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Contents



RBI Mediaminds
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- 8 The crisis triggered by the pandemic no country can overcome such threats alone: President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi
- 9 Chinese doctors and medical experts visited Pakistan shared their experiences in dealing with Covid-19
- 10 CMEC donated Rs. 5 million to PM's COVID-19 Relief Fund
- 11 MESSAGE BY CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF ADMIRAL ZAFAR MAHMOOD ABBASI NI(M) ON THE OCCASION OF PAKISTAN NAVY MANGROVES PLANTATION CAMPAIGN – 2020
- 12 VISION FO: FOREIGN MINISTER LAUNCHES 'FM DIRECT' APP
- 13 Diplomatic Focus Thru Lens
- 14 Meeting in the MFA of Turkmenistan with the representatives of the UN and its structural agencies working in the country
- 15 Imran Khan Expresses Grief for the Hardship Of Kashmiris
- 16 Pakistan considers Poland as a friend and an important potential trade partner
- 17 Post-crisis global realities
- 18 Japanese Government supports Pakistan and is ready to offer its expertise
- 18 Japan contributed one million US dollars to Pakistan as assistance for Afghan Refugees
- 19 H.E. Dr. Christian Turner thanked on evacuating 2,000 stranded UK Nationals
- 20 Oil prices plunge negative in value due to the pandemic
- 21 Shibli Faraz appointed as a new Information Minister-Asim Bajwa replaces Firdous Ashiq Awan
- 22 The global economic and financial impact of Coronavirus pandemic: COVID-19
- 24 COVID-19 outbreak in India blamed on Muslims
- 25 Coronavirus Pandemic to Bring Asia's Economic Growth to a Standstill
- 26 Mental Health & Coronavirus
- 27 Social Networking Sites Overwhelmed During Pandemic
- 28 G20 agrees to temporary debt standstill for poorest countries
- 29 WHO Director-General calls on G20 to Fight, Unite, and Ignite against COVID-19
- 30 US to halt funding to WHO, says Trump
- 31 China enters new era of space technology
- 32 Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal receives gift of 50,000 surgical masks from TIKa
- 33 Government of Pakistan thanked the Chinese Government for all the assistance in dealing with the COVID-19
- 34 President Xi Jinping attended the G20 Leaders' Special Summit on New Coronary Pneumonia
- 36 China has decided to donate another \$30 million in cash to the WHO in addition to the \$20 million
- 38 Mike Pompeo Plays Blame Game With China
- 39 COVID-19 outbreak drastically improves air quality worldwide
- 40 Elections 2020 South Korea Democratic Party wins amid COVID-19 Outbreak
- 41 Imran Khan and Justin Trudeau converse about the Pandemic crisis
- 42 Pakistan and Bulgaria have agreed to work together for promotion of bilateral trade and investment
- 49 Qatar looks for investment opportunities in health and technology
- 50 Embassy of Pakistan in Berne, Switzerland
- 51 Embassy of Pakistan in France
- 52 The Biggest Economic Depression
- 53 Saudi Envoy Hands Over 200 Ration Bags to Islamabad Club
- 54 Amazon needs to address the demands of its workers
- 55 Covid-19 and beyond reflections for reform
- 56 ALTRUISM: PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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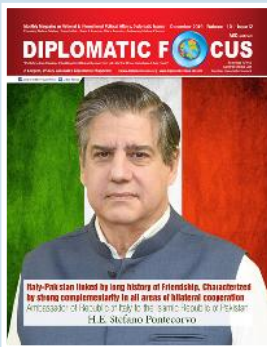
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December 2019



Mian Fazal Elahi

With the latest update, a total of 2,246,291 confirmed cases and 152,707 deaths (till April 20, 2020) according to WHO in 203 countries have taken place due to COVID-19 and this number will only increase unless the virus's spread is stopped. Managements of affected countries have responded by funding more health care facilities and developing the infrastructure of hospitals to accommodate a huge number of patients. This has put an additional strain on the fiscal spending of the governments. Along with this, the economic turmoil caused by the disease cannot be condoned. Both the largest and second-largest economies of the world, the United States and China respectively, have experienced economic shocks as discussed below. The lockdown of cities in China, restricted movement of millions and suspended business operations have slowed down the country's economic growth. The manufacturing and servicing sectors have been hit the hardest since factories have been unable to resume activity, and retail stores and restaurants have been shut down so that Chinese citizens can practice social distancing effectively. Reduced consumer spending has shattered business and investor confidence. Due to supply chain disruptions and with other markets such as those in the United States, Europe, etc. which China exports to, being hit by COVID-19, the country is neither attaining its imported items nor demand for its exports. Job losses have climbed up due to shocks from both demand and supply sides. The effects in the United States' economy have been no different. Global supply chains have broken down, adversely affecting the production in the U.S. economy. Assembly and manufacturing plants have been temporarily shut down due to the inaccessibility of essential components and materials to continue production. With the highest number of confirmed cases due to COVID-19, the citizens in the United States have been strictly advised to stay at homes. With businesses closing down and corporations moving ahead with possible layoff plans for workers, the U.S. labor economy has suffered the strongest hit from the pandemic. The number of Americans filing unemployment benefit claims which hit a record of more than 3 million.

Oil-producing firms in the U.S. have suffered excruciatingly due to oil price declines. Firms that have large debts to pay off, given the fall in investment and production, are at an increased risk of layoffs, consolidations, and even bankruptcy. On the other hand, to counter the pandemic's effects in the risky Italian bond markets, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced a 750 billion euro bond-buying program to control the market turmoil and restore the investor confidence. The market responded in affirmation due to ECB's presence in backstopping the borrowing costs, and the yield on Italian government bonds dropped to 1.542% from 2.5% on pg. 5 19th March 2020. This is a classic example of an effort that governments across the world have been taking to cope with the outbreak of the deadly 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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daily 12 O'CLOCK NEWS

DAILY PAKISTAN JOURNAL



The crisis triggered by the pandemic no country can overcome such threats alone: President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi

By Mian Fazal Elahi

President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, represented Pakistan at the Special Online Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement convened by the Chair, Azerbaijan on the theme of “United against COVID-19”. Addressing the Summit, President gave Pakistan’s perspective on measures taken at national level to mitigate and respond to COVID-19 and socio-economic challenges arising from the pandemic. Pakistan’s national response includes targeted approach of containment, strengthening health system and financial support to the vulnerable individuals and small businesses. Stressing that the crisis should be converted into opportunity, the President underscored the importance of a holistic response to COVID-19 with broader development dimensions taken along with addressing the health system challenges. The President stated “the crisis triggered by the pandemic is also a stark reminder that no country can overcome such threats alone”. A global challenge requires a global response, he added. The President also highlighted Pakistan’s generosity in providing health access to Afghans refugees, despite immense pressure on Pakistan’s health infrastructure. He called upon the UN, UNHCR and IOM to come forward in helping and assisting both the documented and undocumented Afghan Refugees. Highlighting unprecedented challenge to developing countries’ economies, the President reiterated the Prime Minister Imran Khan’s call to the international community for a “Global Initiative

on Debt Relief”. The President underscored that the efforts must be focused toward the most vulnerable countries in the world for relief and revival of economies and livelihoods. The President underlined the importance of fighting COVID-19 pandemic without politicization and pursuit of narrow agendas. The President also rejected deplorable attempts to discriminate against and demonize Muslims in the context of COVID-19. The President highlighted the plight of the Kashmiri people who continue to suffer under Indian occupation against all norms of international law and the UN Security

Council resolutions. Noting that the sufferings of the Kashmiris were further compounded due to communication restrictions and lack of unfettered access to medical and other essential supplies, the President underscored that incarceration of Kashmiri leaders and youth also made them vulnerable to the pandemic. As an active member of the Movement, Pakistan will remain engaged with NAM initiative of strengthening international response to COVID-19 pandemic.



Chinese doctors and medical experts visited Pakistan shared their experiences in dealing with Covid-19



By M. Bilal Zafar

An eight-member team of Chinese doctors and medical experts called on President Dr. Arif Alvi today. The team was led by Dr. Ma Minghui, an expert in infectious diseases. President Alvi thanked the medical team for visiting Pakistan when it was relentlessly engaged in containing the spread of Coronavirus. President particularly thanked the Chinese government for dispatching the team to Pakistan at such a critical and momentous time. Dr. Alvi underscored that coronavirus had become a threat to global health system and massive efforts were required to deal with the dangers posed by the virus. It was reiterated by the President that both Pakistan and China, two iron brothers, needed to deepen their cooperation in battling the infectious diseases. Dr. Alvi underlined that there should be more exchanges between medical and health professionals of both countries to chalk out strategies to effectively contain the spread of such epidemics in future. President Alvi fondly recalled his recent solidarity visit to China that helped deepen his understanding of China's far-reaching and effective efforts to control the spread of coronavirus. He particularly noted that Chinese leadership had undertaken massive and incredible efforts to control the epidemic and expressed delight that the lockdown from Wuhan city had now been lifted. President Alvi underlined the need to invest more in research and medicine to protect people from insidious and treacherous pandemics like COVID-19. The medical experts thanked government of Pakistan for inviting them and helping them share their experiences in dealing with the aftermath of coronavirus. The team lauded the swift efforts of the government of Pakistan that led to the containment of the virus and hoped that, with continuing measures, Pakistan will overcome the spread of coronavirus. The team arrived in Islamabad on 28th March and

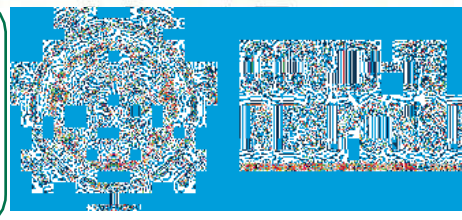


is visiting Pakistan for two weeks. The team visited medical institutions and hospitals in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore. It also held a videoconference with the medical experts, public health officials and civil servants from AJK, KPK, Baluchistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The team shared its expertise on ways to effectively combat the coronavirus. The visit of Chinese

medical experts, while Pakistan was in the midst of battling coronavirus, testified that both the people and the government of Pakistan and China stood by each other through thick and thin. It also reaffirmed the vitality of Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Co-operative Partnership.



CMEC donated Rs. 5 million to PM's COVID-19 Relief Fund



President of Zonergy Company Limited of China Mr. Richard J. Guo, Vice President Mr. Kevin Qiu, General Manager Mr. Li Kan from China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) called on Prime Minister Imran Khan and donated Rs. 5 million to PM's COVID-19 Relief Fund. They also donated medical supplies worth Rs. 3 million that includes 30,000 masks, 100 N95 masks and 300 Protection suits to

NDMA. Chairman NDMA Lt. Gen. Muhammad Afzal was also present on the occasion. GM CMEC Mr. Li Kan apprised about application of latest and environment friendly technology for enhancing cotton production in China. He offered to provide technological support to Pakistan for enhancing cotton production. President, Zonergy evinced interest regarding investment in the renewable energy sector of

Pakistan particularly manufacturing of solar panels. Prime Minister Imran Khan appreciated interest of both companies for investments in Pakistan. Prime Minister also appreciated the generous gesture shown by the Chinese companies towards Pakistan's fight against COVID-19.

MESSAGE BY CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF

ADMIRAL ZAFAR MAHMOOD ABBASI NI(M)

ON THE OCCASION OF PAKISTAN NAVY MANGROVES PLANTATION

CAMPAIGN – 2020



Mangroves Plantation Campaign rekindles the importance being accorded to the noble national cause of developing “Green Coastal Belt” in line with the Government of Pakistan initiative of ‘Clean and Green Pakistan’. Pakistan Navy has been undertaking Mangroves Plantation Campaigns since the last four years during which over six million mangroves have been planted along the Coastal Belt of Sindh and Balochistan with encouraging survival rate.

World is facing severe environmental challenges due to high deforestation rate. Similarly, Pakistan’s Mangroves have also witnessed decline at a disquieting rate. Our marine environment is threatened by coastal erosion and degradation of marine ecosystem. Depleting Mangroves not only affect coastal biodiversity but also the livelihood of our coastal communities. It is, therefore, imperative to forestall deforestation through well conceived policies and integrated institutional measure for economic sustenance and growth.

Mangroves are known to be effective in fending-off adverse effects of coastal hazards spurred by the climate change. Pakistan Navy realizing the significance of preservation of marine environment has embarked on a major initiative to revive Mangroves forests all along the coast. Mangroves Plantation Campaigns also serve to raise awareness on the importance of mangroves protection and for curb the menace of deforestation through institutionalized measures.

On this occasion, let me reiterate Pakistan Navy’s commitment to play its role in preserving Mangroves forests and the environment. I also take this opportunity to urge the Government departments, industrial community and individuals to join hands in this undertaking for the benefit of our marine ecology and our coastal communities. Let us strive together to make this Mangroves Plantation Campaign a success and preserve the nature for our future generations.

Pakistan Navy Zindabad
Pakistan Paindabad



VISION FO': FOREIGN MINISTER LAUNCHES 'FM DIRECT' APP

By M. Bilal Zafar

As part of Foreign Minister's 'Vision FO', a platform for thought leadership at the Foreign Office, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi launched a new App "FM Direct" digitally. The event was attended by over 60 Heads of Missions of Pakistan online across different geographical and time zones. Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood, Ms. Tania Aidrus, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Digital Pakistan, Mr. Shababat Ali Shah CEO, National Information Technology Board (NITB), Dr. Arslan Khalid, Prime Minister's focal person on digital media, Digital Expert Imran Ghazali, Chairman NADRA, and members of FM's Digital Diplomacy Group, digital experts and senior officials of the Ministry. The 'FM Direct APP' is a new and evolved way of thinking, encapsulating the spirit of meritocracy and transparency within the Foreign Office through digital communication. Launching the 'FM Direct APP', Foreign Minister Qureshi said that the purpose of FM Direct is to involve all officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs both at the Headquarters and Missions abroad in an interactive dialogue for the exchange of ideas. The App provides an opportunity to each officer, irrespective of grade and location, to reach out to the Foreign Minister directly and share their views independently and without any restriction. The App was launched now specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Foreign Minister believes in the critical importance of being as connected as possible

to ensure multi stakeholder coordination and dialogue; and indeed it is at a time of great crisis that innovative, game changing ideas have emerged through history. The Foreign Minister thanked Chairman NADRA, present at the meeting, for developing the FM Direct App and for ensuring its security and interactive features. The App will be regularly updated and improved in order to eventually replace other commercially available communication means in the Foreign office. Officers from the Missions present also shared their views with the Foreign Minister and lauded the launch of this modern and innovative communication medium. 'Vision FO' is part of the Foreign Minister's Public Diplomacy drive, to craft an environment of thought leadership at the

Ministry; to promote a macro vision, digital landscape and an evolved/transparent way of communication.



Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Qureshi inaugurating "FM Direct" mobile application, a public diplomacy initiative for effective internal communication at Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad.

Diplomatic Focus Thru Lens



Ambassador of Saudi Arabia H.E. Nawaf Bin Said AL Malki called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.



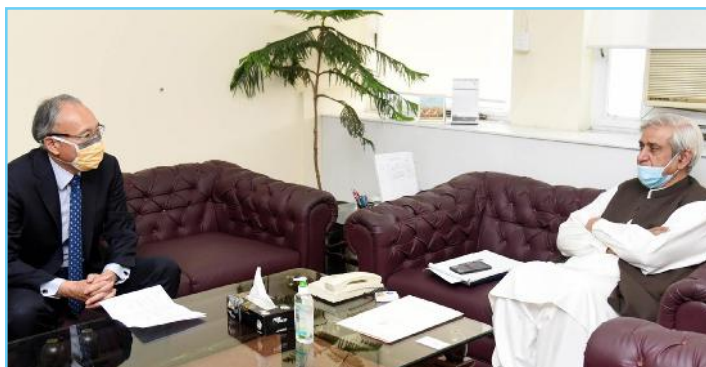
Ms. Sonya Kayani, Regional Communication Director and Mr. Tahir Hafeez, Cluster Leader Supply Chain ME and Africa, Tetra Pak Pakistan called on Prime Minister Imran to present a cheque of Rs. 20 million for PM's Covid-19 RELIEF Fund at Islamabad.



