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PM Imran for MPs lead role in fight against COVID-19
Japanese envoy recognises Pak soldiers sacrifices
Complete transparency in aid distribution


Briefs

FO says all possible support to Pakistanis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Aisha Farooqui has said Pakistani embassies working in 100 countries are providing all possible support to overseas Pakistanis. In an interview with a private news channel, she said the embassy staff had distributed food items among the needy families residing in Gulf countries, besides giving financial support to them. The spokesperson said financial support has been extended to those Pakistanis who are facing serious trouble in Bangkok, Turkey and the United States. She said that the embassy staffers have also extended help for stranded Pakistanis who are waiting at the airports for repatriation. To a question, she said the priority has been given to those Pakistanis whose visa period

18th amend to stay: FM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Monday said with the government having no intention to do away with the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the situation arising out of the coronavirus outbreak, however, required its review through consultation among the Center, provinces and political forces. He expressed these views while talking to media persons here at the Parliament House after attending the fourth meeting of parliamentary committee on the coronavirus. The foreign minister said though the importance of 18th Amendment vis a vis the provincial autonomy could not be denied, yet there was a need to see whether its objectives were achieved.

COVID-19

PM Imran for MPs lead role

The parliamentarians, during the meeting, apprised the Prime Minister about latest Corona situation in their respective constituencies and people's problems

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed parliamentarians to play an active role in providing relief to the people, especially to weaker segments, in wake of COVID-19. He was talking to Minister for Power Division Omar Ayub Khan and Members of the National Assembly Prince Muhammad Nawaz Allai and Ali Khan Jadoon in Islamabad on Monday. The parliamentarians, during the meeting, apprised the Prime Minister about latest Corona situation in their respective constituencies and people's problems.

They also informed Imran Khan about situation emerged due to Coronavirus pandemic and ongoing relief activities. Matters, pertaining to development, also came under discussion during the meeting. Meanwhile the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the country has soared to 13,328. According to National Command and Operation Center, these include 5,446 cases in Punjab, 4,615 in Sindh, 1,864 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 781 in Balochistan, 318 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 245 in Islamabad Capital Territory and 59 in Azad Kashmir. 3029 patients have so far recovered while the death toll from the virus stands at 281.

Shibli made info minister

Asim Bajwa replaces Firdous Ashiq as SAPM on Information

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Shibli Faraz was appointed as the Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting while Chairman CPEC Lt Gen (r) Asim Saleem Bajwa was appointed as the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting in place of Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan. The development was announced on Monday, with science and technology minister Fawad Chaudhry taking to Twitter to congratulate the two.



Faraz is serving as the Leader of the House in the Senate while Lt Gen (retd) Asim Bajwa has served formerly as the DG ISPR. It remains unclear why the government chose to bring about the changes to the information ministry.

Export of Pak goods to Afghanistan urged

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mian Anjum Nisar, President FPCCI expressed his serious concern over not allowing export of Pakistani goods to Afghanistan through Chaman, Torkham and Khorlachi borders and bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is stands still. These borders

were closed due to pandemic situation of Covid-19 and has been re-opened by the government this month and allowed move of cargo traffic to Afghanistan but the concerned authorities on the borders are allowing only those trucks which are carrying cargo under transit trade. The President FPCCI further said that our Pakistani exporters are facing

heavy losses because thousands of trucks of Pakistani traders, carrying perishable consignment of rice, potatoes, vegetable medicines and table eggs, cattle & poultry feeds, small chicks, paints and other miscellaneous items have been stucked up the on Pak Afghan borders for which advance payments have already been deposited in the bank.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a briefing on COVID-19. – DNA

CJCSC visits NCOC

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), General Nadeem Raza visited NCOC, on Monday. CJCSC was received by Lieutenant General Hamood Uz Zaman Khan, Commander Army Air Defence Command & National Coordinator NCOC. Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi and Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan also accompanied CJCSC during the visit. CJCSC was briefed in detail about the latest situation on containment efforts and enforcement measures against COVID-19, projections about likely spread of the disease in Pakistan and support being extended to civil administration against pandemic.

Rs75b for daily wagers

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar says the government has allocated 75 billion rupees to provide relief to labourers and daily wagers, who have lost their jobs due to coronavirus. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Monday, he said this amount has been allocated on the directions of Prime Minister Imran Khan to provide relief to the common people.

Japanese envoy recognises Pak soldiers sacrifices

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives of the Pakistan Army soldiers who embraced martyrdom during an operation against the terrorists in North Waziristan.

While paying rich tributes to the sacrifices of the Pak army soldiers, Ambassador MATSUDA expressed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyred soldiers and wished for the early recovery of those injured in the operation. "We are greatly indebted to the sacrifices of all those who lay down their lives in the line of duty to establish peace and stabil-

ity and I am sure that their commendable sacrifices will not go in waste" said Ambassador MATSUDA. The Ambassador reiterated that the Government of Japan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and is extending assistance and cooperation to the international community to establish peace and stability in the world.

