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Islamabad POST

Steps taken to stabilize virus situation: Shavkat
Second batch of UAE medical supplies arrives

350 European citizens left for Frankfurt


PM hints at action against sugar mafia

Prime Minister says Sugar, wheat price hike reports release unprecedented in country's history; promises to protect interests of general public at all cost

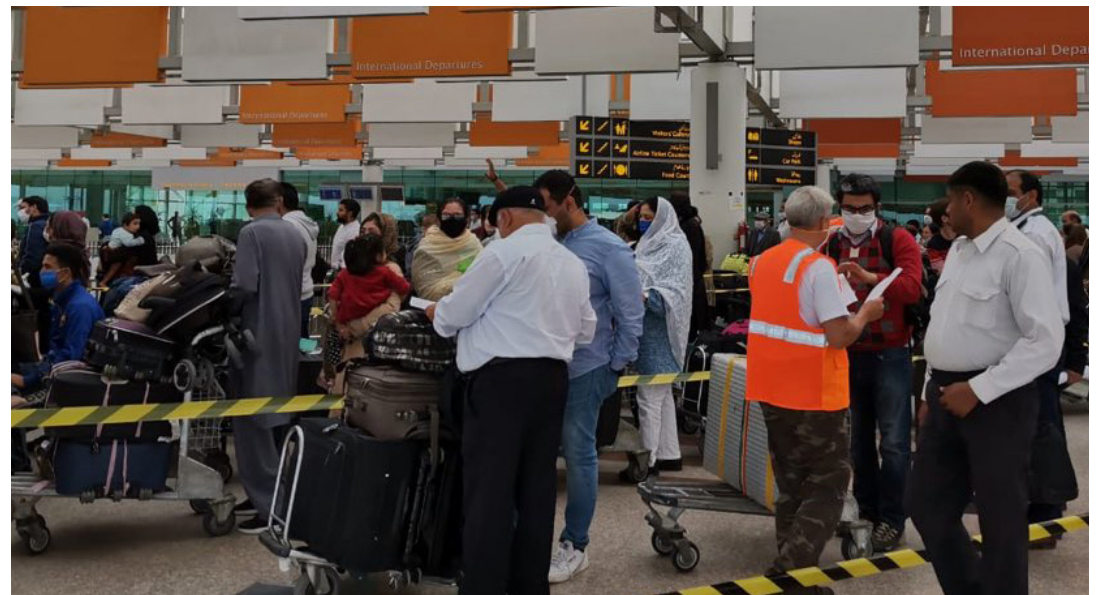
ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan reiterated his resolve on Sunday to take action against those responsible for sugar and wheat price hike after receiving detailed forensic reports on April 25. He said it was unprecedented in the country's history that preliminary reports into sudden price hike of these commodities were released without alteration.

Previously, the political clout with vested interests lacked the moral courage to order and make such reports public, he added. In a series of tweets posted on his twitter account, the prime minister said, "As promised preliminary reports into sudden price hikes of sugar & wheat have been released immed (immediately) without alteration/tampering. This is unprecedented in Pak's history. Prev (previous) pol (political) ldrships

(leadership) bec (because) of their vested interests & compromises lacked moral courage to order & release such reports." The prime minister further tweeted that he was waiting for a detailed forensic reports of the high powered commission on April 25, after which he assured the nation that no powerful lobby would be able to indulge in profiteering. "I await the detailed forensic reports now by the

high-powered commission, which will come out on 25 April, before taking action. InshaAllah, after these reports come out no powerful lobby will be able to profiteer at the expense of our public," he added. Meanwhile social and political circles have lauded prime minister for his bold stand by disallowing mafias to temper with the inquiry report. It was after his intervention that the inquiry team led by Wajid Zia continued its work.



ISLAMABAD: A flight left Islamabad on Saturday night with over 350 European citizens onboard bound for Frankfurt. The flight was facilitated by the European Commission. People seen in picture ready for boarding. – DNA

Briefs

Pakistan embassy in US goes online

DNA

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's ambassador to America Asad Majeed Khan talking on Sunday that the Pakistani embassy and consulate were providing their services online due to the global coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has continued to wreak havoc in the world whereas America has become one of the epicenters of the deadly pathogen.

77 Zaireen shifted to Jhang

JHANG: Seventy-seven Zaireen (pilgrims) have been shifted to their home district Jhang from Multan. They were shifted to quarantine center, established at Veterinary University Campus Jhang, where all arrangements have been made for looking after them. – APP

Govt to take action in the light of inquiry report: Firdous

DNA

SIALKOT: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan has said that the government will take stern legal action against the corrupt in the light of an inquiry report, against all those involved flour and sugar scandal. Talking to the media here on Sunday, she said that all the corrupt elements would have to face accountability and the government would never spare them. She said that

the inquiry report on the flour and sugar scandal had been made public by Prime Minister Imran Khan as he fulfilled the promise made to the public regarding sharing of the inquiry report with the public. Dr Firdous said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had also started strict self-accountability process in his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after the release of the inquiry report. She said that the government had fixed April 25, 2020 for the forensic report of all evidence presented in the inquiry report.

She said that now PM Imran Khan was promoting self-accountability as per his mission to make the country corruption-free, a new Pakistan as envisaged by the Father of the Nation Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as well. She said that the inquiry report had also exposed corruption of the Sharif family, as it clearly mentioned that Suleman Shehbaz, son of Shehbaz Sharif, also availed subsidy of Rs 1.30 billion. She asked Shehbaz Sharif to bring his corrupt son back to Pakistan and face the accountability process.

