



Islamabad POST

Monday, April 13, 2020

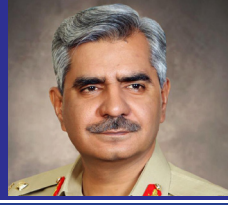
Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Global initiative on debt relief a must, says PM Imran Khan

Indian troops target civilian population

Int'l community to help Pakistan against virus



Briefs

117 deaths in Iran reported

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday announced 117 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, bringing the overall official toll to 4,474, even as it eased some restrictions that had been imposed to slow the spread of the illness. Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour also told a news conference that 1,657 new infections had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 71,686. Iran has carried out 263,388 tests for the virus so far, he added. Of those confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 and admitted to hospitals, 43,894 have recovered and been discharged, while 3,930 are in a critical condition. — APP

President, PM greet Christians on Easter

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday greeted Christians, particularly the Pakistani citizens, on the sacred occasion of Easter celebrated on the day. "Please stay safe and keep your families safe during the COVID-19 pandemic by praying and celebrating at home and by observing the national safety protocols," the prime minister said in a tweet. In a separate message, President Alvi conveyed his sincere wishes to the Christian community and said that the Christian as well as other minorities were equal citizens of the state and their rights had fully been safeguarded by the constitution of Pakistan. He said that the true message of Easter was love, joy and happiness.

Less workforce to affect CPEC

Some replacements may not materialise and some expired visas and passports may not be renewed in due course. On the other hand, the local employees form the bulk of the work force of the projects, there is a high risk that the current status quo may not be maintained and replacements may be delayed. These will more or less impact the operation and implementation of the projects; pandemic may cause many legal issues based on force majeure

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Inadequate supply of workforce in wake of COVID-19 could affect China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as in the case of other sectors of national development. Gwadar Pro App quoting Li Bijian, China's consul-general based in Karachi, said no sector could escape from the effects of the deadly disease. The risk of contraction of the virus may impact negatively on the steady supply of the work force for CPEC projects. Shielding the work force at every

CPEC project from contraction of the virus forms the top priority at present. Along with the rise of confirmed cases, in case some cities or regions become the epicenter and large number of people are infected, these will surely add more pressures to the management of each project. If there occurs infection, tough measures of isolation as well as prevention will be applied which will impact in varying degree on the implementation of the projects based on how many people will be affected. This may lead to the risk of reduction of work force. Some replacements may not materialise

and some expired visas and passports may not be renewed in due course. On the other hand, the local employees form the bulk of the work force of the projects, there is a high risk that the current status quo may not be maintained and replacements may be delayed. These will more or less impact the operation and implementation of the projects. Ever since the outbreak of the epidemic early this year, every project has been taking stringent preventive measures with strong support rendered by the Pakistan Federal and Provincial governments together with the

Special Protection Forces. The Chinese side has been taking strictest measures to screen and check the inbound personnel from China, and so far there is not a single imported case from China. And Zero contraction target has occurred and maintained in all projects till now. And all the projects are operating smoothly according to schedule. Secondly, the import and shipment of the equipment, spare parts, materials, etc., may not be made on time and may affect the smooth operation, and cause delays in implementation of some projects. The lock-down of the cities and provinces, and closure of government

and business offices may cause delays in clearance by the customs, handling and transporting of the relevant goods. Thirdly, the pandemic may cause many legal issues based on force majeure. This may add more burdens to the relevant companies.

In short, the less the pandemic prolongs the smaller the effect on CPEC. If the pandemic prolongs a longer period of time, the bigger the effect will be. But one thing is clear and that is also the advantage Pakistan has, the quick recovery of China after her winning the preliminary battle against the pandemic, Li Bijian added.

PM for global steps on debt relief

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan, today, appealed for a "Global Initiative on Debt Relief". While noting that COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented health and economic challenges, the Prime Minister underlined that a global recession was certain, one worse than the Great Depression. A global pandemic cannot be contained without strong, coordinated and well-crafted global response, he stressed. The Global Initiative on Debt Relief will bring together stakeholders on a platform to promote coordinated health and economic response. During the past week, various announcements have been

made by multilateral actors such as the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank. The announcements made include initial relief packages of US \$ 1.4 billion by the IMF, and US \$ 1 billion by the World Bank. Prime Minister Imran Khan invited the Secretary General to work with him in advancing the objectives of a coordinated response. The proposed Global Initiative aims to lay ground for urgent debt relief to the developing countries, at their request, and without onerous conditionalities. The Initiative is built on the Prime Minister's belief that enhanced fiscal capacity is fundamental to recovery from the ongoing pandemic crises. The Prime Minister cautioned that the pandemic's

socio-economic impacts would be more consequential in the developing countries.

While proposing the Initiative, the Prime Minister highlighted that his Government had provided a \$ 8 billion stimulus package to help the most vulnerable Pakistanis.

Noting the United Nations Secretary-General's call for action, the Prime Minister also urged world leaders to step up measures to help developing countries to overcome disastrous impacts of COVID-19. He proposed that the developing countries be provided with fiscal space and financial relief through enhanced debt relief and restructuring and other additional measures that could help them manage the unfolding crisis.



ISLAMABAD: PM Chairs meeting on COVID-19. — DNA

Virus deaths rise in India

NEW DELHI: Coronavirus cases in Mumbai's densely populated Dharavi slum - one of Asia's biggest - have risen to 43 including four deaths, officials said Sunday as they ramp up testing in a race to contain the spread of the illness. Since the first virus death in early April, Indian authorities have stepped up measures to close off areas where cases have emerged in Dharavi, which is home to around a million people. But 15 new cases and one death were reported overnight, taking the number of infections to 43. — APP

Indian troops target civilian population

In Chirikot Sector, a 35 years old innocent civilian resident of Serian village got injured: DG ISPR

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General Inter Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar Sunday said the Indian Army troops resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation late last night along the Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary in Chirikot and Shakargar Sectors deliberately targeting civilian population. In a tweet, the DG ISPR said the Indian troops

made indiscriminate fire of mortars in Chirikot Sector along LoC and Shakargar Sector that left two innocent civilians injured. "In Chirikot Sector, a 35 years old innocent civilian resident of Serian village got injured and in Shakargar Sector along Working Boundary, 57 years old citizen resident of village Nangal sustained serious injuries," he added. The DG ISPR informed that both injured have been evacuated and being provided with medical care.

