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Infiltration: PM Imran Khan shelves Indian allegations

The flood has proved a bitter lesson for us

Missing Persons Commission performs well



Infiltration: PM shelves Indian allegations

Latest baseless allegations by India of "infiltration" across [the Line of Control] LoC are a continuation of this dangerous agenda. The indigenous Kashmiri resistance against Indian occupation is a direct consequence of India's oppression and brutalisation of Kashmiris

DNA / STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan once again called on the international community to take notice of India's brutality in occupied Kashmir before it jeopardises the peace and security in South Asia. In a series of tweets on Wednesday, the prime minister said, "I have been warning the world about India's continuing efforts to find a pretext for a false flag operation targeting Pakistan."

"Latest baseless allegations by India of 'infiltration' across [the Line of Control] LoC are a continuation of this dangerous agenda. The indigenous Kashmiri resistance against Indian occupation is a direct consequence of India's oppression and brutalisation of Kashmiris," he said. The prime minister added, "The fascist policies of the RSS-BJP combine are fraught with serious risks. The international community must act before India's reckless moves jeopardise peace and security in South Asia."

The premier's remarks come after Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Army Chief Gen MM Naravane and other officials last week alleged that Pakistan has been operating terrorist launch pads from its side of the LoC and attempting to infiltrate the border into the Indian side. A day earlier, Director-General ISPR Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar had also dismissed Indian Army's allegations and termed them as 'baseless' and 'non-serious'.



ADANA: PAC C 130 aircraft being loaded with Piper Brave spray aircraft at Adana (Turkey) before its departure for Pakistan. - DNA

Locust control: PAF airlifts spray aircraft from Turkey

Turkey and Pakistan are all weather friends and this gesture would help improve a comprehensive pest control system to overcome the locust plague

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ISLAMABAD: To augment Pakistan's locust control efforts, Turkish government has offered its expertise to the Government of Pakistan. In this regard, on the special instructions of Pakistan Government, a PAF C-130 aircraft arrived at Adana, Turkey to airlift purpose built Piper Brave

spray aircraft from the brotherly country. The aircraft, along with four crew members would be landing in Pakistan today, where it would be assembled before its departure for the pest infested areas in the country. This aircraft would be used to fight the locust onslaught on various crops and cultivable lands across the country, especially Sindh and Punjab.

Turkey and Pakistan are all weather friends and this gesture would help improve a comprehensive pest control system to overcome the locust plague. PAF transport fleet has a rich history of serving the nation in various natural calamities and it has been in the forefront of providing air transport to the relief efforts in the country.

Briefs

COVID-19 claims third life

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: The Corona Virus pandemic COVID-19 claimed its Third life in district Attock as a Old man who was under treatment at hospital died of Coronavirus and buried under strict safety protocol in Ghurghushti village Tehsil Hazro in Attock. The district health authorities have confirmed that it is Third confirmed death due to Corona Virus COVID-19 in the district. District focal person for COVID-19, Dr Asif Arbab Niazi told that 82 Years old Muhammad Rafique a resident of Tehsil Hazro was tested positive on 02 May and was under treatment at a hospital where he died. He said the deceased had recently returned from Karachi after meeting family. Rescue 1122 officials told that Muhammad Rafique was buried according to the in Tehsil Hazro as per safety protocol of Coronavirus COVID-19.

Pompeo has no evidence: China

"Mr Pompeo repeatedly spoke up but he cannot present any evidence. How can he? Because he doesn't have any," Hua Chunying said

BEIJING: China on Wednesday hit back at US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over his claims that the coronavirus originated in a lab in Wuhan, saying he "doesn't have any" evidence. Pompeo said on Sunday that there was "enormous evidence" to show that the new coronavirus originated in a lab in China, further fuelling tensions with Beijing over its handling of the outbreak.

"I think this matter should be handed to scientists and medical professionals, and not politicians, who lie for their own domestic political ends," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a regular press briefing. "Mr Pompeo repeatedly spoke up but he cannot present any evidence. How can he? Because he doesn't have any," she said.

Pompeo said Sunday in an interview that there was "enormous evidence" that the new coronavirus came out of a Wuhan lab. Most scientists believe the new virus, which emerged in China late last year, jumped from animals to humans - possibly from a market in Wuhan selling exotic animals for meat. The World Health Organization said the US claims were "speculative".

Domestic flights, retail business open

The recommendations were made during Committee meeting chaired by Asad Umar in Islamabad

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ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) on Wednesday proposed multiple recommendations to ease lockdown restrictions in the country which were imposed to curb spread of the coronavirus. The recommendations

were made during Committee meeting chaired by Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Asad Umar in Islamabad. The recommendations include opening of inter-provincial transportation with proper implementation of SOPs, opening phase-II of the construction sector, reopening of retail outlets and operationalization of

selective outpatient departments in Islamabad. The participants of meeting proposed to enhance shops timings from 9am to 5pm and then 8pm to 10pm. They also decided to bring no change in the SOPs for the religious congregations in the second half of the holy month of Ramadan.

PM, DG ISI discuss security matters

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ISLAMABAD: Director General Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt. Gen. Faiz Hamid called on Prime Minister Imran Khan here on Wednesday. Matters pertaining to national security were discussed during the meeting, said a press statement issued by the PM Media Office. Meanwhile, Special Assistant to PM on National Security Division Dr. Moeed Yusuf called on Prime Minister Imran Khan here on Wednesday. Regional security situation particularly the Indian aggression emerging during the recent days and other matters were discussed in the meeting, a press statement issued by the PM Media Office here said.

Faisal Edhi tests 'negative'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Faisal Edhi, the head of Edhi Foundation and the son of philanthropist late Abdul Sattar Edhi, has tested negative for coronavirus, on Wednesday. Faisal Edhi said that he has tested negative for COVID-19 by the grace of Allah Almighty.

