

The Business

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Pharma industry's call

The pharmaceutical industry has done quite well by maintaining its operations while much of the rest of the country had to go into lockdown. Keeping medicines on store shelves is no less important than keeping hospitals open, of course, regardless of the nature and magnitude of the emergency that necessitated the quarantine in the first place. Everybody realised right from the beginning that the shutter-down approach, to contain the spread of the coronavirus, would work only if the supply of food and other essential items was ensured. But now the pharma industry has begun facing serious raw material shortages, which puts the country in danger of running out of life-saving drugs used to treat diseases like cancer, thalassemia, hepatitis, etc.. The industry has sounded a collective red alert that should grab the government's most urgent attention. The supply bottleneck is traced to India and, to an extent, to China. The former accounts for a good 40 percent of all pharmaceutical industry raw material globally. But since the political bitterness between Islamabad and New Delhi also spilled over into matters relating to trade and commerce, particularly after India ended the special status of Occupied Kashmir on August 5 last year, we have just been pushed out of this particular market.

Imports from friendly neighbour China are also compromised, unfortunately, because of the lockdown. While some cargo is still being shipped through ports but freight charges have been increased many times, which renders it unaffordable for the local industry. It is preparing to absorb a 40 percent decline in sales this month because Outdoor Patients Departments (OPDs) are shut and people are generally reluctant to go to hospitals to avoid any unnecessary exposure to the coronavirus. Abnormal raw material costs at this point, no matter how understandable given the circumstances, could well push it towards insolvency. So it was believed that the government was doing whatever was necessary to erect all the supply chains that were needed. Nobody expected this to be an easy exercise given the lockdown and the ability of the coronavirus to spread very far, very fast.

It's already got to the point that the problem is not just restricted to a large range of imported drugs, but locally-made medicines, like cough syrups and vaccines for rabies, are also short in the market. The government must look very seriously into all problems of the pharmaceutical industry and make sure it gets supplies from elsewhere if India won't play ball even in these extraordinary circumstances. It must also make sure that other essential industries do not face similar problems.

Pandemic truths

KIRKPATRICK SALE

Two truths at least are certain in this post-pandemic world: 1) Humans have so dominated the world, destroying much of non-human life and systems in the process, that the world has struck back in recoil and seeks to readjust the balance; 2) Human sustenance systems are far too large and unwieldy to be effective and the smaller the system or operation the more efficient, useful, friendly, or supportive.

The first truth is of course the one that the current organizers of the world, the ones who have brought this crisis upon us, do not want to believe. To believe that, they would have to acknowledge that the global-liberal-capitalist-guided environment they have worked centuries - or, to be more precise, 75 years - to create has so damaged the environment that it can no longer function.

It is not merely that we have engineered a world warming so fast, with ancillary die-outs of so many other species and ecosystems, that it has finally caught up to us, the bipedal species that thought it was in charge. It is more, that we have almost eliminated all other species than those that serve us (only less than 5 percent of the species on earth can be called wild anymore) to the point that the earth needs to seek a way to reestablish a balance. A global pandemic is a simple way to begin that.

Now it is hardly surprising that the Henry Kissingers and other satraps of the present system want to create another worldwide capitalist

world, only this time a little more dictatorial than in the past to crush any nasty pandemic that might stand in the way of progress. But the earth is telling us that the capitalist world is using her up, fouling her systems, killing off species useful and needful, and no one species however sapient can be allowed to do that.

It is saying that here we have the one chance to re-order our values, restructure our relationship with nature, create an economic arrangement that does not depend upon using the treasures we call resources as recklessly as we can. The one chance to reposition our species as one among many, and a humble one at that, instead of thinking ourselves superior.

The second truth follows neatly from the first. Clearly all the large systems we have evolved to solve our problems and govern our lives have failed, some most dramatically so. When a crisis hit, no one depended on international institutions to do anything useful - no one even thought the UN should meet! - and all the globalists at once fell upon national governments to save them, ignoring the whole edifice of internationalism cobbled up since World War II.

