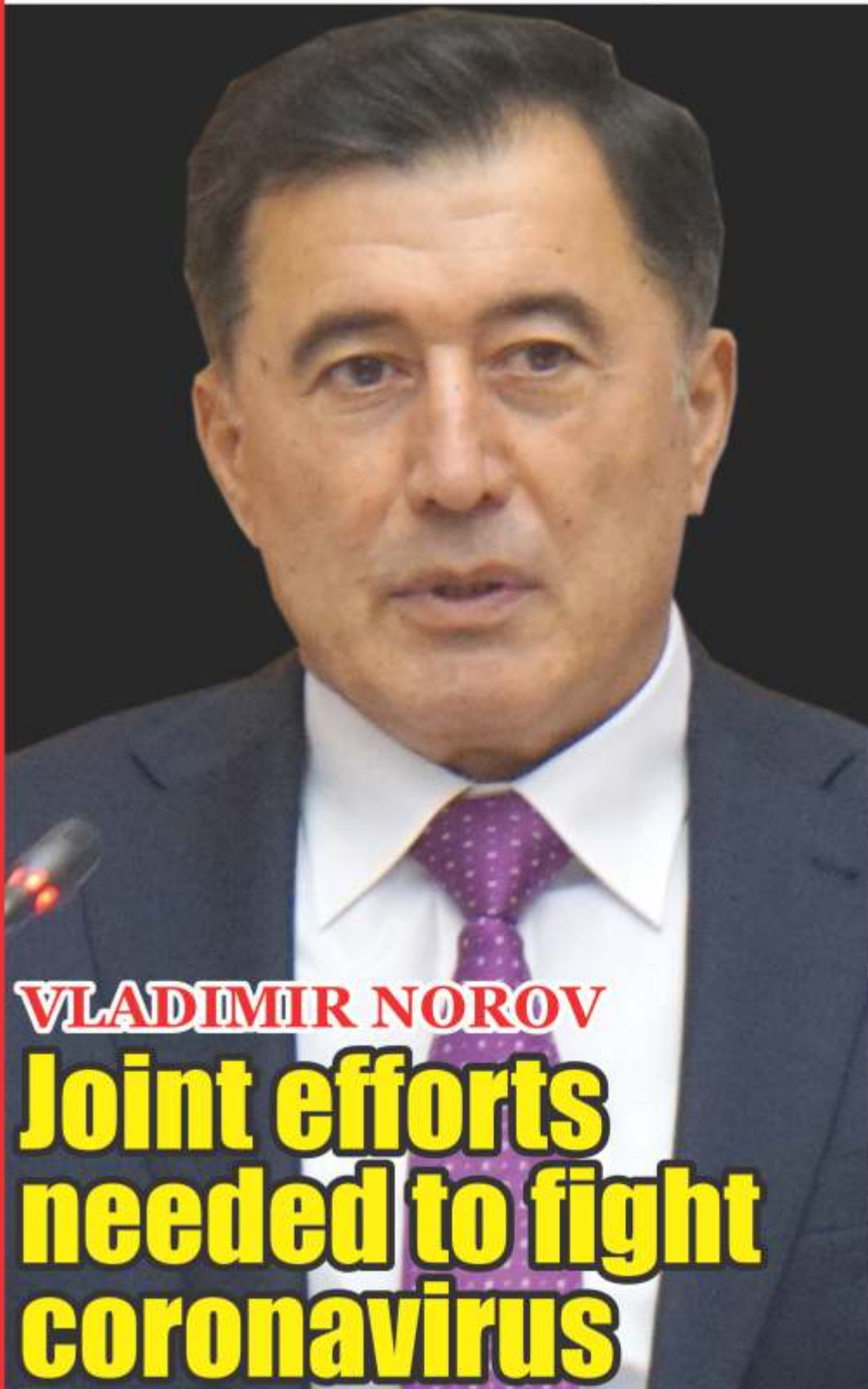


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needed to fight
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The Kashmir issue and Pakistan's options



The Indian govt presumably wants to muzzle all dissenting voices being raised after its unlawful and unwarranted action in occupied Kashmir without knowing the fact that all such coercive measures would ultimately end up in uniting the suppressed class of so-called biggest democracy of the world. Such tactics would surely prove a recipe of disaster for India particularly in Kashmir.

By doing away with the constitutional provisions India in fact has exhausted all its options on Kashmir and provided Pakistan with an ample chance of not only raising this issue at all available forums but to resurrect this matter in the Security Council also, which it has ably done. Now the question is, is it enough to bring Indian under pressure to withdraw its decision? Certainly not. It may be a humble beginning. It needs a fearless follow up to force India for a revision of the decision.

Unlike, India seems to have put itself in a vantage position by scrapping the constitutional provision. Pakistan now will have to make sure that the decision is withdrawn and India is forced for a plebiscite in occupied Kashmir as per the UN resolutions. The task is arduous and uphill.

Pakistani leadership is trying to make the world understand that the Indian decision would drive the region towards precipice. Both countries happen to be the nuclear powers – a fact which makes things more complicated for any armed conflict would prove fatal for the region and the world at large. Despite our 'frantic' efforts, the world seems least interested in playing any role on this issue. Disappointing response from the Muslim world must compel the Pakistani political and security leadership to sit together and try to find causes of such a lukewarm response. Insipid response from the Western world was expected though keeping in view huge business interests that those countries have in India.

The incumbent PTI government needs to focus more on foreign front, which can be done through proactive approach and by engaging with the foreign missions based in Pakistan. Regrettably our foreign office mandarins have not made any such effort. Lack of coordination has virtually left us in the lurch and tyranny of the matter is that we still are not ready to learn from our mistakes.

Instead of blaming others for all our woes, we need to put our own house in order which can be done only by achieving self-reliance especially in the economic field. Fact of the matter is that edifice of Pakistan's economy is erected on international financial institutions and loans and grants from friendly countries. This is not the way to manage economy. It may be a stopgap arrangement but not a permanent one. During last one year our exports have dropped down to an alarming extent. Abnormal devaluation of rupee is yet another factor that has not only dealt a deadly blow to our economy but continues to take a heavy toll on hapless Pakistanis.

Governance remained at the lowest ebb during the first year of PTI government with level of corruption increased considerably. Prime Minister Imran Khan needs to immediately grapple with this situation before it gets too late. In order to make world realize that Pakistan is a strong and self reliant country, we have to stand on our own feet, which is possible only by achieving economic independence. We must keep in mind that beggars can't be choosers!

Ansar

Chief Editor's Profile: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti is a career journalist. He started off as District Correspondent of Daily **The Muslim** in 1988 from Gujrat. Later he moved to Islamabad and joined **Pakistan Observer** as Sub-Editor / Op-ed Writer, in 1993. In 1995 he again moved to The Muslim as Sub-Editor and he left The Muslim in 1997 to join **The Nation** as City Editor and Diplomatic Correspondent, where he remained till 2002. His association with **The News** spans over three years from 2002 to 2005 as Columnist. In 2005 Mr. Bhatti switched over to Khabrain Group as Columnist / Special Correspondent. In 2010 he was made Resident Editor of **The Post**, a sister publication of **daily Khabrain**. In 2010 he launched his own publication **Centreline**. He has authored two books on European Union. He has also served in **Pakistan Telecom Company (PTCL)** as Media Advisor/Director Communications. He Launched Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) in 2012.



Vladimir Norov Joint efforts needed to fight coronavirus

**SCO Secretary General talks to
daily Islamabad Post, DNA and
Centreline**

DNA

Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Vladimir Norov told the about the cooperation of the SCO countries in the conditions of the global pandemic, about the unpreparedness of major international structures and alliances to crises and about the fact that no state can provide its own security by suppressing the coronavirus only on its territory. Here are excerpts from his interview.

- Dear Mr. Norov, we are well aware of the situation with coronavirus and a fight against disease in China. Could you tell us about the measures taken to combat the pandemic in other SCO member states?

- The scale of the epidemic in China in January and February has allowed many countries to assess in advance the level of the impending threat and take preventive measures.

In mid-March, the epidemic landscape began to change dramatically, and the SCO countries were also faced with this previously unknown to anyone, dangerous disease.

In order to avoid a widespread outbreak of the virus in many SCO member states, an emergency regime is currently in place, and the

headquarters, committees and commissions responsible for the epidemiological situation have been established and are working systematically to mobilize the necessary resources.

I would like to highlight a few key factors.

First, the people of the SCO countries understood the forced measures to close educational institutions, to restrict the activities of enterprises, to shut down transport communications and borders, to postpone public and entertainment events.

Secondly, all government institutions, especially those responsible for healthcare, have been mobilized and are working to combat the Coronavirus epidemic in accordance with WHO recommendations. Ministries of health have demonstrated their readiness to quickly and effectively counter the virus wave, but, as everywhere else, there are cases of infection of doctors themselves in the process. In this regard, measures are taken to support healthcare personnel who are at the frontline of the fight against the dangerous virus. The already tense daily life of doctors has now turned into a real battle, they are risking their lives to treat the infected, but at the same time they remain calm and

cheerful. This attitude of doctors towards their work and the sick is deeply respected and appreciated. In this regard, the governments of the SCO countries take measures to materially encourage the work of doctors and medical workers, which is quite fair and justified given the degree of danger of treating the coronavirus patients.

I think that the care at the state level, unity of spirit, solidarity and moral support from the population for the efforts of doctors give them additional strength and a sense of confidence in overcoming this common threat.

Thirdly, in the fight against the coronavirus, the possibilities of foreign ministries were mobilized to the maximum extent, which did a great job on the return of their citizens



from other countries.

Fourth, financial and economic resources have been mobilized. Most SCO member states have adopted anti-crisis packages of measures that define the rights and obligations of citizens in connection with the introduction of the emergency situation, and provide for measures to support public and private enterprises, preserve wages, reduce taxes and provide assistance to the most vulnerable social strata.

The law enforcement and defence forces have also consolidated all their capacities and ensure public stability, taking the necessary measures to prevent the negative trends that have been observed in some countries of the world amid the growing epidemic. Unfortunately, some citizens have shown irresponsibility, in particular, in many countries there is the spread of inaccurate information

related to coronavirus, concealment of symptoms of disease or intentional infection of others, growing organized crime through the Internet, production of counterfeit medical products and medicines.

There is also the risk of terrorist and extremist forces exploiting the coronavirus situation, which imposes many restrictions and pressures on the functioning of key public security services.

The epidemic is also experiencing the reliability of the widespread use of information and communications technologies in human life. The issue of information security and the security of critical infrastructure has become particularly relevant due to the increased attention paid to the

coronavirus in the information space, as well as the mass transition of people to online and remote communication, which undermines established norms for the secure functioning of systems on the Internet. According to experts, the main threats are leakage of personal data, cyber-attacks on test laboratories, medical facilities, banks, financial fraud, and malicious messaging.

Given that the entire world faced an information security challenge during the pandemic, it is important to look at these experiences from an organizational and technical

The scale of the epidemic in China in January and February has allowed many countries to assess in advance the level of the impending threat and take preventive measures.

perspective, as there is a need for further improvements in the regulatory framework, national sustainable structures, high-tech software systems and information security tools. I think that these issues will be given special attention within the SCO as China, India and Russia have more sustainable systems and mechanisms that can be introduced in other SCO countries. I am convinced that the SCO Working Group on IT-technologies will conduct an analysis on all the positive and vulnerable factors of the new reality that lies in the practical establishment of the technological way of life.

How do Member States help each other?

The coronavirus epidemic has become a test of the unity and strength of cooperation within the SCO countries. First of all, it demonstrated its readiness to share not only epidemiological and organizational experience, but also to provide financial, economic and food aid to each other.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, the SCO member states have been in close contact with each other at the level of heads of state, heads of ministries and agencies responsible for healthcare and public security.

In the current difficult situation, coordination, exchange of information and mutual assistance are essential in overcoming all the negative consequences of the pandemic.

It is well understood in our countries that no state will be able to ensure its own security by suppressing the coronavirus only on its territory as long as the disease continues to spread in neighbouring countries.

As it is known, in the midst of the epidemic in China, the SCO member states provided assistance to the Chinese government. Currently, China, where the virus has gone down, is providing necessary assistance to the SCO countries by sending humanitarian aid. Chinese and Russian specialists are working on developing the vaccine. Back in February Russia transferred test systems for laboratory diagnostics of coronavirus to Central Asian countries. China, Russia, and Uzbekistan, despite the tense process of containing the epidemic, are now sharing available food supplies and medicines with the most needy countries in the region. In particular, Uzbekistan has provided humanitarian assistance to Kyrgyzstan. According to Kyrgyz experts, this noble step shows that today relations in Central Asia have a completely different face. Assistance at such a difficult time indicates brotherly relations in the region, which seeks cooperation, integration and improvement of mutual relations,



which will also have a beneficial impact on the SCO.

Russia, China, Uzbekistan have also sent assistance to Iran and Afghanistan, our observer states. Kazakhstan expressed willingness to help Central Asian nations in case of need. China has sent doctors and specialists to Iran and Kazakhstan.

All this demonstrates the commitment of SCO nations to mutual support and cooperation in order to jointly overcome this emergency.

I am fully convinced that our countries will withstand this ordeal with dignity and emerge from the situation with even stronger spirit and consciousness to build a new future

accelerate vaccine development, introduction of drugs and test systems seems important from the point of view of concrete definition of the most effective treatment and prevention methods.

President Vladimir Putin, in his proposal to create so-called green corridors, free of trade sanctions, for mutual supplies of medicines, food, equipment, as well as a solidarity moratorium on the restriction of essential goods, as well as financial transactions for procurement against the countries most affected by the pandemic, rightly noted that this is a matter of life and death, and it is entirely a humanitarian issue.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra

endangered the constantly circulating mechanism of globalization by halting the international flow of finance, goods and people.

The coronavirus has also shown that major international structures and alliances are not prepared for emergency and crisis situations requiring joint action.

The virus has also affected the global balance of power, but the attempts to use the pandemic to increase sinophobia have not been particularly successful. I support the UN Secretary-General's opinion that the cause of the pandemic should be sought after it has been overcome.

This is a time for unity, solidarity in order to save lives and reduce devastating social and economic consequences. We need to support the work of the UN as a universal and effective platform for global cooperation. Politicizing the virus is of no benefit to anyone but the virus itself.

I would like to ask if there are any changes in the schedule for the SCO summit in St. Petersburg today?

No changes have yet taken place in the date of the meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO member states in St. Petersburg, and we are still planning to hold it in July this year. At the same time, the measures taken to limit transport communication objectively force us to postpone the dates of preparatory events or to switch some of them online, to the format of videoconferences.

We intend to continue consultations on the fight against coronavirus at a higher level and to take decisive action together to counter the spread of the disease.

Moreover, to agree on a large package of documents we plan to maximise the contacts of the SCO Permanent Representatives to the SCO Secretariat in Beijing. Thus, on April, 9, they held a meeting and considered draft documents such as a statement by the Heads of SCO member states on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Victory Day and a statement by SCO member states on cooperation in ensuring international information security.

The proliferation of coronavirus has become a global problem that deserves attention at the highest international level. The efforts of one or more countries are definitely insufficient, as experience shows. In this regard, the practical implementation of the proposals and initiatives voiced at the recent meeting of the G20 heads of state, including leaders of SCO member states - China, Russia and India, is very important.

on the basis of their experience.

What efforts should the international community make to combat the Coronavirus pandemic?

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In particular, President Xi Jinping's proposal on consolidation of forces to

Modi has noted a paradoxical statistic that 90% of COVID-19 cases and 88% of deaths were in G20 countries, despite owning 80% of world GDP and living in 60% of the world population.

It should be said that the coronavirus has seriously tested the national health systems of all countries of the world and their ability to withstand epidemiological shocks. The disease caused problems not only in the sphere of health care, but also provoked the economic crisis, revealing all the imperfections of the social sector responsible for the welfare of elderly people and people who do not have a permanent job.

