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Pakistan, China ties further cemented, says Yao Jing

We must refrain from politicizing Coronavirus

Turkish envoy thanks Pak for citizens return



Foreign support to ease Pakistan economic burden

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Amid Coronavirus surge and easing lockdown, Pakistan switches on COVID-19 Emergency Response and Effectiveness Project under strategic preparedness and response program (SPRP) using the multiphase programmatic approach (MPA) with finance envelope of US \$ 2.7 billion and \$ 1.3 billion approved by World Bank.

It aims to cushion socio-economic dynamics preventing, detecting and responding to the threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen national systems for public health preparedness. According to Gwadar Pro App, the primary target

groups for the support to mitigate socioeconomic impacts are affected households/persons with high vulnerability to shocks, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable who tend to have limited assets and other mechanisms to protect themselves from shocks and households/persons who are affected due to mobility restrictions or are quarantined that disrupt their ability to meet basic needs. Households may benefit from multiple interventions under the proposed project. The social risks are also considered substantial. One major social risk is that marginalized and vulnerable social groups (e.g. women, elderly, differently-abled, indigenous

people (IPs) of Kalash and other areas of Pakistan, religious minorities, communities in remote locations etc.) are unable to access and benefit from facilities and services which could undermine the objectives of the project. To mitigate this risk, the Ministry of National Health Services will commit to the provision of services and supplies based on the urgency of the need. The project's communication strategy will facilitate the access of vulnerable groups to information on how to prevent and respond to COVID-19 in ways they can understand. There is a potential risk of social tension and conflict within communities due to the adverse impacts on

containment strategies on people's livelihoods, and in quarantine/isolation facilities servicing marginalized groups such as religious minorities. A Gender and Social Assessment will be conducted to address the concerns and needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups, particularly the Kalash, (including issues of access, prevention of social tensions and conflict, mental health and psychosocial support of healthcare workers and trauma survivors etc.). This will also encompass the impact of increased unpaid care work on women, impact on their economic participation and gender-based violence concerns.



RAWALPINDI: German Ambassador Bernhard Schlagheck giving donation to Leprosy hospital to support them to buy personal protection equipment in the wake of COVID 19 challenges. - DNA

Iran launches military satellite

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Wednesday "successfully" launched the country's first military satellite into space. "The satellite Noor 1 (Light 1) was launched by the satellite carrier Qased (Messenger) from the central desert region of the country by the IRGC and was successfully reached the 425 km orbit," said the report. - APP

Army Chief lauds NCOC working

DNA

ISLAMABAD: COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa has lauded remarkable efforts of NCOC for formulating and implementing covid-19 response despite resource & time constraints. While complimenting civil-military components of NCOC, COAS emphasised the need for stratified risk assessment, managing trinity of health crisis, economic slide & psycho-social impact through efficient resource management.

He expressed these views during his visit to NCOC Wednesday. He said, Pakistan Army in collaboration with other national institutions should take all possible measures to bring comfort to the nation in these challenging times particularly during RAMAZAN. Earlier, the COAS was received by Lieutenant General Hamood Uz Zaman Khan, Commander Army Air Defence Command & National Coordinator NCOC. COAS was briefed in detail by Major General Asif Mehmood

Goaraya DG operations & planning NCOC about COVID-19 related multi sectoral situation, implementation of NCC decisions, projections about likely spread of the disease in Pakistan and support being extended to civil administration against pandemic. COAS was also apprised about national strategy for test, trace and quarantine (TTQ) aimed at identifying disease spread, focused clusters / hotspots to enable targeted lockdowns & need driven resource optimisation at all levels.

Briefs

Will pray at home: Mufti Muneeb

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman has said that he is offering prayers at home and will continue to do so during Ramadan. According to a private television channel report Wednesday, Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman has urged religious scholars to follow 20 point agenda agreed between ulema and the government. Last week government, after a consultative meeting of Ulema chaired by President Arif Alvi in Islamabad on April 18, granted conditional permission for congregational prayers and Taraweeh during Ramadan. Government and religious scholars of all school of thoughts agreed on 20 points strategy for congregational prayers in Ramadan amid coronavirus outbreak in the country.

Supplies from Turkey arrive

133 Turkish citizens have flown back

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Turkey has donated protective equipment, including 20,000 N-95 masks and 18500 safety gowns, for Pakistani doctors working in hospitals for treatment of Corona-infected patients. According to National Disaster Management Authority, a Turkish jet carrying these items reached Islamabad on Wednesday. Ambassador of Turkey was present on the occasion of handing over of equipment



to Pakistani authorities. Meanwhile 133 Turkish citizens flew back today. Ambassador of Turkey Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul saw them off. In his Tweet the ambassador hoped that these people will soon

come back to their second home i.e Pakistan. He thanked Pakistani authorities for facilitating safe return of Turkish citizens. [More Pictures on Back Page](#)



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Imran Khan visits Ehsaas cash distribution point, on Wednesday. - DNA

ICCI calls for package for SMEs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that due to lockdown triggered by Covid-19 pandemic, the business of SMEs have suffered massive losses and called upon the government to announce urgent relief package for them to save these businesses from complete collapse. He said that SMEs were closed for the last over one month, but government has not announced any relief package for them so far due to which business community of this sector was feeling insecure.

ECC release funds for laborers

Decision was taken at a meeting of the ECC with Adviser to the PM on Finance and Revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in the chair

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved release of Rs 75 billion from PM's Relief Package of Rs 200 billion for targeted payments to the low-income groups, especially labourers and daily wagers most severely affected by the lockdown situation in the country. The decision was taken at a meeting of the ECC held at the Cabinet Block today with Adviser to the Prime

Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in the chair. Under the decision, disbursement of Rs 12,000/- per selected person would be made using the Ehsaas disbursement mechanisms under a programme called "Mazdoor Ka Ehsaas Programme". For this purpose, a fourth category in addition to already existing three categories in "Ehsaas Kifalat", would be created and standard filters/checks of Ehsaas Program would be applied for identification of the beneficiaries.