Pak Navy continues supporting people

ADNA YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy is extending support to needy families in current difficult state due to Corona Virus Pandemic. In coordination with various philanthropist associations, Pakistan Navy distributed food/ commodities while reaching out to indigent families in various cities/ towns across Pakistan. Thousands of ration bags (30 kg each) carrying basic food/ commodities were distributed to families of low paid employees of units & organizations and were also handed over to various Cantonments of

Karachi including Sindh Police for further distribution to needy people in different localities. Pakistan Navy while taking utmost care of fisherman community distributed 32 tons of ration at Shams Pir Island, Karachi. In Islamabad, dry ration was distributed to needy families at Kachi Abadi area whereas, over thousands kilogram of ration was handed over to Union Councilor, Kot Radha Kishan for further distribution in rural towns/ villages in Lahore. Pakistan Navy besides providing humanitarian assistance across Pakistan also conducting awareness campaigns to help in countering the challenge of ongoing Pandemic of Coronavirus.

Economic activities in Iran soon

TEHRAN: Iran said Sunday it will allow "low-risk" economic activities to resume from April 11 as its daily coronavirus infection rates slowed for a fifth straight day. "Restarting these activities does not mean we have abandoned the principle of staying at home," President Hassan Rouhani said at a meeting of Iran's anti-coronavirus task force. The president, whose country has been battered by US economic sanctions, did not specify what qualified as "low risk" activities but said bans would remain on schools and large gatherings. – APP

109 at Manga tested negative

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister on Information Ajmal Wazir said here Sunday that 109 persons had been tested negative in Union Council Manga in Mardan district. Addressing a news conference here, Ajmal Wazir said Manga UC with around 5,700 population had been lockdown. – APP

CPEC projects to meet deadlines

BEIJING: Pakistan Ambassador to China, Nagma Alamgir Hashmi has said that all the projects being completed under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework would meet their deadlines as all the preventives and control measures had been put in place against the spread of Covid-19.

"In consultation with the Chinese government and companies, we have put in place a double quarantine system for the Chinese workers returning to Pakistan after the New Year's vacations to ensure that other workers don't



infected," she made these remarks while speaking in "World Insight" of China Global Television Network (CGTN). The interview was conducted by one of top and celebrated Chinese anchorperson Tian Wei. She informed that the first phase of CPEC was almost near to completion as 90

percent of projects were already commissioned and the remaining were only months away from the finishing point.

When the novel coronavirus pandemic happened in China, the government of Pakistan didn't stop issuance of visa or impose any restriction on travelling between Pakistan and China to ensure that projects were continued and completed on time.

The double quarantine system also worked 100 percent and as a result there was not a single case of coronavirus that went to Pakistan from China and the projects didn't stop.

Over 600,000 register for T Force

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With the aim to work as a relief force for needy fractions of the society affected by coronavirus pandemic, almost 600,000 youth including 19,178 females from across the country has registered themselves in Corona Relief Tiger Force. As of Sunday, the latest number released by Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit (PMDU), a

total of 68,2518 citizens has registered and of these, 662977 are males, 19178 are females and 534 have been marked as others on the Citizens Portal while a Control Room had already been set up at the Prime Minister Office for monitoring the evolving situation. Punjab, being the biggest province population wise, was leading the numbers with 458419 members and of these, 444276 are males and 13923 are females while 341 are others.

Chinese experts meet Buzdar

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar on Sunday met with Chinese doctors and medical experts here on Sunday in Lahore. The meeting discussed the strategy to curb the outbreak of coronavirus in Pakistan. The participants also deliberated on promoting mutual cooperation and joint efforts to contain the virus.

Second batch of medical supplies from UAE arrives

Second phase of medical assistance to Pakistan is a pioneering model and a realistic evidence of the success of humanitarian efforts of the UAE leadership in their quest to provide support and assistance to the friendly people of Pakistani: Ambassador Hamad Al Zaabi

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The second batch of 11 tons of medical aid supplies provided by the UAE government to brothers in Pakistan to combat the Corona virus Covid 19 arrived at Islamabad Airport. Ambassador of UAE Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi, confirmed that upon the directives of leadership of UAE the second batch of medical aid containing 11 tones of medical supplies and

preventive aids provided by the government of the UAE to brothers in Pakistan to combat Corona virus arrived this Sunday morning to Islamabad International Airport. The UAE Ambassador stated that the arrival of the second batch of medical aid for Pakistan confirms the commitment of UAE and its leadership to stand by the people of Pakistan in this exceptional circumstances going through the world. He further added that the second phase of medical assistance



to Pakistan is a pioneering model and a realistic evidence of the success of humanitarian efforts of the UAE leadership in

their quest to provide support and assistance to the friendly people of Pakistani, which is an established approach in foreign policy since the era of founding father Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan «may Allah bless his soul» and continued and developed in the era of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of UAE. He added that bilateral relations between UAE and Pakistan are based on mutual affinity and respect, and these ties has flourished to partnerships

in many fields, stressing that friendship and close linkages between the two countries is a key element of this partnership. The Ambassador concluded his statement by saying that the core of bilateral relations is 'human' which is considered essential and basic focus in Emirates humanitarian policies, and there are many evidences of this fact embodied today by arrival of the second-air lifted medical and preventive aids to friendly people of Pakistan.

