied by Asif have caused insurmountable damage to his reputation and such acts will not go unpunished.



LALAMUSA: People stand in queue to get ration. – Khurshid Nadeem

## Four more people recover in Sindh

**DNA**

KARACHI: Four more patients recovered from novel coronavirus in Sindh and tested negative for the disease on Monday, according to a spokesperson for the provincial government. Murtaza Wahab said the total number of recovered patients in the province now stands at 18. “This again emphasises the importance of strictly following the isolation guidelines.” Four more patients have recovered from Corona Virus in Sindh and have tested negative. The total number of recovered patients in Sindh now stands at 18. This again emphasises the importance of strictly following the isolation guidelines. Sindh earlier today reported two new deaths from the novel coronavirus, bringing the provincial tally to five.

## Pakistani students praise China

**APP**

BEIJING: Pakistani and other international students in Wuhan, Hubei province of China said that they have been receiving good care during the novel coronavirus outbreak thanks to arrangements made by their universities and local authorities. Hassan Ali, 21, a Pakistani studying logistics engineering at Wuhan Textile University.

## Elections in occupied Nagorno-Karabakh illegal

Justice (Retd) Ali Nawaz Chowhan, Chairman, National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR condemns Armenia for genocide; warns of dire consequences

**ADNAN YOUSAF**

ISLAMABAD: Justice (Retd) Ali Nawaz Chowhan , Chairman, National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) has strongly condemned holding of sham parliamentary and presidential elections in the occupied Nagorno Karabakh. In a statement the former judge of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and a renowned jurist, Justice Ali Nawaz further said “I strongly condemn the holding of so called "parliamentary elections" and “presidential elections” of the illegal regime, established by Armenia in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh territory of Azerbaijan by the occupying forces of Armenia”. He said the elections which are scheduled to

be held on March 31 are uncalled for, unwarranted and illegal. “I along with my government and the UN announce support to Azerbaijan. I also once again condemn the genocide committed by Armenia in the town of Khojaly against Azerbaijani civilians. Armenia will be accountable for its aggression and Genocide’.

## Special prayers offered

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Special prayers were offered to get rid of coronavirus from the country during a limited gathering in connection to celebrate the birthday of Hazrat Abbas Aldamar and Imam Zainul Abedin on Monday. The 1415th birth anniversary of Hazrat Abbas Alamdar and 1403th birthday of Hazrat Imam Zain al-Abadin was held here at the residence of Deputy Mayor of Islamabad Syed Zeeshan Ali Naqvi.

## AJK president thanks China

**DNA**

MUZAFFARBAD: Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) has expressed his gratitude to Ulema and Mushaikh and the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Azad Kashmir for their valuable guidance in the light of the Sharia, on measures to combat Coronavirus. In a video message on Monday, he said that the government is repeatedly advising the people to remain in their homes and adopt precautionary measures because this is the sole way to stay safe from the pandemic, and the survival and protection of all of us lies in it.

## Train service suspended indefinitely

**DNA**

RAWALPINDI: Railways Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad on Monday announced that the passenger train operations will remain suspended in the country due to rising tally of coronavirus pandemic. Sheikh Rasheed said that initially it was decided to resume the operations from April 1.

# COVID 19: Uzbek embassy, CGSS join hands to highlight Uzbek govt efforts

In Uzbekistan, there has been a lockdown on all activities and a special hospital comprising of 10,000 beds has also been constructed for any emergency situation within 5 days

**FARUKH SHEHZAD**

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Furqat A. Sidiqov held a videoconference with Lt Col Khalid Taimur Akram (Retd) - Executive Director CGSS and Ms. Mehreen Gul – Director CGSS. During the video-call meeting it was decided that CGSS and Uzbekistan Embassy will collaborate to highlight the efforts of Uzbek Government in battling COVID-19 and to project

Pakistan's initiatives in combating COVID-19 in Uzbekistan through sharing of information and articles. Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan briefed regarding the situation in Uzbekistan, and various progressive measures taken to ensure the safety of citizens. In particular, In Uzbekistan, there has been a lockdown on all activities and a special hospital comprising of 10,000 beds has also been constructed for any emergency situation within 5 days.



Educational activities for students are being carried out through the National Television especially in the rural areas. Furthermore, the endeavors of Pakistani government in con-

trolling the pandemic situation were also appreciated. It was decided to jointly host an inspirational drawing competition in order to uplift the spirits of young students in Pakistan to struggle pandemic situation. Moreover, both sides the agreement to hold video-conference of the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Business Council with participation of entrepreneurs of both Brotherly States, as well as same interaction with Uzbekistan's think tanks and media groups.



## CITY BRIEFS

### ICT starts cleanup operation at coronavirus affected areas

APP

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory Administration has started cleanup operation at coronavirus affected areas to control the spread of coronavirus. According to Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat, Kot Hatheyaal, Keyani Road, Janjua Town, Torab Town are being cleared on Monday. He said that ICT administration and NDMA staff taking part in cleanup operation including three fire brigade vehicles, 12 water bozers participating in the operation. He said 40 hand spray machines are being used for spray in small streets.