Japan reassures support to Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Japanese Ambassador Kuninori Matsuda called on Prime Minister's Special Assistant on National Health Services Dr Zafar Mirza in Islamabad on Wednesday and expressed his country's resolve to stand by Pakistan in the context of COVID-19. The Ambassador said Japan is providing an assistance of 3.41 million dollars to fight the Coronavirus pandemic.

Karachi traders threaten movement

DNA

KARACHI: Karachi traders on Wednesday threatened to launch a jail bhara (fill the jails) movement if their demand to resume businesses in the metropolis during COVID-19 lockdown is not accepted. "If our demands are not accepted, we will be launching a jail bhara (fill the jails) movement," said Sindh Tajir Ittehad leader Jameel Paracha during a joint presser of different trade organizations. He said that the traders would reopen their shops from the first day of the Ramadan. "We will not meet any negotiating team or minister of the provincial government," he said.

Pak, China ties further cemented: Yao Jing

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In order to combat against COVID-19 outbreak, a common enemy of the world, Pakistan and China have cooperated with each other to weather such a storm. "The friendship between China and Pakistan has been stabilized by catastrophe again," said Yao Jing, Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, reports Gwadar Pro App on Wednesday. Briefing about the two countries' cooperative, fighting the epidemic, Yao Jing said, "Pakistan and China are true friends sharing weal and woe. Since the

beginning of COVID-19 outbreak, China has cooperated with Pakistan closely to jointly fight the epidemic. Through this occasion, a solid basis of friendship between Pakistan and China can be witness." According to Yao Jing, the Pak-China cooperation on combating COVID-19 can be observed in two phases. "In the first phase, China faced tremendous pressure and challenge to cope with domestic outbreak. In this period, all walks of life in Pakistan firmly supported China to overcome difficulty," he said. Regarding this, Yao gave several examples. In the first phase, there were sev-

eral telephone conversations and correspondence between the authorities of Pakistan and China, such as Pakistani president Arif Alvi and prime minister Imran Khan sent letters to Chinese president Xi Jinping and premier Li Keqiang, Imran talked with Xi Jinping on the phone and the foreign minister Qureshi talked with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi on the phone. In each communication, Pakistani authority highly spoke of and firmly supported China's endeavor on combating against COVID-19. "In such a harsh time, Pakistan senate passed a reso-

lution in support of China's anti-epidemic efforts. In the meantime, President Alvi made a special trip to China to express his firm support for China. Meanwhile, Pakistan and China released a joint statement on deepening strategic cooperative partnership and signed a series of bilateral cooperation documents. In addition, Pakistan has made every effort to give a helping hand to the Chinese practically, such as keeping the air routes unblocked, insisting on not evacuating Pakistani nationals from China, and collecting anti-epidemic medical supplies to support China," he said.

Yao Jing added that, "looking back those events, the Chinese government and people are deeply grateful to Pakistan for its kind support and will carve it in mind." In the other phase, when COVID-19 epidemic attacked Pakistan, China also has supported Pakistan to combat against it at full stretch. Including the central government of China, the government of Xinjiang province, Chinese enterprises, the Red Cross society of China and non-governmental charities, all walks of life in China have constantly provided support to Pakistan. "Up to now, China already

provided a large number of funds, testing kits, masks, respirators, protective equipments, medicines and other materials. Moreover, China also helped Pakistan establish a provisional isolation hospital in Islamabad to combat COVID-19." Further more, the Chinese government has dispatched a special aid team composed by Chinese medical experts who have rich experiences on combating against COVID-19. The Chinese military held an online conference with Pakistani military to share the experiences of controlling and prevention of the epidemic.

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Pakistan's blue economy seeks way out amid COVID-19

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Briefs

Chan for collective efforts to fight virus

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan's Special Assistant Nadeem Afzal Chan Wednesday said that war against Corona pandemic can be won with the collective efforts and Prime minister Imran Khan was showing serious concerns over low income people's lives in this coronavirus critical situation. Talking to a private news channel, Nadeem Chan said we are facing the challenge of poverty along with the issue of coronavirus and the government of Imran Khan will use all its available resources to extend support to the needy and deserving segments of the society on priority basis. He said almost 70% of poor population has been suffering from crisis and they cannot afford more lockdown situation in the country. However, Prime Minister has always expressed concerns over situation of daily wagers and laborers in current circumstances, adding, he is satisfied with 'Ehsaas program' which will reach to those people who really deserve.

0.5 mln new houses in two years

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Association of Builder and Developers (ABAD) Mohsin Seikhani on Wednesday vowed to construct 500,000 new houses in four major cities in the country during the next two years. The houses would be built in four major cities including Karachi, Hyderabad, Islamabad and Lahore, he said. "We have completed our market study and acquired land and industrial players would start construction of houses to complete in next two years", Chairman ABAD said while talking to APP here. Chairman Abad said, "We would provide these houses on affordable rates of Rs 3 to 2.4 million in two different categories for middle class families for giving them good residential facilities in major cities. He said that this big project initiated by ABAD would not only start business activities but would also provide employment opportunities to the skilled and unskilled laborers in the country.

Weekly live poetry session

ISLAMABAD: Theatre Walley has started a live poetry weekly session to unite audiences all over the world through messages of peace and unity during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an official, this difficult challenge of the pandemic is a new way of thinking which has opened up the resources, transformed human activities and we should take advantage of the technology available in this environment and stay in touch with each other. He said that members will recite selected Urdu poetry and prose something people have rarely heard before. -- APP

Experts analyze peace deal between US and Taliban

Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) and Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar jointly organized an "Online National Conference" on the topic "Post Doha Agreement Afghanistan: Implications and Options for Pakistan". The Conference was organized to analyze the peace deal between US and Taliban and its implication for Pakistan