But as it turned out most of those national systems sputtered and backstepped and went around in circles too, the only partial exceptions being oriental-rooted autocracies in the East. The US dithered for days without any leadership and no one knew whether the medical side or the political side would step up; in the end it was a little bit of both and a lot of neither.

World economic disaster by COVID-19

MUHAMMAD NADEEM BHATTI

The world economies depend on healthy minds and bodies for that cleanliness and healthy environment is necessary to generate it positively the human cost of the Covid-19 outbreak is climbing across world. The economic cost is also mounting, mainly, but not only, in China. That is damage, for the most part, not due to the virus itself so much as efforts to prevent it spreading.

There are strict restrictions on moving out, where the outbreak began, and a city with a population of 11 million citizens of China. The lockdown, also now extended to other parts of Hubei province, prevented business-related travel as well as the movement of goods and workers.

Fear of the virus also means many people will choose to avoid activities they think might expose them to the risk of infection. So restaurants, cinemas, transport providers, hotels and shops are all quickly feeling the impact. The timing of the health crisis, during the lunar New Year break, means those industries have been particularly exposed to commercial losses.

The New Year holiday was extended for a few days by the national Chinese authorities and there have been longer extensions imposed by some provincial authorities, delaying the return to work for some businesses even longer. Any delay resuming production and selling goods is likely to lead to cash-flow problems, especially for smaller operations. Many companies will have to continue paying bills, including employees' pay. And for manufacturers selling goods abroad, there may be some issues with buyers becoming more reluctant to buy from China.

Herbert Wun, who owns Wing Sang Electrical, which makes products such as hair-straightness and blow-dryers in Guangdong province, officially said the many companies would not have much

slack to take this kind of impact, coming, as it did, on top of the US-China trade war. And the epidemic "will add to the pressure on customers trying to shift their supply chain away from China". International retailers have closed operations in China - the furniture seller IKEA and the coffee shop chain Starbucks, for example. Several overseas airlines have stopped flights to China and international hotel chains have been offering refunds. And beyond that, there is growing concern about integrated international supply chains. China has a much bigger role in these networks than it did at the time of the last major health problem that emerged from the country - the severe acute respiratory syndrome virus 17 years ago.

Hyundai, of South Korea, has suspended its car production because of problems with the supply of parts from its operation in China - an early warning sign of possible extensive disruption ahead. China is an important supplier for the global motor industry and the electronics sector. Many renowned mobile phones company depending existing by Chinese economy and so many good but low price computers are made in or buy China or at least have components manufactured there. There financial markets worst damage effects in their Business due to this health crisis which is increasing rapidly. Although it is recoverable but due to low standards of living hoods in these suffered countries people cannot make the good standard due to poverty and passive policies of health toward humanity. Stock markets around the world are lower than they were two weeks ago. China's market fell eight percent on the first



day of trading after the holiday.

There has been a particularly marked impact on the prices of industrial commodities, as China is such an important buyer. Crude oil hit its lowest level in more than a year. It has dropped by about 15 percent in the past two weeks, reflecting declining demand from China - underlined by reports the country's leading refiner, Sinopec, is cutting back. A group of oil exporting nations is considering production cuts in an effort to reverse the price fall. Copper is also cheaper - by about 13 percent over the past two weeks. It is an important material for the construction industry, which is also sure to be affected in China. Many of the suppliers of these commodities are emerging and developing economies.

It is early days to attempt to quantify the likely economic effects. Much will depend on how well the Chinese authorities are able to contain the virus.

But some forecasters have made rather tentative efforts to put some numbers on the impact. One example is the consultancy Oxford Economics which predicts the Chinese economy will grow less than four percent in the first quarter of 2020 from a year earlier. For the full year, the forecast is average growth of 5.6 percent. For both figures, the previous, pre-virus forecast was six percent.

It also expects the global economy to grow severely less - by 0.2 - than it would have done otherwise. According to Oxford Economic Council this is all based on an assumption the "worst case scenario" will not be avoided.

So there is a risk of the economic damage turning out to be more severe by the passage of time and existing covid-19. With disaster of health being face by the

world to save people at their best there is easy solution to keep people in home isolation and total lock down on outdoor movement and economic existence. By this situation the chain of economy has taken a slump. So, the economic powers are fully disturbed by the social lockdown although it is in favour of the community.