### PCST team creates online ‘Corona Virus Knowledge Center’

APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Council of Science and Technology (PCST) team has created an online “Coronavirus Knowledge Centre” by compiling reliable information, articles, updates etc about coronavirus to educate the researchers, planners and masses. Talking to APP on Monday, Secretary PCST, Dr Aslam Tahir, who is leading the initiative, said that there was dire need for developing such a link at a time when unreliable information was being spread in the society. The center has been created on the direction of Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain.

### Easy paisas, U paisas to remain open

APP

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner Islamabad /District Magistrate Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat directed to open the shops of easy paisas, U paisas, Jazz cash and others online payment services for three days from 12 pm to 4 pm with immediate effect. Keeping in view the difficulties faced by general public sending and receiving remittances the DC took this initiative. In his letter Hamza Shafqaat directed that all shops strictly abide by notified SOP dated 24,3,2020 for shops of capital territory Islamabad. He said the shopkeepers would also ensure that measures required for maintaining social distancing by the customers was strictly adhered with.

### Tele-health facility effective for treatment

APP

ISLAMABAD: Tele-health facility can effectively contribute to the well being of citizens by providing them guidance through technology use about their routine health issues after closure of clinics and hospitals’ Out Patient Departments (OPDs) amid lockdown for prevention of COVID-19 spread in the country. The Tele-Health service can increase efficiency of overall healthcare delivery system by reducing cost and provision of speedy healthcare through use of technology thus minimizing human interaction and the risk of catching COVID-19, Consultant, Project Manager COMSATS Tele-Health, Dr Nadia Rasheed said. Talking to APP on Monday, she said it was the perfect time when the authorities concerned must utilize such services for the provision of contact less health facilities to the patients through technology usage for routine medical issues.

### Phase-wise repatriation of Pakistanis reviewed

APP

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting chaired by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Monday discussed situation on COVID-19 with reference to phase-wise repatriation of Pakistanis in the wake of suspension of international flights. Foreign Minister Qureshi mentioned that the National Coordination Committee had taken decision on suspension of flight operation to control spread of Coronavirus. Dr Zafar Mirza gave a briefing on risk assessment of Coronavirus cases in the country. The Executive Director NIH updated the meeting on capacity of Coronavirus testing and other related facilities. The meeting also discussed strategy post resumption of international flights on April 4.

### Steps needed to vacate Indian action of 31 October

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Those who opposes the Indian rule in Kashmir, have to reposition in their efforts to seek the realisation of self-determination through a UN supervised Plebiscite. The parties that have identified themselves, in rejecting the Indian action of 31 October 2019 are mainstream pro India parties, Hurriyat, non Hurriyat, Governments of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit and Baltistan, Government of Pakistan and the United Nations.

# Industrialists demand deferment of banks mark up for few months

SHAEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that due to coronavirus issue, businesses and industrial units were closed, but they have to pay the monthly commercial bills of gas and electricity, which is adding to their difficulties. He appealed to the government that receipt of commercial bills of gas and electricity from business and industry should be deferred for few months so that business community could be able to cope with the current crisis. He further



said that if deferment of receipt of utility bills was not possible, business community should be allowed to pay monthly commercial bills in three installments till the time the coronavirus issue was over.

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that whole country including the federal capital was in lockdown situation due to which markets and industrial units were closed. However, business community has to pay the wages of workers and meet day to day expenses as well. He said that in these circumstances, deferring the receipt of commercial bills of gas and electricity for few months or allowing them to pay monthly bills in 3 installments would provide significant relief to the business community. TahirAbbasi Senior Vice President and SaifurRehman Khan Vice President ICCI further said

that despite closure of industrial activities, industrialists have to pay mark up of banks on daily basis, which is putting more pressure on them. They stressed that government should also issue directions to commercial banks to immediately defer the receipt of mark up from industrialists for few months to save the industry from further troubles. They said that in these difficult circumstances, instead of earning profits, banks should realize the problems of industry and freeze the receipt of their mark up for few months to save the industrial units from closure.

## PBM disbursed Rs 308.75 million

APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait ul Mal (PBM) had disbursed Rs 308.75 million as Individual Financial Assistance (IFA) among the deserving persons in 28 most neglected districts in last financial year. PBM was striving to eradicate poverty through Individual Financial Assistance (IFA) in different areas including Medical, Education, Medical and Special Friends.



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance & Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh chairing a special meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet in Islamabad on March 30, 2020. — DNA

## Coronavirus testing kits, ventilators to hit country markets soon: Fawad

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry Monday hoped that the locally manufactured ventilators and testing kits would hit the country market soon that were previously manufactured only by China and other countries to fights the coronavirus. The coronavirus testing kits developed by Pakistan’s National University of Science and Technology (NUST) have been handed to the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) for final approval, he said while talking to private news channel. Similarly, the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) has developed ventilators, in collaboration with NED and Pakistan Engineering Board, which will be handed over to DRAP this week.