Growth in South Asia to fall: WB report

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) in its recent report released on Sunday estimated that GDP growth in South Asian countries would fall to a range between 1.8 and 2.8 percent in 2020, down from 6.3 percent projected six months ago.

That would be the region's worst performance in the last 40 years, with temporary contractions in all South Asian countries, says the World Bank in its twice-a-year-regional update. In case of prolonged and broad national lockdowns, the latest South Asia Economic Focus report warns of a worst-case scenario in which the entire region would experience a negative growth rate this year.

Uzbek president's assistance to the people of Belarus

DNA

TASHKENT: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev sent friendly assistance to the people of Belarus. The help of the head of state will support the friendly people of Belarus in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, which today has spread around the world. The cargo, which was



formed by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Uzbekistan, included medical masks and gloves, protective overalls, antiseptics and other

medical items necessary to combat coronavirus. Friendly assistance will be delivered to Minsk by plane of the Ministry of Defense of Uzbekistan.

EU to support agri, rural uplift in Azerbaijan

The European Union's support to regional and rural development is one of the key priorities in our cooperation with Azerbaijan

DNA

BAKU: The European Union Delegation to the Republic of Azerbaijan has informed that 4 grant contracts in the area of the agriculture with the total value of about 2 million Euro and the duration of 24 months were registered at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The grants aim to support the strengthening and diversification of rural incomes by promoting local food concepts and developing local agricultural advisory services networks. "The European Union's support to regional and rural development is one of the key priorities in our

cooperation with Azerbaijan. In this regard I warmly welcome the registration of our recent grant contracts that will provide practical support to small and medium agri-business owners throughout Azerbaijan, help them develop their businesses further, create jobs and generate profits. I am particularly pleased to see that support to vulnerable groups and women features high on the agenda of these grants," said Ambassador Kestutis Jankauskas, Head of the European Union Delegation. "Given the negative impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on rural communities I do expect that these projects within the limits of their scope also help improve the prospect for economic

recovery of project beneficiaries in the post COVID 19 period," the ambassador added.

The four new grant contracts will envisage:

*Promotion of the local food production and small and medium farms through advisory services, the creation of new value chain models and agri-tourism development in Shaki-Zagatala and Mountainous Shirvan areas; *Establishment of the local farmers group of pomegranate producers and support of their transformation and achievement of excellence in pomegranate value chain, including in training them on use of pesticides, fertilizers to ensure food safety in the Aran Economic Region;

*Creation of a sustainable agri-tourism and ecotourism development mechanism that will help rural households in southern regions of Azerbaijan increase their revenue;

*Promotion of authentic local food heritage through strengthening female agripreneurship and increased income generation through development of new market opportunities, creative branding and marketing, and innovative agricultural inputs in all regions of Azerbaijan. The project will include also the establishment of the Baku-based food heritage women's café. It should be noted that 2 other grant projects in the area of agriculture were signed earlier,

namely on development of sustainable and inclusive local agri-food systems in Gakh, Zagatala and Balakan and on assistance to farmers to develop the sustainable value chains on soft fruit and vegetable production in Barda, Aghdam, Tartar, Goranboy, Samukh, Goygol, Shamkir, Tovuz, Aghstafa and Gazakh regions. All 6 above-mentioned EU-funded contracts valued at 3.5 million are part of EU's AP 2015 - Integrated Regional Development of Azerbaijan programme that aims to support regional development by contributing to business development, investment promotion and employment generation, while raising rural livelihoods and quality of life in rural areas.

Taliban release prisoners

KABUL: The Taliban said it would on Sunday release the first prisoners in a delayed exchange deal with the Afghan government - a potential breakthrough after the insurgents walked out of talks with Kabul last week.

The announcement comes as fears rose that an avenue for fragile peace talks between the two sides was being undercut by mounting disagreements over the prisoner swap, considered key to paving the way for negotiations. — APP

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Kasuri family pledges Rs 60 mln for fund

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Kasuri family and the Mahmud Ali Kasuri (MAK) Welfare Trust have pledged a combined Rs 60 million (6 crore) towards the Covid-19 crisis engulfing the country. Of this, the Trust and the Kasuri family have contributed Rs 20 million each to alleviate the hardship faced by deserving individuals through a Rs 40 million fund, while a further Rs 20 million is being contributed by the Trust to the Prime Minister's Covid-19 Relief Fund. The Rs 40 million (4 crore) fund will be used to procure and distribute essential food items as 'ration packs' to deserving individuals, mainly daily-wage workers. These ration packs include necessary food supplies to help sustain a family of 5 for approximately one month.