LHC moved against NAB

Chaudhry brothers filed a petition in the LHC against the anti-corruption watchdog and alleged that the NAB is involved in political engineering

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Husain and Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Perwaiz Elahi on Wednesday moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman's jurisdiction. Chaudhry brothers filed a petition in the LHC against the anti-corruption watchdog and

alleged that the NAB is involved in political engineering. Chaudhry brothers have taken the stance that courts have already issued verdicts regarding the anti-graft body's erroneous way of conducting investigations. NAB Chairman Justice (ret'd) Javed Iqbal has reopened 19-year-old assets beyond means case against us in which the anti-corruption watchdog failed to prove anything earlier, Chaudhry brothers maintained.

Asim Bajwa sheds light on CPEC projects



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority and Special Assistant to PM on Information Asim Saleem Bajwa on Wednesday said that the CPEC project is a reality and there was hindrance in its completion. "CPEC is an important national project and soon its second and most important phase will begin," he said adding that the phase-II would emphasize on the agriculture, industry, trade and science sectors. Asim Saleem Bajwa said that it was their priority to establish economic zones in all provinces of the country while development of Gawadar was also part of the second phase. "The development work on economic zones is being expedited," he said. Shedding light on the agriculture project, the CPEC Authority chairman said that China would establish pest control centre in Pakistan to improve quality of seeds in order to yield better results. He said that overall 20,000 Pakistani students would visit China on educational scholarships. "Soon this programme will be announced," Asim Bajwa said.

COVID-19 impact on CPEC controllable

DNA

BEIJING: The COVID-19 spreads will affect the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to a certain extent, but the effect is likely to be within a controllable range, said a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Wednesday. The report says, it is a matter of concern these days, COVID-19 spreads rapidly in Pakistan, as confirmed cases have crossed 22,000 with 476 deaths. The CPEC is a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which runs

through the northern and southern parts of Pakistan, where the pandemic is getting worse. Now everyone is very much concerned about the COVID-19 impact on the construction of CPEC projects. Some people say that it has an impact, some say there is no impact, and others say the impact is very large. The impact on CPEC will depend on the spread of the epidemic in days to come and the effectiveness of Pakistan's epidemic prevention and control measures. We should seek truth from facts. At the same time, we should be alert to the

fact that there is a force in the world that does not wish to see the success of CPEC, so they arbitrarily exaggerate the impact of the pandemic on CPEC development. The Chinese and Pakistani governments and peoples have firm determination to overcome difficulties caused by COVID-19 and promote CPEC construction. Therefore, while fighting COVID-19 together, the two governments attach great importance to the continuous construction of CPEC projects. Both governments have maintained close communication and coordination

on specific issues of CPEC projects now. Normal flights between the two countries were temporarily interrupted due to the epidemic, but Chinese technicians had returned to the site by chartered airplanes. The Chinese enterprises have implemented closed-off management and all CPEC projects have formulated prevention and control plans and implemented them very strictly, therefore effectively preventing the invasion of the novel coronavirus. So far there is no COVID-19 spread at the project sites. The Chinese government and headquarters of the

Chinese enterprises have provided sufficient prevention and medical materials to workers onsite, and sent medical teams to the construction sites. In addition, the Chinese enterprises participating in the construction of CPEC projects are also actively making contributions to the prevention and control of the pandemic in various locations in Pakistan, donating materials to the local governments, schools and hospitals. At present, Pakistan's economy and its people are struggling, especially when facing the strike of COVID-19.

Therefore, in this special period, the continuous construction of CPEC is of great significance, because these infrastructure projects as well as special economic zones and industrial parks are closely related to future development of Pakistan. All walks of life in Pakistan have reached a consensus that CPEC is the lifeline of Pakistan. Recently, I have read an article written by a Pakistani friend on social media, saying that Pakistan's future development can be maintained only if CPEC's development is further promoted, the report added.

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The flood has proved a bitter lesson for us

Pak students in Wuhan celebrate easing of lockdown
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Briefs

Online Theater Festival held

ISLAMABAD: Ajoka Theater Pakistan has arranged an online Theater Festival titled "Coronologue" amid COVID-19 Lockdown. An organizer of the event said, send 1-3 entries of up to 10 minutes duration for this exciting and innovative theater festival. The Monologue should be one or two person Performances with Stand up Comedy acts, record it on your smart phone/ laptop cameras as a single cut but well rehearsed, he started. He said that duration must be up to 10 minutes for each entry along with script and participants from any part of the world can participate. Act can be played in any languages, Urdu, English, any other Pakistani language and Jury would be comprising from eminent theater personalities. The Selected 5 performances will be presented live on social media and Ajoka's Youtube channel and the selected entries will also be performed on stage after the lockdown. — APP

Rs 20 mln for HR programme

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) would be spending Rs 20.0 million during the current financial year 2019-2020 for creating an effective Human Rights Awareness Programme in the targeted districts. Talking to an official of MoHR on Wednesday, he said the main objectives of the project were to increase the people's understanding and knowledge about respect of human rights in Islam and fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan and domestic national laws for human rights; To promote tolerance and respect for human rights and inter-faith harmony to combat religious intolerance for a peaceful society through strengthening regional Directorates project of Human Rights; To sensitize rural and urban communities for behavioral change towards certain human rights issues particularly gender based violence; To develop communication strategy to address major human rights issues particularly violence against women, women's inheritance rights, child abuse, transgender, minorities and PwDs. — APP

LRH Gynae Block sealed

PESHAWAR: The Gynae Block of Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) Peshawar has been temporarily sealed after reporting of coronavirus cases in its staff. LRH spokesperson Muhammad Asim said this while talking to media persons here on Wednesday. He said more than 35 doctors and nurses have been tested positive for COVID-19, after which the block was sealed and the services stood terminated on temporary basis. The affected staff have been quarantined and their families have also been tested in this regard. He said that a committee has been established to devise Standard Operating Procedures for the patients after re-opening of the block. — APP



GHJOTKI: German non governmental organisation distributing ration in interior Sindh. — DNA