The minister said that he is in talks with various ministries and hopes that the products will hit the market in the coming days. “Two initiatives of the Ministry of Science and Technology are in final stages of approval 1) coronavirus testing kits (NUST) 2) ventilators (PEC) this will immensely bring down costs of war against coronavirus”, he added. “At this time, a coronavirus testing kit is available at the cost of Rs7,000 to Rs8,000. Moreover, a detection test will not be fruitful until it is properly conducted by the medics”, he added. The minister said that Prime Minister Imran Khan directed all authorities to rapid act upon the developments regarding the coronavirus pandemic across the country. Fawad Chaudhry further said that the steps related to acquiring testing kits and ventilators were taken prior to the latest situation.



## Relief package historic step: Zartaj

APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Monday said that government’s relief package for the vulnerable segments of society including daily wagers, labourers and others in view of the prevailing coronavirus situation was a historic step in right direction. Talking to private news channel, she said the newly announced “Corona Relief Tigers Youth Force” would take the prime minister’s fight forward and ensure that labourers and daily wage earners do not remain hungry across the country. She said country can’t afford complete lock down, as if government announced it all over the country people would start flooding to shops for stocking up groceries and other items. She added that the government was fully aware of the difficulties being faced by the people and further steps were being taken to provide relief to the people.

## Jori Junaid & Hira Mani together for ‘Kashf’

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Actor par excellence and one of the most dependable stars of the TV industry, Junaid Khan, would be seen with Hira Mani once again in their new serial ‘Kashf’ after their recent blockbuster ‘Mohabbat Na Kariyo’ came to an end earlier this month. The new drama stars this reel life hit couple in lead roles, who have been a fan favorite ever since their love story bloomed in ‘Sun Yaara’. After their recently concluded ‘Mohabbat Na

Kariyo’, they have yet another intriguing tale coming for the audiences. ‘Kashf’ features Junaid Khan as ‘Wajdaan’ a man so madly in love with Kashf, played by Hira Mani, that he is willing to go to any extent to win her heart. Talking about this new project, the excited Junaid Khan revealed, “Kashf is a very unique story, unlike anything I have ever done before. Playing this character was an exhilarating experience for me. Getting to work with Hira is always amazing, so we hope that you guys would love this story as well.”

## 3 buildings in Islamabad declared quarantine centre

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Amid increasing fear of suspected cases of coronavirus in Islamabad, three buildings have been declared quarantine center. According to the notification released by the Islamabad’s administration, a

quarantine facility has been established in Pak-China Friendship Center, which will be looked after by Dr Sartaj. Two other quarantine facilities have been established in the Haji Camp and the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL).

# CDA, MCI washing roads, markets to control spread of Coronavirus in the Capital

ICT Administration with the Collaboration and assistance of NDMA and Bahria Town management taking steps to provide human resource and other facilities in Baharakhu, Kot Hatiyal particularly the chemical spray in the vicinity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA), ICT Administration and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) are taking coordinated steps and measures including spraying and washing of roads, markets, streets and other areas and imparting due awareness amongst the residents to control the

spread of Corona Virus in the Federal Capital.

In order to make the efforts and measures being taken to control the spread of Corona virus result-oriented, CDA has placed the services of 14 officers and Officials on the disposal of Health Services Directorate, MCI Islamabad. These Officers and Officials have been directed to immediately report to Directorate of Health Services for their fur-

ther assignments

In the meanwhile, after carrying out chemical spray in the hospitals and businesses center, the spray and chemicals washing of residential sector has also been started. During the activity being jointly carried out by the CDA, ICT and MCI uptill now spray and washing in sector G-9, G-10,, G-11 and F-10 has completed in addition to several rural Ares of the city. Furthermore, chemical spray is

being carried out in Sector I-9, I-10, G-6, G-7 & Katchi Abbadies of the city, which will remain continue till dusk. Moreover, ICT Administration with the Collaboration and assistance of NDMA and Bahria Town management taking steps to provide human resource and other facilities in Baharakhu, Kot Hatiyal particularly the chemical spray in the vicinity. Machinery of Bahira Town is spraying disin-

fectant in the whole vicinity.

Vehicles of fire Brigade and Water Tankers are being utilized in spray activity being carried out in the residential sectors of Islamabad. Moreover, doctors and paramedical staff are also being imparted training regarding diseases, care and protocols to deal coronavirus patients. Furthermore, awareness among the residents is also being created to curtail and control deadly virus.