According to my global assessment standards of living hood and survival of lives always depend on land cultivation but in these areas where the prohibited unhealthy things are made able to serve the people by making that tasteful and to run their business with different unhealthy ethics.

People introduce those things which are not according to the health and body standard of humanity. The negligence of local food department and their checking standards give results of damaging the health of community so in this result the people whom exist through low resistance power they suffer a lot when we go through these type of people working behind any kind of industry the people work very close to each other and even use their thing jointly and they have get together so this type of virus moves rapidly and not even damage a single person even a family which consist on seven to nine members most probably contain on two aged and three younger people they take the adoption of these types of virus from those working house members from them which they work for a community or industry.

In the result of get damage they will not only play the game of death even plays the vital role to burst an existing world economy. More over Pakistan economy cannot bear lockdown as much as far. So to competitive health policies deserve to be given to take rest of economic momentum of trading market. ■

The writer is an entrepreneur & senior social economic analyst

NAB BEING USED FOR POLITICAL ENGINEERING: CHAUDHRY



Corona testing priorities

IMRAN KHAN

Covid-19 has generated many urban myths. One very apt one is about the health minister of a certain third world country who was asked why his country didn't have any coronavirus patients; he responded by saying: "because we have not conducted any coronavirus tests."

Covid-19 tests form the basis of the Corona policy response; be it isolation of patients, priority of hospitals, decisions for total or partial lockdowns - all are linked to testing. If there are no tests, there are no confirmed Covid-19 patients and therefore there is no reasonable basis for optimal allocation of resources and assigning priorities.

One country that has effectively used testing to not only control the spread of the novel coronavirus but also to avoid lockdowns is South Korea. Its response has been so effective that the country managed to hold its General Elections on April 15, 2020. The turnout of 66 percent has been the highest in 16 years. Despite this record turnout, just 15 days later ie on April 30, South Korea announced that it had no new cases to report for that day. How was South

Korea able to manage all that?

South Korea's response to Covid-19 has largely been shaped by its experience with the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) which killed 36 and infected 186 South Koreans in 2015. For South Korea, one of the main takeaways from MERS was the importance of testing and the subsequent contact tracing. This was such a strong realization that following MERS, South Korea enacted legislation that smoothed out the legal impediments towards approval of testing and the placement of necessary contact tracing measures. The impact of this preparation was seen in South Korea's response to Covid-19, as it approved Covid-19 tests in record time and put in place effective contact tracing measures.

Given the reluctance of our prime minister to impose a lockdown, it is indeed strange that he almost never mentions South Korea, a country that has been able to control Covid-19 without lockdowns. It should be obvious that the US, UK, and some other European countries largely failed not because all efforts against Covid-19 are futile, but because their leaderships are guilty of crim-

inal mismanagement and incompetence. The fate of US, UK and many other first world countries could have been different had their governments taken effective and timely measures. The failure of these rich countries should not be a reason for our ministers and their advisors to shrug shoulders, South Korea's examples shows that horrific death tolls can be avoided through efficient and timely use of resources.

It is also the district that has a testing coverage of 5,922 persons per million people, more than 6 times the national average on May 2, 2020. Given these trends, it may very well be the case that our Corona priorities and efforts, which are tied to testing for the virus, are geographically focused on our most developed districts. This means that districts with low or even nonexistent health facilities might be getting ignored in the tracking and isolation efforts that that are currently underway. Call it oversight or negligence, but ignoring less developed districts can have major implications in the near future. By dragging our feet on testing as well as lockdowns, our prime minister is wishing for a situation where he can have his cake and eat it too. Human history has shown that that

EOBI pensioners

KHALID BHATTI

The six hundred thousand (0.6 million) pensioners of the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) were happy to receive increased pension in April 2020.