In general, the coronavirus has



Turkish Ambassador distributes ration among poor people

Pakistan and Turkey are two brotherly countries and their relationship is centuries old. Turkish people had a great love with the Pakistani brethren: Turkish Ambassador Ihsan Mustafa

DNA

RAWALPINDI, : Keeping in view the problems of poor masses facing shortage of food amid lockdown due to Corona virus outbreak Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) has finalized its arrangements for distributing ration bags among impoverished masses in the city here today.

In this regard, Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Cap (R) Anwarul Haq, Chairman RDA Tariq Mehmood Murtaza, Director

Admin and Finance RDA Khalid Javed Goraya, Secretary Turkish NGO IHH-NL Ikhtlaqur Rahman and others attended it. It started with the recitation of The Holy Quran.

Turkish Ambassador while addressing on the occasion expressed that the Corona is worldwide pandemic



and there is a grave situation and difficult time. He said Pakistan and Turkey are two brotherly countries and their relationship is centuries old. Turkish people had a great love with the Pakistani brethren. We will not leave alone Pakistan in this critical period of time. We will extend our moral and financial support to the needy people in Pakistan. He added that Turkish NGO IHH-NL would continue to help and facilitate poor people in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion Dy Commissioner Rawalpindi said that all out efforts are being made to control Corona virus. He said that nothing to be worry and the situation will be better soon. He thanked Turkish Ambassador for extending his support to help the deserving people in this critical and alarming situation.

Earlier in his welcome address Chairman RDA also thanked Turkish Ambassador in Pakistan. He said this is a good gesture and noble cause as Turkish Government is helping poor



community of Pakistan. He said that Turkey and Pakistan working together for the welfare of the poor people in Pakistan. He said that main agenda of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is to improve the living standard of the

people. Meeting concluded with a vote of thanks. At the end Ration Bags have been distributed among poor people in RDA Office, Pirwadahi, Dhok Hasso, Bhabra Bazar, Chittian Hattian, Landa Bazar and Naya Mohalla Rawalpindi.

Japan to expand support at grassroots level: envoy

ASNAR M BHATTI



ISLAMABAD, (DNA) – Matsuda Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan, has said that circle of support by Japan and its various organizations shall be expanded at the grass-roots level with the passage of time.

He said special persons need special attention particularly in challenging times such as COVID-19, emphatically.

The ambassador made these remarks on the occasion of emergency support extended by Japanese NGO for the weakest segments.

He said this emergency support reflects the sentiments of the people of Japan for the weakest segment of the society in Pakistan.

It may be mentioned here that as a part of goodwill gesture by the people of Japan and to support the vulnerable segments of the society in Pakistan to protect themselves against COVID-19, a Japanese international NGO, AAR-

JAPAN (Association for Aid and Relief, Japan) started providing hygiene material as well as food items as an emergency support to the deserving people in Haripur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This emergency support which is being provided by AAR-JAPAN on behalf of the Japanese people has a scale of JPY 500,000 (ca. PKR 770,000) and will be

provided particularly to the disabled persons, widows and orphans in the district.

The AAR-JAPAN will continue to provide such support to the lesser privileged people of Pakistan as soon as it receives further donations from the people of Japan.

The AAR-JAPAN has provided improved hygiene facilities at various girls schools in the district to encourage girls students to come to schools with confidence and get education in an enabling and conducive environment. A project "Enhancement of sanitation and Maintenance of Hygienic Environment in girls schools in Haripur district" successfully promoted hygiene education with slogans like 'wash your hands after visiting bathroom' or 'keep your classrooms clean'.

The AAR-JAPAN is continuously working in education sector to establish "inclusive education" in schools to promote mutual understanding between students with disabilities and those without. =DNA



Japan approves grants for uplift projects in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: (DNA) -As a part of efforts to promote human security, the Government of Japan has decided to provide financial assistance of US\$ 236,230 for four social development projects in education and rural electrification in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces.

The grants will be provided to four national NGOs, □ Learning Awareness & Motivation Programme (LAMP) in Khyber district, □ Friends Welfare Association (FWA) in Torgar district, □ Hana Development Council (HDC) in Mandi Bahauddin district and □ Actions for Human Advancement (AHAT) in Kasur district.

Human security is an idea, focusing on individual member of community, to promote to strengthen the community and independence of each person with protection and capability development in order to achieve rich potential of each member of community. There are variety of areas that Japanese Government has been extending assistance with this idea in Pakistan and education is one of the very focused area as education is the equal basic right for everybody to enjoy, will be a tool for everybody to develop its own potential, and naturally resulting in the accomplishment of sustainable development of each nation.

The grant of US\$ 73,514 provided to LAMP will be utilized for the expansion of a primary section of the school for boys and girls in a village of Khyber district to overcome the problem of overcrowded classrooms. Currently, the school having classes from Play Group till Grade 10 has over 950 enrollment, and over 300 students sit outside their classrooms in open space because of the limited sitting capacity in the classrooms. Earlier, the school was expanded up to grade 10 with the financial assistance provided by the Government of Japan in financial year 2011 and 2015.

The grant of US\$ 64,868 provided to Friends Welfare Association will be spent for the construction of a building for primary and middle school in Torgar district of KPK. At present over 130 girls and boys use the premises of a local mosque for their classes because of the lack of availability of school building. The



new school building will also be used in second shift for middle school classes for girls specifically. The project is expected to provide a conducive environment to the students for study.

The grant of US\$ 42,818 provided to Hana Development Council will assist in installation of electricity scheme for seven communities of Mandi Bahauddin district in Punjab province where there is no facility of electricity at present. Together with a local power generation company and participation of local communities, the project will install electricity equipment – transformers, poles, electricity lines and meters and connect it with the national grid. The scheme is expected to benefit over 1650 local community members.

AHAT will spend the grant of US\$ 55,030 for the expansion of a public elementary school in Kasur district. Currently, the NGO runs the school in a rented building, which has poor infrastructure and limited capacity in the classrooms. With the construction of new school building, children will be able to continue their education in conducive environment. Over 700 boys and girls will get benefit from this project.

Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan,

MATSUDA Kuninori, congratulated the recipient organizations for winning the Japanese grant for their respective development projects. He expressed his hope that these projects will help girls and boys to have an easy access to their basic right of education and help local communities get maximum benefit from the rural electrification project. He especially added his strong desire that education will promote understanding and respect to the others and different culture, then will promote peace and stability.

Japan, sharing our experience of modernization and rapid economic growth after the WWII, has been extending assistance in the area of education in Pakistan. For those interested in Japanese experience, Embassy is happy to share this with the education institutes in Pakistan, he mentioned.

Japan will continue to support the people of Pakistan to improve their living standard and these project will contribute to strengthen decade's long friendly relationship between the people of Japan and Pakistan, said Ambassador MATSUDA.=DNA

Kazakhstan takes decisive steps to stop the spread of coronavirus

By Akan Rakhmetullin

These are unprecedented times. In many countries around the world daily life seems to be on hold due to the health crisis caused by coronavirus COVID-19. The pandemic has put many areas on lockdown, as the virus continues to spread globally and tragically cause many deaths.

Kazakhstan has proactive position in counteraction to epidemic. The country has not underestimated the danger.

From the very beginning of COVID-19 risk at the end of January, the Government of Kazakhstan has monitored the global situation and has prepared to any possible challenges for the population's healthcare. Special governmental commission on counteraction to novel epidemic created a certain action plan to protect the population in advance. Since February Kazakhstan started blocking national borders for some foreign countries with high epidemic danger, and all the citizens were advised to avoid any trips abroad.

Given the uncertain and unpredictable situation in the world, the Government of Kazakhstan had to take new proactive measures to protect its citizens. This is why on March 15, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev declared a state of emergency across the nation. In his decree, the President stated that entry to and departure from the country is to be restricted for everyone except for diplomats and official delegations, those invited by the Government and foreigners under certain conditions.

In addition, the decree introduced quarantine measures and suspended the activities of shopping and entertainment centres. Kindergartens, schools and universities have been closed as per the recommendations of medical experts.

On March 23, President Tokayev addressed the State Commission on the current state of emergency. To prevent a further wave of infection the President introduced increased quarantine measures to protect the citizens of Kazakhstan. In a move to impose more stringent measures, the President has further ensured the protection of the country's medical services whilst reducing the threat to those citizens most at risk.

Kazakhstan has so far been less impacted



than other countries in terms of confirmed coronavirus cases, despite a long land border with China, where the first cases of the disease were identified. In fact, when the government measures were first announced, there were only a handful of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Kazakhstan. However, as the situation in other countries has demonstrated, it is vitally important to take strict preventive measures, regardless of the number of people affected.

Complacency has certainly not been an option for the Government of Kazakhstan. In order to prevent the virus from spreading widely and to protect the lives and health of its citizens, steps had to be taken even though the country has not yet experienced the spread of the virus on a large scale.

In preparation for such a crisis, the President ordered the Ministry of Health to monitor the availability of medical facilities and equipment taking into account the most drastic of potential pandemic outcomes. Such moves will ensure Kazakhstan's medical services are prepared for every eventuality.

Unfortunately, as was expected, the number of confirmed cases has risen in Kazakhstan's two biggest cities – its capital Nur-Sultan and most populous city Almaty. For this reason, on March 23, the President of Kazakhstan took a decisive step

to lockdown the two cities.

As well as restricting movement of people and vehicles, authorities have limited public transportation and instructed restaurants to switch to delivery-only service. The aim of these measures is to prevent the disease from spreading to other parts of the country, and thus save lives and prevent a health crisis. To enforce the isolation of these city centres, the President announced the need to impose penalties on those who choose to violate the requirements of quarantine.

The Government's highest concerns lie with the health and safety of the citizens of Kazakhstan. In such a time of emergency, it is important to provide more security in a period of crisis. This is why on March 23, the President announced that the nation's entire police force will now be mobilised to protect the population against unexpected public threats. In addition to the increased police presence, President Tokayev has called for residential communities to cooperate and work together to safeguard at risk individuals.

In such times as these, there is a danger that certain groups of society will be affected more drastically than others. Those most at risk are families who have lost sources of income and have no economic 'safety net'. In his statement at the State Commission, the President addressed these concerns; in addition to the already adopted ban on imposing fines and penalties, the payment of principal and interest on all loans of the population affected by the crisis will be suspended. In addition, large families, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups will receive free groceries, consisting primarily of domestic products.

To further support this, the President Tokayev announced initiatives to regionally monitor the levels of socially significant goods in order to protect the population from price spikes. Governors will coordinate the interregional flow of such goods to eliminate local deficits and prevent the panic-buying of essential goods.

The Government of Kazakhstan has put forward concrete measures to support the financial sector. President Tokayev announced that Kazakhstan will allocate

\$10 billion for anti-crisis measures throughout the country, excluding tax benefits and local support. \$740 million will go towards measures to boost employment.

Bonus payments will be made in the amount of one monthly salary to doctors, police officers and other specialists involved in the fight against coronavirus, as well as to people who have lost income due to the state of emergency. To support enterprises, the Head of State ordered a standstill on bank loan repayments by small and medium-sized businesses for the duration of the state of emergency, as well as a deferral of payment of all types of taxes and other obligatory payments for a period of three months.

In his address on March 23, President Tokayev highlighted the necessity of entrepreneurship in the fight to maintain economic harmony. He announced new measures which will reduce fiscal pressures on these individuals. This will see tax deadlines extended and the removal of oppressive inspections. Such alleviations will see businesses have a greater ability to make decisions and take responsibility for their commercial activities. In addition to this, the President announced an additional \$1.5 billion for lending to such businesses for working capital.

Across the world there have been instances of widespread panic due to lack of a direct

Thus, even being located close to large geographic coronavirus outbreaks in Eurasia fast and proactive actions by the Government of Kazakhstan resulted in a relatively low number of infected citizens and full control over COVID-19 epidemic.

information flow from national governments. To protect the citizens of Kazakhstan against such dangers and the resulting effects of rumour, the President has facilitated the Ministry of Information and Public Development to deliver daily briefings. To reinforce these messages the

website coronavirus2020.kz has been set up to inform the population of the Government's official actions in the fight against coronavirus.

Everyone will have to get used to the new reality for perhaps many weeks to come. It may not be straightforward, but through cooperation, both on an individual and state level, the country is well equipped to overcome the crisis. As President Tokayev stated this week, "if each of us fulfils our duty with responsibility, I believe that we will quickly come out of this difficult situation."

Thus, even being located close to large geographic coronavirus outbreaks in Eurasia fast and proactive actions by the Government of Kazakhstan resulted in a relatively low number of infected citizens and full control over COVID-19 epidemic.

Kazakhstan has always pushed for closer regional and global cooperation. The pandemic has laid bare the vital need for teamwork between states. Hopefully, governments around the world will collaborate closely to control the pandemic and will continue to work together once the crisis is over to resolve other global issues. Perhaps this will be the silver lining to these challenging times.

The writer is the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan

Pak, Uzbek medical experts share experiences

ISLAMABAD, DNA

Health Care officers of Uzbekistan and Pakistan held a video conference on Friday during which they exchanged experience in the fight against COVID-19.

The video conference took place at the Uzbek embassy in Islamabad, thus achieving yet another important milestone in cooperation between the brotherly countries, which is very relevant during the period of the spread of the pandemic in the world.

In very lively discussions, Pakistani partners shared their rich experience in the field of prevention and response to epidemics, as well as large-scale work carried out to ensure the safety of the nation and the state, which was very useful in the sense of its practical application in

Uzbekistan.

Particular importance is the special interest of Pakistani officers in the consistent, clear and targeted measures taken by the leadership of Uzbekistan, which not only prevented

the spread of infection in the country in a timely manner, but also supported the welfare of the population, as well as small and medium enterprises, in very difficult conditions in the world.



EU supports Pak civil society, youth to address social challenges: envoy

on societies around the globe.

In Pakistan as much as in

Europe, the virus is

posing a threat to

people's lives,

straining

communities,

overwhelmi

ng health

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All proposed projects will need to be consistent with the COVID-19 response strategies developed by the federal and provincial authorities. The deadline for submission of concept notes is 26 May 2020 at 3PM (Islamabad date and time).

Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, said: "The Corona pandemic is requiring us all to work together – to slow down the spread of the disease and to address the disastrous consequences that it will have on the economy, our societies and especially the most vulnerable people. Civil Society

Organisation are playing a crucial part in these efforts. A vibrant range of CSOs makes a society and a nation stronger and more resilient."

This call for proposals is part of a wider effort of the European Union to support Pakistan in response to the epidemic. In close coordination with the authorities, the EU is assessing how it can assist best.

Ongoing operations are about to be adjusted where possible to react to the needs related to COVID-19. The European Union is one of Pakistan's major development partner, funding cooperation projects worth EUR 603M in the period 2014-2020.

On 8/4/2020, the European Union announced a bold global COVID-19 response package to support its partners across the world.

€1.22 billion will be

mobilized for Asia and the Pacific, largely through the rapid re-orientation of existing funding streams and programmes.

This will include rapid emergency response, action to strengthen health, water and sanitation systems as well as research, and programmes to address the economic and social effects of the COVID-19 epidemic.=DNA

ISLAMABAD, (DNA) – The EU Delegation to Pakistan has launched a call for proposals, amounting to 6 650 000 EUR, for projects by civil society organizations to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on communities and at the same time increase the voice of youth in society. The COVID-19 pandemic has a major health, social and economic impact

endangering livelihoods. In a true spirit of partnership and solidarity, the EU is supporting Pakistan in mitigating the consequences of the crisis in the short and long term. Detailed information, including guidelines for grant applicants, are available directly here and on the website of the European Union Delegation in Pakistan: <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/>

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Coronavirus: every day counts

By Khalid bin Majeed

Coronavirus has thrown the entire world in a tailspin, forcing the world capitals to declare national emergencies, quarantine hundreds of thousands of people, slap international travel restrictions, padlock their educational institutions, put off international sports events, allocate big sums of money to fight off the deadly infection and manipulate the flow of information.