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) and Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar jointly organized an "Online National Conference" on the topic "Post Doha Agreement Afghanistan: Implications and Options for Pakistan". The Conference was organized to analyze the peace deal between U.S. and Taliban and its implication for Pakistan. Mr. Rahimullah Yousofzai - Senior Journalist stated that Doha peace agreement is still holding if not working and it is the biggest opportunity to bring peace if implemented in its true spirit. The issue of releasing the prisoners is the biggest hurdle now which does not seem to resolve easily. Afghan Government stated that it will release 1500 prisoners instead of five thousand which were agreed in Doha agreement. If Afghan Government does not release the prisoners as per the agreement

than Taliban will not take part in Intra-Afghan negotiations. There has been an agreement on power sharing and its terms have been already discussed. Lt. Gen Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Retd), Former Federal Defense Minister & Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS stated that many clauses of the Doha agreement have not been shared. U.S. is not leaving Afghanistan willingly and still has interests in the region due to Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, CPEC and Indian Ocean. However, U.S. will pursue its interests through other means. There are many other fractions involved in Intra-Afghan Dialogue other than Taliban and Afghan Government. Pakistan must keep playing the role of a facilitator in the process as peaceful, stable and friendly Afghanistan is in the maximum interest of Pakistan. Dr. Syed Akhtar Ali Shah - Former Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while highlighting the capacity of the stakeholders stated that it is



necessary to understand perception of different stakeholders in the peace process. Taliban's aim is to establish an Islamic emirate and have their own interpretation of Sharia. Structural amendments are required in the Constitution of Afghanistan as currently it is centralized. If Intra-Afghan Dialogue does not succeed than Afghanistan may submerge into a civil war. However, it has the potential to end the fight if the signatories are sincere in implementing the terms of the agreement. Prof Hussain Shaheed Soharwardi, Director, Institute for Peace & Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar stated that swap

of business is not taking place which is most significant. Afghanistan is at civil war and Afghan Army is fighting on numerous fronts including Taliban, IS and other extremist fractions and reduction in its military assistance and training will destroy the fight against terrorism, militarily and Doha peace deal, politically. Afghanistan's strategy has been continuously revised on many occasions due to its intricacies. Dr Simal Khan, Consultant UNDP, Expert on Afghanistan highlighted the existence of divergent forces within the Afghan Government and the negotiating team. She stated that

the Ghani Government is using delaying strategies and looking at the results of US elections in November 2020. Ghani faction is not interested in any end or meaningful settlement. They are status quo actors and their power is linked to the continuation of U.S. military and economic support even if it is shrinking. Iran and other regional countries as well as multilateral institutions must be involved. We should look at the 6+2 framework again to bring the region together and to discuss all possible scenarios. Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan - Director, Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), Uni-

versity of Peshawar stated that whatever happens in Afghanistan is more important for Pakistan than happenings in any other state in historical and geographical perspectives. USA has taken many policy turns on the region during the last two decades or so. USA might be serious in withdrawal because of election year. Division of Afghanistan on ethnic or sectarian basis will have catastrophic consequences for its neighbors. Bringing and sustaining peace in Afghanistan must be a shared responsibility of the regional states. Pakistan and other regional states need to re-construct the regional security paradigm through regional integration. Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad, IR Department, University of Sargodha stated that peace deal is an opportunity for bringing stability in Pakistan and across the region. The two important aspects include the release of the prisoners and U.S. breaching the peace deal. Certain fractions in Afghanistan believes that this agreement has legitimated and recognized the Taliban.

Ambassador Asif Durrani, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran and Afghanistan stated that Taliban have not yet agreed to ceasefire which is most significant and crucial for any agreement. If U.S. follows the timeline of the agreement only then we can talk about prospects and success of the dialogue. Role of the natives including Iran, Pakistan, China and Russia and the attitude of Taliban is also very important. Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd), President CGSS concluded the Conference and stated that developments in Afghanistan are taking place quickly and its future is uncertain. U.S. at this time is not showing too much of interest in Afghanistan and EU has been given the task to be more active on this front. The Conference was moderated by Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Retd), Executive Director CGSS and was attended by 52 participants which was followed by an interactive question and answer session.

Govt to spend Rs 20 mln on awareness campaign

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Human Rights would spend Rs 20 million for effective awareness programme about human rights across the country, said DG Muhammad Arshad here on Tuesday. Talking to APP here on Wednesday, he said total allocations for the project was Rs 55 million. This project has been developed to create human rights awareness in targeted programme, through print and electronic media. The main purpose of this campaign was to promote tolerance and respect for human rights and inter-faith harmony to combat re-

ligious intolerance for a peaceful society. To sensitize rural and urban communities for behavioral change towards certain human rights issues particularly gender based violence; to develop communication strategy to address major human rights issues particularly violence against women, women's inheritance rights, child abuse, transgender, minorities and PWDs etc, he added. To disseminate information on human rights in schools, colleges, universities and public & private sector. The awareness campaign are the regular phenomena of Ministry of Human

Rights department which had national moral imperative affect of people. Keeping this tradition alive, every year Human Rights and Minorities Affairs Department devises three fold plan of human rights day activities at provincial, district level in all districts of Punjab including print and electronic media campaign / coverage for celebrations of International Human Rights Day, 2020 to raise the momentum of public awareness at the maximum level. He also said the successful activity with deep rooted affects of all awareness activates conducted by public private partnership also.



ISLAMABAD: Mayor Islamabad Sheikh Anser Aziz talking to people on the occasion of distribution of ration among needy. -- DNA

'Moin Akhtar remembered'



ISLAMABAD: Legendary humorist actor Moin Akhtar was remembered on his 9th death anniversary on Wednesday (today) to paid tribute for his lifetime services. Moin Akhtar was a Pakistani stage actor who later joined the television and film

industry and enchanted millions of Pakistani and international viewers with his humorist style, comedy and impersonations of famous and ordinary people. He was also gifted with a thick and charming voice which also led him to being a host and singer. Moin Akhtar had a way with words and combined with his vast experience he was also able to write, direct and producer numerous shows which rose to fame in era of Radio Pakistan along with his co-actors Anwer Maqsood and Bushra Ansari. Electronic/Radio channels reported. -- APP

Online Declamation Contest Held

ATTOCK: Due to the Corona epidemic, where other fields of life have become paralyzed, at the same time the students ability to speak in front of public is also getting worst due to their restriction in homes. To highlight hidden art of speech among the students "All Pakistan Online Declamation Contest" is being organized by Marham Welfare Foundation & Debate Club. -- DNA