Woman martyred in LoC firing

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A woman was martyred and a girl was injured in unprovoked Indian firing in Jandrot and Khairatta sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) on Monday morning. Inter Services Public Relations Director General Major General Babar, in a tweet, said: "Indian Army troops initiated unprovoked CFVs (ceasefire violations) in Jandrot & Khairatta Sectors along #LOC deliberately targeting civilian population this morning. A woman embraced Shahadat (martyrdom) while an 8 years old girl sustained injuries. Injured child evacuated & being provided medical care." The martyred woman is identified as 36-year old Yasmeen, resident of Red village, while

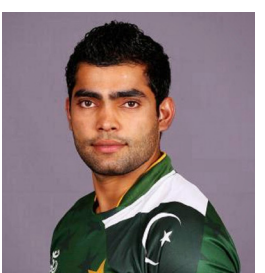
eight-year old innocent girl Adeeba Zaheer belongs to Mohra Chattar village.

Indian envoy summoned

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indian Charge d'Affaires Gaurav Ahluwalia was summoned by Director General (South Asia and SAARC) Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, to register Pakistan's strong protest over the ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation forces along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jandrot and Khairatta Sector on Monday resulting in shahadat and serious injuries to innocent civilians.

Umar Akmal banned for three years



DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday banned cricketer Umar Akmal for three years from all forms of cricket on corruption charges. "Umar Akmal handed three-year ban from all cricket by Chairman of the Disciplinary Panel Mr Justice (retired) Fazal-e-Miran Chauhan," the Pakistan Cricket Board said in a tweet. Earlier, Akmal had said during an interview that he was offered \$200,000 by fixers to leave two deliveries in one of the matches. He also claimed that he was offered money to skip matches against India.

Ahsan warns against 18th Amend changes

DNA

NAROWAL: Senior Leader Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Ahsan Iqbal has said that the 18th amendment came about as a result of national consensus and any attempts to meddle with it will result in further controversy. Ahsan Iqbal asked that the amendment was passed unanimously by all parties, so what is the intention behind disturbing it.

NAB committed to root out corruption

NAB has recovered Rs. 328 billion from corrupt and deposited in national exchequer. He directed all DGs of NAB to pursue all corruption cases according to merit and transparently as per law.

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Honourable Justice Mr. Javed Iqbal has said that NAB is absolutely committed for logical conclusion of mega corruption white collar crime cases. He said that NAB has filed 101 corruption references in different accountability courts from out of a total of 179 mega corruption references. Out of which 46 corruption references had already been disposed off. Out of a total of 179 mega corruption references, 13 inquiries and

19 investigations are under process. NAB has recovered record Rs 178 billion from the corrupt elements during the last two years directly and indirectly from corrupt elements and deposited in the national exchequer. Besides, NAB has recovered Rs. 328 billion from corrupt and deposited in national exchequer. He directed all DGs of NAB to pursue all corruption cases according to merit and transparently as per law. Honourable Justice Mr. Javed Iqbal said these remarks while chairing fortnightly meeting of NAB to



review its performance at NAB headquarters. NAB thorough deliberation of the performance of all Regional Bureaus and NAB Headquarters including operation and Prosecution Divisions of the NAB as well as measures taken by the present

management of NAB in order to further improve the performance and efficiency of NAB are being reviewed regularly in order to implement the decisions in letter and spirit. Chairman NAB said that NAB has chalked out a very

comprehensive Anti Corruption Strategy for eradication of corruption. Chairman NAB directed that NAB's investigation officers zero tolerance policy on the basis of evidence as per law. He said that to close the possibility of any single NAB officer influencing the discharge of official inquiry/investigation, the concept of a "Combined Investigation Team" (CIT) has been introduced where two investigation officers and a legal consultant are working as a team for a fair, transpar-

ent and unbiased, inquiry/investigation. He said that the overall conviction ratio in respected accountability courts is about 70%. He said that the performance of all Regional Bureau's of NAB would be conducted on midterm and annual basis at a given criteria under Quantified Grading System in order to review and further improve the performance of officers/officials of NAB as with better quantitative and qualitative improvements in Operational Efficiency Index.

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Briefs

Sale, production of cars decline

ISLAMABAD: The sale and production of cars dipped by 46.78 percent and 47.90 percent respectively during the first three quarters of financial year 2019-20 as compared to the corresponding period of last year. During the period under review, as many as 85,330 cars were sold against the sale of 160,359 units while the production of cars decreased from 170,118 units to 88,628 units, showing a decline of 46.78 and 47.90 percent respectively, according to Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA) data. Among cars, the sale of Honda cars went down by 62.77 percent from 32,209 units in last year to 11,989 units during current year while Suzuki Swift sale also dipped by 57.12 percent from 3,610 units to 1,548 units during this year. The sale of Toyota Corolla went down from 42,989 units to 20,991 units, showing decreased of 51.17 percent, the data revealed. – APP

CDA starts construction work

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) has started construction activities amid smart lockdown, construction activities for Arch Type Overhead Pedestrian bridge spanning over constitution avenue in front of Pak - Sectt has been resumed on Sunday April 26, 2020. The work was awarded to Heavy Mechanical Complex with a cost of Rs. 39 Million. Length of the bridge is 50 meters. Manufacturing of steel bridge was started by HMC which was later on, halted due to Covid -19 spread and subsequent lockdown. Now, in line with the smart lockdown policy of the government, CDA decided to resume the construction activities that had been stopped.

Resources with traffic police inspected

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed inspected the vehicles, bikes and other equipment under use of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) and directed the force to repair the broken down machinery at earliest. According to details, the SSP (Traffic) checked all the available resources with ITP and directed to repair the broken down vehicles and bikes. He said that the vehicles and motorcycles should be mechanically fit and to be properly utilized for the assigned tasks. He said there would be no compromise on performance and more resources including vehicles and bikes would be provided to the force. The SSP said that performance of ITP's personnel would be reviewed on continuous basis and those showing good results to be awarded and others to face disciplinary action.