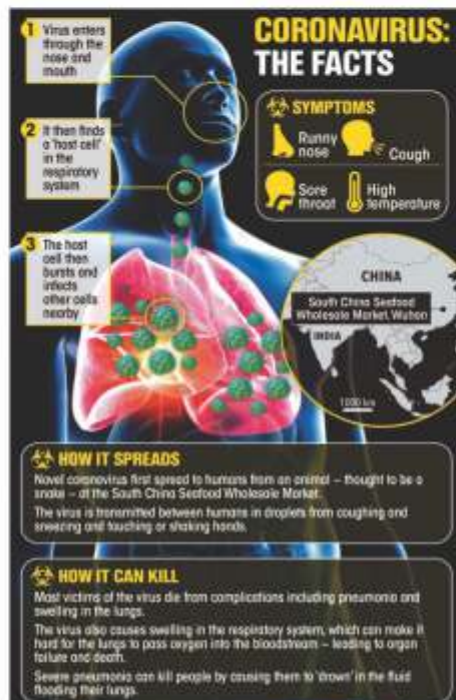
The gory tentacles of the infection, which has now been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization [WHO], has almost choked the global food, non-food, and oil supply chains, knocked the bottom out of stock exchanges, and brought the world economies to a virtual standstill. The pandemic is estimated to cause a loss of \$1.1tr dollar to \$2 trillion to the international economy.

According to the WHO, the so far uncontrollable pandemic is spreading apace affecting 146 countries, areas, or territories. Though health experts have put their heads together to come up with a magic bullet to cure the infection, their efforts seem to be leading nowhere.

The coronavirus is already here, in Pakistan. It's largely hidden, except for a few dozen cases, but it can be growing exponentially. Already we can see a significant rise in coronavirus tally in Pakistan, with new cases hitting as high as 20 in a single day, which used to be one or two in the earlier days.

In Pakistan, cases have been reported from different cities and provinces: Karachi, Sukkur, Quetta, Gilgit-Baltistan, Lahore and Islamabad. Being unable to contain it, now we have to play a different game: mitigation. We need to make this virus as inoffensive as possible. And the best way to make it possible is 'social distancing'. It means lesser interactions ... by keeping as many people home as possible. Wuhan can certainly be a case study, where complete lockdown helped containing the virus to the city to a large extent.

Being the next-door neighbour of China, we are more prone to coronavirus infection. Pakistan has certainly taken an array of measures to contain its spread. The country has closed its borders with Afghanistan and Iran and all incoming passengers from other countries at all entry points are being screened. Schools, colleges and universities,



marriage and banquet halls, shrines and cinemas have been closed, while the jail administrations would allow no visitors initially for three weeks.

Through such measures, if we are able to reduce the coronavirus infections as much as possible, our healthcare system will be able to handle cases much better. Since we can't eliminate it, our goal must be to postpone it until a vaccine is invented and the humanity is saved from this evil.

Plenty of nonsense about coronavirus cure circulating on social media is another challenge. Albeit, the only authentic 'cure' available so far is 'prevention'. In its latest advisory, the World Health Organization (WHO) has busted all the myths associated with the disease. According to the advisory, coronavirus can be transmitted in all areas, including areas with hot and humid weather; hot bath will not prevent you from catching COVID-19; praying alcohol or chlorine all over your body will not kill viruses that have already entered your body; vaccines against pneumonia do not provide protection against coronavirus; regularly rinsing nose with saline does not necessarily protect people from infection; eating garlic does not protect people from coronavirus and people

of all ages can be infected by coronavirus.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the coronavirus. Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after having been in a public place; using a hand sanitizer which contains at least 60% alcohol; and avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands are some of the measures that can help prevent the infection.

Buttressing the government efforts and banking on its huge force of skilled volunteers, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) – indisputably the largest humanitarian organization in Pakistan – under the leadership of Chairman Abrar ul Haq, who himself is a known philanthropist and humanitarian worker, has undertaken a panoply of measures to contain the virus and educate the masses about how to avoid contracting the infection.

The PRCS in close coordination with the IFRC, Movement Partners, and federal and provincial governments, especially the National Institute of Health Islamabad, has launched a nationwide awareness campaign under the slogan #EhtiatKarona and health teams and trained volunteers are working across country to help people stay safe. Qualified screening teams with ambulances have been deployed at Chaman and Taftan borders to support Balochistan health department in screening of people.

A quarantine facility has been established at the Taftan border in addition to provision of six high-tech and fully equipped containers, one generator, and one Watson Plant to the health department. Ambulances with first aiders have been deployed at the Islamabad, Lahore and Quetta airports and National Institute of Health, Islamabad, for transportation of suspected patients to the marked health facilities. The PRCS Merged Areas Branch has deployed an ambulance at the Torkham border as well. A quarantine facility has also been set up at the PRCS Hospital in Rawalpindi in coordination with the National Institute of Health.

Trained volunteers are engaged in different parts of the country sensitizing people to the gravity of the situation and educating them about how to protect themselves from becoming a victim. Awareness brochures were also distributed among the teachers and students before the closure of schools

and colleges, and among the public at different points in major cities.

An awareness rally was taken out in Islamabad on March 11 to sensitize the people about the coronavirus challenge. Social media influencers, celebrities, sportsmen, clerics/religious leaders, and prayer leaders in mosques are being engaged in the awareness campaign.

Chairman Abrar ul Haq and myself visited Geneva last week to muster up international support for the PRCS coronavirus contingency strategy. During high-level meetings at the headquarters of IFRC, ICRC and the Swiss Red Cross, we vigorously highlighted the efforts being made by the government of Pakistan as well as the PRCS to contain the coronavirus outbreak in the country. The international institutions not only appreciated the measures taken by the PRCS to tackle the disease but also pledged their all-out support to the PRCS to help fight out what has now turned into a global challenge.

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society has always been at the beck and call of the nation



and whenever a manmade or natural disaster befall any part of the motherland, it always rose to the occasion and remained in the vanguard of action in accordance with its slogan of "First to Reach, Last to Leave". The Society commits to spare no effort and pool all of its available resources to help combat the situation.

With everything that's happening about the coronavirus, it might be hard for us to make

decisions. But, we have no time to wait. This is an exponential threat. This is a pandemic now. It can't be eliminated. But what we can do is reduce its impact. Every day counts. It's the moment to act. Not from tomorrow. Not from today. Now.

*The writer is Secretary General of
Pakistan Red Crescent Society*

Establishment of Air Links Between Isb-Almaty To Give Impetus To Existing Bilateral Relations

Islamabad 2020: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that enormous economic potential exists between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, which needed to be utilized for mutual benefit of both the countries. He also stressed the need to establish air links between both the capitals for fully realizing that potential. He expressed his desire to further strengthen bilateral relations through promoting parliamentary and commercial cooperation. He expressed these views while talking to Ambassador of Kazakhstan Akan Rakhmatlin, who met with the Speaker at Parliament House, today.

The Speaker said that strong fraternal bonds exist between Pakistan and Kazakhstan that are built on strong foundations of religion, brotherhood, history and culture. He emphasized the need to promote cooperation in the socio-economic sectors between the two brotherly countries. He said that the two countries have enormous opportunities to promote cooperation in trade, energy, tourism, agriculture and other sectors. He said that trade volume between the two countries does not commensurate the opportunities in both countries, therefore, needed to be improved. He said that Kazakhstan's role in regional peace and stability was of the utmost

importance.

He said that parliamentary diplomacy could play an important role in expanding cooperation between the two countries. Stressing the need for closer ties between the two countries' parliament, Asad Qaiser said that the parliamentarians of both countries could play an important role in furthering bilateral relations. He told the



Ambassador that the Pak-Kazakh Friendship Group in the National Assembly could play a vital role in promoting relations between the two countries' parliaments. He said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan share commonality of views on regional and international issues and had always supported each other on global forums. Referring to the investment opportunities

in Pakistan, Speaker Asad Qaiser said that the present government had introduced pro-investment policies in the country. He said visa policy for the business community intending to visit Pakistan had been relaxed and visa issuance had been facilitated on arrival. He said that Kazakh investors could take benefit of those facilities and invest in Pakistan. Establishing air links between capitals of both the countries would also play a significant role in improving our economic and trade volume.

The Kazakhstan Ambassador Akan Rakhmatlin thanked the Speaker, saying that Pakistan was an important country in the region and Kazakhstan attached great importance to its friendly relations with Pakistan. He said that his government wanted to promote cooperation with Pakistan in the all sectors of economy. He appreciated Pakistan's role in promoting development and prosperity in the region and for establishing peace and security. He agreed with the Speaker's proposal to promote relations between the two countries' Parliament, saying parliamentary diplomacy could play a key role in bringing the two nations closer. He further said that direct air connectivity between Islamabad and Almaty could promote trade and tourism in both countries.

The effective national response of Uzbekistan against COVID-19

BY FURQAT SIDIKOV



Nowadays all countries around the world are counteracting to the COVID-19 pandemic, deploying and mobilizing their financial, intellectual and human resources.

Unfortunately, Uzbekistan, along with a number of other countries in the world, is facing consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and social area, including on the lives of people in cities and regions.

Today are 1900 confirmed cases and 8 died in Uzbekistan, which is a relatively low number for a country with 32 million population. Good news is more than 800 recovered in Uzbekistan, which demonstrates the professionalism of Uzbek doctors and the effectiveness of Uzbekistan's health care system.

Republic of Uzbekistan initiated "sensible and effective measures" to safeguard the national interests of its people and economy. For instance, by initiative of Uzbekistan's President H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev various socio-economic, administrative and legal measures has been implemented for comprehensive and effective fight against COVID-19.

In accordance with Presidential Decree 10 trillion Uzbek sums (\$1 billion) Anti-Crisis Fund has been established for mainly on four areas: countering the spread of the coronavirus, supporting business and employment, expanding social welfare provisions and ensuring the continued functioning of the financial sector.

On March 25, Uzbekistan made mandatory the wearing of face masks in public. On March 27, the movement of people and personal vehicles in the cities was restricted except for grocery shopping and pharmacy visits. In the first nine days since the rules were introduced, as of April 3, about 2,200 violations of the rules were registered, mostly individuals being outside without face masks. Today, more than 100 thousand people are quarantined. At the same time, almost 13 thousand citizens, who were returned to Uzbekistan, were also in quarantine. A special and unique quarantine zone with 10 thousand beds has been created in the Tashkent region. More than 2.2 thousand citizens, who have returned from abroad, have already been placed there and

successfully finished their quarantine period.

The Government of Uzbekistan has also initiated comprehensive measures in the field of customs. According to the Presidential Decree, starting from 1 April 2020, customs clearance of imported food products will be carried out in an accelerated mode, including by issuing permits before the arrival of goods on the territory of Uzbekistan. The State Customs Committee and other authorized agencies responsible for permits issuance will implement these measures.

The Ministry of Finance on 6 April 2020 announced certain tax relief measures in

Uzbek Leader noted that the current situation with the rapid spread of coronavirus in many countries of the world proves that we in Uzbekistan introduced quarantine and restrictive measures quite in time.

response to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In particular, the tax relief generally is aimed at small and medium size enterprises and individual entrepreneurs, and includes the following:

- funds received by business entities in the form of interest-free financial assistance will not be subject to income tax;
- annual audits of certain taxpayers are postponed;
- there is a moratorium on initiating or declaring bankruptcy by enterprises faced with financial difficulties;
- planned increase in the rates of excise

tax on gasoline, diesel fuel, and alcohol and alcohol products is canceled;

– rate of customs duty and excise tax on "primary goods" (generally food products and hygiene products) is assigned zero percent (0%);

– moratorium on tax audits will be effective until 1 January 2021 (tax audits will only be limited to tax audits conducted based on criminal cases and liquidation of legal entities);

– property tax, land tax and water use tax payment deadlines for legal entities can be extended for 6 months by local authorities based on the application of the taxpayer (late payment interest on these taxes is not assessed by the tax authorities until 1 October 2020 in relation to entities experiencing temporary difficulties, and measures on forced tax collection measures shall not be applied);

– water use tax rate for water volumes used for the purposes of agricultural irrigation is reduced by 50% in 2020;

– social tax for individual entrepreneurs is reduced to 50% of the specified base value for the period between 1 April 2020 to 1 October 2020.

In kind benefits received by individuals from charity institutions are exempt from individual income tax from 1 April 2020;

– the individual income tax declaration filing deadline is extended from 1 April to 1 August 2020;

– property tax and land tax payment deadlines for individuals are extended from 15 April to 15 October 2020;

– touristic duty is not levied during the period from 1 April to 1 October 2020;

– penalties for having overdue receivables from foreign trade operations are not applied until 1 October 2020;

– export of goods without guaranteed payment is allowed if the overdue receivables do not exceed 10% of the total annual export (previously export of goods without guaranteed payment was allowed only if there were no overdue receivables).

It should be noted that President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is paying great attention to communication and cooperation with foreign partners, especially with Central Asian countries. For example, Uzbek leader had telephone talks with leaders of Central Asia: President Kassym-Jomart

Tokayev and Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov on March 18 and 27; Kazakh First President Nursultan Nazarbayev on March 20; Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on March 26; Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov on March 27; Russian President Vladimir Putin on March 20; Chinese President Xi Jinping on March 24; and UN Secretary General António Guterres on March 24.

It is very important that, this very difficult time for the world and Uzbek Nation, the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is paying a great emphasis on providing support to vulnerable segments of the population and ensuring full operation of industrial enterprises, construction area and country's infrastructure.

On 24 April, the next video-conference on the issues of ensuring employment of the population and the resumption of activities of economic sectors was chaired by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The quarantine regime, which has been going on for more than a month, is becoming a test and experience for everyone, especially the heads of government. Video-conference calls are held to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the life of the population, the activities of entrepreneurs and economic sectors, and specific tasks are identified.

At a regular meeting held on 22 April, issues of the stable functioning of economic sectors, employment, social support for needy families were discussed using the example of Samarkand and Namangan regions. At today's meeting, the work carried out in the Ferghana and Kashkadarya regions was reviewed.

As for the epidemiological situation in these regions, in Ferghana region, coronavirus was detected in 120, in Kashkadarya region – in 6 citizens.

During the quarantine period, production fell sharply at 10 thousand enterprises in Ferghana and 11 thousand in Kashkadarya. As a result, the number of unemployed has grown significantly. In addition, 56 thousand live in Ferghana, and 91 thousand families in need in Kashkadarya.

At the meeting, the Ministry of Health and khokims of these areas were instructed to analyze the regions and activities for high, medium and low risk of spread of infection, and taking into account this, make proposals for the phased mitigation of quarantine restrictions for consideration by the Republican Special Commission.

This year, 632 billion soums were allocated for the construction and reconstruction of 130 objects in the Ferghana region, 536 billion soums in 132 objects in Kashkadarya. However, in the first quarter, disbursement of funds and

implementation of projects lagged behind the targets.

Given that to ensure employment, permission was given to continue the construction industry, the President noted the need to accelerate work at all facilities in these regions.

Uninterrupted supply of food to the population and maintaining stable prices in the domestic market is the most pressing issue. A large reserve in this regard is the space between the rows of gardens and vineyards.

In Ferghana and Kashkadarya there are orchards and vineyards with an area of 34 thousand hectares and more than 22 thousand hectares, respectively. However, usually only 20 percent of the row spacing is planted. With this in mind, the regional khokimiyats (provincial administrations) were instructed to organize a complete planting of row-spacing of orchards and vineyards with

President said that the Holy month of Ramadan is approaching, and with this in mind, helping low-income and needy families during this period is a good deed.

various crops and thereby ensure employment of the population.

The importance of the construction of wells on withdrawn from circulation and rainfed lands, to divide the plots among the population, was emphasized. For these purposes, 15 and 11 billion soums were allocated to Ferghana and Kashkadarya, respectively.

Instructions were given to provide work for low-income families through the distribution of livestock, poultry and bee hives, and to increase the procurement of products.

Due to the expected shortage of water this year, difficulties may arise in the irrigation of re-crops in Uzbekistan, Uchkuprik, Yazyavan, Kushtepa, Mirishkarsky, Nishansky, Mubarek and Kasbinsky districts. Therefore, as emphasized at the meeting, it is possible to grow export-oriented legumes less demanding on

water.