Japanese Ambassador, Kuniyori Matsuda called on Azam Swati Minister Narcotics Control in Islamabad.



H.E. Matsuda, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan called on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Makhdoom Khurshid Mahmud Khan in his Office at Ministry of Economic Affairs



Ambassador to Japan to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Kuniyori Matsuda called on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Search Syed Fakhar Imam in Islamabad.



Australian High Commissioner, Dr. Geoffrey Shaw called on Minister of State for Climate Change Ms. Zartaj Gul in Islamabad.



H.E. Mr. Yao Jing Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan calls on Adviser to the PM on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in Islamabad.



SAPM on Overseas Pakistani Syed Zulfiqar Ali Bukhari and SAPM on National Security Dr. Moeed Yousaf Called on Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Quresi in Islamabad.



Meeting in the MFA of Turkmenistan with the representatives of the UN and its structural agencies working in the country

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan R. Meredov held a meeting with the representatives of the United Nations and its structural agencies working in Turkmenistan.

The meeting was focused on the main topic of the recent telephone conversation between the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and the Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres.

As the chief of the external political agency has mentioned, the President of Turkmenistan and the UN Secretary-General reiterated the high level of cooperation, as well as discussed the urgent matters of the international

agenda, particularly the social and economic situation in the world due to the coronavirus pandemic. In this regard, the parties considered the opportunities for the perfection of collaboration by strengthening joint efforts. Thus, the Turkmen side is ready to present its experience and possibilities for the resolution of problems and is designing a National plan under the auspices of the UN.

Based on the aforesaid, Minister underlined the need to intensify cooperation with all the UN structures functioning in Turkmenistan for the implementation of the goals voiced by the Head of State that are aimed at overall wellbeing.

The representatives of international

organizations highly appraised the actions of the Government of Turkmenistan, as well as the openness of the country and its commitment to establish the international mechanisms in the field of healthcare, food security, and transport. It was stated that the given telephone conversation serves as a vivid proof of friendship, trust and mutual understanding between Turkmenistan and the United Nations.

It was emphasized that Turkmenistan, being an active member of the UN intends to cooperate further with its international partners for the search of effective resolutions and approaches to the challenges and threats of modern times.



Imran Khan Expresses Grief for the Hardship Of Kashmiris

PM Imran Khan once again expressed his worry for the pain of occupied Kashmir, that has been suffering a lockdown for over eight months now. The stress and inconvenience faced by the people across the world due to the pandemic will make them realize the agony of Kashmiris.

Arguments are going on against the lockdown in different parts of the world despite the provision of adequate food, medical, communication, and financial assistance. It is getting harder for the people, with every passing day, to stay at home, in a lockdown and they are on the verge of protesting to ease the lockdown. Brutal politico-military lockdown has continued in occupied Kashmir for over eight months without any medical, financial, and food aid with communication halted. In fact, the racist, self-centered, and selfish government of Modi has made sure that Kashmiris are deprived of all the basic necessities required for a decent survival.

Staying stuck at home and not being able to run chores according to their will, people might understand what occupied Kashmir is going through for eight months now in the absence of all the fundamental requirements with the fear of being killed if they get caught by any chance.





Pakistan considers Poland as a friend and an important potential trade partner

By Staff Reporter

Ambassador of Poland, H.E. Mr. Piotr Opalinski, called on Federal Minister for Defence Production, Ms. Zobaída Jalal at Rawalpindi.

The Federal Minister said that Pakistan considers Poland as a friend and an important potential trade partner. Pakistan highly values its relation with Poland and wants to work closely with defense industry of Poland. Pakistan and Poland can share their defense related experiences and the defense industries of both countries can benefit from each other, The Minister said. The Polish ambassador thanked the Federal Minister for her good wishes and said that Poland also desires to further expand its bilateral ties with Pakistan.



Federal Minister for Defence Production, Ms Zobaída Jalal presenting a Souvenir to Mr. Piotr Opalinski, Ambassador of Poland in Rawalpindi.

Post-crisis global realities



By Maleeha Lodhi

THE future holds much uncertainty with an unfolding health crisis convulsing the world. But the reality that will continue to shape the post-pandemic world is this. While unprecedented global cooperation and a collective response will be needed to negotiate multiple challenges — threats to public health, economic recovery, food security, looming recession and unemployment — many countries will tend to turn inwards and act on their own. This paradox did not emerge during the pandemic. It has been evident in recent years but thrown into sharper relief by the Covid-19 crisis.

The world is in fact passing through one of history's most unsettled periods with a number of trends reconfiguring the international landscape: retreat from multilateralism at a time of multipolarity, anti-globalisation sentiment, erosion of a rules-based international order, trade and technology wars between big powers and the rise of populist leaders who reject internationalism, pursue ultra-nationalist policies and act unilaterally.

This backdrop hardly prepared the world for what was to come when the deadly virus defied national boundaries and crossed continents in its remorseless spread. The ongoing crisis showed how interconnected and interdependent the world is and that no country can deal with the challenge on its own. But it also exposed the deep divisions between and within countries as they struggled to confront the havoc wrought by an unforgiving enemy.

Logic and pragmatism dictated international cooperation. As UN Secretary General António Guterres put it: "To prevail against the pandemic today, we will need heightened solidarity." But is this what we are witnessing? The short answer is, not really, because more disharmony than 'solidarity' has been on display.

Obviously, countries had, first and foremost, to focus on their own health emergency. But their efforts to contain Covid-19 would have

benefited from collaboration on travel and trade restrictions, border closures and sharing of virus data and information.

It was the unseemly row that broke out during the pandemic between the two global powers, the US and China — who have the world's most consequential relationship — that served to underline how geopolitics, not solidarity, remained the overarching reality.

The latest tussle came against the backdrop of intense trade and political tensions between the two countries. The trigger was President Donald Trump's persistent description of the coronavirus as the 'Chinese virus', alluding to where the outbreak started, and criticism of China's management of the outbreak. China's retort was to cast such comments as racist and issue stern warnings while 'unofficial' Chinese sources purveyed conspiracy theories about who planted the virus. It took a phone call from Chinese President Xi Jinping to Trump, calling for cooperation, to calm down the situation.

Despite China's call for unity, this episode underlined the volatile relationship between the two economically interdependent but strategic competitors, who will nonetheless need each other's cooperation to restart their economies and steer global recovery in the post-pandemic world. Unfortunately, though, China-bashing by American leaders has continued.

This, of course, isn't the only development during the pandemic to illustrate the limits to 'solidarity' and how the world presents a spectacle where it is mostly every country for itself.

Expectations that the G20 video summit in late March would produce a meaningful global response did not materialise. As several commentators have pointed out, this was very different from the decisive G20 action taken in response to the 2008 global financial crisis.

Europe too hardly exhibited unity. The European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, acknowledged: "When Europe really needed an all-for-one spirit, too many initially gave an only-for-me response." A former Danish prime minister put it starkly: The EU has "not passed the test of solidarity". French President Emmanuel Macron warned of the EU's collapse if it didn't evolve a common response to stricken European economies.

By far, the most extraordinary development at the height of the pandemic was President Trump's stinging attack on the World Health Organisation, the multilateral agency dealing with the coronavirus crisis, and his decision to suspend funding for it. He accused the agency

of mismanaging the outbreak and being "China-centric". Trump's earlier criticism prompted the head of the global health body, Tedros Adhanom, to warn against politicising the virus to score political points.

The UN agency was arguably slow in declaring the Covid-19 outbreak a global health emergency and may not have moved as swiftly as the escalating crisis warranted. But such gratuitous action by Trump at a critical moment was only the latest example of his contempt for multinational organisations, which have constantly been assailed by him.

The challenge to multilateralism and its institutions in recent years has not just come from Trump's America but other nations and regional powers too, who have acted unilaterally in defiance of established international norms. Therefore, the wrangle between Trump and the WHO only shone another light on how multilateral institutions are under profound stress in the contemporary international milieu.

A frustrated UN secretary general has had to frequently remind a fractured international community about the value of multilateral cooperation for the common good. In response to President Trump's move against the WHO he again called for unity, describing Covid-19 as "one of the most dangerous challenges the world has faced in our lifetime".

Despite these entreaties before and during the pandemic, international cooperation has remained in short supply. Indeed, weakened commitment to multilateralism continues to be an unedifying feature of the global environment today. From the resurgence of geopolitical competition between the big powers, declining respect for global rules and go-it-alone strategies of populist leaders, who fan xenophobia for political gain, the picture that emerges is of an increasingly atomised international system.

This is not likely to change in the post-pandemic world. It is far from certain what kind of international order will evolve from the present Hobbesian-like melee. The US presidential election later this year will be critical for its global impact. Its outcome may not overturn the trends already in play but it could have a major influence on the future of a fraying multilateralism system. For now, the outlook is not promising even at a watershed moment when global cooperation is most needed for the imposing challenges that lie ahead.

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

Japanese Government supports Pakistan and is ready to offer its expertise

By Staff Reporter

Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Kuninori Matsuda, called on the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue, Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh here at the Finance Division. The Ambassador shared with Adviser Finance the steps being taken by the Japanese



Government to contain the Corona Virus pandemic and the impact they had created so far. The Japanese Ambassador said that the Japanese Government supports the People of Pakistan in these trying times and is ready to offer its expertise and any sort of assistance to the government of Pakistan if the situation so requires. The Ambassador also discussed

certain issues of the Japanese investors in Pakistan arising out of the restrictions on business activities. The Adviser appreciated the efforts of the Government of Japan to control the Pandemic and thanked the Japanese government for its support to the people of Pakistan.

Japan contributed one million US dollars to Pakistan as assistance for Afghan Refugees

By Bilal Zafar

This is the first international contribution in response to the call made by Minister for SAFRON & Narcotics Control Shehryar Afridi for helping out the Afghan refugees. In this regard, Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Mr Kuninori Matsuda called on Minister for SAFRON & Narcotics Control Shehryar Afridi here and presented the contribution on behalf of the government and people of Japan. He said that the amount had been paid to the UNHCR and it would be used to help the Afghan refugees. He said the Japanese Government highly appreciates steps taken by Pakistan to fight Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. He said that the Japanese government wants to contribute to Pakistani airports to fight COVID-19. He said that Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees generously for 40 long years. He said that he had of late visited Afghan Refugees Camp in Peshawar and studied



how Pakistan is generously hosting Afghans especially the children and streamlined them with Pakistani children. He also said that the Japanese government has been supporting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in economic development and it would like to help the federal government too. "We appreciate the peace process in Afghanistan and Japanese would like to become a part of development process in KP and Afghanistan," he added. He said that Japan would also like to collaborate with Pakistan in the field of sports. Shehryar Afridi expressed gratitude to the government and people of Japan for helping out the Afghan refugees and said that this contribution would go a long way in helping the Afghans affected by lockdown. "We are grateful and expect that this contribution by Japan would send a strong message to the western countries to help the stranded Afghans," he added. He said that Japan's commitment to help the suffering humanity has been exceptional and Japan has

always helped people in calamity situations. Japan has led from the front and remembering those who are deprived. 2.8 million Afghan refugees and 32 percent are in camps. He said that Pakistan has provided equal opportunities to Afghans as enjoyed by our own people and they have been mainstreamed in our society. "We are issuing 60,000 visas to Afghans every month without charging even a single penny beside providing scholarship to 50,000 Afghan students," the minister added. He said that Prime Minister on his request had also written to UN Secretary General to provide special assistance to Afghan refugees. "Even amid COVID-19 fight, we are helping the refugees. Why the Prosperous World is not coming to help. 85 percent of Afghans are daily wage earners for their families. We also need to provide them medical equipment for Afghans to help fight COVID-19," he concluded?

H.E. Dr. Christian Turner thanked on evacuating 2,000 stranded UK Nationals



Federal Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan received the British High Commissioner at his Office in Islamabad. He asked him to convey his best wishes to the PM of the UK for his speedy recovery and also assured him of the utmost support in accommodating the stranded UK nationals in Pakistan.

Aviation Minister, Mr. Ghulam Sarwar Khan received the British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr. Christian Turner CMG at his office. The Aviation Minister highlighted the strong relationship and the long history between Pakistan and United Kingdom. He inquired about the health of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Mr. Boris Johnson and conveyed his best wishes for his speedy recovery. British High Commissioner to Pakistan

Dr. Christian Turner CMG thanked the Aviation Minister for his efforts to evacuate 2,000 stranded UK nationals back to their country. He stated that the two countries should enhance mutually beneficial collaboration in the time of Corona Virus. British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr. Christian Turner CMG stated that the two countries have immense trade potential which should be fulfilled in order to further strengthen bilateral ties. Aviation

Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment towards enhancing aviation operations with United Kingdom and assured the British High Commissioner of his full support in accommodating all of the stranded UK nationals in Pakistan. He further stated that the future of the two countries is very bright and that there is high potential for trade. The two dignitaries agreed to speed up efforts to accommodate stranded nationals of the two countries.



Oil prices plunge negative in value due to the pandemic

By Mian Fazal Elahi

US oil prices drop to a negative value for the first time as the oil-producing countries run out of space to store the oil due to a drastic fall in the demand amid the corona chaos, causing a historic oil market collapse leaving the traders in awe.

The price of US crude oil dropped from \$18 per barrel to -\$38 in a couple of hours, reported on Monday as the rising stockpiles of crude oil overwhelm the storage capacity forcing the buyers to take the excessive amount of oil with money paid by the producers. The oil market crashed badly as the oil demand fell dramatically due to the global lockdown crisis. The emergence of negative oil values is expected to force some of the rigs and oil wells to shut down in order to prevent digging deeper into debt and bankruptcy.

The collapse of the oil market will come as a shock to US President Donald Trump as he took all the credit for striking a remarkable deal between the OPEC oil cartel and the

world's largest oil-producing countries such as Russia to limit the flood of oil production in the market. The idea to diminish the supply of at least 10 to 20 million barrels of oil in the market was condemned and dismissed by many saying the number was too little and the time was too late to prevent the market crash. A record 160m barrels of oil were stored in the giant oil tankers outside the world's largest shipping ports, including the US Gulf.

The collapse of oil markets globally has also hurt pensioners who invested their money in shares of oil companies by tracking their performance through equity markets. With the fall in oil prices, the profitability of oil companies has been adversely affected, therefore, shaking the investors' confidence. Pensioners have less room left for the investment as they can seldom earn good returns by keeping their money in banks as the policy rate across the globe has been cut by central banks drastically. Hence, these individuals have suffered a double blow in the form of reduced interest rates and crumbling oil markets.

Brett Fleishman, a member from the climate campaign group mentioned that they are experiencing a lone instability in the economies and it's high time that the fossil fuel industry realizes that the ground is the only cheapest and best place to store the oil. The collapse of the oil market is the best example of how hard it is for the economy to rely upon the fossil fuel industry for its stability. Fleishman complains that the fossil fuel industry is trying to take advantage of this chaos as well as pushing them further towards the climate breakdown while they are in a dire need of a strong, stable and resistant economy system based on accessible, renewable and just energy sources.

The US oil market is expected to trade above \$20 per barrel recovering from its downfall this week while the Brent crude is trading for \$26 per barrel. This recovery is expected to increase overtime as the universal lockdown is lifted and the oil, as well as fossil fuel demands, will begin to rise. However, some analysts believe that the oil prices will fail to reach the same level as they were prior to the virus outbreak.



Shibli Faraz appointed as a new Information Minister, Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa has been appointed as special assistant to Prime minister (SAPM)

Shibli Faraz appointed as a new Information Minister-Asim Bajwa replaces Firdous Ashiq Awan

By Zainab Ashraf

The Federal Minister Fawad Chaudhry and Pakistan news announced on Monday that PTI Senator, Shibli Faraz has been appointed as the new information minister. Meanwhile, retired Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa has been appointed as special assistant to Prime minister (SAPM) for information.