Lok Virsa continue to promote Pakistani culture

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) is prompting Pakistani cultural heritage and folklore through research projects of university students on significant aspects of national culture. Lok Virsa has conducted field surveys to record folk, culture and traditions. According to an official of Lok Virsa, it conducted research on different sub-fields of folk and traditional heritage including folk songs, nursery rhymes etc, children games, celebrations at birth and weddings and others. — APP

Fair wages of agri workers urged

ISLAMABAD: The wages of women working in agriculture sector need to be enhanced and brought at par with men as they were working continually despite the COVID-19 threat. Human Rights activist Ayub Malik said while talking to APP here. He said it was need of the hour to empower and facilitate agrarian workforce, especially women. He said the owners must be bound to pay fair wages to women workers who were facing discrimination despite hard work of long hours. "The authorities concerned must fix the wages of agriculture work force", he pointed out, yub Malik said that women and youth were approximately one third of the agricultural workforce. They worked hard right from the cultivation stage to harvest time. Their working conditions needed to be improved, he reiterated. — APP

CPBC donates 2 million ton of medical equipment to Pakistan

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A special plane of Pakistan International Airline (PIA) carrying 2 million tons of medical equipment from China arrived here on Saturday, said Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). It was the second plane in two days from China. The supplies include 132000 masks, 15 breathing machines, 11000 protection clothing sets, 200 forehead thermometers, and 21000 detection kits. According to details, couple of days back, the Sichuan liaison office of the China-Pakistan Business Council handed over a batch of anti-epidemic materials to Chinese iron brother—Pakistan, through the consulate-general of Pakistan in Chengdu. The council has collected donations from enterprises and individuals, who were eager to help Pakistan in its hour of need. Acting consul-general Mahmood Akhtar of the Pakistani consulate general in chengdu expressed sincere thanks for this, saying that "we can see real friends coming forward in difficult times."



After the outbreak of the new epidemic in China, Pakistan actively raised money in the absence of medical supplies and donated urgently needed epidemic prevention supplies to China. On February 20th, the Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, stressed that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic partners, praised Pakistan for the first time for China to express support and arrange the precious material donations, said China always put Pakistan foreign priority, call

made China-Pakistan relations a model to promote the construction of a community of human destiny. Sichuan liaison office of the china-pakistan business council actively serves the friendship between China and Pakistan, and has received donations of urgently needed medical supplies from enterprises and individuals in sichuan, chongqing, guizhou and other parts of the country. It is learned that in January 2020, China chamber of international commerce authorized sichuan provincial council

for the promotion of international trade to establish the sichuan liaison office of china-pakistan business council to lead the work of the china-pakistan business council and take charge of the economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan. At the donation ceremony, acting consul general Mahmood Akhtar of the Pakistan consulate general in chengdu expressed his gratitude to the Sichuan association for the promotion of international trade and people who have always cared about Pakistan for their efforts at this time. Ma Zhijun, member of china-pakistan business liaison office in sichuan province, boss of fan fang food co., LTD, said that "this is the power of the contribution you can, but also want to call support for Pakistan's enterprises and individuals' ". Two Pakistani students from sichuan university witnessed the donation ceremony. Noshervan Khaliq, one of the students, said that knowing the lack of medical supplies in the country, "I am really happy to see the donation from China. I will never forget the help from China for the rest of my life."

Stay at home sole option

ISLAMABAD: Stay-at-home is the sole option for the general public to effectively curb the spread of COVID-19, in addition to extensive support for the collective initiatives at national level. The professionals and officials have expressed the cautious note that any disregard of restrictions for public safety would ultimately hamper national initiative - the fight against COVID-19. They passionately called for wholeheartedly observing the government's instructions to restrict unnecessary movement of people. "The attitude of locals towards the lockdown seems to be casual and less cautious" said Dr Mehwish. — APP

Coronavirus fallout worse for women than men

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWC-CI) on Sunday said coronavirus fallout is worse for women than men, therefore the vulnerable women should get special attention of the government. Women comprise the majority of health workers who are on the front lines in the fight against the pandemic who deserve a salary raise while school closures have particularly affected them as they bear the whole responsibility for childcare, said Samina Fazil, founder President IWCCI. In a statement issued here today, she said that women are facing income loss, beauty parlours and boutiques have been closed, millions of maids have been laid off, and hundreds

of thousands of teachers etc. have been sent on forced leaves. She said that many women are low-wage and part-time workers facing gender pay gap while those who are running their businesses depend on exhibitions and middlemen as the majority cannot afford to have a shop. Housewives are facing household budget cuts and increased domestic violence due to problems linked to the lockdown, she added. She said that most of the items women sell in the market is not seen as a necessity, but more of luxury amid an economic slowdown which has resulted in financial constraints for the businesswomen. The country needs a robust social protection system in place to save the poor during emergencies as women and children are always worst hit in such situations, she demanded.

Mayor distributes masks, PPE among MCI staff

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mayor Islamabad Sheikh Anser Aziz has distributed sanitizers, masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) among the staff of Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) in a ceremony held at the sanitation directorate. On the occasion, he said that with the support of friends and philanthropists, he distributed 2,100 sanitizers, 200 PPEs, 2,000 masks and 2,000 gloves. The PPEs were given to



doctors, paramedical staff and those fighting the pandemic on the front lines, he said, adding that these people not only serving in quarantine centres but were playing a lead role in areas, where positive cases surface. He appreciated all those people, who without publicity, helped the MCI and provided relief goods.

Nigerian Scholar Graduates from COMSATS

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Under a Joint Fellowship programme of Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) with National Centre for Physics, Pakistan, a Nigerian student, Dr. Raphael Mmaduka Obodo from University of Nigeria, has completed his Ph.D. research work at the National Centre for Physics. Under an Agreement, signed in 2016, with the NCP, COMSATS has been providing joint fellowships to young scientists from COMSATS' member states apart from supporting joint research projects between NCP and scientific institutions in COMSATS' member states.