The feasibility of cultivating 50-60 percent of the land freed from grain by farmers themselves and the distribution of the remainder among the population temporarily left without work and in need of assistance under quarantine is noted.

The khokims (governors) of Ferghana and Kashkadarya regions reported on the upcoming work to resume the activities of enterprises in compliance with the rules of quarantine, ensuring employment.

Bearing in mind historic and spiritual values of Uzbek nation, its generosity and care for other people, the President of Uzbekistan suggested establishing "Kindness and Support" nationwide movement.

The initiative aims to further ensure the supply of food and medical facilities to families in need and temporary jobless individuals. Particularly, entrepreneurs are encouraged to take selfless responsibility to support families in their neighborhood. In light of upcoming Ramadan, an act of goodwill is becoming more noble.

President said that the Holy month of Ramadan is approaching, and with this in mind, helping low-income and needy families during this period is a good deed. Uzbek Leader instructed the Special Republican Commission to gradually ease quarantine restrictions in regions, districts and cities with no cases of coronavirus infection or where the epidemiological situation has improved. Facilities that have restored their activity will have to strictly observe sanitary and hygienic rules.

Moreover, Uzbekistan's President H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev regularly hold a Government meetings and videoconferences with regional administrations on the measures taken in Uzbekistan to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Uzbek Leader noted that the current situation with the rapid spread of coronavirus in many countries of the world proves that we in Uzbekistan introduced quarantine and restrictive measures quite in time.

He is also grateful to our citizens who properly understand and share this view, patiently observe the rules of home self-isolation and lockdown, as well as to doctors who have proved courageous and steadfast in their duty performance.

As my President always emphasize, we will use all our strengths and capabilities, whether inside the country or outside its borders, to combat this challenge. Not a single person, not a single family in our country should be left without the attention and care of the state and society.

THE WRITER IS AMBASSADOR OF UZBEKISTAN.

Economic Potential of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

By Lieutenant Colonel Khalid TaimurAkram (Retd),



Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a regional group comprising of eight official Members including; China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan; four observer states; Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia; and multiple dialogue partners including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka.

SCO has continued to play a prominent role as a forum for security cooperation, with an objective to combat three evils that have maligned the regional environment i.e. extremism, separatism, and terrorism. However, since 18 years of its creation, SCO's scope and bureaucracy have expanded, thereby making it a multifaceted and multilateral institution.

The primary aim of the organization nevertheless remains to build mutual trust and foster multidimensional cooperation among its members, which is defined in SCO's charter as: "strengthening mutual trust, good neighborliness and friendship among

member states; developing effective cooperation in political affairs, economy, trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transport and environmental protection; and working together to maintain regional peace, security and stability".

Since the existence of SCO, many significant developments have taken place. The major evolution is the expansion and dynamism in the field of economy, energy, culture science and technology. SCO provides a favorable environment for economic investments and inter-connectivity projects, to enhance trade and commerce activities, attain free flow of goods and capitals. There are various factors behind this evolutionary development of the organization, such as the changing regional security and geo-political dynamics, emergence of new potential players in the region, increased globalization, economic orientation of global powers, China's economic progression through BRI and willingness of countries to welcome business and investments to their

homelands.

Regional integration has emerged as a fundamental trend in the development of global order, incorporating more flexible models of cooperation, collective approach to address common challenges and deepening economic ties. SCO serves as a remarkable example of this new model of regional partnership, as it has tremendous potential and the increased enthusiasm of its members to search for new opportunities stimulates its further development.

Interestingly, SCO members are so diverse and their political systems, economies, geography, degrees of influence and internal dynamics are so different, yet they have absolute equality regardless of their position in international system.

Thus, SCO is a practical example of coexistence and a powerful transnational structure. SCO also has a large scale economic agenda, for which a Business Council was established to create a capacity for investment in regional projects. The Business Council

of SCO is actively functional and directed to gear up a cross-regional business framework by supporting various start-up and humanitarian projects.

Numerous constructive projects have been planned to promote economic prosperity and increased connectivity in the region such as the transport infrastructure projects, construction of highways and railways, building oil and gas pipelines across Central Asia.

SCO aims to form a common market and a free-trade zone in the region so as to increase trade and commerce opportunities for regional states. The key elements required to successfully implement economic projects in a region are; a huge market, a substantial component of the mineral resources, strong industrial base and consumer/purchasing power.

Fortunately, all the SCO member states possess these prerequisites. The legal framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization includes more than 100 documents on economic cooperation, encompassing all areas of trade, banking activities, manufacturing, financial and investment projects, agriculture, transport and infrastructure, telecommunications, and tourism.

The member states of SCO are against trade protectionism and actively support the strengthening of a transparent multilateral trading scheme. Chinese President Xi Jinping has proposed to create Shanghai Cooperation Organization free trade zone in the region.

All the members are motivated to work in accordance with the principle of mutual benefit to improve regional economic cooperation and deepen the Belt and Road project. This will further enhance the cooperation in business sector, investment, finance, connectivity and trade.

It will also foster new opportunities for integrated development to the entire region, ultimately adding more impetus to global growth. The economic potential of SCO has further boosted by the inclusion of Pakistan and India, being two major countries with enormous bulk of mineral resources and huge markets.

The organization has contributed a lot in the areas of economy and trade. In the year 2018, the total trade volume among the member states reached 255 billion US dollars, a year-on-year increase of 17.2 percent. Moreover, in the year April 2019, China's total investment in SCO member states exceeded 87 billion US dollars. Several large-scale energy-

related, mineral and industrial manufacturing projects have made headway. According to the IMF report, in the next five years (up to the year 2023), the economic potential in the SCO region will surpass that of the G7 economies.

SCO has made considerable economic achievements since its creation in 2001. The meetings of different officials concerned with foreign economic and trade activities have been regularly held, resulting in a number of developments.

In the year 2003, the SCO Council of Heads of Government in China – Beijing, initiated a program of multilateral trade and economic cooperation. Many joint working

All the members are motivated to work in accordance with the principle of mutual benefit to improve regional economic cooperation and deepen the Belt and Road project. This will further enhance the cooperation in business sector, investment, finance, connectivity and trade.

committees were also created to address the issues of electronic commerce, customs, technical conformity assessment procedures, investment promotion, expansion of transit potential, development of telecommunication technologies and energy complex.

In the year 2004, the organization adopted an Action Plan for the implementation of this Program that comprised of 10 areas of cooperation, including trade and investment, customs, the application of regulations, standards and procedures conformity assessment, financial and tax spheres, transport, the energy sector, agriculture, science and high technologies,

information and telecommunication technologies, and in the field of environmental protection. Then in year 2005, another milestone was achieved within the framework of the SCO that is, an agreement on the preparation for pilot projects in the field of hydro-power, development of transport routes, establishing fiber-optic communications, and cooperation in scientific and technical sectors. In the year, 2010 Russia proposed the implementation of the SCO's Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Program. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Energy Club was also created in 2010, comprising of not only the member states, but also the observer countries.

These initiatives and mutual collaboration will provide a strong synergistic effect for the entire SCO economy and for the cooperation of its members as a whole. In real economic terms, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization accounts for almost one-fourth of the global GDP, and average GDP within the SCO has rose by 4.84% in the year 2016. The member countries of SCO are steadily improving their foreign exchange reserves that now constitute of about 4 trillion US Dollars. Approximately 11% of global direct foreign investment in 2016 took place in the Shanghai Eight. The organization is also actively developing the tourism industry. The SCO Tourism Cooperation Development Programme was adopted in June 2016 at the SCO Summit in Tashkent. The SCO member states have great tourism potential. Pakistan, for example, is a country with a rich historical and cultural heritage. This provides opening up a new range of opportunities for tourism cooperation in the SCO states. The SCO members display enthusiasm for participation. Many other players are also attracted due to the financial resources that Russia and China bring to the region. Moreover, now that China is investing in the Central Asia, it has attracted Western investors who were reluctant to invest in these countries. SCO's approach and framework is not military or security oriented, but diplomatic. SCO has created a powerful image of a regional organization as it has the capacity to develop into a strong player in the region that has huge economic potential.

The writer is the Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad

Serena Extends Community Support in Wake of COVID-19

"Only the weeks and months ahead will reveal the full impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Mankind, and the losses to the local and global economy and business sectors. However, it is already clear by early estimates that there will be far-reaching economic repercussions, with the under-resourced segments of society suffering the most," he said.

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels has started distributing rations to communities in locations surrounding their hotels countrywide, to support affected segments at a time when the global Coronavirus pandemic is wreaking havoc on the country's economy.

More than 3400 deserving families and households in areas where Serena Hotels are located, including in Islamabad, Faisalabad, Quetta, Swat, Gilgit, Hunza, Shigar and Khaplu have been provided with rations that include food staples and essentials.

In addition, the employees of Serena Hotels have donated one day's salary, with the company double matching the donation as a goodwill gesture, to contribute Rs. 10 million to the Prime Minister's COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund.

"Serena Hotels has always played its role as a responsible business and support the local communities through its extensive CSR initiatives, and community-friendly ethos," said Aziz Boolani, CEO Serena Hotels. "During this crisis we stand united with the Government, relief organisations and local community, and shall continue to extend our humble support."

"Only the weeks and months ahead will reveal the full impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on Mankind, and the losses to the local and global economy and business sectors. However, it is already clear by early estimates that there will be far-reaching economic repercussions,



with the under-resourced segments of society suffering the most," he said. "The severity of the situation calls for prudent measures and precautions to be taken to contain and manage this crisis."

Serena Hotels has implemented a comprehensive Coronavirus Response Plan that stringently follows the health and safety guidelines from the WHO and CDC, and directives from local Government Authorities. The company has also launched a multimedia awareness campaign for the guests, employees and the public about virus precautionary measures.

"We are closely monitoring the situation and adapting our policies accordingly. We hope and pray to return to times of health and prosperity around the world again," said Mr. Boolani.



Elections in occupied Nagorno Karabakh illegal

Justice (Retd) Ali Nawaz Chowhan , Chairman, National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR condemns Armenia for genocide; warns of dire consequences

ISLAMABAD, Justice (Retd) Ali Nawaz Chowhan , Chairman, National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) has strongly condemned holding of sham parliamentary and presidential elections in the occupied Nagorno Karabakh. In a statement the former judge of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and a renowned jurist, Justice Ali Nawaz further said "I strongly condemn the holding of so called "parliamentary elections" and "presidential elections" of the illegal regime, established by Armenia in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh territory of Azerbaijan by the occupying forces of Armenia". He said the elections which are scheduled to be held on March 31 are uncalled for, unwarranted and illegal.

"I along with my government and the UN announce support to Azerbaijan. I also once again condemn the genocide committed by Armenia in the town of Khojaly against Azerbaijani civilians. Armenia will be accountable for its aggression and Genocide".



Moroccan govt to build mosque in Park Enclave

ISLAMABAD, (DNA) :- Moroccan Government will Build a mosque in the CDA Project Park Enclave -I. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had forwarded a request of Moroccan Government through its Embassy to the CDA. The Moroccan Government will construct this mosque as token of brotherhood and cordial relations between the governments and people of both countries.

The mosque would be built on Moroccan style and would be a masterpiece. The CDA has already allocated 11 kanals of land in the Park Enclave -I for the construction of mosque.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs has asked the CDA to identify the site to for the mosque and provide site possession, as well as the title and other details for the construction of the mosque so that Moroccan Government could be informed. The mosque will be sign of brotherly relations between the two countries.

COVID-19 overpowered SDGs?

Dr M Ali Hamza

A journey that started from United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio+20, finally set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including 169 supplementary targets, to address the multifaceted and complicated needs of our global society ranging from climate change, extreme poverty, global education to of course health, in 2015 at United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). SDGs stress on ending poverty and deprivations, reduce inequality, improve health and education, and spur economic growth, while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests, therefore all member nations adhered to accomplish these SDGs by year 2030.

Pakistan has also, for example, ensured that the UN SDGs are taken seriously throughout domestic policy as well as framing the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, placing education, environment and healthcare at the forefront. In a sense, SDGs have become the cornerstone of global governance at all levels, even at the most micro-level of an institutional governance set-up. But once the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 as a global pandemic, the entire ball game has changed. The pandemic Covid-19 does not just come in the way of the SDGs, but calls for a rethinking of the timeline.

What Covid-19 means for SDGs? What are the impact of COVID-19 on the set SDGs and the pace of their implementation? Let us have a quick review over it. The deadly virus has jammed the economic activities throughout the globe. Even after recovering from the corona attack it will take the businesses an ample time to recover and another unprecedentedly severe global financial crunch is well anticipated. The UNDP report states that due to COVID-19 income losses are expected to exceed \$220 billion in developing countries with an estimated 55% of the global population having no access to basic food security and nutrition. This is going to directly hit the SDG1 (no poverty) and SDG2 (zero hunger), it seems that instead of alleviation, the poverty and hunger are most likely to experience elevation. This economic turmoil is associated and will gravely hit SDG8 (decent work and economic growth)

and SDG9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) too. The impacts in the short-run are expected to be highly worrisome, because one very vital element to stimulate SDG8 and 9 is human capital that is under substantial strike.

Moreover, the reliance on digital connectivity is a part of our life today and there is a possibility that digital or IT sector may grow faster in coming days, but consequently we got to ready to witness simultaneous crash and closures of traditional businesses. The developed countries may not have this situation as devastating, but as far as developing and under developed countries it is going to be dreadful. The reason is simple, a large part of the business sector in the developing world remains unorganized and does not have significant share in the digital space; causes include deficient human, physical and structural capacity. This incapability or insufficiency of being accommodated in digital spaces will lead to more poverty, hunger, and inequalities thus obstructing achievements of SDGs 1, 2 and 10 (reduce inequality) respectively. These are also the challenges to the equity dimension of holistic development by the pandemic and severely affecting SDG3 (good health and well-being). A recent report by UNESCO explicitly says that the COVID-19 pandemic is causing more than 1.6 billion children and youth to be out of school in 161 countries and impacting over 91% of the world's enrolled students. The crisis crystallizes the dilemma for educational policymakers particularly of developing countries whether to completely suspend education or adapt to online learning systems. Developing countries like Pakistan is frankly not well equipped for traditional education even, and not at all ready for the hybrid educational mechanism, which means that the fundamental educational system is in trouble already, therefore SDG4 (quality education) presents a dream at a far distance from turning into a reality.

SDG16 is about Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. And under COVID-19 crises many developing and underdeveloped world believes and views this pandemic as one spread and imported by the privileged class through international travels and free



mixing in the western ways of life. They feel dejected and demotivated for almost no fault of theirs, and a probable demand for compensation by those responsible to cause them disease or hamper their economic activity, cannot be stated as unjustified. The relevant questions appear: can the global justice system uphold such demand? can global and local institution put their foot down and let the peace prevail through justice by the strong institutions? is SDG16 still pragmatic and doable? Though current focus is on the alarming spread of Covid-19, but the developed world should focus on ultimate impacts on poorest and most vulnerable in social, economic and environmental terms, living in developing and underdeveloped countries, to leave no one behind, and that refers to SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals). SDG17 restates a commitment of global partnership to realize the remaining 16 goals, and COVID-19 can be a decisively indicative test for this. If economic giants particularly of the west do not offer a patronage and do not whole heartedly assist the countries with huge population but weak financial settings, if financially settled countries remain blind to the miseries of people from underprivileged world during and due to COVID-19 crises, then fulfilling SDG17 was never a true and sincere intention. Though UN working to fight COVID-19 but simultaneously the global community has to unite, learn lessons from each other and use this time to reset and to look at existing frameworks for some clarity including the SDGs. Our priority must be to inspire and enable the new dialogue for reform; how do we actually build the global and unified system that can deliver on the aspiration of the UN SDGs? Now more than ever the SDGs have reinforced the fact that how critical it is to have engagement of all sectors and industries, an approach that has been noticeably lacking in many areas including global public health. In context of Pakistan, pragmatically speaking, apparently COVID-19 has almost overpowered the majority, nearly all of SDGs and this detention seems not to finish soon, therefore Mr. Prime Minister must not overlook the matter and should assign the cabinet a task to find way-out for SDGs from the shackles of COVID-19.