The reason for these changes is still not definite. Firdous will be given another position or not is also not confirmed. Firdous thanked the PM on the Twitter and respected his decision. She also confuted news reports that aired that she was removed from the post because of corruption. She claimed that she was working towards the progress of the country and welfare of its people and would continue to do so under PM's leadership. She also congratulated Faraz and Bajwa.

PTI's leader Faraz was elected to the upper

house in March 2015 from KPK. He was then appointed as the leader of the house in 2018. He is the son of a renowned poet, late Ahmed Faraz. He was a former banker, currently a chairman of the senate's standing committee on commerce and special committee on circular debt. He is also a member of committee on planning and development of reforms, water resources, statistics, and climate change. He is also a member of the parliamentary committee on the CPEC.

Retired Lt General Bajwa had served as Commander Southern Command prior to his retirement. He remained the director general of the Inter-Services Public Relations from 2012-2016. In November 2019, he was appointed as the chairman of CPECA, which comes under the planning and development ministry.

Firdous Ashiq Awan, who was a devoted PPP member before she joined PTI in May 2017. She was appointed as SAPM on information

and broadcasting as a major cabinet reshuffle in April 2019. She started her political career in 1990 with an aim to improve Pakistan's healthcare system, and was the founder of the Society for Health and Development and Exchange. In 2002, she was elected to NA-286 on a reserved seat for women. In 2008, she successfully won the NA-111 poll and was appointed as the federal minister for population welfare. She later served as an information minister at the time of PPP leadership. In 2015, she resigned as the PPP Punjab vice president before joining PTI two years later.

Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari, federal minister Fawad Chaudhary, and former Pakistan ambassador to the UN Maleeha Lodhi, all congratulated the newly appointed people and appreciated the changes as "good move by the government".

The global economic and financial impact of Coronavirus pandemic: COVID-19



By Mian Fazal Elahi

The outbreak of Coronavirus in China, since mid-December 2019, has proved catastrophic not only for the country itself, but other economies as well, such as the United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Italy, and many more. The virus's spread has threatened the effective functioning of the global economy, with countries going in partial lockdowns or complete curfews. Due to the preventive measures government authorities, across the world, have taken, supply chain disruptions, closure of businesses, loss of jobs, volatility in bond and stock markets, a fall in the profitability of the commodity markets, all have been witnessed in the first quarter of the year 2020. With the latest update, a total of 2,246,291 confirmed cases and 152,707 deaths (till April 20, 2020) according to WHO in 203 countries have taken place due to COVID-19 and this number will only increase unless the virus's spread is stopped. Managements of affected countries have responded by funding more health care facilities and developing the infrastructure of hospitals to accommodate a huge number of patients. This has put an additional strain on the fiscal spending of the governments. Along with this, the economic turmoil caused by the disease cannot be condoned. Both the largest and second-largest economies of the world, the United States and China respectively, have experienced economic shocks as discussed below. The lockdown of cities in China, restricted movement of millions and suspended business operations have slowed down the country's economic growth. The manufacturing and servicing sectors have been hit the hardest since factories have been unable to resume activity, and retail stores and restaurants have been shut down so that Chinese citizens can practice social distancing effectively. Reduced consumer spending has shattered business and investor confidence. Automobile sales have gone down, and the economy's exports have shrunk by 17.2% in January and February. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a report in March stating that the Chinese economy is

expected to grow at 4.9% this year compared with an earlier forecast of 5.7%. Due to supply chain disruptions and with other markets such as those in the United States, Europe, etc which China exports to, being hit by COVID-19, the country is neither attaining its imported items nor demand for its exports. Job losses have climbed up due to shocks from both demand and supply sides, and according to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's unemployment rate jumped to 6.2% in February, highest on record. The effects in the United States' economy have been no different. Global supply chains have broken down, adversely affecting the production in the U.S. economy. Assembly and manufacturing plants have been temporarily shut down due to the inaccessibility of essential components and materials to continue production. With the highest number of confirmed cases due to COVID-19, the citizens in the United States have been strictly advised to stay at homes. With businesses closing

down and corporations moving ahead with possible layoff plans for workers, the U.S. labor economy has suffered the strongest hit from the pandemic. This has shown up in the number of Americans filing unemployment benefit claims which hit a record of more than 3 million.

The predicted economic growth has come down. The aggregate demand in the economy has fallen since consumers have been spending less, and investment expenditures have been curtailed. Industries such as Automobile, Food and Beverages, etc, have experienced severe shutters due to the virus outbreak. Chinese tourists are not travelling overseas, thus, the U.S. is expected to lose 1.6 million visitors or \$10.3 billion in monetary terms from mainland China. Hence, the U.S. is already finding it difficult to cope with its declining exports and economic activity. A loss of approximately 293,000 jobs is expected, and President Donald Trump has announced a \$2 trillion stimulus package which includes a \$500 billion fund to

Slump in oil prices

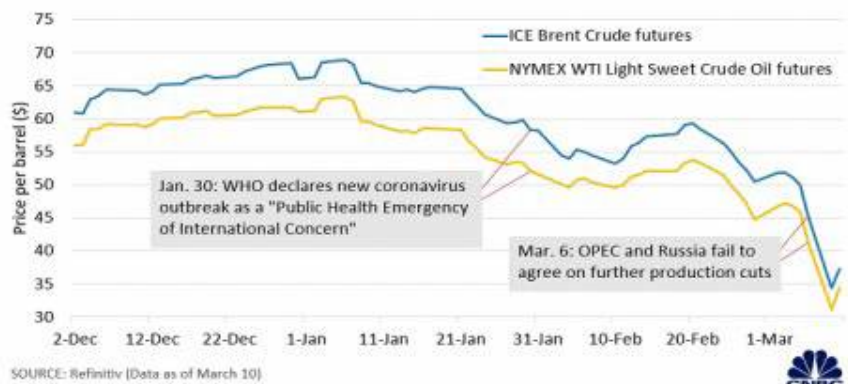


Figure 4: Change in oil prices following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sell off in stock markets

Chart shows the year-to-date percentage changes in major stock indexes



Figure 2: Changes in the major stock market indices worldwide.

Global economic growth slowdown

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) downgraded its 2020 real GDP growth projections for almost all economies

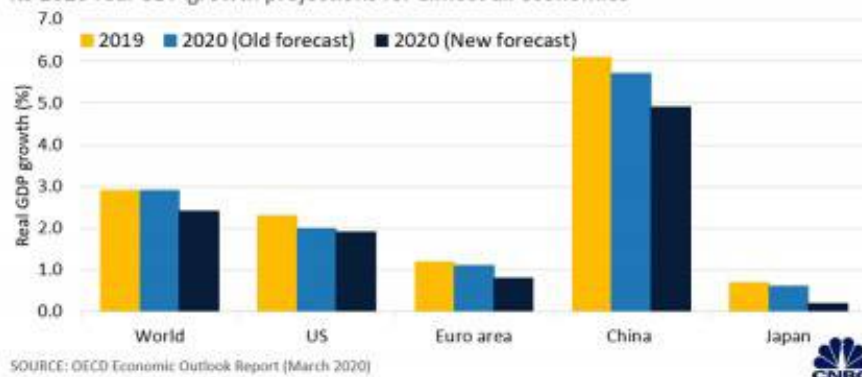


Figure 1: Real GDP growth rate for major world economies.

help the hard-hit industries.

European countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and more, and those with close economic links to China including Singapore, South Korea, etc., all have undergone economic downturns. The highest death toll has been experienced by Italy. The closure of non-essential services, accounting for one-third of total output, in major European economies, have put their GDP growth rates in jeopardy. The world has become integrated and as countries adopt restrictive measures to deal with COVID-19, manufacturing activity at regional hubs has slowed down, and major European countries have undergone tragic upsets. The United Nations has projected that foreign direct investment flows could fall between 5%- 15%, their lowest levels since the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. The worldwide financial impact of the virus has been no less devastating than its economic impact. Corporations in different countries have faced a sharp fall in their profitability levels due to declining demand for their products and services, thus, investors have lost confidence and started to sell shares rapidly, bringing down the stock prices. On Monday, 24 February 2020, the Dow Jones Industrial Average and FTSE 100 dropped more than 3% as soon as the virus spread in countries other than China. Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by 1,191 points intraday, its largest one-day drop since the 2008 financial crisis. Stock market indices in France and Spain, pg. 3 such as CAC 40 and IBEX 35, along with various others of the U.S. including NASDAQ-100 and S&P500, have fallen over time in the first quarter of the year 2020.

Continuing further, bonds have always been considered safer investments relative to stocks. Therefore, in such a panicky situation, investors across the globe have resorted to buying safehaven assets, such as the U.S. Treasury bonds, bidding up prices but lowering their yields significantly. Moreover, the U.S. Federal

Reserve cut its policy rate by a full percentage point, to a target range of 0 to 0.25%. This was done to boost the economy amidst the Coronavirus crisis by making borrowing cheaper for individuals as well as firms and encouraging them to spend and invest. A potential sovereign debt crisis is expected to occur because of the global pandemic since governments of affected economies have started to introduce stimulus packages for funding health care facilities, and helping out the manufacturing and servicing sectors. However, if countries pursue borrowing, debt servicing can become a major concern, given that the sovereign debt by September 2019 was \$253 trillion and will increase further.

Economies across the world are trying to recover from the threat COVID-19 has posed on their performance. On 11th March 2020, the Bank of England reduced its interest rate from 0.75% to 0.25%. Similarly, on 19th March 2020, the Reserve Bank of Australia also cut its policy rate by 25 basis points to 0.25%. Both the economies did so to curtail the borrowing costs, and protect the small and medium-sized enterprises during this challenging time. The only problem with this measure is that it leaves central banks with no flexibility in altering a major tool, the interest rate, to improve the economic performance since it is already too low. Another important

consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak has been the decline in oil prices worldwide. As the global economy has slowed down, the demand for energy has fallen as well. Air travel, production of firms, and many other activities have been suspended in many countries, thus, contributing to a demand slump. Oil prices in recent times have reached multiyear lows, but a driving factor behind this has also been the Saudi-Russian oil price war. China has been a major importer of crude oil, and a fall in demand from its side, due to the containment measures, led to a meeting of the members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The cartel wanted to cut oil production by 1.5 million barrels per day, but Russia refused to do so and ended its agreement with OPEC. On 8th March 2020, Saudi Arabia instead announced to increase the production of crude oil and offer a discount per barrel as well. Oil prices which had already gone downhill by 30% further declined after this declaration. Brent Crude fell more than 20%, the sharpest one-day drop since 1991. Oil-producing firms in the U.S. have suffered excruciatingly due to oil price declines. Firms that have large debts to pay off, given the fall in investment and production, are at an increased risk of layoffs, consolidations, and even bankruptcy. On the other hand, to counter the pandemic's effects in the risky Italian bond markets, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced a 750 billion euro bond-buying program to control the market turmoil and restore the investor confidence. The market responded in affirmation due to ECB's presence in backstopping the borrowing costs, and the yield on Italian government bonds dropped to 1.542% from 2.5% on pg. 5 19th March 2020. This is a classic example of an effort that governments across the world have been taking to cope with the outbreak of the deadly COVID-19.

The writer is a senior journalist and Editor of Diplomatic Focus. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect editorial policy.

Government bond yields inch lower

Chart shows the movements in 10-year government bond yields of major economies

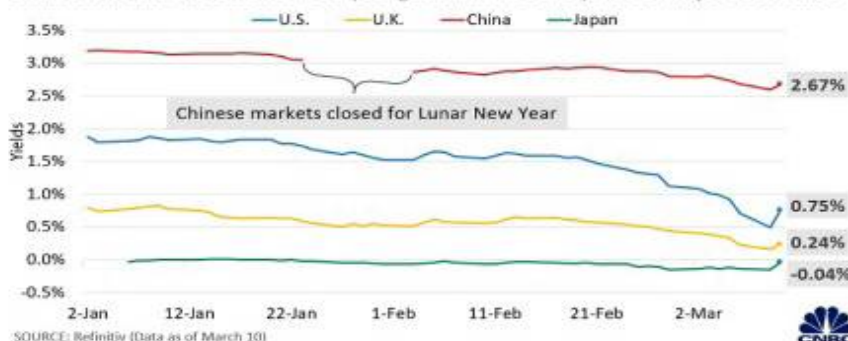


Figure 3: Changes in yields of Government securities in major economies.

COVID-19 outbreak in India blamed on Muslims



By M. Bilal Zafar

The outbreak of coronavirus in India has given it another opportunity to suppress Muslims, physically, verbally, as well as psychologically, demeaning the Muslim society further in the country. Ruthless attacks on Muslims from different parts of the country have been reported. Meetings are being conducted in the gated communities to prohibit Muslims' entry. In some villages, the entry points are being guarded to prevent Muslims from coming in. In fact, Muslim vendors have been asked to stop selling on the streets.

There has been a dramatic rise in the Islamophobic hashtags and posts on social media, accusing Muslims of infecting and spreading the virus in the rest of the population. A new terminology 'corona jihad' has been coined to explain the conspiracy.

It all began when the news circulated that people who had attended a mass gathering of Tablighi Jamat, in New Delhi, tested positive for the virus. Muslims travelled from outside India to join this meeting and they are being suspected of introducing the virus in the country. The movement was carried out in the mid of March, amid the coronavirus outbreak, ignoring the havoc the virus was creating already. Since it is difficult to differentiate

between the Tablighi Jamat Muslims and the other Muslims, therefore, all the Muslims are seen as the potential carriers of the novel virus.

But there are other people who are questioning the methodology of testing, tracing and reporting the cases of COVID-19. Suagota Datta, who is a behavioral and developmental economist highlights that a large proportion of overall positives have been confirmed in this mass gathering can be misleading since other such sort of gatherings were never tested. It is therefore, inefficiency and lack of seriousness of Indian government who failed to carryout adequate testing and reporting since end of February and March only.

Despite this, Indian media continued to humiliate Muslims by launching a high-decibel campaign against Muslims. One newspaper even published a cartoon depicting the coronavirus as a terrorist in a Muslim attire. One tweet highlighting this scenario as a Muslim conspiracy has been retweeted nearly 2000 times until Twitter removed it for violating rules. This anti-Muslim strategy is being powered by official channels as well. Officers from border security forces have claimed that there are groups of people from Muslim community that are trying to invade in India via its border with Nepal to spread the contagion.

Government of India is also participating in this agenda very subtly. It sent a message to the government of West-Bengal state, expressing the worry that it cannot impose a strict lockdown in certain areas. Out of seven localities mentioned, six were Muslim dominant. Mamta Banerjee, chief minister of West Bengal, sternly condemned this shameful act of Indian government.

For months prior to the outbreak, Muslims and their allies across India had been raising their voice against the new citizenship law and other executive exercises like the National Register of Citizens, which seemed to enhance discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. While Muslims were taking hard core efforts to break this discrimination at the political level, this anti-Muslim conspiracy is further degrading Muslims.

Muslims are hardly present in the formal sector of the economy and government, with insignificant number in state services. And now this campaign will give Hindus an authority to further devalue and kick Muslims out of other economic activities. It is painful to see the world silently watching as India demeans largest religious minority in the country and it has been doing so since forever, since the subcontinent split into India and Pakistan.

Coronavirus Pandemic to Bring Asia's Economic Growth to a Standstill

By Zainab Arshad

The International Monetary Fund predicts Asia's economic growth likely to drop to zero in 2020, a first for the region in 60



years, in a report on the Asia-Pacific region.

The director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, Changyong Rhee, said,

“Policymakers must extend targeted provision to households and firms hardest-hit by travel prohibitions, social distancing policies and other actions aimed at restraining the pandemic.”

“These are highly uncertain and challenging times for the global economy. The Asia-Pacific region is no exception. The impact of the coronavirus on the region will be critical, across the board, and unprecedented,” he told a virtual news announcement conducted with a live webcast.

“This is not a time for business as usual. Asian countries need to use all policy instruments in their toolkits.”

