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Pakistan & China underlined that Covid-19 is a common challenge for humanity and all countries should unite to overcome this challenge

H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan with H.E. Xi Jinping, President of People's Republic of China



Countries around the world have taken drastic measures, including border closures, in an attempt to curb **COVID-19**

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Pakistan strongly condemns and rejects the latest Indian action aimed at illegally changing the demographic structure of the Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJ&K). The so-called "Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization

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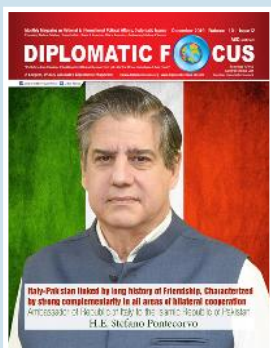
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Mian Fazal Elahi

Don't be fooled. The coronavirus pandemic is deadly serious, and it's everyone's problem. It's hard to believe, but just in days, normal life around the globe has ground to a halt. Businesses deemed nonessential by the government are closed or closing. Classrooms sit empty. Streets are eerily quiet and freeways unimaginably clear. Most of the state's millions of residents are now under orders to remain in their homes for the coming weeks at least in an extraordinary attempt to slow the relentless march of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The coronavirus is a problem for everyone. Not just for people over 65 (who, so far, have made up the majority of deaths worldwide). And not just for people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems who are at higher risk for serious illness. In fact, all adults are at some risk. (Happily, young children continue to be spared the worst of the infection.) As it turns out, large number of the people hospitalized with coronavirus infections in Europe and U.S. are non-boomers between the ages of 20 and 54, and since most of them are still sick, we can't say for sure how they will fare in the long term.

Social distancing and home isolation are the best tools we have at the moment to slow or even stop transmission, while we continue to search for vaccines, treatments and the resources to keep our healthcare system working. That's what we are learning from China's early experience managing the outbreak. The country quickly instituted strict quarantine rules for millions of people, and on Friday, Chinese officials reported for the second day in a row that they'd gone without any new cases of locally transmitted COVID-19.

The articles, columns, Opinions are published in Magazine in good faith. However, the contents of these writings may not necessarily match the views of the Editor/Publisher/Organization.



Important Announcement

It has been announced for the general information that Mr. Mian Assad Ullah has been appointed as Editor In Chief of the Monthly "Diplomatic Focus" for the UK/EU Edition. He is entitled to participate official /non-officials diplomatic engagements, events, national days, social evenings/gatherings, press conferences/interviews and can be contacted for all kinds of stuff including articles, supplements and advertisements etc). It is requested to all Diplomatic missions and government high officials of UK, please contact with Mr. Mian Assad Ullah on His mailing address, 4 Ipswich Road, SW17 9RH, London. Cell number:+44-7961005954/ 2087694850, Email: uk.diplomaticfocus@gmail.com, assadmian1@gmail.com

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23rd March Day Pledge

We wish our people to develop to the fullest spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political life in a way that we think the best and in consonance with our own ideals and according to the genius of our people." Muhammad Ali Jinnah

By Huma Kashif

The nation of Pakistan is celebrating another momentous "Pakistan Resolution Day" which possesses an enormous commemoration in the historic struggle for acquiring Pakistan. The particular resolution is also renowned as "Lahore Resolution" made the Muslims of India to decide their own destiny and journey for the attainment of a separate entity to establish a Muslim-State. That was the day when the Muslims of the sub-continent rejuvenated their political struggle for self-determination and acquisition of socio-political, economic, religious, and cultural freedom. On this particular day, the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims of India was converted clearly into the demand of Pakistan. Although Presently, 23rd March day is losing its significance among our young generation. Most of our youth consider this day as just a public holiday, without realizing its true essence and spirit. But due to the emerging social chaos, and the political upheaval it is the need of the time that we should once again revitalize the spirit, struggle, and sufferings behind the freedom struggle.

Providing a short background, the British Raj,

socio-political injustice, economic downfall, religious restrains, linguistic clash, cultural subjugation led to the Pakistan Resolution and ultimately to the creation of Pakistan. Furthermore, the provincial autonomy achieved in 1937, and the discriminatory congress rule further strengthened the Muslims' notion of a separate sovereign state. The 23rd March 1940 resolution was moved under the strong leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah also called the father of the Nation, who stimulated the Muslims to see the dream of freedom and encouraged them to turn this dream into reality. The Lahore Resolution stirred by Maulvi Fazlul Haq never contained the name Pakistan but it is considered as a landmark in the Muslim struggle for a separate homeland where they could live their life according to the teachings of Islam.

Pakistan is a precious gift that has given to us by Allah Almighty, it is the time to do some constructive efforts for our beloved country. Pakistan's armed forces are fully equipped and have the capacity to defend the territorial integrity and state sovereignty. Pakistan Navy is a strongly capable force having the potential to protect the sea borders and national maritime interests of Pakistan. On the same scale, the

Pakistan air force is vigorously securing the air space with modern stable aircraft. Pakistan army is ranked consistently among the top 10 armies in the world, it is definitely a major component of the national power of Pakistan.

As Youth has always been a harbinger to a welcome change and given a proper direction, our youth can easily channelize the passion for their country. Ideally, 23rd March is the sort of day that should motivate people to seriously contemplate and reflect over our lives in a national sense rather than with the myopia of personal and individual evolution. Keeping in mind the countless sacrifices and sufferings of the men, women, children, old and young, certainly, it is not just another national day but it is the day to take a resolution at individual level to contribute positively in democratic structuring of Pakistan, give our share as a responsible citizen, respect every ones' liberty with tolerance and harmony, and follow the rules and regulations. Ideally, it is the sort of day that should motivate people to seriously anticipate and reflect on our lives in a national sense.

The author can be reached at humakashif1000@gmail.com



Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of China

By Mian Fazal Elahi

At the invitation of H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, visited China from 16-17 March 2020. The President was accompanied by the Foreign Minister, Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives, and senior officials. During the visit, President Dr. Arif Alvi met with President Xi Jinping. Premier Li Keqiang and Chairman National People's Congress, Li Zhanshu, also met President Dr. Arif Alvi.

Given the depth and breadth of Pakistan-China ties and the finest traditions of both countries to always stand by each other particularly in challenging times, President Dr. Arif Alvi's first visit to Beijing was a singular expression of Pakistan's solidarity with its "iron brother." The visit was undertaken at a time while China was engaged in a massive national struggle to contain the Covid-19.

President Dr. Alvi praised the relentless efforts undertaken by China for containing and controlling the virus, and was confident that the Chinese people under the leadership of President Xi Jinping will emerge stronger and

victorious in the aftermath of Covid-19.

President Dr. Arif Alvi also appreciated China's keen resolve to look after Pakistan's nationals during this difficult time. The Chinese leadership had assured that it was taking the best possible measures to ensure the safety, health and well-being of Pakistani nationals, including the students.

President Xi thanked President Alvi for visiting China at a critical time and expressed profound gratitude for Pakistan's gesture of support and

solidarity.

The Chinese leadership stressed that since the outbreak, the Chinese Communist Party and government have given top priority to people's life and health. On the basis of nation-wide mobilization, China adopted the most comprehensive, rigorous and thorough measures in little time to contain the virus. Chinese side emphasized that China has made major progress in prevention and control of the virus and will win "People's War" against Covid-19.





Both China and Pakistan underlined that Covid-19 is a common challenge for humanity and all countries should unite and cooperate to overcome this challenge together. President Alvi spoke highly of China's major progress in battling the epidemic, and acknowledged that China's efforts have won time and set a model for the rest of the world to combat the epidemic, and have made contribution to safeguarding global public health security.

Leaders of the two countries took the opportunity to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The exchange was marked by the exceptional warmth, convergence of views, and strategic trust that characterize the China-Pakistan "All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership."

Stressing that the close and strategic ties, and deep-rooted friendship between Pakistan and China served the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples, and contributed to peace, stability and development in the region, the two sides underscored that the enduring partnership between Pakistan and China remains unaffected by the vicissitudes of the regional and international developments and continues to move from strength to strength. The two sides reaffirmed their resolve to further strengthen China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership aimed at building a Community of Shared Future in the New Era.

Both sides reaffirmed their support on issues concerning each other's core national interests. The Chinese side reiterated solidarity with Pakistan in safeguarding its territorial sovereignty, independence and security. The Pakistan side reaffirmed its commitment to the One-China Policy and underscored that affairs related to Hong Kong and Taiwan were China's internal affairs. The Pakistan side underlined that due to the developmental measures undertaken by Government of China, Xinjiang was on the path to overall social stability and economic development.

Pakistan underscored that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a signature

project of Belt and Road Initiative(BRI), was transformational. A CPEC Authority was established to oversee the expeditious implementation of CPEC projects. Both sides maintained that the new phase of high-quality development of CPEC will promote industrialization and socio-economic development in Pakistan. Both sides hoped that the 10th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting of CPEC, to be held soon, will further contribute to making CPEC a High-Quality Demonstration Project of BRI. Both sides stressed that the economic and social impact of CPEC on the region will be substantial and beneficial and hoped that the international community will support such efforts that underpin economic development.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. China recognized measures taken by Pakistan to combat terrorism financing and appreciated the resolve with which Pakistan implemented the Action Plan of FATF.

Both sides expressed satisfaction over the close cooperation at multilateral fora and resolved to deepen strategic coordination, consultation and communication. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and support for multilateralism and win-win cooperation.

Both sides exchanged views on the situation in Jammu & Kashmir. The Pakistan side briefed the Chinese side on the latest developments, including its concerns, position, and current urgent issues. The Chinese side underscored that it was paying close attention to the current



situation and reiterated that the Kashmir issue was a dispute left from history, and should be properly and peacefully resolved based on the UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements. China opposes any unilateral actions that complicate the situation.

Both Pakistan and China welcomed the signing of the Peace Agreement between the U.S. and Taliban and hoped that the intra-Afghan negotiations would be the next logical step. The two sides agreed that all Afghan parties must seize this historic opportunity and work together constructively to secure durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. The two sides further emphasized the need for the international community to help establish peace as well as extend support for post-conflict reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan. Pakistan underscored the need to assist the Afghan government in creating an enabling environment and instituting "pull" factors to enable the Afghan refugees to return to their homeland with dignity and honour. Both sides maintained that they will continue to support a peaceful, stable, united, sovereign, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, at peace with its neighbors.

During the visit, President Dr. Arif Alvi and President Xi Jinping witnessed signing of various Agreements/MoUs. President Dr. Arif Alvi thanked the leadership and people of China for their gracious hospitality and invited the Chinese leadership to visit Pakistan at a mutually convenient time. Both sides agreed to maintain high-level exchanges and mutual contacts.





AMBASSADOR OF EGYPT PAID A FAREWELL CALL ON PRESIDENT DR. ARIF ALVI

By Mian Fazal Elahi

The outgoing Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan, Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Fadel Yacoub, paid a farewell call on the President of Pakistan. While talking to the Ambassador, the President said that Pakistan attached great significance to its ties with Egypt and wanted to further expand the relations in the area of trade, culture and defence. He emphasized the need for frequent interactions at the high-level between the two sides. The President commended the government of Egypt for taking cognizance of the dire human rights violation in Indian Occupied Kashmir. He also expressed satisfaction over the current level of cooperation as both countries were working closely at various international fora like UN, OIC and D-8. The President congratulated the outgoing ambassador on successful completion of his assignment in Pakistan. He appreciated his efforts for improving the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. The outgoing Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Fadel Yacoub, also paid a farewell call on Ministry for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi.