## ‘European project’ at risk in pandemic

THE European Union has warned that economic policy disagreements among member states in reaction to the coronavirus pandemic risked splitting and dooming the European project. EU Economics Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni, a former prime minister of Italy, also told Italy's Radio Capital that mutualised debt would never be agreed upon by eurozone members, but that it was essential for Germany to come to an agreement with its southern neighbours currently hardest hit by the pandemic. The COVID 19 crisis has hit Europe hard. Apart from Europe those countries that used to get huge inflow of tourists have been the worst victims of this deadly virus. The virus seems to have put integrity of Europe at stake. The European project is in danger of dying out," Gentiloni told Radio Capital. "It is clear that if the economic differences between European countries, rather than shrinking in the face of a crisis like this, instead increase... it will be very difficult to keep the European project together, he warned.

Without Germany, he added, "we cannot find a compromise." On Thursday, Germany and other northern EU states rejected a proposal backed by nine countries, including Italy, Spain and France, for so-called "coronabonds."

These would be issued in the name of the eurozone as a whole and in effect result in pooled debt among member states of the single currency zone – a long established red line in Berlin. Gentiloni said he had expected the reaction by Germany, calling it a "long-standing vision that we know by heart." Germany has repeatedly dismissed the idea of mutualised European debt as an attempt by over-spending southerners to take advantage of the cheap borrowing rates enjoyed by states with balanced budgets, without being subject to fiscal austerity measures. European member states should "start with the common objectives" in order to break the standstill, Gentiloni said, adding that he recognised that pooled borrowing would never be agreed upon.

"We need a new unemployment guarantee instrument, a business support plan and we need the "Green Deal" development model to not be forgotten," he said, adding that one possible way to finance such objectives was to issue bonds.

Europe indeed is passing through testing times. It is a test of leadership also. Europe unfortunately is also faced with leadership crisis. The COVID 19 outbreak has badly exposed the healthcare system of Europe, which was considered the best in the world. Let us hope Europe is able to overcome its difficulties since EU as a whole is a wonderful project and therefore it should not fail.



## Learn and grow in self-isolation-II

M Omar Iftikhar

THE freelance services you can provide may include among others website designing, content writing, business coaching, social media coordinator, digital marketing, blog writing, content marketing, ebook writing, SEO consultancy, data entry, video editing and the list goes on. You need to identify a skill that you are good at or have experience in and can pursue selling it online

During this period of lockdown, you can develop the habit of reading. For those who are avid readers, you can spend more time reading books, newspapers and publications available over the Internet. There is nothing more important than reading especially when the objective is to keep jogging your brain cells. You need to keep your mind active and reading is the activity you must pursue at least two hours every day. While talking about a productive activity, you need to take care of your health too. Staying at home makes us lethargic which is not good – in the present nor the long run.

Despite the plan for you to be at home for two weeks – or until this period of self-isolation ends, you must remain mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically active. You need to wake up early in the morning, take a bath and have a healthy breakfast.

You must exercise at home. This may include performing simple exercises in your room such as sit-ups, crunches, lunges, squats, squat jumps, push-ups, bridges, planks, high knees, dips, Bavarian split squats and calf raises. You need to compel and motivate yourself to perform exercises and lead a healthy lifestyle. At first, it will be difficult to adjust, however, as human nature goes, you will adopt it if you put your mind to it.

Self-isolation also tends to make one go under depression. This happens when one does not interact with others. You should spill out your innate thoughts and opinions. Either you can write a daily diary or a journal, publish a blog or you can make a short (five to seven-minute long) video to express how you feel. This way you will not only connect with your family and friends but also with the world.

The sense of belonging must be there or else your emotions will get the best of you. In this time of global crisis, we must accept our situation. We cannot change the problem but we can control our lives and thoughts. Stay blessed!

*The writer is a columnist, author and an independent researcher*

# Kazakhstan takes decisive steps to stop the spread of coronavirus

Akan Rakhmetullin



*The Government's highest concerns lie with the health and safety of the citizens of Kazakhstan. In such a time of emergency, it is important to provide more security in a period of crisis*

THESE are unprecedented times. In many countries around the world daily life seems to be on hold due to the health crisis caused by coronavirus COVID-19. The pandemic has put many areas on lockdown, as the virus continues to spread globally and tragically cause many deaths. Kazakhstan has proactive position in counteraction to epidemic. The country has not underestimated the danger. From the very beginning of COVID-19 risk at the end of January, the Government of Kazakhstan has monitored the global situation and has prepared to any possible challenges for the population's healthcare. Special governmental commission on counteraction to novel epidemic created a certain action plan to protect the population in advance. Since February Kazakhstan started blocking national borders for some foreign countries with high epidemic danger, and all the citizens were advised to avoid any trips abroad.

Given the uncertain and unpredictable situation in the world, the Government of Kazakhstan had to take new proactive measures to protect its citizens. This is why on March 15, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev declared a state of emergency across the nation. In his decree, the President stated that entry to and departure from the country is to be restricted for everyone except for diplomats and official delegations, those invited by the Government and foreigners under certain conditions.