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Residents continue visiting trails

ISLAMABAD: The residents of the federal capital are continuing to visit trails despite lockdown for containing the pandemic of coronavirus in the country. Talking to APP, Assistant Director Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) Sakhawat Ali regretted the irresponsible behaviour of residents flouting the restriction to stay at homes for mitigating the risk of outbreak. He said: "IWMB staff and Islamabad Capital Territory Police officials are deputed at the entrance of all the Trails. However, the regular and expert hikers are using short routes and alternate passages to venture into the Margalla Hills National Park." Though the number was not that big yet it was a threat due to serious outbreak of Corona virus. – APP

Lok Virsa promotes culture

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage Lok Virsa is one of the largest publisher of the traditional and national music and culture. Lok Virsa has produced a set of 36 cultural documentaries and over 500 audio cassette labels of nation's cultural heritage. An official of Lok Virsa told APP that a professional state-of-the-art studio is operational and the mobile units which are well-equipped will capture/record event in any part of the country. He added that Audio and video cassettes, CDs, VCDs and DVDs produced by Lok Virsa are available in the market. – APP

Taxila Museum preserves Gandhara art

ISLAMABAD: Taxila Museum has preserved 1,400 Gandhara era artifacts and excavated ruins of Gandhara art. Much of the artifacts in Taxila Museum are from the Gandharan era and dated back from the 1st and 7th centuries CE. UNESCO recognizes many ruins in Taxila as World Heritage Sites, an official of the Museum told APP. He said that Taxila is still considered one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. Most of the objects in the museum come from between 600 BC and 500 AD. – APP

Death condoled

ISLAMABAD: Chairman, Pakistan Academy of Letters, Dr. Yusuf Khushk Sunday expressed condolences on the sad demise of renowned Pashto and Urdu researcher and critic Sher Afzal Khan Birkotti. In his condolence message, he said that Sher Afzal Khan Birkotti contributed valuable services to promote Pashto literature and worked actively for national unity. – APP

AIOU upgrades skill to promote early childhood education

It is expected that the postgraduate diploma program will produce quality early childhood education teachers / instructors and planners so that they can pursue career successfully

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University said on Sunday that it has provided an opportunity to the interested people to get post-graduate diploma in Early Childhood Education (ECE). According to a statement, AIOU said that the people could enroll themselves in this program through on-

line by April 15. Duration of the program is one year, spreading over two semesters (Six-month each). The AIOU took the initiative as the early childhood education is a unique and intensive program in the country. During the program, the prospective graduates will be introduced to ECE, child physical/social/emotional and cognitive development processes.

The graduate will learn about ECE curriculum, assessment, classroom management and art work. The program also aimed to equip the graduates with necessary quality training and skills for ECE. It is expected that the postgraduate diploma program will produce quality early childhood education teachers/instructors and planners so that they can pursue career successfully.

The AIOU has also launched postgraduate diplomas in ten other disciplines as well that include Mass Communication, Educational Planning and Management, Educational Leadership and Management, Supply Chain Management, Entrepreneurship, Population and Development, Computer Sciences (Through Online), Criminology, Human Resource Management

and TEFL. All these programs have been designed as per the market's needs that also helped to upgrade the professional skill of those people, who already working in the relevant fields. The eligibility criteria for the enrollment in the proposed programs could be checked in the university's prospects, or its website adms@aiou.edu.pk.



ISLAMABAD: Cops of Islamabad police donating blood. – DNA

Timesaco to provide foods in twins cities

ISLAMABAD: Chinese mobility services company, Timesaco has started the new instant services "Help Buy" a instant delivery mechanism under the platform of 'Tatu Mobility' to provide items of daily necessities to the needy as the service to the people through its Corporate Social Responsibility's (CSRs) mechanism in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Now Pakistan is suffering from the epidemic disease of coronavirus, which brought the difficulties for the people including the needy people

in all over the country. "Chief Executive officer Donald-Li said while talking to APP here. Recently "we have released FreshOne App to support the people for basic daily necessities of life in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, but it still cannot help everyone's for the basic living needs, due to the current circumstances. Timesaco has decided to unite tens of thousands of drivers on our platform from different cities to support citizens' mobility issues for purchasing items, he said. – APP

KIIR chief writes UN SG

ISLAMABAD: Veteran Hurriyat leader and Chairman Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) Altaf, Hussain Wani Sunday appealed the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres to mount pressure on India to revoke all anti-Kashmir laws including new domicile law, which violates the United Nations resolutions. In a statement issued here, he particularly mentioned the resolutions that provide basis and structure for final disposition of the state through a fair and free plebiscite conducted under the auspices of United Nations. – APP

Daily wagers awaiting donations

ISLAMABAD: The daily wagers and people holding minor jobs in the country have demanded of the authorities to provide them sufficient financial and other daily items donations as the novel COVID-19 virus has put devastated effects on their lives to meet the ends. Talking to this scribe of APP on Sunday, Sufi Saeed 33 resident of Rawalpindi and by profession a newspaper hawkker said that it was already hard for the poor section of the society to meet their ends that closure of trains, restaurants and decline in newspapers demand snatched away the hope of winning bread for a day even. "I used to deliver newspaper to more than 80 houses before corona virus spread which has been reduced to now 17 only, I was a shopkeeper at someone's shop but that was also closed now," he said. People were so scared of the corona virus pandemic disease that it stopped their habit of reading the newspapers as they thought newspaper could also transfer the particles of corona. – APP