Ambassador of Qatar H.E. Saqr Bin Mubarak M.S. Al-Mansouri paid a farewell call on President Dr. Arif Alvi

By Zainab Ashraf

The outgoing Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan, Saqr Bin Mubarak M.S. Al-Mansouri, paid a farewell call on the President Dr. Arif Alvi. While talking to the Ambassador, the President said that Pakistan was committed to transform the brotherly bilateral relations into a robust political and economic partnership. He stated that bilateral trade had registered marked improvement following the direct linkage between Karachi and Hamad Ports and opening up of Qatari food market for Pakistan. Highlighting the investment friendly regime in Pakistan, he emphasized that Qatar could take advantage of emerging investment opportunities in Pakistan, especially in the context of CPEC. The President appreciated the important role of Qatar in hosting Afghan peace talks and commended its valuable support to the peace agreement. He expressed the hope that all parties to the agreement would abide by its provisions and would translate the dream of peace in Afghanistan into a reality. He also briefed the outgoing ambassador on the human rights

violations in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and urged international community, including OIC, to play its role in peaceful resolution of Kashmir Dispute as well as protection of minorities in India. The President

congratulated the outgoing ambassador on successful completion of his assignment in Pakistan. He appreciated his efforts for improving the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.



Ambassador designates of Pakistan to Germany and Poland call on President Dr. Arif Alvi



By Mian Fazal Elahi

Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Germany, Dr. Muhammad Faisal and Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Poland, Malik Muhammad Farooq, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi separately here



at Aiwan-e-Sadr. During the meetings, the President directed the ambassador-designates to work for the enhancement of commercial relations with special focus on bilateral trade with the respective countries. He said that Pakistan had a great potential in the area of tourism and asked the ambassador-designates to make their efforts for promoting the tourism sector. He further stated that Pakistan offered attractive opportunities for investment in different areas, which must be highlighted to attract European investors. The President also asked the ambassador-designates to take special care of Pakistani Diaspora and address the issues being faced by them.



Ambassador designate of Pakistan to Denmark, Mr. AHmedi Farooq called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.

Ambassador designates of Pakistan to Denmark call on President Dr. Arif Alvi

By Mian Fazal Elahi

Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Denmark, Dr. Ahmad Farooq called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr. During the meetings, the President directed the ambassador-designates to work

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opportunities for investment in different areas, which must be highlighted to attract European investors. The President also asked the ambassador-designates to take special care of Pakistani Diaspora and address the issues being faced by them.

Ambassador designate of Pakistan to Romania and Jordan Calls on the President Dr. Arif Alvi



By Mian Fazal Elahi

Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Romania, Dr. Zafar Iqbal and Ambassador designate of Pakistan to Jordan, Maj Gen (R) Umar Farooq Burqi called on President of Pakistan. The President directed the Ambassador-designate to different countries to make efforts to further enhance and expand bilateral cooperation in various areas of mutual interests. He asked Dr. Zafar Iqbal and Maj Gen (R) Umar Farooq Burqi to work for the promotion of trade relations, particularly establishing linkages between the Chambers of Commerce of the two countries. The President also directed him to focus on attracting foreign investment as Pakistan offers enormous opportunities in this regard.





Pakistan strongly condemns Indian Government's continued attempts to illegally change the demographic structure of IOJ&K

By Staff Reporter

Pakistan strongly condemns and rejects the latest Indian action aimed at illegally changing the demographic structure of the Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJ&K). The so-called "Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Order 2020" is another illegal step by India to settle non-Kashmiris in IOJ&K by changing the domicile laws. This is a clear violation of international law, including the 4th Geneva Convention.

This Indian action, a continuation of India's illegal and unilateral steps since 5 August 2019, also constitutes a violation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions, bilateral agreements between India and Pakistan, and humanitarian norms.

The Kashmiris in IOJ&K have outrightly rejected the new law as "unacceptable." Indeed, the Kashmiris will never accept such blatant usurpation of their fundamental rights and attempts to change their demography and distinct identity.

The latest Indian action, at this moment of global health crisis, is particularly reprehensible as it seeks to take advantage of the international community's focus on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and further advance BJP's sinister, "Hindutva" agenda.

Pakistan has been consistently sensitizing the international community about the BJP Government's designs for demographic change in IOJ&K to perpetuate India's illegal occupation of the disputed territory, manifestly against the

wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

The United Nations and the international community must take immediate cognizance of this Indian action, prevent India from changing the demography of the occupied territory, and hold India accountable for its persistent violations of international law.

On its part, Pakistan will continue to highlight India's state terrorism in IOJ&K, and its denial of the fundamental freedoms and inalienable right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. No matter what its tactics, India will never be able to break the will of the Kashmiri people. Nor will India succeed in its nefarious designs to subjugate the Kashmiris against their wishes.



Pakistan PM urges US to halt sanctions on coronavirus-hit Iran

By Mian Fazal Elahi, Monitoring Desk

Prime Minister Imran Khan called on the international community to remove sanctions on Iran, enabling the neighbouring country to better deal with the novel coronavirus crisis.

"I would stress and insist the international community to lift the sanctions on Iran. It is very unjust they are dealing with such a large outbreak on one side, and on the other they are facing international sanctions," said Mr Khan at a press briefing according to AFP.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani had last week written letters to his counterparts across the world including Prime Minister Khan informing them how his country's fight against Covid-19 was being impaired by the US sanctions. He had urged other countries to stop observing the American sanctions against his country. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, too, wrote to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres demanding that the US curbs be removed.

Describing the situation in Iran as "dire", Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi also called for removal of US sanctions to help Tehran fight the pandemic and save lives. "The entire global community is fighting an unprecedented pandemic. We must, as leaders at time of such great challenge & difficulty, show utmost compassion. Sanctions must be lifted against

Iran, in this moment of peril so that it can use its resources to save precious human lives," Mr Qureshi tweeted.

iting Iranian statistics, according to which one person in Iran dies from Covid-19 every 10 minutes and 50 others get infected with virus every hour, he said the situation was "dire". Till Friday, 1,433 people in Iran had lost their lives because of Covid-19 pandemic while 19,644 people had been infected by the virus according to the Iranian health ministry.

Iran's embassy in Islamabad, meanwhile, in a statement said US sanctions against Iran were obstructing the Iranian efforts to contain the disease and warned that this could imperil the health of citizens of other countries in the region.

"These sanctions are not only against humanitarian norms of international law and judgments of the International Court of Justice, rather depriving of Iran from access to medicine, medical equipment and violates the rights of access to health care and right of life for the people of Iran. In view of its contagious character and quick outbreak of the virus, the sanctions will endanger health security of all the regional countries and the world," the embassy warned.

The embassy said that Iran despite being among top 10 countries of the world leading

in specialized health care was facing shortage of special protective dresses and equipment, which left medical personnel in Iran more vulnerable while confronting this disease and several of them fell victim to it.

Tehran argues that US sanctions deprive Iran of access to its financial resources in the foreign countries and utilization of exports earnings, which in turn impairs production and import of equipment, items and medicines, treatment of patients, transfer of technology and research all of which require huge financial resources.

However, US rejected the Iranian demand for lifting of curbs telling the Iranian leaders that the spread of the coronavirus would not save it from the sanctions that are choking off its oil revenues and isolating its economy. "Our policy of maximum pressure on the regime continues," said Brian Hook, the US Special Representative for Iranian Affairs, according to Reuters.

The US on Wednesday imposed additional sanctions on Iran targeting nine entities based in South Africa, Hong Kong, and China as well as three Iranian individuals.

Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini also wrote a letter to Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif, urging him to help build pressure for lifting of sanctions.



H.E. Dr. Istvan Grafjodi Commercial Counsellor visits ICCI

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry exchanging views on bilateral trade with H.E. Dr. Istvan Grafjodi Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of

Hungary in Pakistan on his visit to ICCI. Increase the Trade export to European countries was the point of discussion during the meeting. Trade and Foreign Direct Investment play an important large role in the economic growth

of developing countries. Increased exports and foreign investment creates wealth which drives economic growth and hence creates jobs in an economy Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said.



Diplomatic Focus Thru Lens



Ambassador of China H.E. Yao Jig called on President of Dr Arif Alvi at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.



Ambassador of Pakistan OIC, Mr. Rizsan Saeed Sheikh called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.



HRH Prince Khalid Bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, Deputy Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, call on Prime Minister Imran Khan at Islamabad.



Federal Minister for Interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah met with the Ambassador of South Korea H.E. Mr. Kwak Sung Kyu at Minister of Interior, Islamabad



H.E. Mr. Movlamov Atajan, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan called on Federal Minister for Energy Omar Ayub at Ministry of Energy Islamabad.



Secretary of Commerce, Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Sukhera in a meeting with Ms. Margaus Mcdonalid Canadian Trade Commission in Islamabad.



Ambassador of Korea to Pakistan Mr. Kwak Sung Kyu called on Federal Minister for National Food Security & Resarch Makhdm Khusro Bakhtyar in Islamabad.



Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Syed Muhammad Ali Hssain called on Federal Minister for Railway Sheikh Rashid AHmed at Ministry of Railway, Islamabad.

Diplomatic Focus Thru Lens



Federal Minister for Interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah receiving Shield from the Ambassador of Palestine H.E. Mr. Ahmed Jawad A.A Rebbei at the Ministry of Interior Islamabad



Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Syed Muhammad Ali Hosseini called on Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi in Islamabad



Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan H.E Syed Mohammad Ali Hossein called on Federal Minister for Water and Resources Muhammad Faisal Vawda in Islamabad.



Ambassador of France H.E Marc Baretry called on Federal Minister for Defence, Perviz Khattak in Islamabad.



Foreign Secretary Mr. Sohail Mahmood in a meeting with UAE's H.E Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, Assistant Foreign Minister for Political Affairs in Islamabad.



Inaugural Session of the Pakistan UAE Bilateral Political Consultation held at Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UAE's delegation was headed by H.E Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar



Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Mr. Paulo Neves Pogino called on Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination Dr. Fehmida Mirza in Islamabad



Federal Minister for Provincial Cooperation Dr. Fehmida Mirza Presenting a shield to Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Mr. Pauloneves Pochino in Islamabad.



Afghanistan's peace process is in danger of unravelling

The COVID-19 crisis and the Ghani-Abdullah dispute could bring down the fragile peace in the country

By Sultan Barakat

Those of us who witnessed United States officials and Taliban representatives shake hands on February 29, 2020, were inspired by the political will for peace that we

witnessed. Yet many of us have also recognised the inevitable difficulties in implementing the agreement concluded in Doha. But what we could not have anticipated was the two crises which would simultaneously threaten to derail the entire Afghan peace process: the Afghan

presidential election dispute and the COVID-19 pandemic.

So far, Afghanistan has registered 170 cases of COVID-19 and four deaths. While these numbers are low compared with what is

reported from the worst-affected countries such as Italy, Spain, Iran, and the United States, given the limited testing capacity in Afghanistan, it is feared that the true scope of the outbreak is much bigger.

Afghanistan's health system is also underdeveloped and unable to cope with a large-scale pandemic. There are persistent problems with water, sanitation and hygiene and many Afghans live in communally shared, crowded spaces. This means that self-isolation, social distancing, and hygiene measures will be less effective.

Some may point out that Afghanistan's geography and the extreme isolation of some communities will likely slow down the spread of COVID-19. While that may help, there is an increasing flow of Afghan refugees departing Iran and returning to provinces across the country, which could accelerate the spread of the virus.