RCCI organizes blood donation camp for thalassemia patients

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has taken an initiative to arrange a blood donation camp to facilitate the patients of thalassemia in the wake of prevailing lockdown and Corona Virus spread. RCCI President Saboor Malik informed that amidst prevailing lock-

down and restriction in transportations and closure of Universities and Colleges in the city, patients of thalassemia are facing acute shortage of blood after reduced blood donations are being observed from citizens. Anticipating the difficulties and problems of thalassemia patients, RCCI arranged a blood donation camp, in which as many as 70 members,

staff and civil society donated blood for patients of thalassemia, he added. RCCI chief also appealed to the business community to come forward and be a part of its ongoing campaign for relief activities including blood camp for thalassemia patients. It's the responsibility of all the stakeholders of the society as lives of thalassemia children depends on blood transfusion, he added.

Pakistan must seek its place in new world order

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: The Covid-19 crisis will out of necessity give rise to a new world order based on review of policies and strategies, and reorientation of survival concepts and doctrines. Pakistan cannot afford to remain oblivious to this transformation and will have to align itself with the altering world and swiftly change the business as usual model to business for the future, according to an analyst. The views were shared at a webinar titled 'Emerging Trends in Strategic Arena and Pakistan', which was organized by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad as part of its webinar series 'Covid-19: Global Challenges, National Response'. The session was addressed by security analyst Brigadier (ret'd) Said Nazeer Mohmand and jointly chaired

by former secretary finance and member of IPS National Academic Council Dr Waqar Masood Khan and Executive President IPS Khalid Rahman. The participants included senior research associate IPS Ambassador (r) Tajammul Altaf and Mirza Hamid Hasan, former secretary, water and power. The speaker, terming Covid-19 as a non-state actor which could be man-made or natural, said such episodes will keep reoccurring in future. So it is essential for Pakistan to learn from the experiences and response potential of other nations and formulate strategies according to its own environment. Outlining response options and strategic plans, he said care, cure and preservation of human life should be prioritized by carving out new health strategies with intense budget allocations. Research centers, indigenization of medicines and electro-medical

equipment, and naturalization of medical facilities should be strategic health undertakings. This is currently the top priority of the world and should be of Pakistan as well. He said the country must be well-equipped to detect and stop such threats. For this the National Disaster Management Authority has to be more potent and broad-based. He said it has been seen that big administrative units like provinces are not very viable, active or responsive in dealing with such crises. Small units or administrative pockets are more practical and have a more targeted approach, he added. Nazeer also recommended demographic surveys to determine strategies for the social sectors, urban and rural planning, administrative arrangements and crisis management both at the micro and macro level. Besides threat profiling should be conducted

to devise strategies for targeted approach and disaster management and resource allocation. It would be a folly if the country does not prepare for attacks from this dimension. Unless there is threat perception the government will not be able to create proper response potential and gain the required tools to neutralize such threats. At the same time, the country has to evolve strategies so that it would have policy options when faced with such threats. The expert explained that future strategies and doctrines will be reshaped to fight short, intense and multi-directional limited wars for which smart, agile and small armies would be required. These will not require huge logistics stamina and so defense spending will automatically be reduced. As such Pakistan's strategic direction should be of unconventional deterrence for war

avoidance. This deterrence should be forward poised and should be anchored in positioning obstacles along the borders, especially with India, rather than men and tools of war. This will also force India to hike its military spending to counter the obstacle-based and multiple defensive lines. Ambassador Tajammul said the healthcare systems of the developed and developing countries are unable to sustain the enormous pressure caused by the pandemic. Countries should change their priority from defense and warfare to welfare of the people, he added. Hamid stressed the need for greater coordination and integration to face multi-dimensional attacks. This is essential because scientific and technological sectors such as artificial intelligence, cyber warfare and robotics and will become more important than physical resources in future.

The road ahead

IN many parts of the country's bigger cities, it can be said the lockdown is virtually over. While some sporadic efforts to stop cars carrying more than three persons or motorbikes is continuing, the reality is that people crowd supermarkets, grocery stores, vegetable shops and the roads appear once more to be carrying a larger load of traffic after a period when they had virtually emptied. This is obviously a cause for concern. Coronavirus cases are beginning to spike in the country, with the number rising from 8,400 on Sunday to more than 9,000 on Tuesday. This figure is likely to rise further rapidly, with an increase in testing. The government is currently carrying out up to 7,500 tests a day, but hopes to increase this to 25,000 tests. As has been found in other countries, more testing would certainly identify more cases and world experts believe the peak of the virus has not yet been reached.

This raises for us a number of questions. The federal government's concern over how long a lockdown can be effectively maintained, especially with the month of Ramazan approaching and people certain to follow convention and gather around food vendors ahead of Iftar, is a valid one. The suggestion beginning to come in from the central government that specific lockdowns, of areas where high numbers of Covid-19 cases have been reported, be practised may in theory sound like a solid suggestion. But we must ask if it will be possible to accurately identify these areas in the midst of our congested cities and towns and then close off access to them from the rest of the city.

It has also been seen that people are scared of going to the hospital for fear that their families will be put in quarantine, and also of the stigma that has become attached to the novel coronavirus. Lockdowns could work if we are capable of effectively implementing them and conducting the scientific research necessary to identify those that need to be closed down while allowing other people to continue to earn their livelihoods.

But we also desperately need awareness campaigns assuring people that the Covid-19 test is nothing to be afraid of. We also need to think of preparations for Ramazan. The Punjab government has suggested fiscal handouts to avoid congested Ramazan bazaars. The practicalities of this mechanism will need to be considered carefully. Even beyond the bazaars, vendors selling traditional iftar items such as samosas or jalebis must be distanced and volunteers enrolled to prevent crowds gathering around the carts.

These are difficult days. And there is no perfect solution. The countries which have succeeded best at containing the virus have conducted strict lockdowns followed by a close tracing of those who tested positive to identify others in contact with them, and then lifted these restrictions and lockdowns only in small steps.

