



ISLAMABAD: People eat meal at Panahgah shelter homes. —Online

Wani urges world to take notice of India's terrorism in IOK

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Urging world human rights bodies to take effective notice of India's constitutional terrorism against Kashmiris, veteran political and human rights activist Altaf Hussain Wani vehemently criticized Indian Ministry of Home Affairs' (MHA) notification regarding amendment in Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Act and termed it as a deep rooted conspiracy intended to dilute Kashmir's distinct identity as a Muslim majority state.

"The anti-Kashmir law is a part of the BJP government's sinister design to fulfill the RSS's long-pending demand of mainstreaming Kashmir by changing the demography of Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir", Wani said in a statement issued here.

It is worth mentioning here that, under this act, anyone who has resided in J&K for 15 years or has studied in the state for seven years, and appeared in either the Class 10 or the Class 12 examination,

will be eligible for domicile certificates. As per the notification, this would allow them to apply for gazetted and non-gazetted government jobs, said a press release. Terming MHA order as a continuation of the abrogation of article 35A & 370 Wani, who is also senior vice chairman of Jammu Kashmir National Front (JKNF) said that the recent amendments in the Kashmir's domicile law was tantamount to open up floodgates for non-Kashmiris (Indians) to settle in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir state, which until August last year had enjoyed special status under the Indian constitution.

Referring to India's motive behind the abrogation of Article 35A, Wani said, "So far as the Indian plan to settle outsiders in the state is concerned the article 35-A was the only constitutional and legal barrier that stood as a strong and effective deterrent against Indian intrigues". "By the virtue of this fresh order, India has virtually paved a way for outsiders to get settled in the state per-

manently besides enabling them to be the claimants of the already existing jobs in Jammu & Kashmir, where there is a massive unemployment problem", the JKNF leaders said adding that the act was against the interests of the local youth who were facing a number of daunting challenges out of which unemployment has been the main problem they have been facing over the past several years.

Under the pretext of new law, Wani pointed out that those outsiders who get jobs in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir will also claim the right to purchase land in the state. Terming it as a beginning of demographic change in the state he said that the amendment to the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Act would render thousands of Kashmiri jobs less. About amendments in the J&K Property Rights to Slum Dwellers Act 2012 he said the words "permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir" have been deliberately omitted in the Act, which means that slum dwellers can get proper houses in Jammu & Kashmir.

Zartaj Gul salutes soldiers

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul paid a rich tribute to doctors, paramedics, police, Rangers and Army, recognizing their services in the fight against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"We need strong nerves to combat COVID-19 pandemic and as a mature nation we should be united to fight against this pandemic", she said while talking to a private news channel. Pakistan and the United States were hit with the novel Coronavirus on same day but Prime Minister Imran Khan foresighted the situation and took certain measures to control its spread, she mentioned.

President Arif Alvi visited China to seek support of Chinese experts to cope with this challenge, she added. The government also launched an awareness campaign about social distancing and precautionary measures to keep the virus from spreading, she mentioned. Prime Minister time to time motivated the nation and advised people not to panic and bravely fight the Corona virus, she added.

AIOU earmarks 15 regions for online submission of assignments
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has earmarked fifteen regions of the country for submission of academic assignments to the designated tutors through Online, by April 15. The regions are: Islamabad-Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Quetta, Bahawalpur, DG Khan, Abbottabad and D.I. Khan.

According to Director Regional services on Thursday, a separate LMS portal (<http://aaghi.aiou.edu.pk>) has been generated for this purpose. The students of these regions have already been sent password and user-names for online submission of the assignments, by the University's Directorate

of Information and Communication Technology. The assignments could be sent for those programs which come under 2nd Phase of admissions (autumn 2019). The programs include: BS, B.Ed, and MA. MSc except Urdu, Arabic, Islamiyat and Pak Studies. The University has introduced the scheme according to newly launched Learning Management System (LMS). A proposal is also under consideration for holding online academic workshops, that are essential part of the University's distance learning system.

Daniel Pearl murder: SHC commutes death sentence of prime accused to seven years in prison
The Sindh High Court (SHC) has commuted the death sentence of prime suspect Ahmed Omer Sheikh to seven years in prison in abduction and murder case of Daniel Pearl - an American journalist.

Justice KK Agha and Justice Zulfiqar Ali Sangi issued verdict on appeals, lodged by the suspects against their sentences, after 18 years and acquitted the other three accused in the case who had been handed over life terms earlier. Fahad Naseem, Salman Saqib and Sheikh Adil were the co-accused. Ahmed Omer Sheikh, the main accused, is a British national.

The SHC remarked that the kidnapping case is proven against Ahmed Omer Sheikh while the murder accusations had not been proven against any of the suspects.