Since late February, almost 100,000 of the three million Afghans living in Iran have travelled home, with around 15,000 crossing on a daily basis in March, in spite of Afghan government pleas to Tehran to close the border. While the February 29 agreement between the US and the Taliban has likely encouraged some Afghan refugees to return, the large-scale movement is driven more by the spread of the coronavirus in Iran and the severe economic crisis, exacerbated by the US policy of maximum pressure.

Those Afghan refugees are returning to a country gridlocked by a political crisis, with President Ashraf Ghani and Dr Abdullah Abdullah stuck in a dispute over the results of the September 28 presidential election. Both leaders have held separate presidential inauguration ceremonies threatening to split the country.

Amid the crisis, on March 23, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a damning statement, expressing the US disappointment by the failure of the Afghan leadership to reach an agreement. Considering this "to poses a direct threat to US national interests", Pompeo announced a reduction of US spending in Afghanistan by \$1bn this year and \$1bn in 2021. This move is intended to put pressure on Ghani and Abdullah to put aside their differences and form a unity government.

Yet if this strategy proves ineffective, there is a real risk of a collapse of political order in Kabul, as the Afghan state is deeply dependent on foreign aid, which accounts for 40 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

The crisis could be compounded by an early withdrawal of US and NATO troops. Four NATO service members who recently arrived in Afghanistan have tested positive for coronavirus; and given fears of a major outbreak in the

Since late February, almost 100,000 of the three million Afghans living in Iran have travelled home, with around 15,000 crossing on a daily basis in March, in spite of Afghan government pleas to Tehran to close the border

country, Western allies may decide to pull their troops out ahead of the schedule set by the US-Taliban agreement. The rapid scaling down of the foreign military presence in Afghanistan could precipitate a major security vacuum and encourage the Taliban to break the agreement and escalate their military campaign again. It is also likely to enable even more attacks by the Islamic State in Khorasan. On March 25, its fighters laid an hours-long siege on a Sikh religious complex in Kabul, killing 25 people.

The coronavirus outbreak could also affect efforts to push forward intra-Afghan talks by foreign mediators. Face-to-face negotiations will likely cease as they bring risks to all those involved. Furthermore, while the intra-Afghan talks to be effective should be as inclusive as possible, consulting at all levels of Afghan society, if the peace process does indeed proceed then it will likely be confined to a very

narrow, top-down negotiation between an Afghan negotiating team and the Taliban.

There are, however, reasons for cautious optimism.

Intra-Afghan negotiations continue, albeit not in the form imagined just a few weeks ago. On March 22, Qatar and the US facilitated technical talks addressing prisoner releases between the Afghan government and the Taliban via Skype. This demonstrates that the coronavirus has not brought diplomacy to a complete halt. The seriousness and intensity with which Secretary Pompeo and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad have engaged with the Afghan political crisis and faltering peace process over the past weeks, conducting many face-to-face meetings at the start of a global lockdown, also shows that more traditional forms of diplomacy will continue out of necessity. It is also conceivable that the coronavirus could help establish further forms of cooperation between the Afghan government and the Taliban. For this to happen, the Taliban must first accept reality: the virus will spread to all of Afghanistan and will affect all Afghans, regardless of faith, political allegiance and ethnicity.

By working together with all parties to combat coronavirus, the Taliban could show the world that it can conduct itself as a responsible power-sharing partner in any post-settlement Afghanistan. The Taliban have made tentative steps in the right direction on this front: they have reconciled with the International Committee of the Red Cross and restored security guarantees for its personnel. It is high time to do the same in all areas they control and allow in emergency health responders. So far, the Taliban have been hedging their bets on US President Donald Trump's urgent need for a diplomatic victory in an election year. In the context of the current pandemic, the Taliban need to understand that if Trump is pushed too far, he could decide that money spent in Afghanistan is better spent at home and under emergency legislation withdraw all US forces. While the Taliban may initially perceive this to be a victory, it would be a pyrrhic one. A security vacuum will not pave the way for the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; it will only plunge the country into long and bloody conflict.

Rather than exploit the gridlock in Kabul to advance militarily, the Taliban should maintain their reduction in violence and assist in a united front against the Islamic State. The Taliban should heed the call of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire and ensure a level of stability in Afghanistan so the country has a better chance in combatting and containing the outbreak. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.

US and Taliban sign historic agreement



By Jennifer Hansler

After a week-long “reduction in violence,” the US and Taliban signed a historic agreement Saturday which sets into motion the potential of a full withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and could pave the way to ending America’s longest-fought war.

The agreement was signed in Doha, Qatar, by US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad -- the chief US negotiator in the talks with the Taliban -- and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar -- the Taliban’s chief negotiator. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo witnessed the signing.

The “Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan” outlines a series of commitments from the US and the Taliban related to troop levels, counterterrorism, and the intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at bringing about “a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.”

“This is a hopeful moment, but it’s only the beginning,” Pompeo said at a news conference in the Qatari capital. “There’s a great deal of hard work ahead on the diplomatic front.”

The Taliban “will start intra-Afghan negotiations with Afghan sides on March 10, 2020,” according to the text of the agreement.

close dialog

The agreement lays out a 14-month timetable for the withdrawal of “all military forces of the United States, its allies, and Coalition partners, including all non-diplomatic civilian personnel, private security contractors, trainers, advisors, and supporting services personnel.”

An initial drawdown to 8,600 troops would

occur within the first 135 days, according to the agreement. US officials have stressed that any downsizing of US troop presence would be “conditions based.”



Speaking at the signing ceremony in Doha, Pompeo said the US “will closely watch the Taliban’s compliance with their commitments, and calibrate the pace of our withdrawal to their actions.”

“This is how we will ensure that Afghanistan never again serves as a base for international terrorists,” Pompeo said.

President Donald Trump on Saturday told reporters at a White House news conference in Washington that he would be “meeting

personally with Taliban leaders in the not too distant future” following the signing of the agreement.

Taliban leaders could meet Trump in the coming days or weeks, the group’s spokesman told CNN. Muhammad Suhail Shaheen, also a member of the negotiation team, said the Taliban had accepted Trump’s invitation for talks in the US. He said Trump had set the agenda for the meeting and “of course this will be shared with us through proper channel and we will have own opinion about that. And then it will take place.”

CNN has reached out to the White House for comment.

“We’ll be very much hoping that they will be doing what they say they’re going to be doing” under the agreement, Trump said at the briefing.

“Everybody wanted this to happen,” Trump added.

Trump said he wanted congratulate those US officials involved in the agreement as well as his Afghanistan counterpart.

What the agreement says

The four-page agreement states that the Taliban will take steps “to prevent any group or individual, including al-Qa’ida, from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.” Those steps include commitments that the Taliban will instruct its members “not to cooperate with groups or individuals threatening the security of the United States and its allies” and that it “will prevent any group or individual in

Afghanistan from threatening the security of the United States and its allies, and will prevent them from recruiting, training, and fundraising and will not host them in accordance with the commitments in this agreement."

A senior administration official who briefed reporters last week acknowledged that "people are concerned about the historic relationship between the Taliban and al-Qai'da."

"We think this is a decisive and historic first step in terms of their public acknowledgment that they are breaking ties with al Qaeda. That's going to be a work in progress," they said.

The agreement also calls for the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 "prisoners of the other side" on the first day of intra-Afghan negotiations.

"The relevant sides have the goal of releasing all the remaining prisoners over the course of the subsequent three months. The United States commits to completing this goal," the text states.

In a news conference following the signing, Pompeo said that, "if the Taliban do not uphold their commitments, Trump and his team will not hesitate to do what we must do to protect American lives."

While Pompeo was in Doha, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper was in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Saturday for a joint declaration ceremony with Afghan and NATO officials, including Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Esper said that there is "great hope" about Afghanistan's future.

"Afghanistan deserves a chance to enjoy the security that comes from peace and stability, this will only happen if Afghans join together to embrace this opportunity," Esper said.

The signing of the US-Taliban agreement sees the realization of a campaign promise for Trump, who has sought to diminish US involvement in wars overseas.

"If the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan live up to these commitments, we will have a powerful path forward to end the war in Afghanistan and bring our troops home," Trump said in a statement Friday. "These commitments represent an important step to a lasting peace in a new Afghanistan, free from Al Qaeda, ISIS, and any other terrorist group that would seek to bring us harm."

The US has been at war in Afghanistan since 2001. Saturday's agreement in Doha came after more than a year of on and off negotiations with the militant group. The two sides had reached "an agreement in principle" in early September 2019, Khalilzad said at the time. Shortly thereafter, Trump called off the talks and said he canceled a secret Camp David



summit with the militant group after they took credit for a deadly attack in Kabul that killed a US service member.

In a surprise visit to Afghanistan in November, Trump announced that the talks had restarted. The US President made the announcement shortly after the Taliban released an American and Australian professor in exchange for the release of three Taliban prisoners by the Afghan government. The State Department announced in early December that Khalilzad had rejoined talks with the Taliban in the Qatari capital.

Members of Congress and regional experts had raised concerns about the deal prior to the signing. On Wednesday, Rep. Liz Cheney led a group of 21 other Republican lawmakers in expressing "serious concerns" about the anticipated agreement.

In a letter to Pompeo and Esper, they called for the full publication of the deal and wrote that they are "are seeking assurances that you will not place the security of the American people into the hands of the Taliban, and undermine our ally, the current government of Afghanistan."

A senior administration official said last week that "there are parts of this agreement that are not going to be public but those parts don't contain any additional commitments by the United States whatsoever," but rather they will contain "some confidential procedures for implementation and verification of the agreement itself."

Following its signing, Sen. Lindsey Graham, expressed mild support as well as some skepticism about the agreement.

"I am very suspect of the Taliban ever accepting the Afghan constitution and honoring the rights of religious minorities and women," the South Carolina Republican and staunch Trump ally, said. "Time will tell if reconciliation in Afghanistan can be accomplished with honor and security, but after more than 18 years of

war, it is time to try."

The text of the agreement does not contain any specific language regarding the protection of women or civil society.

In his remarks in Doha Saturday, Pompeo called on the Taliban to "embrace the historic progress obtained for women and girls, and build on it for the benefit of all Afghans."

"The future of Afghanistan ought to draw on the God-given potential of every person," Pompeo said.

The senior administration official told reporters last week that women will "have a seat at the table during the negotiations."

Those negotiations in March are likely to take place in Oslo, Norway, a second senior administration official said. The details are still being sorted out in terms of the negotiation's design, and who will specifically be at the table for the Afghan side.

There were a record high number of attacks carried out in Afghanistan last year by the Taliban and other anti-government groups. The violence in Afghanistan has continued this year, with the Taliban killing two US service members earlier this month.

The second senior administration official acknowledged last week that the path forward is not going to be "easy" or "perfect."

"It's not like the Taliban are endlessly evil or that this will bring flowers and roses and doves overnight," they said. "We and the Afghans have been in this conflict for decades. There are patterns of behavior, psychological views. People are going to have to begin making a big shift."

This story has been updated with additional details from the agreement. (Courtesy to CNN)

CNN's Kylie Atwood, Jennifer Glasse, Simon Cullen, Nada Bashir, Kevin Bohn, Nic Robertson and Nicole Gaouette contributed to this report.



OIC Secretary General's Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir's visit to Pakistan and AJK

By Mian fazal Elahi

The OIC Secretary General's Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir, Ambassador Yousef M. Al Dobeay, has concluded his visit to Pakistan and AJK.

During the visit, the Special Envoy and his high-level delegation called on Prime Minister Imran Khan and held meetings with the Foreign Minister, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir, and Foreign Secretary. A delegation

of representatives of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) also met with the delegation and apprised it of the aggravating situation in IOJ&K.