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Oil shock

MONDAY was not a good day for oil producers as the price of US oil plunged to minus \$37. But soon it was realized that it was a one-off freak moment caused by a trading deadline. It was back to a positive figure within hours. The same happened in the UK where the price of a barrel of Brent crude was back to \$23. It is characteristic of modern capitalist economies where futures trading is prone to such fluctuations. But it also has to do with a weak demand in the market which is likely to continue in the near future. The sharp decrease was essentially caused by two factors: one is the oversupply of crude oil in the international market; and two, a collapse in global demand that is an offshoot of stagnating economic activities the world over mainly caused by coronavirus lockdowns and accompanying measures. It is noteworthy that the oil prices that are normally reported in the international media are not the actual or current prices but reflect the future price of oil. That means that in the future a certain contractual obligation will be fulfilled to deliver the physical commodity at a later date or time. This oil price is normally an indication of what we will see as the market price for future months. These contractual obligations can be rolled over to subsequent periods as the date approaches for an expected delivery of the crude oil. The negative oil price reported in the media headlines was not applicable to all markets, it was the price of a barrel of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) which is the benchmark for US oil. So the WTI fell into negative for the first time, and that has a significance in history. Moreover, this was also related to the contractual obligations for May 2020. When such a situation develops the traders holding the contract look for new buyers but fail to get any punters. This is because no one can take the delivery of crude oil due to the economic standstill that is likely to continue into May and even beyond it.

So what do we expect in the near future? The outlook is bleak as not only oil prices but also their associated equities will remain weak at least for a couple of months to come. Even if the Opec group of oil-producing countries cut supplies – as they have agreed to do to stabilize the market – it will not be good enough to balance the market. What's in it for a country like Pakistan? Well, we could reap huge benefits if we had done some planning and if our economy were in a slightly better shape. In terms of planning we needed better and more storage capacity. In that case we could fill our reservoirs to brim and get dividends for many months to come. But even if we had the storage capacity that would be useless since our economic capacity has been dimly low. For now, the government could reduce oil prices in the local market so that the benefit of reduced prices in the world market can be shared with common people.

We must refrain from politicizing Coronavirus pandemic

Vladimir Norov



According to UNCTAD (the UN Conference on Trade and Development), in 2020 and 2021, developing countries will lack US\$2 trillion to meet their financial obligations. This could lead to a debt crisis in which many direct and indirect creditors in industrialized countries would be drawn. Developing countries have entered the crisis with record high debt levels relative to their economic indicators. As early as 2018, their total debt was almost 200 per cent of annual GDP

conomic indicators. As early as 2018, their total debt was almost 200 per cent of annual GDP. This includes public and private debts, both domestic and abroad. UNCTAD, therefore, appeals to the developed countries for an ambitious support programs in their self-interest to prevent debt distress and humanitarian disaster.

The IMF estimates that the gross external financing needed by emerging markets and developing countries is trillions of dollars. The head of IMF stated that they "need to be assisted immediately". At the same time, German business publication Handelsblatt points out the need for an urgent moratorium on debt service for developing countries, as well as debt restructuring, following the example of the London Treaty, under which, after the Second World War, Germany's debts were partly cancelled, extended or made conditional on sufficient export revenues. This idea is fully consistent with the proposal of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan to restructure loans to developing countries.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has a profound impact on all social processes in society, including criminal manifestations, especially organized crime and illicit markets. Interpol analysts note that criminals have quickly seized opportunities to exploit the crisis for their own gain. The number of cyber-attacks against organizations and individuals has been already significant and is expected to increase. Criminal groups have adopted new fraud schemes to take advantage of the fears of victims during the crisis.

These include various types of adapted telephone and Internet fraud involving the supply of personal protective equipment and disinfection. The sale of counterfeit medical and hygiene products and personal protective equipment has increased significantly since the beginning of the crisis.

"The Coronavirus pandemic is a serious threat to international peace and security," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said during the UN Security Council meeting on 10 April 2020. He stressed that "the threat of terrorism remains as the weaknesses and lack of preparedness of different countries exposed by this pandemic provide a window of opportunity for launching terrorist attacks with the use of biological weapons as well as gaining access to dangerous strains

In the current Coronavirus pandemic, it is clear that for the first time, in at least 100 years, the world is facing a global crisis that will change economic, political and social realities dramatically.

In this difficult situation, I believe that, global solidarity and international cooperation are the only right choice to reduce the impact of these massive challenges. Unfortunately, even many developed countries are struggling to cope with the devastating scale of the disease. Social and economic consequences of the pandemic indicate that 90% of the COVID-19 cases and 88% of the deaths were in the G20 countries, despite the fact that these countries contribute 80% of the world's GDP.

This shows that the virus has no borders, so the international community needs to come together to coordinate better and jointly fight the Coronavirus pandemic, share experiences in diagnostics and treatment, accelerate the development of drugs and vaccines, minimize health and life damage, and mitigate economic impacts. Trade wars and sanctions must be abandoned in order to ensure the smooth mutual supply of medicines, food, equipment and technology in order to save the lives of thousands of people.

"No country, not even the US, can defeat the virus solely through national efforts," said former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. "The solution to the challenges currently required must be combined with a global joint vision and program. If we fail to develop both in tandem, we will face the worst-case scenario for each item. We are now living in an epochal period. It is a historic task for leaders to cope with the crisis while building the future. Failure to do so can ignite the world," said the former US Secretary of State.

At the same time, the global pandemic, the concomitant atmosphere of anxiety and the quarantine measures are actively used to spread sinophobia, influence public and individual psyche by spreading conspiracy theories about the origin of the COVID-19 Coronavirus.

In that regard, we must first refrain from politicizing the topic of the Coronavirus pandemic, which is a global challenge to the entire international community and requires concerted action by all States. Pandemic COVID-19 should not be used for growth of populist sentiment, nationalism, xenophobia and attempts to split the world community.

In addition, the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) to fight the virus should be fully supported. In recent days, WHO's activities have been under the scrutiny of the world community. It is a matter of concern that some countries question the effectiveness of WHO's work.