Their pension was increased from Rs6500 to Rs8500 per month. They received Rs12500 in April, including two months arrears as the PTI government increased the pension from January 2020. Prime Minister Imran Khan called this another step towards formation of an Islamic welfare state. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Zulfikar Hussain Bukhari vowed to increase the pension to Rs15,000 per month in the next three years of the PTI government. EOBI pensioners were happy to receive extra money in the middle of a lockdown imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Pensioners and trade unions praised the PTI government for the increase. But this happiness was short-lived. They received a message from the EOBI helpline that the increase in pension was made without fulfilling the legal requirements so they will receive Rs6500 in May 2020.

The legal procedure is that the Board of Trustees of the EOBI consisting of trade union representatives, industrialists and government officials are to give approval for increase of pension. This approval is then sent to the federal cabinet for final approval. The government then issues an official notification in this regard. The EOBI department or board cannot make payment to pensioners without the approval of the federal government and PM.

In this case, the EOBI department and Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development paid the increased amount to pensioners without getting approval from the federal cabinet. Pensioners were shocked to hear this news. Now they are worried about

possible recovery of arrears in the coming months. They are worried that deductions in their meager pensions will make their already miserable lives more painful.

Pensioners are suffering because officials of the EOBI department and the Board increased EOBI pension without fulfilling the legal requirements. The mistake made by some 'babus' sitting in their comfortable offices have caused enormous problems, difficulties and mental torture to pensioners mostly in their 70s. Most of them are ill. They are not in a position to move the high courts or the Supreme Court against the official negligence and incompetence. The honourable chief justice of Pakistan can help these poor old pensioners by taking suo-motu notice.

Some trade unions have raised their voice for pensioners but no top government official has so far taken notice of this situation and to provide relief to pensioners.

Despite the mismanagement and corruption of billions of rupees over the years in this department, it still has enough funds to pay for higher pensions to more workers. The question is why so few workers are receiving old age pension while millions are working in the country. The reason is that only few workers are registered in social security to become eligible for old age pension after retirement. The social security departments in provinces only register workers through their employers. Employers just register a fraction of workers working in their industries and businesses. Governments want to reach out to the affected workers but lack of accurate data and absence of an integrated social security system is making this process more problematic.

This law and regulation needs to be changed so every worker working at every workplace or self-employed can register him/herself with the social security department. Millions of workers are not registered with social security, so they really do not exist for government departments.

Letters to the Editor

Ramazan price-hike

When the Ramazan begins the prices of the kitchen items have registered considerable raise with meat, milk, sugar, vegetables and fruits selling up to 20% costlier. Shopkeeper in Ramazan want to earn extra money on every food item because they know that this is the need every Muslim in Ramazan. Ramazan brings unlimited happiness and blessings with it but unfortunately most of the people are dejected in the holy month of Ramazan.

People are unable to afford the food items needed to break their fast. Black marketing is also started before Ramazan due to which the prices of items is increased. The Ramazan of 2020 is stared during seri-

ous issue covid-19 which is also the main cause of inflation. Punjab government should need to take strict action against these shopkeeper and black marketer.

Arslan khan
LAHORE

PM's cultural plan

PM Imran khan would like Pakistanis to watch this Turkey serial and learn Islamic values through this serial. He called the series "interesting", and blamed Western and Bollywood films for diluting Pakistani culture.

He Said "Our Culture goes from Hollywood to Bollywood and then here, a third-

hand culture gets promoted this way, it is badly affecting our children"

I have watched Ertugrul Ghazi first season recently, there are so many lessons in it. One of the most interesting occurrence in the series is when the tribal chiefs get together for feasts and pull their own personal spoons out from the inside of their robes. At a time when water was scarce it probably made most sense to bring your own spoon. The lesson learned is that one should think about the ways on how not just to be a gracious host but also a gracious guest. Adding that, "series and films would be produced on Muslim history to educate/inform our own people and the world; Muslims would be given a dedicated media presence."

Sibgha Arshad

ISLAMABAD

Keep schools closed

The announcement of the government about the closing of schools till the 15th of July is an excellent decision. As this crucial times, we need to play very carefully about the future aspects of COVID-19. The spread of viruses is much much vulnerable as related to other countries but proper preventive measures require to maintain the situation in control. The children have less immunity and they are more close to each other, definitely, they can be a more effective source of Corona spread secondly all over the country millions of students are enrolled in thousands of private.