Electric Fan exports increase

ISLAMABAD: The exports of electric fan from the country witnessed an increase of 10.35 percent during the first eight months of current financial year (2019-20) as compared to the export of corresponding period of last year. The electric fan exports during July-February (2019-20) were recorded at \$15.684 million against the exports of \$14.213 million during July-February (2018-19), showing a growth of 10.35 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). — APP

Omar assures country would not face any food shortage

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Umar Hameed, Federal Secretary, National Food Security (NFS) said that sufficient stock of food items including flour, sugar was available and country would not face any food shortage during ongoing lockdowns. He said this while exchanging views with a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry that called on him led by Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President. Ch. Abdul Rauf Chairman Flour Mills Association Punjab, Atif Ikram Sheikh Chairman Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association, Sheikh Amir Waheed Secretary General Sugar Dealers Association Punjab, Malik Sohail Hussain and Waleed Ahmed were in the delegation. The delegation congratulated Umar Hameed on being appointed as Federal Secretary NFS. Umar Hameed acknowl-



edged the role of business community in the economic development of the country and added that his doors were always opened for them to listen to their issues and play role for their resolution. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that business community would play role to complement the

efforts of the government for providing food items to the weak segments of society who have been hit hard by the lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic. He also highlighted various issues being faced by the business community due to ongoing lockdown and hoped that government would take necessary measures to address them. He apprised the Federal Secretary NFS of the ini-

tiative of ICCI for distribution of free ration among Covid-19 affectees, which was appreciated by Umar Hameed. The members of delegation also shared issues of their respective fields with the Federal Secretary NFS and gave proposals for their redress. Both sides also discussed various proposals for further improving the food supply chain in the country.

HBL, Serena pledge 30,000 meals for Medical Professionals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: HBL and Serena Hotels join hands to provides 30,000 meal-boxes over a period of one month, in seven cities with Serena Hotel presence, to medical professionals battling at the frontline of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. Serena Hotels will provide the meal-boxes with the sup-

port of HBL. The collaboration, "Jazba-e-Khidmat", is a joint initiative of HBL and Serena Hotels and aims to provide specially prepared meal-boxes to the medical teams at the COVID-19 designated hospitals and health camps in the seven cities: Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Swat, Quetta, Gilgit and Khaplu. The "Jazba-e-Khidmat" meal-boxes will be provided

twice a day to all the medical team members in 20 hospitals country-wide for a month. Medical professionals are doing a tremendous service to society by battling on the frontlines against the Coronavirus pandemic. Efforts should be undertaken to ensure the health and safety of these medical professionals. Only then will they be able to save the society from this pandemic.

Gallery 6 arranges online classes



ISLAMABAD: Gallery 6 has arranged an online Calligraphy Classes through Skype during lockdown to develop creative and spiritual dimensions of Brain and Life. The Calligraphic classes will be taught in three languages including Arabic, English and Urdu. The classes were aimed to beautify handwriting as calligraphy is considered a great source of creativity. Calligraphy art is one of the best creative and intellectual medium of Art Therapy, practiced since centuries by Legend Artists, an organizer said on Wednesday. He said that there will be weekly 2 classes with duration of two hours. Wasif Shahid, a known calligrapher will be a teacher and fee charged will go to our fund for supporting families in need in COVID19, he stated. — APP

AIOU to launch TeleSchool channel with Education Ministry's help

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood said that the government welcomes academic support being extended by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in launching TeleSchool channel, in wake of COVID-19 outbreak. The AIOU will be a Knowledge based platform providing education to the students, who are currently stuck-up at their homes, Shafqat said during a meeting that was attended by the Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zia-Ul-Qayyum and other officials. The TV channel named 'Tele-

School' would work as an alternative to educational content delivery mechanism during closure of educational institutions during the epidemic. The minister said, since the AIOU have an academic, technical and professional expertise it could be a useful partner of this program. He hoped the AIOU's contribution in contents' delivery will be useful in managing the channel, when schools and colleges are closed as precaution against COVID-19. The University will assist in production and editing of the contents to be delivered through PTV. As was decided earlier the PTV would provide eight-hour airtime to promote education

through the channel. The dedicated channel would work for promotion of education for next three months. During the morning session, juniors will be given classes followed by seniors. The channel would likely start telecasting the content within next few days. The Vice Chancellor, while assuring his support in making the program successful expressed his confidence that it will meet the students' requirements during the lock-down period. He assured that the University's resources including its TV studios and academic contents will be available to present the program. He thanked the Minister for his acknowledgment and

support in carrying out digital transformation and his other initiatives for the University's overall development. It may be mentioned here that Parliamentary Secretary of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Wajiha Akram, Federal Education Secretary Dr. Sajid Yoosufani and Technical Adviser Umbreen Arif of the Ministry recently visited the AIOU and discussed the plan of launching TeleSchool channel. Meanwhile, during the meeting, the Minister also asked the AIOU to develop Accelerated Learning Program—contents for Grade 1 to 8. The quality contents could be delivered with the support of NCHD or such other

organizations. They are planning to establish a Distance Learning Wing in the Ministry of Education, especially for the Online learning and in this connection, he added the AIOU could be a supporting partner. During the meeting, Minister showed keen interest in AIOU programs for Madrasa students Darse-e-Nizami Matric, Darse-e-Nizami FA and Darse-e-Nizami BA-Level programs. On the occasion, Dr. Zahid Majeed, Director, International Collaboration Office gave a presentation on the AIOU's capacity and potential to assist the Ministry in developing Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Vol: 01 Issue: 19

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Tough choices for the govt

PAKISTAN is stuck in a dilemma: if there is a continuation of the lockdown after April 14, or if this lockdown is tightened as the Sindh chief minister has suggested it must be, more people will lose jobs, severe food insecurity and there may even be a situation where desperate people take to the streets. On the other hand, if such a lockdown is not imposed, as Chinese experts who met with the Punjab chief minister recently have warned, there will be no stopping the coronavirus, with 4,600 cases and 66 cases already confirmed in Pakistan. The proportion of deaths is not as high as in other countries. But we have been told we should not take solace in this. The rate of testing has been very low with only several hundred tests carried out daily. As far as doctors and medical experts dealing with Covid-19 are concerned: the lockdown must be strict and continue to contain the virus. We must break the chain before the virus gets out of hand and we experience an Italy-like situation.