Strong immune system to ward off coronavirus

SEEMA MIR

ISLAMABAD: A weak immune system makes the body prone to the attack of all sorts of diseases ranging from benign to the deadly ones; therefore, a strong immune system is quintessential to ward off the diseases. Now, the question is how to boost up the immune system? The health experts recommend a balanced diet, adequate amount of sleep spanning

over seven to eight hours and lots of liquids intake preferably water. As the saying goes, "You are what you eat", not only this much, eating a healthy or balanced diet successfully wards off bacterial and viral diseases, say doctors. They further say, besides following hygiene and social distancing, balanced diet is a must to emerge victorious in fight off against the deadly Coronavirus which is devouring scores of lives across the globe with

every passing moment. A balanced diet they say comprises vegetables, fruits, proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Vegetables and fruits have vitamins and minerals which provide energy to the body on daily basis to carry on the normal routine. One such fruit is lemon having loads of vitamin C which is helpful in fighting the diseases. A nutritionist Dr. Nosheen said lemon a vitamin C rich fruit available the year round was essential to fight off the viral and

bacterial diseases. "You can have it yourself and give it to your children in the form of lemon water," she added. Besides lemon, she recommended Bell pepper (Capsicum), garlic and ginger in the category of fruits and vegetables. Proteins including meat, eggs and milk were also part of balanced diet; she said adding, white meat having Omega-3 and Omega-6 was also recommended as these are essential for brain health, reduce anxiety and depression.

COMSATS holds startup founder workshop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: STEM education is important in sustainable growth of the country and also a critical component to win the future, STEM education creates critical thinkers, increases science literacy and enables the next generation of innovators", stated US-based

certified Scrum trainer and Agile coach, Ms. Cathy Simpson, during a Startup Founder Workshop organized recently by the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) at its Secretariat in Islamabad. Ms. Simpson, as a part of training, discussed contemporary market trends

and shared with the trainees some key attributes of a successful start-up. She highlighted the need of technical knowledge and soft skills development for the success of entrepreneurial ventures. According to her, team work, sound leadership, trust, effective planning and timely testing are essentials for better product development.

Lockdown shows decline in air pollution

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital on March 25 observed a virtual lockdown, to contain the risk of Coronavirus pandemic outbreak, that resulted in drastic decline in air pollution since the closure of traffic and public mobility in the metropolis. Deputy Director Labs Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Dr. Mohsina Zubair told APP that increased number of vehicles entering into the federal capital was the major source of air pollution. – APP

Govt policies laudable: VC

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor (VC), Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) Dr. Muhammad Umar said on Sunday that the policies of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government were commendable to cope corona pandemic. Talking to a private news channel, he said there was no cure to coronavirus in the world. The only way to prevent from gatherings and follow the guidelines provided by the government. – APP

Afridi warns UN against human crisis in Afghan camps

If Pakistan can roll out a special relief package for Afghan refugees, why can't the developed nations come to the rescue of the besieged refugees. Afghan refugees migrated due to the Afghan war under launched under UN umbrella. Now it is the responsibility of the UN and the world to help these refugees

RAJA FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Shehryar Khan Afridi on Sunday warned the Prosperous World and the United Nations against developing humanitarian crisis in Afghan refugees camps due to prolonged lockdown situation amidst Coronavirus outbreak. The Minister made these remarks while speaking to media here at Afghan Camp after installing a walk through sanitation gate at the camp. The Minister said that he had raised

funds for helping out the Afghan refugees stranded in camps due to lockdown situation. He said that on his request, Prime Minister Imran Khan had already directed the formation of a special relief package for Afghan refugees despite financial difficulties faced by the country. "If Pakistan can roll out a special relief package for Afghan refugees, why can't the developed nations come to the rescue of the besieged refugees. Afghan refugees migrated due to the Afghan war under launched under UN umbrella. Now it is the responsibility of the UN and the world to help these refugees," he said. Shehryar Afridi said that Paki-



stan was doing its bit to help out refugees despite the fact that Pakistan was not a signatory of the UN convention on refugees and its protocols. The Minister said that he had written a let-

ter to the Pakistan representative of United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, to immediately divert funds to provide food to besieged Afghans in refugee camps. "I would call upon the United Nations Secretary-General and UN High commissioner on refugees to please send food rations to these Afghans in camps who are mostly daily wagers. Failure is no option," he said and added that though the UNHCR had formed a crisis management cell on his request there was a need to turn measures into practical support. He said that food items need to be sent to Afghan refugees on war-footings as the refugees were out of food for two weeks.

Life after the lockdown

THE Coronavirus (COVID-19) has halted the world as we know it. The world of business and trade has to face serious repercussions. While some companies across the world have begun laying off their employees, many have announced a cut in salary. All this is happening ever since the world went under lockdown. The virus raised havoc across Europe especially in Italy and Spain among others. However, the COVID-19 showed the world the unstable health infrastructure of the United States of America. Many Americans are unable to pay the hefty price of getting treatment. The COVID-19 has also revealed the credibility of nations. Italy, with a GDP of nearly \$1.9 trillion, could not stand tall against the COVID-19 as it spread havoc across the country. Italy reported its first two deaths on February 22, 2020. However, Italy reported 793 deaths on March 21 alone.

The intensity by which the COVID-19 spread across Europe was unprecedented. Similarly, the United States of America could not fathom the COVID-19, obviously because of the slow response by its authorities and mainly because of the ignorance of their President. Jen Kates, director of global health and HIV policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation said, "Everyone working in this space would agree that no matter how you measure it, the US is far behind on this."

The average American may not consult a doctor for any sort of treatment because of the high bills associated with it. The COVID-19, in reality, was a death note for such Americans.

The world has changed drastically. With the employees now working from home and students not taking classes online, the Internet infrastructure present across the world has been sustaining the load of data transfer.