In addition, the decree introduced quarantine measures and suspended the activities of shopping and entertainment centres. Kindergartens, schools and universities have been closed as per the recommendations of medical experts. On March 23, President Tokayev addressed the State Commission on the current state of emergency. To prevent a further wave of infection the President introduced increased quarantine measures to protect the citizens of Kazakhstan. In a move to impose more stringent measures, the President has further ensured the protection of the country's medical services whilst reducing the threat to those citizens most at risk. Kazakhstan has so far been less impacted than other countries in terms of confirmed coronavirus cases, despite a long land border with China, where the first cases of the disease were identified. In fact, when the government measures were first announced, there were only a handful of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Kazakhstan. However, as the situation in other countries has demonstrated, it is vitally important to take strict preventive measures, regardless of the number of people affected.

Complacency has certainly not been an option for the Government of Kazakhstan. In order to prevent the virus from spreading widely and to protect the lives and health of its citizens, steps had to be taken even though the country has not yet experienced the spread of the virus on a large scale. In preparation for such a crisis, the President ordered the Ministry of Health to monitor the availability of medical facilities and equipment taking into account the most drastic of potential pandemic outcomes. Such moves will ensure Kazakhstan's medical services are prepared for every eventuality. Unfortunately, as was expected, the number of confirmed cases has risen in Kazakhstan's two biggest cities – its capital Nur-Sultan and most populous city Almaty. For this reason, on March 23, the President of Kazakhstan took a decisive

step to lockdown the two cities.

As well as restricting movement of people and vehicles, authorities have limited public transportation and instructed restaurants to switch to delivery-only service. The aim of these measures is to prevent the disease from spreading to other parts of the country, and thus save lives and prevent a health crisis. To enforce the isolation of these city centres, the President announced the need to impose penalties on those who choose to violate the requirements of quarantine. The Government's highest concerns lie with the health and safety of the citizens of Kazakhstan. In such a time of emergency, it is important to provide more security in a period of crisis. This is why on March 23, the President announced that the nation's entire police force will now be mobilised to protect the population against unexpected public threats. In addition to the increased police presence, President Tokayev has called for residential communities to cooperate and work together to safeguard at risk individuals.

In such times as these, there is a danger that certain groups of society will be affected more drastically than others. Those most at risk are families who have lost sources of income and have no economic 'safety net'. In his statement at the State Commission, the President addressed these concerns; in addition to the already adopted ban on imposing fines and penalties, the payment of principal and interest on all loans of the population affected by the crisis will be suspended. In addition, large families, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups will receive free groceries, consisting primarily of domestic products. To further support this, the President Tokayev announced initiatives to regionally monitor the levels of socially significant goods in order to protect the population from price spikes. Governors will coordinate the interregional flow of such goods to eliminate local deficits and prevent the panic-buying of essential goods.

The Government of Kazakhstan has put forward concrete measures to support the financial sector. President Tokayev announced that Kazakhstan will allocate \$10 billion for anti-crisis measures throughout the country, excluding tax benefits and local support. \$740 million will go towards measures to boost employment. Bonus payments will be made in the amount of one monthly salary to doctors, police officers and other specialists involved in the fight against coronavirus, as well as to people who have lost income due to the state of

emergency. To support enterprises, the Head of State ordered a standstill on bank loan repayments by small and medium-sized businesses for the duration of the state of emergency, as well as a deferral of payment of all types of taxes and other obligatory payments for a period of three months. In his address on March 23, President Tokayev highlighted the necessity of entrepreneurship in the fight to maintain economic harmony. He announced new measures which will reduce fiscal pressures on these individuals. This will see tax deadlines extended and the removal of oppressive inspections. Such alleviations will see businesses have a greater ability to make decisions and take responsibility for their commercial activities. In addition to this, the President announced an additional \$1.5 billion for lending to such businesses for working capital. Across the world there have been instances of widespread panic due to lack of a direct information flow from national governments. To protect the citizens of Kazakhstan against such dangers and the resulting effects of rumour, the President has facilitated the Ministry of Information and Public Development to deliver daily briefings. To reinforce these messages the website [coronavirus2020.kz](http://coronavirus2020.kz) has been set up to inform the population of the Government's official actions in the fight against coronavirus.

Everyone will have to get used to the new reality for perhaps many weeks to come. It may not be straightforward, but through cooperation, both on an individual and state level, the country is well equipped to overcome the crisis. As President Tokayev stated this week, "if each of us fulfils our duty with responsibility, I believe that we will quickly come out of this difficult situation."

Thus, even being located close to large geographic coronavirus outbreaks in Eurasia fast and proactive actions by the Government of Kazakhstan resulted in a relatively low number of infected citizens and full control over COVID-19 epidemic. Kazakhstan has always pushed for closer regional and global cooperation. The pandemic has laid bare the vital need for teamwork between states. Hopefully, governments around the world will collaborate closely to control the pandemic and will continue to work together once the crisis is over to resolve other global issues. Perhaps this will be the silver lining to these challenging times.