Today, WHO is the only body within the UN system that can mobilize the necessary resources and coordinate response to contain the global threat of COVID-19 to public health in all countries of the world. The WHO has placed orders for 30 million diagnostic tests over the next 4 months. It is shipping nearly 180 million surgical masks in April and May, as well as 54 million face masks and more than 3 million pairs of protective goggles. International cooperation through the UN system is an essential and irreplaceable tool for addressing the global challenges of today's world.

The member States of the Shanghai Cooperation organization (SCO) highly appreciate and fully support the activities of WHO, follow its recommendations on prevention and control of disease spread. The SCO intends to establish broad cooperation with WHO in order to strengthen public health in the Organization's space, which is home to almost half of the world's population.

There is also a need to look more closely at the good practices of countries such as China, South Korea, Singapore and others in combating the epidemic.

I can share my opinion about the Chinese experience, as I live and work in China. Since the threat of the virus was identified, authorities of China have adopted a centralized and scientific approach in fighting against the epidemic, and have defined a set of measures that are effective and targeted. Comprehensive and concrete actions have made it possible to establish an effective system of disease control, prevention and treatment. Measures aimed at early detection, early warning, early isolation and early treatment have had positive results. Resolute action by the Chinese authorities helped contain the coronavirus outbreak in the country.



It must be said that Chinese people have shown an exceptionally high degree of responsibility and understanding with regard to the decisions taken and restrictions imposed. Effective counter-epidemic measures in China, provision of reliable and transparent information, as well as recommendations developed by WHO based on the Chinese experience of fighting the Coronavirus epidemic have allowed the world to buy two months of precious time to prepare for the fight against the epidemic.

China's success has inspired many countries. For example, India, the world's second most populous country, has imposed a 21-day national lockdown since 25 March, and its viral infection and mortality rates are now much lower than in developed countries in the West. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced that from April 20, restrictive measures will be relaxed in regions where there is a zero increase in cases.

WHO Director-General Mr. Tedros A. Ghebreyesus, at the Munich Security Conference on 15 February 2020, attended by leading policy-makers, public and academic representatives from the European Union and North America, called on all countries to prepare for the further possible spread of Coronavirus, and opposed politicization of the epidemic. "It is easy to blame and politicize, but it is harder to solve the problem together," he said.

From the very beginning, the SCO member States realized seriousness of the great danger of the Coronavirus, and that inaction in this situation could lead to disastrous consequences. They advocate coordinated efforts to combat the Coronavirus pandemic. Many SCO member States currently have emergency systems, special government commissions and operational headquar-

ters that are responsible for fighting COVID-2019 and containing its spread. At the same time, I would like to highlight the courage and dedication of medical workers in our countries, who are at the forefront of the fight against Coronavirus.

The SCO countries maintain close contacts with each other at the level of heads of state, heads of ministries and agencies responsible for health and public security. We have also implemented a set of measures to provide humanitarian assistance, at first it was directed to China, and now all our countries are involved in this process, providing each other with financial resources, food, medical equipment and medicines.

The SCO Secretariat, acting as a coordinating body, has put forward a number of proposals and initiatives to jointly combat Coronavirus. We intend to continue consultations on fight against Coronavirus at a higher level and work together to take decisive action against the spread of the disease. At the same time, the Regional Anti-terrorist Structure (RATS), in close coordination with the SCO member States, pays close attention to transnational and increasingly interconnected challenges and threats to security in the region in the context of emergency measures taken to combat Coronavirus.

As the Coronavirus spreads, more and more countries lack surgical masks, medical equipment and basic necessities, and some are turning to China for help. To date, China has provided assistance to more than 127 countries and 4 international organizations, donated US\$ 20 million to WHO, and sent a total of 14 teams of experts to fight the epidemic in 12 countries. All these facts show that China is making a significant contribution to overcoming the coronavirus pandemic on a global scale.

At present, as a result of the successful fight against coronavirus, China's economic activity is recovering. The international community expects the world's second-largest economy to become a reliable pillar against the backdrop of severely affected global growth, at the same time, China's top leadership has taken a number of important stimulus measures to revitalize the country's economy and also seeks to contribute to global economic stability.

According to prominent experts, despite a decline in the first quarter, China's economy will grow again in the second quarter of 2020.

In March, the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) of China's industrial sector rose sharply, surpassing analysts' expectations. PMI was 52 points, while experts of Reuters who surveyed, expected it to be at 45 points. In addition, almost 99% of large industrial enterprises in China have restored their operations.

The industrial production index rose to 54.1 points in March as compared to 27.8 points in February. China's major industrial enterprises had an average work resumption rate of 99 percent and 94 percent of the employees have returned to work. The Renminbi remains stable on foreign exchange markets. As of April 15, a total of 1.16 trillion yuan of new special bonds had been issued by local governments, mainly for new and under-construction projects.

China's housing market began to recover after a marked decline in early 2020 due to spread of coronavirus. In the first 17 days of March, there were 39.4 thousand purchase and sale transactions in 30 major cities, which is almost eight times more than in the same period in February. Given that China's real estate sector and related industries account for 25% of the economy, its recovery will play a key role in the return to strong economic growth in the country, remarked experts from the real estate consulting company Knight Frank.

Foreign investors remain optimistic about China and their confidence and determination in long-term business development in China has not changed.

In January-March this year, the volume of foreign direct investment in China's hi-tech services sector grew by 15.5 percent compared to the same period of the previous year. Western investment funds are showing a growing interest in Chinese securities market. Analysts point out that with continued instability in other markets, Chinese assets may become one of the few sources of profit for investors.

Overall, while maintaining key advantages in the form of strong productive capacity and based on a dynamic domestic market, China has been a driving force in global efforts to contain the virus and restore the world economy.