In these changing times, one wonders how people will react to once the lockdown ends. The environment has become clearer and purer ever since the humans went into isolation. Will we have a shift in our collective consciousness and appreciate what we took for granted before the lockdown? Or will we resume our life as if nothing happened?

The life after the lockdown will be different for many.

— **Muhammad Omar Iftikhar**



India pressured Assam tribunal: NYT

MEMBERS of official tribunals, set up in Assam to decide who was an Indian citizen and who was not, have said they felt pressured to declare Muslims non-citizens as the government seeks to expel illegal migrants, according to a dispatch published in The New York Times Saturday.

The newspaper said it interviewed one current and five former members of the Assam tribunals that review suspected foreigners. The five former members said they had felt pressured by the government to declare Muslims to be non-citizens, with three of them saying that they were fired because they did not do so. "I was punished," Mamoni Rajkumari, a 54-year-old lawyer who spent nearly two years on the tribunal and was among the dismissed members, was quoted as saying by the Times.

In addition to the tribunals, which Assam has operated for decades, the state has also recently completed a broader, separate review of every resident's paperwork to determine if they were citizens.

That review found that nearly two million of Assam's 33 million residents, many of them desperately poor, were possibly foreigners. Now this group — which is disproportionately Muslim — is potentially stateless, the dispatch said. "What's happening in Assam is a preview of what may be coming to India as a whole as Prime Minister Narendra Modi tries to pull the country away from its foundation as a secular, multicultural nation and turn it into a more overtly Hindu state," The times correspondents — Karan Deep Singh and Suhasini Raj — wrote in their joint dispatch.

Assam state and central government officials declined to comment, according to the report. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party has its roots in a Hindu nationalist worldview, and during last year's national elections, party leaders vowed to apply the same type of citizenship checks used in Assam to the rest of India, the Times said, while noting Modi's recent denial.

In December, the Indian government passed a sweeping new immigration law that gives a fast track to citizenship for undocumented migrants from nearby countries as long as they are Hindu or one of five other religions — only Muslims were excluded. "The upshot is that any Hindus left off Assam's citizenship lists after its broad review, or declared by tribunals to be foreigners, will likely be affirmed as citizens because of the new immigration law. Muslims may not," the dispatch said.

Even before the citizenship review, an indigenous rights movement in Assam, in northeast India on the border of Bangladesh, had been agitating for the government to expel foreigners, it was pointed out.

Will the COVID 19 pandemic bring peace?

Sherry Rehman



When rich, developed countries like the US struggle to cope with epicenter numbers, policy leaders in the two nuclear countries of South Asia need to reassess strategic priorities. Regional competition and the failure of markets to distribute resources or to provide public goods such as health services is teaching global leaders harsh lessons in social justice and the wages of growing inequality. We must learn them too

to shape rapid responses to the crisis, a tiny protein molecule is re-shaping the world that we knew.

In this moment of epochal challenge, it is important to question fundamental choices that put us at risk, while looking at broader faultlines that caught us so badly unprepared. As countries lock down borders to fight the transmission rate, which they must do in a series of first-responses to suppress, contain and mitigate, an opportunity to review the 21st-century retreat from multilateralism has obviously arisen. What about South Asia, with its creaky infrastructure, big populations and cramped cities and water-starved ecology? When rich, developed countries like the US struggle to cope with epicenter numbers, policy leaders in the two nuclear countries of South Asia need to reassess strategic priorities. Regional competition and the failure of markets to distribute resources or to provide public goods such as health services is teaching global leaders harsh lessons in social justice and the wages of growing inequality. We must learn them too.

Given sobering limits on our ability to map the viral spread or screen numbers, Pakistan is clearly at a growing trajectory of risk, like other nations of South Asia, which are connected by a huge youth demographic, acute climate stress and social support systems that are poised at the edge of a breakdown. At this point of time, early suppression in South Asia could save approximately five million lives, but if we cross the mark and carry on with poor mitigation, our region could see 7.5 million deaths over the next eight months. The social and economic costs will be very high in South Asia, where the daily wage-earner and small entrepreneur is acutely vulnerable to economic lockdowns, so the choices are doubly difficult. The choices are only actually between contained bush fires or one big raging, forest fire.

With unpredictability as the new normal India and Pakistan, given their wide-ranging HDI and climate risks, both must return to thinking of themselves as a region before they take the sovereignty straitjacket as their only policy framework. First, like all natural disasters, pandemics like this one should delegitimize the science-denialist politics of ultra-nationalism. Current calculations point to 30,000 deaths in India by end of May, (according to The Print). Pakistan may do no better. The UN, in fact, has put Pakistan at the centre of many dangers as lack of testing-capacity

compounds systemic and structural problems.

In these two countries, particularly India, the politics of populism has done much damage. If left-of-centre opposition parties in India and Pakistan have been accused of lending to the long-term governance rot, then what have the new illiberal democracies done to address emerging crises? In Pakistan, Sindh under the PPP has demonstrated clear and visible leadership in making tough decisions by not positing the false choice of lives-versus-livelihoods in a dangerously confused policy mix. In India, in Kerala the state government ruled by the Communist Party (M) is known to be handling the crisis with more empathy and efficiency than Delhi. Modi has woken up late to curbing the transmission burn rate of Covid-19, but has thrown up huge social exclusions in his lockdown applications. None of these holds the promise of early containment of the pandemic, unfortunately.

Despite the systematic dismemberment of Saarc by India, done only to foil Pakistan's membership, Modi's sudden operationalization of Saarc has been one step to which Islamabad still responded. And for Pakistan, populist government or not, an invitation to peace remains a prospect rarely ignored. Once the pandemic flattens its transmission curve, will India think rationally about the future, or continue its rash trajectory to deepening conflict? Responses will tell us if mortality and morbidity emerge as first policy priorities or old-school muscle-flexing.

