

# Islamabad POST

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**Pak Army leads from the front in fight against COVID-19**

**Commercial flight to take German citizens home**

**Australian envoy wishes Ramadan Mubarak**



## Pak Army leads from the front

DG ISPR says collective efforts needed to cope with this disease; army surrenders internal security allowance; army medical corps strength to be enhanced; lauds Chinese role; praises Ulema, media role in creating awareness; warns next two weeks crucial; condemns Indian atrocities on innocent Kashmiri people; requests people to offer prayers at home

A.M.BHATTI

RAWALPINDI: Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar on Friday said that Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has directed to implement steps taken to contain coronavirus with the help of civil institutions. Addressing a press conference, the DG told that a conference was held under the supervision of army chief to discuss the situation caused by the deadly virus. The COAS has instructed to carry on the training of Pakistan Army officers and use all the resources to fight the epidemic,

he stated. Director General of military media wing told that Pakistan Army has decided not to take Internal Security Allowance in the wake of worsening situation due to coronavirus. He also expressed his concerns that the spread of virus may speed up in coming weeks. We have to take extreme care to prevent the outbreak of pandemic, he appealed. Major General Babar Iftikhar told that Indian forces have violated the ceasefire for 850 times so far with heavy weapons, targeting the civilians. Indian leadership, with the help of its media, had tried to malign Pakistan with false propaganda, he added.

ISPR DG said that India is promoting the ideology of Hindutva and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) by breaking the international laws. Talking about lockdown he said smart lockdown shall remain in place. He said only those areas shall be closed where virus cases shall be reported. He made special mention of Chinese support and thanked Chinese authorities for extending whole hearted support to Pakistan in this difficult time. He told that China had already sent huge quantities of medical supplies adding Chinese doctors were also in Pakistan to help Pakistani doctors fight against this disease.



ISLAMABAD: A view of CPEC highway Havelian Thakot section which has been completed. - DNA

### Chinese doctors team arrives

DNA

ISLAMABAD A team of Chinese doctors headed by Maj Gen Huang Qingzhen along with medical supplies & equipment arrived Pakistan on two special aircraft. The Chinese doctors who have expertise in treating infectious diseases shall support Pakistan's efforts in fighting against COVID-19 situation for the coming two months. General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee along with senior military officials welcomed the team on arrival at Pakistan. The Chinese support reaffirms that being 'Iron Brothers' and 'All-Weather' friends, Pakistan and China have always helped each other in the time of need.

### CPEC's Havelian-Thakot section completed

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the construction of Mansehra-Thakot, a secondary road section, has been completed, the Havelian-Thakot of the Karakoram Highway Phase II (KKH) gets through, which will boost the economic and social development of Pakistan, reports Gawdar Pro App on Friday. The 79-kilometer-long secondary road of Mansehra-Thakot, is a part of the 118-kilometer-long Havelian-Thakot. The other part of Havelian-Thakot, the Havelian-Mansehra expressway section, 39 kilometers, has been open to traffic in November 2019

when Prime Minister Imran Khan attended its launching ceremony. Havelian-Thakot section is given priority among the three sections of the Karakoram Highway Phase II that is an early harvest project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to the Havelian-Thakot project's contractor, China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), this project was launched in September 2016. The Chinese company employed as many as 8,000 locals during the busy months of the project, which accounted for 81.6 percent of the total employment. Besides bringing tangible

benefits to local workers, CRBC has also taught them work skills and trained thousands of locals to be engineers or technicians, which could benefit them more in a long run. Thousands of local families have seen their lives changing for the better thanks to job opportunities of this project. Karakoram Highway, the only overland connection between China and Pakistan at present, was built with fund from China during 1966-1978. The first phase of KKH's renovation and expansion project had been completed in 2013. In 2014, the memorandum on the second phase of KKH was signed between Pakistan and China.

### Briefs

#### PIA reduces special flights' fares

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airline has reduced its special flights' fares by 20 to 30 per cent, extending maximum relief to the nationals stranded in the United Arab Emirates due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Addressing a meeting in Islamabad, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari said airfare for the UAE-bound special flights would come into effect from Saturday (25 April, 2020). He said government top priority is to ensure the repatriation of all those people who stranded in UAE and want to come back to Pakistan. Special Assistant said government has increased capacity to repatriate 2,000 people per week to 6,000.

### Special flight to Frankfurt on 26th

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Despite the decision of Pakistani authorities to extend the suspension of domestic and international flights until 30th April 2020 a special commercial flight of Pakistan International Airways (PIA) has been arranged from Islamabad to Frankfurt on 26th April 2020 at 07:00 am. Being not a repatriation flight in a classical sense - as the Embassy organized on 30 March and 4 April 2020 - the flight on 26th April will

be operated by PIA solely which means that the Embassy has no role in pre-selecting passengers. According to an announcement made on the website of the German embassy, this offer is available for travelers from Germany, i.e. German nationals and Pakistani (or third country) nationals with valid residence permit ("Aufenthalts- oder Niederlassungserlaubnis" or Blue Card holders) in Germany. The flight is equally open to European citizens with a valid transit arrangement. The responsibility for com-

plying with transit and possibly quarantine requirements for the onward journey from Frankfurt to final destinations in EU countries, including onward flight tickets, rests with the respective traveller. The ticket price is 140,000 PKR including taxes. Tickets need to be purchased individually via one of the two following options: either at PIA ticket offices or by sending a booking request via email to specialflights@piac.aero Please read the pdf document for further information on the two booking options.