During the meetings, the Pakistani leadership appreciated OIC's steadfast support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the aftermath of India's unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019. The Special Envoy was apprised of the dire human rights and humanitarian situation in the Indian Occupied

Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) and the threat to peace and security owing to India's belligerent rhetoric and aggressive actions. It was emphasized that the Kashmiris looked towards the OIC and Muslim Ummah for active support for the realization of their fundamental rights and for peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

In AJK, the delegation held meetings with the President and Prime Minister of AJK, and visited the Line of Control (LoC) as well as a refugee





camp in Muzaffarabad. In their interactions, the AJK leadership commended the OIC's commitment to the Kashmir cause and their support for the oppressed people of IOJ&K.

During its visit to the LoC at Chakothi, the delegation was briefed about the loss of civilian lives and damage to property due to frequent unprovoked firings by the Indian forces across the LoC. At the refugee camp in Muzaffarabad, the delegation interacted with refugees from IOJ&K to get first-hand understanding of the sufferings of Kashmiris under India's illegal occupation.

The Special Envoy emphasized that Kashmir and Palestine remained the top-most items on the OIC agenda. Reaffirming the OIC's principled position, the Special Envoy stated that the Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute which calls for its peaceful settlement in accordance with the relevant UN and OIC resolutions. He assured that the OIC will take all necessary steps to alleviate the sufferings of the Kashmiris and help resolve the dispute according to the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

This was the first visit of Ambassador Yousef M. Al Dobeay to Pakistan and AJK after his appointment as OIC Secretary General's Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir during the 14th Summit of OIC held in Makkah in May 2019. The visit was also a reaffirmation of the OIC's commitment to the Kashmir cause.





Foreign Minister appreciated the expanding trade ties between the European Union and Pakistan

By M. Bilal Zafar

Foreign Minister Mahmood Qureshi received Ambassador of the European Union, Ms. Androulla Kaminara at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Foreign Minister was pleased to note that the Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) signed between the two sides in June 2019 would be formally operationalized in 2020 through multiple scheduled engagements.

The Foreign Minister appreciated the expanding trade ties between the European Union and Pakistan. The two sides committed to take trade beyond Euros 13 billion achieved in the year 2019.

The two sides discussed development cooperation in various areas of mutual interest including rural development, climate change, good governance, and energy. The EU Ambassador also briefed the Foreign Minister on the projects currently under implementation across Pakistan.

Foreign Minister shared Pakistan's perspective on the regional situation especially the human rights violations by Indian security forces in



Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the BJP government in India.

The two sides welcomed the Afghan peace deal signed between the US and the Taliban, and hoped that an inclusive and comprehensive Intra-Afghan dialogue would follow leading to

lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Both sides agreed on the need to further capitalize on the positive trajectory of Pakistan-EU relations further strengthening the current political engagements and trade and economic relations.



Federal Minister for Defence, Pervez Khattak Presenting A shield to Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia, H.E. Mr Borhene El Kael at Islamabad.

Ambassador of Tunisia called on Federal Minister for Defence

By staff Reporter

H.E. Mr.Borhene EL KAMEL, Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia called on Federal Minister for Defence, Mr.Pervez

Khattak here in his office at Islamabad. Federal Minister stated that Pakistan and Tunisia have friendly bilateral relation and Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Tunisia. Federal Minister said we look forward

to closer cooperation with Tunisia at various international and regional platforms including the UN and OIC. He said that the proposed MoU on military cooperation will further enhance prospects of mutual defence collaboration.



US to send envoy to Saudi Arabia as Texas suggests oil output cut

By News Agency

The administration of United States President Donald Trump plans to send a special energy representative to Saudi Arabia, officials said on Friday. The White House is scrambling to respond to the global oil price crash as a regulator from the top US oil-producing state took the rare step of considering output cuts to help stabilise markets.

Oil prices have lost more than half their value in the last two weeks as Saudi Arabia and Russia kicked off a price war, and the coronavirus pandemic destroyed demand.

The crash has shocked the oil industry as a pact among OPEC and non-OPEC producers to cooperate imploded, triggering a production free-for-all. Texas regulators are considering the unusual step of intervening to curb output for the first time in decades, while the US is scrambling to negotiate with Saudi Arabia, which has unleashed production after years of touting its role as a stabilising force for markets.

Saudi Arabia and Russia are locked in a war for global oil market share after their three-year deal to restrain output collapsed this month. The kingdom has vowed to increase production to a record 12.3 million barrels per day and has

Oil prices have lost more than half their value in the last two weeks as Saudi Arabia and Russia kicked off a price war

chartered numerous tankers to ship oil around the world, pushing prices to near 20-year lows this week.

US officials believe Saudi Arabia's move to flood oil markets compounds the global economic

crash at a time of a crisis caused by the pandemic.

A senior US Energy Department official will be sent to Riyadh for months to work closely with Department of State officials and the existing energy attache, the senior US officials told Reuters News Agency, on the condition of anonymity.

Trump administration officials said Saudi Arabia has, for decades, been a steadfast leader of stability in the global oil market. The energy representative would help the countries return to a path of stability, they said.

The price crash is also devastating to US oil producers, some of which have already begun putting employees on leave.

The hope is that Trump could negotiate with Saudi Arabia and Russia and convince them to match cuts with a similar cut in production in Texas, said Ryan Sitton, a commissioner with the Texas Railroad Commission, the body that regulates the state's oil and gas industry.

Sitton said production limits could be implemented quickly, though no one who works at the agency was around the last time the state limited production in the early 1970s.



"We need to take the time to hear from everybody," he said, adding that he was not yet advocating for the cuts. "[But] if we can help [Trump] get a deal done, then I think that's when we do something."

Sitton said in a tweet that he spoke with OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo about an international deal "to ensure economic stability as we recover from" the coronavirus outbreak. Sitton said Barkindo was "kind enough to invite me to the next OPEC meeting in June".

Barkindo told Reuters that he and Sitton discussed their "perspective on current developments and the possibility of future

cooperation" in a teleconference. Barkindo and OPEC ministers have, in the past, met with shale industry executives at annual conferences.

Frank Fannon, the US assistant secretary of state for energy resources, said that to his knowledge, the federal government does not have the ability to restrict the Texas regulator from any work with OPEC to cut production. "Those are wholly within state matters ... from a federal level we have no ongoing engagements with OPEC, it's a cartel," Fannon told reporters late on Friday in a teleconference.

US industry unmoved

Some US industry representatives were sceptical that Texas should intervene in the

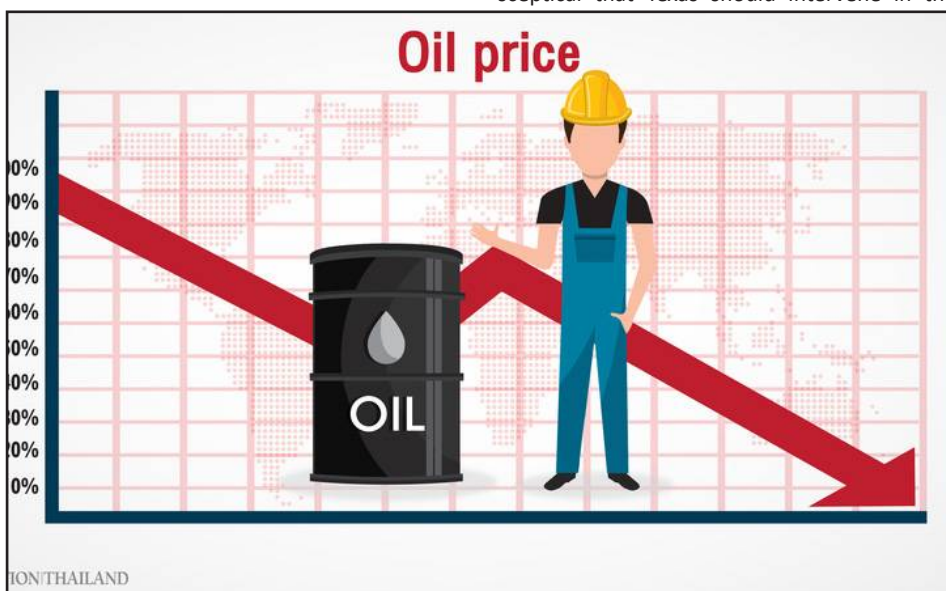
market. US oil producers have long resisted such a move, and the industry's largest trade association did not sound convinced Friday, either.

"Our view is simple. Quotas are bad," said Frank Macchiarola, senior vice president of policy, economics and regulatory affairs at the American Petroleum Institute. "They've been proven ineffective and harmful. There's no reason during this time to try to imitate OPEC."

In the last several years, shale operators using the innovative hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, technique, have boosted US oil output to nearly 13 million barrels per day, making it the world's largest producer. Since 2016, as OPEC restrained production, the US has taken market share from Saudi Arabia, Russia, and other nations.

Russia has been slower to come on board with OPEC's continued efforts to bolster prices, and the country's largest oil producer, Rosneft, has been an opponent of the deal with OPEC to cut supply. Units of that company, and its managers, were recently sanctioned by the US due to its trade relationship with Venezuela.

Trump administration officials will continue to reduce global oil output with sanctions on what the officials called bad actors in Iran and Venezuela, both of which are OPEC members, and their shipping networks, the officials said. To the extent that Russia is involved in marketing Venezuelan oil, it will be sanctioned, the officials said.



A seminar on 'Together for Peace and Humanity, End to Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide'

By M. Bilal Zafar A seminar on 'Together for Peace and Humanity, End to Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide' was jointly organised by the Department of International Relations of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and the embassy of Azerbaijan.

Chairman, Senate Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed was the chief guest of the ceremony while H.E Mr. Ali Alizada, the ambassador of Azerbaijan, H.E Mr. Sakib Foric, the ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ambassadors and high commissioners of various Central Asian States, Middles East and Africa, Director General NUML Brig Muhammad Ibrahim, former president Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Anwar Khan, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments and students also attended the event.

Speaking on the occasion the ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada said that Kashmir is close to our hearts and minds and his country is concerned about the human rights violations by the Indian Army in Indian Occupied Kashmir. He said that Azerbaijan fully support that Kashmir dispute must be resolved according to the UN Resolution and will support Pakistan's stance in this regard. Ambassador said that his own country Azerbaijan is facing the same situation as Armenia has continued to illegally occupy around 20% of Azerbaijan's internationally recognised territory including the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts.

He said that in February 1992, the whole Azerbaijan watched in horror as their TV screens showed the aftermath of a brutal killing: dead children, women and elderly people, mutilated bodies, frozen corpses scattered across the ground.





World must learn from China in epidemic battle, says expert

China's experience and lessons, earned by overcoming the COVID-19 outbreak, will contribute to stemming the spread of the coronavirus across the world, says one expert.

"If China's experience and lessons are shared with the international society, it will contribute to prevailing over the COVID-19 outbreak early," Lee Hee-ok, a professor of political science at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, told Xinhua ahead of a Group of 20 (G20) video conference on Thursday.

"China has effectively enforced quarantine measures based on its experience and lessons learned from the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)" back in 2003-04, Lee said.

The professor noted that although China's quarantine model may not be directly adopted by other countries, it could offer inspiration for those working to overcome their own outbreaks.

Furthermore, China could propose at the G20 quarantine steps that countries could jointly adopt to combat the virus' spread around the globe, the professor noted.

"An infectious disease is a common enemy that harms people around the world regardless of nationality and border," said Lee.

"It cannot be resolved by the power of a single country. Every country with a shared future in the fight against the infectious disease will join hands and form a single community," Lee noted.