Pak earns \$ 526 mln thru transport services

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$ 526.710 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the first eight months of current financial year (2019-20) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. This shows decrease of 6.48 percent as compared to US \$563.210 million earned through provision of services during the corresponding period of fiscal year (2018-19), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the period under review, the exports of air transport witnessed nominal decrease of 3.54 percent by going down from US \$483.530 million last year to US \$466.390 million during July-February (2019-20). Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services however increased by 13.33 percent, from US \$271.790 million to US \$308.020 million, whereas the exports of freight services also grew by 21.75 percent, from US \$12.320 million to US \$15 million, in addition the export of other air transport services decreased by 28.11 percent from US \$199.420 million to US \$143.370 million. The exports of sea transport services declined by 39.54 percent, by going down from US \$46.050 million last year to US \$27.840 million this year. — APP

Missing Persons Commission puts up excellent performance

Chairman of the Missing Persons Commission Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal and other Honorable members have disposed of 4523 cases till April 2020. The relatives of missing persons have lauded the efforts of Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal Chairman Missing Persons Commission and other Honorable members of Missing Persons Commission for taking personal interest in locating their near and dear ones

FIAZ CHAUDRHY
ISLAMABAD: Missing Persons Commission has disposed of 4523 cases upto April 30, 2020 as per monthly progress report released by Farid Ahmed Khan, Secretary (ColoED) on cases of alleged enforced disappearances for the month of April 2020. A total number of 6628 cases were received by the Miss-

ing Persons Commission upto March 2020. During April, 2020, 33 more cases were received by the commission and total numbers of cases reached to 6661. The Missing Persons Commission disposed of 10 cases in till April 30, 2020 and thus total disposal of Missing Persons upto April 30, 2020 is 4523 and balance as on April 2020 is 2138. The Missing Persons Commission conducted 26 hearings in



Islamabad in April 2020. The hearings in others area including Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar will be resumed after review of Lock down policies of the respected provincial governments as per law. Chairman of the Missing Persons Commission Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal and other Honorable members have disposed of 4523 cases till April 2020. The relatives of missing persons have lauded the

efforts of Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal Chairman Missing Persons Commission and other Honorable members of Missing Persons Commission for taking personal interest in locating their near and dear ones. Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman of Missing Persons Commission is serving Missing Persons Commission in an honorary capacity and drawing no salary and availing other faculties.

Steps to end child abuse

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) has taken special measures to strengthen the realisation of the rights of the children to protect them from all forms of violence and exploitation.

The Ministry has devised a plan through its helpline 1099 to make it working for 24/7 to end the menace of child abuse with collective efforts of the society, an official said on Wednesday. He said that now helpline would work day and night to end Child abuse to bring them into mainstream of the society's fabric.

Hashoo Group provides meals to on duty police cops



ABID RAZA
LAHORE: To honor the brave services of front-line police personnel safeguarding Lahore 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 agreed in a meeting held between the Superintendent of Police, Civil Lines Division Mr. Dost Muhammad and the Hotel Manager Pearl-Continental Hotel Lahore Mr. Hussain Abbas on Wednesday, May 6th, 2020. Under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, Hashoo Group is going to provide daily Sehr and Iftar meals to on-duty law-en-

forcement agency (LEA) personnel deployed at security checkpoints under Lahore, Civil Lines Division. The Group, in collaboration with Lahore Police, is going to deliver a total of 7,000 hygienically packed, nutritious meals to the policemen manning these 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 law-enforcement 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 Program - 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, Chief Operating Officer - Hashoo Group Hospitality Division, said: "We thank the courageous policemen for displaying genuine care and bravery in bringing us peace and security while we stay comfortable and feel safe at our homes during this unprecedented time."

CDA starts e-filing system

DNA

ISLAMABAD: E-filing system has been made operational in the Human Recourse Development and Administration directorates of Capital Development Authority (CDA) to make internal working of authority fast. Capital Development Authority chairman had earlier issued directions for introduction of e-filing system in the authority. E-filing system is being introduced in phase wise manner in the CDA. In this regard it was decided to start e-filing system in the authority from HRD and Administration directorates as pilot project.

PACRA maintains IFC rating of UIC

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Credit Rating Agency (PACRA) has maintained the IFS rating of the United Insurance Company (UIC). A statement issued by PACRA said that UIC is one of the leading players in the insurance sector with a balanced portfolio and good profitability representing all segment of the insurance industry. The company has good capability to absorb risks while it is striving for higher standards in various facets including efficiency and transparency and governance standards, PACRA said. However, it said that the current economic meltdown may impact the business volumes of the industry, which are yet to

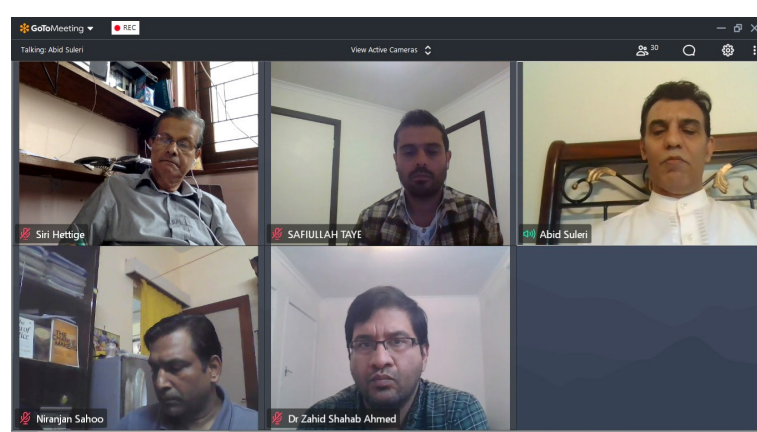
be ascertained. Speaking on the development, Chairman of the United International Group Mian Shahid said that we have planned to generate liquidity through divestment of some stake as the generation of internal capital has become essential in the current scenario. He said that the insurance industry plays an important part in national development while the pandemic has underlined its importance and now more people are taking interest in insurance for security of their families and business. The losses linked to COVID-19 has amplified the importance of the role of the insurance sector in development, and in the economic resilience of businesses and individuals, he added.