*The writer is the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan*

# Cronavirus pandemic: blessing for some, misery for others

Mariam Javed Asghar

*2020 was the year of hope for economic prosperity aiming at various bilateral agreements between US and China, ended uncertainty about Brexit and peace in Afghanistan but then came novel COVID-19*

THE novel coronavirus pandemic has become a global misery; 199 countries have been affected, 620,246 people have now been confirmed with the coronavirus globally and 28,641 are dead. Fear traveled faster than virus itself and when it was accompanied by conspiracy theories, it attracted public at large. As the pathogen appears, rumors thrived on fear and many social-media analysts suggested that this is a biological weapon – either American or Chinese. The arguments accompanied by allegations were, that either Americans inflicted this virus during World Military games in Wuhan despite of Chinese austere security measures against Americans or the virus had escaped Wuhan Institute of Virology; China's only biosafety level-4 lab. Whatever the case is,

it has exposed the vulnerability of the interconnected world; globalization fostered interdependence but it also allows rapid spread of contagious diseases. Hundreds of millions of people are isolating themselves around the world, states rush to close their borders, hoarding medical and food facilities making this novel coronavirus an enormous stress test for globalization. As of March, Coronavirus is still a mystery, not a single person on earth can claim its cure and no one can predict its duration with confidence and accuracy. The main carrier of the virus in current scenario are humans, to minimize the transmission, flight operations are reduced in numbers, companies are closing down or reducing their workloads to protect workers, tourist spots are shutdown, food chains do not welcome customers anymore, big shopping malls are closed, in short, states are trying their best to confine people to their homes, so that, they won't be available as fertile hosts of COVID-19. There are many repercussions of this epidemic – other than global health vulnerability or disease susceptibility – that's the exposed fragility of the globalized system, which can change the world as we know it today. In the pre-globalization age, states might have built up stockpiles to protect themselves against such situations but globalization allowed countries to embrace global supply chains, maintain a tangled web of production networks that wove the global economy. COVID-19 has targeted this very web of global economy, for instance, global production of laptops fell by as much as 50 percent in February when the virus did not even have massive global host as compare to this

ongoing month of March.

There is panic and insecurity all around the world, everyone wants this crisis to be over as early as possible, people are longing for pre-corona world but unfortunately, this is not the case for each and every living being as this suffering to humanity is a blessing to ecosystem at large. Nature was yearning for reduced carbon emissions but humans did not pay attention, then unfortunately Coronavirus outbreak came as a savior for environment and forced humans to suspend most of the carbon consuming activities.

The novel COVID-19 has led to astonishing shutdown of industries almost across the globe, roads are empty, fewer air operations are carried out; mostly cargo flights are flying in the air, this unprecedented lockdown has reduced the fossil fuels consumption drastically. Only in China it caused a drop in carbon emission by 25 percent which according to The Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air is equivalent to 200 million tons of carbon dioxide – more than half the annual emission of Britain. The clean air and clean canals for the past 4 weeks are good reasons of concern but on the other hand with the shutdown of industry, the manufacturing of environmental friendly cars and other technologies is delayed, the expected global recession in post-corona world will halt or slow down the shift to environment friendly energy consumption. The revival of industry in post-corona world won't be any good for environment as it was evident in 2008 recession and the 1970s oil crisis, carbon emissions bounced back.

2020 was the year of hope for economic prosperity

aiming at various bilateral agreements between US and China, ended uncertainty about Brexit and peace in Afghanistan but then came novel COVID-19. It is expected that the global economy will go in recession this year and with the growth of only 1.5 percent only, however, IMF has signaled a revision soon. The post Corona world won't be the same in terms of economic activity, global politics, health assurance or even cooperation among states. COVID-19 has exposed the fragility and vulnerability of globalization; beggar-thy-neighbor dynamics threaten to escalate as the crisis deepens.

Pandemic is reshaping the geopolitics of globalization; United States absence from global stage in the fight of Coronavirus as a global leader while Beijing's endless generosity is demonstrating a powerful strategy in order to alter the balance among spheres of influence on global stage. Self-serving approach of nations in time of crisis even in well-woven regional organization such as EU (beacon of hope for globalization) accompanied by overwhelming revival of nationalism and opposition of globalization has indicated initially slight but in longer terms complete revival of nation-states in west. Those who are well-prepared to combat this novel virus have competition on the question that either they will be hoarding resources only for themselves or will be sharing with those who are deprived, China has gone with the second choice unlike US or European countries, which is marking the beginning of Asian globalization mainly in Asia under the flag of China with the assistance of soft power.