While Asia is set to do better than other regions suffering economic contractions, the forecast

is worse than the 4.7% average growth rates throughout the global financial crisis, and the 1.3% increase during the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, the IMF stated.

The IMF projected a 1.2% growth in China during 2020 and warned that Beijing would strive to ascend a stimulus on the same scale as it did during the 2009 crisis. “This time China may not be able to bail out Asia's growth rate,” said Mr. Rhee.

For India, the region's other colossal economy; the IMF cut its prediction to 1.9% but validated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's judgment to enforce a nationwide lockdown.

The region's advanced economies are inferred to be the hardest hit. The IMF expects Japan's economy to decrease by 5.2%. South Korea's economy is calculated to shrink only 1.2%, showing the economic value of its strategy to control coronavirus with aggressive testing.

“They contained the virus relatively quickly and that allowed them to have a partial lockdown



compared with the complete lockdown in other advanced economies,” said Mr. Rhee. But he



cautioned that Korea's dependence on exports meant it would struggle to shake off weakness elsewhere.

Asian policymakers must offer targeted support to households and firms hit hardest by the pandemic, the IMF said, calling also for efforts to provide abundant liquidity to markets and ease financial stress faced by small and midsize firms.

Rising economies in the region should tap bilateral and multilateral swap lines, seek financial support from multilateral establishments, and use capital controls as needed to battle any disruptive capital outflows caused by the pandemic, the IMF said.

The IMF argued that Asia could still enjoy a quick recovery from the crisis but only if the virus outbreak is brought under control around the world. “For 2021, there is hope: if containment policies succeed, we will see a rebound in growth,” said Mr. Rhee.

“However, it is highly uncertain how this year will progress.”



Mental Health & Coronavirus

By M. Bilal Zafar

Truly, the number of people suffering from coronavirus is increasing but there is a large number of people who are being affected mentally due to this pandemic and this effect is going to last for a pretty long time expectedly. A lot of individuals crave for social gatherings, hangouts and meet-ups so forceful isolation is not a good idea for the mental as well as emotional health of these kinds of people. Piling up the feelings of loneliness is mainly due to the anxiety of the loss of livelihood, financial crisis, fear of the spread of infection, losing the loved ones especially, elderly, and above all, uncertainty as to how and when will this virus leave the country or when will the normal routine get back on track. Considering the figures so far, it is predicted that Coronavirus is yet to peak in the country. With all the rising havoc in the official quarters whether to ease or further tighten the lockdown, no one can imagine when will this state of seclusion get over. It is a global pandemic right now and nobody knows for how long in the future.

It is a situation that is going to test the patience

of the strongest among us, let alone those more vulnerable to depression, paranoia, and those with suicidal tendencies. On Friday, the ministry of Human Rights issued guidelines for people to care for the mental health of others during this dark hour. Some of these suggestions include avoiding the association of any race, ethnicity, religion or a region with the virus, avoiding spreading wrong information or highlighting those who became a target of the virus, and refraining from creating panic. The guidelines include a helpline number that can be called by anyone if they witness someone suffering from any signs and symptoms of mental stress or abuse. These guidelines may be well-intentioned, informative and premised as they are based on the understanding that everyone has a right to seek medical help if need be. However, there should also be an official report, preferably in the form of awareness-raising campaigns about how individuals themselves can take care of their mental health during this stressful time. How do they prevent themselves and their families from falling into the black hole of despair where there is not a single ray of hope?

One of the coping strategies put forward is to avoid watching excessive news about the pandemic. The purpose is to gain awareness of the disease rather than getting obsessed over it. Moreover, it is advised to only rely on trustworthy sources of information and not all. Maintaining a social connection with friends and family via applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom is the core of surviving this quarantine time because it gives a sense of satisfaction of being in it together. Spending quality time with family, pursuing hobbies, home workouts, are a few ways to stay sane during isolation. The government must ensure the security of women and children at risk of abuse in their violent households because this can also nourish depression among these people. It is heartening to know that some people have stepped forward for free counseling, workshops, mentorships, etc for those finding it difficult to sail through the psychological challenges thrown at them by the global pandemic. Serving one's skills to help others is in itself the best self-therapy for own mental health. Coronavirus is a pandemic that can be tackled successfully if it is fought with unity instead of being afraid of it.



Social Networking Sites Overwhelmed During Pandemic

M. Bilal Zafar

During this lockdown and social distancing, citizens nationwide are staying connected to each other via social media, becoming more and more reliant on video calls for entertainment, as well as work. Also looking out for government apps to address COVID-19 concerns, as per dawn news analysis.

It is seen that overall internet traffic has increased by 15% but according to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, most of the bandwidth is being utilized by social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, etc due to the ban on social interactions during the pandemic.

Amid this outbreak in Pakistan the desktop usage of Facebook has increased by approximately 7% and that of WhatsApp web by 23.5% as the workplaces and educational institutes have gone remote. Likewise, desktop usage of Twitter has also increased by 23% since more updates related to coronavirus are available on Twitter.

From political discussions to schooling, to business and social gatherings, to fitness training and telemedicine, awareness campaigns regarding coronavirus and mental

health, to marriages and even funerals, all are taking place via video calls. First time in the political history of Pakistan, the cabinet meetings and government engagements, are being held online on video call forums.

This increasing trend of video calls has given a dramatic boost to an application called Zoom. Not only does it provide the facility of inaccessible work, its main attractive feature is that it provides a free of cost 45 minutes video call to 100 people at the same time.

As declared by the PTA, the number of users of Zoom were somewhat near 4000 on February 26th and the desktop usage surged to 85,000 on April 8th and its application users have increased from 5,404 to over 23,000 in past 44 days.

However, YouTube still remains the most viewed website in Pakistan with a growth of 4.3% in terms of online traffic. Along with this, people have become increasingly dependent on entertainment sites or applications such as Netflix. From 36,000 users to over 87,000 users within last one month.

Amid the chaos caused by coronavirus breakout, citizens have turned towards government portals to report their concerns regarding

COVID-19. The government's citizen portal app was ranked the most popular application in the country on April 9th with the daily active users increased by 74% since the first case of coronavirus was reported in Pakistan.

Insaf Imdad App is another application that is gaining popularity rapidly which was developed by Punjab Government for registration of the needy people deserving the financial aid during this pandemic. It was launched on March 31st with over 14,000 downloads each day.

Apart from this, online Ludo game is shown to be a great boredom killer during this quarantine period. It has emerged as the nation's favorite game application in the lockdown that can be played with friends and family. LudoStar's usage has risen up by 83% and that of LudoKing by 40%.

During this lockdown, social media is proven to be a major asset in helping people to pastime and prevent depression which would otherwise drive people insane, especially those who depend highly upon social gatherings and hangouts.



G20 agrees to temporary debt standstill for poorest countries

The Group of 20 nations announced support Wednesday for a temporary halt to debt payments by the world's poorest nations as they struggle to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

"We support a time-bound suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries that request forbearance," the G20 finance ministers and central bankers said in a communique following their virtual meeting. "All bilateral official creditors will participate in this initiative."

The group, which brings together the world's

largest economies, also called on private creditors, working through the Institute of International Finance, to participate in the initiative that extends to the world's 76 poorest countries.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank had been calling on the governments to provide six months of debt relief to the countries most in need, and finance ministers from the Group of Seven advanced economies agreed to do so on Tuesday providing the G20, including China and Russia, was in favor.

"This is a powerful, fast-acting initiative that will

do much to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of millions of the most vulnerable people," the leaders of the IMF and World Bank said in a joint statement.

The IMF on Monday approved a six month standstill on debt payments from 25 nations, mostly in Africa.

The G20 officials also reiterated their commitment to deploy "available tools" to deal with the health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19.

"Our efforts must continue and be amplified," the communique said.



WHO Director-General calls on G20 to Fight, Unite, and Ignite against COVID-19

By Christian Lindmeier

Communications Officer WHO

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, addressed Heads of State at today's extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit focused on COVID-19.

He told them, "You have come together to confront the defining health crisis of our time: We are at war with a virus that threatens to tear us apart - if we let it."

He welcomed the G20's initiative to find joint solutions and work together: "This is a global crisis that requires a global response."

"Fight, unite, ignite"

Dr Tedros' call was clear. First, he urged leaders to fight without excuses, without regrets – thanking countries who have already taken steps and urgently asking that they do more.

Second, he encouraged them to unite, stressing that no country can fight this alone, and calling on all countries to build on the solidarity

already sparked by the crisis.

Third, he exhorted them to ignite a global movement to ensure this never happens again.

He welcomed G20 leaders' commitment "to do whatever it takes to overcome the pandemic" to protect lives and livelihoods, as well as restore confidence and shore up stability currently

response, and called for full funding of WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan.

G20 members pledged to work together to increase research and development funding for vaccines and medicines, strengthen international scientific cooperation, and leverage digital technologies.



World Health Organization

threatened in trade and other sectors, and to commit to take all necessary health measures and seek to ensure adequate financing to contain the pandemic and protect people, especially the most vulnerable."

The G20 committed to support and further strengthen WHO's mandate in coordinating the

In turn, they tasked WHO and other relevant organizations with assessing gaps in pandemic preparedness and report the findings of this assessment to the G20 Finance and Health Ministers, in order to establish a global initiative on pandemic preparedness and response together.



US to halt funding to WHO, says Trump

By Monitoring Desk

US President Donald Trump has said he is going to halt funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) because it has “failed in its basic duty” in its response to the coronavirus outbreak.

He accused the UN agency of mismanaging and covering up the spread of the virus after it emerged in China, and said it must be held accountable.

In response, the UN’s chief said it was “not the time” to cut funds to the WHO.

Mr Trump has been under fire for his own handling of the pandemic.

He has sought to deflect persistent criticism that he acted too slowly to stop the virus’s spread by pointing to his decision in late January to place restrictions on travel from China.

He has accused the WHO of having “criticised” that decision and of being biased towards China more generally.

“I am directing my administration to halt funding while a review is conducted to assess the World Health Organization’s role in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus,” Mr Trump told a news conference

at the White House on Tuesday.

The US is the global health body’s largest single funder and gave it more than \$400m in 2019.

A decision on whether the US resumes funding will be made after the review, which Mr Trump said would last 60 to 90 days.

The WHO is yet to directly respond but UN Secretary General António Guterres said the international community should be uniting “in

solidarity to stop this virus”.

“It is my belief that the World Health Organization must be supported, as it is absolutely critical to the world’s efforts to win the war against Covid-19,” he said.

Germany’s foreign minister tweeted that strengthening the “under-funded” WHO was one of the best investments that could be made at this time.



Bill Gates ✓
@BillGates



Halting funding for the World Health Organization during a world health crisis is as dangerous as it sounds. Their work is slowing the spread of COVID-19 and if that work is stopped no other organization can replace them. The world needs @WHO now more than ever.

♥ 38.6K 5:17 AM - Apr 15, 2020



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China enters new era of space technology



The coronavirus crisis will be the biggest economic crisis face by the entire world, much worse than that of 2007-2009. It can be compared with the Great Depression that occurred between 1929-1939 where the world suffered massive downsloping of economy, companies shut down, millions of people lost their jobs, and also suffered trauma.

Coronavirus has already been deadly so far with over three million people infected globally and 200,000 lost their lives. Researches show that coronavirus may kill over 100,000 Americans, equivalent to the double of people who died in the war of Vietnam.

The Spanish flu pandemic in 1918-1919 affected 500 million people, out of which 50 million died, alone 675,000 in the USA. The world's population was 1.5 billion back then. In comparison to today's world population of 7.8 billion, it would be equivalent to 2.6 billion people getting infected and 250 million deaths.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development highlighted the fall in the global economy due to the pandemic can cost \$1 trillion in 2020 alone, in terms of slow growth, measured with GDP. This might increase over time if the virus is not contained. The 2007-2009 global financial crisis cost the USA around \$4.6 trillion in terms of a drop in growth in GDP. During the Great Depression, 25% of people lost their jobs in the countries. Half of the banks collapsed, 20,000 companies went bankrupt,

and 23,000 people committed suicide in the USA.

The COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to affect the global economy in a similar manner or even worse with people losing jobs and become unemployed likewise. The Great Depression was confined to industrial countries mainly. However, the pandemic has effected developed and developing countries both.

The International Labour Organization has analyzed that the pandemic will wipe out 6.7% of the working hours during April-June which equals to 195 million full-time workers. The pandemic is already showing its side effects. In the US, more than 22 million people filed claims for jobless benefits in the four weeks ending April 11th. However, in 2008, 2.6 million people filed for unemployment benefits which marked the biggest employment loss since 1945.

Suicides, murders, domestic violence, and robberies generally increase during the economic crisis and this will get worse due to lock down and self-isolation.

Financially stable countries such as USA, UK, and Germany have initiated huge financial support programs, larger than those in 2008, to support small/large businesses, the daily wagers and those who lost their jobs due to unemployment, to give away the salaries, and reduce working hours of the employees. The US has revealed a \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue

package or all those struggling during the pandemic.

These financial support programs can provide temporary relief, but they will put countries and companies into an unpayable debt for years. At the same time, we will also have to deal with social issues of deaths, suicides, violence, and mental stress.

There has been a similar rise in nationalism, populism, and xenophobia as that in 2007-2009 economic crisis that led to WW2, during this pandemic, just that it's even worse as a result of austerity measures that caused financial burden during the Great Depression. Coronavirus can make these strict measures worse.

Although some countries have shown generosity in response to this COVID-19 battle. China sending medical equipment and essential medication to Pakistan, Cuba, Italy, and other states. But some countries have restricted this equipment and food from being exported.

The main concern is that authoritarian governments can come in power in many countries and those in power become more established, as a result of social, economic, and, emotional hardships faced post-pandemic. If this happens, then the measures taken to contain the virus such as sealing off borders, self-isolation, tracking the virus using surveillance technologies, can be used for more menacing purposes.



Ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan H.E. Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul Handing Over Surgical Masks to Managing Director PBM Aon Abasi Duppin in the presence of Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs AL Muhammad Khan and Head of Tika Gokhan UMUT in a ceremony held at PBM Head Office in Islamabad.

Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal receives gift of 50,000 surgical masks from TIKA

By News Agency

Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) receives gift of 50,000 surgical masks from Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), for paramedical staff to protect them against COVID-19. Turkish Ambassador Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul handed over these masks to Managing Director PBM, Aon Abbas Duppi in the presence of Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Ali Muhammad Khan and Head of TIKA, Gokhan Umut, in a ceremony held at PBM's Head Office here on Wednesday. Addressing the ceremony, Ambassador of Turkey in Pakistan,

Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul expressed the love and affection of Turkish people for the people of Pakistan. "TIKA has been working with PBM hand-in-hand for the betterment of vulnerable populace, today we are pledging to win the war against COVID-19 together", he remarked, appreciating PBM's proactive response towards solving the national issues linked with poverty and diseases. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Ali Muhammad Khan appreciated the Turkish cooperation, highlighting the cordial brotherly relations between the two countries. Managing Director PBM, Aon Abbas Duppi,

in his address, expressed his gratefulness to the Ambassador and TIKA for their generous cooperation with PBM, extending care and protection to the frontline doctors and nurses combating with COVID-19. "The stimulating efforts of the Government are highly admirable in present critical scenario of pandemic corona virus; however it's also our collective national responsibility to prevent the spread of this fatal virus", he added. Managing Director PBM also spotlighted the approaching joint ventures with TIKA, including distribution of PPEs and Ration Bags.



