

Medical News

Pakistan's First
Independent
Medical Periodical from
Karachi

Vol. 52 No. 20 / April 1-14, 2020

Published Fortnightly | Reg. No. ID. MC-153 | ISSN 1728-1520 | Controlled Circulation

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GLOBAL COVID-19 CASES TOP 1 MILLION

Death toll passes 50,000

MN Report

WASHINGTON - More than 1,002,000 people have been diagnosed with the COVID-19 disease worldwide, as the death toll surpassed 53,000 while about 210,000 patients recovered. Nearly 53,000 people have died and more than 210,000 have recovered.

The coronavirus pandemic death toll in Spain passed 10,000 recently, as the country reported its highest single-day number of deaths since the outbreak began, with the total rising by more than 1,000 to 10,096 among 110,238 infections.

The US has the most cases, and more than 1,000 died there in the past day.

The disease, Covid-19, first emerged in central China three months ago.

Though the tally kept by US university's figures, Johns Hopkins records one million confirmed cases, the actual number is



thought to be much higher. It took a month and a half for the first 100,000 cases to be registered. A million was reached after a doubling in cases over the past week.

Nearly a quarter of cases have been registered in the United States, while Europe accounts for around half.

There are 117 countries and territories that have reported over 100 cases, 50 with outbreaks of

over 1,000 and seven that have reported 50,000 or more Covid-19 cases, mainly in Europe. The global fatality rate is now over 5pc of all reported cases, with countries, including the United Kingdom, the US and Spain reporting a spike in fatalities over recent days.

Around 22pc of total cases has been reported by the US, while Italy and Spain have each reported 11pc of

global cases. China, where the virus emerged in December, has reported 8pc of total cases globally as the epicentre of the pandemic moved to Europe and the US.

The pandemic continued to wreak havoc on the global economy, with the US announcing that a record 6.65 million workers filed for unemployment benefits last week and Spain reporting its biggest monthly increase in jobless claims ever.

Head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there had been a 'near exponential growth' in new cases. The crisis has put enormous strain on national health care systems and on nurses, doctors and other medical staff working in the most difficult of circumstances.

CORONAVIRUS IN PAKISTAN

CONFIRMED CASES
4,489

REPORTED DEATH

63

SINDH

1,128

PUNJAB

2,241

ISLAMABAD

102

BALOCHISTAN

212

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

560

GB/AJK

213/33

RECOVERED CASES

572

*Stats as of 9/4/2020 08:30PM, Provided by
Ministry of National Health Services Regulations &
Coordination, Government of Pakistan

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Battle against Pandemic: PM Imran establishes NCOC

MN Report

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Imran Khan recently visited to the currently established National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). He emphasised on uninterrupted supply of essential items during the countrywide preventive restrictions on movement of people and transport during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister said in his briefing, "There must be

Continued on Page 08

Meet the doctor who treated Pakistan's first coronavirus patient

MN Report

KARACHI - Once the threat of the coronavirus epidemic going global was raised, Dr Faisal Mahmood, an Associate Professor of Infectious Diseases at the Aga Khan University, was anticipating a healthcare emergency in Pakistan.

He and his colleagues rapidly assessed preparedness preparations and started coordinating with the provincial and federal governments.

Pakistan's first COVID-19 patient was identified on February 26 - a 22-year-old man who had returned from Iran just a few days ago. Feeling unwell, he came to AKU to be tested.

"Once he tested positive, we admitted him immediately," Dr Mahmood said. "Although he had COVID symptoms, he seemed healthy and calm. Since we were all prepared to deal with patients, it was an easy decision for the team: isolate him and go for supportive treatment."

The Sindh government was equally prompt. They immediately quarantined and tested the patient's family, but their results were all negative.

The man soon recovered. "It was a memorable day for the patient, his family, and the healthcare team when he was discharged from the hospital," Dr Mahmood said with a smile on his face. "He is now doing well, talking to the media, and spreading the message that being COVID positive is

Continued on Page 08



Case mapping in preparation against COVID-19

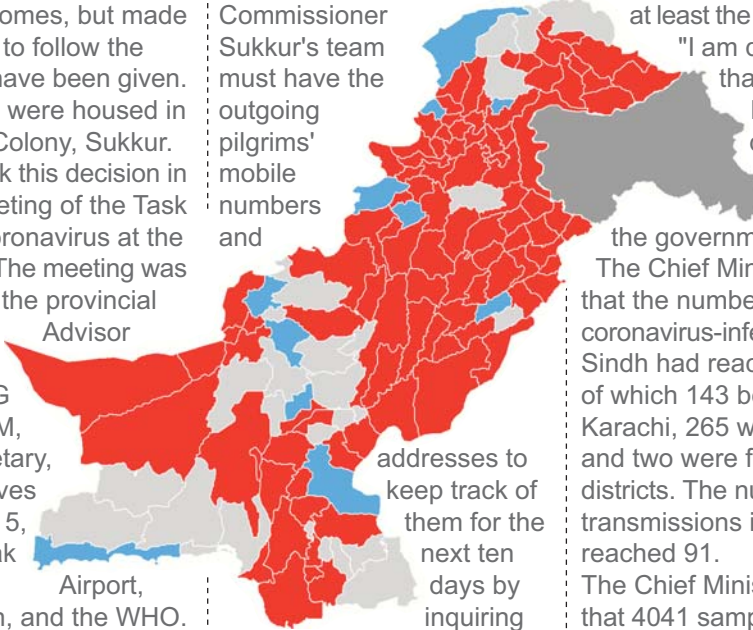
MN Report

KARACHI - Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, has allowed 640 COVID-19 negatively tested pilgrims to return to their respective homes, but made them bound to follow the SOPs they have been given. The pilgrims were housed in the Labour Colony, Sukkur. CM Sidh took this decision in the 27th meeting of the Task Force on Coronavirus at the CM House. The meeting was attended by the provincial ministers, Advisor Law, Chief Secretary, IG Sindh, PSCM, Home Secretary, representatives of the Corps 5, Rangers, Pak Navy, FIA, Airport, Civil Aviation, and the WHO. Commissioner Sukkur, Shafiq Mahesar, through a video link, told the Chief Minister that there were 640 pilgrims who had been tested thrice, and their test results were declared negative every time. The Chief Minister, in response to this, directed the Commissioner Sukkur to arrange special buses and send the 640 coronavirus negative pilgrims to their respective homes/districts.

"I would suggest you issue an SOP under which they will have to stay in self-isolation in their respective homes for the next ten days," he said adding, "The Commissioner Sukkur's team must have the outgoing pilgrims' mobile numbers and addresses to keep track of them for the next ten days by inquiring about their health," he said. The Chief Minister directed the Chief Secretary Karachi to issue directives to the deputy commissioners of the districts where these 640 pilgrims were going to receive them. "Make the deputy commissioners responsible for keeping track of the pilgrims for the next ten days," he said. Mr Shah congratulated the outgoing pilgrims and their

families and hoped that in the interest of their family members' health and the health of their friends and neighbors, they would voluntarily stay at home for at least the next ten days. "I am quite happy that a great burden is dropping from the shoulders of the government," he said. The Chief Minister was told that the number of coronavirus-infected cases in Sindh had reached 410, out of which 143 belonged to Karachi, 265 were pilgrims, and two were from other districts. The number of local transmissions in the city had reached 91. The Chief Minister was told that 4041 samples, including 2443 of Karachi, 168 of other districts, and 1430 of pilgrims, were tested. The results show that 143 from Karachi, two from other districts, and 265 pilgrims had tested positive. Four hundred eighty-five results are still pending, including 83 of Karachi, 93 of other districts, and 309 of pilgrims. It may be noted that 796 patients are under treatment

Continued on Page 08



CHK requests DUHS to provide buses for medical staff

MN Report

KARACHI - The Dr Ruth K M Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) requested the Vice-Chancellor, Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS), to provide buses for the pick and drop of the medical staff deputed on emergency duties.