### Taliban reject ceasefire offer

KABUL: The Taliban have dismissed a government call for a Ramazan ceasefire in Afghanistan, saying a truce is "not rational" as they ramp up attacks on government forces. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani appealed to the militants to lay down their arms for the Islamic holy month that began Friday, as the country battles the growing coronavirus pandemic. But the Taliban's spokes-

man Suhail Shaheen tweeted late Thursday to lambaste the government's offer, citing ongoing disagreements over a potential peace process and a delayed prisoner exchange as reasons to keep fighting. "Asking for ceasefire is not rational and convincing," wrote Shaheen as he accused the government of putting prisoners' lives at risk during the outbreak. Under a landmark US-Tal-

iban deal signed earlier this year, the Afghan government and the insurgents were by now supposed to have concluded a prisoner swap and started talks aimed at bringing about a comprehensive ceasefire. The latest round of bickering comes after dozens of Afghan security forces personnel were killed in a fresh wave of violence launched by the insurgents this week. - APP

### ADB to provide \$1.7b to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Asian Development Bank has assured to provide 1.7 billion dollars to Pakistan to fight the impacts of coronavirus. The assurance was given by the President of the bank during a virtual meeting with Minister for Economic Affairs Khusro Bakhtiar. The bank will approve 800 million dollars budget support by June this year. - DNA

### Italy to ease virus lockdown

Building sites as well as the textile and fashion industry can restart on May 4, followed a week later by clothing, shoe and other shops

ROME: Italy is to ease its coronavirus lockdown, the toughest and longest in Europe, over the next four weeks, media reported on Friday although there was no official confirmation. "The next four Mondays will mark the country's reopening" following the lockdown implemented last month to slow the spread of the new coronavirus, the Corriere della Sera daily reported. The COVID-19 pandemic has killed at least 25,500 people in Italy, the world's second highest death toll. "Everything depends on the infection curve," the

best-selling daily said, but if it doesn't rise again "factories making agricultural and forestry equipment can reopen on (Monday) April 27". Building sites as well as the textile and fashion industry can restart on May 4, followed a week later by clothing, shoe and other shops. Finally, bars, restaurants and hairdressers can reopen on May 18, the paper said. Other Italian media said that bars and restaurants could reopen some time "in the second half of May". - APP

### Australian envoy wishes Ramadan Mubarak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Geoffrey Shaw sends his warmest wishes to the people of Pakistan at the start of the holy month of Ramadan. "To the people of Pakistan, I wish you peace and fulfilment during the holy month of Ramadan. Let us all take inspiration from the spirit of Ramadan to practice self-discipline and compassion in these challenging times. As we rededicate ourselves to family and community, let us focus on keeping ourselves and those around us safe and healthy."

### President again asks people to pray at homes

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has advised the people to pray at homes and observe the precautionary measures about Covid-19 during holy month of Ramazan. In a statement today, he said the first 17 points of the agreement with Ulema explicitly highlight the health safety measures that need to be followed during prayers and Taraweeh in Ramazan. - DNA

### Qureshi, Chinese envoy discuss CPEC, COVID-19

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Yao Jing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood was also present. During the meeting, Pakistan-China bilateral relations, fight against COVID-19, CPEC and other issues of mutual interest were discussed. Foreign Minister thanked China for extending support to Prime Minister Imran Khan's Global Initiative for Debt Relief at the recently-held G-20 meeting. The Foreign Minister underscored that Pakistan and China

are All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partners and have preserved the finer tradition of standing by each other during thick and thin. He particularly thanked the Government and people of China for extending solidarity and moral and material support to Pakistan in the wake of outbreak of COVID-19. The Foreign Minister underscored that the large amounts of PPE's and medical equipment sent by Beijing have significantly strengthened our capacity to control the COVID-19. The Foreign Minister also expressed deep gratitude to the Chinese leadership for sending a team of medical experts to Pakistan to assist our health community to contain the pandemic.



Foreign Minister reaffirmed that CPEC was a transformational project and completion of CPEC projects was number one priority of the government. Both sides wereworking closely to further deepen cooperation during CPEC's Second Phase which will have far-reaching im-

act on our industrial, agriculture, health, and socio-economic development sectors, he added. Ambassador Yao Jing said China is Pakistan's close friend and steadfast partner. Pakistan extended valuable support in China's fight against outbreak of the virus. Ambassador Yao recalled

that President Dr. Arif Alvi's visit to Beijing in March 2020 was an expression of tremendous solidarity to the Chinese people and further cemented our ties. China would continue to strengthen Pakistan's capacity to fight this pandemic. He reiterated that CPEC was high priority and both countries have maintained momentum of CPEC's development. Reiterating the consensus reached between the highest leadership of both countries, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Ambassador Yao Jing underlined that the two "iron brothers" would continue to strengthen bilateral cooperation and enhance exchanges between two countries at all levels.

### Inside...

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## Briefs

### Craft classes from April 26

ISLAMABAD: Theater Wally has arranged an online art and craft series from 26 April to provide an opportunity to be creative and useful during lockdown.

The series titled "Origami workshop" is interesting and beneficial for adults and children alike. It will not only help develop eye and hand co-ordination, sequencing skills, maths reasoning, spatial skills and memory, but also increases one's attention span and tolerance, an organizer of Theatre Wally said.

He said that everyone can be a part of their workshops simply by logging in to Zoom from any corner of the world. All you need for this ancient form of Japanese art is; a piece of paper and time, he said. Don't let quarantine limit you, learn new skills with us at Theatre Wally, and emerge a more creative person when this ends, he stated. - APP

### More water in dams, good omen

ISLAMABAD: In what can be termed a good omen for agriculture and hydropower generation in Pakistan, the cumulative quantum of water available at present in Mangla, Tarbela and Chashma reservoirs is far better than that of the previous years.

According to the statistics, as much as 7.018 million acre feet (MAF) of water is available in the reservoir, which is 4.191 MAF more if compared with the corresponding day last year, and 5.496 MAF more if compared with the average of last 10 years.

As of today, 2.419 MAF water is available in Tarbela, 4.423 MAF in Mangla and 0.176 MAF in Chashma, said a press release. This better hydrological situation will aptly fulfill the requirement of water for agriculture in the country for the days to come. - APP

### KP farm owners to get Rs 826 mln

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government under Prime Minister's Emergency Reform Programme would provide Rs826 million to farm owners for breeding of calves and to discourage their slaughtering. This was said by Minister for Agriculture and Livestock and Fisheries Mohbiullah Khan while addressing cheque distribution ceremony among 100 farmers/farm owners here for breeding and protection of calves.