Government of Pakistan thanked the Chinese Government for all the assistance in dealing with the COVID-19

BY Mian Fazal Elahi

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Yao Jing, called on the Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh here at the Finance Division. The Adviser welcomed the Ambassador and thanked the Chinese Government for all the assistance it has provided so far to Pakistan in dealing with the Corona Virus Pandemic. He then shared with the Ambassador the details of the Economic Relief Package given by the Government of Pakistan to the people whose lives and businesses have been effected by the pandemic. He said that during this difficult time, the government has three major priorities: to provide health care and safety to its people, provide cash assistance to the most vulnerable and keep

the wheel of the economy moving in slow but steady pace. The government has come up with a comprehensive relief package of worth Rs 1.2 trillion, which inter alia includes, Rs 200 billion assistance for workers and labourers, Rs 100 billion for supporting SME and Agriculture sector, Rs 107 billion as sales tax refunds and Rs 50 billion income tax refunds from 2014 onward. Moreover, Ehsaas Program through its urgent cash disbursement is taking care of the most vulnerable in the country. Reduction in petrol and diesel prices and deferment of payment of bills are some other significant steps. Incentivizing the construction sector is also an opportunity for those who are in need of work. The Adviser also discussed with the Ambassador the effect of the Corona virus Pandemic on the overall growth of the economy of the country as exports and

remittances shall both suffer as the global economies are in recessionary phase. He said that different economies have different levels of strength to deal with the economic losses and the developing countries will be the worst hit by the impact of this slow down. Keeping in view the present circumstances World Bank, IMF and G-20 countries are talking about debt relief without which developing countries will be worst affected. The Adviser expressed hope that these forums would be able to come up with a plan enabling developing countries like Pakistan to not only meet its international obligations but also to provide relief to its population adversely effected by this pandemic. The Adviser said that Pakistan looks forward to Chinese support in dealing with this unprecedented situation arising because of this pandemic.



President Xi Jinping attended the G20 Leaders' Special Summit on New Coronary Pneumonia

President Xi Jinping attended the G20 Leaders' Special Summit on New Coronary Pneumonia in Beijing and delivered an important speech entitled "Working Together to Fight Epidemic Diseases and Overcoming Difficulties".

In the face of the sudden new pneumonia epidemic, the Chinese government and Chinese people are not afraid of hardships and dangers, and always put people's lives and health in the first place. In accordance with the general requirements of firm confidence, solidarity, scientific prevention, and precise implementation, we insist on mobilization of the whole people, joint defense and joint control, openness and transparency, started a people's war against the epidemic. After hard work and tremendous sacrifices, the current domestic epidemic prevention and control

situation continues to improve, and the order of production and living has accelerated to recover, but we still cannot relax our vigilance. At present, the epidemic is spreading all over the world. What the international community needs most is firm confidence, concerted efforts, and united response to join hands to win this human struggle against major infectious diseases. Upholding the concept of a community of shared future for mankind, China is willing to provide assistance within its capacity to other countries and contribute to the stability of the world economy

In the most difficult time for China, many members of the international community give China sincere help and support. We will always remember and cherish this friendship

Major infectious diseases are the enemy of all mankind. The epidemic of New Coronary

Pneumonia is spreading around the world, posing a huge threat to people's lives and health, and a huge challenge to global public health security. Proposal: First, resolutely fight the global anti-pneumonia epidemic prevention and control global blockade. Second, effectively carry out international joint defense and joint control. Third, actively support the role of international organizations. Fourth, strengthen international macroeconomic policy coordination

Take common measures to reduce or eliminate tariffs, remove barriers, and facilitate trade, send a powerful signal to boost the morale of the world economic recovery. Formulate the G20 action plan, and make necessary institutional communication and arrangements for the coordination of anti-epidemic macro policies in a timely manner

At this critical moment, we should face the challenge and act quickly. I firmly believe that as long as we work together and help each other, we will be able to overcome the epidemic thoroughly and usher in a better tomorrow for human development

Xi Jinping emphasized that in the face of the sudden new coronary pneumonia epidemic, the Chinese government and the Chinese people are not afraid of hardships and dangers, and always put the lives and health of the people in the first place. In accordance with the general requirements of firm confidence, solidarity, scientific prevention and precise execution, National mobilization, joint defense and joint control, openness and transparency have started a people's war against the epidemic. After hard work and tremendous sacrifices, the current domestic epidemic prevention and control situation continues to improve, and the order of production and living has accelerated to recover, but we still cannot relax our vigilance. At present, the epidemic is spreading all over the world. What the international community needs most is firm confidence, concerted efforts, and united response to join hands to win this human struggle against major infectious diseases. Adhering to the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, China is willing to provide assistance within its capacity to other countries and contribute to the stability of the world economy.

Wang Huning, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Secretary of the Central Secretariat, accompanied the attendance.

Xi Jinping first stated that during the most difficult time for China, many members of the international community have given China sincere help and support. We will always remember and cherish this friendship.

Xi Jinping pointed out that major infectious diseases are the enemy of all mankind. The epidemic of New Coronary Pneumonia is spreading around the world, posing a huge threat to people's lives and health, and a huge challenge to global public health security. Xi Jinping put forward four proposals on the agenda of the meeting.

First, we must resolutely fight the global anti-pneumonia epidemic prevention and control global blockade. Convene the G20 Health Ministers' meeting as soon as possible to strengthen information sharing, carry out cooperation in drug and vaccine R & D and epidemic prevention, effectively prevent the cross-border spread of the epidemic, and work together to help developing countries

with weak public health systems to improve their response capabilities. I suggest launching the G20 Anti-epidemic Assistance Initiative to strengthen information communication, policy coordination, and action coordination with the support of WHO. Adhering to the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, China is willing to share beneficial prevention and control practices with other countries, carry out joint research and development of drugs and vaccines, and provide assistance within its capacity to countries where the epidemic has spread.

Second, effectively carry out international joint defense and joint control. China has established a new online knowledge center for the prevention and control of coronary pneumonia, which is open to all countries. We must gather the power of all countries to work together to accelerate scientific research in medicine, vaccines, and testing. Explore the establishment of a regional public health emergency liaison mechanism.

Third, actively support the role of international organizations. China supports WHO's leadership role in formulating scientific and reasonable prevention and control measures. I suggest that the G20 rely on WHO to strengthen the sharing of epidemic prevention and control information and promote comprehensive and effective prevention and control guidelines. It is necessary to give play to the communication and coordination role of the G20 and hold a high-level meeting on global public health safety in due course.

Fourth, strengthen international macroeconomic policy coordination. Countries should work together to increase macro policy hedging efforts to prevent the world economy from falling into recession. It is necessary to implement strong and effective fiscal and monetary policies, maintain the stability of the global financial market, and maintain the stability of the global industrial chain supply chain. China will increase the supply of raw materials, necessities, and anti-epidemic materials to the international market. We must protect the vulnerable groups and guarantee the basic life of the people. China will continue to implement an active fiscal policy and a prudent monetary policy, unswervingly expand reform and opening up, relax market access, continue to optimize the business environment, actively expand imports, expand foreign investment, and contribute to world economic stability.

Xi Jinping called on members of the G20 to take joint measures to reduce tariffs, remove barriers, and smooth trade, send a powerful signal, and boost the morale of world economic

recovery. Formulate the G20 action plan, and make necessary institutional communication and arrangements for the coordination of anti-epidemic macro policies in a timely manner.

Xi Jinping finally emphasized that at this critical moment, we should face the challenge and act quickly. I firmly believe that as long as we work together and help each other, we will be able to overcome the epidemic completely and usher in a better tomorrow for human development. (For the full text of the speech, see the second edition)

This year, Saudi King Salman, chairman of the G20, presided over the summit. G20 members and guest country leaders, as well as heads of international organizations such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank attended the meeting.

In their speeches, all parties agreed that the epidemic of New Coronary Pneumonia is spreading rapidly around the world, which not only seriously endangers the world's public health security, but also has a huge negative impact on the global economy, finance and politics. In the face of this common crisis of all mankind, no country can be alone. The international community needs solidarity and cooperation more than ever before. It should take prompt and coordinated and effective actions to effectively cut off the spread of the epidemic and strengthen scientific research on drug and vaccine development. Cooperate to increase the treatment of patients, and effectively protect people's lives and health. It is necessary to adopt effective fiscal and monetary policies to ensure the safety and stability of the global supply chain, maintain global financial stability, promote the recovery of the world economy as soon as possible, and make every effort to reduce the damage caused by the epidemic to the economy and society. All parties support WHO's leadership role and promise to help developing countries and vulnerable groups improve their response capabilities.

The summit issued a "Statement of the G20 Leaders' Special Summit on New Coronary Pneumonia".

Ding Xuexiang, Liu He, Yang Jiechi, Wang Yi, Xiao Jie, He Lifeng and others participated.

The G20 Leaders' Special Summit on New Coronary Pneumonia was hosted by Saudi Arabia and held in a video format to promote global cooperation in responding to the epidemic and stabilizing the world economy.



China has decided to donate another \$30 million in cash to the WHO in addition to the \$20 million

China has decided to donate another \$30 million in cash to the WHO in addition to the \$20 million cash donation already made to support the global fight against COVID-19 and strengthen developing countries' health systems.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19, the WHO, under the leadership of Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has been actively fulfilling its duties and upholding an objective, scientific and impartial stance. It has played an important role in helping relevant countries strengthen their pandemic response and promoting international cooperation to tackle the pandemic.

As the global fight against the pandemic enters a crucial stage, supporting the WHO is defending the ideals and principles of multilateralism and upholding the status and authority of the United Nations. The virus is the common enemy of mankind. Solidarity is the only weapon for the international community to defeat it.

Our donations demonstrate the Chinese government and people's support for and trust in the WHO. It is also our way of contributing to the cause of global public health and the joint pandemic response. China will continue to work with all parties and contribute with mutual help and support to the fight against the COVID-19, the maintenance of regional and international public health security, and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on April 22 that China and Russia have been coordinating closely on fighting the COVID-19, and the two heads of state have confirmed their political will to strengthen such cooperation via phone calls. He also said that claims about the artificial origin of the virus are groundless, and allegations against any country without adequate scientific proof are unacceptable. What is your comment?

Geng Shuang: We have noted these remarks by

the Russian side.

China and Russia are each other's biggest neighbor and comprehensive strategic partner of coordination in the new era. In the spirit of high-level mutual trust and mutual assistance, the two countries have been firmly supporting each other in the fight against the epidemic. President Xi and President Putin spoke on the phone twice in a month, which has injected strong impetus into anti-epidemic cooperation. In accordance with the consensus reached by the two heads of state, the two sides will enhance mutual support, maintain close cooperation and jointly respond to the pandemic.

We appreciate Russia's position on the origin of the virus, which is objective, fair, science-based and rational. As a scientific matter, the origin of the virus should be researched by scientists and medical experts. This is also the general consensus of the international community. Any attempt to politicize the source of the virus and dump the blame on other countries is unacceptable. The international community should, based on the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, work together in solidarity and good faith to safeguard world public health security.

Phoenix TV: US Secretary of State Pompeo said at a press availability that China is "exploiting the world's focus on COVID-19 crisis by continuing its provocative behavior", including eroding Hong Kong's autonomy, exerting military pressure on Taiwan and coercing its neighbors in the South China Sea. What's China's response?

Geng Shuang: I want to stress that China will always resolutely safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests, no matter what, no matter when.

Matters relating to Taiwan and Hong Kong are China's internal affairs which allow no interference from external forces. China's sovereignty over the islands and reefs in the

South China Sea and their adjacent waters is based on sufficient historical and jurisprudential evidence. In the meantime, we are committed to resolving differences with parties directly concerned through dialogue and consultation.

Some people in the US want to replace facts with rumors and lies and sow discords among neighbors. Such attempts will not succeed.

AFP: My question is about COVID-19. Secretary Mike Pompeo pressed China to allow inspectors into sensitive laboratories. Do you have any comment?

Geng Shuang: I have taken a lot of similar questions recently. Any objective person will see that some US politicians have been peddling lies that discredit China's anti-epidemic efforts to fuddle people's minds and deflect attention from the fact that they fell short of fulfilling their own anti-epidemic responsibilities. Facts speak louder than words. China has taken timely, swift and efficient epidemic prevention and control measures in an open, transparent and responsible manner.

Spending much energy on scapegoating and buck-passing will neither alleviate the domestic situation in the US, nor promote international cooperation against the pandemic. These US politicians need to know that.

Beijing Youth Daily: Recently, there have been some reports published by the Washington Post and others saying that since January, US CDC officials and health experts have been relaying real-time information on COVID-19 to the US government. But the latter, ignoring these warnings at that time, now claims unawareness of the real situation so as to get rid of their responsibility. What is your comment?

Geng Shuang: I have seen these reports as well. I have no comments on what is going on inside the US government. But let me tell you what we Chinese people often say: keen is the sight of the public.

Beijing Daily: Mississippi Attorney General

Lynn Fitch said on April 22 that her state will file a lawsuit against the Chinese government, demanding it to take responsibilities and compensating losses. What do you think of such blame-shifting by the US side?

Geng Shuang: We have repeatedly stated China's position on such frivolous litigation.

I would like to reiterate that shifting the blame onto China will not help solve domestic problems in the US and frivolous litigation against China will lead nowhere.

Shenzhen TV: According to LA Times and other media, autopsies conducted by California's Santa Clara County medical examiner reveal that the first confirmed US coronavirus death occurred in February 6, almost a month earlier than the first death confirmed by the US CDC. Since the case in Santa Clara had no known international travel history, US medical experts believe community transmission in the US may have begun as early as mid-January. The US government is criticized for lacking testing capabilities and putting too much restriction on testing at the earlier stage, leading to some suspected cases being treated as flu or pneumonia for lack of access to effective testing. I wonder if you have any comment?

Geng Shuang: I read those reports, too. This medical revelation again proves that tracing the origin of the coronavirus is a complex scientific matter, which should be studied by scientists and medical experts.

Hong Kong Review News: Yesterday US Secretary of State Pompeo delivered a speech on the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day. He said "wildlife wet markets create risks for the generation and spread of diseases, and may have played a critical role in the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic". He also called on China and other countries to close such markets permanently to reduce risks to human health. I wonder if you have any comment?

Geng Shuang: First I need to clarify that there's no "wildlife wet market" in China.

In fact, "wet markets" is a foreign notion for the Chinese people. Instead, we have farmers' markets and seafood markets where meat, fish, vegetables, seafood and other fresh produce are sold. A very small number of them sell live poultry. Such markets are commonplace existence not only in China, but also in many Southeast Asian countries and a lot of developing countries. They form an important part of people's everyday life. There's no prohibition on opening or operating such markets in international law.

China's legislature has banned illegal hunting, trading, transporting and consumption of wildlife. In China, farmers' markets and markets selling live poultry and seafood are not places for wildlife trading. Selling wild animals in these markets is illegal. Violations will be cracked down upon and punished as soon as they are detected.

The Chinese government always sees people's security and health as the first priority. After COVID-19 broke out, competent authorities

and local governments further strengthened regulation on these markets and adopted strict quarantine and testing to ensure all measures concerning the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases are well implemented.

The Paper: Reports say the Australian Prime Minister expressed support for an independent review into COVID-19 response and lobbied leaders of France, Germany and New Zealand, among others, to support the review. On April 22, Australian Foreign Minister Payne said in a signed article that Australia will play a leading role in such international review. I wonder if China has any comment?

Geng Shuang: I have noticed relevant reports. If they are truthful, then I have to say that the so-called independent review proposed by the Australian side is political maneuvering in essence. It will disrupt international cooperation in fighting the pandemic and goes against people's shared aspiration.

Currently, with the pandemic still spreading across the world, the most pressing task is to put people's life and health first and work together to defeat the virus. At such a critical juncture, it is highly irresponsible to resort to politically-motivated suspicion and accusation.

We advise the Australian side to put aside ideological bias and political games, focus on the welfare of the Australian people and global public health security, follow the international community's collective will for cooperation, and contribute to the global cooperation in fighting the virus, instead of doing things to the contrary.

PTI: On the \$30 million grant you announced to WHO, if I remember right, the \$20 million announced earlier is for COVID response. Is this also meant for that or is it just an across-the-board grant in addition to your annual contribution? What is the total contribution of China in 2019?

Geng Shuang: China's \$30 million cash donation to the WHO that I just announced is to support the global fight against COVID-19 and strengthen developing countries' health systems. It has nothing to do with our annual contribution.