The CHK's administration stated that due to the prevailing situation and lockdown in Karachi, a large number of doctors, paramedical staff, nurses, and other staff is facing difficulties in reaching the hospital for duties.

VC, DUHS, requested the arrangement of at least two university buses for the following routes in the morning and evening for the pick and drop of the staff deputed on emergency and coronavirus duties.

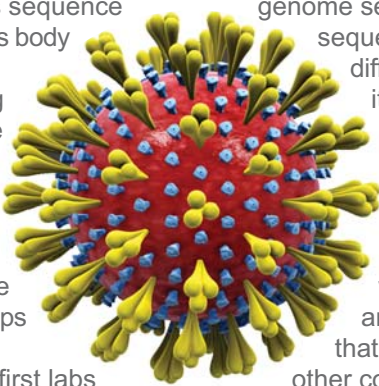
The first route comprises of Gulshan-e-Hadeed, Malir, Drigh Road, Shara-e-Faisal, Nursery, Metropole, and the second route covers North Nazimabad, F B Area, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Liaqtauabad, Saddar, and MA Jinnah Road.

SARS-COV-2 changing its genetics per local conditions

MN Report

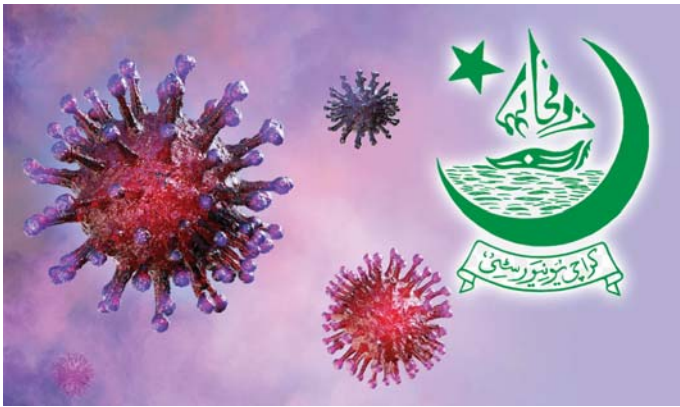
KARACHI - A team of experts led by the Vice-Chancellor of the Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS), Prof Mohammad Saeed Quraishy, analyzed the virus sequence from a locally infected patient's body (host). Experts say that determining the sequence is a remarkable step, which in turn will help in the development of a vaccine as well as possible treatment modalities. This is a very early yet critical phase of the research, and more steps are, however, to follow. The DUHS lab is one of the first labs in the country to introduce coronavirus PCR testing. The fully equipped modern (BSL-3) virology lab at the DUHS was used to isolate the RNA from the sample, and the presence of virus was confirmed using PCR. The virus was transmitted to the boy locally, but research shows that this virus came from Saudi Arabia

and infected 15 patients of the same family, indicating that the local spread of this virus is very fast. The genome sequence revealed that the sequence of this virus is slightly different from the Wuhan virus as it displayed a few mutations. This virus originated in China and came to Pakistan via Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it is to be noted that this is just one of the invested cases, and while we are in the process of analyzing many other samples that have been transmitted from other countries, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, the UK, the US, etc. The DUHS's fully equipped lab has conducted hundreds of coronavirus tests free of cost, and co. This research study is in its initial stages, and the sequencing was done with the cooperation of the ICCBS, University of Karachi.



PCMD completes genome sequencing of coronavirus from a local patient

MN Report
KARACHI - The Jamil-ur-Rahman Center for Genome Research, Dr Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research, University of Karachi, recently carried out the whole genome sequencing of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). "This is the first indigenously sequenced whole genome of the coronavirus in Pakistan. Analysis of the sequence revealed nine mutations in the different regions of the genome, as compared to the sequence reported from Wuhan, China. This will be helpful in decision making at a national level for the use of future therapeutic options and vaccinations," noted Prof Dr M Iqbal Choudhary, Director of International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi. He said that the sequencing was carried out to understand the genetics of this pathogen in Pakistan. The entire genome sequence of SARS-CoV-2 was mapped by a team of young scientists under the supervision of Dr Ishtiaq Ahmed. The work was carried out using next-generation DNA sequencing systems at the Jamil-ur-Rahman Center for Genome Research, Dr Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research (International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi), he said, adding that the sample for genomic analysis was collected from a patient with relevant travel history. Mutation refers to any changes in the DNA of any organism, including viruses, he said, adding that comparison with genomes from other parts of the world revealed that this virus is more closely related to the virus from China, where the pandemic started. He said that the COVID-19, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-



2), has become a grave health challenge globally with more than 800,049 confirmed cases and 38,714 recorded deaths to date. Currently, no drug or vaccine is available for the treatment and prevention of this disease, respectively. COVID-19 cases are exponentially rising, and new territories and regions are consistently reporting new cases, he said. Understanding the genetic repository of any infectious agent is vital for its prevention and clinical management, and viruses are no exceptions. The sequencing report reveals that this viral genome is slowly mutating, and it is premature to say what will be the impact on virulence (severity of disease) due to these mutations, Prof Choudhary said. "During pandemics, it is more important to monitor the way, rate, and nature of mutations that may have an impact on the effectiveness of future therapies and vaccinations." In the past, a single mutation in the Chikungunya virus affected vector specificity and epidemic potential and lead to more efficient viral dissemination, he said, adding that this has important implications with respect to how viruses may establish a transmission cycle when introduced into a new area. Hundreds of SARS-CoV-2 genomes are being reported from different parts of the world. The University of Cambridge, UK is spearheading efforts to massively map coronavirus genomes from the UK population, he said. "A total

of £20 million have been allocated for the said project in the UK alone, which reflects the importance of such studies." Given the specific environmental conditions in our part of the world, it is strongly recommended that more genomes from Pakistani patients are sequenced to understand the full spectrum of genetic variations, and the way the virus is evolving here, he said. This will be helpful in decision making at a national level for the use of future therapeutic options and vaccinations, he noted. This study was carried out in collaboration with the DOW University of Health Sciences, Karachi.



PRCS launches 'Community Medicine Assistance Services'

MN Report
KARACHI - The Pakistan Red Crescent Sindh (PRCS) recently launched a Community Medical Assistance Services named "AAGAH! COVID-19" in coordination and cooperation with the Governor of Sindh and President of Pakistan at the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) of the Provincial Headquarters Sindh Hilal-e-Ahmer House, Karachi.



This center will work as a call center where people can call for information about the coronavirus. The center has about 1000 medical doctors available on the line, and callers may discuss his /her problem directly with the doctor. This system will help reduce anxiety and panic amongst the people sitting at home and, at the same time, gain their confidence. Initially, ten lines will be available round the clock. The number is 021-37130084.

PMA pays tribute to the medical fraternity

MN Report
KARACHI - The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) salutes the doctors, nurses, and paramedics who are serving the nation in this difficult time. They are on the front line in the war against the coronavirus because their lives are at risk. In the current situation, they are examining the patients at the cost of their lives; even their families are at risk. The PMA requests all paramedics and doctors to follow all the preventive measures as per the WHO guideline. The PMA advised against examining the coronavirus positive patients without personal protection equipment (PPE). PMA appreciates the Sindh Government for establishing the Field Isolation Center at the Expo Centre Karachi. The Pakistan Medical Association, Pakistan Army, Aga Khan University Hospital, Essa Lab, A.O Clinic, and other volunteers are also working day and night at the Field Isolation Center, Karachi. Confirmed coronavirus cases will be admitted at the Field Isolation Center with the approval of the doctor's authority at the center. After the decision to support the Sindh Government for the establishment of the Field Isolation Center by the Executive Committee of the PMA Karachi, the PMA helped the government as its national responsibility for controlling the coronavirus in the province of Sindh. The PMA urged people to stay at home, avoid going out unnecessarily, avoid gathering in crowds, washing their hands regularly, and adopting all the preventive measures that have been requested by healthcare professionals.