UAE's National Policies against COVID-19

Dr Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



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

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) being the 2nd largest economy of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has now become the role model for others in the fight against COVID-19. The government of UAE has announced economic package of approximately AED 26.5 billion (\$ 7.2 billion or 2 percent of GDP) for various sectors.

The UAE's visionary leadership is taking all possible measures to boost the morale of the business community in the UAE. Its latest decision to step up precautionary measures to contain the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is aimed to protecting people's health and safety and ensuring business continuity at all sectors. The country's visionary leadership is positively responding to the challenges with dignity and resilience.

UAE economic package included AED 16 (\$4.4 billion) approved by the federal government to support the private sector by decreasing numerous government charges and speeding-up existing mega infrastructure projects; AED 1.5 billion (\$0.4 billion) by the government of Dubai to reduce government fees, provide additional water and electricity subsidies, and simplify business procedures; and AED 9 billion (\$2.5 billion) announced by the government of Abu Dhabi as part of the ongoing "Ghadan-21" fiscal stimulus program. The new economic initiatives provided for water and electricity subsidies as well as credit guarantees and liquidity support to small and medium-sized enterprises. Moreover, the government of Abu Dhabi has announced a reduction or suspension of various government fees and penalties, as well as a rebate on commercial lease payments in the

tourism and hospitality sectors.

The UAE government have announced and implemented several interconnected and interdependent measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including closure of schools, nurseries, shopping malls, parks restaurants, and various tourist attractions. National Epidemic Control Plan was also announced and imposed effective travel restrictions suspension of international flights, suspension of prayers at mosques and other large gatherings, and enacted tele-working arrangements in government offices.

UAE has established a number of preventative measures, such as localized quarantines and airport screenings. Hand sanitizers are now in all hotels, government agencies are advised to interact online instead of through face-to-face meetings, and a pilot program has already been started in government schools to teach via distance learning. The Emirates have also acted beyond their borders recently, airlifting a group of Yemeni students from Wuhan, China the virus's epicenter.

The Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) has lowered its policy interest rate twice by a combined 125 basis points so far this year. On March 15, the Central Bank had announced a Dh100 billion stimulus package, which allowed banks to grant temporary relief on retail and business clients' for loans payment of up to six months.

UAE has been helping the government of Pakistan in its fight against coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as second batch of eleven ton of medical and supplies handed over to Pakistan authorities. The UAE is the second country after China that has been providing assistance to Pakistan continuously and in constant contact with the government. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador for Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi said that UAE is the champion and role model of humanitarian assistance in the world. It is one the main pillars of its foreign policy too he added.

Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi

said that the UAE leadership including President Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan and Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan taking personal interest in the well-being of the people of Pakistan.

The ambassador said that more aid is in the pipeline and his government is watching the situation prevailing in Pakistan and whenever this country will need, the UAE government would provide the support.

He said that the second phase of medical assistance to Pakistan is a pioneering model and a realistic evidence of the success of humanitarian efforts of the UAE leadership in their quest to provide support and assistance to the friendly people of Pakistani, which is an established approach in foreign policy since the era of founding father late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (May Allah bless his soul) and continued and developed in the era of HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of UAE.

He reminded that bilateral relations between Pakistan and the UAE are based on mutual affinity and respect, and these ties has flourished to partnerships in many fields, stressing that friendship and close linkages between the two countries is a key element of this partnership.

Strong political commitment, immaculate governance and delivery system, optimal utilization of Artificial Intelligence Technologies (AITs), economic bailout package, adequate financial measures and last but not least, immense social security programs proved effective in UAE's fight against COVID-19.

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



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Covid-19: Myths Deluging Faster than Virus Itself

By Ms. Minahil Shawal Afridi



COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

While Beijing is taking every possible measure to halt the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in China and abroad, Washington is busy playing the blame game rather than making concrete efforts to address the global issue. China is very wisely dealing with the health conditions in affected areas and has granted all kinds of possible assistance to improve the health systems in developing as well as underdeveloped countries. Having glance of the international scenario at the moment, it can be seen that China has emerged as a global leader in curbing the menace of a deadly virus, which is accused of originating in China's own Wuhan City. However, the evidence and facts that are now unveiling on different international media platforms and the research being conducted by seasoned health experts raises new queries about the timeline of the pandemic and suggest that Covid-19 though detected in China – has no origin in the country. This article highlights the facts, supporting the aforementioned claim. Fake rumours being circulated on social media is misleading people regarding the actual realities concerning Covid-19, and surprisingly this misinformation is spreading faster than the virus itself. The World Health Organization has defined this harmful outbreak of misleading myths as "infodemic", which is a serious matter to be concerned about. The false claims and information flooding on social media have made it problematic for people to identify reliable sources and, accurate plausible measures. This deluging false medical advice is creating difficulties for the experts in guiding people what preventive measures to take at this hour of need. According to a report cited in the Washington Post on March 1, 2020, over 2 million tweets comprising of conspiracies about the coronavirus were circulated in a time span of just two months between January and February. One of the misleading information spread across the globe initially after the outbreak of pandemic was that

"The virus had been created- accidentally or deliberately - in a laboratory at the Wuhan Disease Control and Prevention Centre". This false proposition had been posted by the Washington Times on January 6, 2020, but has been widely rejected by international experts. The article reads that a government-run lab in Hubei Province of China, the "Wuhan Institute of Virology", is responsible for the outbreak of Covid-19. It's quite strange and at the same time absurd that this very claim was made merely based on a speculation by a former Intelligence officer from Israel. What is more shocking is that without having any evidence of the claimed statement, the international media outlets including The Texas radio station KPRC and The Toronto Sun columnist Candice Malcolm's YouTube show grabbed the idea and ran with it to boost their ratings. However, many international public health researchers very clearly stated in The Lancet that Covid-19 had nothing had no natural origin in China. Another myth circulating among the international community is that the source of the coronavirus is the "wet market" in Wuhan where it was transmitted from bats. Interestingly, the exact animal source of Covid-19 has not yet been identified, and most importantly the point to note is that bats were not sold at the Wuhan wet market. Furthermore, the description of the initial cases that are published in The Lancet also challenges the hypothesis that Wuhan market is the origin of a deadly virus. Chinese scientists have found that the first reported case of the Covid-19, in December 2019, had no link to the Wuhan market. According to the report compiled by Chinese researchers from several institutions, no epidemiological link was found between the first patient and later cases. Also, 13 of the 41 cases had no link to the marketplace. Based on research and facts, it is necessary to understand that China has not started the coronavirus nor are Asians responsible for it. This kind of false statements by US government

officials in creating panic among people and giving rise to hate sentiments against Asians. The US in some cases is openly claiming that China put together this virus. Just recently, what Senator Tom Cotton tweeted out on January 30, 2020:

"I would note that Wuhan has China's only biosafety level-four super laboratory that works with the world's most deadly pathogens to include, yes, coronavirus".

Surprisingly, the evidence Mr Cotton provided to support his claim was the statement itself. There is no scientific evidence for these claims and would do no good but harm as we see happening in the West specifically. This kind of attitude from senior officials has resulted in disastrous events, for example, an Asian man was attacked in London by racists who were furious about the coronavirus outbreak and held "him" responsible for it. Similar incidents of Coronavirus-related racism are observed in other Western countries too, including Germany.

Having deliberated upon the myths revolving around blaming China of the Covid-19, let us now face some harsh realities of the United States' concerning the pandemic. The Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Robert Redfield confessed something very questionable, in the House Oversight Committee. He admitted that Americans who died from influenza were later tested positive for Covid-19, in the posthumous diagnosis. This statement raises so many questions and concerns about the irresponsibility and carelessness on the US' part. Also, it shifts all eyes on US' regarding the debate about the origin of Covid-19, instead of China. So the U.S. officials including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, calling the disease - "Wuhan virus", would now care to call it the "Blooper Virus"?

In August 2019, US observed a viral disease which they initially accredited to "vaping" which they called electronic cigarette pneumonia.

Although the symptoms of the then "unknown disease" could not be explained by e-cigarettes and people had been using them for decades. This caused several deaths in the US which were attributed to common viral flu, and infected many US soldiers as well. Robert

Redfield has however stated that post-mortems were performed to learn the cause of death and was found

that the disease was mis-diagnosed. According to him, he wrote to the US officials that the suspected deaths were not due to flu but coronavirus.

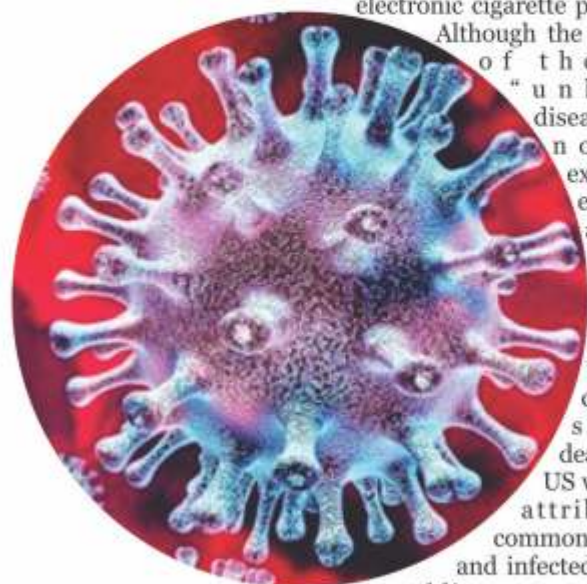
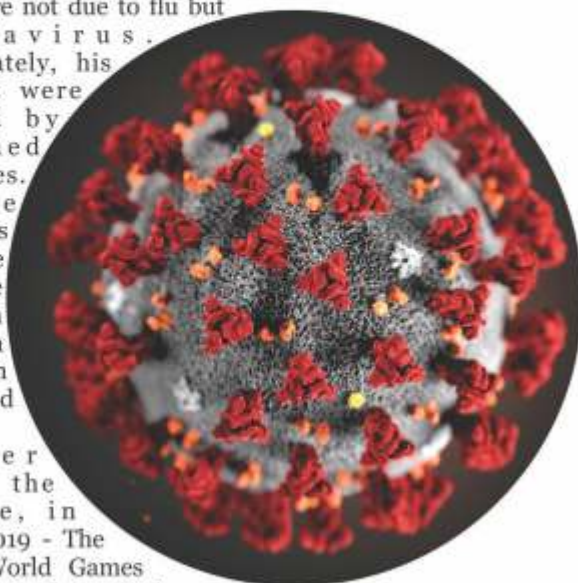
Unfortunately, his warnings were ignored by concerned authorities.

These reports were highlighted on mainstream media in Taiwan and Japan.

Further tracking the timeline, in October 2019 - The Military World Games were organized in Wuhan, China. 300 US soldiers - already infected - came to Wuhan on the pretense of taking part in the military competition but very weirdly, could not win a single game. These soldiers during their visit had visited Wuhan wet markets and roamed around the entire city. Few of them got ill and were hospitalized in Wuhan for an undetermined infection. A few weeks later this novel virus appeared in Wuhan. From August 2019 to January 2020, the CDC department in the US reported that the worst flu had taken over the country causing up to 12000 deaths. But surprisingly the US took no concrete action over this alarming situation. Later in March, the CDC director disclosed that some COVID-19 deaths were misdiagnosed as flu and COVID-19 was diagnosed when they did posthumous tests. After the Military World Games in China in October 2019, it was in December 2019 that the first confirmed case was reported in Wuhan.

Comprehending the facts further, science has proven that the family of coronaviruses has revealed 5 strains until the present, and the US is the only country with all 5 variants of the virus. Another argument is that the laboratory tests conducted in Italy gave stunning results, which showed that a strain of the virus obtained from an Italian patient was genetically different from the original strain isolated in China and two Chinese tourists who became sick in Rome. Therefore the genetic difference of the traits of the virus in Italy as well as Iran, have been declared to have similarities to one found in China. Hence it quite well supplements the claim that China is not responsible for "creating" or "spreading" the deadly virus, rather it was the inattention of US authorities which led to this alarming situation worldwide.

The Writer is Research Assistant, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad



to help strengthening industrial cooperation: Haroon Sharif

DNA/STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could speed up the industrial cooperation in priority sectors, said Haroon Sharif, the former Minister of State and Chairman of Pakistan Board of Investment.

"At this stage, there is a huge scope for investments in the health sector including pharmaceuticals and expansion of hospitals' network," said Sharif in an exclusive interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

The CPEC, he said could help strengthening the digital technology- base in Pakistan, as the world moves to remote working. More specifically, there is a huge demand for digital education in the remote areas of Pakistan.

"China should also look at relocating some industries to mitigate future risks," said Mr Sharif, adding that a number of global buyers would like to have diversified production sources in future rather than taking the risk of dealing with one country. Pakistan has the comparative advantage in value added textiles, agriculture-based food processing and information technology, he said.

He told CEN it is critical for China to create support mechanisms for priority industrial sectors that can create the majority of jobs in Pakistan, such as agriculture, services and manufacturing.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, textiles, food processing and retail will be badly hit. A Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) fund to support these economic sectors will be extremely helpful to keep the momentum of CPEC going.

According to him, focus of CPEC should



move towards human development and funds need to be allocated for expanding the health infrastructure as well as essential skills for the labor-force.

About Prime Minister Imran Khan's public appeal to the Group of 20 (G20) for debt relief to the developing countries, Mr Sharif said it certainly carried weight and strengthened the case for deferral of debt payments till December 2020.

He said, "It is important to understand that there hasn't been a debt write-off for and it is kind of a rescheduling of repayments. Using it as "debt relief" may cause confusion among general public."

According to Mr Sharif, this bilateral relief by the International Development Association (IDA) is likely to be extended for one more year. The G20 leaders have appealed to the commercial lenders including global pension and hedge funds to follow the same path.

Sharif said that Pakistan's foreign debt is around 110 billion U.S. dollars and this year's repayments are in the range of \$10 billion.

This debt suspension will ease pressure on

the external account for one year and the overall relaxation of repayments will be in the range of \$1 to \$2 billion.

Pakistan is likely to reach out to the bilateral lenders including China for deferral of loan payments. Mr Sharif said, "China should look at a potential debt write-off."

If Pakistan manages to reschedule the debt, it will prove fair amount of fiscal space to focus on the revival of economy which has been badly hit due to COVID-19 pandemic.

It is pertinent to point out that Pakistan's domestic debt is three times more than the international debt, said Mr Sharif.

He added, while debt relief will ease pressures on government's fiscal position, investments will be needed to revive the job creating industries.

According to Mr Sharif, the current debt suspension will further ease pressure on the current account, however, the fiscal deficit, is likely to be very high above 9 percent of GDP due to low tax revenues and high expenditures on health and cash transfers to the poor.

Pakistan's GDP growth is likely to go down to 1 percent in 2020. The recent interest rate cuts will ease some pressure on the fiscal deficit, according to Mr Sharif.

So, it is a testing time for everyone and Pakistan will certainly be looking forward to targeted support from the best friend China, said Mr Sharif.

He said, China has clearly shown global leadership in dealing with this pandemic and it is expected that China will continue its leadership in ensuring regional stability especially in the Belt and Road initiative partner countries. This will prove to the world the real meaning of the term – a community with a shared future for mankind.



Confucius Institute will be functional from Fall-2020

SARGODHA, (DNA):Sargodha University (SU) received a specific plaque of Confucius Institute sent by the Confucius Institute headquarters, Hanban China.

In this regard, Ms Salena Wang, the representative of Henan Normal University (HNU), China presented the decorated plaque of Confucius Institute to the Sargodha University Vice Chancellor Dr Ishtiaq Ahmad. The plaque will be fixed at the Confucius Institute Sargodha University.