If Covid-19 deaths remove the denialism blindfold on the transformational value of cooperation lost in conflict, the two nuclear neighbours can agree to a calibrated lowering of tensions, which include steps on Kashmir, where thousands suffer a double-burden of security-curfew trauma as well as coronavirus shocks. The Siachen glacier, which has the dubious distinction of being the highest altitude battlefield in the world, remains a surreal low-news reminder of how both India and Pakistan continue to lose soldiers' lives from temperatures, not bullets. What the indication of flexibility by New Delhi on Kashmir may do is improve confidence levels in dialogue between two neighbours whose conflict has held back any regional dividends of economic growth, energy connectivity, trade optimization to reduce poverty, climate cooperation on water, air and carbon negotiations at all forums.

A whole set of policy priorities already jostle at the table of collective human, food and water security. An alternate future could be ours for the taking. One urgent problem Saarc states could address collectively, after sharing emergency resources, is a discussion on health spending as percentage of GDP, and the opening of visa regimes to health tourism.

Right now, Pakistan and India face first-response gaps on mobilizing emergency services, with Pakistan spending less than one percent of GDP on healthcare, and India less than two percent. Even in the direct context of Covid-19, where access to clean water is the first frontline in the fight against the virus, the two face formidable challenges. Unicef's WASH program says that between 68 and 84 percent of water sources in South Asia are contaminated. Salinity and arsenic affects 60 percent of the underground supply water across the Indo-Gangetic basin. In Pakistan, where multidimensional poverty runs higher than 40 percent, and 60 percent are food insecure, the task of providing clean water and nutrition to an exposed population is going to be very tough. Much of the same applies to India, where two-thirds live in poverty, and even without a pandemic to hit crisis buttons, by 2030 half the population of India will not have access to drinking water.

Economic recovery from the pandemic will be a global problem, with a dollar tag of \$2.7 trillion, and recession will only be one of the fallout. The ADB predicts that the outbreak will cost India losses ranging from \$387 million to \$29.9 billion, while Pakistan would take a hit of \$16.387 million to \$4.95 billion. A shrinking social pie may well bring on more exclusionary policies in India, which holds the key to peace in South Asia, but it will not disconnect the region, nor change geography, nor the map of possibilities open to smart regional politics. 'Connectographists' like Parag Khanna in fact, suggest that supply chains will continue to integrate in Asia, irrespective of cold warriors like Pakistan and India's disconnect. It will be a test of leadership for all, especially in New Delhi, that they use this crisis as an opportunity for a reset, or to plunge the region into further waves of cold war. After living through a shared history where the only war effort should have been a common (possibly-recurring) enemy, the pandemic experience could be the moment to radically re-shape regional futures.

Future of Artificial Intelligence lies at the heart of Asia

Mariam Javed Asghar

Japan facilitates the value chain which moves from largest semiconductors and chipmakers-Samsung and Sk Hynix in South Korea to the host countries of global producers of semiconductors foundries; China and Taiwan. Apple, NVIDIA and Qualcomm rely on Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) to manufacture the graphics chips. At the end of the day, despite the division of processing among nations, the end product is physically fabricated in Asia

Alan Turing, a genius British mathematician widely regarded as the intellectual father of modern computer science and artificial intelligence, he once said in 1949, when only handful computers existed in the world that, "This is only a foretaste of what is to come and only the shadow of what is going to be". Turing remarks remain true today. Most of the technological promises of future have somehow come true as 'Internet of Things'(IoT) permeated everyday life. Consumers eagerly await the next phase in digital revolution; when the autonomy; already acquired for the sky-multi-tasking drones will reach to land with abundant and easily accessible self-driving electric cars, buses, trucks and autonomous vehicles ferrying people from one place to another.

The debate of AI is dominant by two different school of thoughts, the first fear 'singularity', an event in which AI will escape human control and exceeds human intelligence which in fact represent a quite horrifying picture, the other is concerned with disruption of societal web and replacement of humans from almost every sector. While the futurologists and networking pioneers often talk about the marvelous future of AI, Big Earth Data and machine learning promise to revolutionize the world, few ever concerned where the materials-on which new digital world depends-come from or what will happen if the supplies either dry up or the possessor of those materials use it as political weapon. Rare-earths were weaponized by China in 2010, when Beijing cut off supplies to Japan after Chinese fishing trawler collided with a Japanese coast guard vessel near disputed islands and in recent US-China trade war, rare-earths were once again at the table to have leverage over US. Rare earths-a group of 17 metals-are embedded in our digital lives; essential for everything from super-magnets, batteries, actuators, and laptops to weapon, laser and missile systems and China is the leading player at all stage of re-

re-earths processing. From 1960s to the 1980s, US was the leading producer of rare-earths but now it is the biggest importer and around 80 percent of these supplies are dependent on China. When Deng Xiaoping visited the Inner Mongolian rare earth production area of Baotou in 1987, he made a shrewd prediction: "The Middle East has its oil, China has rare earths." Rare-earths are no less significant in present world than oil and China seized the opportunity and now leading the global rare-earths production.