Dr Soomro from Gulshan-e-Hadeed, dies of coronavirus

MN Report

KARACHI - A senior doctor, who was tested positive for Covid-19 earlier last week and put on a ventilator a couple of days ago after his condition deteriorated, passed away on Monday. He became the first health worker to succumb to the deadly coronavirus in Sindh, fanning concerns among health professionals who have been vigorously demanding steps for the protection of their colleagues, officials and sources said.

Dr Abdul Qadir Soomro, 64, breathed his last in the Indus Hospital, where he was moved to ventilator after his coronavirus symptoms stahed worsening. His colleagues and friends were not sure how he actually came into contact with the virus, but agreed that he was actively involved in treating people till a day before he fell ill.

Among the confirmed cases, around a dozen doctors and healthcare workers from different health facilities have tested positive for the coronavirus in Sindh. Some of his colleagues and friends doubt that Dr Soomro, who was a skin specialist, contracted the viral infection from any of his patients in Gulshan-i-Hadeed, where so far three patients have tested positive for the virus.

The Sindh health department has already placed a ban on conducting OPDs at all the hospitals and clinics in Malir district, after Dr Soomro and three other persons tested positive, fearing the funher spread of the coronavirus in the area.

A notification issued by the district health

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First recovered coronavirus patient donates plasma

MN Report

KARACHI - Eminent hematologist, Dr Saqib Ansari, recently announced that the first coronavirus patient in Pakistan, Yahya Jaffery, had donated his plasma to the Children's Hospital Karachi to help treat COVID-19 patients in critical condition.

He announced this while addressing a press conference along with Yahya Jaffery, his parents, and cricketer Roman Raees, at the Children's Hospital Karachi.

Dr Saqib Ansari demanded the government for a go-ahead to use the plasma for the treatment of the patients.

"We need no funds, new machinery or workforce as the Children's Hospital Karachi is ready to offer its services free of cost," said Dr Ansari while talking about recent advancements made for the treatment of coronavirus patients.

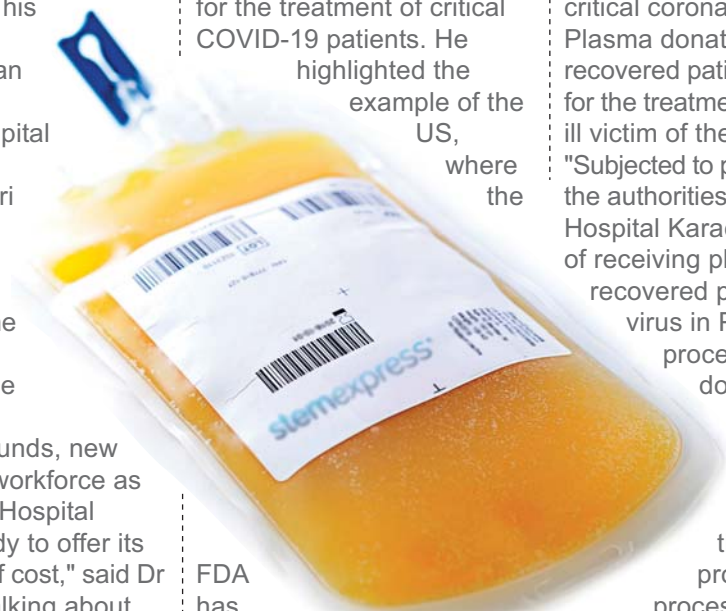
He said that the process of acquiring and processing plasma costs Rs20000 each, and the hospital is ready to bear that cost for the betterment of humanity. Dr Ansari said that currently, his team is working on three fronts to handle the coronavirus pandemic: controlling the outbreak, treating the patients, and reducing panic in society. He termed Jaffery a hero of the nation and paid a rich tribute to his parents for their courage in the face of the epidemic. Talking about recent advancements, he said that the plasma of those recovered patients affected by the virus in the past is being used in several parts of the developed world in combination with several antibiotics and other therapies.

Based on the results of the latest study in Beijing, in

collaboration with the world's leading research institutes, he said that plasma infusion in critical patients of coronavirus had yielded excellent results.

Referring to the Food and Drug Authority (FDA) of the United States, the World Health Organization, and other reputable institutions, he said that the method is being used across the world for the treatment of critical COVID-19 patients. He

highlighted the example of the US, where the



FDA has publically appealed to recovered patients of the coronavirus to donate their plasma.

"The Children's Hospital Karachi and Houston Methodist Hospital of the US are already collaborating with each other in this regard," he said, adding that Dr Fazal Mahmood of the Houston Methodist Hospital is in touch with Dr Ansari and both are closely monitoring developments across the world concerning the virus.

Dr Ansari added that the therapy is only being applied to critical patients of the virus. Almost 90% of the affected people can recover using this method without being admitted to intensive care units, and only a thin fraction of the coronavirus patients are being admitted to the ICUs. Such patients can be administered the plasma. Medical experts believe that the therapy will produce positive results, Dr Ansari added.

To date, 94 coronavirus patients in Pakistan have recovered and out of which almost half are women. He added that due to the possibility of complications, plasma donations are usually not taken from women. He made it clear that recovered patients in the age bracket of 18 to 50 can safely donate their plasma, which can be used for the treatment of critical coronavirus patients. Plasma donation from a recovered patient is sufficient for the treatment of a critically ill victim of the coronavirus.

"Subjected to permission from the authorities, the Children's Hospital Karachi is capable of receiving plasma from all recovered patients of the virus in Pakistan and processing the

donated plasma within five days," he offered.

He added that the necessary procedure for processing plasma

could be carried out by the same machines used for the treatment of dengue patients. He said that the facility and required workforce is already available in almost all public and private hospitals. All they need is basic training for the process, he added.

Yahya Jaffery, who is the first patient to have recovered from the coronavirus in Pakistan, in his message to the nation, said, "In the near future, the virus will become history and all that will be remembered is our resolve and determination."

Famous cricketer, Roman Raies, also addressed the press and assured Dr Ansari of his cooperation against the coronavirus.

He appealed to his fans and the nation to have patience, stay at home, and stay safe. Jaffery's parents also addressed the nation and appealed to fellow countrymen to stand united against the coronavirus threat.

Coronavirus claims another life in Karachi

MN Report

KARACHI - The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) claimed the life of an elderly man in Karachi, taking the death toll to 11 in the Sindh province.

Minister for Health and Population Welfare, Dr Azra Pechuho, confirmed the death noting that the patient tested positive for COVID-19 on April 1, 2020. She informed that this was a locally transmitted case of the COVID-19.

She further informed that the 86-year-old deceased patient was a resident of Karachi and had a history of hypertension. Three people have died in Sindh in the last 24 hours.

A total of 11 deaths have been reported in Sindh so far, out of which ten were reported from Karachi and one from Tando Muhammad Khan.

Nestlé Pakistan to support vulnerable communities in COVID-19 pandemic

MN Report
KARACHI - To meet the nutritional needs of both the affectees and the frontline workers during these times, Nestlé Pakistan has committed 100 million rupees in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the pledge, Nestlé Pakistan will give product and cash donations, which will include 4 million servings of milk, iron-fortified dairy products, baby cereals, water, and juices. Highlighting the efforts, Samer Chedid, CEO, Nestlé Pakistan said, "We will be mobilizing relief to medical facilities (quarantine centers) and food-delivery organizations serving vulnerable families, worth 100 million rupees, in the form of product and cash donations, through national and provincial

disaster management authorities and local governments."
 "We have also joined hands with reputable NGOs in response to their COVID-19 emergency appeals to support deserving people across Pakistan. We have invited all our employees to step forward and donate one day's salary for supporting people going through hard times. The donation intimations by employees will be matched 1:1 by Nestlé Pakistan," Chedid said.
 Chedid also emphasized on the additional safety measures Nestlé was undertaking internally. "We are making sure that we keep our employees healthy and safe, and that they follow the most stringent safety protocols at all our

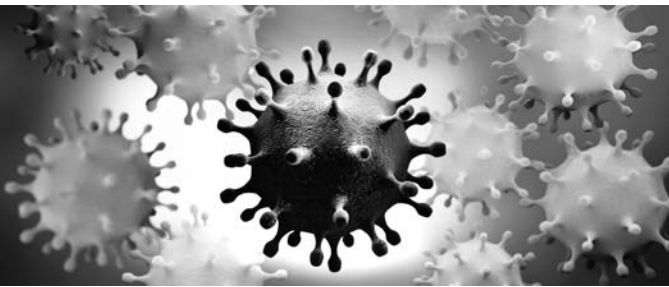


manufacturing and warehouse facilities, as advised by the World Health Organization." Nestlé Pakistan is working tirelessly to ensure that much-needed food and beverage products are available for our consumers across Pakistan, in commitment to the strategic roadmap laid out by Prime Minister Imran Khan and respective provincial leaderships. At Nestlé, we care deeply for people and for the communities in which we operate, and we believe we have an essential role to play during the COVID-19 crisis.