He said each country will be required to minimize the economic fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak through cooperation.

Lee praised the World Health Organization (WHO), saying the global anti-epidemic body rapidly made public information on the COVID-19 to help the international community stay informed of the virus' spread.

The WHO also played an organizing role in combatting the COVID-19 outbreak by offering guidelines to contain the outbreak, he said.

Lee said G20 countries and other international organizations should respect science and the opinions of experts regarding quarantine measures, while refraining from political rhetoric and any attempt to pass the buck to someone else.

Lee said it would be wrong to call the COVID-19 outbreak the China or Wuhan virus because it would contradict WHO recommendations.

China ready to aid global virus combat

By News Agency

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday that China is ready to work with all other parties to step up coordination against COVID-19 and shore up confidence in the international community.

Xi made the remarks during a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel ahead of an extraordinary virtual summit of the Group of 20 (G20) leaders on a coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chinese president noted that Merkel has expressed to the Chinese side sympathies and support, and the German government and various sectors in the country have extended their helping hand in the early days of the outbreak in China, saying that the Chinese people will remember that in their hearts.

Germany is now facing a serious challenge from the epidemic, and the Chinese people feel the same way, said Xi, adding that China firmly supports Germany in its fight against the epidemic and is willing to continue to provide assistance within its capacity.

He also said that the Chinese and German experts have already had video exchanges, and German experts have also travelled to China with the World Health Organization expert team, adding that China is willing to share prevention, control and treatment experience with Germany, strengthen cooperation in vaccine and drug research and development, and contribute to the health and wellbeing of both peoples and global public health security.

"May you lead the German people to overcome the epidemic as soon as possible," Xi said.

Viruses know no borders and are a common challenge faced by humanity, Xi said, adding that no country can stay out of or be immune from the epidemic.

In the battle against the outbreak, China and Germany, as well as China and the European Union (EU) have demonstrated the strength of solidarity and cooperation, and displayed positive energy, Xi said. Noting that the extraordinary G20 summit is about to be held, Xi said that the Chinese side is ready to work with all sides, including Germany, to step up coordination and speak with one voice to advocate the spirit of sharing the same boat and jointly fight the COVID-19 epidemic, so as to shore up confidence in the international community.

China sharing knowledge, resources to fight virus

By Monitoring Desk

From sharing epidemic prevention and control experience to offering emergency medical aid, China has been actively promoting international cooperation in various fields to fight the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic with the rest of world.

The latest diagnosis and treatment plan, prevention and control plan and other technical documents have been compiled, translated and promptly shared with over 180 countries and more than 10 international and regional organizations, said Zeng Yixin, deputy director of the National Health Commission (NHC), at a press conference in Beijing.

He said that a meeting to share China's epidemic prevention and control experience was jointly held by the NHC and the WHO, which was attended by representatives from 77 countries and seven international organizations and was watched by over 100,000 people online. China has also established an online knowledge center in the field of epidemic control and clinical treatment, as well as an expert database for international cooperation, Zeng said, adding that nearly 30 technical exchange meetings have been held with more than 100 countries and regions by video links.

In the meantime, China has also provided assistance to 89 countries and four international organizations.

Chinese medical workers and supplies have been sent to 28 Asian countries, 16 European countries, 26 African countries, nine countries in the Americas and 10 countries in the South Pacific, Deng Boqing, deputy head of the China International Development Cooperation Agency, said at the same press conference.

On the premise of fully ensuring domestic epidemic control, China has properly formulated its aid plan and offered assistance to other countries within its capability, Deng said. Noting China is facing rising risks of imported cases of the novel coronavirus disease, Deng said China's assistance to other countries is conducive to the global fight against the virus and will consolidate its hard-won achievements in containing the spread.

Chinese researchers' contributions were also recognized by the global scientific and technological community. For example, China shared the first completed genome sequence of the novel coronavirus on Jan. 11 and had built two platforms to share its scientific developments. One of the platforms, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Resource (2019nCoV) database, has recorded more than 4 million downloads by users from 152 countries and regions as of Wednesday, according to Vice Minister of Science and Technology Xu Nanping.



Xi hails WHO efforts to curb virus

Chinese President Xi Jinping said he appreciates World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus' efforts to advance the global battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a reply letter to Ghebreyesus, Xi said China will continue to provide support for the international community in combating the coronavirus disease.

Under Ghebreyesus' leadership, the WHO has been actively advancing global cooperation against the contagious illness and gained wide recognition from the international community, Xi noted.

China, he added, will continue to firmly support Ghebreyesus and the WHO playing an active and leading role in the global fight.

China has always supported the global COVID-19 containment efforts with concrete actions, and has offered assistance to international organizations, including the WHO, as well as more than 80 countries, Xi said.

He added that China will continue to provide as much assistance as its capacity allows for the international struggle against the pandemic.

Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation Donation Arrives in Karachi to Help Fight Against COVID-19



The first batch of the much-needed medical supplies donated by the Jack Ma Foundation and the Alibaba Foundation arrived in Pakistan.

The shipment is part of the donation of medical supplies to 10 Asian countries announced on March 21. Collectively, the nations will receive a total of 1.8 million masks; kits for testing 210,000 people, 36,000 pieces of protective clothing, as well as essential medical equipment such as ventilators and forehead thermometers.

The National Disaster Management Authority, Government of Pakistan will transport and distribute the supplies throughout the country. Mr. Syed Murad Ali Sha, Chief Minister of Sindh, Pakistan took receipt of the donations from Ehsan Saya, Managing Director for Daraz in Pakistan in representation of the two foundations. Also present on the occasion were Mr. Li Bijian, Consul General of China to Karachi and Mr. Zhang Hao, Vice Consul of China to Karachi. The remainder of the donation is expected to reach Pakistan soon.



Mr. Li Bijian, Consul General of China to Karachi, said, "Since the outbreak of the pandemic in Pakistan, Government and people of China have been showing our solidarity with and providing assistance to our iron brother

Pakistan." On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Yao Jing, Ambassador of China to Pakistan, Mr. Li expressed his sincere thanks to Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation for their generous donation. He added, "the efforts by



the Federal and Provincial Governments of Pakistan to deal with the pandemic have been very strong and impressive.” He was firmly convinced that armed with today’s donation, Pakistan will eventually win the battle against the pandemic.

“We hope the donation will strengthen Pakistan’s fight against COVID-19 and prevent further community spread of the virus. We are committed to doing everything we can to make a difference, especially overcoming the tough logistical challenges for delivery and getting the medical supplies to where it is needed most as fast as we can,” said the Jack Ma Foundation.

This donation is among a number of aid initiatives from the Alibaba Foundation and Jack Ma Foundation to support the areas of the world most affected by the Covid-19 crisis, sourcing and delivering various types of medical supplies to Asia, United States, Africa, Italy, Belgium, France, Slovenia, Spain and Latin America.

The Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation also supported the publication of a handbook with key lessons and experience from doctors, healthcare workers, and hospital administrators at the First Affiliated Hospital, Zhejiang University School of Medicine (FAHZU), who were on the frontline of COVID-19 treatment in China and crucial to slowing its spread. The handbook is available for global medical health professionals at <https://covid-19.alibabacloud.com/>.

Follow @JackMa and @foundation_ma on Twitter for the latest efforts of Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation to support the global fight against COVID-19.

About Jack Ma Foundation

Established by Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba Group, the Jack Ma Foundation was founded on 15 December 2014 and has been focusing on education, entrepreneurship, women’s leadership, and the environment. The Foundation aspires to be a reliable, participative, and sustainable philanthropic organisation. The Jack Ma Foundation has so far supported projects worldwide including the Jack Ma Rural Education Program, the Africa Netpreneur Prize Initiative, the Ma & Morley Scholarship Program, and Jordan’s Queen Rania Foundation. Additionally, the Foundation has also funded a number of projects in its priority areas. The Jack Ma Foundation is committed to empowering rural educators, entrepreneurs, rural children, young start-ups, and women to equip them for the future and to help build a happier, healthier, more sustainable and more inclusive society.

About Alibaba Foundation

The Alibaba Foundation, established in December 2011, aims to create a culture that encourages people to get involved in philanthropy, make it sustainable and genuinely contribute to civil society and nature. Its key funding aspects include water protection, environmental awareness promotion and development of green organizations. Alibaba Group is committed to devoting a percentage of its annual income to the Alibaba Foundation to ensure stable long-term funding that will allow for timely response in the event of natural disasters or expansion of philanthropic projects.



China to Provide Operational Training in Locust Control: Chinese Ambassador



BY Staff Reporter

Chinese Ambassador Mr. Yao Jing called on Muhammad Hammad Azhar Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiar here in Islamabad. Secretary NFSR Dr. Hashim Popalzai was also present in the meeting. Chinese Ambassador appreciated the role of Khusro Bakhtiar for his dedicated efforts of giving new impetus to agricultural cooperation under CPEC. He said that in the upcoming visit of president of Pakistan MoU on Agriculture Corporation between the two countries would further strengthen the bilateral coordination especially in locust control. Federal minister informed Chinese Ambassador that Pakistan is stretched with sprayers' machines as only one British company is manufacturing it and the demand for sprayers is increasing. He stressed that there is a need for concrete data from FAO regarding the locust affected regions so that new companies may come in market owing to the required market demand of these pesticide sprayers. Secretary National Food Security and research added that we require both vehicle driven and hand held pesticide sprayers. Chinese ambassador said that first lot of pesticides has reached Pakistan from China and more pesticides with spray machines will reach later in April. A Team of technicians

from china will soon visit Pakistan to provide operational training to local human resource, he added. Chinese Government also offered Pakistan more surveillance devices and drones to monitoring and management of locust

issue. Federal minister also acknowledged the timely supply of pesticides and coordination form Chinese Government and said our preparedness level to tackle menace of locust is better than Afghanistan and Iran.



BLUE ECONOMY: A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

(By Ali Basit)

Since the times immemorial, oceans remained an important contour in charting the discourse of human progress. Humanity's relation with oceans led to the development of many ancient civilizations. Livelihood largely remained associated with the seas and oceans as most of the commercial trade transit carried out through important waterways. How people can exploit and use the ocean based resources is evolving in significant ways for sustainable economy: an economic growth that sustains the natural resources and environment for future generations.

The shift from 'Brown' to 'Green' economy was profoundly felt necessary whence the former proved to be a destructive menace for the ecology and ecosystem in general. The industrial activities that our modern civilization depends upon, have raised atmospheric vulnerabilities and also played a pertinent role for bringing in the climate change (a result of natural causes, human activities, emission of greenhouse gases and changes in land use) which adversely affected the natural environment. As per the World Bank estimates, air pollution alone costs the global economy more than \$5 trillion every year. Moving farther to minimize the effects of brown economy on earth, the world in 2008 pledged to move towards an economy with cleaner energy systems that encapsulates the usage of energy more efficiently to reduce the vulnerabilities of the non-friendly environmental factors and ingress much better natural resource management systems to nurture the economic growth; such an economy is termed as 'Green'.

Meanwhile a book by Gunter Paul's, titled: "The Blue Economy; 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs" surfaced in 2010 bringing the concept of blue economy into the limelight. But the question here arises that what exactly the concept of blue economy addresses. As per the

Center for the Blue Economy, "it is the overall contribution of the oceans to economies, the need to address the environmental and ecological sustainability of the oceans, and the ocean economy as a growth opportunity for both developed and developing countries." The concept at its core refers to promote economic growth, social inclusion, and the preservation of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas. The oceans are increasingly becoming the source of food and energy which is pertinent for the existence of life on the planet Earth. Many economists have estimated an asset value of \$24 trillion to the ocean economy and as of now it's delivering something between \$4-500 billion each year in terms of the dividend to humanity.