The Sindh government has so far taken the lead on Covid-19, becoming the first to enforce a lockdown and Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has pointed out that cases have now begun to appear in katchi abadis. He believes that a situation where hospitals are overwhelmed and deaths soar would present a situation that is even harder to manage than hunger. The view of the federal government is somewhat different and Prime Minister Imran Khan has already indicated the construction industry will resume work after April 14, and there are signs there may be relaxation in lockdown restrictions. Already, we are seeing a situation where social isolation is being poorly observed, and according to a survey conducted by an international organization, there are still widespread misconceptions about the virus, what can cure it and how it can be transferred from one individual to the next.

Continuing a lockdown is a very difficult decision for countries such as Pakistan. It is difficult because we need to take into account millions of people who don't know where their next meal will come from. But it is necessary so that we don't end up with millions of infected people who may not get medical treatment from an already patchy health sector. However, we must be clear what exactly a lockdown is meant to achieve. A lockdown is supposed to 'flatten the curve' and prep for the coming flood of cases. It is a futile exercise without mass tracing and testing. Then we have the very real face of the lockdown: the working poor. While it is good that many philanthropists and charity organizations have come forward to help the needy in the country, in the long run it is the state that is ultimately responsible for providing succour to the people, and that too with a lot of care and precautions.



Ehsas programme begins countrywide

THE largest distribution of direct cash assistance to the poor and unemployed began on Thursday as 4m people out of a total of 12m eligible recipients received the go-ahead to report to the nearest distribution point and collect Rs12, 000.

As the distribution gathers pace, it is hoped that it will play a significant role in helping those who have been most badly hit by the ongoing lockdowns. There is no doubt that such an effort was needed urgently and the federal government should be commended for the speed with which they have made it operational.

Perhaps it should also be borne in mind that this is the first such cash assistance being distributed through the Ehsas channel, with more likely to become necessary next month, and perhaps again the month after that. A few important concerns continue to linger, though.

First is the paucity of distribution points. Across the country, 17,000 points have been set up using the networks of two banks. This is far too small a number for an exercise of this scale. If done properly, the number should be more than 10 times this much.

One result of this was seen in the massive crowds that formed outside the distribution points.

Inside the premises, where the distribution was being carried out, it seemed that many places properly enforced the social-distancing protocols, but the entire effort appeared to be futile when people were forced to congregate in large crowds crammed tightly together outside the premises, as they waited for their turn to be let in.

The purpose of cash assistance for the poor is defeated – in fact, reversed – if the beneficiaries are exposed to the hazards of contagion in the course of collection.

The government should urgently reverse its earlier decision to shut out the telecom companies from the disbursement of these funds, since mobile operators can multiply the number of distribution points manifold. They may charge a fee for their service, but banks make money by simply holding Ehsas funds for a few days – and that money is made from the government's account, in any case, since it is the government that the banks are lending primarily to these days.

The second important concern is targeting. It is clear that the initial list of eligible beneficiaries has been drawn up in a terrible hurry, but there is still time in which to tighten the criteria.

Kazakhstan's New Economic Plan: in-death study

Dr Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



Food security has once again become hot topic in the world because of ongoing Mexican wave. Development of a strong and sustainable agro-economy has become vital even for overall macro-economy. In order to increase the agriculture share in term of GDP % the Kazakhstan ministry of agriculture has been directed to create conditions for the processing of raw products in the country

TO achieve the desired goals of economic sustainability, H.E. President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has advised the government to prepare a new befitting economic plan/path/policy to revolutionize the national economy by gearing up mechanism of structural reforms which may also mitigate the spillover socio-economic repercussions of ongoing global recession. While chairing the meeting of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs the president instructed the administration to develop an economic reform program by May 15, 2020.

In this connection, the government and Kazakh Parliament have adopted various diversified but integrated

programs to achieve the macroeconomic goals set out in President Tokayev's election campaign platform. The President of Kazakhstan has instructed the government to improve national legal system, process of legislation and regulation according to guidelines and standards of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in all associated sectors of economy including healthcare and financial markets. Financial facilities provide necessary fuel to channelization and operationalization of macro-economy. In modern economic arena loans are considered as engine to industrialization, job creation, expansion of consumer market, and its easy and smooth supply maintains creditable monetary policy. President Tokayev showed his concerns about slowing of lending which decreased from 23 to 22 percent of GDP during 2019.

Inflationary trends spark social uneasiness. It creates price hike which leads towards economic compromises. Due to many complicated and overlapping regional compulsions and global economic and financial constraints, Kazakhstan confronted the highest level of inflation in the Eurasian Economic Union. Diversification of economy and productive channels has been one of the foremost strategic priorities of President Tokayev. In this regard, the President has also noted the government needs to address slow growth in non-oil exports and a lack of an increase in labour productivity in 2019.

Nevertheless, to achieve the desired goals of economic sustainability, socio-economic prosperity, massive industrialization, diversification of economy, qualitative health care system, high education and housing systems, social entrepreneurship, new job creation and last but not least, international standards of human capital the President reaffirmed his commitment to the objectives set by Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the Strategy 2050, Strategic Plan for the Development of the Country until 2025 and the Plan of the Nation of 100 Concrete Steps.

President Tokayev stressed the need to have new "economic course" and evaluation process and resolution mechanism to pinpoint the key problems and methods to solve them. He termed reforms to stimulate economy which needs strong will and decisiveness. President Tokayev outlined his government priorities not confining to build a transparent fiscal and industrial policy to protect entrepreneurs, to provide access to sales markets, to increase the productivity of enterprises and competitiveness and to increase the quality of domestic products.

President stressed that the basis of economic struc-

tural reform should stimulate the growth of per capita incomes through job creation and increase in salaries, through the improvement of the quality of human capital and the building of a transparent fiscal policy.

Furthermore, suitable monetary policy and a vibrant financial market should provide long-term and befitting financing of national economy, he added. In this connection he projected that the development of entrepreneurship and the strengthening of mechanisms necessary to strengthen competition protections.

