



**PESHAWAR:** An old labour carries sacks of flour for delivery to earn money for his family during lockdown as world celebrates International Labour Day.

## Three Sindh hospitals to use plasma for passive immunisation therapy

**HYDERABAD:** The Sindh Health Department on Friday permitted three hospitals in the province to use plasma of recovered patients of COVID-19 for passive immunisation therapy on an experimental basis.

Dr Ruth KM Pfau Civil Hospital, Karachi, Liaquat University Hospital, Hyderabad and National Institute of Blood Disease, Karachi have been allowed to experimentally use "Coronavirus Convalescent Plasma" for passive immunisation to treat positive cases. According to a notification issued by the health department, a team of experts will supervise the process at these hospitals. The team will include physician/infectious disease specialist, ICU specialist, consultant haematologist, and representative of Sindh Blood Transfusion Authority (SBTA). Earlier, one member of an eight-member committee formed to examine the use of plasma in treating coronavirus patients by Sindh government, Tahir Shamsi had said that Sindh's research can be benefited from by other provinces in the country.

Dr Shamsi said that coronavirus cases had seen a steep rise in the country and he was hopeful of getting samples from cured patients belonging to Lahore, Peshawar and Sukkur.

Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has allowed clinical trials of blood plasma therapy to treat coronavirus patients in the country. Plasma, the fluid in blood teeming with antibodies post-illness, has already proven effective in small studies to treat infectious diseases including Ebola and SARS.

**Sindh to lift ban on public transport after lockdown**  
Sindh Transport Minister Syed Awais Shah said on Friday that provincial government will not lift the ban on public transport in Sindh until the countrywide lockdown ends.

Talking to media in Karachi, the Sindh transport minister said that govt is implementing on the smart lockdown strategy and has allowed some industries to resume their operations. Awais Shah said that transporters cooperated with the government during the lockdown in the province and they [Sindh govt] will not leave them alone in these difficult times.

"Some standard operating procedures (SOPs) for transporters have been formulated while the SOPs for intercity bus service have also been proposed," he added. Sindh minister said that he will put forward the demands and suggestions of transporters in front of Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah.

Earlier on April 26, Sindh Transport Minister Syed Awais Shah met with Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah here on Sunday to discuss matters related to transporters amid the coronavirus lockdown. During the meeting, Awais Shah apprised CM Murad about the reservations of the transporters and problems being faced by them during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Murad Ali Shah directed the Sindh transport minister to formulate the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the resumption of public transport. "Government will resolve all reservations of transporters on a priority basis," Murad assured transporters. It may be noted that President Karachi Transport Ittehad Irshad Bukhari had given the ultimatum to the Sindh government to relax the rules for them in the lockdown within three days. "We will wait for three days for Sindh government's decision, after then will park the vehicles on the roads", Irshad Bukhari was quoted as saying. On March 23, Sindh Transport Minister Awais Shah had ordered a ban on intra-city as well as inter-city public transport across the province. —DNA

## PPP blamed for deception, disinformation in

**KARACHI:** Sindh chief minister and his main advisors are telling lies to people, because their whole politics depends on corruption, deception and disinformation.

This was stated by Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) Central Vice President and the parliamentary party leader in Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil Sheikh while addressing a press conference in the Insaf House Thursday.

Flanked by PTI MNA Aftab Siddiqui, Imran Siddiqui and other leaders, he said PTI salute the journalist fraternity who are working in this difficult situation. He said the chief minister and his disqualified advisor are in self-isolation. He said that it seems that this disqualified advisor would become the future chief minister. He said the whole system of the PPP is based on disinformation.

He said previous day two spent cartages were talking to media. One of them from Larkana was disqualified due to hiding information from the election commission. He said even in the month of Ramzan he was in his usual condition. He said the other from Hyderabad seemed to be sleep-talking.

He said the job of both of them depends on using foul language against the opponents. He said Khuhro and Chandio should be ashamed and with-

draw their statements. He said they just told lies about the Sindh governor. He said the things attributed to Sindh governor by them were totally baseless.

Haleem Adil said that our Prime Minister is a great leader who is respected in whole world. He has given a package of Rs1200 billion. Now he has given another package of Rs75 billion for workers. He said the federal government is also supplying medical equipment to hospitals.