Speaking on the occasion, the vice chancellor said that the Confucius Institute would be functional from fall-2020. As a prelude to the functioning of the Confucius Institute, two Chinese language teachers from HNU have already been started the Chinese languages classes at SU while more teachers will be hired for the institute to promote Chinese language, arts and culture, he added.

The vice chancellor further said that the Confucius Institute would help Pakistani youth to acquire language skills, develop deep understanding of Chinese culture and civilization to become useful partners in development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Ms Salena Wang said that despite the years long relations between the two countries, people don't understand each other's culture. The Confucius Institute would bridge the communication gap and also provide the opportunities to the young researchers with strong knowledge of Chinese language and culture to research at Chinese universities.

Dr Fazal ur Rehman, the Director Pakistan Institute of China Studies said that learning Chinese language and having good understanding of the Chinese culture would



ease the communication and help in building people to people contact.

In October last year, Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang pledged to undertake many projects one of which was about the establishment of the Confucius Institute at Sargodha University.

However, the Vice Chancellor Dr Ishtiaq Ahmad and Dr Fazalur Rehman, the director PICS, worked out the formalities of its establishment in December, 2019 during a visit to China, when they participated in the 2019 International Chinese Language Conference held at Changsha.

Azerbaijan is one of success stories in fight against COVID-19

DNA

BAKU, APR 26 – Azerbaijan is one of success stories in the fight against COVID-19, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Head of Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration Hikmat Hajiyev said in an interview.

"Azerbaijani government has been taking certain actions since mid-January. It is because of the strategic vision demonstrated by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and also risk assessment and threat perception with regard to COVID-19. As a result of this, we can say that Azerbaijan is in a better situation. It is one of the success stories in the fight against COVID-19," he said.

With regard to the actions by Azerbaijani government, Hajiyev pointed out that in the fight against COVID-19 crisis, in such a



pandemic situation, national coordination is extremely important.

"Therefore, by the decree of Azerbaijan's president, a Task Force has been established under the Cabinet of Ministers to coordinate the actions of all government institutions. Of course, quarantine measures are extremely important as well. Here, I would like to share the unique experience of Azerbaijan. Since late January and early February, we have started taking all Azerbaijanis or foreign nationals visiting Azerbaijan in special quarantine zones. Actually, four and five-star hotels have been designated for that purpose. Since mid-February, certain restrictions have been applied. Since early March, all educational institutions have been closed and social isolation measures, as well as movement restrictions have been imposed. With all of these actions, we've effectively contributed to success story of Azerbaijan," he added.

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Kyrgyz ambassador keen to enhance ties with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (DNA) -: The relationship between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan is a worthy example of successful interaction and cooperation and that leadership of both the countries is determined to further strengthen the existing connectivity between the two countries.

Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Erik Beishembiev said this while opening a Round Table entitled 'Kyrgyzstan - Pakistan Partnership for Trade and Investment' organized by the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan.

He said that it was a matter of great pride for his country that Pakistan was amongst the first countries which acknowledged its independence.

The Ambassador went on to say that as a result of over twenty five years' of bilateral cooperation a number of positive developments have taken place adding both countries are taking every possible step to

further strengthen and develop this collaboration. The ambassador added that both the sides were agreed to enhance the volume of bilateral trade and promote joint projects in the field of

energy, communications, agriculture and tourism.

Erik Beishembiev went on to say that his country was quite interested in supporting Pakistan in solving its energy crisis and is actively promoting implementation of CASA-1000 power export project and that at the same time renewal of transport links between the two countries through quadrilateral agreement on transit transport between Pakistan-China Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan as part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor will bring both the countries more closer to each other.

The Ambassador made the mention of several priority areas for bilateral cooperation like electricity production and supply, mining, food industry, textile, medicine, pharmaceutical and Information Technology.

He also underlined the need for intensifying



people to people contacts, information sharing and enhancing visits of businessmen of both the sides.

The Ambassador expressed the hope that the Event will go a long way in further strengthening the Pakistan-Kyrgyzstan close friendship.

On his part, Lt. Col (R) Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director Centre for Global and Strategic Studies gave a comprehensive presentation regarding the available opportunities for promotion of trade and investment between the two countries.

On their part Ashique Hamdani, Ms. Samra Naz and Dr. Shahid Hussain also shed light on the possible avenues of cooperation between the two countries.=DNA



CPBC donates 2 million ton of medical equipment to Pakistan



ISLAMABAD, A special plane of Pakistan International Airline (PIA) carrying 2 million tons of medical equipment from China arrived here on Saturday, said Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

It was the second plane in two days from China. The supplies include 132000 masks, 15 breathing machines, 11000 protection clothing sets, 200 forehead thermometers, and 21000 detection kits.

According to details, couple of days back, the Sichuan liaison office of the China-Pakistan Business Council handed over a batch of anti-epidemic materials to Chinese iron brother—Pakistan, through the consulate-general of Pakistan in Chengdu.

The council has collected donations from enterprises and individuals, who were eager to help Pakistan in its hour of need.

Acting consul-general Mahmood Akhtar of the Pakistani consulate general in chengdu expressed sincere thanks for this, saying that "we can see real friends coming forward in difficult times."

After the outbreak of the new epidemic in China, Pakistan actively raised money in the absence of medical supplies and donated urgently needed epidemic prevention supplies to China.

On February 20th, the Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, stressed that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic partners, praised Pakistan for the first time for China to express support and arrange the precious material donations, said China always put Pakistan foreign priority, call made China-Pakistan relations a model to promote the construction of a community of human destiny.

Sichuan liaison office of the china-pakistan business council actively serves the friendship between China and Pakistan, and has received donations of urgently needed medical supplies from enterprises and individuals in sichuan, chongqing, guizhou and other parts of the country. It is learned that in January 2020, China chamber of international commerce authorized sichuan provincial council for the promotion of international trade to establish the sichuan liaison office of china-pakistan business council to lead the work of the china-pakistan business council and take charge of the economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan.

At the donation ceremony, acting consul general Mahmood Akhtar of the Pakistan consulate general in chengdu expressed his gratitude to the Sichuan association for the promotion of international trade and people who have always cared about Pakistan for their efforts at this time.

Ma Zhijun, member of china-pakistan business liaison office in sichuan province, boss of fan fang food co., LTD, said that "this is the power of the contribution you can, but also want to call support for Pakistan's enterprises and individuals'."

Two Pakistani students from sichuan university witnessed the donation ceremony. Noshervan Khaliq, one of the students, said that knowing the lack of medical supplies in the country, "I am really happy to see the donation from China. I will never forget the help from China for the rest of my life."

HBL, Serena pledge 30,000 meals for Medical Professionals



ISLAMABAD, (DNA) – HBL and Serena Hotels join hands to provide 30,000 meal-boxes over a period of one month, in seven cities with Serena Hotel presence, to medical professionals battling at the frontline of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. Serena Hotels will provide the meal-boxes with the support of HBL.

The collaboration, "Jazba-e-Khidmat", is a joint initiative of HBL and Serena Hotels and aims to provide specially prepared meal-boxes to the medical teams at the COVID-19 designated hospitals and health camps in the seven cities: Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Swat, Quetta, Gilgit and Khaplu. The "Jazba-e-Khidmat" meal-boxes will be provided twice a day to all the medical team members in 20 hospitals countrywide for a month.

Medical professionals are doing a tremendous service to society by battling on the frontlines against the Coronavirus pandemic. Efforts should be undertaken to ensure the health and safety of these medical professionals. Only then will they be able to save the society from this pandemic.

HBL, Pakistan's largest bank and a responsible corporate citizen, is keenly aware of its duty to support Pakistan at this difficult time. The Bank enjoys presence in all those cities where Serena Hotels have presence in.

The Bank's role in financing these meal-boxes is part of its larger effort to assist the society combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Serena Hotels, Pakistan's leading Hotel chain, will provide quality meal-boxes with nutritious food to keep the medical professionals energized. =DNA



Indonesian Embassy hosts Virtual Iftar

Islamabad – In every difficulty we find convenience because every crisis provides an even rather greater opportunity if we innovatively look for the way out and strive to overcome the challenges.

These positive, heartwarming and spirit lifting remarks were made by the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia H.E. Iwan S. Amri, as the host of an Iftar organized the virtual way on the first day of Ramadan (25/4).

In the midst of the corona virus pandemic in Pakistan and social distancing, the Indonesian Embassy switched to Virtual Iftar as an alternative to continue its annual tradition to breakfast together as a coherent community.

The virtual fast-breaking was attended by the Indonesian Ambassador Iwan Amri, Mrs. Rita Amri, Embassy's officials and over 230 Indonesian students of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) who attended the grand virtual event from their boarding campuses and residences.

Welcoming the holy month, Ambassadorial S. Amri said that Ramadan is a great mercy of Allah to reset our lives but this year Ramadan was an unparalleled and perhaps once

in a lifetime experience. The experience that teaches us that difficulties should encourage us to be more creative and breaking our fast together in virtual way was an example, he said.

In the midst of the corona virus pandemic in Pakistan and social distancing, the Indonesian Embassy switched to Virtual Iftar as an alternative to continue its annual tradition to breakfast together as a coherent community.

On the occasion, Director Student Affairs IIUI, Dr. Ibrar Anver on behalf of the IIUI lauded the initiative of the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad and admired the creativity of the

Indonesian students at their campus. Showing unanimity of views and acknowledging the Ambassador, Dr. Anver said in his remarks that "God will facilitate one's life as long as he strives for the benefit of humanity."

During the program, the students were also provided information about the latest trends in the corona outbreak by Defense Attaché of the Embassy, Colonel Kav. Dody Taufik with the view to further enhance self protection and awareness.

In the spirit of social solidarity, staff from the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad also raised funds for the Community Ramadan activities. On the occasion, Firdaus Alfin Hudaya, Chair of the Indonesian Student Association (PPMI) of Pakistan appreciated the Ambassador and conveyed the feelings of the students by saying that the students long for the fasting arrangement back home, but even in Islamabad they feel like at home because they have parents at the Indonesian Embassy who are caring and attentive to them"

As per the arrangement, Indonesian students independently prepare iftar at the campus dormitory kitchen. To have traditional Indonesian Ramadan atmosphere in their campus, they prepare the typical Indonesian Iftar menu such as rending, soto Betawi and



Combating COVID 19: EuroAsian and CAs countries share experiences

CGSS organizes online conference; Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd)- President CGSS welcomed guests; envoys and defence attaches share their views

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an "Online Conference" with the Ambassadors and Diplomats of the Embassy of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and, Russia on the topic "How EuroAsian Countries are Ensuring Preventive Measures

Against COVID-19 & Their Suggestions for Others."

Keeping in view the recent situation of COVID-19 in Pakistan and around the globe, CGSS organized an online session to analyze and discuss the measures taken by Eurasian countries to effectively combat COVID-19. The session was commenced by Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd)-

President Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS). He welcomed the panelists to the online conference and highlighted the importance of preventive measures taken on regional level. Brig Mansoor Saeed, discussed the steps taken by Pakistan Government for battling COVID-19, he also mentioned the special Tiger Force and their responsibilities.

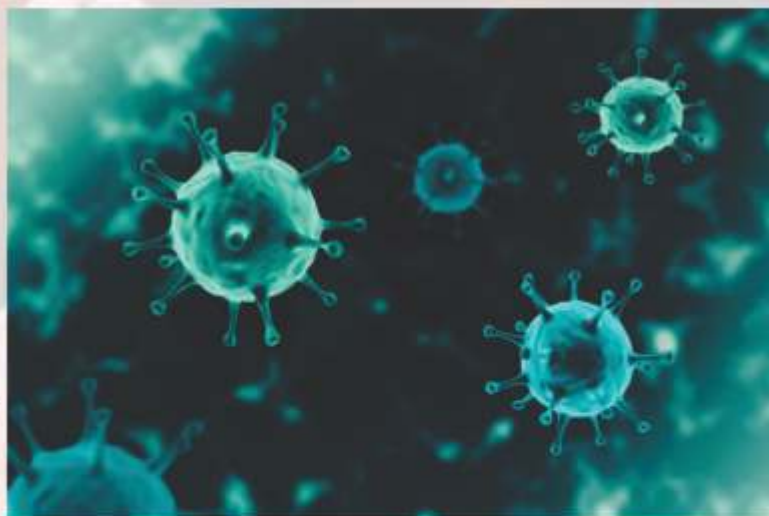
Ali Alizada – Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan shared the preventive measures taken by the Government of Azerbaijan, they have imposed a country wide lockdown with limited mobility. He further mentioned the special organizations formed to control the spread of COVID-19.

Ismatullo Nasredin – Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan mentioned that till date no cases have been reported officially but Tajikistan Government is prepared and fully equipped to deal with any emergency. The government has closed all international borders and prohibited all large gatherings.

Akan Rakhmetullin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan expressed his views and mentioned that, serious quarantine measures have been taken in the country to control the spread. Furthermore, he briefed about the special measures taken for the most vulnerable citizens, they are being provided with free groceries.

Furqat A. Sidikov – Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan shared his thoughts and highlighted that all Educational Institutions and Offices have been closed to ensure social distancing. Moreover, to facilitate the effected tourism industry of Uzbekistan special financial support has been provided to hotels and tourist agencies.

Colonel Anatoly A. Fedotov- Defense Attache - Embassy of Russian Federation to Pakistan stated the goodwill gestures by Russian Government of sending aid to effected countries in the form of medical equipment. Furthermore, the government has also made a volunteering force for assisting the elderly citizens of the country.



Colonel Mehman Novruzov- Defence Attache, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan highlighted the special flights arranged to facilitate the citizens of Azerbaijan around the world. He further stated that COVID-19 tests are being done regularly to limit the spread of the pandemic.

Lt Gen Naeem Khalid Lodhi, (Retd) – Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS advised the citizens to play their role in helping the government for collectively fighting the pandemic.

Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan - Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst reviewed the diversified policies taken by Eurasian countries against COVID-19 and appreciated the effective measures taken by Eurasian countries. Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua (Retd)- Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS stated that this pandemic can be defeated by staying united as a nation.

Syed Muhammad Ali - Member Advisory Board CGSS gave valuable suggestions regarding the political, cultural, economic, and diplomatic measures that need to be taken in order to defeat COVID-19.

The online conference was attended by 25 participants including experts from academia and health sector.

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Persian Gulf: Yesterday, today and tomorrow

Mohammad Ali Hosseini

April 29 is celebrated in Iran as the "Persian Gulf Day". But why do Iranians care so much about the Persian Gulf that they dedicate a day to it in their official calendar? In fact, the Persian Gulf is not just a body of water, but part of the culture, history and identity of ours and the whole region. This gulf also plays an important role in the region's politics and economy.

The Persian Gulf is an important and strategic historical gulf. Historically, the shores of the gulf and the rivers that flowed into it have been the site of the first human civilizations. By studying the history of Persian Gulf, you can go to sea with ancient fishermen; hunt pearls from Qeshm Island, go to Mesopotamia and dig out the ancient inscriptions of Cyrus; listen to historical stories of the atrocities committed by Portuguese and British colonialists on the island of Hormuz, and hear the story of the outbreak of bloody wars, including Iraq's imposed war on Iran and the so-called Persian Gulf War.

So, for Iranians, the Persian Gulf is not just a sea, but part of history, identity and national heritage. This gulf is the ancestral home of the Iranians and they will not let foreigners to log it without permission. But beyond Iran, the Persian Gulf is a symbol of civilization, culture and history that connect the nations of the region. Therefore, now all the countries in the region have a responsibility to preserve the historical heritage of this region in the same historical and original way. These countries are not the same in terms of the history of creation and civilization. Some civilizations date back more than 7,000 years, while others do not exceed a few decades; however, the historical character, originality and dignity of each country requires that it be proud of its resources and Do not be greedy about the cultural, geographical and ancient resources of others. No country is allowed to create a false identity for itself by distorting history, overturning the facts and stealing the cultural heritage of others.

