



Saturday, April 18, 2020

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

**US envoy unfurls plans to help Pakistan against COVID-19**
**Foreign Minister Launches 'FM Direct' App**
**Firdous for media role against virus**


## COVID-19

# US envoy shares plans to help Pakistan

With more than \$8 million in new contributions, the United States is collaborating with the Government of Pakistan to help stop the spread of coronavirus nationwide and to care for afflicted people; this funding will be utilized for a number of activities, including: Providing three new mobile labs so Pakistanis living in virus hotspots can be tested

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a video message released on Friday on the U.S. Mission to Pakistan's social media platforms, Ambassador Paul Jones discussed several new ways that the United States is partnering with Pakistan to combat coronavirus. With more than \$8 million in new contributions, the United States is collaborating with the Government of Pakistan to help stop the spread of coronavirus nationwide and to care for afflicted people. All of these contributions were identified as top priority needs by the Pakistani authorities, and they are fully paid for by the American people.

This funding will be utilized for a number of activities, including: Providing three new mobile labs so Pakistanis living in virus hotspots can be tested, treated, and monitored to stop the spread, through \$3 million in contributions, funding high-tech emergency operations centers in Islamabad, Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan with \$1 million, expanding our partnership with \$2 million to train community health-care workers to assist people in their homes to lessen the burden on hospitals, conducting life-saving activities in Afghan refugee and host communities in Pakistan with \$2.4 million, administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"What I've described today is the latest chapter in a long, vibrant U.S.-Pakistan health partnership. It builds on U.S. contributions over the past 20 years of more than \$1.1 billion in the health sector, and more than \$18.4 billion overall to the U.S.-Pakistan development partnership. Together, we can stop the spread of this deadly disease to protect our loved ones and regain our prosperity and freedom," said U.S. Ambassador Paul W. Jones.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Sonya Kayani, Regional Communication Director and Mr. Tahir Hafeez, Cluster Leader Supply Chain ME & Africa, Tetra Pak Pakistan present a cheque of Rs. 20 million for PM's COVID-19 Relief Fund. Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan Ms. Ingrid Johansson was also present on the occasion. – DNA

## Briefs

### PM grieved over deaths of Pakistanis abroad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the deaths of Pakistanis living and working abroad due to coronavirus. In his tweets on Friday, he said many died while serving in the frontline of the global war against COVID-19. Commiserating with the bereaved families, the Prime Minister also prayed for early recovery of those still battling the virus. The Prime Minister said we can never forget overseas Pakistanis who continue to do us proud and are our greatest asset. He said the overseas Pakistanis are playing a critical role in the country's development through remittances and charity work.

## FO rejects Indian army chief allegations

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office has strongly rejected the allegations made by the Indian Army Chief against Pakistan on Friday morning. In her opening statement at the weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Friday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Aisha Farooqui termed those allegations as irresponsible, false and spurious. She said these baseless



Indian allegations are patently designed to divert global and domestic attention from India's state-terrorism and egregious human rights violations and clamping of fundamental freedoms in occupied

Jammu and Kashmir particularly post August 5, 2019. The spokesperson reminded that Indian forces this year alone have committed over 765 ceasefire violations resulting in martyrdom of 3 civilians as well as serious injuries to 54 innocent civilians. In 2019, India violated the ceasefire agreement 3351 times. She said Pakistan continues to respond to Indian belligerence in a firm and responsible manner.

## Wuhan raises death toll 50%: report

WUHAN: China's coronavirus ground-zero city of Wuhan on Friday admitted missteps in tallying its death toll as it abruptly raised the count by 50 percent following growing world doubts about Chinese transparency. The United States has led

the charge in questioning China's handling of the pandemic and how much information it has really shared with the international community since the virus emerged late last year. Authorities in Wuhan initially tried to cover up

the outbreak, punishing doctors who had raised the alarm online in December, and there have been questions about the government's recording of infections as it repeatedly changed its counting criteria at the peak of the outbreak. – APP