Academicians to enhance regional cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Knowledge sharing and learning each other's best practices to deal with global pandemics like COVID-19 would be significantly important for the South Asian countries in the future. The platform of SAARC, despite all the challenges, could be used effectively at least by applying a sectoral approach, especially in the areas of health, food security, social sector development and climate change in the region. The experts from South Asia and Pacific region said this while sharing views with the audience at an online policy dialogue titled: 'COVID-19 and regional cooperation in South Asia' organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Tuesday. Experts from South Asia and Pacific region, including India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan and Australia participated in the dialogue. Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Research Fellow, Deakin University, Australia,

said that COVID-19 has provided us with the opportunity to revive regional cooperation between the SAARC countries. He said that the priorities need to be changed and the post-COVID-19 cooperation could be more focused on food supply chain, livelihood and vaccination. The idea of SAARC Virtual Summit needs to be worked upon to revive cooperation on such urgent matters. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, SDPI Executive Director, while highlighting different aspects of the SAARC functioning, said that the pandemic signifies the importance of changing the mindset as the insecurities that people in the region face today are beyond the physical security. He said that the insecurities appeared as a result of the pandemic, climate change and food chain could only be responded by working together. "How to keep our food chain intact and creating a balance between saving the lives and ensuring livelihoods are some of the critical questions to ponder over in the post pandemic world," Dr Suleri



observed. He further said that the critical learning on the immunity level, the specific strategies opted by the countries such as the lockdown and the best practices should be shared mutually whereas joint medical investigation, people-to-people contact and virtual platforms of sharing and learning need to be strengthened. "SAARC is an organization whose presence may not seem to create a positive difference, however, its absence would create a much bigger negative effect",

added Dr Suleri. Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, Dhaka University, Bangladesh, said that South Asia is the least integrated region in the world. The coronavirus has exposed our development models that need to be made people-centric now, he added. He stressed upon Indian government that being the largest economy of the region, it should accommodate its neighbours during the time of crisis. Prof. Dr Shaheen Akhtar, National De-

fence University, Islamabad, said that it's time to establish sustainable peace in the region and to take the confidence-building measures to help people in distress in the conflict areas. She said in addition to challenges posed by COVID-19, the issues related to food security and climate change should also be the focus of collaborative efforts in the region. Dr Niranjan Sahoo, Senior Research Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India, was of the view that the SAARC countries should be looking forward to revive this platform, establish peace and respond to shared challenges through enhanced cooperation. He said SAARC provides us a number of forums that need to be revived, especially to enhance cooperation in healthcare sector. Dr Anton Piyarathne, The Open University of Sri Lanka, said that the areas for short-term cooperation between the South Asian countries such as dealing with the pandemic and long-term cooperation should be assessed and mapped out to strengthen a base for the regional cooperation.

Covid disparities

THE Covid-19 pandemic has overtaken virtually the entire world. But the capacity of individual countries to deal with this crisis is very different. A new report released by the UNDP states that Pakistan has one of the lowest levels of preparedness because of its limited human development, poor health infrastructure, lack of internet usage and related issues. Pakistan, one of the countries in the world which spends the smallest percentage of its GDP on health, with only 2.8 percent allocated for the sector, has only 9.8 physicians, five nurses and six hospital beds for every 10,000 people. This is especially visible in terms of the low number of nurses available. In contrast, developed countries for every 10,000 persons have 30 physicians, 81 nurses and 55 hospital beds. We are seeing a continued rise in coronavirus cases in our country, with experts stating the virus is yet to reach its peak. An alarming number of positive tests are emerging from passengers who disembark from flights coming in to the country, notably those from the UAE which carry workers living in dormitory-style settings. This will add to Pakistan's concerns.

Sindh and the Punjab stand virtually shoulder-to-shoulder, with 8,100 cases in Sindh and 7,600 in Punjab. The highest percentage of deaths continues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Our healthcare workers are especially vulnerable, with more nurses and doctors testing positive, and another doctor dying in Karachi – circumstances of which are being probed by the Sindh government. We are also seeing other problems, with OPD departments shut down and patients with other high-risk health issues left without assistance. In Peshawar, the Lady Reading Hospital has closed its gynecology department, the largest in the province, after quite a few of its staff tested positive for the virus – leaving hundreds of pregnant women in the lurch. Through all this, the virus continues to spread. Talks of a softening of the lockdown is being heard, but in doing so we would be breaking away from other countries who relax lockdowns only after their Covid curve had begun to flatten. There is no real evidence of that in Pakistan for now.

One of the problems with the rate of spread is the fact that even after mass media campaigns, people seem indifferent to social distancing, crowding around supermarket stalls as well as other areas. This is perhaps most visible at mosques where the 20-point agenda agreed to between the government and ulama is being blatantly violated in 250 mosques and religious spaces. The police administration is said to have sent out at least 460 notices to these institutions, but with limited response. The main violations involve the participation of people over 50 in prayers, including taraveeh prayers, the presence of children at them, a lack of social distancing and a failure to follow regulations regarding the removal of carpets or communal mats.

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Vaccination failures

THE Covid-19 crisis, which has hit South Asia as well as other parts of the world, has not claimed the lives of many small children. But in South Asia, there is a risk that the suspension of campaigns to deliver other vaccines against preventable diseases to which children under five most often fall victim, could do so due to lockdowns, travel restrictions and consequent shortages of supplies as well as the reluctance of parents to travel to clinics or access doctors.

Thousands of children in South Asia have missed out on routine vaccinations. As a result, small but potentially dangerous outbreaks of measles and diphtheria are already being reported in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Unicef warns that governments need to take action to ensure that children who have been left out from routine vaccination during the Covid-19 crisis do not miss out permanently. Indeed, the UN agency points out that even before the coronavirus pandemic hit the region, 4.5 million South Asian children had missed out on routine immunisations.