The same importance of identical and strategic importance of the Persian Gulf has caused some racist individuals and organizations to use fake names for this gulf in the last few decades in order to be honored by attributing it to them. But researchers, lawyers, historians and lovers of the Persian Gulf have prevented this with the help of the United Nations. All ancient geographical documents and maps in different languages such as Persian, Arabic, Spanish, etc. have referred to that gulf as "Persian Gulf". Thus, the distortion of its name is nothing but the blatant denial of a historical truth. The United Nations, citing ancient maps and texts, has been emphasizing the name of the Persian Gulf since 1990 with the issuance of various resolutions and statements. Also in October 2018, the World Intellectual Property Organization registered the name of the Persian Gulf in an official document. Based on these documents, which are based on international law, no individual, government or organization can use another title to call the Persian Gulf.

Also, the Persian Gulf is of special economic and unique importance. The gulf contains countless valuable marine resources and has valuable animal and plant species, the preservation of which requires the efforts of littoral states. The gulf is also an important international waterway, with its privileged location between the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, making it a highway for maritime trade in the region and the world. Also, the stunning beauty of the beaches and islands of the Persian Gulf provides a unique opportunity for the tourism industry of the coastal countries. The beautiful island of Kish, which has been

named "the Pearl of Persian Gulf", has been announced as the fourth tourist destination in Southwest Asia by the Iranian Tourism Organization.

But perhaps most importantly, the Persian Gulf has abundant hydrocarbon resources, including oil and gas. For more than a hundred years, Iran and the countries of the region have exploited the hydrocarbon resources of the Persian Gulf and its shores, and much of the economic growth and development of the region (including urban, industrial and even social development) is due to these valuable resources. An important part of the region's contemporary social and political history has also been affected by resources from oil and gas sales. And we all know that the future of the region is increasingly linked to the Persian Gulf.

All the historical, cultural-identical, economic, geo-economic and geopolitical aspects of the Persian Gulf make it doubly important to maintain the security of this gulf for the whole region. Unfortunately, in the last few decades, the serenity of the blue waves of the Persian Gulf has been disturbed by the presence of US-led naval fleets. Arms-producing governments, by spreading false narratives of the goals and strategies of countries in the region against each other, have created a sense of false fear and intimidation in order to foment an arms race and sell as many deadly weapons as possible. Therefore, the withdrawal of trans-regional forces, which are the source of convulsions, threats and the escalation of the arms race, is a requirement for maintaining lasting peace and security in the region.

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has submitted a peace plan for the region, called "Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE)" to the United Nations. In this plan, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran suggests that Iran, in cooperation with the countries of the region, will ensure the security of the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. HOPE is based on the principles of respect for territorial sovereignty, peaceful coexistence, good neighborliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries. With this plan, the Islamic Republic of Iran once again emphasizes the need for cooperation between all countries in the region and the promotion of multilateralism and mutual trust to maintain peace, tranquility and security in the region.

The important message that needs to be conveyed in the world today is to let the Persian Gulf continue to be a place to connect the people of our region, not a place for fear, ambiguity and worry about the future of the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran has shown its goodwill for the transformation of the Persian Gulf into a gulf of Friendship; now the great global test is facing other regional and international actors.

*Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini is
Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to*

Wisdom of World's Leaders in saying "NO" to Covid-19 + Sanctions

By Mohammad Ali Hossaini



Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan Experience has proved that on time cooperation for preventing proliferation of a crisis are

both logic and an issue of public interest. Today, the world is witnessing infection of increasing number of people to a scourge called COVID-19. Any inattention by the world leaders to this scourge will lead to a greater and more expansion of the virus even to their own people; the subject that will cause their future responsibility. Regarding the global aspect and depth of the catastrophe, the leaders' responsibility

is not just an internal one and its external aspects can be even more important. The leaders cannot immune their nations just by closing their own borders and be ignorant to the other countries. It is absolutely needed to take a holistic measure. Today, Iran is badly plagued with COVID-19. The level and dimension of virus expansion in Iran which privileges one of the highest health standards in the world is something quite considerable. Despite the torturous efforts of medical teams, Iranians still suffer a very high death toll of the disease. The main reason of this situation is unilateral coercive measures and unfair sanctions that hamper Iranian access to medical requirements. Neither international humanitarian norms nor recent international judiciary verdicts supports such brutal sanctions. The continuation of this situation will lead to a humanitarian catastrophe and needs the immediate

reaction of the global and especially neighboring countries' leaders. Any inaction or passive stance of the others towards these opportunistic unfair sanctions will bring the future responsibility of world leaders. Eradication of the virus needs a global and collective endeavor and there is no guarantee for other countries to immune itself from the situation. Quoting from Iranian great poet Saadi Shirazi: Human beings are members of a whole, In creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, Other members uneasy will remain. If you've no sympathy for human pain, The name of human you cannot retain! In this regard, we appreciate the recent call of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan for lifting sanctions against Iran and we thank his wisdom in understanding the importance of virus control over political rivalries. May Allah protect all of us

Mayor Islamabad says MCI fully geared up to cope with COVID 19

ISLAMABAD, – The Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) has established an emergency helpline 1122 in the wake of deadly COVID 19 with a view to enabling people to register complaints/information about this deadly disease.

Mayor Islamabad Sheikh Anser Aziz disclosed this while talking to DNA on Saturday.

The Mayor further told various formations of MCI have already been given necessary directions and guidelines in the regard.

He said focal persons have been nominated who shall be responsible for a daily chart of coordination and liaison with regards to COVID 19, specifying details of events.

He said Director General Health Services Dr. Hassan Urooj shall head the emergency arrangement and is authorized the pass orders for any assistance and facilitation until

DNA



COVID 19 related emergency is intact, the Mayor added.

"The entire emergency staff shall not be allowed for any leave, unless otherwise under extra ordinary circumstances. The inter-directorate coordination shall also be maintained for all possible support to citizens".

Sheikh Anser Aziz further said UAN numbers such as 1122, 16 and 1334 shall be responded proactively and

any emergency pertaining COVID 19 shall be responded proactively and shall be cautiously dealt assigning top priority. While talking about the safety of the employees of the Mayor told that they would be given equal priority if found affected with COVID 19, being the valuable asset of the corporation.

He said the MCI had made elaborate arrangements for creating awareness among the people about this deadly virus adding no stone would be left unturned in this regard. He said the MCI staff would go to every nook and cranny as part of awareness drive.

The Mayor also appealed to the people to cooperate with MCI and follow all precautionary measures. He said we are passing through an extra-ordinary situation that requires extra-ordinary steps. Sheikh Anser hoped with our collective efforts we will soon overcome this issue. =DNA



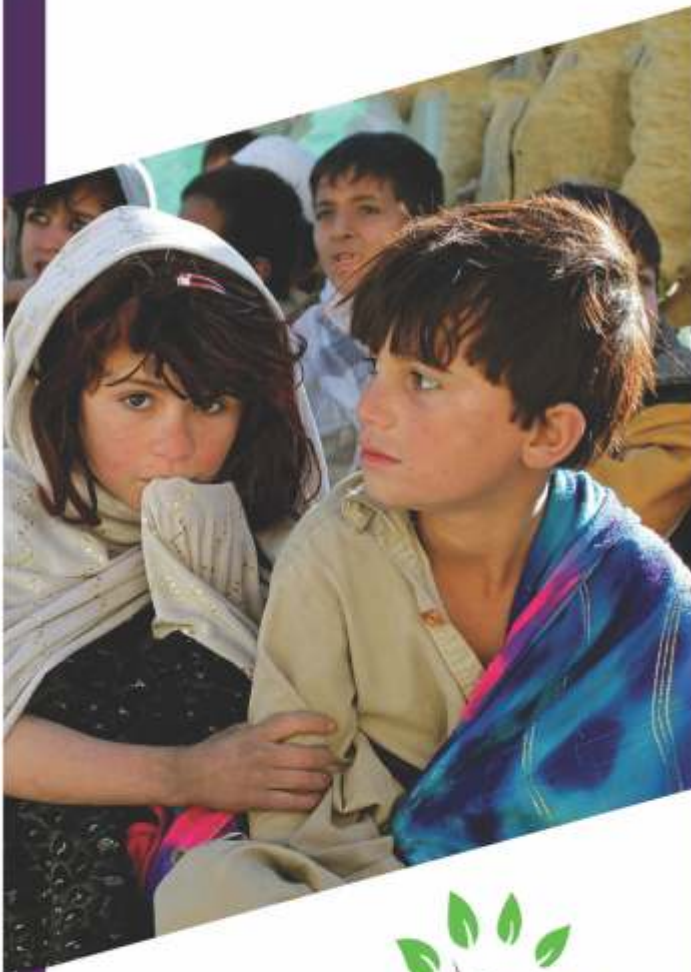
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HEALTH CARE

1

- Providing basic health facilities to the under privileged
- Develop effective health care plans to provide access in remote areas

EDUCATION

2

- To make education accessible to children in remote areas
- Facilitating learning and acquisition of knowledge
- Making strategies to reduce illiteracy

CLEAN WATER

3

- To use resources to provide clean drinking water
- Awareness about the importance of clean drinking water in order to tackle infective diseases
- Installation of water filtration plants and digging of wells

GREEN ENVIRONMENT

4

- Aim to raise the awareness of sustainable green environment
- Increase numbers of parks and plantation to reduce harmful effects of dangerous gases and chemicals
- To provide strategies for waste disposal mechanism

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

5

- Aim to support people to become creative entrepreneurs in order to stand on their feet
- Provide both financial and technical support to the deserving people
- Building financially stable nation

HEALTH CARE:

6

- Aim to support people to gain self-confidence and improve decision making abilities for the best interest of their communities and for the whole nation
- Leadership training camps certificates and degrees
- Targeting remote areas for flourishing of the country

Azerbaijan envoy hosts reception to celebrate Novruz

ISLAMBAD, (DNA) -The Azerbaijani Embassy in Pakistan hosted an event dedicated to Novruz holiday.

The event presented Azerbaijani culture, national and spiritual values, as well as cuisine.

Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Pakistan Ali Alizade said that on March 21, 2010, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the International Day of Nowruz at the initiative of Azerbaijan and other countries celebrating Novruz.

The ambassador said that this holiday has been celebrated annually in Azerbaijan for many centuries and is tied to ancient historical roots and cultural values □□and congratulated the participants on the upcoming Novruz holiday.

Ali Alizade informed about the national traditions associated with Novruz in Azerbaijan, and this holiday, which is characterized by the arrival of spring and renewal of nature, began with the celebration of water, fire, wind and land in our country a month ago.

He underlined his deep commitment to national and moral values. " I am honored and privileged to see friends gathered here at my place to celebrate this event," the ambassador added.

The event featured video clips related to Novruz traditions, national music of Azerbaijan, and samples of national cuisine, sugar, baklava, buffalo, tofu, lobster, pilaf and other dishes.=DNA



Iran interested in trade ties with Pakistan: Rouhani



DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said in a phone conversation with Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday that Iran is interested in trade ties with Pakistan and the neighboring countries, especially cross-border exchange of goods.

President Rouhani and Prime Minister Imran Khan called for the development and deepening of relations between the two countries and stressed the need to share experiences, knowledge and technology to combat and control coronavirus.

The two sides also stressed the need to reactivate borders and border markets and strengthen trade ties in line with health guidelines.

During the telephone conversation, the two heads of governments condemned any prejudice and pressure against Muslims and expressed their support in this regard.

Rouhani praised Pakistan's stance on opposing US sanctions against Iran and expressed hope that the two countries would further develop their trade and economic ties.

He said that reopening of border markets of the two countries with full observance of health protocols as contributing to the development of trade and economic relations between Tehran and Islamabad and added, "We are interested in exchanging goods and trade with Pakistan as well as with some neighboring countries through border markets."

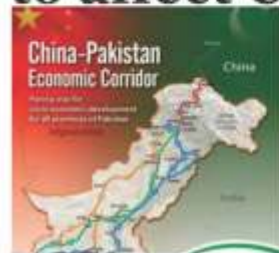
Congratulating the Pakistani government and people on the holy month of Ramadan, Rouhani expressed hope that the two countries' joint agreements would be implemented and made operational in favor of the two nations.

Imran Khan emphasized the development and deepening of relations with Iran, especially economic and trade cooperation, and welcomed the resumption of trade activities on the borders of the two countries and the activity of border markets by observing health protocols, saying, "The two countries' trade exchanges will greatly help Pakistan's economy, which has been affected by coronavirus."

Imran Khan condemned the US imposition of sanctions and increased economic pressure on Iran in the difficult situation that the world is facing with coronavirus, adding, "I consider it my duty to support Iran in the face of US illegal actions."

COVID-19 : Inadequate workforce to affect CPEC

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Inadequate supply of workforce in wake of COVID-19 could affect China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as in the case of other sectors of national development.

Gwadar Pro App quoting Li BiJian, China's consul-general based in Karachi, said no sector could escape from the effects of the deadly disease. The risk of contraction of the virus may impact negatively on the steady supply of the work force for CPEC projects.

Shielding the work force at every CPEC project from contraction of the virus forms the top priority at present.

Along with the rise of confirmed cases, in case some cities or regions become the epicenter and large number of people are infected, these will surely add more pressures to the management of each project.

If there occurs infection, tough measures of isolation as well as prevention will be applied which will impact in varying degree on the implementation of the projects based on how many people will be affected. This may lead to the risk of reduction of work force.

Some replacements may not materialise and some expired visas and passports may not be renewed in due course. On the other hand, the local employees form the bulk of the work force of the projects, there is a high risk that the current status quo may not be maintained and replacements may be delayed. These will more or less impact the operation and implementation of the projects.

Ever since the outbreak of the epidemic early this year, every project has been taking stringent preventive measures with strong support rendered by the Pakistan Federal and Provincial governments together with the Special Protection Forces.

The Chinese side has been taking strictest measures to screen and check the inbound personnel from China, and so far there is not a single imported case from China. And Zero contraction target has occurred and maintained in all projects till now. And all the projects are operating smoothly according to schedule.

Secondly, the import and shipment of the equipment, spare parts, materials, etc., may not be made on time and may affect the smooth operation, and cause delays in implementation of some projects. The lock-down of the cities and provinces, and closure of government and business offices may cause delays in clearance by the customs, handling and transporting of the relevant goods.

Thirdly, the pandemic may cause many legal issues based on force majeure. This may add more burdens to the relevant companies.

In short, the less the pandemic prolongs the smaller the effect on CPEC. If the pandemic prolongs a longer period of time, the bigger the effect will be. But one thing is clear and that is also the advantage Pakistan has, the quick recovery of China after her winning the preliminary battle against the pandemic, Li BiJian added.

COVID 19: Uzbekistan to get over 3 billion dollars from partners



DNA

TASHKENT: President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed the decree "On measures to attract external assistance to support the population, budget, basic infrastructure and business entities during the coronavirus epidemic".

International financial institutions are ready to provide Uzbekistan with long-term loans and grant totaling more than 3 billion dollars. Agreements have already been reached.

A "Roadmap", enclosed to this resolution, stipulates that 277.5 million dollars will go to strengthening healthcare system, 700 million dollars to business and banking systems support, 1.7 billion dollars and 150 million Euro to state budget support and 300 million dollars to utilities and energy enterprises areas.

Within the healthcare system, the country is planning to upgrade sanitary-epidemiological service, supply technical equipment and training of specialists in accordance with international standards and best practices, create world standard regional sanitary and epidemiological laboratories equipped, improve specialists' capacity, attract experts with international experience, build modern clinics for the treatment of infectious diseases, especially for children and mothers.

Uzbekistan is taking active steps to develop the construction of energy-efficient housing. Climate change and carbon footprint reduction are among the most wide-spread topics of discussion in the world. There are many ways to address these global challenges at different layers ranging from individual and state. Improving buildings and houses are some of those ways.

Uzbekistan is taking measures to develop the construction of energy-efficient housing starting from rural areas.

According to the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan dated November 14, 2018, starting from January 1, 2020 housing facilities should be equipped with energy-efficient and energy-saving building materials.

This document stimulated the joint project of the Ministry of Construction of Uzbekistan, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Global Environment Fund (GEF).