The Writer is the Secretary-General of the SCO

Briefs

US oil prices jump after massive rout

SINGAPORE: US oil prices surged Wednesday after falling below zero for the first time at the start of the week as markets down in crude due to a virus-triggered collapse in demand. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate for June delivery was up almost 10 percent at \$12.68 a barrel, paring gains of around 20 percent at the open in Asia. WTI for May delivery on Monday collapsed to an unprecedented low of minus \$40.32 as traders scrambled to sell it before the contract expired Tuesday, but could find few buyers with storage capacity fast filling up. The negative prices meant that traders were forced to pay to have the crude taken off their hands. European benchmark Brent crude for June delivery bounced more than two percent at the open, but then reversed gains and was trading around three percent lower, with a barrel changing hands for \$18.73. It had tumbled to an 18-year low the previous day. — APP

'PML-N classic example of duplicity'

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said on Wednesday that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leadership was a classic example of duplicity and double standards. In a tweet, she said that on the one hand, Shahbaz Sharif insisting on social distancing was not willing to answer the questions of NAB's three-member investigation team while on the other hand, he was insisting on summoning the session of the Parliament with presence of hundreds of parliamentarians. "Like two different narratives at one time, their present stances are contradictory", she remarked.

250 UK citizens repatriate

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The first charter flight carrying over 250 British Nationals have left for London from Islamabad International Airport. The British High Commissioner Dr Christian Turner CMG, went to Islamabad Airport to review the arrangements ahead of the first flight and said: "I've reviewed the final arrangements that have been put in place for all the British people going back home to the UK. I am grateful to the Government of Pakistan, Qatar Airways and the Islamabad Airport Authorities for working so hard with my team over the last week in order to make their journeys as smooth as possible. I wish all those heading back home a safe journey."



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador Mustafa Yurdakul seeing off Turkish citizens who left Pakistan. He said they will soon come back to their second home. — DNA

Uzbekistan labour minister calls for end to cotton boycott

Lifting of the cotton boycott is one of the few measures that could quickly generate much-needed jobs and support the economic wellbeing of Uzbeks during the COVID-19 crisis. Textile production alone employs 200,000 workers in Uzbekistan; their wages support the livelihoods of 1 million people

DNA
TASHKENT: The novel coronavirus pandemic has caused significant damage to the world economy. According to preliminary estimates from the International Labor Organization (ILO), up to 25 million individuals will lose their jobs globally as a direct result of COVID-19—Uzbekistan is no exception. The Government of Uzbekistan is taking action to support the economy, including by establishing a 10 trillion sum (\$1.05 billion) COVID-19 support fund, but many Uzbeks will remain vulnerable to the downturn. The Ministry for Employment and Labor Relations of Uzbekistan estimates that 1.5 million Uzbeks are currently unemployed. Moreover, 200,000 individuals are expected to fall below the poverty line as the country undergoes its lockdown.

In light of these urgent challenges, Mr. Nozim Khusanov, the Minister of Employment and Labor Relations of Uzbekistan, has issued an open letter to the senior leadership of the Cotton Campaign, a coalition of human rights, labor, and business organizations, asking its members to lift a global boycott on Uzbek cotton first established in 2006 due to historic reliance on forced and child labor in the Uzbekistan's cotton harvest. Over 300 global brands and retailers have signed a pledge not to source Uzbek cotton, hampering export growth and the development of

the country's textile industry. Senior representatives of the Cotton Campaign visited Uzbekistan in late January as part of ongoing dialogue with Uzbek governmental and civil society stakeholders. As detailed by the ILO as part of its monitoring of the 2019 cotton harvest, "systematic forced labour did not occur during the 2019 cotton harvest" and "systematic or systematic child labour is no longer used during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan." On March 6 2020, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a historic decree to end state directives over the production, pricing, and sale of cotton—ending a quota system in place for nearly a century. While the lifting of the boycott is warranted given the demon-

strable progress in protecting human rights and social welfare in Uzbekistan, Minister Khusanov has issued this "urgent" call given the "extraordinary pressure" facing the labor market in Uzbekistan. Lifting of the cotton boycott is one of the few measures that could quickly generate much-needed jobs and support the economic wellbeing of Uzbeks during the COVID-19 crisis. Textile production alone employs 200,000 workers in Uzbekistan; their wages support the livelihoods of 1 million people. While calling for an end to the boycott, Minister Khusanov's has invited the Cotton Campaign to "continue to work collaboratively" with the Uzbek government in order to enter a "new chapter of reform." The minister seeks to

draw on the expertise of Cotton Campaign member organizations "to consolidate the progress made in eliminating forced labor, to support ongoing monitoring efforts, and to assist in the introduction of sustainability and social responsibility commitments across the value chain." The open letter concludes by asking the leaders of the Cotton Campaign to "consider an end to the boycott as an act of solidarity towards the Uzbek people" enabling them to "secure their livelihoods in these difficult times and to look to the future with greater optimism." The Press Service of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of Uzbekistan can be reached at this email: mediarelations.moelr@gmail.com

CTGC donates RMB10m medical supplies to Pakistan

DNA
BEIJING: China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC) donated RMB10 million worth of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ventilators to the Pakistan, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). According to Hear Pro App, the emergency medical supplies will be delivered to Pakistan by three planes of the company, and a medical team will also be sent to assist the country fight the COVID-19 pandemic. A donation ceremony was held here, attended by

Ambassador Naghmana A. Hashmi and Mr. Yao Wen, Deputy Director General, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lei Ming-shan, Chairman of China Three Gorges Corporation and senior officials from Chinese government and corporate sector were also at the event. China Three Gorges Corporation is a leading Chinese enterprise engaged in several power projects worth \$6 billion in Pakistan. The donated medical supplies include a vast quantity of disposable surgical masks, N-95 masks, protective clothing and portable ventilators. The critical medical sup-

plies, aimed at reinforcing Pakistan's disease prevention and control measures in its fight against COVID-19 epidemic, would be transported via several special flights chartered by CTGC in coming days. Speaking at the occasion, the participants underscored that medical supplies donated by CTGC are a demonstration of strong commitment and support that Chinese government, corporate sector and general public have extended to Pakistan in its fight against COVID-19. The participants reaffirmed China's firm resolve to stand by Pakistan in its fight against the virus.