2nd batch of donation by CTG to reach Pakistan on April 29

When China's Wuhan was facing enormous challenges amid the virus, CTG's Pakistani and Chinese workers, made a donation of 13,000 in total to support Wuhan. In addition, Pakistani workers' children spontaneously drew over 30 pictures to support Wuhan. Now, the COVID-19 epidemic is getting worse in Pakistan, CTG should return the kindness with a spring, after receiving drips of water when in need

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The second batch of medical supplies by China Three Gorges Corporation (CTG) to help Pakistan containing COVID-19 will arrive here on April 29. The first batch of medical supplies donated by CTG has already arrived here. On behalf of the Pakistani government, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) received the goods and greeted the Chinese representatives at the airport, Gwadar Pro App reported on Monday. At the handover ceremony, Minister for Power, Omar Ayub Khan expressed gratitude to the Chinese government and

CTG for their aids and said, "Long live Pak-China friendship." According to Zhang Jun, a representative of CTG, the two batches of supplies include 750,000 surgical masks, ventilators and protection gowns, which is the largest donations Pakistan has received from foreign enterprises since the outbreak of the virus in the country. Zhang said, 70 percent of the supplies will be donated to National Disaster Management Commission and the largest state-owned hospital in Islamabad to enhance their capacity to battle against COVID-19. The remaining 30 percent will be donated to four communities where CTG's projects are located, to show their solidarity with the neighboring residents. Talking about the reason of donations

to Pakistan, Zhang said, "When China's Wuhan was facing enormous challenges amid the virus, CTG's Pakistani and Chinese workers, made a donation of 13,000 in total to support Wuhan. In addition, Pakistani workers' children spontaneously drew over 30 pictures to support Wuhan. Now, the COVID-19 epidemic is getting worse in Pakistan, CTG should return the kindness with a spring, after receiving drips of water when in need." On the packaging boxes of the medical supplies donated by CTG, there are many pictures on Pak-China jointly battling against COVID-19, which were drawn by children of CTG's Chinese workers. Zhang said, "These pictures show what we donate is not just the materials themselves, but also our moral support."



ISLAMABAD: President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Arif Alvi visited the National Institute of Health (NIH), on Monday. – DNA

Complete transparency in aid distribution: Sania

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Dr Sania Nishtar Monday said that the distribution of cash assistance among deserving families under Ehsaas Emergency Programme was continuing, where more than 1.77 million needy families have been given financial assistance in a transparent way. Talking to PTV programme, she said the government was strictly

implementing the policy of merit and transparency in providing financial assistance to the deserving families under the Ehsaas Programme. Dr Sania said the government had successfully launched the biggest-ever financial assistance programme for deserving people in history of the country, as its fruits would reach to poor people all over the country. She said the government was leaving no stone unturned in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that Prime Minister

Imran Khan is highly concerned with the poor and daily wagers of the country. Pakistan is in dire need of financial assistance to cope with coronavirus outbreak, she said, adding that the government has announced excellent relief packages however more assistance is required to facilitate the people living below the poverty line. Referring to overwhelming response of the public, she said the programme received welcoming response and receiving million of SMSs.

Sarmast Adabi Confrence 2020

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters has planned to arrange an On-line conference titled "Sachal Sarmast Adabi Confrence 2020" aimed to pay tribute to the poetry of Sachal Sarmast. All scholars, writers and writers are invited to submit articles, an official said on Monday.

Submit your article's titles of articles by 2nd May 2020, selected articles will be presented at the conference, moreover, date will be announced soon, he said. He said that Sachal Sarmast was a g mystic poet, a philosopher and one of the towering personalities so PAL will highlight his contributions towards Poetry in conference. – APP

Testing capacity being increased: NDMA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lt Gen Muhammad Afzal said the country's coronavirus COVID-19 testing capacity has been increased by 30,000 to 40,000. Talking to media after receiving another consignment of 18 ton medical equipment from China by a special flight of PIA, he said "in the next few days country's laboratories would be able to conduct upto 40,000 coronavirus tests daily." He said it was the first flight of the consignments of a total of US \$ 50million medical equipments from China in collaboration with National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF). – APP

Steps demanded to avoid economic meltdown

DNA

ISLAMABAD: FPCCI's Businessmen Panel SVP, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday demanded meaningful steps to escape complete economic meltdown. Government should avoid half-hearted measures and plan immediate and full intervention to improve the situation, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that economy cannot improve unless the buying power of masses is augmented for which demand should be pushed. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that

masses lack buying power, therefore the government should stop suppressing demand while reducing interest rates, oil prices and decreasing GST to five percent. The former minister noted that small and medium businesses should be given interest-free loans while the requirement for collateral should be relaxed to boost productivity. He noted that increased price hike at the advent of the holy month of Ramadan has exposed the price control mechanism of the government while some banks continue to exploit the situation. He said that prolonged lockdown has broken the back of the industrial sector while the K-Electric is trying to extract Rs 5 billion out of industrialists which should be noticed

and reversed. The gas and power tariff should be reduced by fifty percent while the price of petrol should be reduced by Rs25, he said. The oil crisis has left thousands of Pakistanis jobless in the oil-rich nations which can jump therefore a strategy should be devised to deal with this issue, agricultural production should be supported, poor needs sustenance while data of those who lost jobs in the country should be maintained so that they can get the government's help, he demanded. All the refunds should be paid immediately, FBR should be given realistic targets and the labour-intensive sectors as well as the agriculture sector should be given preference in the next budget, he demanded.