Unicef advises that there is no risk to children receiving the necessary vaccines, including the one against polio, provided health workers exercise good hygiene and are careful to avoid any gatherings of crowds at clinics. For Pakistan, continuing with its polio campaign is especially important given that 147 cases of the potentially fatal virus had been reported last year. This compares to only 12 cases in 2018 and fewer than that in previous years.

The disruptions in vaccine campaigns caused by Covid-19 poses the risk that still more children could become infected this year, both by polio and by other illnesses. Health strategies have to be thought out systematically and carefully. Naturally, there can be no desire to put children at any risk. However, for small children, the dangers posed by polio or measles may be greater than those presented by Covid-19.

Therefore, carefully planned schemes are required to ensure there is not too great a lag in immunizing children. It is almost certain that there will be gaps this year and perhaps for longer than that. In the current situation where global cargo and local travel is severely limited, it can be extremely difficult to deliver vaccines to children, notably those in rural and remote areas.

These children are often among those left out most often even in ordinary circumstances. This however is not an ordinary circumstance. The coronavirus should not allow us to forget that other diseases exist too and unless measures are taken, these can take the lives of children in large numbers without the vaccines they require.

Red zone files: The Information challenge

Fahd Husain



It wasn't just the ministers who were changing. So were times, and along with them the demands upon the domain of information and communication. While thinking women and men were mulling over these matters, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan suddenly and without warning gate-crashed the information ministry and sent many a party loyalist scurrying for cover. Along with her political baggage, the good doctor brought with her tonnes of uber-confidence to take the war to the opposition in words that cut deep. Yet she struggled to grasp the shifting sands of her job's expanding requirements and expectations

NEW team, new challenge, old problem. Thus continues the saga of PTI and its unending list of information czars chasing moving targets that dance with shadows. Prime Minister Imran Khan has brought in the big guns. Shibli Faraz as federal information minister brings with him goodwill ammunition that should last him a while even in these tense times. Retired Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa as special assistant to the prime minister (SAPM) comes armed with impressive experience of media management and strategic communication.

Yet, there are complications. Let's rewind. PTI stormed into power laden with goodwill, good intentions and good institutional support. Other than these, it was fairly clueless. In this exalted state of cluelessness, the party leadership found comfort in familiarity. Fawad Chaudhry was the obvious by-product of this familiarity. As the communicator-in-chief during the Panama Leaks case when PTI was clawing its way out of political setbacks, Fawad was the obvious – and perhaps the only – choice for the information ministry. PTI had just won a gruelling election after a brutal campaign that had followed fiery few years combating the PML-N. Fawad fit the mood of the moment, and that of his leader. Information meant warfare. Warfare meant the minister going for the opponents' jugular. Every hour of every day. But soon – as was wont to happen – the burden of governance began to weigh down upon the simple joys of cursing out your opponents. Someone had to work too. Work may yet be optional within the corridors of power, but conspiracy is a compulsion. And so it happened that as the PTI government settled down into the addictive comforts of power – oh those plush offices, liveried attendants and fawning staff – it also began to silently groan under the inevitable heft of factionalism.

Whispers, ears and power make a potent combination. The hubris of dissolving hopes and diluting enchantments fell upon many a favoured one. Fawad was one of them. He was eased out of Information and exiled to the Ministry of Science and Technology.

It wasn't just the ministers who were changing. So were times, and along with them the demands upon the domain of information and communication. While thinking women and men were mulling over these matters, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan suddenly and without warning gate-crashed the information ministry and sent many a party loyalist scurrying for cover.

Along with her political baggage, the good doctor brought with her tonnes of uber-confidence to take the war to the opposition in words that cut deep. Yet she struggled to grasp the shifting sands of her job's expanding requirements and expectations. What were these requirements and expectations? In the 20 months since PTI has been in power, the mandate of the information and media set-up has been a series of experiments based on the projected and often perceived desires of the leader himself. The strategy makes surreal sense: attack and insult the opposition while attacking and insulting the media while picking needless fights with the opposition while picking even more needless fights with the media. There must have been an end objective for this strategy conjured by some geniuses deep within the bowels of the government, but these objectives are so well-camouflaged that even those propagating them have little idea what they are in terms of tangibles.

Scale up and you see a strategy adrift in a sea of directionless tactics. No wonder then that alarm bells started ringing in places where they matter. Information ministry is expected to not only sell the government narrative, but it is supposed to craft the communication architecture for the state and fuel up a high-octane national story. If you racked up these objectives on one side and the ability of the government's media team on the other side, the difference was rather conspicuous in its starkness.

But wait. There's more.

The information ministry is a sum total of various important parts: PTV, PBC (Radio Pakistan), APP (state news agency) along with the ministry itself that encapsulates key offices like the Principal Information Officer (PIO), External Publicity Wing,

Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) and a host of other sections.

These have worked for decades like the bureaucracy that they are, often times oblivious to the ferocious winds of change blowing across this (often) barren landscape. But today the key question is not what the ministry of information is expected to do but, in fact, what the minister of information is expected to do?

The answer must precede expectations that continue to rise in direct proportion to the ambiguity of the task. Traditionally, the minister of information has grappled with three distinct tasks: (1) Governance of institutions (PTV, PBC, APP – even though many are now run by autonomous boards); (2) Dealing with media owners, journalists and stakeholders and managing these key relationships; (3) Amplifying the government's narrative and defending official policies as the official spokesperson. But in times like now, are these the tasks on which the minister of information is weighed? Are these the scales that Fawad Chaudhry and Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan were measured on? As the new team takes charge at the ministry, it is absolutely critical that the prime minister clarifies what he wants his information team to do that will – in his mind – constitute success. Which one of the following does he see as the most important function of an information minister?