## PM to sit with Ulema

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday directed the concerned authorities for devising a safety plan against coronavirus during the month of Ramadan after holding consultations with Ulema. The prime minister expressed these views in a meeting with Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Noorul Haq Qadri. The consultative meeting of President Dr Arif Alvi with Ulema, to be held Saturday, came under discussion. The prime minister is also due to hold a meeting with Ulema next week. – APP

## IMF approves grant

DNA

ISLAMABAD: International Monetary Fund has approved 1.386 billion dollars disbursement to Pakistan under the Rapid Financing Instrument to address the economic impact of COVID-19 Pandemic. In a statement, IMF said with the near-term outlook deteriorating sharply, Pakistan swiftly put in place measures to contain the impact of the shock and support economic activity.

## Noose tightened around hoarders

*PM says strict action 'inevitable' against smugglers, hoarders; role of intelligence agencies in checking smuggling and hoarding and called for appointment of honest and dutiful officers at checkpoints*

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday termed smuggling a curse for national economy said strict action was inevitable against smugglers, hoarders and profiteers to eliminate such ills from the society. Chairing a meeting to control smuggling, crackdown on hoarders and eliminating locust attacks on crops, the prime minister said smuggling and hoarding resulted in inflation that put direct financial burden on general public and poor. The meeting was attended

by Interior Minister Brig (ret'd) Ijaz Shah, Minister for National Food Security Syed Fakhar Imam, Planning minister Asad Umer, Minister for Economic Affairs Khushro Bakhtiar, Finance Adviser Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, PM's Special Assistant on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan, Chairman National Disaster Management Authority General Muhammad Afzal and senior officials. The prime minister emphasized the role of intelligence agencies in checking smuggling and hoarding and called for appointment of honest and dutiful officers at checkpoints.

He also stressed effective coordination among the provinces with monitoring on daily basis and directed to ensure smooth working without any administrative hurdle. The participants were briefed about target of wheat procurement for next year and provision of 'bardana' (gunny bags) for farmers. Khushro Bakhtiar told the meeting that Punjab government and Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) took timely steps for wheat procurement and other provinces needed to follow the suit.

## Another Pak taxi driver loses life

DNA

LONDON: Another Pakistani taxi driver has lost life to the novel coronavirus in South London, becoming the second Pakistani taxi driver to lose his life to the deadly virus within a week. Zeeshan Ahmed, 27, passed away at St. George Hospital in Tooting. Speaking to Geo News, his father Mohammad Iqbal Gondal described his only son as a "shaheed (martyr)" who has left behind two sons, both under the age of five.

## More rain expected

DNA

LAHORE: More rain is expected throughout most parts of the country as a westerly wave is affecting upper and central parts of the country and is likely to persist in the country's upper parts till Monday. On Friday, rain wind-thunderstorm (with few hail-storm) is expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, north Balochistan, upper Sindh, Gilgit Baltistan, Kashmir and Islamabad.

## 'Over 150 healthcare workers infected

DNA

KARACHI: The coronavirus which has infected several healthcare workers around the world, dozens of doctors, paramedics, nurses and technicians in Pakistan have also contracted the virus. According to statistics provided by health officials, 45 doctors and paramedical staff have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Sindh.

## Kazakhstan provides aid to neighbours

Overall, the provision of humanitarian aid is one of the important areas of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. The past years have seen Kazakhstan sent various types of assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Serbia, Syria, Turkey, Japan, and other countries



supporting the Tajik people during these challenging times and providing humanitarian assistance. He also expressed his gratitude for the assistance in the evacuation of Tajik citizens to their homeland and in the transit of goods through the territory of Kazakhstan.

The telephone conversation between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Tileuberdi and Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Chingiz Aidarbekov, the Kyrgyz side expressed sincere gratitude to Kazakhstan for the decision to provide humanitarian assistance. At the earliest possible time these goods will arrive at their destination in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Kazakhstan, as a responsible member of the international community, in terms of the global coronavirus pandemic is not keeping away and continues providing the necessary human-

itarian aid to partner countries. So, back in February of this year, Kazakhstan was one of the first to provide partnership support to China amid the Covid-19 epidemic, carrying out several deliveries of medical protective equipment. Overall, the provision of humanitarian aid is one of the important areas of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. The past years have seen Kazakhstan sent various types of assistance to Antigua and Barbuda, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Serbia, Syria, Turkey, Japan, and other countries.