He said under the PM's reforms programme Rs4000 would be given to each farm owner for breeding and protection of calves from slaughtering so that healthy meat could be made available in abundance in market. The minister said the programme would continue for four-year under which farm owners in 16 districts of the province would be benefited, adding that farm owners would be encouraged to feed the calves till the age of slaughtering so that meat production could be increased. - APP



LALAMUSA: A family walks through the main bazar that presents a dreary look because of lockdown. - Khurshid Nadeem

## Nadim Kaira slams govt for ignoring overseas Pakistanis

COVID 19 overseas Pakistanis have also suffered a lot and many of them lost their lives but the government spearheaded by prime minister did not even say a single word of condolence

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior PPP leader Nadim Asghar Kaira has come heavily on government and Prime Minister Imran Khan for what he termed govt's criminal negligence towards overseas Pakistanis.

In a statement on Friday Nadim Kaira said due to COVID 19 overseas Pakistanis have also suffered a lot and many of them lost their lives but the government spearheaded by prime minister did not even say a single word of condolence.

He said it was after massive criticism in social media that forced prime minister to issue a Tweet

expressing solidarity with the overseas Pakistanis.

Nadim said overseas Pakistanis are our great asset and have contributed greatly whenever they were asked to do so. It is therefore our onus to remember them support them whenever they are faced with difficult times.

Talking about recently held Telathon for raising funds for COVID 19 Nadim regretted only a small number of people heeded to PM call for funds and just a small amount was collected after hours and hours transmission, which speaks volumes for the popularity of the government and the prime minister, which is fast decreasing.

He said PPP was ready to help



government fight with this deadly diseases however it could not do so because of irresponsible statements by government functionless and sometimes by the PM also. Defending the Sindh government lockdown policy Nadim said it is because of the

strict lockdown that virus cases in Sindh have significantly been contained.

He added, Federal government has not regularly facilitated the efforts of Sindh government and the BISP has been unconstitutionally rebranded as the Ehsaas programme. However, we will not indulge in a war of words as this is the time for national unity where all of us must be on the same page".

"Regardless of all this criticism, Sindh's testing capacity has increased and it is exploring different avenues to increase testing facilities. Separately, all workers and leaders of the PPP are busy mobilising and providing aid to all provinces in forms of ration,

and in places cooked food.

Commenting on the lack of unity among provinces in the fight against COVID-19 outbreak, he said "Where is National Action Plan ( NAP) on fighting the Coronavirus ? At that time all political parties, despite differences, all provinces were on the same page. We need a similar stance once again".

Lauding Sindh government's proactive efforts in containing the virus, the Nadim said that "Since the beginning, Sindh has been clear and transparent about all facts and figures related to COVID-19, including numbers on how many ration bags have been distributed to the poor and vulnerable".

### 54 allottees of G-14 get possession letters

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Housing and Works (MoHW) has so far given final possession letters to 54 allottees in Sector G-14/1, 2 and 3. Around eight allottees have applied for issuance of No Objection Certificate (NOC) for approval of building plans in the G-14, an official in the Ministry of Housing and Works told APP.

Out of eight, only four allottees have started construction of houses on their plots in Sector G-14/3 till date, the official said. He said it was a fact that federal cabinet in its meeting held on March 1995 imposed ban on the construction of new government accommodations for federal government employees. - APP

## Sherry urges govt to listen to the doctors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Within the span of this week alone, Pakistan's medical community has asked the government three times to reconsider its decision to ease lockdown measures. But is the government paying any heed to these requests? No. The Federal government needs to stop playing pandemic politics and get serious

about saving lives." PPP Parliamentary Leader in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said. She added, "Unlike what the Federal government says, the doctors have not gotten together in different cities to raise the alarm on any party or province's behest. They are health professionals and basically at this point they are sending a warning to the leadership of this country that this situation will get worse".

Rehman commented on Sindh's progress and said, "From day one, Sindh government has given priority to what the health experts have said. We had to take the tough decision that tarweeh prayers will only be offered by mosque's administration as it is the government's responsibility to take these difficult decisions but we did this especially keeping in mind doctors' recommendations.

## MoHR to develop Video sign

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Human Rights developed a video with sign language for differently-able citizen to create public awareness on Coronavirus. In a message on MoHR Twitter handle here on Friday, Ministry of Human Rights said, it is committed to making COVID19 information and guidelines accessible to every segment of society. The video is publicly available on official accounts of Ministry of Human Rights. - APP

## AIOU offers career-making diploma programs

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has offered career-making Post-Graduate diploma programs that include Supply Chain Management, Entrepreneurship and Human Resource Management.

According to Director Admissions, the interested people could enroll themselves in these programs through online for semes-

ter Spring 2020 by June 5. Duration of each program is one-year, comprising two semesters. BA/BSc. B.Com students are eligible to take the admission. These programs are conducted mainly through distance learning system and online mode of teaching. Such programs are part of the University's regular learning practices to enhance capacity-building of the students, enabling them to earn their livelihood and to take part in

the country's socio-economic development. The proposed programs could lead to professional development of the aspiring students to achieve excels in the relevant fields. These may also help them to organize and manage business venture in a competitive global marketplace that is constantly evolving. The post-Graduate Diploma in Entrepreneurship will help to provide its basic understanding, concepts and practices.