Despite of addition of new producers in this field, China is still responsible for 60 percent of global production. A major part is exported to Japan which produce fluorinated polyimides, photoresists and hydrogen fluoride (three materials that were targeted in Japan-South Korea dispute in 2019). South Korea, Taiwan and even China then import these manufactured materials from Japan which is responsible for 90% of fluorinated polyimide and photoresists, along with 70% of etching gas worldwide. Japan facilitates the value chain which moves from largest semiconductors and chipmakers-Samsung and Sk Hynix in South Korea to the host countries of global producers of semiconductors foundries; China and Taiwan. The region has become a hotspot for semiconductor industry and according to a recent report by Deloitte AI will experience explosive growth, AI semiconductor scene has seen a race not just at the application level, but also at the semiconductor chip level. China has become a source of income for top global semiconductor companies, many of which generate over half of their revenue from China. The Chinese government has launched "Made in China 2025," a state-led industrial policy that seeks to make China dominant in global high-tech manufacturing. The plan highlighted 10 priority sectors, which include new-generation information technology; advanced numerical control machine tools and robotics. As part of the plan, the Chinese government seeks

to grow its domestic semiconductor industry output to \$305 billion by 2030, satisfying 80 percent of domestic demand, prior to this plan, Chinese producers met 29 percent of domestic demand, now the number has reached to 49 percent. China is also helping its Asian neighbors to take a step in the world of AI, for instance the establishment of Artificial Intelligence Centre of Excellence in Pakistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan have a very fascinating and complex geo-tectonic setting in terms of plate tectonics concepts composed of a collage of continental blocks that came together over the past 15 million years and have all major mineral deposits including rare earths but as a matter of fact, most of areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan are unexplored to the exact and accurate potential of these countries is unknown to date.

Rare-earths-the key to high-tech-are not rare in contrast these are present in abundance what makes them rare is the processing facility and currently China is enjoying this global dominance of rare-earth mineral processing, it will take years for American companies to win this race. In US, only three companies have processing plants which are under construction or still stuck at early stages, one is set to open this year at Mountain Pass mine, California, the other won't be operational until 2022. So, Asian nations will continue to dominate global production of rare-earths for years and hence provide a key to the marvelous world of AI and other technological innovations. The race for technological dominance has changed the battlefield among nation-states, now it relies more on bytes and bits and replaced 'arms race' with 'AI race'. The real danger comes not from AI advancement but the desire to win this race in order to dominate, this perception of race will prompt every nation to rush to deploy AI systems irrespective of their reliability or safety. The real threat will not come from robots but from maniac humans in charge.

Briefs

Trump warns of 'lot of death' in coming week

UNITED NATIONS: President Donald Trump has said that this week and the next will probably be the toughest for the United States in the fight against the coronavirus, and that "there will be a lot of death." So far, more than 8,000 people in the U.S. have died from the virus, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. The U.S. has more confirmed cases of COVID-19 than any other country in the world, with more than 300,000 people infected. "This will be probably the toughest week," Trump told reporters at a White House press briefing on COVID-19 Saturday afternoon, which was carried live by major television networks. "There will be a lot of death, unfortunately, but a lot less death if this was not done," Trump continued, referencing the steps the federal government has taken to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus. — APP

China rights lawyer released

BEIJING: A leading Chinese human rights lawyer has been released from prison after almost five years behind bars, his wife said Sunday. Wang Quanzhang, 44, was first detained in 2015 in a sweeping crackdown on more than 200 lawyers and government critics in China as President Xi Jinping tightened his grip on power. But Wang has yet to return home to his family in the Chinese capital and was instead escorted Sunday to a property he owns in eastern Shandong province for 14 days in quarantine as a precaution against the coronavirus, according to wife Li Wenzu. — APP

87 martyred in IOK

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Occupied Kashmir, Indian troops have martyred 87 Kashmiris including 3 women during the ongoing 8-month long siege and lockdown in the territory. According to a report released by the Research Section of Kashmir Media Service, Sunday, on the completion of eight months of unrelenting military siege and lockdown, today, after India had revoked the special status of occupied Kashmir on 5th August, last year, and put the territory under military siege, Kashmir Media Service reported. The report said that during the period, at least 956 people were critically injured due to use of brute forces, firing of bullets, pellets and tear-gas shells on peaceful demonstrators by Indian military, paramilitary and police personnel in the occupied territory.

National Museum of Azerbaijan among best 10 history museums of CIS



BAKU: The National Museum of History of Azerbaijan of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) has been included in the list of 10 best history museums of the CIS, ANAS told APA. National Museum of History of Azerbaijan ranks in the sixth place in the rating of best museums for visit and virtual excursions on history and culture of CIS countries. Rating has been organized by TurStat tourism portal according to the popularity of museums and results of analysis of virtual tour suggestions of museums. — DNA

OIC rejects illegal changes in IOJ&K demography

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has rejected any attempt made by the Indian governments towards illegally changing the demogra-

phy of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir territory. The secretariat in a press release on Sunday expressed its deep concern over the adoption of the 'Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Order 2020' by the Indian government. Recalling the OIC Summit

decisions and Council of Foreign Ministers resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, the General Secretariat reaffirmed its solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It also called upon the international community to accelerate its efforts to re-

solve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It further maintained that the IOJ&K has been a disputed territory as recognized by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

The OIC General Secretariat rejects any attempt towards illegally changing the demography of Jammu and Kashmir territory. Recalling the OIC Summit decisions and Council of Foreign Ministers resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, the General Secretar-

iat reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir and reiterates its call on the international community to accelerate its efforts to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

APBF wants cut in sales tax

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The All Pakistan Business Forum, appreciating government's various incentives for the industry, has asked the authorities to also announce some tax relief, reducing sales tax ratio

and import duties on industrial raw material so that cost of production could be dropped. APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the SBP is providing liquidity to banks and Development Finance Institutions for onwards lending to SMEs at dis-

counted rates under different refinance schemes and it is the government responsibility to get it implemented fully. He said that in the wake of slowdown in global demand due to the novel coronavirus, the State Bank has introduced relaxations for exporters to

help alleviate the current crisis. The central bank already offered two lending programmes of Export Finance Schemes and Long-Term Financing Facility to banks worth Rs660 billion for extending cheap credit lines to exporters, which is a good step.