People do understand that the oceans are not limitless and that they are suffering from increasing and often cumulative human impacts. And also the oceans that are not healthy and resilient are not able to support economic growth. The fact that oceans and seas matter for sustainable development is undeniable. An important challenge of the blue economy is to understand and better manage the various aspects of oceanic sustainability, ranging from sustainable fisheries to ecosystem. The second important aspect to highlight in this regard is realization of the effective management of ocean resources which requires collaboration across nation-states on different blue economic avenues and also synergy within various institutions of the nation-states.

Being an important maritime state in the Indian Ocean region, Pakistan is progressively apprehending the marvels of the Blue Economy. The country is blessed with approximately 1050 km long coastline and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covering about 240,000 sq. km. Pakistan's sea trade route contributes about \$66.5 billion dollars

to economic growth, accumulates 31% of Pakistan's GDP. Fish and seafood industry in Pakistan alone has the potential of generating the revenue of more than \$1.2 billion. Moreover, Pakistan's mangrove area, a sixth largest in the world, holds an annual value of about \$20 million which can be extracted from mangrove dependent fish species and shrimp industry. Whereas, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation which handles about 99% import of gasoline products holds a very small number of cargo vessels that only carries 7% of cargo to the world, while the remaining 93% is handled by foreign companies which produce foreign exchange of about \$1.5 billion annually. Such economic figures can contribute to overcome the economic instability of the country and put back the national economy on the success track. To optimally benefit from the country's maritime sector, there is a need for an integrated National Maritime Policy to effectively capitalize the ocean based dividends.

Need of an hour is to formulate an effective national compliance mechanism and synergize the institutional efforts to untap the blue economic potentials. Moreover, CPEC is a significant platform to play a pivot role in this regard as it has already put forward plans for the activation of ocean based activities in a bid to explore the incredible maritime avenues. Furthermore, Pakistan should embark upon boosting its economy while focusing on maritime infrastructure, technology for offshore resource development, a strong fisheries and marine leisure sector (tourism), environment issues etc. All the required financial and technological support should be geared up for building, operating, and making economically profitable industries. These are compelling reasons for Pakistan to endorse and internalize the concept of a Blue Economy in policy, bilateral relations as well as international transactions.





China says US officials making shameless comments on coronavirus data

By Monitoring Desk, Reuters

China's foreign ministry said on Thursday that US officials are making "shameless" comments casting doubt about China's reporting of coronavirus cases in the country.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying reiterated during a daily briefing that China has been open and transparent about the coronavirus outbreak that began in the country late last year, and said the United States should stop politicising a health issue and instead focus on the safety of its people. US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday the coronavirus statistics China was reporting seemed "a little bit on the light side", while his national security adviser said Washington had no way of knowing if Beijing's figures were accurate.

The comments came after a senior Republican lawmaker cast doubt on Beijing's data and Bloomberg News said a classified US intelligence report had concluded that China had under-reported the total cases and deaths it had suffered.

The coronavirus outbreak began in China in late

2019 but Beijing has reported fewer cases and deaths than in the United States, which now has the world's largest outbreak, with 215,000 confirmed cases and more than 5,000 deaths.

Trump told a daily briefing by his coronavirus task force that he had not received an intelligence report on China's data, but added: "The numbers seem to be a little bit on the light side — and I am being nice when I say that — relative to what we witnessed and what was reported."

Trump said he had discussed how China had dealt with the coronavirus outbreak in a phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping last Friday, but "not so much the numbers".

Trump, who has toned down his criticism of China's handling of the virus outbreak since the call, also said the US relationship with China was "very good" and both sides wanted to maintain multi-billion dollar trade deal reached earlier this year.

"As to whether or not their numbers are accurate," he added, "I am not an accountant from China."

Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, told the same briefing Washington was "just not (in) the position to confirm any of the numbers that are coming out of China."

"There's lots of public reporting on whether the numbers are too low," he said. "You got access to those reports that are coming out of Chinese social media ... we just have no way to confirm any of those numbers."

Earlier, Michael McCaul, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, accused Beijing of hiding the true number of those impacted. He said he had called for the State Department to investigate Beijing's "initial cover up and subsequent actions regarding this pandemic".

The Bloomberg report cited unidentified US officials as saying that a classified report, received by the White House last week, concluded that China's public reporting on cases and deaths was intentionally incomplete.



Chief Naval Overseas (China), Commodore Azfar Humayun along with Officials of Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard at the Contract Signing Ceremony for Construction of 2nd Type 054-A/P Frigate at China

Keel Laying Ceremony of second type 054 A/P Frigate for Pakistan Navy held at China

The keel laying ceremony of 2nd ship of Type 054 A/P held at Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard, making a significant milestone in induction of cutting-edge Frigate for Pakistan Navy.

During the ceremony Keel laying protocols were signed by both Pakistani and Chinese sides. Chief Naval Overseas (China), Commodore Azfar Humayun graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

The 054 A/P Frigates are technologically advanced and major platforms which will strengthen Pakistan Navy capability to respond to future challenges, maintain peace & stability and balance of power in Indian Ocean Region.

Speaking at the occasion, the Chief Guest highlighted the importance of Frigates building project for Pakistan Navy and their timely delivery while complying with the highest standards of construction, outfitting and

performance. Commodore Azfar Humayun also acknowledged the professional competence of Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard and Chinese contractors despite the challenges faced during COVID-19 pandemic in China, ensured completion of this important milestone in time.

The ceremony was attended by officials from Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard, Pakistan Navy officers and representatives from Chinese Naval product firms.





Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry addressing a meeting of Business Community About setting up of ICCI Corona Relief Camp. Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President ICCI and others are also there.

ICCI sets up Corona Relief Camp for needy people

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has setup a Corona Relief Camp to provide support to the needy people who have been badly hit by the coronavirus issue. Muhammad Aslam Khokhar, Executive Member of ICCI (Cell No.0300-5110077) has been appointed as focal person of ICCI Relief Camp.

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that many people including daily wagers have been badly hit by the coronavirus as they have lost their daily earnings due to closure of shops and industries. He said that this was the time that well off business people should come forward and extend helping hand to the needy people of society in cooperation with ICCI. He said this while addressing a meeting of business

community at ICCI.

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that business community should donate their donations to ICCI Bank Account No.0010005998750049 in ABL, G-8/1 Branch, Islamabad with Branch Code-0624 so that with their cooperation, ICCI Relief Camp could provide daily used food items to the poor and unemployed people. He said that Muhammad Aslam Khokhar Executive Member ICCI Mobile No.0300-5110077 has been focal person for Corona Relief Camp.

He appealed to the business people to donate their maximum contributions to the above mentioned bank account of ICCI including contributions of Zakat and Sadaqaat so that with their support, deserving and needy people of society could be provided food items. He said

they could also donate food items to ICCI Relief Camp for distributing them to well-deserving people.

Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President and Saif ur Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI said that after thorough investigation, only deserving people would be provided food items in cooperation with the donations of business community. They said that businesses and factories were closed, but business community was standing with the government to provide support to weak segments of society in this crisis situation. They appealed that ICCI members should donate maximum amount of zakat and sadqaat to ICCI account and become partner in this noble cause for serving the cause of needy people.

Japan's Abe admits postponing Tokyo Olympics may be option



Pressure growing on Japan to delay summer games as Canada withdraws and Australia says preparing for postponement.

Canada has become the first country to withdraw its team from the Tokyo Olympics, increasing pressure on Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to delay an event he said for the first time on Monday could be postponed if it could not be held in its "complete form" because of the coronavirus pandemic.

After an emergency meeting on Sunday, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said it was stepping up its "scenario planning" for the 2020 Games due to start on July 24, which would include a possible postponement.

Abe said that while cancelling the Games was not an option, a delay was now on the cards if that was the only way to hold the event in its complete form.

"If that becomes difficult, we may have no option but to consider postponing the Games," he told parliament.

He said he had conveyed his views to Tokyo Games chief Yoshiro Mori on Sunday evening, who then discussed the issue with IOC President Thomas Bach.

Opposition to holding the Games in July has risen sharply in recent days, with several important stakeholders such as the US Track and Field and UK Athletics, along with several national Olympic committees, calling for a delay because of the pandemic.

Late on Sunday, the Canadian Olympic Committee became the first country to withdraw from the Games, urging organisers to postpone the event for one year.

"While we recognise the inherent complexities around a postponement, nothing is more important than the health and safety of our athletes and the world community," it said.

The Olympics have never been postponed or cancelled during peacetime but the IOC's decision to even consider postponement was met with relief. The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) welcomed the IOC decision on Monday and said athletes should now prepare for a Tokyo Olympic Games in the northern summer of 2021.

Preparing for postponement

In a statement, the AOC said its executive board "unanimously agreed that an Australian Team could not be assembled in the changing

circumstances at home and abroad" and that athletes now needed to prioritise their own health and of those around them.

Ian Chesterman, Australian Team Chef de Mission for Tokyo said the postponement of the Games would allow competitors from around the world to properly prepare with the hope the coronavirus crisis would be under control.

"It's clear the Games can't be held in July," he said. "Our athletes have been magnificent in their positive attitude to training and preparing, but the stress and uncertainty has been extremely challenging for them."

More than 13,000 people around the world have died since the coronavirus outbreak began in China late last year, with the epicentre now in Europe.

As of Sunday morning, Japan had 37 deaths and 1,055 coronavirus cases, excluding those from a cruise ship that was quarantined near Tokyo last month and returnees on chartered flights from China, according to public broadcaster NHK.

The IOC said it would finalise discussions on postponing the Olympic Games within the next four weeks.



Doctor's Note: How to do social distancing during coronavirus

Dr Ranj Singh

Coronavirus is a global crisis, and the situation is changing every day. I do not think I have ever quite experienced anything like it in my career, including when the swine flu pandemic hit in 2009.

Around the world, we are seeing the number of affected people rising rapidly. This has led to a whole host of different measures being implemented to try to get things under control. Some have worked well. Others, not so much.

In many countries, it seems that no matter what we try, the situation is worsening day-by-day.

So, am I panicking? Not yet. Even though things are serious, and we may feel helpless at times, there is still much we can all do to help mitigate things.

Two of the most important interventions, which you may already have heard of, are social distancing and self-isolation.

Every country has a slightly different policy when it comes to these, however, the general principles are similar.

Some people get the two confused, so here is an explanation, based on current UK practice.

What is social distancing?

Well, social distancing is the thing we should be

doing, and by we, I mean everyone.

Exact advice varies, but it does include things like: Working from home if possible; travelling only when necessary, especially on public transport or for overseas trips; avoiding social venues like cinemas and clubs; avoiding gatherings of large groups of people; restricting visitors; and, if you do go out in public, maintaining a safe distance from others - usually around two metres.

Since coronavirus is spread mainly through respiratory droplets (especially when people cough or sneeze), maintaining a bit of distance will help to decrease the spread of the virus.

Social distancing aims to reduce the amount of interaction people have while allowing them to carry out their necessary day-to-day activities. It also helps reduce the chances of picking the virus up and then spreading it to others.

These measures are especially important for people at higher risk of severe disease if they get coronavirus. This might include the elderly, especially those over 70, people with significant long-term medical problems like lung disease, heart disease, weak immune system, diabetes, neurological problems, kidney disease; and pregnant women.

How is self-isolation different?