## Experts highlight need to bailout SMEs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Experts across South Asia highlighted the importance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) for their economies and emphasized the need to bailout SMEs amid covid19. Terming identifying the SMEs and workers working in informal sector as a major challenge, the experts suggested to have a South Asia network on SMEs. The experts from the SAARC region including Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal shared these views with the audience at online policy dialogue titled 'keeping SMEs in Business in South Asia: Policy Responses, Lessons and Proposals' organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Thursday. Dr Aliya H Khan, Member Economic Advisory Council (EAC), while highlight-

ing the specific impacts of Covid-19 on the daily wagers and other low income groups, said that the Prime Minister Imran Khan may announce the 'Mazdoor Ehsaas Program' on labour day (May 1st 2020) and it expected to alleviate the problems faced by this segment of society. She said that protection of SMEs is also important from gender perspective as majority of the home-based work force comprises of women, who are already marginalized and the pandemic has enhanced their existing economic vulnerabilities.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Sulri, Executive Director SDPI, said that SMEs are important for South Asian economies not only due to their share in GDP, but also because they are the second largest employer after agriculture. "All SAARC countries are facing similar challenges of supporting SMEs amid



COVID19, we need to learn from each other and this is where the idea of creating a South Asia Network of SMEs is very much needed", Said Dr Abid Sulri. Dr Rathin Roy, Director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), India, said that the SMEs in all the South Asian countries including India are facing similar kinds of issues due to global pandemic. He says while the Government in India is taking sev-

eral measures to support SMEs, new approaches are required to deal with the situation such as locally focused supply chains. Mr Kithmina Hewage, Research Economist at Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka, said that SMEs in Sri Lanka have born the heaviest brunt of the current crisis. He said that the short terms relief package to SMEs has been absolutely necessary. However, going forward, we

need to have a long term policy to support SMEs. This would help I economic recovery post COVID19. Mr. Nar Bahadur Thapa, former director of the Nepal Rastra Bank (Central Bank of Nepal), said that the SMEs in the post-Covid-19 situation should work on the diversification of their products and e-commerce could alone be a key areas of focus. He said the Government in Nepal, realizing the

problems being faced by SMEs, is considering to incorporate long term monetary policies and incentives in the forthcoming annual budget. He also highlighted the importance of having a SAARC network of SMEs. Mr Hashim Raza, Chief Executive Officer Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) said that the Government of Pakistan fully understand the contributions of SMEs in the national economy and is trying to support the sector through various measures including soft loans to retain the permanent employs and work on restarting their business when the pandemic is over, and social protection for the workers. He advised the SME sector to make the best of the situation, diversify the traditional export market and come up with innovative ways to absorb the laid off labour when

times get better. Hassan Daud Butt, Chairman KP BOL, said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was trying to keep agriculture supply and demand chain unaffected, and protect the service sector. "Good news is that due to govt's support more and more female entrepreneurs in KP are coming up in telemedicine and e-commerce", added Mr Butt. The experts, in response to queries raised by the audience, said amidst the fear of a deep and prolonged recession, innovative ways would have to be explored in order to ensure that SMEs are staying in the business in the post Covid-19 scenario. The experts said that although the governments in South Asia are coming up with short term relief packages to SMEs, innovative measures including enhancing the regional trade would be need of the hour.

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## Desperate days

**I**N a heart-wrenching press conference in Karachi addressed by senior doctors from leading hospitals and medical centres in Karachi, doctors have warned that the Covid-19 pandemic which has hit Pakistan is already out of control. And that is true: especially if we see how the number of cases went beyond 10,900 by April 23. There have been 230 deaths. And there are no doubts in the minds of experts that further exponential growth lies ahead.

The medical experts speaking in Karachi provided harrowing scenarios of a situation in which they are left with no place in hospitals to treat patients, where patients are laid on roadsides and of having to choose which member of a family were to live and which must die. This is obviously a nightmare scenario. Doctors have recommended an immediate and extremely tough lockdown and have stated without reserve that allowing congregations in mosques is just leading to a disaster. They have also asked why no medical expert was included on the panel which reached the decision to open mosques during Ramadan.

The extent to which Pakistan has dithered and gone backwards and forwards over the issue of a lockdown is one of the reasons why we face this terrible situation today. Traders of course have also already been very badly affected by the lockdown, and no one looks at their plight with glee either. But some balance has to be found. We must save lives and prevent a dystopian nightmare unfolding with doctors at its centre even while finding means to offer basic rations to those who can no longer earn. Doctors have pointed out that even the SOPs set in place before are being ignored anyway.

They suggest that any visit to a mosque during prayer time would prove this. To further complicate matters, senior clerics have gone on record to say that they have no intention of offering prayers at mosques during Ramazan, since they are above 50 years of age. This is a strange situation: they are themselves then quite aware of the risks, and yet tens of thousands of the less aware will be placed in peril?

This is not a fight between two equal enemies where you can see and target the adversary; it is a war against a virus that is invisible and to date invincible as no medicine has been developed to ensure the eradication of Covid-19, apart from our physical immunity.

Even the WHO has been asserting the importance of a strict lockdown to curtail the spread of the virus and even the most developed countries have been unable to curtail the spread of this pandemic. The matter needs to be rethought. The doctors have appealed desperately to the ulama to take back their decision. They have appealed to the prime minister to do the same.



## Muslims in India

**P**RIME Minister Imran Khan has rightly pointed out that the Modi government's policy in India against Muslims is fanning hatred and Islamophobia among the common people. Even since the BJP assumed power in India in 2014, it has systematically targeted Muslims. Especially after an unexpected landslide victory in the 2019 elections, the BJP redoubled its efforts to malign and marginalize the Muslim population of India. The outbreak of Covid-19 has afforded another opportunity to the BJP and other Hindu extremist outfits to launch fresh attacks on the Muslim community.

There have been press reports and video recordings circulating not only on social media but also televised by mainstream channels that show physical and verbal abuse meted out to ordinary Muslims including children and women. This is compounded by a psychological warfare being waged against Muslims to further their ostracism in Indian society.

According to reports, there have been multiple violent attacks on Muslims in various parts of India. The attackers normally blame Muslims for being carriers of the virus. Even in big cities such as Delhi and Mumbai, there have been incidents in which the Muslims living in gated communities have been denied entry rights by extremists.

There are conscientious activists and intellectuals who have come out to ensure the rights of Muslims and have also protected them at the cost of putting their own safety at stake.