Let it be known that an anti-terrorism had handed over death sentence to Ahmed Omer Sheikh and life terms to Fahad Naseem, Salman Saqib and Sheikh Adil on July 15, 2002 for abducting Daniel Pearl for ransom and killing him afterwards.

Daniel Pearl was working as the South Asia Bureau Chief of The Wall Street Journal. —Online

Coronavirus lockdown in France

Embassy of Pakistan in Paris launches ration distribution campaign

PARIS: The Embassy of Pakistan in Paris has launched a ration distribution campaign to help those Pakistanis who may face hardship due to coronavirus lockdown in France.

This was stated by the Ambassador of Pakistan to France Moin ul Haque in a statement issued in Paris on Thursday.

The Ambassador said that the Embassy in coordination with community associations and local philanthropist organisations will distribute the essential food items to needy people. The members of the Pakistani community who need such help may please contact the Embassy at following helpline numbers: 0033(0)14562232 and 0033(0)637281541 or through Em-



Embassy's email parepparis@mofa.gov.pk or consular@pakembparis.com. The Ambassador thanked the Pakistani companies, associations and social workers who have joined hands with the Embassy in this noble initiative. —PR

Quick Read

Emirates to resume limited passenger flights after suspension due to COVID-19 outbreak

DUBAI: Emirates said it will resume a limited number of outbound passenger flights from Apr 6, less than two weeks after the COVID-19 outbreak forced it to suspend some flights. "Emirates has received approval from UAE authorities to restart flying a limited number of passenger flights," its chairman, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, said on Twitter. "From Apr 6, these flights will initially carry travellers outbound from UAE," he said, adding that details would be announced soon.

Dubai-owned carrier Emirates, the largest in the Middle East with 271 wide-body aircraft, grounded passenger operations last week as the UAE halted all passenger flights to fight the spread of COVID-19. The UAE has declared 814 COVID-19 cases along with eight deaths. It has imposed a sweeping crackdown, including the flight ban and closure of borders.

Sheikh Ahmed said Emirates, which owns the world's largest fleet of Airbus A-380 superjumbos with 113 in its ranks, was looking to gradually resume passenger services.

"Over the time, Emirates looks forward to the gradual re-



sumption of passenger services in line with lifting of travel and operational restrictions, including assurance of health measures to safeguard our people and customers," he said. When Emirates suspended flights, it cut between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of the basic salary of its 100,000-strong staff for three months, saying it wanted to avert layoffs. Dubai's crown prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum said on Tuesday that Dubai will support the airline by injecting new capital. Tourism, aviation, hotels and entertainment are key contributors to Dubai's mostly non-oil economy. —AFP

'Six-week-old newborn dies of coronavirus in US'

NEW YORK: A six-week-old infant has died of complications relating to COVID-19, the governor of the US state of Connecticut said in one of the youngest recorded deaths from the virus.

Governor Ned Lamont tweeted that the newborn was "brought unresponsive to a hospital late last week and could not be revived". "Testing confirmed last night that the newborn was COVID-19 positive," Lamont said.

"This is absolutely heartbreaking. We believe this is one of the youngest lives lost anywhere due to complications relating to COVID-19." Last week Illinois authorities said they were investigating the death of a child "younger than one year" who had tested positive for coronavirus. According to local media that infant was nine months old. The fast-spreading virus that has caused at least 4,476 deaths in the United States is believed to be more dangerous for older adults, though increasingly it appears to be also sending younger patients to hospital as well. —AFP

COVID-19 infections grow fast, deaths near 50,000: WHO



GENEVA: The head of the World Health Organization voiced deep concern about the rapid escalation and global spread of COVID-19 cases from the new coronavirus, which has now reached 205 countries and territories.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that his agency, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund backed debt relief to help developing countries cope with the pandemic's social and economic consequences.

"In the past five weeks there has been a near-exponential growth in the number of new cases and the number of deaths has more than doubled in the past week," Tedros told a virtual news conference at the organization's Geneva headquarters. "In the next few days we will reach 1 million confirmed cases and 50,000 deaths worldwide," he said.

China, where the coronavirus outbreak first emerged in December, reported dwindling new infections on Wednesday and disclosed for the first time the number of asymptomatic cases, which could complicate how trends in the outbreak are read.

Asked about the distinction, Dr Maria van Kerkhove, a WHO epidemiologist who was part of an international team that went to China in February, said the WHO's definition included laboratory-confirmed cases "regardless of the development of symptoms". "From data that we have seen from China in particular, we know that individuals who are identified, who are listed as asymptomatic, about 75 percent of those actually go on to develop symptoms," she said, describing them as having been in a "pre-symptomatic phase". The new coronavirus causes the respiratory disease COVID-19.