ICCI welcomes 75 bln relief package

Businesses in these difficult times when they were struggling for survival due to Covid-19 impact

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The relief package of Rs.75 billion announced by Federal Minister for Industries Mr. Muhammad Hamza Azhar for small businesses and termed it a very positive step that would provide crucial relief to these businesses in these difficult times when they were struggling for survival due to Covid-19 impact. Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that relief package would benefit around 3.5 million small

businesses affected by the lockdowns caused by Covid-19 and would help them in reviving business activities. He said that government has also announced to give relief to businesses in payment of electricity bills, which was very encouraging decision as businesses with 5KW connections and industries with 70KW connections will not have to pay their bills for the months of May, June and July 2020. He said this will reportedly help 95% commercial connections and 80% industrial connections. ICCI President said that government has announced to provide another

financial aid package to businesses in the next phase and stressed that government should finalize it in consultation with all stakeholders. He stressed that government should also further bring down the key policy rate and sales tax to at least 5 percent that would provide significant relief to businesses and help them in early revival of business activities. It would cut down cost of doing business, accelerate the pace of trade and industrial activities and reduce inflation providing great relief to the common man as well.

UNHCR Pak stays and delivers amid corona outbreak

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency rapidly adjusted its country programme and undertook immediate actions to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. "We remain deeply concerned by the pandemic and the impact that it's having on the lives of refugees in Pakistan and the communities that host them. During this past month, all of us at UNHCR have been going the extra mile – with a singular mindset – to stay, deliver and support the most needy in an already vulnerable community," said the UNHCR Deputy

Representative, Mr. Iain Hall. UNHCR's robust field presence in locations such as Peshawar and Quetta, as well as Dalbandin, Haripur, Kohat and Loralai, is crucial to communicating and providing direct assistance to refugee communities. Through direct outreach, UNHCR also has teams that cover Punjab, Sindh and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. "We're doing everything it takes to provide life-saving assistance to those most in need. I'm deeply grateful to all of our thousands of volunteers and community mobilizers who help keep us close with the large refugee population in Pakistan," said Mr. Hall. He added that UNHCR's long-standing relationship with



the Ministry of SAFRON/Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees and many experienced NGOs are equally important. "All have gone above and beyond to serve others at this difficult time," noted Mr. Hall. With the support of UNHCR, refugee community structures,

such shuras and women welfare committees in the 54 refugee villages and urban communities in Pakistan, help deliver important health advisories and social messages concerning the pandemic. Digital platforms are used to quickly disseminate information and interact with refu-

gees, including to refer them to medical services. UNHCR also has helplines available 24 hours, 7 days a week. The UN Refugee Agency continues to help the Government deliver its COVID-19 prevention, preparedness and response plan. Previously, UNHCR provided 10 fully equipped ambulances and 28 housing unit facilities to the provincial Health Departments and the Provincial Disaster Management Authorities in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Large Rubb hall warehousing units were also given to the Balochistan Government to support isolation facilities. Additionally, UNHCR has distributed medical supplies, personal protective equipment

(PPEs) and sanitation products, such as sanitary clothes, soap and disinfectants, and other relief items to rural health facilities. Last week, hygiene kits were distributed to thousands of vulnerable refugee families. UNHCR is also working to identify solutions to the logistical challenges that it has encountered as a result of supply disruptions. This includes stepping up local and regional procurement activities to purchase large quantities of PPEs. UNHCR, together with the Ministry of SAFRON/Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees and NGO partners, are in the process of upgrading water and sanitation facilities in the health centres and schools in refugee villages across the country.

Current account deficit

RECENTLY released data of the State Bank of Pakistan has revealed that the current account deficit (CAD) has contracted to a six-year low and foreign exchange reserves have also increased. Deficit is a measure of a country's trade where the value of goods and service in imports exceeds the value of the products it exports. The current account of a country may include the net income of that country, such as interest and dividends, and may also count transfers such as foreign aid, though usually these components make only a small portion of the total current account. So, briefly, the current account represents a country's foreign transactions and is a component of country's balance of payment. Now, according to the SBP data, the CAD has narrowed 73 percent to just \$2.8 billion dollars in the nine months of the current fiscal year. But this piece of news is both good and bad. The good news is that it shows some stabilization resulting from the regulatory measures the SBP has taken over this past year. And these efforts have yielded some improvements during the first three quarters ending in March 2020. It also shows that foreign inflows and balance of trade showed an uptick. The shrinking of the CAD to just 1.3 percent of the GDP in nine months compared to 4.7 percent in the corresponding period in the previous year is a positive development. But it also entails bad news because there has been a decrease of over 16 percent in imports, while we have shown just 1.3 percent increase in exports during the period under discussion. A reduction in CAD can be a good development when it is achieved through a substantial increase in exports – which has not been the case ever since the present government assumed power in 2018. The focus of the present economic managers has been to reduce the deficit not by improving exports but by reducing imports and that is not a good sign for any economy in the long run. It may give a temporary reason for jubilation to government circles but senior economists have been warning against this sustained decrease in imports. Declining imports also mean that there is a sluggish economy that is likely to result in a screeching halt of economic activities. This is even truer in an increasing likelihood of a prolonged Covid-19 pandemic that has already crippled the economy not only in Pakistan but the world over. The increase in foreign exchange reserves is also the result of reduced payments for imports and not thanks to an improved economic performance. In fact it is a time of concern for the country as the challenges the country is facing are mounting.