Johnson & Johnson takes lead in Covid-19 cure

The drug company, Johnson & Johnson recently announced that it had made progress on a vaccine to prevent Covid-19 and that the product could be ready in early 2021. The New Brunswick, N.J.,

sold on a not-for-profit basis. Johnson & Johnson is one of many companies at work on a vaccine for the disease, which has become a global health crisis. Moderna Inc. has begun human trials for a vaccine using a novel



company selected a lead candidate for the vaccine from the constructs it had been working on, and said human trials would begin by September at the latest. The company had said in February it expected trials to begin in eight to 12 months. J&J said it could get approval under an emergency-use authorization to make the vaccine widely available early next year. The company said it has also chosen two back-up constructs in case the lead candidate falters. The company said the vaccine, if successful, would be affordable and would be

approach that relies on the virus's messenger RNA, a type of genetic material. Sanofi, a French biotech company, has begun work on a similar approach. Johnson & Johnson said it would try to scale its global manufacturing capabilities to make more than 1 billion doses of a Covid-19 vaccine by the end of next year. It said it is also working with the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, a part of the Department of Health and Human Services, to expand its research into a treatment for Covid-19.

Telemedicine Clinic inaugurated at JSMU

MN Report
KARACHI - The Jinnah Sindh Medical University's Institute of Family Medicine has started a telemedicine clinic for minor medical problems during the times of social distancing. Vice-Chancellor, Prof S M Tariq Rafi, said that expert Family Medicine consultants would be available from 10 AM to 2 PM on phone and Skype in order to help people comply with the government's social isolation measures. Head of Family Medicine, Prof Marie Andrade,s said that the online clinic will not treat medical emergencies. People can call in on the PTCL number 021-99205185 171131-32 from 10 AM to 2 PM Monday through Saturday, she said. The complaints suitable for telemedicine consultation include allergies, colds and flu, sore throat, cough, fever, red-eye, rashes, diarrhea/vomiting, digestive problems, joint pains/arthritis, backache, sprains and strains, urinary problems, insect bites, chronic diseases, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma/bronchitis, counseling, and health education.



NATIONAL

May 6
 International Conference on Health and Medicine (ICHM-20), Karachi - Pakistan.

May 14
 International Congress on Nutrition & Health (ICNH-20), Karachi - Pakistan

December 2-5
 34th International Pak ORTHOCON 2020 at Karachi.

2020 HEALTH DAYS CALENDAR



JUNE	OCTOBER
1 World Milk Day	8 World Sight Day
1 International Children Day	10 World Mental Health Day
5 World Environment Day	12 World Arthritis Day
14 World Blood Donor Day	12 World Bone And Joint Week
19 World Sickle Cell Day	15 World Handwashing Day
26 International Day Against Drug Abuse And Illicit Drug Trafficking	16 World Food Day
	17 World Spine Day
	17 World Trauma Day
	20 World Osteoporosis Day
	24 World Polio Day
	29 World Stroke Day
JULY	NOVEMBER
11 World Population Day	1 Lung Cancer Awareness Month
28 World Hepatitis Day	9 World Quality Day
	14 International Diabetes Day
	17 World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day
	26 World Anti-Obesity Day
AUGUST	DECEMBER
1-7 World Breastfeeding Week	1 World Aids Day
	3 International Day of Disabled Persons
	5 World Patient Safety Day
SEPTEMBER	
9 International Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Day	
20 World Retina Week	
21 World Alzheimer's Day	
25 World Pharmacist Day	
26 World Retina Day	
29 World Heart Day	

CHK staffer tests positive for coronavirus

MN Report
KARACHI - An employee of the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) has tested positive for the coronavirus. The CHK's administration has started the screening of its other employees.



An administrative official of the CHK noted that a peon posted in the Administration Block has tested positive for the COVID-19. He contracted the disease from a close family friend in Lyari Town, who recently arrived from Iran. The management has isolated two people, including the infected patient and a security guard, who are in contact with him. The CHK's administration fumigated the Admin Block and started screening other employees as well.

Sindh approves purchase of COVID-19 testing machines and portable x-ray machines

MN Report

KARACHI - Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, has approved the purchase of 290 ventilators, 3.2 million Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), 100 Rapid Kit Antigen Test Machines, 100,000 testing kits, 50 RT Lamp Testing Machines and 10,000 RT Lamp Kits, and 29 portable X-ray machines so that the testing capacity in the province could be enhanced. He took this decision while presiding over the 28th Task Force meeting on Coronavirus at the CM House. The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, Advisor Law, Chief Secretary, IG Police, concerned provincial secretaries, representatives of the WHO, Aga Khan Hospital, Indus Hospital, Corps-5, Rangers, PDMA, FIA, Airport, Civil Aviation, as well as the focal persons of the taskforce. The Health Department said that we only have 484 ventilators, out of which 353 are working, 52 out of order, 43 are yet to be installed, and 21 are being purchased. In response to this, the Chief Minister said that we need at least 5000 more ventilators to meet any emergency requirements, but in the first phase, he approved the purchase of 290 more ventilators. The Chief Minister was told that the Rapid Kit Antigen Test Machine (RKATM) prepared by Chinese scientists has an easy system to test the samples, and it is one of the best machines available for the task. It conducts

ten tests in an hour. The Chief Minister approved the purchase of 100 machines and 100,000 antigen testing kits and directed the Health Department to place the order right away. "I want them delivered as soon as possible," he said. The Chief Minister also approved the purchase of RT Lamp Testing Machines and 10,000 RT Lamp Kits and issued directives for ensuring the delivery of the machines and kits. The Chief Minister was informed that seven health facilities had been provided testing machines such as the Chest Clinic Lyari, DHQ Kashmore, Civil Hospital Karachi, Taluka Hospital Hala, DHQ Sanghar, DHQ Ghotki, and DHQ Naushahro Feroze. These health facilities are able to conduct 1344 tests in six batches per day. Therefore, these health facilities need 120,960 kits for the next 90 days. The Chief Minister was informed that the Health Department had conducted 3718 tests, out of which 3304 were declared negative while 413 tested positive while the results of 485 tests are pending. It may be noted that out of 413 cases, 148 are from Karachi and other districts, whereas 265 are pilgrims. There are 94 local transmission cases in the province. At



Continued on Page 08

China donates 500,000 face mask to Sindh Government

MN Report

KARACHI - The Chinese Government has donated 500,000 face masks to the Sindh Government, which the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah received at the Corgo Terminal. China has donated 500,000 face masks, including 50,000 N-95 masks, to the Sindh government, which the Chief Minister received at Cargo Terminal. A Chinese special plane brought the consignment. Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, under the banner of the Pakistan-China national flags, performed the taking over ceremony of the shipment. The Chief Minister, on behalf of the people of Sindh, thanked the Chinese government for joining hands in fighting against the COVID-19.



CM Murad visits Saylani Head Office

MN Report

KARACHI - Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, visited the Saylani Welfare Head Office in Bahadurabad and visited their godown ration packing system. Founder of the Saylani Trust, Maulana Bashir Farooq Qadri, briefed the Chief Minister about their ration distribution system. The Chief Minister distributed flour among the needy to inaugurate the ration distribution process. Minister Energy, Imtiaz Shaikh, was also present on occasion.