Self-isolation is what people with possible

coronavirus have to do - if they have symptoms, or if they have been in close contact with someone who might.

It is usually reserved for those likely to be infected, to stop the disease spreading.

Self-isolation involves much more stringent and widened application of distancing practices such as: Not going to work or school; not travelling; not having visitors; not leaving the house and instead asking others to help if you need supplies; not sharing a bed; and not sharing household items like towels and utensils.

While social distancing is usually an ongoing practice over a long period of time, self-isolation is usually for a set period of time.

For example, in the UK, we recommend that people with symptoms self-isolate for a minimum of seven days. Their family members and others they have been in close contact with should self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days to allow for the incubation period and to see if they go on to develop the disease themselves.

As we learn more about the virus, this advice is likely to change. However, for now, it represents one of the most powerful tools we have in dealing with this global pandemic.

So let's make sure we all do our part.

Chinese scientists looking for Covid-19 treatment claim finding ‘effective’ antibodies

BEIJING: A team of Chinese scientists has isolated several antibodies that it says are “extremely effective” at blocking the ability of the new coronavirus to enter cells, which eventually could be helpful in treating or preventing Covid-19.

There is currently no proven effective treatment for the disease, which originated in China and is spreading across the world in a pandemic.

Zhang Linqi at Tsinghua University in Beijing said a drug made with antibodies like the ones his team have found could be used more effectively than the current approaches, including what he called “borderline” treatment such as plasma.

Plasma contains antibodies but is restricted by blood type.

In early January, Zhang’s team and a group at the 3rd People’s Hospital in Shenzhen began analysing antibodies from blood taken from recovered Covid-19 patients, isolating 206 monoclonal antibodies which showed what he described as a “strong” ability to bind with the virus’ proteins. They then conducted another test to see if they could actually prevent the

virus from entering cells, he said.

Among the first 20 or so antibodies tested, four were able to block viral entry and of those, two were “exceedingly good” at doing so, Zhang said.

The team is now focused on identifying the most powerful antibodies and possibly combining them to mitigate the risk of the new coronavirus mutating.

If all goes well, interested developers could mass produce them for testing, first on animals and eventually on humans.

The group has partnered with a Sino-US biotech firm, Bii Biosciences, in an effort “to advance multiple candidates for prophylactic and therapeutic intervention”, according to a statement by Bii.

“The importance of antibodies has been proven in the world of medicine for decades now,” Zhang said. “They can be used to treat cancer, autoimmune diseases and infectious diseases.” The antibodies are not a vaccine but could potentially be given to at-risk people with

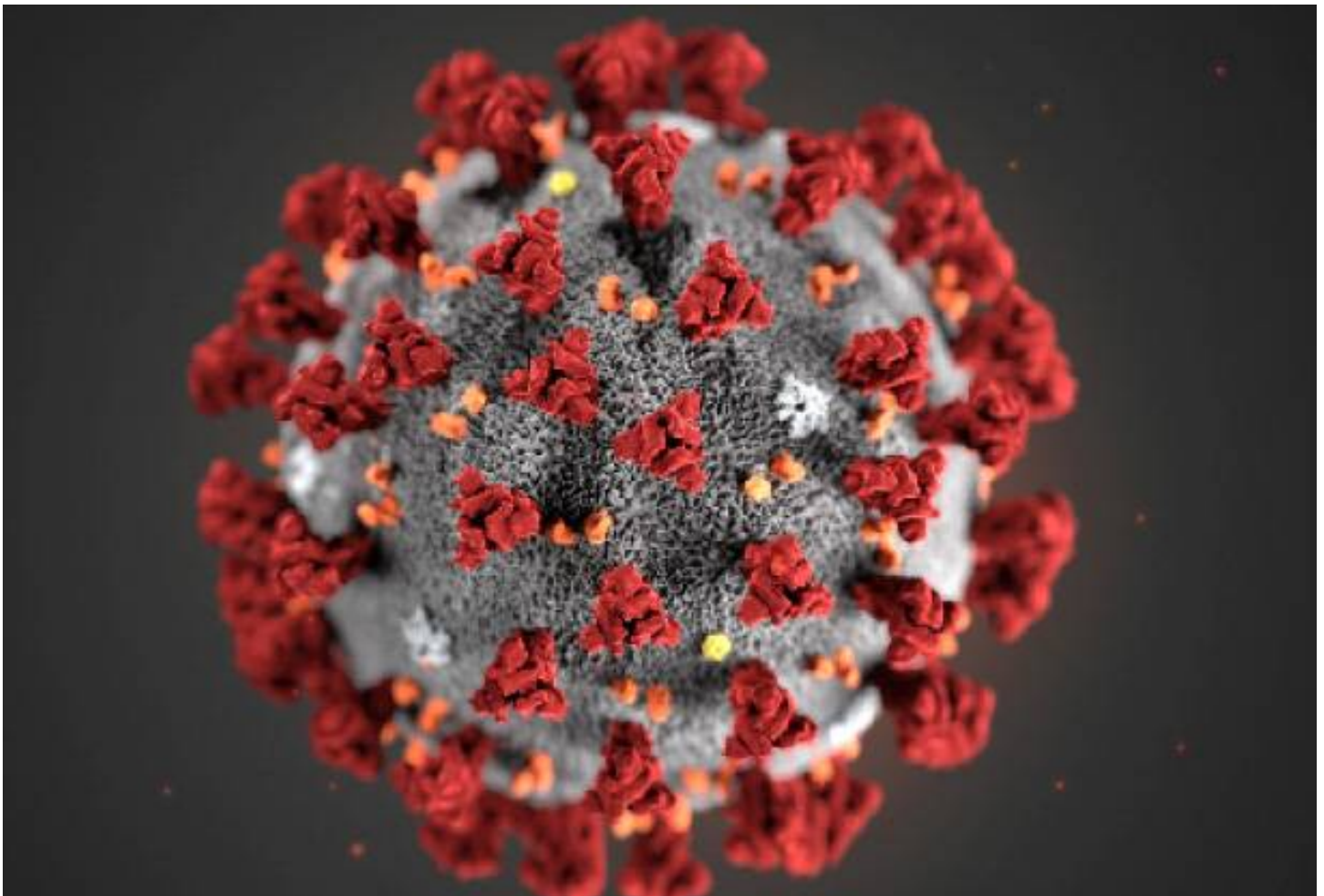
the aim of preventing them from contracting Covid-19.

Normally it takes around two years for a drug even to get close to approval for use on patients, but the Covid-19 pandemic means things are moving faster, he said, with steps that would previously be taken sequentially now being done in parallel.

Zhang, who posted the findings online, hopes the antibodies can be tested on humans in six months. If they are found to be effective in trials, actual use for treatment would take longer. Other experts urge caution.

“There’s a number of steps which will now need to be followed before it could be used as a treatment for coronavirus patients,” Hong Kong University infectious disease specialist Ben Cowling said when the finding was described to him by Reuters.

“But it’s really exciting to find these potential treatments, and then have a chance to test them out. Because if we can find more candidates, then eventually we’ll have better treatment,” Cowling said.





Pakistan Navy distributes ration in coastal areas & various cities across the country during ongoing pandemic of Coronavirus

While the country is combating Corona Virus Pandemic, Pakistan Navy is extending its support to affected families in prevalent precarious state of affair due to lockdown. Pakistan Navy has donated food/ commodities while reaching out to needy families in Coastal and Creeks areas of Sindh and Balochistan that includes distribution of ration bags in Gwadar, Pasni, Bin Qasim,

Somiani, Shah Bandar, Ketu Bandar and other adjoining rural areas containing sufficient amount of food/ commodities for a family of 8-10 persons for a month.

Beside, Pakistan Navy with passionate resolve remained committed in distributing ration bags in various cities across Pakistan at Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Bahawalpur, separately. In addition, Pakistan Navy personnel conducted awareness campaigns on preventive measures against COVID-19 and distributed Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs).

Pakistan Navy Women Association (PNWA) has also remained at forefront in distributing ration among low income civilian staff families and Fisherman Association in Karachi and rural

outskirt villages of Islamabad including Bhara Kahu and adjoining areas.

Pakistan Navy midst challenges of Corona pandemic is determined to extend humanitarian support for national cause.



Reimagine Our Digital Future

Prominent players in the local digital industry held a lively and thought-provoking panel discussion on Pakistan's digital future at the Serena Hotel here.

The event titled 'Reimagine our Digital Future – Preparing to thrive or survive?' and held as part of Raabta, Serena Hotel's public diplomacy initiative meant to create awareness among diverse groups and networks on critical aspects of socially significant fields such as the economy, health and education.

The panelists discussed the challenges facing the local digital economy in face of its rapid expansion, and the challenges and opportunities this brings in terms of innovation, governance, job market, cyber risks, regulation and ease of doing business.

Raabta curator Sidra Iqbal said the focus of the event was on the potential benefits and costs arising from global digital technology changes and, importantly,

anticipation of public policy solutions to emerging problems that would shape the future of society and the economy for generations to come.

"Change can come within a generation if managed properly, rather than waiting for millennia. We are asking if the policymakers going to be reactive to the digital revolution or take the bull by the horn and prepare an environment for the digital economy to thrive," she said.

The keynote speaker at the event was head of the prime minister's 'Digital Pakistan' initiative Tania Aidrus, who spoke about the five pillars that form the cornerstone of the Government's digital policy which include access and connectivity, digital infrastructure, e-government and digital skilling.

She said the response to the PM's digital initiative was overwhelmingly good and it felt like a movement already. "A lot is

happening in the digital arena but it's important to keep the end view in sight and take a strategic approach. Efforts at provincial and federal levels have to be synchronised to achieve the objectives on a broader scale," she said. She said the internet was a democratising force and digital technologies allowed equitable access to knowledge provided the affordability of digital infrastructure was enabled and commodities like the internet were not taxed as a luxury item.

Tania Aidrus compared 35 per cent internet penetration in Pakistan with 80 per cent in other developing countries like Myanmar and said Pakistani policymakers needed to ensure that smartphones and internet are more affordable and accessible especially in rural areas. She further said the AI and the internet of things is improving decision making in multiple areas like affordable healthcare, distance learning and transportation.





World Wildlife Day celebrations held in Islamabad to raise awareness on snow leopard conservation by engaging youth

By staff Reporter

At the World Wildlife Day celebrations held in Islamabad at FAST National University, the speakers urged for creating awareness on snow leopard conservation by engaging youth.

The event was jointly organized by Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF) and FAST National University in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Change and Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Malik Amin Aslam Advisor to the Prime Minister on Climate Change was the chief guest at the occasion. The event was attended by diplomats, officials from government and non-government organizations and students. The Rector FAST-NU Dr. Muhammad Ayub Alvi was also present.

The Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic H.E. Mr. Erik Beishembiev in his remarks highlighted the importance of protecting snow leopards. He informed the guests about ecotourism promotion and an increasing number of

tourists every year in the Kyrgyz Republic. He appreciated FAST-NUCES and the students for working on snow leopard conservation. The Ambassador also planted a tree in the campus. A documentary on Kyrgyz tourism screened on the occasion.

GenerationFAST Snow leopard mascot of FAST-NUCES was launched at the event. Lajpal Haider a student from GFSL informed that students from different faculties who are members of snow leopard mascot team are actively involved in snow leopard conservation with the





guidance and partnership of SLF.

Malik Amin Aslam congratulated management and students of FAST National University for contributing in the conservation efforts and launching the Snow leopard mascot.