During the government meeting, the President also advised to establish the Centre for Analysis and Monitoring of Socio-Economic Reforms under the Presidential Administration without any budgetary costs. The centre will operate on a voluntary basis and will later be transformed into a Presidential Reform Agency. The centre will consist of representatives of the scientific and expert community. Kazakhstan's President has also announced a long-term budgetary allocations for the purchase of expensive transportation, furniture, and holding of forums, seminars and conferences.

Knowing the strategic importance of immaculate trade policy for pushing forward the macro-economy and its associated sectors and sub-sectors, during the meeting the President also instructed authorities to develop a Trade Policy Program 2025, develop the National Certification System and develop and adopt the Law on Technical Regulation by the end of 2020.

Food security has once again become hot topic in the world because of ongoing Mexican wave. Development of a strong and sustainable agro-economy has become vital even for overall macro-economy. In order to increase the agriculture share in term of GDP % the Kazakhstan ministry of agriculture has been directed to create conditions for the processing of raw products in the country. The share of agriculture in Kazakhstan's GDP has not exceeded 4.5 percent despite more than 2.4 trillion tenge (US\$6.3 billion) allocated to the sector over the past five years.

The President also observed and upheld housing construction a government priority. In 2019, social support expenses were 3.5 trillion tenge (US\$9.2 billion) or 30 percent of the state budget. Approximately four million people were included in the social protection program. Some 20,000 families have received loans as part of the Bakytty Otbasy (Happy Family) and 7-20-25 mortgage program. Tokayev also called for more stringent registration of cars imported from Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries. People have to pay the registration fee and tax. Temporary registration should be carried out without the right

of alienation and transfer to use and disposal to other persons," he said.

Prime Minister Askar Mamin also said during the meeting that the Kazakh government will create more than 400,000 jobs in tourism, trade and construction, manufacturing and agriculture in 2020.

According to latest report (March 20, 2020), personal incomes in Kazakhstan increased 5.5 percent and GDP growth was 4.5 percent in 2019. Non-resource sectors accounted for 80 percent of growth. Construction, trade, transport and production sector became the main drivers of growth. The manufacturing industry increased 4.4 percent in 2019. The mining industry achieved 3.7 percent in 2019 as a result of an increase in metal ore production by 16 percent.

Prime Minister Askar Mamin elaborated termed creation of new job as the most important priorities. Moreover, the investment projects ensured a transition to a new level in the production of goods and services, which led to labour productivity increase up to 8.2 million tenge (US\$21,660) per person," said Mamin. Labour productivity in 2019 was 7.4 million tenge (US\$19,500) per person. According to latest statistical data (March 20, 2020), investments in fixed assets increased 8.5 percent in 2019, including private investment by 9.5 percent. The inflation rate in Kazakhstan remained within the planned corridor of 4-6 percent with the level of 5.4 percent.

Kazakhstan attracted approximately \$25 billion in foreign direct investment and the share of small and medium-sized enterprises in economy reached 29.5 percent in 2019. The number of operating enterprises grew by 8 percent in 2019. Furthermore, as of January 2020, 93 percent of the comprehensive privatisation had been implemented. Approximately 2.7 million people in Kazakhstan receive salary increases in 2019 and more than 423,000 jobs were created.

H.E. President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev suggested new rules for economic development based on rigorous structural reforms in every sector of national economy. He pinpointed various reasons for slowing of credit supply, inflationary trends, non-adherence to government's instructions towards governance and delivery to general masses and rightly chalked out certain holistic strategies to overcome these shortcomings. It seems that by analyzing the ongoing various socio-economic reforms, trade, fiscal, monetary policies and performance of regulatory bodies, the President of Kazakhstan rightly suggested the right policy to put his country on the right path of economic sustainability and socio-economic prosperity.

Fight against the Pandemic and our response

Raja Furqan Ahmed



In many parts of the world borders are closed, trade stop, hotels, businesses shut down, churches, Mosque, learning institutions close, stock market crashes, economy collapse etc

THE spontaneous change in the life of human kinds comes through the pandemic called COVID-19. Approximately 7.8 billion world population feels threat and larger confined

at home. In many parts of the world borders are closed, trade stop, hotels, businesses shut down, churches, Mosque, learning institutions close, stock market crashes, economy collapse etc. Government takes unprecedented measures to stop the spread of coronavirus. The pandemic first outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019.

Later on it spread around the globe and on 30 January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Public Health Emergency of International Concern on and recognized it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

China's experience so far shows that the right policies make a difference in fighting the disease and mitigating its impact most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

Corona virus disease spreads primarily through contact with an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It also spreads when a person touches a surface or an object that has the virus on it, and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Simplest protection from corona virus is to wash your hands frequently, avoiding touching your face, and avoiding close contact with people who are unwell.

Majority sitting at home and waiting for the situation to become better. As a university student, corona virus really affects my social life. In a normal day life was quite fantastic with lots of task and work but literally in a few days the situation changes. Quarantine has been started and country like Pakistan stays at home for a long time is too difficult but for the survival we have to take that step.

My day started with the prayer, a healthy breakfast, taking online classes (forcefully), Long conversation with friends, Enhancing old skill as well as learns a new skill, writing Articles and finally read a book I had in my shelf for years. In addition to, this pandemic doesn't only affect your social life but it really impact on the state economy.

Specifically I will discuss the case study of Pakistan that corona virus has become threat to the pace of development. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) report it's stated that the virus outbreak could cost the Pakistan economy in the range of \$16.387 million to \$4.95 billion, or 0.01 % to 1.57% of Gross Domestic Product.

Furthermore, United Nations estimates international tourism to drop 3% due to virus resulting a loss up to \$50 Billion globally, is another bad news for the government of Pakistan which is committed to increase tourism exports. Same case in Aviation industry that till now Pakistan International Airline

(PIA) loss almost 6 billion.