The outbreak continues to be driven by people who show signs of disease including fever and cough, but it is important for the WHO to capture that "full spectrum of illness", she added. Tedros praised India's US\$22.6 billion economic stimulus plan - announced after a 21-day lockdown imposed last week - to provide free food rations for 800 million disadvantaged people, cash transfers to 204 million poor women and free cooking gas for 80 million households for

the next 3 months. "Many developing countries will struggle to implement social welfare programmes of this nature," he said.

"For those countries, debt relief is essential to enable them to take care of their people and avoid economic collapse. This is a call from the WHO, the World Bank and IMF - debt relief for developing countries," he said. But debt relief processes are lengthy, Tedros said.

COVID-19 can spread 1 to 3 days before symptoms appear, CDC report on Singapore cases shows
People infected with the novel coronavirus can transmit the infection one to three days before symptoms start to appear, according to a study published by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The study, which underscored the importance of social distancing to fight the coronavirus outbreak, looked at 243 cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, reported in Singapore between Jan 23 and Mar 16. It identified seven "clusters" where pre-symptomatic transmission was likely, and in four such groups, where the date of exposure could be determined, pre-symptomatic transmission occurred one to three days before symptoms appeared in the source patient. Of the cases in Singapore, 157 were locally acquired and 10 of these were likely transmitted before symptoms started to show.

The fast-spreading virus has claimed more than 43,000 lives globally, with nearly 4,000 in the United States. The findings suggest that it might not be enough for people showing symptoms to limit their contact to control the pandemic, the researchers wrote in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, published online on Wednesday.

The findings increase the challenges of containment measures, the researchers wrote, but said the magnitude of the impact depends on the extent and duration of transmissibility while a patient is pre-symptomatic and that has so far not been clearly established. The study authors suggested that public health officials conducting contact tracing should strongly consider including a

period before symptom onset to account for the possibility of this type of transmission.

Transmissions might take place through respiratory droplets or even speech and other vocal activities such as singing, with the rate of emission corresponding to voice loudness, according to the researchers.

And the findings could also be affected by incorrect reporting of cases, especially if people had only mild symptoms.

With the focus currently on testing only people who show symptoms, the researchers expect asymptomatic illness to be under-detected.

Iran's death toll from coronavirus rises to 3,160: Health official
Iran's death toll from the coronavirus has reached 3,136, with 124 deaths in the past 24 hours, Health Ministry spokesman Kianush Jahanpur told state TV adding that the country had 50,468 cases of infection.

"We have 3,956 infected people in critical condition ... There was 2,875 new cases of infected people in the past 24 hours ... 16,711 people have recovered from the disease," Jahanpur said. Download our app or subscribe to our Telegram channel for the latest updates.

Australia gives free childcare as coronavirus case curve flattens
Australia announced free childcare for six months as part of a bid to keep businesses operating through the coronavirus pandemic, as data on new infections supported early signs of "flattening the curve".

The childcare centre subsidy adds to a growing list of support packages worth some AS200 billion (US\$121 billion) for airlines to mall owners as the government attempts to "hibernate" the Australian economy, to be reawakened when the crisis has passed. "We will demonstrate to the world here in Australia how such societies can deal with these sort of challenges our way, the Australian way," Morrison said during a televised press conference. "So stay positive, Australia. Stay connected, stay strong. We will get through this together." Morrison and state officials have introduced unprecedented restrictions on public movement to stop the spread of the virus and said that data on new infections

continued to show those efforts were paying off. Australia has reported around 5,200 infections and 25 deaths, with daily increases in new cases dropping to single digits from between 25 per cent and 30 per cent two weeks ago. "The curve is beginning to flatten," Health Minister Greg Hunt said. "It isn't sustained yet, it hasn't been consolidated, but those early, important signs are absolutely critical." Morrison said on Thursday the country's testing rate was now more than 1,000 tests per 100,000 people, or 1 per cent of the population.

"We are the first country to the best of our knowledge that has been able to exceed that mark," Morrison said. Childcare centres have lost significant business in recent weeks as thousands of people shifted to working at home, or were made redundant. A military-style operation was planned to airlift doctors onto eight cruise ships floating off the New South Wales (NSW) coast which were refusing orders to leave Australian waters, to conduct health checks on nearly 9,000 crew members, local media reported on Thursday.

The Maritime Union of Australia said there were 11 foreign-owned cruise ships in limbo in Australian waters, with 11,000 crew members in total, and their situation was "an emerging humanitarian crisis".

State governments, meanwhile, began putting time limits on the use of police to enforce restrictions on personal movement intended to slow the spread of the illness, including fines of up to to AS11,000 and prison time of up to six months.

Authorities themselves have referred to the measures as "draconian" but necessary. In New South Wales, the country's most populous state, officials said the rights of police to enforce penalties would initially last for 90 days.

"People will have gotten the message by then, hopefully," NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller said. "And we won't be talking about the powers, we'll be talking about what does it look like coming out of this?" In Victoria, the second most populous state, officials said policing of the social distancing policies might last until at least June. —AFP