Coronavirus clinic and helpline introduced at SIUT

MN Report

KARACHI - The Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) has established a coronavirus clinic and introduced a coronavirus helpline for the general public. The SIUT's spokesperson said that to help the untiring efforts of the Sindh Government, the SIUT started a coronavirus clinic where the public can be examined for any symptoms of the coronavirus. A detailed history of travel and contact and clinical parameters are being tested at the facility. Those found with relevant history and symptoms suggestive of the coronavirus are being tested with the help of PCR. Thus far, over 1258 people have been screened, and one patient with relevant travel history tested positive for the COVID-19. The patient is now quarantined at home by the Sindh Government and is doing well. The SIUT also introduced a coronavirus helpline (021-99215469), which is also playing an important role in assisting the public round the clock, where doctors provide them with important information concerning preventive measures and guidelines. The SIUT has always been at the forefront when dealing with national disasters. During the 2005 earthquake, the SIUT established more than five medical camps in different earthquake-hit areas. The SIUT set up a dialysis center in Muzaffarabad, which is still operational and providing dialysis facilities to the patients of the area. During the 2010 floods, the SIUT established more than five centers across Pakistan to help the flood-affected population of the country.

Halting waste disposal in Karachi unacceptable: NFEH

MN Report

KARACHI - National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) expressed grave concern concerning the municipal waste disposal work that has come to a virtual halt in several areas of Karachi during the COVID-19 emergency lockdown. In a recently issued press statement, the NFEH President and Convenor of the Standing Committee on Environment Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Naeem Qureshi, said that halting waste disposal work in Karachi during a serious health emergency like the COVID-19 was simply a recipe for disaster. "We are simply inviting a disaster if we stop municipal waste disposal in Karachi during an epidemic as

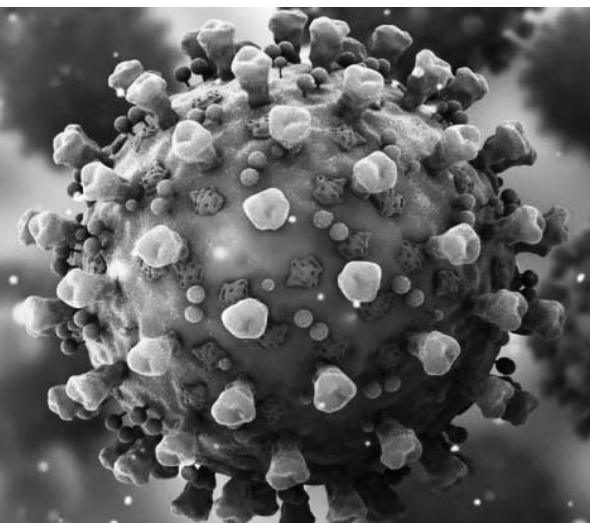


resultantly issues related to public health will worsen," he said. Qureshi said that the waste disposal work should be quickened during an epidemic. Minimal human resources and maximum mechanical means should be utilized to protect the health of the municipal staffers. "Most importantly, the

municipal workers who do waste disposal work should be provided with all the safety gear to protect them against the viral disease," he said. He said that the Sindh Government's local government department, municipal agencies, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board, Karachi Water &

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Scientists cautioned against second coronavirus wave in China



For the first time in months, the Chinese province of Hubei, where the coronavirus first emerged, is getting attention for a good reason. COVID-19 cases there have dropped to practically zero, and last week authorities lifted travel restrictions in and out of the province, some 60 days after much of it was dramatically locked down. Now scientists - and the rest of the world - are watching closely to see whether easing the intense measures to keep people apart results in an emergence of new cases. An early analysis suggests that, so far, these fears have not come to pass.

What China's coronavirus response can teach the rest of the world

"It's time to relax the lockdown, but we need to be alert for a potential second wave of infections," says Ben Cowling, an epidemiologist at the University of Hong Kong, who will be following the situation in China. If a second wave comes, Cowling would expect to see it emerge by the end of April.

How things unfold in Hubei - and across China - will be relevant to many European nations and some US states that have restricted travel inside their borders, closed most businesses, schools and universities and told people to stay at home, in an attempt to halt the pathogen's spread. Modelling of the UK outbreak suggests that the country's social distancing measures, including school and university closures, might be needed for large parts of the next two years to keep the proportion of people with severe COVID-19 infections in hospital at manageable levels. But if China can show that it can lift its lockdown without a significant re-appearance of COVID-19, it might be possible that such protracted restrictions won't be necessary.

Extensive testing

Chinese provinces will now use extensive testing and contact tracing to pinpoint new infections, and will maintain some social-distancing practices to prevent a resurgence. The country has also closed its borders to everyone but citizens to prevent cases from being imported. Returning residents will be quarantined for 14 days. But some researchers say that the situation in China is different because its government acted aggressively, using social-distancing measures to slow down the spread and extensive testing and isolating of infected people to stamp out potential transmission sources. This strategy helped the country contain the outbreak. But other nations, such as Italy and Spain, have focused mainly on slowing the virus - through social distancing - without intensive testing and contact tracing. They will face more challenges when trying to return to life before the pandemic, says Cowling.

And yet, the risk of new outbreaks in China is high given the ease with which the virus passes between people, and the possibility that some

infections still linger undetected, says Gabriel Leung, an infectious-disease researcher at the University of Hong Kong. It's possible that one lockdown might not be enough, and severe efforts to suppress the virus might be needed again, he says. "The tension between health, protecting the economy and emotional well-being will vex every government for the foreseeable future."

Restrictions ease

Life in Hubei - home to roughly 60 million people - hasn't returned to normal yet, but people are slowly leaving their homes and returning to work, and factories are reopening. Universities, schools and child-care centres remain closed pending "a scientific assessment of the epidemic control situation", say government authorities. And travel in and out of the provincial capital, Wuhan, remains restricted until 8 April. Until then, people will need to be tested for the virus to come and go. Since 18 March, there has been only one new case reported in Hubei.

A UK team has modelled whether the increasing movement following the easing of travel restrictions in the six Chinese provinces with the highest number of COVID-19 cases resulted in a surge of new infections. In these provinces - Hubei, Beijing, Guangdong, Henan, Hunan and Zhejiang - the lockdowns helped to reduce new COVID-19 cases to near zero.

What the cruise-ship outbreaks reveal about COVID-19

The team, led by infectious-disease researchers Neil Ferguson and Steven Riley at Imperial College London, found that as movement and economic activity in these regions increased in late February for all provinces except Hubei, the number of new infections stayed near zero. As activity restarted in Hubei in March, the numbers of new cases remained low. The analysis concludes that after containing the virus with the severe lockdowns, "China has successfully exited their stringent social-distancing policy to some degree."

"So far, so good," says Andrew Tatem, an emerging-disease researcher at the University of Southampton, UK. But the findings must be approached with some caution, he adds. The movement and economic activity levels in the six regions that the group measured were only half of what they were before the outbreak, except in Zhejiang province, where it appears to have matched pre-pandemic levels. There might also be a lag between the increase in activity and reports of new cases. "We're at the 'wait and see' stage. How the graphs look as movement levels keep rising back towards normality will be very interesting," he says.

Second wave

The virus would have difficulty reestablishing itself in the community if a significant portion of people, between 50% and 70%, were infected

and are now immune, says Leung. But he notes that even in Wuhan - which accounted for more than half China's 81,000 cases - the number of those people infected and are now immune to the disease is probably less than 10% - which means there are lots of people still vulnerable to infection. A vaccine would increase the percentage of immune people, but no vaccines are expected for at least a year. "These numbers don't allow a sigh of relief," he says.

Covert coronavirus infections could be seeding new outbreaks

To see the risk of easing these measures, "You only have to look across to Hong Kong to see what's happened there with a resurgence," says Tatem. Hong Kong, as well as Singapore and Taiwan, contained the initial spread of the coronavirus with intensive testing and contact tracing.

But over the last week, all three regions have seen a jump in new infections. Most were in travellers from abroad, but some local transmission has been detected. All three regions have now temporarily banned international visitors and are making returning residents undergo a two-week quarantine.