As per the Asian Development Bank the "best-case scenario", the loss would be \$16.23 million, of which Pakistan's agriculture and mining sectors could sustain a loss of \$5.5 million, business trade, personal and public service a loss of \$5.54 million, hotels and restaurants a loss of \$0.67 million, light and heavy manufacturing a loss of \$3.6 million, and transport services incur a loss of \$0.92 million. In the "moderate-case scenario", the projected loss that Pakistan may suffer is estimated to be \$34.2 million.

In the worst-case scenario, ADB estimates Pakistan to suffer a loss of \$5 billion, of which \$1.5 billion loss will be incurred in the agriculture and mining sector, \$1.94 billion in business and trade, \$253.7 million in hotel and restaurants, \$671 million in light and heavy engineering, and \$565.6 million loss in transport services. The report also highlights that this loss would plunge Pakistan's GDP by at least 1.57 percent and trigger 9, 46,000 job losses.

This pandemic is invisible and unknown enemy. We all have to fight with determination and hope and to win this war we have to follow the precautions and keep the social distancing.

The writer is a student of International Relations and Freelance Journalist currently based in Islamabad, Pakistan.



LAHORE: A view of Church a Christians stayed at home on the occasion of Easter. – Shahbaz Sindhu

Briefs

Hurdles in way of Pakistanis return

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: A lack of quarantine and testing facilities back home is hampering the repatriation of thousands of stranded Pakistanis from the UAE, says a top diplomat. Pakistan Ambassador to the UAE Ghulam Dastgir said that more than 25,000 Pakistanis who are stranded in the UAE have already registered with their diplomatic missions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. "It is not an easy task to repatriate all of them during the current circumstances when the flights are closed and the country is under lockdown," he told Gulf News while answering a question about why Pakistan government is not evacuating its stranded citizens from the UAE. He said that repatriation process may start anytime soon but he cannot give any date as the situation is changing every day. Ambassador explained that both the UAE and Pakistan governments are working together on this issue. I am also putting pressure on my government to expedite the process while at the same time I am in touch with the UAE authorities concerned to sort out the issue. The UAE government is ready to repatriate Pakistanis but the various departments including the Health authorities back home are not ready to receive such a large number of people.

India to export wheat to Afghanistan

STAFF REPORT

KABUL: India will export 50,000 tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan under a government to government arrangement, the Indian media reported. "National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) has been asked to export 50,000 tonnes to Afghanistan through diplomatic route," a senior official of the Indian agriculture department said. According to the report, the official said that India has been producing more than 100 million tonnes for the last three years and there is surplus wheat in granaries to feed the country.

US anti Iran cubs putting region in danger: Bilawal



ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and son of former President warns that inhuman US sanctions are putting Iranian nation and the people of whole region in danger. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while talking on Saturday said unfortunately the United States has a president who promotes multilateralism, who has engaged in trade wars and

who is currently placing inhuman sanctions against Iran putting the people of Iran and people of the region in danger. He said COVID-19 is a global pandemic that has caused the countries in the entire globe to scramble. "Internationally we have seen that for the past five to ten years the world moved away from multilateralism and towards more popular nationalism at a time when the world needs to be cooperating as far as the supplying chains for what we need to deal with the emergency of the pandemic and eventually we hope for a vaccine," said Zardari. He went on to say that the effect of the coronavirus and lockdown would be immense on the people of Pakistan. "While we are in opposi-

tion and have been playing an aggressive role within the opposition, as soon as the coronavirus reached shoulders of Pakistan the opposition parties came forward and set aside all the differences with the federal government," added the PPP chairman. Earlier Spokesperson of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Nafisa Shah while responding to a query of IRNA said the US should lift sanctions to avert humanitarian and economic disaster that Iran confronts. Meanwhile Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan who believes that US sanctions against Iran are cruel and unfair had called upon US President Donald Trump to lift economic sanctions from the Islamic Republic.

Sichuan enterprises sent equipment to Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A special plane carrying medical equipment from China arrived here, enabling Pakistan to overcome COVID-19. The equipment include 132000 masks, 15 breathing machines, 11000 protection clothing sets, 200 forehead thermometers, and 21000 detection kits. According to details, the Sichuan liaison office of the China-Pakistan Business Council has handed over a batch of anti-epidemic materials to Chinese iron brother-Pakistan, through the consulate-general of Pakistan in Chengdu. The council has collected donations from enterprises and individuals, who were eager to help Pakistan in its hour of need.

Acting consul-general Mahmood Akhtar of the Pakistani consulate general in chengdu expressed sincere thanks for this, saying that "we can see real friends coming forward in difficult times." After the outbreak of the new epidemic in China, Pakistan actively raised money in the absence of medical supplies and donated urgently needed epidemic prevention supplies to China. On February 20th, the Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, stressed that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic partners, praised Pakistan for the first time for China to express support and arrange the precious material donations, said China always put Pakistan foreign priority, call made China-Pakistan relations a

model to promote the construction of a community of human destiny. Sichuan liaison office of the china-pakistan business council actively serves the friendship between China and Pakistan, and has received donations of urgently needed medical supplies from enterprises and individuals in sichuan, chongqing, guizhou and other parts of the country. It is learned that in January 2020, China chamber of international commerce authorized sichuan provincial council for the promotion of international trade to establish the sichuan liaison office of china-pakistan business council to lead the work of the china-pakistan business council and take charge of the economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan.

Virus to cause big loss to textile industry: report

Epidemic outbreak has hurt Asian textile industry rigorously. Lu Sheng, professor of University of Delaware said, COVID-19 epidemic probably impacts textile and clothing industry in South Asia bitterly and leads to more than 4%-9% unemployment in this industry of such regions."

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The textile industry in Pakistan is badly suffering in wake of COVID-19, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro App. The country's textile industry accounts for 8% of GDP and over 46% of manufacturing industry. Facing the challenges of epidemic, more than 19 million Pakistani working in this field would be in-

fluenced.