*The writer is a student at Quaid-i-Azam University.*



## Briefs

**S Arabia reports 96 new COVID-19 cases**

APP

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has announced the detection of 96 new cases of COVID-19, taking the tally to 1,299. Spokesman of Saudi Health Ministry Dr. Mohammed Al-Abd Al-Aali disclosed in a press conference on Sunday evening that the confirmed cases covered many cities including 27 in Riyadh, 23 in Dammam, 14 in Madinah, 12 in Jeddah, seven in Makkah, five in Khobar, two in Dhahran, and one each in Qatif, Ras Tanoura, Saihat, Hafuf, Taif, Khamis Mushait and Tabuk. The country has had 66 recoveries and eight fatalities following the virus outbreak, Saudi Press Agency said. The Spokesman said of the four fatalities, two each were residents of Madinah and Jeddah. Al-Aali added that there were eight critical cases in Madinah, two in Riyadh, and one in each of Dhahran and Hafuf.

**Car sale, fell by 43.37%, 45.83%**

APP

ISLAMABAD: The sale and production of cars dipped by 43.37 percent and 45.83 percent respectively during eight months of financial year 2019-20 compared to corresponding period of last year. During the period under review, as many as 79,537 cars were sold against the sale of 140,462 units while the production of cars decreased from 151,753 units to 82,196 units, showing negative growth of 43.37 and 45.83 percent respectively, according to Pakistan automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). Among cars, the sale of Honda cars went down by 62.91 percent from 28,760 units in last year to 10,665 units during current year while Suzuki Swift sale also dipped by 54.52 percent from 3,224 units to 1,466 units during this year.

**CNIC condition should be deferred**

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Chemicals & Dyes Merchants Association (PCDMA) chairman and former director Karachi Stock Exchange Amin Yousuf Balmgawala has protested against notices sending to commercial importers and demanded to withdraw all notices. In a statement, chairman PCDMA has requested to waive all notices including income tax, sales tax, WHT and all proceeding in this regard for 2 months due to the worst economic crisis, as due to coronavirus pandemic, all the business activities have stopped and commercial importers are already facing huge financial crises.



HYDERABAD: People pounce upon a ration truck on Monday. – Jan Ali Laghari

**Businessmen want substantial package**

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The business community has expressed dissatisfaction over the financial package announced by the government to cope with the challenges posed by coronavirus, saying it must have taken more steps to give maximum relief to the poverty-stricken people. “However, we appreciate the PM’s incentives for the export industry, demanding to extend the same benefits to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which was being affected seriously in the wake of coronavirus pandemic”, observed Friends of Economic and Business Reforms (FEBR) President Kashif Anwar. In a statement issued here on Monday, he added that the government should have brought down the prices of the petroleum products to at least Rs75 per litre by announcing cut of Rs35 per liter to provide some visible relief to the people. He said that the current relief was not enough keeping in view of magnitude of the crisis. It is to be noted that the price of petroleum products has been slashed by just Rs15 as a breather for the public under a complete lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak in Pakistan. According to a notification issued by the federal finance ministry, after the cost reduction, petrol is available for Rs96.58 per litre. High diesel costs Rs107.25, while light diesel is being sold for Rs62.51 per litre.

## ADB approves \$2 million grant for Pakistan’s fight against COVID-19

*The grant, financed from the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund, will help fund the immediate purchase of emergency medical supplies, personal protective equipment, diagnostic and laboratory supplies, and other equipment*

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Monday approved a further \$2 million grant to support the government of Pakistan’s efforts to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the country. The grant, financed from the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund, will help fund the immediate purchase of emergency medical

supplies, personal protective equipment, diagnostic and laboratory supplies, and other equipment. It supplements an initial \$500,000 approved by ADB on 20th March which is already being deployed to support Pakistan’s procurement of emergency supplies through UNICEF. Taken together, this \$2.5 million in approved funding represents ADB’s immediate response for Pakistan, with further support to

follow, an ADB press release said. “ADB recognizes the extraordinary burden of this pandemic on Pakistan and is committed to supporting Pakistan in the fight to control COVID-19”, said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Xiaohong Yang. “This grant will help strengthen COVID-19 detection, improve infection prevention and control, and boost Pakistan’s capacity to respond to the pandemic.” ADB’s assistance echoes the

World Health Organization’s Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 and Pakistan’s National Action Plan for Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19), which includes preventive measures, containment efforts, and treatment of infected persons. Given the urgency of the required support, ADB will use the most flexible and expeditious approaches to facilitate procurement of the required medical supplies and

equipment. On 18th March, ADB announced an initial package of approximately \$6.5 billion to address the immediate needs of its developing member countries as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. ADB stands ready to provide further financial assistance and policy advice down the road whenever the situation warrants. Visit ADB’s website to learn more about our ongoing response.