(a) Blast political opponents as viciously as possible in the strongest language possible; (b) explain government policies in an effective manner and defend against criticism; (c) influence public opinion through persuasive short- and long-term communication strategies and build bridges with the media for effective dissemination of the government's perspective; (d) craft a state narrative that weaves a national story and influences regional and global public opinion. The easiest answer, of course, is "all of the above". But that is not possible. It never is. The leader must prioritise his preferences before he can judge the person responsible for carrying them out.

The writer is Resident Editor DAWN, Islamabad. The article first published on April 30th, 2020.

Why ME needs an EU-like regional order

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib



The region is in a mess. It is difficult to get out of this quagmire as long as each party looks at conflict from a zero-sum perspective. Our situation resembles the Europe of previous eras. Shattered by sectarian wars and rivalry for influence, the old continent was only able to prosper and achieve true peace when it realized that cooperation is better than competition

THE UAE and Turkey last week exchanged accusations regarding Libya, with each party claiming that the other is a hostile, destabilizing force in the region. Unfortunately, the region is bleeding from conflicts due to competition between different partners, while Israel tries to play on the differences to find allies, and radical movements like Daesh take advantage of the chaos created by conflicts to thrive.

The region is in a mess. It is difficult to get out of this quagmire as long as each party looks at conflict from a zero-sum perspective. Our situation resembles the Europe of previous eras. Shattered by sectarian wars and rivalry for influence, the old continent was only able to prosper and achieve true peace when it realized that cooperation is better than competition. This is when the concept of the EU was born. The Middle East needs a similar regional order to overcome its differences and to start constructive interstate relations.

If we take a close look at the Middle East, though we like to blame our calamities on Western imperialism or on the US, really the threats any country faces come from within the region – from a neighbor, whether distant or close. They do not come from across the Atlantic or the Pacific. In this respect, we should ask ourselves, if the money we have spent in the last 50 years on conflicts and weapons had been spent on development, where would we be standing now?

As said before, there is a similarity between our plight and the past of Europe. Though history does not repeat itself, human nature has some patterns that are likely to cross cultures and times. If we ask ourselves: What led to the Thirty Years' War? What led to the First World War and the Second World War? The answer is greed and fear: Wanting to have more power and more influence, and being afraid of annihilation by the other. Ideologies that led to bloody conflicts

were built on those two destructive human feelings. Our current conflicts are governed by the same tendencies. To overcome them we need an overarching order, a regime, a system that transcends interstate differences and sets the rules of engagement. When I look at the region today, I think of the Thirty Years' War of 1618-48 that destroyed Europe and ended with the Peace of Westphalia treaties. The different parties were compelled to enter into an agreement when their coffers emptied and they had no more young men to send into battle. Unfortunately, we are far from that stage. We still have money to pour into conflict and we still have fighters. Unless we have the maturity and the will to cooperate, these conflicts can drag on for another 10 years, if not more. Today, there is some speculation that, with Brexit, the refugee influx and the coronavirus crisis, the EU project is nearing its end.

However, if we pay attention to French President Emmanuel Macron's interview with the Financial Times last month, he emphasizes that only through cooperation can Europe emerge from the current pandemic and overcome its repercussions. He called it a "moment of truth" for the bloc. The Middle East's leaders should follow the logic of the moment of truth. No power is strong enough to totally defeat the others and spread its influence all over the region; hence we need to cooperate. There is no other way.

The starting point is to create a congress where Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia, the anchor powers in the region, can meet and streamline their differences. Instead of exchanging accusations, each of these three regional powers should put on the table the perceived threats it is facing from the others. Once these differences are streamlined and an initial agreement is reached, other countries in the region will join. The order should organize economic as well political relations among members.

Like the EU, it should have a parliament for political representation of the different member states and a commission that has more of a technical, sectoral function. All countries will be joined by a common market that can unleash huge economic potential for the region.

Unless we have the maturity and the will to cooperate, these conflicts can drag on for another 10 years, if not more.

Once relations among the different states are streamlined and no country represents a threat to its neighbors, then we can focus on growth, prosperity, human and civil rights, and quality of life, instead of being obsessed with security the way we are today.

Such a structure can offer the necessary pressure, incentives and guarantees for Israel to abide by the two-state solution. It would need to join the order in order to find friends in the region. And, by joining the order, Israel would have the necessary guarantee that it would not be attacked by any neighbor. Therefore, Israeli politicians like Benjamin Netanyahu, who have built their narrative on fear and hate, will become a thing of the past. Also, access to a huge market would provide the incentive for Israel to make the necessary concessions for the Palestinians.

This is a gargantuan task but it is worth initiating. We need to remember that the Westphalia treaties were not drafted overnight, but rather took almost 10 years of negotiations. The EU took even longer to materialize in the structure we know today. However, an initiative needs to be launched to start the process.

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Briefs

IGP wants Islamabad crime free

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Amir Zulfiqar has assigned task to all police officials to make capital "crime free" city and ensure safety to the lives of people through high vigilance. Chairing a meeting at Central Police Office (CPO) here on Wednesday, he directed for effective policing measures in the city and complete investigation of all pending cases including of dacoities. The meeting was attended among others by DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed, AIG (Operations) Kamran Adil, Zonal SPs and Additional SP. The IGP directed SPs to visit the crime scene themselves and conduct investigation of high-profile criminal cases under their own supervision by remaining in contact with complainants or victims.

Briefing held for Tiger Force

DNA

ATTOCK: A briefing session regarding the responsibilities of the volunteers of Prime Minister's Corona Relief Tiger Force activities was held on Wednesday at District Council Stadium. Incharge District Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) Dr. Mian Muhammad Ashfaq welcomed all the Tigers Force members and briefed them about the importance of First aid and the volunteers about their initial responsibilities, duties in wake of the spread of COVID-19. Assistant Commissioner Jannat Hussain, Assistant Deputy Commissioner finance Zagum Abbas and others officers attended the session. Incharge District Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) Dr. Main Muhammad Ashfaq while briefing the volunteers said the biggest challenge faced by the whole country today is to protect people from the spread of Corona Virus, educating citizens to stay at home following precautionary measures including social distancing and making it a permanent feature of their daily routine life.