### Inside...

**Pakistan to get IAEA's nuclear tech-based COVID-19 testing equipment**

– Page 02

**Pakistan-Belarus Bilateral Relations: New Hopes, New Horizons**

– Page 03

**Qureshi launches 'FM Direct' app for digital connect**

**British HC visits COVID-19 emergency operations centre**

– Back Page



**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The hoarding ordinance cannot achieve its objectives Without the consultation and involvement of business community. it will create further constraints on price stability and continuous supply. These views were expressed by the President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, in a meeting with retailers in Islamabad Chamber today.

"It is unfortunate that the business community has never been consulted while making policies and laws concerning the business community. Any law without the consultation of the

required result.this ordinance will further disturb the business friendly and conducive environment for investment , he said.

On this occasion, people associated with retail businesses expressed their concern and stated that it would become difficult for them to continue their businesses. They said above mentioned ordinance will create hurdle for the smooth supply of essential commodities and will also disturb the whole chain of supply.

President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & industry on the request of the retailer community calls a meeting in Islamabad chamber tomorrow at 11am to formulate the policy regarding this ordinance .



Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Vol: 01 Issue: 24

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

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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

## WHO funding

At this time of a worldwide health crisis of Covid-19, the US president's instruction to his administration to halt funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) is deplorable, and as unwise as it could be. President Trump has accused the WHO of mishandling the coronavirus pandemic in the world.

According to Trump's hyperbolic statement, the WHO had failed in its basic duty to contain the virus and must be held accountable for this negligence. President Trump insists that the WHO's lack of responsibility prompted China's 'disinformation' about the virus that likely led to a wider outbreak. It is noteworthy that the United States is the biggest donor to the WHO whose head office is in Geneva. America contributes nearly 15 percent of the WHO's total budget. The world reaction to this Trump caprice has been befitting and prompt.

First the director-general of the UN health agency regretted that President Trump had taken this hasty decision to halt funding when it needed help the most. He was right in pointing out that this is the time for the world to unite in the common struggle against an enemy that can target anyone, anywhere. The DG also reaffirmed the WHO commitment to keep "working without fear or favour". Similar statements have been issued by the head of the UN, Guterres, the head of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the EU foreign policy chief, the US Center for Disease Control, and the American Medical Association. The former Ebola coordinator for the US Department of Health termed it nothing but an attempt by President Trump to distract from his own history of downplaying the severity of the coronavirus crisis and his administration's failure to prepare for it.

At this crucial juncture of world history we expect all the countries of the world to unite, and all the relevant international institutions to work together to fight this menace. The WHO may have been slow in its response but for that matter nearly all countries in the world took some time to realize the magnitude of this danger. Targeting the WHO for any imaginary or real lapses at this moment is neither sane nor suggestible. The WHO has a track record of fighting several battles in the past against AIDS, Congo fever, ebola, malaria, polio, SARS, and many other diseases. In all these battles it has displayed success to varying degrees.

Where it fails or makes an error of judgment, it is not entirely of its own making. For example, the fight against polio is being lost in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan not because of the WHO but due to many other factors. President Trump must reconsider his direction and restore funding to this apex health body in the world.



"He was doing well at first, but then he started drifting in and out of health coverage."

## Pakistan-Belarus Bilateral Relations: New Hopes, New Horizons

Dr Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



*More than 80 MOUs have so far been signed between the two sides having well organized institutional cooperation mechanisms in the form of commissions and working groups, a system of interregional contacts, groundwork for inter-parliamentary diplomacy and humanitarian cooperation since the last 25 years. Both sides have advanced the bilateral relations to a mature stage*

In order to intensify the inter-parliamentary dialogue, both countries have been discussing the possibilities to organize mutual visits in 2020 by the heads of the legislative bodies of Belarus and Pakistan, as well as by the representatives of friendship groups.