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Model courts

IN a timely move, the Lahore High Court (LHC) has established model courts to facilitate judicial proceedings in a safe and secure environment especially when Covid-19 cases are increasing rapidly in Punjab. These Model Criminal Trial Court (MCTCs) have been set up in accordance with the recommendations from the National Judicial Policy Making Committee (NJPMC). The model courts started functioning with the help of the latest cyber technology in which the lawyers will not be required to appear before the court in person but will be submitting their arguments and replies online. The record of all the pending cases is also reported to have been scanned and made available online. This is a step forward from the model courts that were initiated last year on the orders of the former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Asif Saeed Khosa. The model courts have been helping in speedy trials of cases without delays. It is noteworthy that in Punjab, MCTCs have been set up in 36 districts for expeditious dispensation of justice. In most cases these model courts have been able to wrap up cases within weeks after the accused are indicted for crimes as serious as murder and peddling drugs. Initially, only murder and narcotics cases were assigned to model courts with dedicated staff that was supposed to work exclusively in model courts. Then gradually, more standard operating procedures (SOPs) were developed, and now in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, innovations have been introduced to these models courts. Normally, these model courts do not grant any adjournments and strictly follow the trial schedule issued for observance of lawyers and prosecutors. The lawyers are also required to give details of their juniors or replacements so that no excuses can be presented to the court to delay the proceedings. The apparent success of these model courts has been highlighted by the figures released from the Supreme Court monitoring Cell. These figures show that by January this year, 465 model courts had been set up across the country which had decided over 30, 000 cases in just one year. Having appreciated the concept, a couple of points must be stressed for the sake of ensuring that no miscarriage of justice is done. The idea of developing any model in isolation of the entire system is not going to work in the long run. Be it model schools or model courts, they need to be replicated at a much wider scale to be able to show a major improvement in the system. The same applies to anti-terrorism courts that ostensibly dispense justice quickly and satisfy the demands of those who clamour for harsh and hasty punishments, but such prompt penal exercise leaves much to be desired before we can vouch for its due process. That's why we must appreciate the need for justice but we should also highlight the need for systemic changes that improve the mechanism of legal prosecution and provision without compromising on the forensics.

UAE's national policies against COVID-19

Dr Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



It is one of a few countries that have taken systematic and result oriented actions to combat the economic fallout this pandemic will certainly create. The country's support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should prompt the rest of the world to navigate these trying circumstances properly

THE United Arab Emirates (UAE) being the 2nd largest economy of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has now become the role model for others in the fight against COVID-19. The government of UAE has announced economic package of approximately AED 26.5 billion (\$ 7.2 billion or 2 percent of GDP) for various sectors. The UAE's visionary leadership is taking all possible measures to boost the morale of the business community in the UAE. Its latest decision to step up precautionary measures to contain the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is aimed to protecting people's health and safety and ensuring business continuity at all sectors. The country's visionary leadership is positively responding to the challenges with dignity and resilience. UAE economic package included AED 16 (\$4.4 billion)

approved by the federal government to support the private sector by decreasing numerous government charges and speeding-up existing mega infrastructure projects; AED 1.5 billion (\$0.4 billion by the government of Dubai to reduce government fees, provide additional water and electricity subsidies, and simplify business procedures; and AED 9 billion (\$2.5 billion) announced by the government of Abu Dhabi as part of the ongoing "Ghadan-21" fiscal stimulus program. The new economic initiatives provided for water and electricity subsidies as well as credit guarantees and liquidity support to small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, the government of Abu Dhabi has announced a reduction or suspension of various government fees and penalties, as well as a rebate on commercial lease payments in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The UAE government have announced and implemented several interconnected and interdependent measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including closure of schools, nurseries, shopping malls, parks restaurants, and various tourist attractions. National Epidemic Control Plan was also announced and imposed effective travel restrictions suspension of international flights, suspension of prayers at mosques and other large gatherings, and enacted tele-working arrangements in government offices. UAE has established a number of preventative measures, such as localized quarantines and airport screenings. Hand sanitizers are now in all hotels, government agencies are advised to interact online instead of through face-to-face meetings, and a pilot program has already been started in government schools to teach via distance learning. The Emirates have also acted beyond their borders recently, airlifting a group of Yemeni students from Wuhan, China the virus's epicenter. Moreover, it has increased testing and scaled up disinfection efforts, established a dedicated task force to ensure uninterrupted supply of consumer goods and prevent manipulative pricing practices, and launched remote learning initiative to ensure continuity of education. The UAE leadership continues to take numerous integrated supportive measures that would provide banking and financial liquidity for national business sustainability and growth opportunities during the ongoing infectious COVID-19. The Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) has doubled the size of its stimulus package to Dh256 billion (\$70 billion or 20% of GDP) package which included various diversified but integrated measures and allowed banks and finance companies in the country to extend deferrals of