Turkish mosque made market

ISTANBUL: At the entrance of an Istanbul mosque, the racks usually reserved for the shoes of the faithful are loaded with pasta packages, oil bottles, biscuits — like a supermarket. But they aren't for sale. Instead they are destined for the needy, hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The sign on the mosque's window asks anyone who can to leave something, and says those in need can take something. Abdulsamet Cakir, 33, imam of the Dedeman mosque in the Sariyer district, came up with this idea of reaching out to the poor via the place of worship after Turkey suspended mass prayers in mosques.

Asad Qaiser for lifting anti-Iran sanctions

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly says that in a recent letter to his US counterpart Ms Nancy Pelosi he raised the issue of lifting of sanctions against Iran adding that Pakistan would keep endeavoring to flag the issue. Asad Qaiser in a letter to Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini said Pakistan is fully cognizant of the effect of international sanctions regime on brotherly Islamic Republic of Iran in dealing with this global health challenge. "Keeping this effect in rear view mirror, Prime Minister Imran Khan has



vociferously raised the issue of sanctions and urged US to lift them temporarily," he said. He said: In these extremely challenging times, I would like to share my heartfelt support and solidarity with you, your families and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran. "It is with a heavy heart that we note the grave toll in human life in Iran at the hand of the Corona pan-

demia," said Qaiser. He also conveyed warm wishes and best regards to the government of Iran and the Speaker of Majlis Mr Ali Larjani. Prime Minister of Pakistan, who believes that US sanctions against Iran are cruel and unfair, had called on US President Donald Trump to lift the economic sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi also started a diplomatic outreach for the removal of Iran sanctions and held telephonic conversations with his German, Spanish, French, Turkish, Nepali, Bangladeshi, Maldivian counterparts on the issue.

Pakistan's blue economy seeks way out amid COVID-19

STAFF REPORT

BEIJING: Pakistani ports such as Gwadar, Karachi and Qasim did not get boxed in as the COVID-19 pandemic haunted all human beings. Located beside the key shipping routes in and out of the Persian Gulf, Gwadar Port which strives to become a vibrant transit and transshipment port, took actions since COVID-19 did shake Pakistan's economy. According to Gwadar Pro App, at the request of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PAJCCI), Gwadar International

Terminals Limited and other stakeholders, government allowed import of Afghan bulk cargo of wheat, sugar and fertilisers at the Gwadar Port, and onward transit to Afghanistan from April 17. "The petitions have been examined in light of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTITA) 2010, and in view of the provisions of the APTITA, the petitions of the stakeholders, and for the sake of efficient and cost-effective operationalization of the Gwadar Port and the western corridor of the CPEC, the import of Afghan bulk-cargo of wheat, sugar and fertilisers at the Gwadar Port and onward transit to Afghanistan shall be permitted in bonded carrier, insured and

sealable trucks having a tracking device installed on them," the office memorandum noted. In addition to Gwadar Port, Karachi Port and Port Qasim, Pakistan's two main operating international deep-sea ports, also adopted measures to tackle the current economic downturn caused by COVID-19. On April 15, Central Development Working Party (CDWP) approved 3 projects worth Rs. 1.04 billion for Karachi's Korangi Fish Harbour (KFH), namely, "Establishment of Business Park at Korangi Fisheries Harbour" worth Rs.784 million, "Establishment of Cold Storage & Freezing Tunnel at Korangi Fisheries Harbour" worth Rs. 170.1 million and "Modification of Auction Hall

of Korangi Fisheries Harbour" worth Rs 94 million. As per CDWP, the first project presented by Ministry of Maritime Affairs envisages the development of Business Park to accommodate industrial units, offices and other associated infrastructure and services centered around one primary product or activity. The planned Business Park will be established on the 320 acres of land available within KPFHA boundary. Port Qasim - currently caters for more than 40% of seaborne trade requirements of the country - issued a Response Plan for Coronavirus on March 12, preparing to deal with entry of the ship in port and while it is berth inside and defining the role function of port health

authority, port administration, shipping lines/agents and other stakeholders. In accordance with the Response Plan, brisk shipping activity was observed at Port Qasim these days, with ships like Maersk Bentonville, Nordic Anny, CL Heidi and Serene Amelia carrying Containers, Mogas and Coal arriving at outer anchorage of Port Qasim on April 17. On top of port authorities mentioned above, Pakistan's fishermen are to venture into the Seas of Pakistan by being equipped with advanced Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) technology. According to Pakistan's Press Information Department, Fisheries Development Commissioner Dr. Safia Mushtaq gave a

detailed presentation to Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi on VMS, an integral element of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) programs at the national and international level on April 18. In other words, Ministry of Maritime Affairs is all set to harness potential in deep sea fishing by providing access to cost effective and state of the art equipment to Pakistani fishermen, with fishermen who are currently operating from coastal areas of the province of Sindh and Balochistan to benefit the most. As the first step in the modernization of industry, the up-to-date technology will open new avenues of development and sustainability in the fishing industry of Pakistan.

'World on brink of hunger'

UNITED NATIONS: The world is on the brink of a 'hunger pandemic' as the coronavirus continues to spread, the head of the U.N. food agency has warned the Security Council. Highlighting "the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II" sparked by the global spread of COVID-19 this year, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) David Beasley pointed to deepening crises, more frequent natural disasters and changing weather patterns, and said, "We're already facing a perfect storm". As millions of civilians in conflict-scarred nations teeter on the brink of starvation, he said, "famine is a very real and dangerous possibility". "There are no famines yet," WFP chief told the virtual session of the Security Council on Tuesday. "But I must warn you that if we don't prepare and act now — to secure access, avoid funding shortfalls and disruptions to trade — we could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months." — APP

Indian troops martyr four youth

DNA
ISLAMABAD: In Indian Occupied Kashmir, Indian troops in their fresh act of state terrorism, martyred four Kashmiri youth in Shopian district, Wednesday. The youth were killed during a cordon and search operation, which was launched by the personnel of Indian Army and paramilitary forces on Tuesday in Melhora area of the district, Kashmir Media Service reported. Indian police police claimed that the youth were killed in a gunfight in Melhora village of the district.