He emphasized on working collectively to tackle the challenges of climate change and its impacts on the ecosystems. He also shared measures taken by the present government to protect biodiversity and wildlife through ecotourism. Due to these efforts, Pakistan has been declared one of the top tourists' destinations in 2020 by leading international tourism organizations and international media.

National Project Manager PSLEP Mr. Jaffar Ud Din presented the concept and objectives of summer nature study camps being organized by SLF for students. He informed that conservation education is one of the key components of SLF projects that are aimed at educating and capacity building of youth in snow leopard and ecosystem conservation in the project landscapes.

Talking about the role of youth in sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, Mr Aslam informed the guests that the Prime Minister Imran Khan will soon launch the Green Youth Movement (GYM) – designed and structured for capacity building of youth which one of the priorities of the current government.

The event was concluded with vote of thanks by Assistant Professor FAST-NUCES Mr. Muhammad Adil Amin Kazi.

SLF celebrated the World Wildlife Day at the

national and regional level in its program region in Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral KPK. All the events were celebrated under the theme "Sustaining all life on earth".



10 Reasons to Explore Kyrgyzstan

CELESTIAL MOUNTAIN SCENERY | BREATHTAKING MOUNTAIN LAKES | EXTREME SPORTS |
THE GREAT SILK ROAD | ANTIQUITY AND SACRED PLACES | THE MANAS EPOS | NOMADIC
CULTURE | KYRGYZ HOSPITALITY | ETHNIC CUISINE | VISA-FREE REGIME



Dean of Diplomatic Corps honored outgoing Envoys

Ambassador of Turkmenistan and Dean of Diplomatic Corps H.E. Atadjan Movlamov hosted farewell dinner reception in the honor of outgoing diplomat. The bid farewell is given to Mr. H.E. Saqr Bin Mubarak Al Mansouri, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan at Marriott Hotel Islamabad. Member of Diplomatic Community, Government Officials, High dignitaries and media persons also graced the occasion.



Uzbek Designers collection

Embassy of Uzbekistan in collaboration with Iqra University organized a fashion show “Encounter Culture Vol.II,” featuring Uzbek Designers collection.

The fashion show provided the people of Islamabad with an opportunity of getting firsthand knowledge about various Uzbek traditional dresses.







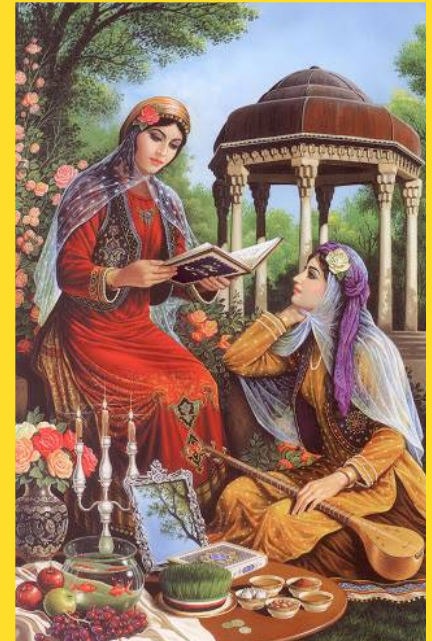
Nowruz, our Region's Joint Cultural Festival

Nowruz is the Iranian New Year, also known as the Persian New Year, which is celebrated worldwide by various ethno-linguistic groups.

Nowruz is the day of the vernal equinox, and marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. It marks the first day of the first month (Farvardin) of the Iranian calendars. It usually occurs on March 21 or the previous or following day, depending on where it is

observed. The moment the Sun crosses the celestial equator and equalizes night and day is calculated exactly every year, and families gather together to observe the rituals.

While Nowruz has been celebrated since the reform of the Iranian Calendar in the 11th



Century CE to mark the New Year, the United Nations officially recognized the "International Day of Nowruz" with the adoption of UN resolution 64/253 in 2010.

Nowruz is celebrated as the beginning of the new year by more than 300 million people all around the world and has been celebrated for





over 3,000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions. Currently the New Year festivity celebrated in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Kurdish regions of Iraq, Turkey and Syria, and throughout Central Asia.

It is a springtime celebration whose activities symbolise rebirth and the link between humans and nature. The Iranian poet Saadi (1210-1291) wrote: "Awaken, the morning Nowruz breeze is showering the garden with flowers."

While the two-week celebrations centre on seeing relatives, picnicking, travelling, and eating traditional food, Nowruz itself - which is Farsi for New Day - is steeped in ancient myths and fiction, as well as traditions and symbols.

Nowruz plays a significant role in strengthening the ties among peoples based on mutual respect and the ideals of peace and good neighbourliness. Its traditions and rituals reflect the cultural and ancient customs of the civilizations of the East and West, which influenced those civilizations through the interchange of human values.

Celebrating Nowruz means the affirmation of life in harmony with nature, awareness of the

inseparable link between constructive labour and natural cycles of renewal and a solicitous and respectful attitude towards natural sources of life.

In the first moments of the year, the Iranian people read the Prayers or recite Quran and increase their focus on God, commemorating the beginning of the new Hijri solar year.

This year, despite the outbreak of the deadly Corona virus, people of Iran and other countries in the region celebrate the arrival of this ancient eve and the coming of spring. On this Nowruz, people pray for the health, safety and development of their fellow citizens.



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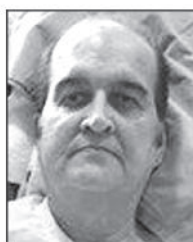
DIPLOMATIC FOCUS

Mr. Mian Fazal Elahi Editor, CEO & publisher of “**Diplomatic Focus**” and Entire team condoles the sad demise of **Mr. Mir Javed Rehman** Chief Editor & Publisher of Daily Jang Weekly Jahan.

Mr. Elahi Expressed his profound condolences on the sad and sudden demise of **Mr. Mir Javed Rehman** and prayed that Almighty Allah may rest the departed soul in eternal peace and give courage and patience to the bereaved family to bear the loss.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
CPNE Expresses profound sorrow and grief
on the sad demise of Veteran Publisher



MIR JAVED REHMAN
Publisher / Chief Editor
Daily Jang Group & Akhbar-e-Jahan Weekly
Member of CPNE

MAY ALLAH REST HIS SOUL IN PEACE
And grant courage to the family members
To bear the loss



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CONDOLENCE



The All Pakistan Newspapers Society
expresses its profound grief on the sad
demise of
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May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace
and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



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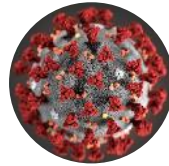
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PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE BY

DIPLOMATIC FOCUS

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC COVID-19



Most common symptoms:



Fever



Fatigue



Dry cough

Some patients may also have:



Aches and pains



Runny nose



Sore throat

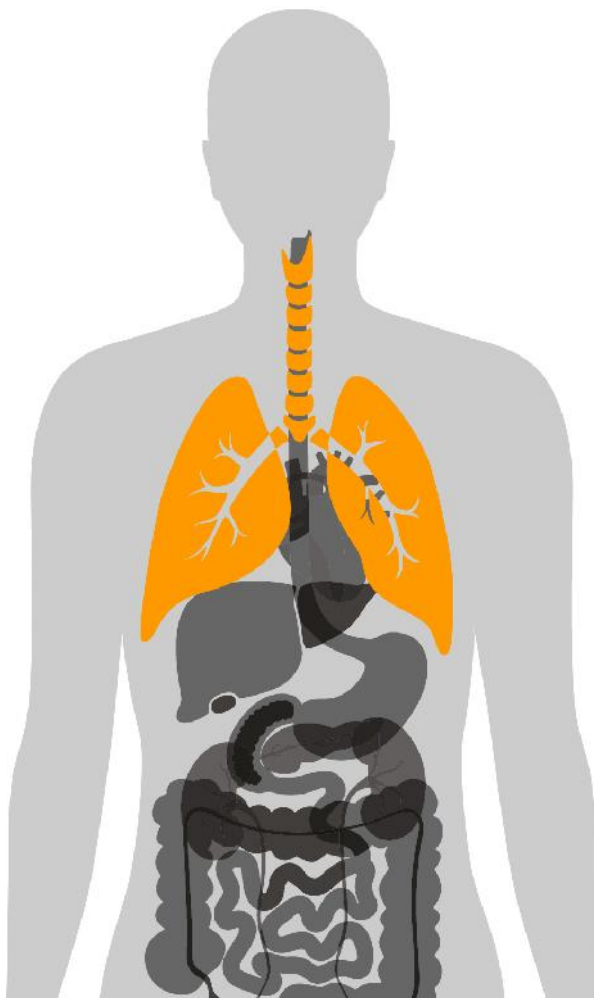


Shortness of breath



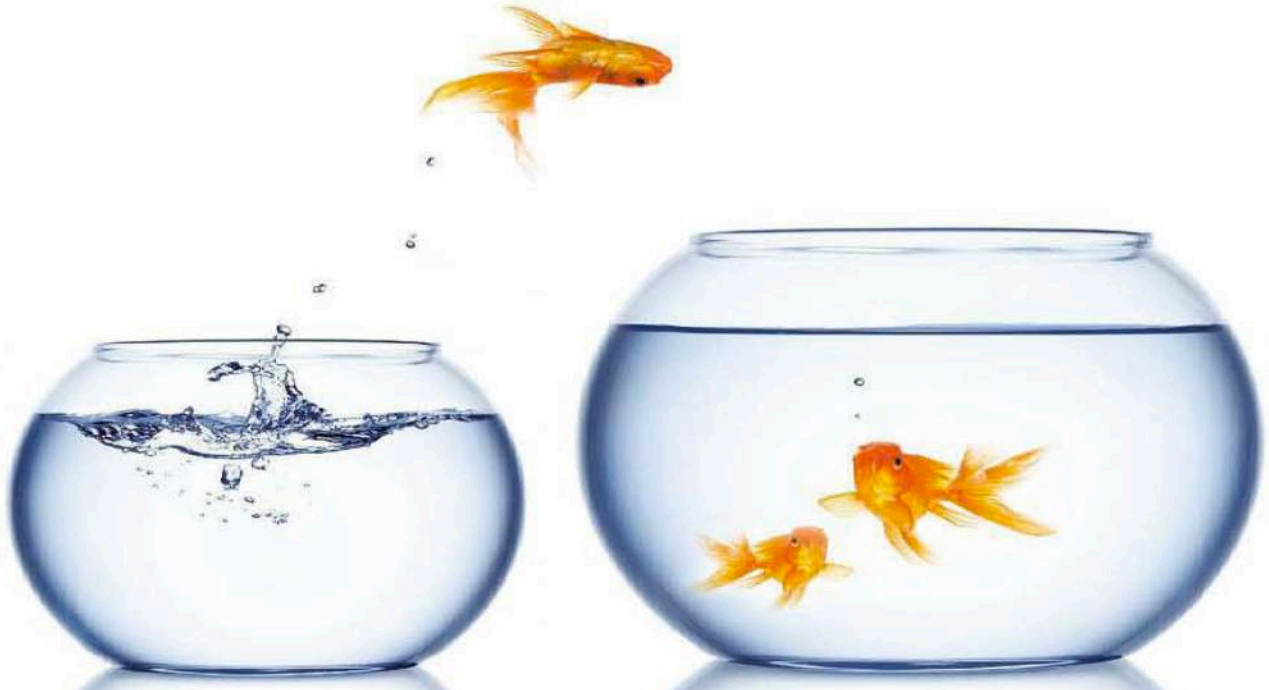
Diarrhoea

In critical cases, COVID-19 can cause severe pneumonia or a multiple-organ failure and can lead to death.



National Helpline for CoronaVirus 1166

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