Within it, in 2019 a number of business trainings for bank workers specializing on "green mortgage" were organized in 12 regions of the country. Assistance was provided in the construction of 800 one-story 3-bedroom energy-efficient and low-carbon houses in the Ferghana, Samarkand, Bukhara, Surkhandarya and Khorezm regions.

UN and OSCE in Uzbekistan Representatives Heads got acquainted with newly created conditions for ethnic minorities

UN Resident Coordinator in Uzbekistan Helena Fraser and OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan John MacGregor joined by the representative of ministries and agencies paid a visit to Altinkul village in Pakhtakor district of Jizzakh region, built within "Prosperous Villages" Program.

This village was built within a few months in the abandoned wasteland. President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev was personally supervising the implementation of the construction project. Less than in year, this area saw 460 new cottages, consumer services utilities and textile factory that provided 500 new jobs.

Press Freedom essential for democracy: Dutch envoy



ISLAMABAD (DNA) –Wouter Plomp Ambassador of the Netherlands to Pakistan has said press freedom is corner stone of human rights. He added, press freedom in fact protects others fundamental freedom rights.

In a message on the Press Freedom Day the ambassador said, free press is essential democracy. In this current corona pandemic reliable information can save lives. The ambassador said media workers should report independently without any fear. We need a free press now than ever, the ambassador added. =DNA

Desert Locust: regional cooperation needed, says

Ambassador Ali Hosseini

ISLAMABAD, (DNA)- Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan has made comments on the attack of Desert Locust and the need to regional cooperation.

He said, emergence of new challenges like virus originated global pandemics, climate change; pollutions and infest of locusts require timely and collective response, infest of locusts from different sides threatens food supply for millions of people in Iran and Pakistan.

The ambassador further said, this year, the unusually warm and wet winter allowed an extra generation of breeding, meaning that the Desert Locust infestations will be much larger than normal and poses a major risk for the region.

It is predicted that the locust swarm Iran and Pakistan is the worst Desert Locust outbreak in the last 50 years. In this regard, two countries need more and early coop



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Japan's lucrative offer for Pak workforce, professionals

Japanese government greatly values its ties with Pakistan; all foreigners get compensation at par with their Japanese colleagues: Shindo Yusuke

By Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

ISLAMABAD, (DNA) - SHINDO Yusuke, Deputy Chief of Mission/Minister of the Embassy of Japan has said Japan was keen to invite more and more Pakistani skilled and semi-skilled workers/professionals with a view to promoting and strengthening bilateral bonds and overcoming the ageing Japanese population.

Mr. Shindo further said Japanese government greatly values its relations with Pakistan adding Japanese markets offered a lot of opportunities to Pakistani workforce.

He talked about three categories in which workforce from Pakistani were invited. These categories included technical intern training; specified skilled worker and profession required higher training.

The Japanese envoy unfurled these details during a media talk. Ryuji Iwasaki Counsellor and Head of Culture and Public Information Section was also present on the occasion.

Shindo Yusuke further said keeping in view the potential and scope of this program, number of people participating in this scheme was very small. He said both sides needed to gear up efforts to increase this number.

To a question he said, many Japanese companies do not know about Pakistani workforce and their potential that is why they prefer workers from other countries.

"The Pakistan ambassador in Japan Imitiaz Ahmed is doing great job to spread awareness about Pakistani potential.

However his efforts can bear more fruit only when supported by the government of



Pakistan and Ministry of Foreign Affairs". While underlining various impediments in the way of increase in number of Pakistani workers to Japan he said language ostensibly was a major hurdle.

He added, the Japan Foundation in Pakistan had already undertaken various Japanese languages course. Such courses are offered twice a year in July and December. March 27 is the deadline for course being offered in July 2020.

Talking about the first category the Japanese envoy said purpose of this program is to transfer technical skills, techniques and knowledge to foreign countries including Pakistan, through an

experience of "On the Job Training (OJT)" in Japan, to contribute to the human resource development by the development of the economy of that country.

This would thus promote international cooperation. He added, Japan and Pakistan signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on this program in February 2019.

He said applicants should be at least 18 years old with good health conditions adding Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training of the Government of Pakistan nominated "National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC)" and "National University of Technology (NUTECH)" to choose participants for this category. He said third category has a variety of fields. This status of residence is permitted for foreigners who have higher expertise, technique such as academic background or career history with a contract with public/private entity in Japan. IT software engineers are included in this status of residence. This doesn't have any restriction on the period of stay in Japan which is required for the "Technical Intern Training" and the "Specified Skilled Worker".

To a question about remuneration Mr. Shindo said all workers are treated equally and as per the Japanese law. All foreigners get compensation at par with their Japanese colleagues.

He hoped that Pakistani people would benefit from this Japanese offer. He stressed to circulate this information in order to enable more and more Pakistanis to avail this opportunity. =DNA

CPEC companies taking effective steps

ISLAMABAD, (DNA): China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) companies were taking effective measures to control the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, a renowned Chinese Scholar said. The corridor projects have formulated plans for epidemic prevention and control and implemented them in strict accordance with the plan. In addition, the Chinese companies involved in the construction of corridor projects are actively contributing

to the prevention and control of epidemics in their localities, donating medical supplies to local governments, schools, and hospitals, Cheng Xizhong, Special Commentator of China Economic Net and visiting professor at Southwest University of Political Science and Law said in his article. He informed that the headquarters of the Chinese companies are closely monitoring the spread of the Pakistani epidemic, attaching great importance to

the epidemic prevention work of the corridor project site, and providing key guarantees for medical supplies. Some companies also send medical teams to the project site.

During this special period, the continuous progress of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project is of great significance.

He advocated that during this special period, the construction of the corridor cannot be stopped.

The world is upside down

This raised the importance of emergency situation how modern technology can be utilized for the basic needs of the society. Certainly, we can do better with latest innovative and technological advances but certainly this needs a senior and trained leadership who can direct its nation towards a right path.

Dr. Aamir Hanif

Who knew that 2020 would bring the whole world to a standstill due to emergence of a very novel virus called corona virus identified at the end of 2019. Within a few weeks it has taken the world into a huge panic after it started from Wuhan city in Hubei province in China and we still see the disastrous effects in different parts of the world especially Europe and USA. In February, the World Health Organization designated the disease as CoVID-19. The virus that caused the CoVID-19 is designated as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-Cov-2). Globally more than 500,000 confirmed cases of CoVID-19 have been infected. The WHO has declared the virus to be pandemic, meaning it will have sustained global impact. The epidemic in China peaked between late January and early February, 2020 and the rate of new cases decreased by early March. The transmission of virus was initially noted due to outbreak in sea food market which sold alive animals. Later on, person to person contact became the main mode of transmission mainly through the droplets which typically stayed in air for up to 2 meters. The genomic study of the virus shows similarity between bat coronavirus and shows a link to the bat as primary source.

The incubation period of Covid-19 is about 14 days and disease range from mild to severe disease. According to WHO figure, the fatality has varied from 0.7 percent in China except Wuhan city, where case fatality was 5.8 percent and mostly involved population with chronic diseases (including Diabetes Mellitus, Cardiovascular diseases, Chronic lung diseases and cancer). Asymptomatic cases have been detected but their frequency is not completely known. Initial symptoms are mild to moderate including cough, fever, shortness of breath, fatigue, myalgias, low appetite,



this then progress to severe respiratory illness which needs oxygen support and ultimately leads to critical condition which requires ventilatory support. Other complication such as cardiac injury, arrhythmia and shock can occur.

Lab test from covid-19 patients show variation from low to high white blood

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cells, Lymphocytopenia (low lymphocyte count), elevated lactate dehydrogenase level and elevated liver enzymes including ALT and AST levels. Confirmatory test from covid-19 is RT-PCR testing. Testing should be done in symptomatic patients, patients with a travel history and any close contact with a known case of coronavirus.

There are on-going trials to find a cure and some drug trials have shown promising results including combination treatments with hydroxychloroquine and Azithromycin. Other drug trials include tocilizumab, Lopinavir / Ritonavir.

Prevention is better than cure. WHO recommends preventing exposure in the community such as frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds particularly after touching surfaces in public, use of hand sanitizer that contain at least 60 percent alcohol, respiratory hygiene (covering cough and sneezes), avoid touching the face (nose, eyes and mouth), avoid crowds, keep a distance of 2 meter from other individual, cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces.

This pandemic has created a lot of anxiety and panic among people across the globe. Due to extreme measures taken by the government, significant interruptions in business and daily work routine occurred. This whole scenario has changed people's thinking and finding a solution of working from home, new innovative ways are being developed in order to continue schooling from online, online shopping, online business transitions, online social contacts and online doctor's consultation.

This raised the importance of emergency situation how modern technology can be utilized for the basic needs of the society. Certainly, we can do better with latest innovative and technological advances but certainly this needs a senior and trained leadership who can direct its nation towards a right path.

A Lone Long Walk

Book: "A Lone Long Walk"

Author: Tahir Mehmood

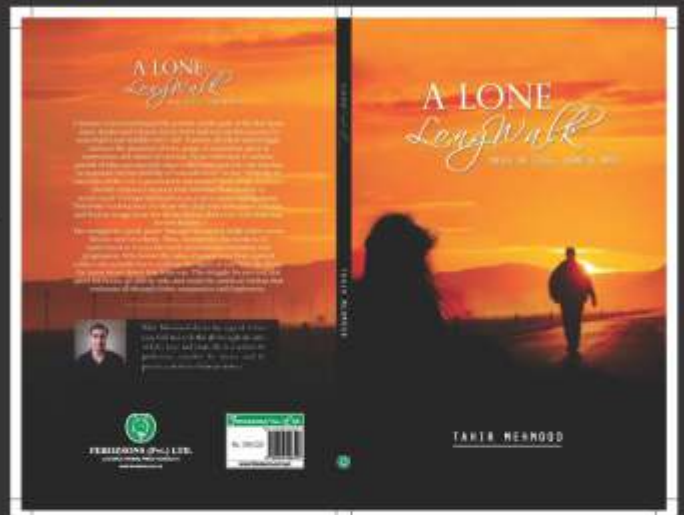
Genre: Short-Stories (Fiction)

Publisher: Ferozsons (Pvt.) Ltd.

Publication Year: March-2020

Pages: 116, Price: Rs 395

Reviewed by Asma Ishaq



Pick up Tahir Mehmood's book "A Lone Long Walk" and you will enjoy reading it till the last page. The book consists of short stories that the writer wrote over a span of six years – from 2014 to 2019. The 116-page book published by Pakistan's leading Ferozsons fully serves for the pleasurable-leisure-reading. Like any established story-teller, he chose 'love' and 'life' as his main subject to write about. However, soldiery, call of duty, mystery, union and separation also range throughout his stories. These stories may also be called a product of his long service years in the military, his strong reading of the human-traits and interactions with fellow humans and subordinates also come visible. The title of the book 'A Lone Long Walk' is itself wrapped in the mystery that attracts the reader who believes in the thought that "Life is nothing but a journey to walk all alone".

Story is a 'narration' in one word. Tahir Mehmood successfully uses the literary genre of his 'gripping narrative' in writing all these stories, which are mostly written in the third-person account; it is a popular but difficult literary genre where the writer must develop an engaging plot for developing the stories as well as for the reader's attraction. Usually, such 'gripping narrations' are written about the wartime-adventures, love and life, union and separation, and tribute to the Nature. Almost in all his stories, the author brings a 'moving-narration' and 'motivating-impression' while utilizing all these subjects for the chosen plots. He has maintained it well to catch-hold the reader's attention to take them to the end. His grip remains firm in narrating the ongoing events of the stories. Moreover, he has tactfully intertwined the events. At one point, these very events become compelling and engrossing for the readers in order to know the end. One must say, it's a book to be read in one go.

As the writer has chosen the stories of soldiers in particular, one may trace some glimpses of the Elizabethan Tragedy in these tales. He has tried much better to have written the stories where the 'hero' of the story must have to die or to meet a 'dreadful' destiny. The stories are melancholic in nature where the hero contributes something really greater to sacrifice. This sacrifice maybe the hero's 'life' or 'love' both in pursuit of 'call of duty'. His stories 'He Chose to Die', 'From Piccadilly to Gatwick' and 'The Remains' are good examples in this regard. Whereas, in couple of stories, it is just the 'fate' that brings separation in between the two

'star-crossed-lovers.'

The expression of the stories is eloquent one, yet somewhere it is esoteric too. Each story shares a good amount of knowledge and wisdom about 'life'. It's not wrong to say that the writer's philosophical interpretation of 'life' is similar to that of Khalil Gibran. Tahir Mahmood seems touching all the realms of life – 'romance', 'courage' and 'morals'... He has given an intellectual meaning with a guide to decipher the secrets of 'life'. He has also brought in discussion the dilemmas and miseries of 'life' like 'poverty', 'injustice', 'violence' and 'usurpation' in a thought-provoking manner.

One added beauty of these stories is the use of literary devices like 'personification', 'metaphors' and 'imagery'. Likewise, is the writer's excellent use of the imaginative skill. The two stories: 'A Cloud Above the Land' and 'A Town Beyond Sorrow' are an excellent example of the mentioned characteristics. The writer personifies a 'Cloud' and 'Land' to depict the complexities of the love-relationship in manner of a conversation. The 'Cloud' represents a 'free-lover' while the 'Land' symbolizes a lover seeking comfort in the uninterrupted companionship. The puppeteer and marionette in 'A Town Beyond Sorrow' is an amazing conversation about the human evolution. It is about how a human grows from the formative years into a complete functioning mode. This story also points out the challenging phases of a human's growth; the author metaphorically calls the human a 'nomad', a 'vagabond' and a 'traveller'.

'A Lone Long Walk' is a treat to the readers who like to read something unique or different line of thought. Justifiable to say, Tahir Mehmood is a welcome addition in the list of prolific writers of our contemporary era. It is a proven-fact that an indigenous writer that he is, is always found effective to bring and discuss the prevalent issues in a constructive manner. Tahir Mahmood has done it well. His main purpose to write these stories is primarily to pass on the 'knowledge', 'wisdom' and 'truth' to fellow humans. His stories are riveting; nevertheless, helpful to understand 'life'. 'Love', 'Life', 'Call of Duty' are his catch words. His propitious effort must be appreciated for the reason to have received more guiding-books in the future.

(Asma is senior school teacher)

Palestine Ambassador indebted to Pakistan whole hearted support

ISLAMABAD, (DNA) -Federal Minister for Science and Technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain has said that the entire Pakistani nation stood with Palestine adding Pakistan will continue supporting the Palestine cause.

The minister expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei.

During the meeting, views were exchanged on issues of mutual interest including scholarships to study in the universities under the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The minister assured to facilitate Palestine students in a befitting manner. The ambassador thanked the minister for whole hearted support. =DNA



Palestine ambassador visits RCCI

Rawalpindi : Palestinian ambassador to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad Rabei has said that his country considers Pakistan as his brother and trusted friend. Pakistan is one of the most important countries in the Islamic world and its role is praiseworthy for the Muslim Brotherhood. Talking to President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saboor Malik at Chamber house here on Tuesday, the Ambassador said that there was a need for promoting relations between the business community of both countries to promote economic cooperation between Palestine and Pakistan. The ambassador said that his country would provide one million olive plants to carry forward the plantation drive in Pakistan. The envoy expressed his gratitude for giving educational opportunities to more than 50,000 Palestinian students who graduated from Pakistani universities and

were contributing to the development of Palestine. He suggested for enhancing interaction between the chambers of commerce of the two countries. He said that bilateral cooperation in Pharmaceutical, food, Dates, tourism and services sectors could be enhanced. Speaking on the occasion, President Chamber Saboor Malik said that the hearts of the people of Pakistan and the business community are striking with the Palestinian people. Business community

strongly condemns Israeli atrocities and violent acts on Palestine. Private sector cooperation between the two countries is essential. Bilateral trade relations can be further strengthened through close cooperation and exchanges at the Chamber of Commerce and the delegation level. He also gave the Ambassador a brief briefing on the ongoing activities of the Chamber. He also invited the Ambassador to attend the Rawal Expo 2020.



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