But such people are few and far between, especially since anti-Muslim gangs are reported to have intimidated anyone trying to protect or support Muslims even in villages where they have been living for centuries. In some other locations, poor Muslim vendors have also been asked to stop selling their merchandise on the streets.

Various social media platforms are also being used to accuse Muslims of being carriers of the novel coronavirus. Some have gone so far as to coin a new term 'corona jihad' meaning a conspiracy by Muslims to spread the virus among Hindus.

Such a fanciful and well-organized campaign will have a lasting impact on Indian society that has already been torn apart on religious and sectarian lines. The BJP government and its allies of the Saffron brigade are clearly behind this campaign of hatred and violence.

The government of India must realize that the unity of a country greatly depends on promoting harmony and unity. It is sad to see a country that claims to be the largest democracy in the world and boasts a secular constitution is sliding so fast into an abyss of fascism and religious intolerance.

## COVID-19 – Lessons learnt from Chinese experience

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani



*China's experience in fighting the epidemic will offer lessons and clues for the rest of the world to contain COVID-19. In this regard, China's experience can be distilled in 10 words/phrases: speed, strength, transparency, responsibility, coordination, overall planning, technology, balance, cooperation, and timely correction*

**C**OVID-19 has not only posed a huge threat to the World community & specially first of all Chinese people's safety and health, but also a major challenge to the global public health security. There had been no newly confirmed indigenous cases in China outside Wuhan for several days. At the same time, imported confirmed cases of COVID-19 in China surpassed the newly confirmed indigenous cases as the daily reports said. In the next stage, China's main task is to rein in the imported cases and defend themselves from cross-border infection. China will update the response measures to prevent the resurgence of the epidemic. As new COVID-19 cases skyrocketed in other countries, China's experience in fighting the epidemic will offer lessons and clues for the rest of the world to contain COVID-19. In this regard, China's experience can be distilled in 10 words/phrases: speed, strength,

transparency, responsibility, coordination, overall planning, technology, balance, cooperation, and timely correction.

### 1. Speed: Rapid response

COVID-19 is a very special virus. China's experience in combating COVID-19 shows that it is possible to control the epidemic if effective measures are taken as early as possible. Such measures made the "Four Earlies" possible, as they encouraged patients to seek treatment as early as possible like on January 23, Guangdong province initiated a first-level public health emergency response, with a suspension of public places, allowed every single patient to receive timely treatment in hospitals.

### 2. Strength: Intensified measures

Infection prevention, control and patient treatment require both speed and strength. China showed super strong determination to block the transmission of COVID-19. The Chinese governments at all levels and all communities worked hard to fully implement joint prevention and control measures. China adopted region-specific and multi-level targeted approaches based on an accurate understanding of China's Response Measures based on virus and precise evaluation of risks.

### 3. Transparency

As the COVID-19 pandemic threatens every person and every country, real-time information sharing is a must for both China and the international community. Transparent information disclosure can never be overemphasized during the war against COVID-19. Committed openness and transparency, the Chinese government has released trustworthy epidemic-related information in a timely manner without reservation. China has shared its experience in epidemic containment and patient treatment, and responded openly to concerns at home and abroad. As a result, China has avoided public panic and put down rumors and misinformation, and succeeding in communicating the progress in epidemic prevention and control.

### 4. Responsibility

China demonstrated strong courage and a sense of responsibility to fight COVID-19 as an enemy. If we compare epidemic response to a "war", it is considered to be the people's war. WHO encouraged every person, especially every leader at any level and from any sector to stand in solidarity and seize every single opportunity to prevent, contain, curb, delay and reduce the impact of the virus. It is a collective commitment to the humankind. UN Secretary-General António Guterres delivered a speech saying "we must declare war on this virus" and calling on governments to cooperate in order to "ensure targeted support for the people and communities most affected by the disease." As the first country to move,

in fact, China had already mobilized its governments at all levels, all its communities and people to kick out the virus. No one was alone in the combat. Every single member of the society from governments to citizens and from medical system to other industries were actively involved in this fight by playing different roles in preventing infection and treating the disease. All Chinese people were united in the battle.

### 5. Coordination

China demonstrated a strong ability to organize a full-scale battle against the COVID-19 virus. Epidemic response requires the systematic and complex efforts of the health sector and the entire society. Efficient and flexible coordination played an indispensable role in combating the virus and made quick and effective response possible. Efficient coordination enhanced preparedness, enabling the medical system to handle the outbreak in a timely, effective and composed manner. Good coordination means the number of cases were well controlled to avoid shortage of medical resources for severe cases whereas infection rate and number were reduced through effective quarantine. This helped a lot to block off the source of infection through monitoring and screening.

### 6. Overall Planning

The epidemic outbreak tested and proved the power of the Chinese tradition of overall planning. An outbreak on this scale would surely rock the economy and society. History shows that a severe epidemic or disaster could lead to economic downturn and social disorder which in turn worsens the situation. No country would like to be trapped in such a vicious circle, and China is no exception.

### 7. Science and technology

China has taken a scientific approach towards COVID-19 outbreak. Science and technology remained the most powerful weapons against the epidemic as quoted by President Xi. Without this approach the fight could have been blind. On the other hand, a warrior well equipped with scientific tools and techniques has a much higher chance of victory. After the outbreak, Chinese researchers identified the whole genome sequence of COVID-19 in less than a week and isolated the strain of the coronavirus, and the findings were immediately made public to the world.

### 8. Balance

Technology can't do everything automatically to fight this pandemic so non-technological measures must play their roles. There is no specific drug or vaccine available as yet but China has effectively contained the epidemic by embracing non-technological means. Some people in

other countries considered China's epidemic response measures as "over-reactive" whereas some even questioned China's political system.