In the past, during their various interactive meetings and sessions both countries stressed the need to coordinate systematic approaches to the further development of Belarusian-Pakistani cooperation in political, trade and economic spheres, including preparations for bilateral events and mutual visits at various levels. Being prominent regional expert on Belarus and CIS, I personally think that new hopes are emerging due to which new horizons are widening which may be further accelerated by having harmonious policies in the days to come. Pakistan and Belarus are 5,000 kilometers away from each other. They have different traditions, cultures, social setups, religions, and political systems. Notwithstanding, the two countries have been maintaining friendly relations for the last 25 years and this trustworthy friendship has now paying its dividends.

Rise to commercial diplomacy, changing dynamics of international marketing and emerging socio-economic compulsions, geo-political alternativeness and last but not least, geostrategic scenarios have encouraged both the countries to move forward by pursuing further socio-economic integration and food & energy connectivity.

More than 80 MOUs have so far been signed between the two sides having well organized institutional cooperation mechanisms in the form of commissions and working groups, a system of interregional contacts, groundwork for inter-parliamentary diplomacy and humanitarian cooperation since the last 25 years. Both sides have advanced the bilateral relations to a mature stage.

It is hoped that further enhancing of bilateral relations will heavily depend meaningful participation of private sectors of both the countries in the preferential areas. Close business-to-business contacts, exchange of business delegations, one country exhibitions and business and investment incentives may be useful to achieve the desired goals of greater socio-economic integration and cooperation in diverse fields in the days to come. Intensified economic cooperation holds the key of achieving trade target of US\$ 1 billion.

2014 was the paradigm shift in bilateral relations of Pakistan and Belarus. During 2016-2017 there was numerous diplomatic activities held between the two sides due to which parliamentary diplomacy intensified and the heads of supreme legislative and representative bodies of both sides exchanged official visits. Various interactive

business forums were arranged to forge new partnerships in agriculture and the textile industry. The joint commission for trade and economic cooperation was also arranged. The \$1 billion challenge was to be formalized by signing a declaration on strategic avenues of economic cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It has not been finalized because of change in the political government in Pakistan. On its part, Belarus has taken various concrete steps to restart the bilateral relations, establish business contacts with the new government that came to power in August 2018, and take solid measures on the \$1 billion challenge. Both sides parties are rigorously working on the implementation of the signed agreements during the official visits of the President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko to Pakistan on May 28-29, 2015 and October 4-6, 2016 former, Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif to the Republic of Belarus on August 10-12, 2015), Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus A. Kobyakov AT. to the Pakistan (November 9-11, 2015, sideline meeting of Belarusian President A.G. Lukashenko with Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, and last but not least, deputy foreign minister of Belarus visit to Pakistan during 2019, all showed increasing momentum in diverse filed of politics, diplomacy, economy, trade and commerce, FDI's and last but not least, inter-parliament cooperation.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko visited Pakistan and inked various meaningful agreements and MOUs. It was first ever visit of any Belarusian President visit to Pakistan which showed its multidimensional importance. During his stay he met with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and former President Mamnoon Hussain and discussed matters of mutual interests. Both sides agreed to enhance socio-economic ties in the days to come.

President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan gave great importance to enhancing trade relations with Belarus. Both countries were gateways for each other to enter huge markets of Asia and Europe. He said Belarus should set up assembly and manufacturing plants for tractors and heavy duty vehicles in Pakistan. These are the main areas of joint work. It is hoped that after signing of MOUs in the above mentioned areas both sides will get quite tangible and long-term results in the days to come. It is important that both countries and their private sectors/enterprises, ministries, bilateral commission, chambers of commerce and last but not least, working groups, understand the above given comprehensive road map to move forward to achieve the desired goals of greater volumes of bilateral trade, inflows of FDI's, joint ventures, joint pro-

duction facilities, cooperation in technical education and many more.

Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Delegation will visit Belarus during 2020. Despite, having cordial and healthy relations, the trade volume between Pakistan and Belarus is merely around 45 million dollars. The trade balance is heavily tilted in favor of Belarus as our imports from Belarus are around US\$43 million while our exports to Belarus are just US\$ 1.37 million. Pakistan is mainly importing tractors, tractor parts, potash fertilizers, tyres, synthetic yarn and synthetic fibres from Belarus.