In order to redress the situation, the government has already released a DTLT refund of Rs. 20.5 billion to textile industry. According to the report, epidemic outbreak has hurt Asian textile industry rigorously. Lu Sheng, professor of University of Delaware said, COVID-19 epidemic probably impacts textile and clothing industry in South Asia bitterly and leads to more than 4%

9% unemployment in this industry of such regions." He also explained the factors of this inclination: "Epidemic has not only impacted short-term export orders, but also brought a serious of long-term harmful effects, such as labour shortage, hiking of prices of raw materials and so on." Though textile industry is undergoing a harsh time, the turnaround is forthcoming that several large textile and clothing

companies have resumed production, such as Kohat Textile Mills Limited, Masood Textile Mills Limited, and Saif Textile Mills Limited. According to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) "In view of the relaxation allowed to the textile industry from the current situation of lockdown due to COVID-19, by the authorities, Nishat Mills Limited has resumed partially its production."

No soap, no water in France

PARIS: As nations around the world fight the coronavirus pandemic with mass lockdowns and travel bans, UN experts warn that some three billion people lack even the most basic weapons to protect themselves: soap and running water. The outbreak has infected some 200,000 people and killed 9,000, scorching through populations across the globe after emerging in China late last year. While Europe has become the centre of the battle against the virus, closing borders and sequestering millions of people in their homes, concerns are rising for developing nations with fragile healthcare systems. Countries across Africa and Asia have heavily restricted travel, imposed quarantines and closed schools, with fears for impoverished communities as infections begin to grow. – APP

Bilawal's statement to ruin unity: Firdous

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Murad Ali Shah said that the statement of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was tantamount to ruin the atmosphere of national unity in the fight against coronavirus.

In a tweet, the SAPM said everyone knew that the decisions in the National Coordination Committee (NCC) were made after consultation. She said that Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah was member of the NCC and Sindh people were citizens of Pakistan. She said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was responsible for the protection of the rights of

Pakistanis living in all federating units. She reminded Bilawal that the department of Health was under the jurisdiction of the provinces after the 18th Amendment and for more than a decade when PPP was in power in Sindh. Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said this was not the time of political point scoring, rather it was time to take a united stand against the pandemic.

SAARC Chamber for cooperation to defeat virus

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Sunday called for closer cooperation among national health emergency agencies to defeat the deadly Coronavirus and a long-term economic recovery plan for the region. In a statement issued here today, President designate SAARC Chamber Iftikhar Ali Malik suggested that SAARC must adopt a shared telemedicine framework to provide health care to remote areas. He appreciated the contribution of Pakistan for

donating 3 millions dollars towards Coronavirus fund for South Asia. He said this is good sign that all the SAARC countries are ready now to fight this lethal coronavirus outbreak collectively and he also appreciated Pakistan's suggestion to hold a SAARC health ministers video conference to enhance cooperation and proposed establishing a working group of national authorities to exchange information and data in real time. Sri Lanka reiterated the need to work together, create social awareness, and have one central depository to disseminate information.

Pakistan Embassy does not confirm virus deaths

WASHINGTON: The Pakistan Embassy on Saturday brushed aside as "guess-timates" media reports about the death of more than 100 Pakistani-Americans in the New York region resulting from the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the United states and many other countries of the world. "We have seen media reports on the number of Pakistani-American deaths on account of Covid-19 infections in the US. There are no formally confirmed figures available from any official source in the US," the embassy said in a statement. "Meanwhile, we have no reports even informal ones of any Pakistani-American deaths from our consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston," the embassy said. "The Embassy and the Consulate Generals are in touch with our community members and will be ready to extend every assistance and support wherever needed." – APP

PAL plans online poetry reading

RAJA FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters has planned to organize international online poetry reading and during this week on video link poets of Pakistani languages across the country and

around the world will recite their poetry. Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, National History and Literary Heritage Shafiqat Mahmood will be the chief guest. This was stated by Dr. Yousuf khushk, Chairman of Pakistan Academy of Letters.

Zafar urges nation to stay indoor

ISLAMABAD: SA to Prime Minister on Health Dr Zafar Mirza said on Sunday that lockdown had helped to maintain social distance to contain the novel coronavirus as avoiding the interaction was the only safety which could stop the virus to spread. "Proper measures would be taken to contain the coronavirus and provide people an access to purchase the food and other daily needed stuff," he said while talking to a private news channel. – APP

Int'l community to help Pakistan taking care of poor segment: Cheng Xizhong

STAFF REPORT

BEIJING: Renowned Chinese scholar Professor Cheng Xizhong said International community should help Pakistan taking care of poor segment of society in wake of COVID-19 spread. In an article published by China Economic Net on Sunday, he said these days, the novel coronavirus has invaded slum areas in Pakistan which is a very dangerous signal and should be highly concerned by the international community.

He noted that about 40% of Pakistan's population lives below the extreme poverty line. A large number of poor people flock into cities, resulting in the increasing number of slums in major cities. Karachi, for example, is the most populous city in Pakistan, with an annual population increase of 800,000 and most of the new arrivals live in slums. The Pakistani government and the whole society have been making great efforts to cope with the pandemic and solve the problems of poor people's livelihood.



While implementing the lockdown measures, the government has been seriously considering and taking effective

measures to overcome the livelihood problems of "slum dwellers" and daily income workers. In addition to using its own resources, the government has been raising funds because the economic impact of the coronavirus crisis on the poor will "further worsen". According to the latest media report, at the call of the government, Pakistan's social organizations, business circles and the rich have been making active contribution these days, which fully reflects the national unity of the country. As Prime Minister Imran Khan

said, "no federal or provincial government can win the war against coronavirus alone, only national unity can win the war." Prof. Cheng said, Pakistan used to be a front-line country in international counter-terrorism war, making extremely important contributions to world and regional peace. Now, the country is increasingly plagued by the pandemic. "I strongly believe that at this crucial moment, the international community should lend a helping hand and assist Pakistan to fight the pandemic and solve the livelihood problems of the poor," he added.