### 9. Co-operation

Virus knows no borders. Victory over COVID-19 is of utmost significance to the safety and health of not only the Chinese people but also people around the world. While fighting a hard battle against the virus, China received countless condolences and support as well as large amount of supplies from many countries. Since the very beginning of the outbreak, China has highly valued international cooperation on public health and provided timely information updates to WHO and the global community and shared the genome sequence of the coronavirus in an open and transparent manner.

### 10. Timely remedy

China has a huge population of 1.4 billion, so it is essential to stay alert to and prepared for any major epidemic and public health emergency. As President Xi Jinping said, the epidemic was a big test for China's governance system and capacity. He called on the people to learn from past mistakes and continue to improve. Considering that WHO has declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, China had met with difficulties and showed shortcomings in the earlier days of the outbreak, while other countries were not well prepared either even after China made some progress in fighting the virus. In short, every country has weaknesses and problems in their epidemic response. China's problems include formalism and bureaucracy which hindered some epidemic prevention and control efforts. China was serious about these weaknesses and has taken quick remedial adjustments and corrective measures and has planned to take even more remedial actions after the outbreak is over.

The world has seen that the government and the people of China didn't panicked or taken delayed decisions instead they shown their resilience in this course of pandemic. Chinese noble struggle against the deadly novel corona virus was appreciated and acknowledged by the world which clearly reflects that how they act in this hour of distress. They gave weight age to their medical experts' opinions and proved that apart from being self sufficient in resources, nations can also be recognized by their self determination, upright consciousness, display of unwavering discipline and collective sense of responsibility.

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## Military Duty and COVID-19

**A**N April 20 column in the Indian press censures Pakistan for continuing with missile test firings and so called terror missions in Indian Occupied Kashmir amid rising concerns about COVID-19. The op-eds singles out Pakistan Navy for releasing area warnings in Arabian Sea to conduct missile firings.

World-wide, armed forces remain alive and alert to all kinds of external and internal threats. They are also involved to shore up national effort in calamity or crisis. Militaries across the world are today reaching out to their citizens in need and reinforcing respective national effort to contain the spread of deadly Corona virus. Pakistan is no exception. While upholding its core mission and maintaining credible combat potential, Pakistan navy is helping the distressed section of the society in the country. Sure enough, the aid to civil authorities comes without lowering of the guard. Fully cognizant of its national responsibility, Pakistan navy has reached out to coastal communities and residents of inland water ways.

It is also opening new channels of communication in urban centres and farthest rural expanses of the country, particularly in provinces of Balochistan and Sindh. Areas of specific focus are hunger mitigation, poverty and disease eradication, personal protection equipment, food and cash distribution besides general hygiene training and preventive measures.

A number of Corona infected personnel were recently reported onboard US and French aircraft carriers USS Theodore Roosevelt and Charles De Gaulle respectively. Those afflicted ships were

recalled to ports for disembarking and isolating infected crew members. Such incidents however, did not result in US or French navies abandoning their routine deployments or curtailing whatever other operations were underway.

The discovery of over 26 Corona infected sailors in Indian navy's Western naval command did not necessitate Indian navy to cease operations on the western seaboard. It was however, wise enough to swiftly remove all related reports from internet. As recently as April 14, the international media cited Indian naval chief issuing warning to Beijing for its continued presence in the Indian Ocean. While addressing Raisina Dialogue, a multilateral forum committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community, Indian Admiral did not spare a thought for the suffering of teeming millions in his own country. He was more concerned about Chinese navy's presence in Indian Ocean.

To be precise, he fulminated, "If anyone operates in our region, they have to notify us first." A press release later by the Indian Navy said, "The Dornier squadron, operating from the air station, has been undertaking regular maritime surveillance missions". This statement and Indian Navy's press release should suffice to put to rest the misleading and conjured claims in the Indian column. As masses suffer in India under pressure of COVID-19, its more than business as usual in Indian Navy; in fact India is stepped in militarism.

In the Gulf, Indian navy ships are patrolling to 'ensure the security of India's sea-borne trade; An informed observer may inquire as to why Indian

navy ships are still steaming in Gulf waters and against whom? Even if there is some threat, US navy is strategically locked to the Indian navy. These crutches are enough to guard India's maritime interests anyway.

Let us also take stock of virus statistics. Pakistan has tested roughly 70,000 suspected cases as of April 20. This is about 250 per million people, far more than India (129 per million). According to the Indian press, 'tens of millions of Indians living below the poverty line and transient migrant rural-to-urban migrant workers were left with their livelihoods upended by the lockdown'. 'Attempts by the Indian government to offer a social safety net are insufficient, with spending at under 1 percent of Indian GDP', claims a report.

In so far alleged terrorism by Pakistan is concerned, one may go nowhere except read what Subramanian Swamy, a top BJP leader and member of Indian parliament, said in a recent interview. "We know where the Muslim population is large there is always trouble because the Islamic ideology says so."

No wonder, 'the Indian government is exploiting COVID-19 to ramp up suppression of Muslims, comparing the tactic to one used by the Nazis'. 'This, alleged strategy on the part of the Hindu nationalist government would dovetail with this illness to create something which the world should really keep its eyes on', 'the situation is approaching genocidal', says, the Booker Prize winner author and political activist Arundhati Roy.

*The author is a freelance columnist with interest in maritime security issues.*

Muhammad Azam Khan

*Pakistan has tested roughly 70,000 suspected cases as of April 20. This is about 250 per million people, far more than India (129 per million). According to the Indian press, 'tens of millions of Indians living below the poverty line and transient migrant rural-to-urban migrant workers were left with their livelihoods upended by the lockdown'. 'Attempts by the Indian government to offer a social safety net are insufficient, with spending at under 1 percent of Indian GDP', claims a report*

**Briefs**

**Parliament has a role in fight against virus: PM**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the parliament has a pivotal role in the fight against Coronavirus. He was talking to the National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser in Islamabad on Friday. The Prime Minister said implementing the decisions taken at the parliament level is our priority. He said the government is taking every possible step to rid the country of this virus. He said we have to surmount this challenge collectively as a nation. Imran Khan appreciated the steps taken by the Speaker regarding the establishment of a functional committee for Zaireen and Tableeghi Jamaat. The speaker appreciated the steps taken by the government to contain the spread of the contagion. He said it is because of timely steps that the trajectory of coronavirus in Pakistan is low when compared with other countries.