There is tremendous potential for Pakistan to enhance its exports of value added textiles, Pharmaceutical products, Surgical Instruments, sports goods and Leather products to Belarus. There is also a tremendous scope to enhance collaboration in the fields of agriculture and energy. Exchange of Trade Delegations and single country exhibitions can play a vital role in enhancing the trade volume between two countries.

According to the official figures (2019) trade with Pakistan amounted to 53 million dollars. Exports of Belarusian goods to Pakistan amounted to \$ 39.4 million, a decline of 38.7 percent, imports \$ 13.4 million, an increase of 26.9 percent.

The balance of bilateral trade is positive for Belarus (\$ 26 million). For the further strengthening of bilateral relations and trade volumes Pakistan asked Belarus to initiate the process of entering into a free trade agreement (FTA) Finalization of FTA which would bring the desired goals of greater socio-economic integration in the days to come. Setting up of Belarusian plants in Pakistan for the manufacture of automobile parts and assembly of buses, tractors and grain harvesters would be a value-addition for agro-economy of Pakistan.

Belarus must also consider technological up gradation and expansion of existing facilities in different sectors in Pakistan which would further strengthen the bilateral relations. Pakistan and Belarus can enhance economic cooperation through business-to-business (B2B) meetings, exhibitions, and sending experts under the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) platform. A joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry may also improve trade relations between the two countries. It would secure the commercial interests of the business communities of both sides.

Both countries can promote trade in fertilizer, chemicals and textile sectors. Joint ventures and inflows of Belarusian FDI's can be handy for Pakistan's local industries and increasing of its exports to Belarus.

## Karmic cycle : COVID 19 and its aftermath effects

Dr. Ramesh Kumar

*The Law of Karma is applicable to everyone, regardless of his/her social status. As per Hinduism, every good deed which we do in our life results in peace and prosperity. On the other hand, every sin brings problems in our life. During our day-to-day interactions, we are either dealing with our past actions or creating new ones. Thus, the destiny of a human revolves around his/her own actions. This concept is also known as the Karmic cycle, emphasizing that our past actions are responsible for all kinds of good and bad happenings*

It is entirely unbelievable that delegates belonging to Western countries are, due to fear of the Covid-19 outbreak, reluctant to go back to their home countries, and trying to seek refuge even in less privileged areas.

The Trump Wall, which was actually meant to stop illegal entry of immigrants from Mexico, is now probably more to stop the entry of US citizens to Mexico.

A couple of months ago, Western countries like Spain and Italy were busy stopping refugee boats coming from African countries. Once, a super-power, on the basis of its strong economy and power military, was claiming that nobody had the courage to challenge its world domination. Today, ground realities are telling an entirely different story.

The Law of Karma is applicable to everyone, regardless of his/her social status. As per Hinduism, every good deed which we do in our life results in peace and prosperity. On the other hand, every sin brings problems in our life. During our day-to-day interactions, we are either dealing with our past actions or creating new ones. Thus, the destiny of a human revolves around his/her own actions.

This concept is also known as the Karmic cycle, emphasizing that our past actions are responsible for all kinds of good and bad happenings. God obviously helps all those persons who are obedient to His teachings and as a result, they

are blessed with peace, happiness and prosperity in their lives.

Contrary to this, a person interested in indulging himself in evil deeds has to suffer badly. Sins of past crimes never let the person escape until a sincere apology is offered to seek repent. In my view, the Karma ideology is also applicable to all nations and countries. Some of the decisions, at the state level, are taken for public welfare but some are very harmful for humanity.

The brutal way in which the Native American inhabitants were massacred in the United States is a shameful chapter of history.

The discrimination against black minority community is also an open secret. Similarly, many Western powers were involved in exploitation during the colonial era in order to occupy territories of others.

World powers, to fulfill their vested interests, used to promote the culture of warfare, militancy and armed conflicts in different regions. Many crises are kept unresolved to boost the weapon industry.