Containment measures should be relaxed "gradually and with ultra-caution and very close monitoring and surveillance", says Tatem.

Test and trace

China is still implementing extensive COVID-19 monitoring nationwide. Provinces issue all residents a QR code, a type of barcode containing information that is revealed when scanned, based on their health details and travel history. If a person has remained in areas considered safe in China or has been quarantined and tested negative for the disease, they are assigned a 'green status' - the lowest risk - which allows them to cross provincial borders, enter hospitals and residential areas, and ride the subway and trains.

The measure not only keeps infected people from mingling with others, but if a new infection is detected, the government can track that person's movements and pinpoint people they might have come in contact with. Cowling calls this an "advanced form of test and trace" that will allow China to identify as many infected people as possible as quickly as possible, and then isolate them.

The big question is whether that will be enough to stop a new outbreak. Cowling thinks other cities would have trouble if required to do the number of tests that Wuhan did, which at its peak reached about 10,000 tests per day. "There is a danger in focusing too much on testing and isolation," he says, and adds that social-distancing measures will still be important.

How pandemics shape social evolution

Chinese cities seem to fear the dangers of

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Battle against Pandemic ...

Continued from front page

no compromise on availability of essential food items and sustainability of supply lines throughout the country." The Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Health had last month while announcing the decisions taken at the National Security Committee for containing the spread of the viral disease cautioned about the possibility of shortage of food and other essential items. Although no major shortages have been reported so far essentially because the government had directed that all businesses producing essential supplies be kept open and functional; and movement of cargo vehicles be allowed unhindered during the restrictions period, but there are apprehensions that shortages may still happen in coming days and weeks. The prime minister further emphasised on effective enforcement of the decisions through NCOC for containing Covid-19 across the country. The NCOC, a PMO (Prime Minister Office) statement explained, would serve as the nerve-centre for synergising and articulating unified national effort against Covid-19, and implementing the decisions of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) on Covid-19, which is led by the prime minister. The NCOC works as a one window operation collating, analysing and processing information based on digital input and human intelligence from across the country. Recommendations based on the available information/ data are then forwarded to the NCC for real-time projections and timely interventions by the NCC. One of the core jobs of NCOC is, therefore, making evidence-based recommendations. But, the prime minister at a separate meeting ordered setting up of yet another multi-disciplinary committee for preparing recommendations for NCC, according to another PMO statement. At NCOC, Mr Khan urged the centre to focus on health management, financial impact, socio-economic and food security, strategic communication and awareness and recommending calibrated and measured responses with the evolving Covid-19 situation. The government's focal person for Covid-19 and Planning Minister Asad Umar and NCOC DG Operations and Planning Maj Gen Asif Mehmood Goraya briefed the prime minister about the latest situation of Covid-19 pandemic, containment measures, and the planned actions. Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, Minister for Economic Affairs Hammad Azhar, Minister for National Food Security Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar, SAPM on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashig Awan, SAPM on Health Dr Zafar Mirza, SAPM on National Security Dr Moeed Yousaf and senior civil and military officials were present during the briefing. Media conference Military Spokesman Maj Gen Babar Iftekhhar, later speaking at a media conference alongside PM's Special Assistant for Media and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashig Awan, said NCOC was helping the country's leadership in taking informed and timely decisions. Explaining the hierarchy, he said NCOC worked under the NCC. The prime minister chairs the NCC, while NCOC is being headed by Federal Minister Asad Umar and Commander Army Air Defence Lt Gen Hamooduz Zaman is working as its chief coordinator. About the working of NCOC, the general said that it collects information from all provinces, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan and the federal capital through digital platforms and human resources, and then collates and analyses it before formulating recommendations for the top leadership. Under this system hundreds of thousands of people, who had been potentially exposed to infected persons, have been tracked and traced and provided 'necessary instructions'. Maj Gen Iftekhhar said 465 million messages have been sent out with the help of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority to promote awareness about the disease. Several areas of the country, the spokesman said, had been isolated to contain the virus on the basis of information received by NCOC.

Moreover, continuity of essential supplies to all parts of the country was being ensured through NCOC. Dispatch of human resources to targeted areas is also among the functions of the cell. The military spokesman said that the Army was using all of its resources for containing Covid-19 and all formation commanders were extending assistance to the respective federal and provincial governments in their areas of responsibility. Echoing the message of Army Chief Gen Bajwa, he said that everyone in the country would have to fight against the disease as one nation by rising above ethnic, linguistic and religious.

Meet the doctor who treated ...

Continued from page 02

not a death sentence - you can get well." The relieved father has written a letter of appreciation to Syed Murad Ali Shah, the Chief Minister of Sindh, praising the provincial government for its timely response and the Aga Khan University Hospital for the excellent care. He especially lauded Dr Mahmood and his team "for showing utmost care and professionalism in the line of their duty." Currently, over 1,700 confirmed COVID-19 patients had been reported in Pakistan, 58 of whom have recovered, and 25 have died. "This is not a fight that we can win through health workers or government measures. This is a fight that every individual has to fight for themselves: reduce the risk of getting infected to reduce the chance of others getting infected from you to win the war against the virus going viral," Dr Mahmood said. Dr Mahmood is well-known for his public advocacy work on infectious diseases. An AKU alumnus of the Class of 1997, he is a Diplomate, American Board of Internal Medicine (Infectious Diseases).

Case mapping in preparation ...

Continued from page 02

in Sukkur-I, 303 Sukkur-II, 83 in Larkana, 98 in Malir, and 104 in home-isolation. The Health Department, on the instruction of the Chief Minister, has started corona-case mapping. The map shows that there are three cases in Gadap, 15 in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, nine in Gulberg, nine in Jamshed Town, seven in Liaquatabad, four in Malir, 10 in Nazimabad, three in North Karachi, one in Orangi, 41 in Saddar Town. Out of the 143 cases, the mapping of 122 cases has been completed. The Chief Minister directed the Health Department to share the mapping data with the deputy commissioners so that they could take the necessary measures to contain the virus within limited areas. The Chief Minister was told that Sindh's government hospitals had reported 1874 pneumonia cases, out of which 251 were tested while private hospitals reported 702 cases, out of which 21 were tested. The Chief Minister, in his last meeting, had directed the Health Department to improve sampling arrangements at home. The Health Department told the Chief Minister that 18 mobile clinic vehicles of the Indus Hospital had been made available to collect the samples. The Chief Minister said that the lockdown needed to be stricter. "People are still moving around here and there without any restrictions. This was not the objective behind imposing the lockdown," he said. He directed the IG Sindh to take the necessary measures to make the lockdown stricter and to not allow people from roaming freely in the city. The Chief Minister was told that Wuhan Institute of Virology, China, had prepared a machine for testing the samples of COVID-19. The machine accepts the swabs of the throat while the currently prevailing system accepts swabs of the nose. The Chief Minister directed his Principal Secretary to sit with Dr Faisal and Dr Bari to discuss and decide whether the machine was fit for Pakistan or not. "If the decision is taken in favor of procuring the machine, then order for 100 machines must be placed," he said. Furthermore, the CM noted that he would request the federal government to fly a special plane to China to transport the machines for the Sindh province.

Dr Soomro from Gulshan-e-Hadeed ...

Continued from page 04

officer of Malir last week said that a complete ban had been imposed on OPDs at all hospitals in Gulshan-i-Hadeed, but emergencies at the hospitals would remain open and staff of all health facilities would remain present for their duties.

Sindh approves purchase of ...

Continued from page 06

present, there are ten people in isolation in their homes. Out of the 413 positive cases, 145 belong to Karachi, 265 to Sukkur, one to Dadu, and two to Hyderabad. The Chief Minister was told that some 100 pilgrims were kept in Malir, and their samples had been sent for testing. Out of the 100 pilgrims, the result of 68 samples was found to be negative. The Chief Minister directed the Health Department to release 68 COVID-19 negative individuals from the Isolation Center but keep their data in the record. Public sector hospitals reported 1874 suspect cases, out of which 93 were tested. Private hospitals reported 702 cases, out of which 27 were tested. The Chief Minister was told that on his instructions, 2366 nurses had been issued offer orders while the recruitment process of 1000 doctors and 500 lab technicians was currently in progress.