**Virus cases in Pakistan soar to 11,155**

ISLAMABAD: The total number of coronavirus infection cases in the country has reached 11,155. These include Punjab, 4767, Sindh, 3671, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1541, Balochistan 607, Islamabad Capital Territory 214, Gilgit-Baltistan 300, and Azad Kashmir 55 cases. According to National Command and Operation Center, so far 2,527 patients of Coronavirus have been recovered, while 237 died (Sindh: 73, Punjab: 65, KP: 85, ICT: 03, Balochistan: 08 and GB: 03) and 111 others are in a critical condition. 131,365 tests have been conducted since outbreak of the pandemic. Local transmission is 79 percent and foreign travel 21 percent. The government has made ready 717 hospitals with Covid facilities with 2867 patients admitted across the country. - APP

**English cricket season delayed**

LONDON: No professional cricket will be played in England and Wales until at least July 1 due to the coronavirus pandemic, cricket chiefs announced on Friday. The England and Wales Cricket Board said attempts would be made to reschedule international fixtures in the period from July until the end of September, including the West Indies Test tour of England. The women's series against India, including one-day internationals and Twenty20 matches, will also be moved. Nine rounds of fixtures will be lost in the four-day county championship season, but time slots for red-ball and white-ball cricket will remain in a revised schedule. - APP

**US approves \$483 bln stimulus plan as death toll nears 50,000**

The new package "is essential to protecting families across America and ensuring more small businesses have access to the resources they need," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday approved nearly half a billion dollars in new stimulus but European leaders were divided on their own measures as the world sought to salvage economies ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic. Governments from South Africa to Vietnam, as well as states in the US, took steps to resume normal life amid debate whether a lockdown that has restricted the movement of half the planet has been in place long enough.

In scenes never witnessed in the tradition-bound US Congress, lawmakers covered their faces with masks and voted in small groups as the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a \$483 billion stimulus plan. The money will back small businesses on the brink of bankruptcy, and hard-pressed hospitals. It comes on top of \$2.2 trillion package enacted in late March. The House voted hours after data that another 4.4 million US workers had filed claims for jobless benefits, bringing the total to 26.4 million since the pandemic intensified. The world's

largest economy has been hit by about 50,000 deaths, more than any other country, and saw one of its deadliest days with 3,176 new fatalities in 24 hours. The new package "is essential to protecting families across America and ensuring more small businesses have access to the resources they need," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said. President Donald Trump, with whom Pelosi frequently spars, said he would quickly sign the bill, which already passed the Republican-led Senate unanimously. In Europe, the worst-hit continent with 110,000 deaths, EU

leaders haggled by video conference over their own package that could top one trillion euros. The 27-nation bloc agreed to ask the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, to come up with a rescue plan by May 6, sources told AFP. Addressing the leaders by video, European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde warned "there was a risk of acting too little, too late" and said that virus lockdowns could shrink GDP by as much as 15 percent this year, a source said. The fight has reopened the wounds of the 2009 economic crisis with

debtladen southern states such as Spain and Italy, both badly hit by the disease, demanding help to get back on their feet. "With the pandemic, nobody calls," says Pedro Oran, a 53-year-old Spaniard who usually works by helping a plumber, as he lined up to collect food for the first time at a Madrid soup kitchen. But richer northern countries like Germany and the Netherlands, while saying they are ready to help for now, insist they will not take the long-term step of pooling debt with Mediterranean governments they accuse of profligacy.

**Crude lifted by Iran-US tension**

HONG KONG: US oil prices were set to end a historically bad week on a positive note, extending gains Friday owing to rising Iran-US tensions, though equities edged down following a series of crushing economic data. As the rates of infection and deaths linked to the coronavirus show signs of easing in some countries thanks to draconian lockdowns, a fuller picture of the extent of its economic impact was beginning to emerge. - APP

**Emirates steps up safety measures**

DNA

DUBAI: Emirates is stepping up precautionary measures at the airport and on board to ensure the health and safety of its employees and customers. All cabin crew, boarding agents and ground staff in direct contact with passengers will now don personal protective equipment (PPE) which includes a protective disposable gown over their uniforms, and a safety visor, in addition to masks and gloves. At Dubai International airport, gloves and masks are mandatory for all customers and employees. Thermal scanners monitor the temperatures of all passengers and employees stepping into the airport.

Physical distancing indicators have been placed on the ground and at waiting areas to help travellers maintain the necessary distance during check-in and boarding. The airport team has also installed protective barriers at each check-in desk to provide additional safety reassurance to passengers and employees during interaction over the counter. On board Emirates' flights, seats are pre-allocated with vacant seats placed between individual passengers or family groups in observance of physical distancing protocols. Emirates has also modified its inflight services for health and safety reasons. Food and beverages continue to be offered in the form of bento-styled boxes to reduce contact between the

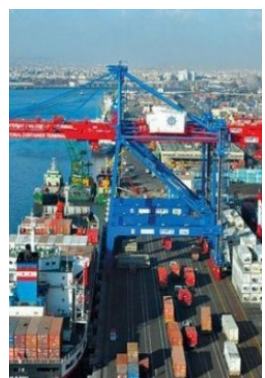
crew and customers during meal service, and minimise risk of interaction. The personal boxes provide customers with sandwiches, beverages, snacks and desserts. Similarly, to reduce risk of spreading the virus by touch, magazines and other print reading material are temporarily unavailable. Cabin baggage are currently not accepted on flights. Carry-on items allowed in the cabin are limited to laptop, handbag, briefcase or baby items. All other items have to be checked in, and Emirates will add the cabin baggage allowance to customers' check-in baggage allowance. Customers have to wear their masks and gloves throughout their journey from check-in until they disembark.