Thousands of innocent migrants have to face kidnapping, slavery, torture, murder and physical violence on a daily basis, but the right to receive assistance, the right to protection from abuse and the freedom to seek asylum are never ever granted by these so-called civilized countries. It is true that the entire population is not responsible for the evil deeds of colonial powers

or social crimes carried out by some elements. However, it is the collective responsibility of every human being, especially belonging to powerful countries, to seek repentance.

We should understand that today if we burn the home of somebody then tomorrow, in return someone would burn our home.

Even if we keep ourselves safe from the dire circumstances on the basis of power and authority we enjoy today then as per karma laws, our near and dear ones have to pay the price some other day.

It is therefore very necessary to learn from our past mistakes. In order to provide eternal peace to the souls of our elders, Hinduism emphasizes to compensate in the form of doing good deeds, such as charity and welfare activities.

Failure to do so will result in our lives moving in a cycle, and there will always a trouble coming again and again to disturb our life.

The Karmic cycle of the international community, in my view, would only be ended if all world leaders understood their responsibility to maintain peace by supporting oppressed nations. According to Hindu astrology, the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak crisis will be controlled in September.

*The writer is a member of the National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council. Article first published in The News on April 18, 2020.*



## Briefs

Rupee  
recovers  
against  
dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani currency recovered Rs3.31 in a single day on Friday against dollar in the interbank after approval of \$1.386 billion additional loan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Pakistan and the G-20 group countries' announcement for providing debt relief in response to COVID-19. However, according to Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of Dollar in open market were recorded at Rs165.5 and Rs167.5 respectively. The State Bank of Pakistan reported that that in interbank, the price of Euro depreciated by Rs 4.28 to close at 177.21 against the last day's trading of Rs 181.49. — APP

211  
Kyrgyzstan's  
citizens  
arrives  
home

DNA

BISHKEK: A charter flight from Istanbul, Turkey with 211 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic on board arrived at Manas International Airport. "For the safety of all passengers, they have been served on the platform of the airport and sent for examination." This flight organized in cooperation with the Turkish side as part of the evacuation of citizens of the Republic of Turkey located on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. On April 16, 2020, a videoconference was held between Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyzstan H.E. Mr. Chingiz Aidarbekov and Turkey H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, during which they discussed the organization of charter flights for the mutual evacuation of citizens of both countries.

Spain virus  
death toll  
19,500

MADRID: Spain's death toll increased to nearly 19,500, government figures showed on Friday. The country reported 585 new fatalities in the past 24 hours, but said it had revised its counting mechanism, making the figures hard to compare to previous daily tolls. The total number of deaths in Spain now stands at 19,478, the third highest in the world after the United States and Italy. — APP

2,669  
corona tests  
conducted

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid has said that the provincial government has increased the coronavirus testing capacity and conducted 2,669 tests in all its laboratories in the province in one day. "In total, we have conducted over 46,000 tests until now. We are conducting daily review of cases and are monitoring the situation accordingly," she said. — APP

## Qureshi launches 'FM Direct' app for digital connect

"The mobile application has been introduced during COVID-19 pandemic as an efficient and swift medium of internal communication, in cognizance of the critical importance of interactive and responsive multi-stakeholder coordination and dialogue," he said

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Friday launched a mobile application 'FM Direct' for a direct digital connection between him and all officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the first time in the history of the institution, each officer irrespective of the grade or location, is directly connected with the Foreign Minister. Speaking at the launching ceremony of 'FM Direct', Foreign

Minister Qureshi said digitization of the Ministry would introduce a "prominent change in ethics and work culture". The foreign minister said the 'FM Direct' was a new and evolved way of thinking, encapsulating the spirit of meritocracy and transparency within the Foreign Office through digital communications. "The mobile application has been introduced during COVID-19 pandemic as an efficient and swift medium of internal



communication, in cognizance of the critical importance of interactive and responsive multi-stakeholder coordination and dialogue," he said.