## Air Chief grieved over Azam Khan death

DNA

KARACHI: Air Chief Marshal Muzahid Anwar Khan, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force has expressed his heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of legendary squash player Azam Khan who breathed his last in UK on Saturday. The Air Chief, who is also President Pakistan Squash Federation showed



ered praise upon one of the greatest squash players of all times, who died at the age of 95 year. Describing the legend

as an inspiration for the young squash players in the country, the Air Chief said that Azam Khan proved that hard work and focused approach would ensure success in fulfilling the desired objectives in one’s life. He further said that Azam Khan carried along the legacy of his elder brother Hashim Khan by winning four consecutive British Open crowns from 1959 to 1962.

## Punjab Governor asks philanthropists to help poor

APP

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Governor Chaudhry Sarwar Monday requested the philanthropists to come forward and help the daily wagers and the poor, as they have lost their livelihood due to the closure of trade and business activities because of the coronavirus in the country. “The Punjab

Talking to a private news channel, he urged welfare organizations and philanthropists to come forward and help the daily wagers and the poor, as they have lost their livelihood due to the closure of trade and business activities because of the coronavirus in the country. “The Punjab

government is using all available resources to mitigate difficulties and problems of needy and daily wagers”, he added. He said that the coronavirus was not just Pakistan’s problem, its a global pandemic and almost all the countries were fighting with the virus.

**Mir Shakil allowed to enquire after his ailing brother**

APP

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has allowed owner of Jang Group Mir Shakil ur Rehman to inquire after the health of his seriously ill brother Mir Javed ur Rehman on humanitarian ground, following the request of his son Mir Ibrahim ur Rehman. According to NAB press release, Mir Shakil has been allowed to go to Karachi for one day to meet his brother. It said Mir Shakil will be in the custody of NAB and added the authority to grant the remand or otherwise during custody rested with the relevant court. It said the accused or his family could contact the relevant court for getting transit remand.

## Development of health sector priority of PTI govt: Firdous

APP

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said on Monday that practical steps for the development of health sector were example of service to the nation in real sense. In a tweet she said that the facts and figures proved that health sector never remained priority of former rulers. They inaugurated various projects only for their self-projection, she added. She said that better health facilities for the people of Pakistan were top most priority of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government led



by Prime Minister Imran Khan. She said sizeable increase in health sector budget was reflection of the government’s sincere efforts to strengthen this important sector. She said that all national resources were being utilised to overcome coronavirus and with the grace of Allah Almighty the nation would defeat the pandemic.

**Moscow begins lockdown**

APP

MOSCOW: Moscow, with its more than 12 million people, went into lockdown on Monday while other parts of Russia moved to introduce similar steps to curb the coronavirus outbreak. The enforcement of the strict new rules, which Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin suddenly announced for the capital late Sunday, coincide with the beginning of a “non-working” week declared by President Vladimir Putin last Wednesday. Moscow, which has become the epicentre of the contagion in Russia, announced the new measures after many Muscovites failed to heed official recommendations to self-isolate and instead went to parks for barbecues at the weekend.

## China pledges to continue best help to Pakistan against Covid-19 pandemic

*“China and Pakistan are all weather strategic cooperative partners and iron friends. We have fine tradition of lending each other support and mutual assistance in the time of adversity”*

AGENCIES

BEIJING: China will continue to provide its best help to Pakistan against Covid-19 pandemic as both the countries have fine tradition of lending support and assistance to each other in the difficult time, Chinese Foreign Ministry’s Spokesperson Hua Chunying said on Monday. “China and Pakistan are all weather strategic cooperative partners and iron friends. We have fine tradition of lending each other support and mutual assistance in the time of ad-

versary,” she said while responding to a question of APP during her regular briefing held here. The spokesperson remarked that since the outbreak, Pakistan and its people had lent precious and timely support to China immediately and added, “We will never forget this and We will always bear in mind this precious friendship.” Expressing concerns over spread of novel coronavirus in different parts of Pakistan, she said “We totally relate to what they are experiencing.” Hua Chunying said the Chinese government had donated supplies such

as testing kits, masks, protective suits and ventilators to help Pakistan fight the disease. “And we will also help Pakistan to set up temporary makeshift hospital. Last week this hospital has been put into construction.” She informed that the Chinese side held a video conference with Pakistan’s health authorities to evolve a strategy against the pandemic. “We also invited Pakistan to attend the video conference on Covid-19.” Referring to medical team, organized by China’s National Health Commission and consisted of ex-

perts selected by the health commission of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region which was currently visiting Pakistan to provide consultations of pandemic control, patients treatment and laboratory works and guide and train Pakistani medical staff, she said, currently, the team was in Islamabad and was working nonstop. The medical team likely to stay in Pakistan for around two weeks would also visit Punjab and Sindh provinces. The spokesperson said, in addition, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

had donated supplies to Pakistan while China’s renowned Alibaba Group also provided medical supplies. This information was available online. “In addition, many friendly sister cities and provinces in China also donated the epidemic response and control materials to Pakistan and they are also joined by Red Cross Society,” she added. She pointed out that assistance and help extended by Chinese enterprises was also on the way, adding, “We will continue to provide our best possible help if necessary.”