As to the figure for China's 2019 contribution, I don't have it here and will get back to you later.

RIA Novosti: The spokesperson of Russian president said yesterday that a video conference of leaders of the UN Security Council five permanent members may be held in the next few days. Also some sources are saying that this video conference may be held tomorrow. Could you confirm this and if so which questions and issues is China going to raise during this video conference?

Geng Shuang: The COVID-19 is still spreading around the world. It can only be stopped and defeated by international solidarity and cooperation. China holds a positive attitude towards all initiatives that will help the global efforts against the virus. We believe that the summit needs to deliver a clear message of unanimity on supporting the international anti-

epidemic cooperation. We would like to stay in touch with all relevant parties on this.

Xinhua News Agency: Yesterday Australia's Wagga Wagga City Council adopted a motion at an extraordinary meeting, rescinding a previous resolution to sever sister city relations with the city of Kunming in China's Yunnan Province. The Mayor is to write a letter of apology to the Mayor of Kunming. Do you have any comment?

Geng Shuang: China welcomes and commends Wagga Wagga's correct decision.

Since sister city ties were established in 1988, Kunming and Wagga Wagga have conducted friendly exchange and fruitful cooperation, which has fostered a deep friendship between the people.

The Chinese people value the friendship with the Australian people. Facts have proven once again that a few Australians' attempts to smear China and undermine bilateral friendly relations are deeply unpopular and will never succeed.

The Australian: I wonder residents in China who are Australian citizens and citizens from anywhere but China, like my wife, who is currently in Canberra, when will the travel ban be relaxed and when do you think they will be allowed to come back to China?

Geng Shuang: As COVID-19 is still spreading across the world, countries including China have imposed travel bans on border entry and exit. These measures will be adjusted according to how the epidemics develop, so I cannot give you a precise answer now. In fact, the restrictive measures taken by China and others since the outbreak of COVID-19 have been adjusted quite a lot of times based on how the virus has been contained. Now the urgent task for all is to cooperate, defeat the virus and resume normal life and production as soon as possible.

PTI: You said just now that many countries including China have imposed travel bans on border entry and exit and that these measures will be adjusted according to how the epidemics develop. So is China going to take different approaches toward each country to permit those with relevant visas to come back to China? Geng Shuang: I cannot give an exact answer now because things vary from country to country. But as I said to the Australian journalist, I can assure you that our measures will be adjusted according to how the epidemics develop.

The most urgent task now is for all countries to pull together in order to defeat the pandemic.

The Australian: When China makes a decision on which people can come back and when to China, will it look, say in Australia's case, look at how successful Australia has been in dealing with the epidemic or will it look instead at the political relationship between Australia and China and the same for any other country?

Geng Shuang: China's policies and measures after the COVID-19 broke out all aim to protect the safety and health of Chinese and foreign nationals. This is our sole purpose.



Mike Pompeo Plays Blame Game With China

US State Secretary blamed China for not informing the WHO about the outbreak of Coronavirus before it was too late to manage. It also accused China of destroying the COVID-19 samples and not sharing adequate information regarding the virus. Mike alleged China of diverting all the world's attention to the pandemic so that it could pursue its agenda on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the South China Sea. Opposed to this, China had already informed the WHO of pneumonia of an unknown cause on December 31st. With further testing, the genetic composition of the virus was revealed and subsequently brought in the knowledge of WHO on January 3rd.

Blame game is an old habit of the USA. It is doing so solely to protect its government from the public criticisms of the deteriorating condition of the country because of the virus.

The supreme power is leading, in terms of, both, the total number of cases reported and the death toll. Neither China nor the WHO is to be blamed. The USA government is at fault totally for showing a careless attitude.

The WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of global concern on January 30th. The alarm rang, but the USA paid no heed to it until March 13th. While China and all the countries across the world were making the most of every single minute, America was busy wasting time, downplaying the virus and cursing China for the chaos.

Pompeo should be honest about how non-serious Trump's leadership was in terms of taking control of the virus. Accusing China of initiating and spreading the virus is a very petty way of putting off the blame from themselves.

As the infection rate gained intensity, the media outlets have begun to recognize that the USA administration failed to contain the virus effectively. However, when it comes to China, be it media, Democratic or Republican, all get united which is supposedly why Mike hyped up the Hong Kong and, South China Sea matter.

A huge number of people are dying every day, it is not the right time to play politics. It is time to focus on saving lives of innocent people that are on the edge only because of Trump's carelessness. As compared to the havoc caused by the virus in America, China has smartly contained the virus through its efficient and strict lockdown measures. Playing this blame game is way more dangerous than the virus itself and the USA has paid a very heavy price for it already. Therefore, the blame game must stop.



COVID-19 outbreak drastically improves air quality worldwide

By Monitoring Desk

The only positive aspect of the coronavirus outbreak so far seems to be the decrement in the air pollution levels. Since many factories, and business companies have shut down, and fewer cars and traffic on the roads along with fewer planes in the sky, our natural environment is progressing towards recovery gradually.

As the major sources of greenhouse gases are their emission from the industries, airplanes and road traffic and as a result of this pandemic, there has been a drastic reduction of emission of these gases due to a global shut down of factories and cancellation of flights. The only positive outcome of this pandemic is that it is providing us the carbon-free feel of air that we terribly lacked and needed.

WHO estimates that about 3 million people die annually from respiratory tract diseases caused by air pollution. Over 80% of the people residing in urban areas are exposed to air quality levels that exceed safety limits. This situation is even worse in third world countries where 98% of the states fail to meet the standard WHO air quality levels.

Measurements from the European Space Agency's Sentinel-5P satellite show that during late January and early February 2020, the levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in the cities of Asia and Europe fell by 40% as compared the same time period in 2019 only because of this global industrial shutdown due to the pandemic.

Two weeks post nationwide lockdown was announced on March 23rd in the UK, NO₂ levels in some cities dropped as much as 60%

compared to the same time frame in 2019. NASA revealed that NO₂ pollution over New York and other major metropolitan areas in the north-eastern USA was 30% lesser in March 2020, compared to the monthly average from 2015-2019.

Most NO₂ comes from road transport and power plants in the industrial zones, that can worsen the respiratory ailments such as Asthma. It also adversely affects those suffering from lung or heart conditions.

In a way, the world is conducting the largest ever global air pollution experiment for a relatively short period of time, by turning off major air pollution causing sources, that can supposedly guide us towards taking essential measures required for controlling air pollution levels in the future. Across China, over half a billion people were in a lockdown at the peak of the outbreak over there. China alone emits 30 megatons of NO₂ per year that were estimated

to reach 40 megatons by 2019. Each ton of NO₂ that is not emitted as a result of the pandemic is equivalent to removing 62 cars from the road annually. A drop of 40% in NO₂ levels across China means getting rid of nearly 192,000 cars.

This is an evident indication as to what improved air quality results can be achieved as an outcome of eradicating the use of cars and replacing them with an electricity operated mass vehicle. Therefore, using electrically operated transportation, expanded train lines and electric cars can serve to dramatically improve air quality.

The temporary air quality betterment can be made permanent if fossil fuel generation is replaced with renewable energy and low carbon resources. The Global virus outbreak has shown us how a future with improved air quality might look like or it might as well just indicate the challenges the world is going to face ahead.



Surface concentrations of nitrogen dioxide over northern Italy, January 31 versus March 15 2020.

Image: Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS); ECMWF

Elections 2020

South Korea

Democratic Party wins amid COVID-19

Outbreak

South Korean 21st legislative election were held and the ruling party of South Korean President Moon Jae-in has won a decisive victory in legislative elections, which is being seen as an endorsement of government response to the coronavirus pandemic.

South Korea was among the first country to hold a national election since the COVID-19 outbreak. Millions of people were observed wearing face masks and standing at least 1 meter apart, at the polling stations.

Voting booths were established at government-run isolation centers. In the beginning those individuals who were under self-quarantine were unable to cast their vote, but the election authorities introduced a provision that will allow these individual to leave their house to vote after polling booths close to the general public at 6 p.m. on Wednesday.

Strict safety and social distancing measures were taken in account throughout the election procedure as before casting the votes, the voters underwent a temperature check, sanitized their hands and put on disposable plastic gloves. Anyone with a temperature of more than 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit was required to vote in a special booth. Moreover, all polling booths were continually disinfected.

In the nearly 300 seat National Assembly, President Moon Jae-in's Democratic Party won 163 seats, the party's sister group, the Platform Party won a further 17 seats, giving the government a total of 180 seats, becoming the biggest win by any party since the current democratic constitution.

Among the winning candidates for United Future was high-profile North Korean defector Thae Yong-ho. MrThae, a former senior diplomat at North Korea's embassy in London, won a seat for the Gangnam district in Seoul.





Imran Khan and Justin Trudeau converse about the Pandemic crisis

PM, Imran Khan, highlighted once again, that Pakistan was fighting dual battles. One against protection from the deadly virus and the other to save the slumping economy from further facing a backlash. Prime minister had a telephonic conversation with the Canadian Prime minister where he mentioned the twin crisis Pakistan is going through, along with other developing countries. Both ministers discussed the outcome of this global pandemic and several other issues of mutual interest.

Imran Khan expressed his deep sorrow for the deaths of Canadians due to coronavirus, emphasizing on the fact that this global war required a greater level of cooperation at an international level.

PM Khan thanked Trudeau for its participation in Pakistan's inclusion in the G20's debt relief program. PM also underlined the need to enhance financial support for the developing countries in order to save lives of the people suffering from the virus or dying from hunger and stabilizing the socioeconomic conditions of these countries. Both of the leaders discussed the facilities they can provide in order for the nationals to return to their respective countries.

PM also expressed immense pain to his Canadian counterpart as to how India was demeaning Muslim minority in the country blaming them for the spread of COVID-19 in



the country. The situation in occupied Jammu-Kashmir was way too worse in terms of banned communication, inability to access healthcare facilities and other essential supplies they were necessary to fight the deadly contagion.

Imran and Justin promised to stay in close



contact in all the matters of mutual interest and come with the solutions all together.



Pakistan and Bulgaria have agreed to work together for promotion of bilateral trade and investment

**H.E. Assoc. Prof. Aleksandar Borisov Parashkevov
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the
Republic of Bulgaria to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**



Your Excellency, given your professional biography so far, would you share your experience and tell us about the places where you worked as a doctor?

Good afternoon, Mr. Elahi and welcome to the Bulgarian Embassy in Islamabad. It is an honor for me to welcome you and to be yours and the readers of the prestigious Diplomatic focus magazine, interlocutor. It is true that this is my first designation as an ambassador and it is a

Bulgarian universities are very attractive to international students because of the quality and good educational programs taught in English, French and German. Currently, 30 students from Pakistan are studying under various programs in Bulgarian universities.



great honor for me to be in Pakistan.

I have worked as a military surgeon for over 25 years. In that capacity, I have been in many hotspots around the world: Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Haiti, etc. At these places I saw the true face of war: suffering, grief

and pain. I have had many patients including some from Pakistan and I have been in touch with many of them so far. It can be said that I was part of the so-called "health diplomacy" that Bulgaria conducts in different parts of the world.





Your Excellency! What is your favorite thing about living and working in Pakistan?

In my preliminary preparation in Bulgaria, I had the opportunity to get acquainted with the history and life in Pakistan in details. I learned many interesting facts about your country and filled my knowledge of it. I also came across a very interesting study by our scholars that the birthplace of the Bulgarians could be considered northern Pakistan and for our ancestors the ethnic group of the Kalashi tribe. According to anthropologists and geneticists who worked on the project “Bulgarians - Motherland”, the roots of the Bulgarians are not Slavic, as it was thought until recently. But let us leave these scientific disputes to scientists and return to the present question. My impression from all my contacts with the locals is that you are friendly people, you are always ready to help and treat others with respect. It is a pleasure for me to walk through the streets of Islamabad and talk to ordinary people and listen their stories about your country. I believe this is also a way to enrich my knowledge about your way of life.

Your Excellency! You have been serving for the last several months as ambassador here in Pakistan. My question is how would you like to rank Pakistan in terms of tourism?

My family and I have been in Pakistan for almost 5 months. During this time I had the opportunity to visit the city of Lahore and Sialkot. In addition to the formal meetings with the Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and prominent businessmen, I and my family also visited some cultural and historical sites and got acquainted with the rich history of these places. For example, Fort Lahore, Badshahi Mosque, etc. I am planning also a visit to Gilgit and Hunza Valley soon. According to my information, these are very beautiful



places with unique nature. In Bulgaria Pakistan is also famous for the excellent mountaineering conditions you have.

Your Excellency! People to people contact are very necessary to further deep rooting the bilateral relations between the two countries? My question is how many people of Bulgaria visited Pakistan for tourism in the last year 2019 and how many Pakistani people went to Bulgaria in 2019 for tourism?

Bulgaria is known for its natural and historical features. Our country is visited annually by about 10 million tourists, as their number is increasing every year. Unfortunately, tourists from Pakistan are relatively small: according to data from our Ministry of Tourism for 2019 Bulgaria was visited for the purpose of tourism by 937 Pakistanis, an increase of 1.8%. This shows a lot of unused opportunities and scarce tourist information between the two countries. For that reason one of my main tasks will be to promote our tourist opportunities and destinations.

Your Excellency! Bulgarian educational system is considered one of the best education systems. I would like to know how many Pakistani students are enrolled in the universities of Bulgaria. Would you further increasing the number of students under scholarship programs?

First, thank you for your assessment of our educational system. Bulgarian universities are very attractive to international students because of the quality and good educational programs taught in English, French and German. These diplomas are recognized throughout the European Union, which is also of great importance. Preferred specialties are medicine, engineering, tourism and political science. Currently, 30 students from Pakistan are studying under various programs in Bulgarian universities.

Your Excellency! Bulgaria is one of the important countries of European Union in terms of bilateral trade with Pakistan. Would you like to share the information of volume for trade and the products which are import/export between the two countries? And how do you see the export opportunities for Pakistani businesses to Bulgaria?

Pakistan is an important partner of Bulgaria in South Asia and we would like to continue developing fruitful cooperation in areas of mutual interest. There is a potential that needs to be harnessed. Bulgaria is a strong EU member



with a key geostrategic location - Asia's gateway to Europe. Our well developed infrastructure, connectivity with Western European countries and ports in Black Sea enable our Asian partners to reach Western European markets.

In 2019, Bulgarian exports to Pakistan amount of USD 14.7 million with a decline of 9.8% compared to 2018. It mainly includes vegetables, raw or unmanufactured tobacco, textile and more. Imports from Pakistan during the same period amounted to USD 30.9 million with increase of 48.8% over 2018 and includes mainly: bed linen and table cloths, epoxy resins and more.

Bilateral trade in 2019 had an increase of nearly 23% over the previous year.

Last year, the Second Bulgarian-Pakistani Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation was held and an agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of tax fraud in respect of income taxes was signed. The two sides agreed to support investment projects and seek opportunities to set up joint ventures in mutually agreed areas. It should be noted that Bulgaria is the closest EU Member State to Pakistan by land. Five to six days are needed from border to border for the transportation of goods and this is another great prerequisite for successful trade relations. Since last year, well-known Pakistani mango has also appeared on our local market, which aroused great interest among consumers in Bulgaria. We should not forget our most convertible product, too: Bulgarian yogurt. There are quite a few connoisseurs here. In Pakistan, you have conditions to produce the product, not to mention that you are in the 5th position in



Relations between Bulgaria & Pakistan are traditionally based on a high level of understanding in the political, commercial and economic fields

the world of milk production. By combining your capabilities and our technology, we can produce a quality and healthy product that will diversify the Pakistani market. Finally, I would like to summarize that in Bulgaria there are very good conditions for foreign investments that Pakistani businessmen can benefit from.

Your Excellency, this year marks the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Pakistan, how do you assess the current and future relations between the two countries?

Diplomatic relations between our two countries were established in 1965, and Bulgarian Embassy in Islamabad was opened in 1968. During these years, relations between our two countries expanded regardless of their geographical distance and their affiliation with different historical and cultural heritage. At present, relations between Bulgaria and Pakistan are traditionally based on a high level of understanding in the political, commercial and economic fields and on effective cooperation in international organizations.