Halting waste disposal in ...

Continued from page 06

Sewerage Board, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, were not on the list of the government institutions, which had been shut down during the COVID-19 emergency. "The very reason these institutions are not on the government's shutdown list is that they have to provide seamless municipal services in the province as the most important service in this regard relates to the waste disposal work," he said. The NFEH President said that the waste disposal work should not be stopped in a city like Karachi that generates 12,000 tons of garbage daily. He said that the waste disposal work should be resumed in Karachi to safeguard the public's health. He appealed to the Sindh Chief Minister, Local Government Minister, and Chief Secretary to take stock of the situation and order resumption of the waste disposal work in Karachi at the earliest. "Doing so is also in the best interest of the proactive campaign of the Sindh Government to tackle the COVID-19 health emergency in the province," said Qureshi.

Scientists cautioned against ...

Continued from page 07

loosening measures to keep people apart too soon. Museums and attractions in Shanghai, which have been open for the past 18 days, were shut again from today. Cinemas were also closed again. Although the city has relaxed some rules: people are no longer required to have a pass to leave residential compounds, and delivery people are able to enter these areas. The city also dropped the requirement to wear masks in some public areas - a practice police had previously enforced with drones or robots. Most of the countries now facing raging outbreaks, including Italy, Spain and the United States, are relying on social-distancing policies and getting people to stay home. China implemented those measures, but it also built new hospitals and conducted extensive testing. Then, officials went door to door to check people's temperatures. They tested anyone with a fever, and isolated positive cases. "The extra work allowed them to stop the virus," says Cowling. "People are following China, but not in exactly the same way," he says. **-Courtesy by Nature**

PIMA introduces telemedicine ...

Continued from page 09

Praising the services of Dr Zakiuddin Ahmed, a pioneer in telemedicine in Pakistan, who has developed telemedicine portals and facilities for several hospitals in Pakistan, Dr Hafeez maintained that even after the coronavirus epidemic is over, this initiative would remain relevant and help people seek medical advice by staying home. People in need of medical advice can call on 0315-5550911 (9:00 am to 1:00 pm) 0316-6660912 (1:00 pm to 5:00 pm), and 0317-7770913 (5:00 pm to 9:00 pm) to seek medical advice.

SHCC submits its recommendations ...

Continued from page 12

temporarily turned into isolation/quarantine/treatment centers, at least one in every district. All tertiary care hospitals (both public and private) across the province should be equipped with ventilators, and as a second step vent support to be provided on a District Head Quarter level, the SHCC noted. The SHCC has developed policies for establishing isolation centers, quarantine, as well as burial arrangements of deceased coronavirus patients. The SHCC offered its support for training programs for healthcare workers in areas as needed. Currently, it is involved in the training of lab technicians for nasopharyngeal swab collection. The SHCC looks forward to collaborating with the Health Department and the Sindh Government in taking all the necessary measures to ensure the health and safety of people of the Sindh province.

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Healthcare organizations jointly express concern over countrywide PPE shortage

MN Report

KARACHI - Representatives of the Pakistan Medical Association, Young Nurses Association (YNA) Sindh, and Sindh Paramedical Staff Welfare Organization have expressed grave concern over the unavailability of Personal Protective Equipment in Pakistan's public sector hospitals particularly in Sindh. They demanded the concerned authorities to ensure the provision of safety equipment to the medical staff working in these health facilities.

Secretary-General, Pakistan Medical Association (Centre), Dr S M Qaisar Sajjad, expressed concern over the unavailability Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in the public hospitals all over Pakistan, noting that the medical staff is serving the people of Pakistan without any protection or safety. He explained that doctors, nurses, and paramedics are on the front line in the war against the coronavirus. Their lives are at risk, and in the present situation, they are examining the patients at the cost of their lives. Their families' lives are also at risk. He said several doctors, nurses, and paramedics have tested positive for coronavirus



in the country as they were not provided with the necessary safety equipment during their duties. Doctors, nurses, and paramedics have been reluctant to continue their jobs in the hospitals in such circumstances, he said. The provision of personal protection equipment is the responsibility of the federal and provincial government, he added. He requested all paramedics and doctors to follow preventive measures as per the WHO's guideline and avoid examining coronavirus patients without any Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Central Leader of Young Nurses Association (YNA) Sindh, Aijaz Kelari, appealed to the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers of all the provinces to provide safety kits to the medical staff serving in these health facilities as they are

unable to perform their duties properly. He said that the medical force urgently needs Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to effectively fight the war against the coronavirus. Nurses all over the country urgently need transport facilities as well due to the unavailability of public transport. Chairman Sindh Paramedical Staff Welfare Organization, Javed Mirza, demanded the Sindh government to announce a special high-risk allowance for doctors, paramedics, and nurses who were performing their duties round the clock treating coronavirus patients. He said that the medical staff should be given transport facilities, travel and utility allowances, and Personal Protective Equipment as they are putting their lives in danger.

PIMA introduces telemedicine facility for public

MN Report

KARACHI - The Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA) introduced a telemedicine project named "PIMA Health Line" to provide health and medical consultation to people in their homes regarding the current scenario. Coordinator of PIMA health line, Dr Atif Hafeez, said that the facility is being provided through telephone and WhatsApp initially. For this purpose, the PIMA has introduced three phone numbers people can call and seek medical advice from general practitioners 12 hours a day.

Dr Atif Hafeez said that they received an overwhelming response as hundreds of calls came in from people who could not visit the OPDs as most public hospitals were closed. The helpline is aimed at "keeping people at home" instead of going outside for minor health issues and ailments, which could be managed through telephonic advice, he added. He said that in most cases, people need medical advice to adjust their doses. Doctors can consult patients on the phone instead of



having patients visit the hospital. As for medication, they can be purchased from any pharmacy or medical store in the city. So far, 42 consultants, including ENT specialists, pediatricians, gynecologists, general surgeons, neurologists, gastroenterologists, cardiologists, international medical experts, eye specialists, pulmonologists, psychiatrists, and diabetologists associated with the PIMA have volunteered their services.

Continued on Page 08

'PMDC situation is very unfortunate and unacceptable'

MN Report

KARACHI - The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) recently expressed concern over the delaying tactics of the government in the de-sealing of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) building on the orders of Islamabad High Court. The regulatory body for the registration of doctors and medical education is still nonfunctional.

On contempt of court petition moved by the employees of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), a bench comprising of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani of the IHC, while hearing the contempt plea for not complying court orders, gave an hour to the government to open the PMDC and warned to send the concerned officials behind bars. Despite the warning, only the Registrar of the PMDC was allowed to visit his office for less than an hour. No other employee was allowed to enter the building. Even now, the PMDC remains closed. Registrar, PMDC, Brig (R) Hafizuddin Ahmed Siddiqui, waited two hours outside the PMDC office Islamabad but the gate of the PMDC Building was not opened for his entry. This situation is very unfortunate and is unacceptable to the PMA.

The current regime dissolved the PMDC and formed the Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) to run the affairs of medical education and the registration of medical practitioners. The Islamabad High Court has now dissolved the PMC, and the PMDC and its employees have been restored.

We regretfully say that the government is not implementing the decision of the Islamabad High Court and the PMDC still has not been restored. The head office and regional offices of the PMDC are also closed, the PMA noted.

We request the Supreme Court of Pakistan to take notice of the situation in restoring the PMDC. Many doctors are fighting on the front line against the coronavirus pandemic in Pakistan, but their registration with PMDC is expired. Thousands of registration cases are pending. More than 15,000 fresh graduates are also waiting for their provisional registration to start their house jobs. These fresh graduates, if given provisional registration, can become part of the medical force fighting against the COVID-19 crisis.