Traders protest against lockdown

DNA

ATTOCK: Traders of Bazaar took out protest against the lockdown the government has imposed to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease (Covid-19). The protestors demanded immediate lifting of lockdown in the Pindi Gheb area as more than a month long lockdown has impoverished them. Traders Association representative Imran while addressing the protestors said that they had no other alternative left but to reopen their business as government has not paid them single rupee in relief.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev: the flood has proved a bitter lesson for us

DNA

TASHKENT: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev expounded once more on the efforts in progress in our country to combat the coronavirus infection as well as on the disasters in Bukhara and Syrdarya regions. The head of state noted in particular: What we all observe today is how humanity is struggling with both the coronavirus and equally the resulting economic crisis. A growing number of countries are gradually softening lockdown measures to overcome the difficult situation. Thanks to the Almighty, the epidemiological situation in Uzbekistan has currently been stabilizing. With each passing day, there are more recovering patients that those sick. So are people leaving the quarantine regime than those getting shut down. As a result, out of 2,204 patients infected with coronavirus, 1,454 or 66 percent of patients have fully recovered.

83 percent of quarantined people have already returned home. Positive dynamics are evident. All necessary measures are being taken to treat 740 patients remaining in hospitals, restore their health and return them to their families. All this has been barely easy. To date, we have streamlined 2 trillion 250 billion soums from the Anti-Crisis Fund and \$ 500 million from funds of international financial institutions.

Today, no one in the world knows for sure how long this pandemic will last. Therefore, no matter how difficult it may be, we must learn to work and live in a pandemic, and in accordance with all its requirements.

Now, taking advantage of the fact that the epidemiological situation has changed for the better, we must gradually weaken the lockdown regime in our economy. These restrictions have a huge negative impact on economic development and the life of the population. In this respect, we have taken the first steps to soften the quaran-



tine requirements in order to create convenience for our people, especially farmers and entrepreneurs. This year, the entire human race, including us, are tested for strength. Over the past week alone, our people have faced a series of unexpected trials. You are well aware of the severe natural disaster that occurred on the night of April 27-28 in the Bukhara region, especially in Alat and Karakul districts. It impaired more than 38,000 homes, as well as 847 social

facilities and crops throughout the region. Serious damage was caused to agriculture, manufacturing sector, services and infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the trials did not end there. As you know, due to the emergency at the Sardoba reservoir in the Syrdarya region, about 90 thousand people from 24 mahallas of the Sardoba, Akaltyn and Mirzaabad districts were immediately evacuated to safe areas. All of them are provided with basic necessities, food, clothing and other products. The government commission is working to remove the consequences and investigate the causes of the flood.

Until all issues related to the restoration and repair of damaged housing, the return of people to their homes, assistance to them in establishing their lives, restoring infrastructure, protecting public health are resolved, all executives assigned to Syrdarya shall continue working in emergency mode.

The life of people in these areas should not only be restored to its previous state,

but also improved. I think we are obliged to build them new housing, social facilities, create new jobs.

To date, large-scale works have been undertaken in a number of mahallas to clear and do up. As a result, more than 53 thousand people have returned to their homes or moved to those of close relatives. I repeat: our state and society will not leave anyone unattended in the face of such unexpected disasters.

The Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, as well as the National Guard played an important role in saving lives and evacuating people. Today they are widely occupied with emergency recovery works.

Unfortunately, according to available data, 4 people died as a result of the natural disaster, 1 went missing. In particular, two officers of the National Guard were carried away by a strong stream of water during the warning and rescue operations. They sacrificed their lives and saved the lives of hundreds of people.



ISLAMABAD: DG ISI Lt. General Faiz Hameed in a meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan. - DNA

Trump urges US to reopen

LONDON: President Donald Trump on Tuesday made his first major foray out of the White House since the coronavirus lockdown began, pushing for the US economy to reopen as Britain became the country with the second most deaths. The growing US death toll is already more than 70,000 - by far the highest globally - while Britain's rose to 32,000, putting it above Italy in the grim ranking of national fatalities.

Elsewhere in Europe, hard-hit Italy, Spain and France have reported a levelling off of figures, offering hope that life could slowly start returning to normal. With experts warning of a severe global recession, many governments have been easing stay-at-home measures in a bid to revive badly hammered economies. Financial markets hinted at some light at the end

of the tunnel, with stocks and oil prices rallying Tuesday.

"We can't keep our country closed for the next five years," Trump said on a trip to a mask-making factory in Arizona, conceding that some people would be "badly affected." He urged US states to ease restrictions as he attempts to fire up the world's biggest economy before the November presidential election, when the high death toll and millions of lost jobs could cost him dearly. The US registered 2,333 more deaths over the 24-hours to Tuesday evening, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, with some scientific models suggesting the figure will rise to 3,000 a day by June. Countries are balancing the need to revive stalled economies against the risk of a new wave of deadly infections.

PM stresses media's key role

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday stressing media's "key role in highlighting the Islamic history and culture" said delivering a message of humanity and care was need of the hour. In a meeting with Chairman Standing Committee on Information Broadcasting and Heritage Senator Faisal Javed Khan, the prime minister said Islamic teachings were based on principles of helping out the people in need and distress. The meeting discussed co-operation among Muslim countries on promotion in the fields of culture, heritage and fine arts. Imran Khan said Pakistani nationals, from anywhere in the world, always supported the people in their homeland facing problems and challenges.