Your Excellency! Did you always want to be an Ambassador? If not what was your childhood ambition?

Interesting question. To be honest, I never thought about the profession of a diplomat. My interests were in the arts, because I loved to paint, I was drawn to history, but in the



end I graduated in medicine and specialized in surgery. A serious medical specialty that requires great dedication and responsibility, and in my case more than 25 years from my professional life.

My assignment as an Ambassador is a challenge for me and my family and a great chance, both personally and professionally. I believe in the

success of my diplomatic mission and will continue working for the development of our friendly relations.

Your Excellency! If you could give one piece of advice to students interested in becoming an Ambassador, what would it be?

To answer this question, I will refer to the





following: if you want to pursue a profession, you must first understand the nature of that profession, to be aware not only with the good and attractive sides, but also the downsides. To be convinced that you can overcome the difficulties and accept them, to love people, and especially for the profession of “diplomat” to be able to accept different opinions and never say “NO”, because there is always a solution.

Your Excellency, this is a myth that there is a woman behind the success of every man. Is there any role of your wife in your success?

This is an old sentiment, and if I remember correctly it was said by Napoleon Bonaparte. It has lasted in time and is valid today. Obviously, I enter as part of that rule. Analyzing backwards in a personal and professional way, things are going that way for me. In all decisions I have made, I felt the support of my wife Iglika, even in my current position as Ambassador, which is a great challenge for me and my family. According to Eastern psychology, the woman is the soul of the family; she is the one who determines the spirit and mood at home. My wife has that power to inspire me, to be my encourager and motivator. Well, I feel that way with my spouse,

who, by the way, is psychologist by profession and vocation; she is the one who truly have impact of my life.

Your Excellency, No blessings are comparable with the blessing of a child. Can You please share or express your emotions in words when you became a father? What is the impact of your daughter in your life?

I would like to wish the friendly Pakistani people, first and foremost, peace, prosperity and unity in the face of all the modern challenges

Yes, having a child in the family is the most wonderful blessing. Five years ago our daughter Beloslava was born, and since then she has

brought only joy and happiness into our live. A month ago, we celebrated her birthday at the kindergarten she attends in Islamabad. It was an unforgettable day of joy and children smiles for Beloslava and her new friends from Pakistan and other countries. I can also say that she adapts more than well here and she feels very happy with her stay in Pakistan and this is very important for me as a parent as my profession involves living in a foreign country.

Your Excellency! Would you like to give any message for the people of Pakistan and the readers of Diplomatic focus magazine?

Of course, with pleasure. I would like to wish the friendly Pakistani people, first and foremost, peace, prosperity and unity in the face of all the modern challenges, especially now, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for many years to the respected readers of Diplomatic focus Magazine to enjoy this specialized edition and receive up-to-date information on diplomatic life in Pakistan. Once again, thank you very much for your attention to me and Bulgaria!



Qatar looks for investment opportunities in health and technology

BY Mian Fazal Elahi

Qatar intends to remain active in terms of investment amid the global pandemic and searches for reasonable deals in the health and technology industries. Ali Shareef Al Emadi informed that \$320bn Qatar Investment Authority (QIA)'s main focus is to look for decent market opportunities and plunging asset prices to identify buying chances. Qatar is looking for investing its billions in the sectors that can stabilize its economy despite some adverse coronavirus effects.

QIA is trying to imitate the idea of other neighboring countries i.e. UAE and Saudi Arabia's public investment fund's Mubadala Investment Company of investing the money in buying the assets at plunged prices due to the global lockdown. The PIF has already bought shares in Carnival, and large oil companies including Royal Dutch Shell, Total, Repsol, Equinor, and Eni.

Doha has announced a \$21bn support package

for business and \$2.75bn into the local stock market which is separate from QIA. Qatar has always been one of the most high profile investors, attaining the award worthy assets such as luxury department store Harrods and The Shard building in London. It invested billions of dollars in 2008-9 in financial institutions Barclays and Credit Suisse, and carmakers Volkswagen and Porsche.

However, when Emir Sheikh succeeded his father in 2013, QIA halted its activities as it gave in most of its finances to third party managers. In 2017, \$20bn was sent back to the country to stabilize the domestic economic sector after some Gulf countries cut off its domestic ties Qatar. QIA, chaired by Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdul Rehman, who is also a foreign minister. Is considered an inspirational individual in Doha, has become more active lately. He is looking for investments in North America and Asia.

Last year, the QIA's deals included leading a \$500m equity financing for SoFi, a US

digital lender. It also teamed up with Crown Acquisitions, the US real estate group, to buy a 24 percent stake in a portfolio of properties controlled by Vornado Realty Trust, which they estimated to be worth \$5.6bn. The portfolio includes some of New York's most iconic properties in Times Square and along Fifth Avenue, including the St Regis hotel and luxury jeweller Harry Winston. Qatari government was budgeting \$55 per barrel of oil this year but planned to reduce it to less than \$40 per barrel in 2022.

Doha claims to give its 100% to stabilize its domestic economy therefore, it can devote itself at a maximum capacity to support Qatar Airways. Qatar is also giving its best to build its infrastructure for the upcoming Football World Cup in 2022. All the venues will be completed by 2021. Emaadi assured that the government was taking care of all the migrants working on the venues, ensuring their sound health and safety.

Embassy of Pakistan in Berne, Switzerland

H.E. Mr. Ahmad Warraich Ambassador of Pakistan to Berne, Switzerland



In the last two weeks, stabilisation, rather than a downward trend of Covid-19 related incidents, is being observed in Switzerland. Till date, 29,061 individuals have been tested positive. Unfortunately, 1,337 have died due to the corona virus infection. Switzerland employed its excellent health facilities to respond to the pandemic. Its government promptly took precautionary measures and the citizenry also acted responsibly.

There are approximately 6,000 Pakistan origin individuals residing in Switzerland. Thankfully, only less than a dozen were affected by the virus. They have recovered. This indicates that our community has also acted responsibly and have observed the guidelines issued by the Swiss government.

Only a few have approached us with a request of travel to Pakistan. We will assist them as soon as a possibility of their travel to the country is available.

During this whole period, the Embassy has remained open. We have been providing consular services and information to our community. The Staff of the Embassy also personally stayed in touch with members of the community and has kept the community up-dated on the Covid-19 situation.

Swiss economy will face difficulties in the coming months. The Swiss government took swift actions to provide relief package to businesses and individuals. Our community in Switzerland is hardworking and resilient. We hope it will overcome the challenge. We will maintain close contact with our community members and continue assisting them, where needed.



Embassy of Pakistan in France

H.E. Mr. Moin ul Haque's Ambassador of Pakistan to France, Message to the Pakistani community

Dear brothers, sisters and elderly, In these tough times, when the whole world is occupied by the coronavirus, here I am, addressing with you again.

All of you must be informed that France is also gripped by this virus and it has spread very rapidly over here as well. According to the data, over 1 lac people have been affected by the virus and 15,000 died so far.

I am relieved that the Pakistani community is showing a sense of responsibility and is following the instructions directed by the government. It is not only for you and your family's safety but it is highly essential to overcome this virus. According to the information we have received, 40 Pakistanis have been affected by the virus and sadly 9 died over here.

I, on behalf of my own self and my colleagues, intend to express grief. May Allah grant them the highest rank in heaven and give patience to their family members and relatives. I pray for the sick and for their speedy recovery from this ailment.

Ladies and gentlemen, I realize that it would have been very difficult to organize funerals of those who passed away but I am glad that these issues, to a greater extent, have been taken care of.

I also want to mention that those who are facing financial problems in affording the funerals will be facilitated with the donations by the Embassy as much as possible.

There is another problem, ladies and gentlemen, of those stranded Pakistanis. Those people who

left the country due to some work, and got stuck in different other countries when the flight operations were canceled due to coronavirus outbreak or those whose visas expired or students whose hostels and universities shut down are facing terrible circumstances. This issue has been discussed in detail by the Foreign Minister of Affairs, H.E. Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi. He assured of the arrangements and safety precautions have been made and taken and those stranded Pakistanis will be back to the country very soon.

It is my request to the stranded Pakistanis stuck here to please contact us so that we can inform the government about them.

Ladies and gentlemen, in these crucial times, we should support each other. The Embassy has also donated grocery bags, containing necessary food items, to those people who are facing a financial crisis, who are locked inside their homes, elderly, handicapped, or women who cannot leave houses. In this regard, I want to thank the Pakistani community especially Sir Sardar Zahoor, Sir Chaudhary Arif, Sir Afeem, Sir Haidar. I wholeheartedly thank all of these people that they helped us out with these donations. Along with this, I want to thank our quarantine manager Sir Hussain and all the others who supported us and participated in this noble task of delivering food.

Along with all the other countries, our beloved country Pakistan is gripped by this virus. The government of Pakistan has taken all the safety precautions and protective measures to fight this virus. The government has launched this

huge Ehsaas program for poor class and low wagers through which it is providing assistance. It is a program that is establishing worldwide. Covid-fund has also been established. PM has requested overseas Pakistanis to contribute in this donation drive and he has assured that donations will only go to the needy people. So I will also request you to keenly participate in this donation drive. The details of this funding drive are present on our website. However, accounts in the National Bank have also been established.

In the end, I would like to give honor to the Pakistani community that is fighting with these difficult times with responsibility and patience. I want to salute all those friends working in hospitals i.e doctors, paramedical staff, those working in grocery stores, people who are associated with the food business, those who are associated with transport occupation, those working in community service programs, those associated with welfare states, our journalists who provide all the knowledge at doorstep during this crucial time, or those who are helping us in arranging funerals. They have not only saved humanity but have made Pakistan proud.

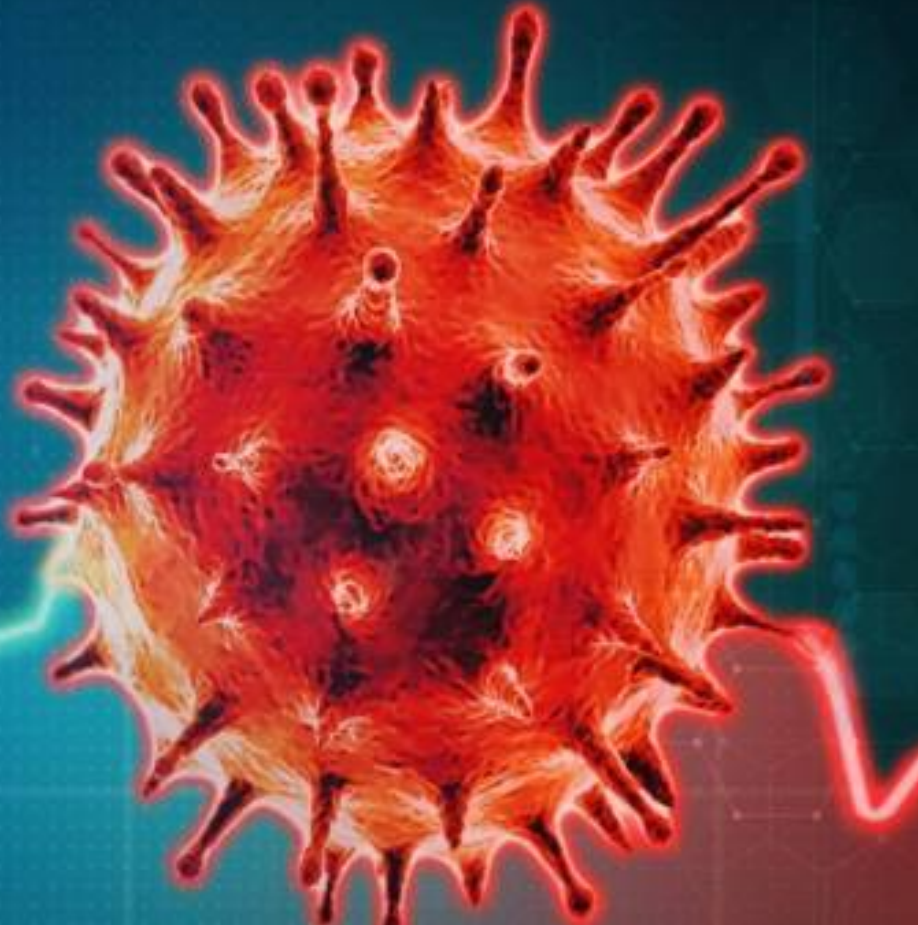
Ladies and gentlemen, I assure you that you are not alone and helpless in this condition. We are keeping an eye on you. The Embassy and I are in contact with the Pakistani community. The Embassy is standing by your side. For God's sake, don't lose hope, don't hesitate, it is a tough time, Allah will show mercy, and good days await ahead. Take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Goodbye. Long live Pakistan.



By Mian Fazal Elahi

The Biggest Economic Depression



The coronavirus crisis will be the biggest economic crisis face by the entire world, much worse than that of 2007-2009. It can be compared with the Great Depression that occurred between 1929-1939 where the world suffered massive downsloping of economy, companies shut down, millions of people lost their jobs, and also suffered trauma.

Coronavirus has already been deadly so far with over three million people infected globally and 200,000 lost their lives. Researches show that coronavirus may kill over 100,000 Americans, equivalent to the double of people who died in the war of Vietnam.

The Spanish flu pandemic in 1918-1919 affected 500 million people, out of which 50 million died, alone 675,000 in the USA. The world's population was 1.5 billion back then. In comparison to today's world population of 7.8 billion, it would be equivalent to 2.6 billion people getting infected and 250 million deaths.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development highlighted the fall in the global economy due to the pandemic can cost \$1 trillion in 2020 alone, in terms of slow growth, measured with GDP. This might increase over time if the virus is not contained. The 2007-2009 global financial crisis cost the USA around \$4.6 trillion in terms of a drop in growth in GDP. During the Great Depression, 25% of people lost their jobs in the countries. Half of the banks collapsed, 20,000 companies went bankrupt,

and 23,000 people committed suicide in the USA.

The COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to affect the global economy in a similar manner or even worse with people losing jobs and become unemployed likewise. The Great Depression was confined to industrial countries mainly. However, the pandemic has effected developed and developing countries both.

The International Labour Organization has analyzed that the pandemic will wipe out 6.7% of the working hours during April-June which equals to 195 million full-time workers. The pandemic is already showing its side effects. In the US, more than 22 million people filed claims for jobless benefits in the four weeks ending April 11th. However, in 2008, 2.6 million people filed for unemployment benefits which marked the biggest employment loss since 1945.

Suicides, murders, domestic violence, and robberies generally increase during the economic crisis and this will get worse due to lock down and self-isolation.

Financially stable countries such as USA, UK, and Germany have initiated huge financial support programs, larger than those in 2008, to support small/large businesses, the daily wagers and those who lost their jobs due to unemployment, to give away the salaries, and reduce working hours of the employees. The US has revealed a \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue

package or all those struggling during the pandemic.

These financial support programs can provide temporary relief, but they will put countries and companies into an unpayable debt for years. At the same time, we will also have to deal with social issues of deaths, suicides, violence, and mental stress.

There has been a similar rise in nationalism, populism, and xenophobia as that in 2007-2009 economic crisis that led to WW2, during this pandemic, just that it's even worse as a result of austerity measures that caused financial burden during the Great Depression. Coronavirus can make these strict measures worse.

Although some countries have shown generosity in response to this COVID-19 battle. China sending medical equipment and essential medication to Pakistan, Cuba, Italy, and other states. But some countries have restricted this equipment and food from being exported.

The main concern is that authoritarian governments can come in power in many countries and those in power become more established, as a result of social, economic, and, emotional hardships faced post-pandemic. If this happens, then the measures taken to contain the virus such as sealing off borders, self-isolation, tracking the virus using surveillance technologies, can be used for more menacing purposes.