principal and interest payments to their customers until December 31, 2020. The Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) has lowered its policy interest rate twice by a combined 125 basis points so far this year. On March 15, the Central Bank had announced a Dh100 billion stimulus package, which allowed banks to grant temporary relief on retail and business clients' for loans payment of up to six months. It reduced banks' required reserve requirements from 14% to 7% which increased liquidity in banking sector and mitigated the impact of COVID-19. It will release Dh61 billion additional liquidity for the banking sector, zero-interest rate collateralized loans to banks (AED 50 billion), allowing the use of banks' excess capital buffers (AED 50 billion), 15-25 percent reduction in provisioning for SME loans, increase of loan to value ratio for first-time home buyers by 5 percentage points, limiting bank fees for SMEs, waiver of all payment service fees charged by CBUAE for six months, raising the limit on banks' exposure to the real estate sector from to 30% of risk-weighted assets, subject to adequate provisioning and allowing banks to defer loan repayments till December 31, 2020 UAE has been helping the government of Pakistan in its fight against coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as second batch of eleven ton of medical and supplies handed over to Pakistan authorities. The UAE is the second country after China that has been providing assistance to Pakistan continuously and in constant contact with the government. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador for Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi said that UAE is the champion and role model of humanitarian assistance in the world. It is one the main pillars of its foreign policy too he added. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi said that the UAE leadership including President Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan and Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan taking personal interest in the well-being of the people of Pakistan. The ambassador said that more aid is in the pipeline and his government is watching the situation prevailing in Pakistan and whenever this country will need, the UAE government would provide the support. He said that the second batch of 11 tons of medical aid supplies provided by the UAE government to people of Pakistan to combat the COVID-19. The UAE ambassa-

dor stated that the arrival of the second batch of medical aid for Pakistan confirms the commitment of UAE and its leadership to stand by the people of Pakistan in these exceptional circumstances going through the world. He said that the second phase of medical assistance to Pakistan is a pioneering model and a realistic evidence of the success of humanitarian efforts of the UAE leadership in their quest to provide support and assistance to the friendly people of Pakistani, which is an established approach in foreign policy since the era of founding father late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (May Allah bless his soul) and continued and developed in the era of HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of UAE. He reminded that bilateral relations between Pakistan and the UAE are based on mutual affinity and respect, and these ties has flourished to partnerships in many fields, stressing that friendship and close linkages between the two countries is a key element of this partnership. It is obvious that the backbone of the UAE's response to the Covid-19 pandemic is derived from its comprehensive public health-care system which includes testing (UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention claims 2nd position in the world for the number of COVID-19 tests conducted so far. The ministry has said it has carried out more than 220,000 laboratory tests across the UAE for COVID-19. It number is equivalent to 22,900 tests per a million people the second highest in the world), hospital treatment and recovery programs are covered by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed's health care program. A manageable health-care and economic situation has allowed the UAE to go a step further and provide humanitarian missions to areas outside its own borders something that the world's most powerful nations have been unable to perform. Strong political commitment, immaculate governance and delivery system, optimal utilization of Artificial Intelligence Technologies (AITs), economic bailout package, adequate financial measures and last but not least, immense social security programs proved effective in UAE's fight against COVID-19. It is one of a few countries that have taken systematic and result oriented actions to combat the economic fallout this pandemic will certainly create. The country's support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should prompt the rest of the world to navigate these trying circumstances properly.

A united global community can begin the fightback

Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah



It is in this spirit that Saudi Arabia, as Chair of the G20, convened the Extraordinary Virtual Summit on COVID-19 in March, bringing together every G20 leader and the heads of international organizations. Together, we recognized the need for the world's leading economies and international organizations to respond, not as lone actors, but with collective actions to protect lives, support jobs and businesses, and ensure the world is better protected against future pandemics

A Menace is currently sweeping our globe. From Asia and the Americas, to Europe and Africa, and here in the region, COVID-19 has shown it respects no borders. Every continent, almost every country, rich or poor, is under attack. Our global interconnectedness has long been a powerful force for good in the world, yet this pandemic is a powerful reminder of our vulnerabilities. As of this moment, nearly 2.3 million people have been infected and over 155,000 people around the world have lost their lives because of this pandemic. Health workers, international leaders and policymakers are somberly and acutely aware that this number will continue to rise in the coming weeks. It is clear that combating this pandemic and protecting lives requires the world to come together to deliver a robust, coordinated, large-scaled and science-based response. The G20 is committed to doing exactly that, and taking whatever action is necessary, along with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant international organizations,, to help all nations overcome this pandemic. It was in the spirit of this commitment that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pledged \$500 million to global organizations as an initial contribution to help bridge the immediate \$8 billion funding gap estimated by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. When I speak to my fellow health ministers, a common discussion point is the pride and admiration

they have for their respective nation's health workers – their willingness to go on caring for people, despite the risks – their utter selflessness and incredible work ethic, which serves as an inspiration to all of us. The theme of this year's World Health Day, which celebrated the work of nurses and midwives, underlined this point, and the debt we all owe to health care workers around the world; it is only right that we unite in our support for them as they fight to tackle COVID-19. It is only through solidarity and cooperation that we will be able to fight back. It is in this spirit that Saudi Arabia, as Chair of the G20, convened the Extraordinary Virtual Summit on COVID-19 in March, bringing together every G20 leader and the heads of international organizations. Together, we recognized the need for the world's leading economies and international organizations to respond, not as lone actors, but with collective actions to protect lives, support jobs and businesses, and ensure the world is better protected against future pandemics. The G20 has committed to providing immediate resources in the fight against the pandemic including development of a COVID-19 vaccine through support for WHO's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and fully funding the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. Leaders have also agreed to securely and transparently exchange epidemiological and clinical data which is essential in the search for a vaccine. These urgent actions will immediately enhance the world's