Pakistani doctors working abroad are also very distressed because they are unable to get their registration renewed or their good standing certificates issued. The PMA believes that the government should immediately implement the verdict of the Islamabad High Court and open the head office of the PMDC in Islamabad as well as its regional offices in the provinces. The Registrar of the PMDC should be allowed to take up his duties with 1/3 of his office staff so that day-to-day issues of medical professionals could be resolved.



Lockdown results in air pollution level drop: NFEH

MN Report
KARACHI - The National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) said that the lockdown regime enforced in Karachi had provided an excellent opportunity to the authorities concerned to reassess urban sprawl, mass transportation, and the industrial needs of the city to curb harmful carbon emissions. In a recently issued press statement, NFEH President, Naeem Qureshi, said that Karachi was one of the biggest industrial and commercial hubs in the world where lockdown orders had brought about an immediate drop in its air

pollution levels. The NFEH President said that with public transportation completely halted, minimal use of private vehicles, and limited industrial activity, Karachi's air pollution problem had been eased for the time being. Naeem said that the authorities who were responsible for mitigating the perennial environmental degradation issue of the city should take stock of the present situation. Qureshi said that the relevant authorities should not miss this opportunity as they should properly do real-time monitoring of the

drop in air pollution levels in the city with a massive decrease in public transportation and industrial activity due to the lockdown regime in place. President NFEH said that such real-time monitoring of the air pollution data should lead to proper research studies by scientists whose findings would help the authorities concerned in mitigating the environmental issue. "The main thing is that once the lockdown orders are withdrawn, benefits of the present situation for the city's environmental conditions should be retained to a certain extent," said Qureshi, who



is also the convener of the FPCCI's Central Standing Committee on Environment. "Such benefits for our environment could only be achieved when we sit together now to do a proper reassessment of our needs to do industrial and transportation activities for the good of the society in a socially responsible and sustainable manner," Naeem said.

Qureshi said that no doubt the city needed proper infrastructure to fulfill public transportation and industrial requirements, but these systems should carry proper mechanisms to safeguard our environment. "The present situation once again teaches us the lesson we have long forgotten that environmental laws, rules, and regulations of the State should be enforced in a uniform and indiscriminate manner to mitigate the issue of environmental degradation," he said. "While roads today carry fewer vehicles and a minimal number of industries doing their operations in Karachi, we have to think now as to how to massively improve our traveling and industrial practices to safeguard the environment that is constantly being damaged due to harmful emissions," Naeem said. "No doubt, the coronavirus epidemic has caused a massive health emergency in our midst, but this is like a blessing in disguise for us as we should not lose this opportunity," said the NFEH President. Advisor NFEH, Saquib Ejaz Hussain, said that air pollution is one of the world's leading health risks. Recent releases from NASA on the air quality over Wuhan before the onset of the corona viral episode show that the

region was all covered with pollutants, but the same thinned out after the Chinese attempt to deal with the situation. This leads to the inference that the aerosols in the polluted air were the carrier of the coronavirus. According to Saquib Hussain, "Exposure to common air pollutants can alter host immunity to respiratory viral infections. Given the number of individuals that contract some kind of respiratory virus each year and considering that the most common form of illness in urban areas is respiratory allergies and infections which account for more hospital visits, potential interactions between exposure to air primary and secondary pollutants and respiratory virus infections have significant public health implications for people throughout Pakistan." Hussain further added, "More importantly, air pollution-induced enhanced susceptibility to respiratory viral infections could have even more serious implications for individuals with preexisting pulmonary conditions, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease - COPD. The SEPA, being a regulator, is mandated to conduct studies and share results with the public to improve the understanding of how exposure to air pollution enhances the risk for respiratory virus infections and who, if anyone, is most susceptible. An important challenge for the future will be to further our understanding of cellular and molecular mechanisms mediating pollutant-induced effects on the susceptibility to viral infections and potential therapeutic strategies to overcome these effects."

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PMDC restored with immediate effect, Secretary Health sentenced


MN Report
ISLAMABAD - The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council was re-opened on the orders of the Islamabad High Court that directed the federal government to restore the PMDC immediately. The Islamabad High Court restored the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council with immediate effect and sentenced the Secretary Health to six months in prison. As per the details, the IHC heard the petition seeking concern about the closure of the PMDC despite court orders. The court expressed discontent with the government's failure to restore the PMDC within the given deadline and immediately ordered to open the council and warned to send ministers and other



officials to jail for contempt of court. Justice Mohsin Kiyani heard a contempt of court petition and remarked that the government's action is equivalent to slapping the court in the face. While hearing the case, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani remarked that he is sentencing the Secretary Health to 6 months in prison. In March this year, the federal government assured the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that it will implement its orders regarding the restoration of the dissolved Pakistan Medical and Dental Council's (PMDC) employees. The IHC has given the government two weeks to restore the council. The Ministry of National Health Services' secretary attended the hearing conducted by a single-member bench of the IHC comprising of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani on the contempt petition filed by the PMDC's employees.

Congo fever claims the life of a woman

MN Report
KARACHI - The deadly Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) recently claimed the life of a woman at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC). Executive Director, JPMC, Dr Seemin Jamali, noted that a woman suffering from the Congo fever had died during treatment at the hospital. She informed that the woman was brought to the JPMC from Umerkot, Tharparkar, a few days ago for treatment but succumbed to the ailment. She further informed that a total of two patients were reported at the JPMC with Congo fever-related complications, out of which one died and the other recovered from the disease. Congo fever is a fatal viral disease that spreads via a tick bite, which is a parasite that lives in the blood of animals. People who deal with cattle and livestock mainly contract Congo fever. Primary symptoms of the Congo virus include back, joint, and abdominal pain, high-grade fever, and bleeding from different parts of the body.



PMA urges Sindh Government to pay doctors' salaries

MN Report
KARACHI - An urgent meeting of the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) Karachi, Centre, and members of the civil society were recently held at the PMA House Karachi. It was noted with concern that the salaries of the doctors working in different hospitals of Sindh as House Officers and post-graduate trainees had not been paid for the past several months (4-6 months). This situation is unacceptable because most of these doctors belong to middle-class families. In these circumstances, it is not possible for them to make ends meet. The PMA demanded that the outstanding balances should be paid to these doctors immediately to help run the health care system of the province smoothly.



SHCC submits its recommendations for COVID-19 to Minister Health

MN Report
KARACHI - The Sindh Healthcare Commission's (SHCC) Board of Commissioners (BoC) has submitted its recommendations to the Minister Health Sindh and the Secretary Health. The deliberations and decisions were made by the Emergency COVID-19 Committee to deal with the pandemic. The committee consists of five members of the BoC, CEO, and Directors of SHCC. The SHCC team is working round the clock to ensure the implementation of decisions of the committee and catering to the requests from different corners for any assistance. In summary, during this time period, the SHCC team shared an advisory of the Health Department and ensuring appropriate measures accordingly being taken by the registered hospitals, conducted inspections for labs for coronavirus testing, and acted against unauthorized healthcare establishments. More than 100 labs have been inspected so far and advised for standard infection prevention and control and biosafety measures. Public notices for healthcare providers and healthcare establishments and an advisory for the general public have been issued. Additionally, various policies for the quarantine have been developed. The SHCC, as a part of the technical committee on laboratories, is helping the Sindh Government both in the technical and training aspects of the campaign and playing its role in ensuring that the appropriate measures are being taken towards the health and safety of the masses in the Sindh province. The SHCC recommended that laboratory facilities should be set up across Sindh to test for COVID-19, both in the government and private sectors. At least one testing laboratory should be set up in every district. Labs should be upgraded at least at all tertiary and secondary care centers. The SHCC recommended that mobile testing facilities must be considered with trained staff who can be deputed in major cities, at least, to cover every 100 km coverage area to provide quality testing. All labs offering coronavirus testing are being inspected by the SHCC's team to ensure the adoption of the required standards. The SHCC requested the government to subsidize the extortionate amount charged by all the private hospitals for COVID-19 testing and treatment as it is not within reach of the common man. The SHCC suggested that schools, colleges, marriage halls, and convention centers should be



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