Finance Ministry, SBP steps for SMEs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Taking cognizance of the SMEs finding difficulties in arranging adequate collateral and banks' risk averseness in taking exposures for such lending under the SBPs Refinance Scheme to Support Employment and Prevent Layoff of Workers, Ministry of Finance has stepped forward to shoulder risk sharing with banks. Accordingly, the Federal Government has allocated Rs30 billion under a credit risk sharing facility for the banks spread over four years to share the burden of losses due to any bad loans in future. Under this risk sharing arrangement, Federal Government will bear 40% first loss on principal portion of disbursed loan portfolio of the banks. This facility will incentivize banks to extend loans to collateral deficient SMEs

and small corporates with sales turnover of upto Rs2 billion to avail financing under SBP refinance scheme. Under the SBP's Refinance Scheme to Support Employment and Prevent Layoff of Workers due to the impact of COVID-19, businesses that commit to not lay off workers in the next three months can avail credit through banks for the three months of wages and salaries expenses at a concessional mark up rate.

Egypt reopens slowly

CAIRO: Egypt's economy had just started to recover after years of political turmoil and militant attacks when the coronavirus crisis hit, impacting especially its vital tourism sector. Now President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government has loosened a strict curfew for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in an effort to kickstart North Africa's largest economy. Having shuttered shops and cafes in late March and forced millions of civil servants to stay home, it is slowly reversing some of these measures, bringing back many state workers and extending the trading hours of shops and malls. The blessing for the emerging economy of more than 100 million people, experts say, is that activity has kept ticking over in agriculture and construction, and especially in the vast informal sector. - APP

Virus cases in Russia on rise

MOSCOW: Russia recorded more than 10,000 new coronavirus cases for the fourth day in a row on Wednesday, surpassing Germany to become the country with the sixth-highest number of confirmed infections. Russia has emerged as a

new hotspot for the virus and in recent days has been recording the highest number of new infections in Europe. Health officials on Wednesday reported 10,559 new cases over the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of infections to 165,929,

with 1,537 deaths. The number of infections in Russia has been rising by more than 10,000 a day since Sunday, in contrast to countries in western Europe who are taking steps to ease lockdown measures after their rates of new cases and deaths dropped. - APP

Govt allocates Rs 30 bln for banks

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday allocated Rs30 billion under a credit risk sharing facility for the banks, spread over four years, to share the burden of losses due to any bad loans in future. The risk-sharing mechanism has been introduced by the Finance Ministry and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to support bank lending to SMEs and small businesses to avail SBP's Refinance Facility to Support Employment. Taking cognizance of the SMEs finding dif-

iculties in arranging adequate collateral and banks' risk averseness in taking exposures for such lending under the SBPs Refinance Scheme to Support Employment and Prevent Layoff of Workers, Ministry of Finance has stepped forward to shoulder risk sharing with banks, said a press statement issued by the ministry. Under this risk sharing arrangement, the federal government would bear 40% first loss on principal portion of disbursed loan portfolio of the banks. - APP

Pak students in Wuhan celebrate easing of lockdown

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani students in Wuhan studying in Central China Normal University celebrated easing of lockdown restrictions by having a dinner together. The epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak - the Chinese city of Wuhan in Hubei province - began easing lockdown restrictions towards the end of March. According to Gwadar Pro, the celebration, however, adhered to strict social distancing measures and other preventive steps. "Even while celebrating, we were wary enough to observe precautionary measures," a student said. The entire ordeal - from the virus emerging to restrictions on movement - was a traumatic ex-

perience for the students living in Wuhan, which caused some, according to Nadeem Baloch, a MPhil student to become victims of depression. "We were prohibited from visiting each other's rooms and not allowed to cook. The university's administration used to cater to our needs by delivering items to our doorstep, urging us to refrain from venturing outside." At the very beginning of the outbreak in Wuhan, the gravity of the situation coupled with fear and anxiety had led many to urge the government to repatriate the stranded students. But with the passage of time and a better understanding of the situation, that argument has also died down. "Since the lockdown has lifted, talks of evacuation have taken a

back seat," said Baloch. "We still do not have permission to travel outside of campus grounds, but that is hardly an inconvenience; almost all things are easily available within the varsity's premises." Despite being confined to their universities, students are overjoyed at finally being able to interact with one another. "Compared to the last few months, we can at least sit down together for one-and-a-half-hour while having our meals," said Ali Nagri, a PhD student of international relations studying at Wuhan University. We gather together for sehri and iftar and also offer our prayers together, he said, adding that the Middle Eastern store within campus grounds provides them access to halal food options. According to Nagri, Pakistani students

are now thankful for not being evacuated. "Ever since we heard that there were zero new cases in Wuhan - which was once the epicentre of the outbreak - students have heaved a sigh of relief. "They are thankful they did not return to Pakistan where the situation is worsening day by day," he said. "The Chinese government has taken care of Pakistani students as if they are our own," said Peng Zhengwu, the deputy consul general at the Chinese Consulate, Lahore. "They are being provided all facilities at their doorsteps." He said that life in Wuhan was slowly creeping towards business as usual step by step. "We are in close contact with the Pakistani students and hope they are able to complete their studies," he said. On April 26, Wuhan achieved a milestone in its months-long

struggle against the coronavirus as officials reported that the city no longer had any Covid-19 patients in hospitals. According to the South China Morning Post, the announcement came a day after the city discharged its last critical patient. In the downtown city area, streets are slowly becoming alive with the buzz and chatter of citizens slowly slipping back into their pre-pandemic routines. Hamza Bajwa, a civil engineering student at Wuhan University, explained that the varsity administration had given students a digital pass to move freely within campus grounds. "University officials can scan the pass, dubbed the 'Green Code', to get an update about students leaving and entering hostels and check their health," he said. "Initially, it was tough. We were

completely dependent on the university to fulfil all of our needs, including arranging our meals and water. But now we are able to order food online." According to Bajwa, life post-lockdown has marked a new beginning for Pakistani students living in Wuhan who have emerged on the other side of what he called "the darkest night". Approximately 500 students from Pakistan are currently enrolled in different universities across the city. Since the outbreak began, students have received financial assistance from the government which has been directly transferred to their bank accounts. "The nightmare is almost over. Students are free to play sports and exercise within the campus. Our student life is slowly inching its way back to normal.