capacity to fight COVID-19 now, and better protect us in the future. In this international effort, the World Health Organization has never been more important than it is today. The WHO is on the frontline everyday delivering medical supplies, including diagnostic tools, treatments, medicines, and vaccines. As such, the G20 is fully committed to coordinating with international organizations in the global battle against the pandemic, and delivering medical supplies, including diagnostic tools, treatments, medicines, and vaccines. Nations with health systems and economies less likely to be able to deal with COVID-19 and its impacts are of significant concern. The G20 is working quickly to close the financing gap in international organizations' strategic preparedness and response plans to ensure all nations can implement the best health policies, plans and practices possible in the fight against this pandemic, and are not deserted when they need our support most. These efforts by the G20 do not exist in isolation. We are fully aware of our immediate responsibility. We have expressed an absolute readiness and determination to react promptly and take any further action that may be required. I will join my G20 health ministers in meetings in the months ahead as we continue our work to protect lives and strengthen the global health system for the future. This virus exploited our global interconnectedness, and it is only through solidarity and cooperation that we, as a global community, will be able to fight back. **The writer is Saudi minister of health. Article first published in Arab News on April 19, 2020.**

Briefs

Uzbekistan to receive World Bank emergency financing

DNA

TASHKENT: The World Bank approved a US\$95 million financing package to support Uzbekistan's immediate response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the health and well-being of its citizens. The financing will be used to strengthen life-saving medical systems, as well as to provide income support to poor and vulnerable people affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic. "This assistance is part of a package put together by a coalition of development partners to help protect the people of Uzbekistan against the threats of COVID-19," said Hideki Mori, World Bank Country Manager for Uzbekistan. "The Government, World Health Organization (WHO), other UN agencies, international finance institutions including the World Bank Group, bilateral aid agencies, and non-governmental organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), are all standing together to support the country during this difficult time."

US oil slips below \$15 a barrel

SINGAPORE: US oil prices fell heavily on Monday and slipped below \$15 a barrel on renewed storage concerns as the coronavirus throttles demand, even as producers start slashing output to boost markets. American benchmark West Texas Intermediate dropped 15 percent to \$14.39 a barrel in Asian afternoon trade, reversing direction after several days of gains last week. Brent crude, the international benchmark, was off nearly six percent at \$20.16 a barrel. Oil prices have collapsed in recent weeks as demand evaporated because of lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed worldwide to fight the virus. Last week, US oil fell below zero for the first time as investors scrambled to offload it before the expiry of a trading contract, but could not readily find buyers. Prices have recovered since, but remain at their lowest levels for years. - APP

Social distancing SOP for S. Waziristan

ISLAMABAD: The standard operating procedures (SOP) of Social Distancing was fully implemented in Taraweeh and other prayers at mosques in Wana, South Waziristan district with the support of ulema. In pursuance with instructions of provincial government and following the directions of Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan HameedUllahKhan, AC Wana AmirNawaz held meetings with Ulema at Wana for implementation of SOPs for Taraweeh and prayers. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Iwan Amri and his staff holding a video conference. - DNA

PM Johnson back to work

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson returns to work on Monday more than three weeks after being hospitalised for the coronavirus and spending three days in intensive care. Johnson, one of the highest-profile people to have contracted the virus, returned to 10 Downing Street on Sunday evening and will chair a meeting on Monday morning of the coronavirus "war cabinet", his colleagues confirmed. Dominic Raab, the foreign secretary who

has deputised in Johnson's absence, told the BBC on Sunday that his return would be a "boost for the government and a boost for the country". Raab also claimed the prime minister was "raring to go". Johnson, 55, was admitted to hospital on April 5 suffering from "persistent symptoms" of the deadly disease. His condition worsened and he later admitted after being put in intensive care that "things could have gone either way". - APP

Saudi Arabia signs \$265m China deal to ramp up Covid-19 testing

DNA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced Sunday a \$265 million deal with a Chinese firm to ramp up coronavirus testing as the kingdom eased a 24-hour curfew, except in hotspots including Islam's holy city of Mecca. The agreement with China's Beijing Genome Institute (BGI) will provide for nine million COVID-19 tests, the government said in a statement. It said in line with the agreement "500 experts, specialists,

and technicians" would come from China to conduct the tests. The deal, which has a total value of 995 million riyals, also includes "the establishment of six large regional laboratories in a number of areas in the kingdom, including a mobile laboratory with a production capacity of 10,000 tests daily", it added. Earlier the government decided to relax a nationwide curfew between 9am and 5pm, with malls and retailers allowed to reopen until May 13, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. But a round-the-clock lockdown

will be maintained in some areas including Mecca, where the highest number of infections have been recorded in recent days despite the city being sealed off. Many countries around the Middle East and North Africa have the easing of lockdown restrictions to coincide the holy fasting month of Ramadan which began on Friday. Saudi Arabia, which has reported the highest number of infections in the Arab world, is scrambling to limit the spread of coronavirus at home.

On Sunday, the health ministry said the number of deaths from Covid-19 had risen to 139, confirmed infections to 17,522 while 2,357 people have recovered. Last month, Saudi Arabia suspended the year-round "umrah" pilgrimage over fears of the coronavirus pandemic spreading in Islam's holiest cities. Authorities are yet to announce whether they will proceed with this year's hajj, scheduled for the end of July, but they have urged Muslims to temporarily defer preparations for the annual pilgrimage.