Air India flight gets message

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The coronavirus knows no borders but amid the death and disease, it is helping bring people together. It recently created a moment of camaraderie between neighbours and longtime rivals Pakistan and India. When a special Air India flight evacuating European nationals from India to Frankfurt crossed over Pakistan, it received a special message from an Air

Traffic Controller. "It was a very proud moment for me as well as the entire Air India crew when we heard from Pakistan ATC praising our special flight operations to Europe," one of the senior captains of the special flights told. Once the flight confirmed its position and was cleared to exit the space, the air controller gave them a special message. "We are proud of you that in a pandemic situation you are operating flights. Good luck!"

PALPA stops pilots

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airline Pilots' Association (PALPA) on Sunday prohibited pilots from operating special flights after COVID-19 related

SOPs have been ignored. "It has come to our notice that on recently operated "humanitarian flights" safety has been compromised and COVID-19 related SOPs have been ignored," reads a statement released by PALPA.

Child aged five among new UK victims

LONDON: Britain on Saturday reported a record 708 daily deaths from COVID-19, including a five-year-old child, who is thought to be the country's youngest victim. The health ministry said 4,313 people who tested positive for the virus in hospital had died as of 1600 GMT Friday while there were 41,903 confirmed cases as of 0800 GMT Saturday, up 3,735. The toll has been steadily increasing by more than 500 deaths a day this week and the country is bracing for an expected peak in the next week to 10 days. — APP

China's safety model useful

LAHORE: Coronavirus outbreak has shaken the huge global health system and economies, but the way China stepped up to contribute to the response by accomplishing their tasks including updating infrastructure, fighting misinformation and providing virtual work and awareness tools is surprising. Various news reports from China have revealed that during the last week, only one new case of coronavirus infection was reported from the origin city of the disease, Wuhan. — APP

15 cases of coronavirus in Dir

DIR LOWER: A total of 15 Coronavirus tested positive out of 56 reports submitted to laboratory with 41 have been declared as negative, Focal Person and Deputy District Health Officer for Crises Management Cell Dir Lower Dr. Irshad Ali Roghani informed media here on Sunday. He said there were 11 positive cases on Saturday last, so the report of four more positive cases came reached upto 15 out of 56 simple submitted for tests and the result of 41 have been negatives, which is very positive sign. — APP

Steps taken to stabilize virus situation in Uzbekistan: Shavkat Mirziyoyev

100 thousand people have been quarantined. At the same time, almost 13 thousand of our citizens have been returned to the country, who are also under quarantine

DNA

TASHKENT: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev chaired a video conference on business support in the context of countering the crisis caused by coronavirus pandemic. Before discussing the agenda, the Head of the state again addressed people. — Today the whole world and humanity are going through difficult times. All measures are being taken in Uzbekistan to stabilize the epidemiological situation and fully protect the health of the population. The number of detected cases of coronavirus infection has reached 221. Unfortunately,

despite the provided medical assistance, two patients died. On my own behalf and on behalf of all our people, I express my deep condolences to their families and relatives, wish them patience and strength. 100 thousand people have been quarantined. At the same time, almost 13 thousand of our citizens have been returned to the country, who are also under quarantine. A quarantine zone is being created in Tashkent region that can accommodate 10 thousand people. More than 2.2 thousand citizens who returned from abroad have already been placed here. 2 virology hospitals with 10 thousand beds are being built in Zangiata district. In the coming



days, buildings for 2 thousand beds will be put into operation. To date, 245,000 tests and about 700,000 protective equipment have been imported and delivered to medical institutions. The activity continues. Diagnosis and treatment, quarantine measures are carried out based on the recommendations of the World Health

Organization and best foreign experience. Qualified doctors from South Korea have arrived and are involved in treatment of patients. A group of Chinese specialists is expected to arrive. In addition, our doctors are conducting constant video communication with foreign colleagues and exchanging experience. It should be noted that systemic measures are yielding results. 25 patients were fully recovered and transferred to rehabilitation. Taking this opportunity, once again I express my deep gratitude to our selfless and noble doctors who have shown courage and perseverance in the forefront of this struggle. I am grateful to our people and my dear compatriots who un-

derstand the situation correctly and actively support us. At the same time, we have to state with great regret that, despite all warnings and explanations, quarantine rules in some places continue to be violated. To date, more than 22 thousand such cases have been identified, 330 people have escaped from quarantine zone. Nothing can justify the fact that during the quarantine period, some irresponsible individuals held 24 various ceremonies with mass participation of people. Strict measures will be taken against this recklessness that endanger the lives of all our people. I also signed a resolution on the financial support for cotton-textile clusters that are just getting

back on their feet, which today create many new jobs in rural areas. According to the resolution, the term of repayment of loans that they received in 2019 for cotton harvesting is extended until October 1. Our people, no matter what severe cataclysms they have experienced in their history, with the help of Allah, their strength, restraint and wisdom, have always overcome them. I have full confidence in the insight, strong will and determination of our brave, resilient and caring people. No person or family in Uzbekistan will be left without attention and care of the state and society! May Almighty protect all of us and save our people and all mankind from this scourge!