SAUDI ENVOY HANDS OVER 200 RATION BAGS TO ISLAMABAD PRESS CLUB



Islamabad: King Salman Aid and Relief Centre give ration package bag to the media workers of Islamabad Press Club suffering from corona pandemic. Ambassador Nawaf Bin Saeed Al Maliki handed over 200 ration bags to Islamabad Press Club suffering from corona pandemic. Mian Fazal Elahi Editor/Publisher/CEO of Diplomatic Focus and Founder Member of Press Club Mian Akhtar Hussain offered thanks to Saudi representatives. Mian Fazal Elahi Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are two iron brothers who have deep brotherly relations. Whenever one faces difficulty, other stands by him in difficult times. During corona pandemic, more than one crore and twenty lac Pakistanis have been unemployed. Provision of ration bags to them is the biggest need, the Mr Fazal Elahi said. We will also provide ration to people on their doorsteps during Ramazan. Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Saeed Al Maliki said, "I am happy that we are initiating supplying ration to unemployed media workers during Covid-19 pandemic. We are working along Government of Pakistan. King Salman Aid and Relief Centre is providing aid during Covid-19 pandemic in 49 countries including Pakistan. We are proud of having Pakistan as our brotherly friend since independence of Pakistan. Our strategic, economic, humanitarian and diplomatic relations are growing day by day. We are standing with people of Pakistan in crisis time, he said.



Amazon needs to address the demands of its workers



During this coronavirus outbreak, Amazon CEO seems to have become pretty generous. On March 11th, Amazon announced a \$25m fund for the workers who contracted COVID-19 infection during the pandemic. A week later, company also informed that it was donating \$1m fund to its four foundations including the greater Washington, DC area, the site where new Amazon headquarters was located, to help with the relief efforts.

On April 2nd, Bezos promised to give a \$100m donation to Feeding America, a nonprofit organization that runs food banks and pantries across USA. After a week, Bezos himself visited the Amazon store, surveyed the whole area and thanked all the workers for their tireless services. While all the Amazon workers need one hell of a financial assistance as well as moral support amid this outbreak, it was seen as just a showoff attempt of Bezos to make up for his terrible track record on workers' rights in the company. Granting financial aid or food for one time is not sufficient for such needy blue-collar workers and their families.

Working conditions were never satisfactory at the Amazon but pandemic has made them worse. Workers are made to work extra hours, but are not provided with basic necessities and protection, including sick leave. Amid the virus outbreak, this is extremely risky especially at a very low income. So far there have been numerous cases of the COVID-19 but the facilities take no time to reopen after application of disinfectant. Amazon workers have complained that they have been deprived of basic protective items such as hand sanitizers,

gloves, and masks nor there has been a proper cleaning facility of the Amazon stores. This has results in a widespread protest by Amazon workers across the entire USA.

Employees have also complained that they have been kept uninformed of the others testing positive for the virus. They are not compensated in terms of financial assistance when they are quarantined, and do not get sick leave unless they have contracted the disease, which many people cannot do due to low testing rates.

Whole Foods is no different. Its workers are allowed to have as many offs as they want during March but unpaid and paid two weeks off if they are tested positive for the virus. For any medical emergency or a death, workers have to donate offs to help each other. Amazon workers and Whole Food employees started a protest against these unjust policies.

Instead of compensating for their ill treatment of their employees on the front line, taking online orders and visit stores, helping families to abide by the lockdown rules, Amazon and Whole Food executives have adopted rather detrimental responses. They have attempted to nullify the protests by giving false statements in the media and news and also, punished some employees who took part in the protests. Executive have also taken action to prevent unionization of employees at the outlets.

People might wonder that the companies cannot afford to extend the benefits of the workers amid the global pandemic, when the overall economy is down sloping. However, this

is really not the case. In fact, the company is breaking records of the profit even during the COVID-19 outbreak. It increased from \$140bn to \$1.14 trillion between February and April.

Until now, Amazon has offered a temporary increase of \$2 per hour in the pay till the end of the month and doubled the hourly rate for overtime work. But this is not sufficient given its record breaking profit.

Amazon workers have put forth an agreement requiring 5,000 signatures from North America and Europe, highlighting exactly what they think is just in terms of improving working conditions and paying better. They are demanding a full paid sick leave without any conditions, pay for childcare and subsidies, 1.5 times increased pay in case of any hazardous condition, an end to rate based write-ups, provision of adequate facilities in case a worker is tested positive for the virus.

Amid this global crisis, millions of people are losing their jobs and many are growing desperate, as they suffer hunger and homelessness. Companies like Amazon and Whole Foods are taking advantage of the situation, assuming that desperation would allow exploitation. Little do they know that people are becoming more sensitive to social injustice and are becoming more aware of unfair treatment coming from higher authorities such as these executives. Workers are growing more confident and determined to fight for their rights. It's high time that their needs are paid heed to or else things will be hard to handle.

Covid-19 and beyond reflections for reform



Hamid Asghar Khan

The provenance and origins of Covid-19 remain shrouded in mystery as the uncertainty governing a second wave, mutation of the strain, and possibility of re-infections persist. This outbreak has virtually compelled mankind to lock itself away, it has no known cure and guesstimates of when a vaccine will be ready are too speculative to be mentioned.

As the world grapples with COVID-19, discussions regarding the shape of things to come have been initiated, even as debates rage over the 'correct' way of handling this global outbreak. Governance The Moroccan local government system led by the Waalis, Governors, and Mayors has done an admirable job of not only enforcing the lockdown, but also in ensuring an ample supply of daily use products for citizens across the Kingdom. Most importantly the state has been able to reach out and assist the most needy and vulnerable members of society.

A commission for the devolution of powers has since long been striving to strengthen and empower local governments, so that regions have the capacity and means to better address the requirements of communities in a localized area. The benefits of smaller, independent and self-sustaining administrative units, more in touch with, and better able to respond to local requirements are beyond question.

Every nation has done its best to respond. The methodology, speed and intensity of response has varied, based on threat perception and advice of medical experts, but also based on compulsions arising out of peculiar local conditions and the vision, will and capacity of the State to respond and enforce its writ.

The Moroccan response was immediate, effective, unfaltering and assertive, which has paid dividends in keeping infection rates low. The policies flowing from the top were seamlessly implemented across the Kingdom. Being immediate neighbors of some of the worst hit European nations, the Kingdom was quick to shut down all flights and sea connectivity. The absolute lockdown enforced since 20th of March has been professionally enforced with security forces arresting over 75,000 individuals who violated stay at home orders. To the credit of the national media and civil society, they have unquestioningly supported the state in its remarkable efforts to ensure collective wellbeing.

His Majesty the King also being the 'Ameer ul

Momineen', ordered all mosques closed for all prayers in the larger public interest. The decision has been obeyed in letter and spirit, indicating high levels of education and discipline in a country that is 99% Muslim. With the advent of Ramadan a 7pm to 5 am curfew has further been imposed. The National Covid-19 Relief Fund boasts a healthy balance of \$ 3.3 billion, almost entirely raised within the Kingdom, within a few days. Major corporate groups and wealthy individuals led by His Majesty himself were the first to contribute.

Drift from Globalization Since the end of WW-2, the world has witnessed an ever more globalized, interconnected and interdependent world. Materialism and conspicuous consumption along with commensurate pollution and exploitation of natural resources had reached a peak with no signs of abating. Mankind has been cavalier and insouciant while disposing off toxic waste while simultaneously exploiting the earth without thought for detrimental degradation.

President Trumps 'America first' move was the first sign of a change. Brexit became the second bombshell that created shockwaves and raised question marks on the collective European project. Now there is an expression of angst emerging from loud voices in Italy, who feel they had been left alone by Europe in the face of the crisis. As countries confront the global pandemic, the natural instinct for self-preservation has kicked in.

The initial squabbling over masks, medicines and frenzied search for ventilators, along with attempts to outbid friends and allies has triggered what may perhaps be a lasting "country first" and more insular approach to relations between States marking the beginning of a new phase in global relations.

Travel & Tourism The impact on convenience, cost and prerequisites of international travel are certain to be profound. Prior medical testing, fewer flights, more expensive tickets, socially distanced seating and even quarantining requirements at the destination lie within the realm of possibility.

The enduring impact on travel can in no way be underestimated. The global leisure and tourism industry will also take an enormous hit in the short to medium term. Economies used to the influx of huge numbers of tourists will have to brace for the impact as hotel rooms remain unbooked and restaurants and souvenir shops remain near empty.

A recession has set in the global economy, and hardly any sector or country shall escape unscathed. Globalization and interdependencies will in this case trigger an adverse, negative chain reaction, having a slowing down effect as people,

corporations and governments reduce spending to focus on essentials. Less demand, less exports, less production, resulting in less employment.

Stimulus In such a situation the extraordinary stimulus package announced by Prime Minister Imran Khan for the construction industry is a timely and beneficial step. This will benefit a host of allied industries such as cement, wood, steel, brick and finishing products in addition to generating employment. With an existing housing deficit of almost 10 million units, real demand exists and can be met through this timely initiative which will generate significant economic activity.

Exports Exports are also going to face severe challenges as Europe, one of our prime markets, has been particularly hard hit, and many orders have been cancelled or are on hold. With the crash of the global oil market, the middle east also faces a waning cashflow as economies are heavily reliant on robust oil and gas revenues. The glut accumulated over the current phase will take time to dry up, and with a global recession in full effect, reduced demand indicates that no high oil revenues may be anticipated soon.

Migrants & Remittances Pakistan is also faced with the prospect of the return of large numbers of overseas workers, especially from the Middle East where roughly half the populations consist of migrant workers. This along with a commensurate drop in remittances shall present yet another challenge. From the middle east alone, it is feared a few hundred thousand are likely to make a one-way trip back home in the coming months.

SME's There is an opportunity to assist these individuals by pro-actively crafting a plan to bolster the small and medium enterprise sector that is the backbone of any economy. Few if any new jobs would be available to absorb them in the short term as a dreaded decrease of employment in the domestic industrial sector is also anticipated. In a phase when foreign investment is likely to be ever more difficult to come by as economies struggle with their internal pressures, the importance of forging ahead with CPEC projects becomes ever more important for both job creation and stimulating growth.

Population Our 'youth bulge' and 'potential demographic dividend' have frequently remained the subject of debate. Now is a good time for us to recognize that an unchecked population is not in our long-term interest. Indeed, the first step in China's economic miracle was the difficult, but ultimately beneficial step of limiting the size of the family.

[The author is a Diplomat serving as Ambassador of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Morocco.]



ALTRUISM: PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic all the nations across the globe are engulfed in a war like situation. The pandemic has at large shaken the global geopolitical and the socio economic fabric of the world. Countries and the global leaders are levelling their best to overcome the pandemic outcomes however no big successes have been accredited to any nation's claims so far.

The diseases associated with the new coronavirus are also spreading in Pakistan but at a low pace. Considering the fact that nation share borders with two global epicenters of the pandemic Iran and China the situation could have been worse. In Pakistan, according to the most recent data provided by the official website launched by the government of Pakistan <http://covid.gov.pk/> there are less than 8418 confirmed cases and no more than 160 deaths linked to it. As of now the countries across the globe have found lockdown an effective tool to fight the spread of the virus alongside social distancing but this has also left many people out of their jobs and daily wagers at the behest of mercy or generosity only. Following the global suit Pakistan too followed the guidelines to prevent the spread of this novel corona virus and imposed lockdown which

came with certain side effects mainly in terms of economic recession. But Pakistanis as always are bonding together to assist the less fortunate and all those unable to leave their homes to earn bread for their families in a unique and inspiring way. Specifically, many are offering zakat, the traditional Muslim charity tax, for daily wage earners who have no paid leave, health insurance



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or financial safety net. The altruism displayed by the nation yet again in these testing times speak volumes about nation's strong resolve to uphold fraternity and brotherhood irrespective of faith, caste or creed.

The unprecedented strength and valor of the paramedic staff who are the real frontline soldiers in this war has indubitably bolstered the volunteerism of the whole nation. The Armed Forces of Pakistan also stepped forward in this moment of emergency and provided the government with every possible support they could. Pakistan Navy in this regard is extending its support to affected families by donating food/ commodities while reaching out to needy families in Coastal and Creeks areas of Sindh and Balochistan. Besides carrying relief operations in the coastal areas Pakistan Navy also continued relief drive and thousands of ration bags including food/ kitchen commodities and cash amounts were distributed to deserving families at Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, Kasur, Lahore, Muzaffar Garh, Rahim Yar Khan, Multan, Kharian and Sialkot. Pakistan Navy keeping its tradition of Humanitarian Assistance alive is also distributing PPEs and other necessary equipment required to battle the prevalent precarious situation in the far flung areas in Balochistan. Medical and personal protection equipment including masks, gloves, goggles and protective dresses were also provided to authorities and hospitals in various remote villages/ towns and cities. As per Pakistan Navy's released press releases, Pakistan Navy has been able to distribute by around 70000 Ton of Ration and approximately 50000 PPEs and Medical equipment.

Not only the Armed forces but volunteers from almost every walk of life have contributed in this national relief drive to help the less fortunate not lose hope. As of now, Pakistan has not seen the surge in the cases as many nations have witnessed in Europe or America, yet the nation requires to follow the guidelines amid lockdown provided by the health experts, Government Officials, televangelists and clerics. Globally it has been seen that so far only those countries have been successful in fighting this pandemic who actually were successful in breaking the chain of the spread of the virus by observing complete lockdown and practicing social distancing. Scientists, Paramedics and researchers across the globe are working day and night to find the antidote to the virus and soon they will be successful.

To conclude let's highlight and encourage sounding work done by all tenets of nation especially Pakistan Navy contribution with the help of philanthropists, donors and volunteers for reaching out to masses in entire country. Let's make a resolve to turn this unity and national volunteer movement into a real national movement of resolve.



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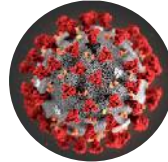
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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC COVID-19



Most common symptoms:



Fever



Fatigue



Dry cough

Some patients may also have:



Aches and pains



Runny nose



Sore throat

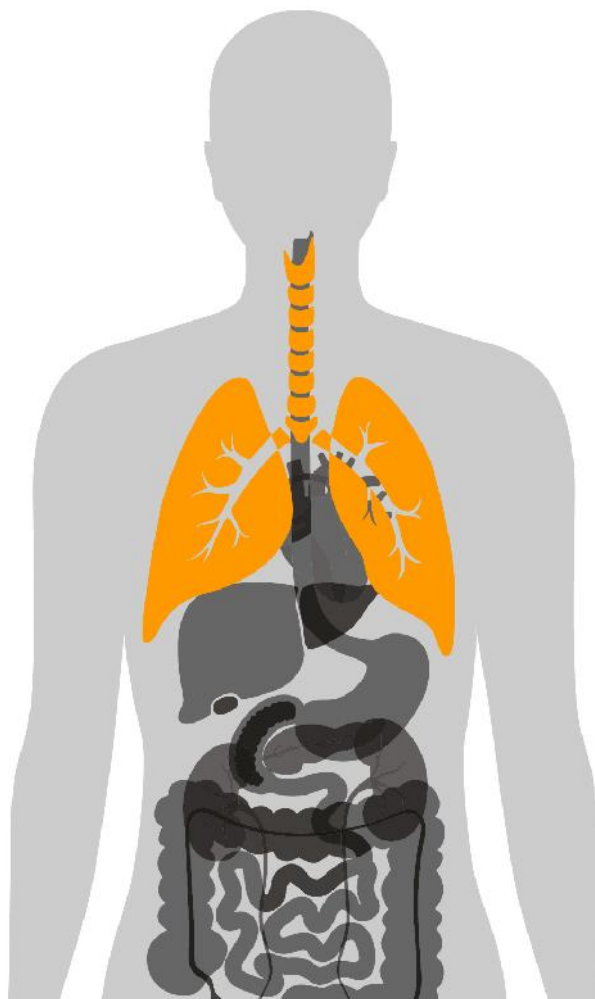


Shortness of breath



Diarrhoea

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



National Helpline for CoronoVirus 1166



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