Qureshi said in next step, the Ministry would be made paperless and digitized. He said the step under 'Vision FO' aimed at promoting a macro vision, digital landscape and a transparent way of communications. He acknowledged the contribution of Chairman National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) in helping the launch of application. He mentioned holding of 'FM Connect coffee mornings', where he regularly connected with a diversity of stakeholders

across the country each month, to help frame a more progressive and inclusive foreign policy. The foreign minister said he was in touch with Digital Diplomacy Group for setting up a more digitally connected system for the Ministry. Earlier in December 2019, Foreign Minister Qureshi introduced #VisionFO to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of his Public Diplomacy Initiative to promote a macro vision, digital landscape and a transparent way of communications.

Oil climbs  
as Trump  
lays out  
reopening of  
virus-hit US

DNA

SINGAPORE: Oil prices pushed higher Friday as President Donald Trump's plan for a reopening of the virus-battered United States offset worries about a devastating supply shock triggered by the pandemic. Brent crude, the international benchmark, was up nearly three percent in Asian trade at \$28.65 a barrel while US benchmark WTI rose 0.6 percent to \$19.99 a barrel — but still around its lowest level since 2002.

British HC visits COVID-19  
emergency operations centre

DNA

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner, Christian Turner CMG has visited the COVID-19 National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in Islamabad to see at first-hand how Pakistan is responding to the crisis. The centre is the key surveillance and data management centre for the global pandemic in Pakistan, providing data on how the virus is affecting the country and so strengthening the fight against the disease. The High Commissioner was accompanied by the head of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) office in Pakistan Annabel Gerry. They were received by the Director of the NEOC, Dr Rana Safdar, who briefed them on how COVID19 Surveillance is working throughout Pakistan. The centre and surveillance networks have been supported by UK Aid through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), to monitor polio

in Pakistan, before being used for COVID-19 response. Dr Christian Turner said: "Hugely impressed with National Emergency Operations Centre putting world class data, surveillance and epidemiology at the heart of COVID19 response. "I'm proud that the UK supports this centre, which was set up to help fight polio. Now it has repurposed to become the biggest data centre in the country for all COVID-19-related information, as Pakistan responds to this global pandemic. "The dedicated people behind this centre underline the best of UK-Pakistan friendship and shared problem-solving, even in these most challenging of times" The data collated at the centre is published daily on the COVID-19 dashboard by the Government of Pakistan [covid.gov.pk]. The centre was originally the National Emergency Operations Centre for surveillance of polio cases, but is now also being used to track cases and collate data on COVID-19 in Pakistan.

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner, Christian Turner CMG visited COVID-19 National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). — DNA

Firdous urges media  
role to defeat COVID-19

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Friday asked the media to play a proactive role in educating the masses about the importance of preventive measures, including social distancing, to defeat the coronavirus pandemic. She said the protection of media persons from the

COVID-19 was the government's priority. Her ministry had approached the National Disaster Management Authority for the provision of personal protection kits, which would be distributed among the media professionals through press clubs. The SAPM was talking to the media on the occasion of distribution of personal protection kits among the media persons here at the National

Press Club (NPC). She said like other sectors, the government was considering a relief package for the media workers, who were already facing a financial crisis and the coronavirus had further added to the problems. Being the incharge of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, it was her responsibility to raise voice for the protection of the rights of media professionals at the government forums, she added.

Japan offers \$930  
payment to all residents

TOKYO: Japan will offer a cash payment of 100,000 yen (\$930) to every resident, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced Friday, as measures to contain the coronavirus decimate the world's third-top economy. "We are moving quickly to deliver cash to all people,"

Abe said in a televised news conference to explain his decision to expand a state of emergency nationwide. An initial plan to provide three times that amount to households, which have seen incomes slashed because of the coronavirus, was ditched

and Abe apologised for the confusion. Japan has seen relatively few cases and deaths compared to hotspots in Europe and the United States but a recent spike in Tokyo — which logged a daily record 201 new cases on Friday — has sparked concern. — APP

Saudi  
govt says  
Ramadan  
prayers  
to be at  
home

DNA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al Al Sheikh, the highest religious authority in the country, said that Muslim prayers during Ramadan and for the subsequent Eid Al Fitr feast should be performed at home if the coronavirus outbreak continues. "Ramadan's Taraweeh (evening) prayer can be performed at home if it cannot be performed at mosques due to the preventive measures taken to fight the spread of coronavirus," he said in response to a question, adding that same applies for Eid prayers.