Last year, some 2.5 million faithful travelled to Saudi Arabia from across the world to participate in the hajj, which Muslims are obliged to perform at least once during their lifetime. The Arab world's biggest economy has also closed cinemas, malls and restaurants and halted flights as it attempts to contain the virus. King Salman has warned of a "more difficult" fight ahead against the virus, as the kingdom faces the economic impact of virus-led shutdowns and crashing oil prices

Trump lashes media

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Sunday dismissed reports he was considering sacking health secretary Alex Azar as criticism mounts over the US response to the coronavirus pandemic. Trump, who risks losing public support ahead of the November election due to the climbing death toll, lashed out over stories on CNN and other media outlets. "Reports that H.H.S. Secretary Alex Azar is going to be 'fired' by me are Fake News," Trump wrote on Twitter. - APP

Pak-China to enhance cooperation in agri sector

Both sides re-affirmed China's assistance to Pakistan to relieve the desert locust attack. They also discussed cooperation mechanism on the control of plant diseases and insect pests and the proposed plan of action on Pak-China agricultural cooperation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The second meeting of Pak-China Joint Working Group (JWG) on Agriculture Cooperation under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was jointly held by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research of Pakistan and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China (MARA). The participants through

video conference decided to enhance bilateral cooperation in agriculture sector. They exchanged ideas and priority areas of cooperation, reports Gwadar Pro App. Both sides re-affirmed China's assistance to Pakistan to relieve the desert locust attack. They also discussed cooperation mechanism on the control of plant diseases and insect pests and the proposed plan of action on Pak-China agricultural

cooperation. It was agreed that Pakistan and China will jointly implement the "MoU between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China (MARA) and the Ministry of National Food Security and Research of Pakistan (NFS&R). The MoU is aimed at strengthening cooperation on Plant and Disease Control" and actively promote the establishment of a Center for sustainable management of plant diseases

and insect pests in Pakistan. In addition, the participants made it clear that cooperation will be strengthened in agricultural capacity building, technical innovation, aquaculture, the construction of foot-and-mouth disease-free areas and investment & trade. Representatives from Pakistan's CPEC Authority and China's CPEC Secretariat were present at the meeting.

Back to school in China

BEIJING: Children in China's two most important cities went back to school Monday after more than three months at home, as coronavirus restrictions eased and governments around the world began charting a path out of the pandemic lockdown. Europe's four worst-affected countries all reported marked drops in their daily death tolls, offering hope that the outbreak may have peaked in some places - at least for now. But leaders and experts remain divided on how quickly to revive shuttered economies while maintaining a delicate balance between freedom and safety. - APP

Egypt seeks aid from IMF

CAIRO: Egypt is seeking an aid package from the International Monetary Fund to offset the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli said Sunday. In a televised press conference with the central bank governor and other ministers, Madbouli did not specify the size of the one-year financial aid package the government was seeking from the IMF alongside technical assistance. - APP

Japanese envoy grieved over death of Dr. Javed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of Prof. Dr. Mohammed Javed who lost his life battling against the novel coronavirus on last Saturday in KPK. Offering condolences to the bereaved family, Ambassador MATSUDA said the services of late doctor Javed will be remembered for times to come as he lost his life while saving the lives of his fellow countrymen battling the deadly pandemic. "Doctors, nurses, paramedics and all individuals affiliated with the health department are fighting at the frontline against COVID-19 and risking their lives to protect the people. We sincerely salute their services for saving the precious lives of people fighting the pandemic", said the Ambassador.



While paying glowing tribute to late Dr. Javed who was senior doctor at Peshawar's Hayatabad Medical Complex, the Ambassador said the entire global community is facing a difficult time in the aftermath of COVID-19 outbreak and we need to demonstrate collective resolve and responsibility to defeat this lethal pandemic. The Ambassador assured that Japan would continue extending support to Pakistan in its fight against the novel coronavirus, adding Japan and Pakistan will fight together until this pandemic is defeated.

Hashoo group pays tribute to police cops

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To honour the brave services of front-line police personnel safeguarding the federal capital by putting their own well-being at risk during the Covid-19 outbreak, Hashoo Group has launched an initiative to benefit them by providing Sehr and Iftar meals at their checkpoints during the Holy Month of Ramadan. This was decided in a meeting held between the Hashoo Group Hospitality Division - Chief

Operating Officer (COO) Mr. Haseeb Gardezi and the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Police Mr. Waqar Uddin Syed in Islamabad on Monday, April 27, 2020. Under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, Hashoo Group is going to provide daily Sehr and Iftar meals to all on-duty law-enforcement agency (LEA) personnel deployed at security checkpoints in the jurisdiction of Islamabad. The Group, in collaboration with Islamabad Police, is going to de-



liver a total of 7,200 hygienically packed nutritious meals to the policemen manning the checkpoints throughout the Holy month of Ramadan. Through this heartfelt gesture of gratitude, Hashoo Group aims to acknowledge and appreciate the dauntless courage of the personnel rendering tireless duties to ensure the safety and security of the citizens under the turmoil of the pandemic. In addition, Hashoo Foundation - through its Hashoo Humanitarian Programme - has already

responded to the crisis with its emergency and relief activities such as the distribution of food packages, hygiene and medical kits to vulnerable communities and LEAs, and will continue to do so until the pandemic is over. Mr. Haseeb Gardezi said "We thank these courageous policemen for displaying genuine care and bravery through all times in bringing us peace and security while we stay comfortable and feel safe at our homes during this unprecedented time."