ISLAMABAD: Babar Awan PM Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs in a meeting with PM Imran Khan. - DNA

**Shipping activity at Port Qasim**

KARACHI: Five ships, Kiel Trader, Lady Maria, Pacific Advance, Songa Opal and Gas Zeus scheduled to load/offload Containers, Cement, Coal, Palm oil and LPG were arranged berthing at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multipurpose Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal and SSG Terminal respectively on Thursday. Meanwhile three more ships, CMA CGM Butterfly, Star Fighting and Golar Snow carrying Containers, Coal and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of Port Qasim during the same day. A total of ten ships were occupied at PQA berths to load/offload Containers, Cement, Coal, Soya Bean, Palm oil, LPG and LNG respectively. - APP



**PIA lifted 11,000 stranded Pakistanis**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has lifted 11,000 stranded Pakistanis in the foreign countries thus far. According to the PIA spokesperson, the operation to bring back stranded Pakistanis to the country is underway by the PIA and so far 11,000 country-

men have been lifted via 101 flights. The stranded countrymen were brought back from Saudi Arabia, Canada, United Kingdom (UK), France, Turkey, Iraq, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Japan. Those lifted from the Saudi Arabia, also include Umrah pilgrims. The PIA's rescue operation will continue to bring

back the Pakistan expats, said the spokesperson. He added that CEO PIA Air Marshal Arshad Malik is himself supervising the operation. Earlier this month, Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had granted permission to the national airline to operate relief flights for bringing back the stranded Pakistanis in foreign countries.

**European stock markets slide**

LONDON: European stocks slid in early deals Friday, with EU leaders divided over the size of a financial rescue package to stimulate the bloc's economy left battered by the coronavirus pandemic. Around an hour after opening, London was down 1.3 percent, Frankfurt dropped 1.6 percent, Paris retreated 1.5 percent, Milan lost 1.4 percent and Madrid tumbled 2.1 percent. "The inability of the EU to come together quickly and agree, even in times of emergency, isn't just frustrating, it's harmful to all members," noted Craig Erlam, analyst at Oanda trading group. "They seem to have agreed on the idea of a recovery fund while leaving the details for a future date," he told AFP. - APP

**Pak exports to Africa increases**

I am appealing to local textiles industry to take full advantage of these new opportunities to enter in new segment and new geography"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister Adviser on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood on Friday said Pakistan's exports to African countries have increased by 10 percent from July 1st, 2019 to April 21st, 2020, as compared to the same period during last Fiscal Year. The adviser said, "I would like to commend my team at the Ministry of commerce for the 'Look Africa Policy Initiative' under which rice exports has increased by 20 percent from US \$ 500 to US \$ 600 million, tractors from US \$ 9 to 15 million, clothing from US \$ 4 to 50 million and bed linen from US \$ 30 to US \$ 36 million, he shared these view on his

twitter account. He also announced that Drawback of Local Taxes and Levies (DLTL) refunds of Rs 828 million for non-textile sector had been transferred to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and reimbursement would start from today. He said the western economic block would gradually opening up there market and there were trickles of order coming from them to provide huge opportunity to the local industrial sector. The adviser said, "I am appealing to local textiles industry to take full advantage of these new opportunities to enter in new segment and new geography". He reiterated that the government would fully support to the Industrial sector in that regard.

**Wheat procurement target priority: Aleem**

LAHORE: Punjab Senior Minister Abdul Aleem Khan said on Friday that it was top priority of the Punjab government to achieve the wheat procurement target. According to official sources here, he said this while presiding over a meeting at Bahawalpur Commissioner office to review wheat procurement campaign in south Punjab and coronavirus situation in the area. Senior Minister said that there should be no hindrance in procuring wheat

from the farmers, and directed the authorities concerned to ensure facilities at wheat purchase centers in Bahawalpur division. "Farmers should not face any problem during the procurement process", he said adding that he would personally visit field areas to review things there. He directed relevant authorities to ensure implementation of precautionary measures against COVID-19 during the on-going wheat procurement process. - APP

**UK PM Johnson 'in good shape'**

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is recovering after contracting the new coronavirus, is "in very good shape", Health Secretary Matt Hancock said on Friday. Johnson, 55, spent a week in hospital, including three days in intensive care, before being discharged on April 12. "I spoke to him yesterday, he is in very good shape and is clearly recovering," Hancock told Sky News, but said it was not yet known when he would return to work.

**WHO Pakistan welcomes South Korea support in country's efforts to combat COVID-19**

DNA

ISLAMABAD The Government of the Republic of Korea has announced that it will be providing in kind assistance worth USD 300,000 via the World Health Organization in Pakistan to support Pakistan's response to the outbreak and spread of COVID-19. Korean investing companies have also contributed to this cause, with companies such as K-Water, KOEN and KOICA providing an additional USD 47,000 to Pakistan for COVID-19. In a meeting with Dr Palitha

Mahipala, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Pakistan; the Ambassador Kwak Sung-kyu stated that "the Government of the Republic of Korea hopes that this assistance will be instrumental in controlling the current spread of the pandemic in Pakistan and further supporting the healthcare sector to cope with rapidly increasing COVID-19 caseload." COVID-19 case numbers have been increased exponentially across the country in the past few weeks. As of today, Pakistan has reported over 10,513 cases of COVID-19 and a total of 224 deaths. A further increase in cases is anticipated to place an



extraordinary burden on existing healthcare facilities in Pakistan and support from countries like South Korea are necessary to strengthen the country's existing response capacity in pri-

ority areas such as surveillance, case testing, management of cases as well as communications with the public on effective prevention measures. The Representative of the World Health Organization in Pakistan, Dr Palitha Mahipala, shared that, "the WHO highly appreciates the valuable support made by the Government of the Republic of Korea. Such support will enable WHO to scale up its response activities to COVID-19 alongside federal and provincial national authorities and counterparts, especially in light of the prospect of an increased case load in coming weeks."