Kyrgyz FM holds  
talks with Turkish  
counterpart

DNA

BISHKEK: Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic Chingiz Aidarbekov held a videoconference with Head of the Turkish Foreign Ministry Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. During the conversation the foreign ministers of the two countries discussed topical issues of bilateral cooperation, as well as comprehensive implementation of the results of the video summit of the Turkic Council Heads of State, held on April 10, 2020. Foreign Minister Chingiz Aidarbekov drew attention to the need for joint practical cooperation in combating the coronavirus pandemic. The sides noted the importance of direct interaction of medical services of the two countries for online



and other consultations on treatment and prevention of COVID-19. The Foreign Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic and Turkey also considered the issue of organizing charter flights for mutual evacuation of citizens of both countries. The Kyrgyz foreign minister thanked the interlocutor for the decision of the Turkish authorities not to

impose penalties on citizens of Kyrgyzstan, who have exceeded the term of visa stay or residence permit until the resumption of regular flights. At the same time, Chingiz Aidarbekov expressed gratitude to his counterpart for the comprehensive assistance provided by the Turkish side in the fight against COVID-19.

## Covid-19 pandemic: need to shun differences

Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues statement; calls for global efforts to fight this disease

DNA

HAVANA: The impact of COVID19 can already be measured and will be assessed in the future by the striking numbers of people infected, the unacceptable numbers of deaths, the unquestionable damages to the world economy, production, trade, employment and personal income of millions of people. It is a crisis that goes well beyond the scope of health. The pandemic has emerged and spread amidst a scenario previously marked by overwhelming economic and social inequalities within and among nations. With unprecedented migratory and refugee flows, xenophobia and racial discrimination have

reemerged. The remarkable advances of science and technology, particularly in the area of health, focus in the pharmaceutical business and commercialization of medicine, rather than in securing the wellbeing and healthy living of majorities. Covid19 has come into a world overburdened by production and consumption patterns, especially in highly industrialized countries and among the elites of developing countries, that are unsustainable and incompatible with the finite character of natural resources upon which life on the planet depends. Before the first case was identified, there were 820 million people suffering from hunger worldwide; 2.2 billion people with no access to fresh

water; 4.2 billion without access to safely managed sanitation services and 3 billion lacking basic amenities for hand washing. This scenario becomes more inadmissible when it is known that globally around 6.7 billion dollars are spent on a yearly basis only in advertising, while military expenditure amounts to 1.8 trillion dollars that are completely useless in the combat against the COVID19 threat, which has already taken the lives of tens of thousands of people. The virus does not discriminate. It does not distinguish the rich from the poor. However, its devastating effects multiply there where people that are most vulnerable and get the lowest incomes live, in the poor and developing world, in the pockets of poverty of large indus-

trialized cities. Its impact is specially felt where neoliberal policies and social spending cuts have limited public administration capacities of the State. Covid19 has taken more lives where governmental public healthcare budgets have been cut. It has caused more economic damages where the State has little or no options to bail out those who lose their jobs, close their businesses and suffer the dramatic reduction or loss of their personal and family income source. In most developed countries the death toll is higher among the poor, migrants and, in the specific case of the United States, among African Americans and Latinos. To top it all off, the international community has to deal with this global threat while the biggest military, eco-

nomical, technological and communicational power of the world implements a foreign policy that seeks to incite and promote conflicts, divisions, chauvinism and supremacist and racist positions. At times when the worldwide combat against the Covid19 pandemic requires boosting cooperation and the leading role of international organizations, particularly the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the current US administration attacks multilateralism and seeks to disqualify the established leadership of WHO. It also insists in its petty strategy of taking advantage of the circumstances to impose its dominance and attack countries whose governments it has discrepancies with.