He advised Bilawal to talk to the Pakistani media instead of defaming Pakistan on BBC. He said people of Sindh want to know what the PPP government has done for them. He said the Sindh chief minister is an expert actor.

He said now PPP MPAs are hiding from people. He said even Aftab Siddiqui has distributed more ration than the whole Sindh government. He said the Sindh government is distributing expired items just for photo sessions. They also hold a photo session when distribute a couple of soap bars.

He said masses, journalists and even policemen are suffering a lot due to ban on pillion riding. He said even patients and women were not exempt from the ban on pillion riding. He said now they are bringing an ordinance, even knowing that gas and electricity are federal subjects.

He said tenants are being given exemption but there should also be some incentives for the property owner. He said there is no incentive for factory owners. He said Murad Shah wants to bring this ordinance for creating more chaos.

He said soon big news would be heard after investigation by the FIA. He said in Sindh the economy is in the lockdown. He said giving ration to 2 million people proved to be a big lie of Sindh government as poor people of Sindh are dying from hunger. He said in Jinnah hospital patients and dead bodies are kept together. He said previous day a patient jumped from the roof of Jinnah hospital and committed suicide. He said a case should be registered in this regard.

He said the online business is a drama while traders are facing immense troubles. He said the PPP is choking the economy of whole Pakistan in the name of lockdown in Karachi. He said the PPP had established a gang war in this megacity. He said the Sindh government has not spent even one rupee out of budget. It is spending even from salaries and pension money.

He said the government of Imran Khan gave huge funds, but what the government of Bilawal in Sindh has given to the people. —DNA

## Online International Hamdia Mushaira held

**ISLAMABAD:** International online Hamdia Mushaira organised by Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) is admirable and the efforts of PAL to organise online literary programmes by observing the principle of social distance are commendable.

These views were expressed by Inamullah Khan, Federal Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division being the chief guest of the first online *Hamdia Mushaira*, organised by the Pakistan Academy of Letters.

The Mushaira presided over by Dr Ehsan Akbar, Dr Yousuf Khushk, Chairman Pakistan Academy of Letters presented an introductory note. Prof. Rabb Tabassum moderated the Mushaira. Poets from all over the country and around the world including Dr Khurshid Rizvi, Saud Usmani, Abbas Tabish from Lahore, Dr Tariq Hashmi from Faisalabad, Muhammad Mukhtar Ali from Multan, Jabbar Wasif from Rahim Yar Khan, Dr Javed Manzar from Karachi, Ahmad Hussain Mujahid from Abbottabad, Mohsin Shakeel, Jahan Ara Tabassum

from Quetta, Ali Akbar Abbas, Hassan Abbas Raza, Ziauddin Naem, Dr Waheed Ahmed, Manzar Naqvi, Dr Farhat Abbas, Dr Najiba Arif, Shakeel Jazeb, Akhtar Usman from Islamabad, Basit Kazmi, Sajjad Haider (UK), Noshi Gilani (Australia) and Dr Mahmood Al-Islam (Bangladesh) recited their poetry through video link, which was listened by more than 100 listeners.

Inamullah Khan said that Ramazan refreshes the praise be to Allah almighty and refreshes the enthusiasm. Along with the recitation and worship, human beings express their heartfelt feelings and spiritual connection in the form of poems. Federal Secretary said that the Hamdia Poetry is part of our religious manifestation and our cultural identity too.

Hamdia Kalam in all Pakistani languages, including Urdu, began in the form of poetic expressions of mystical and philosophical ideas, and form that time the ideas of Wahdatul-Wujud dominating. —DNA

## Trump threatens new tariffs on China as US mulls retaliatory action over COVID-

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump said his hard-fought trade deal with China was now of secondary importance to the coronavirus pandemic and he threatened new tariffs on Beijing, as his administration crafted retaliatory measures over the outbreak.

Trump's sharpened rhetoric against China reflected his growing frustration with Beijing over the pandemic, which has cost tens of thousands of lives in the United States alone, sparked an economic contraction and threatened his chances of re-election in November.

Two US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a range of options against China were under discussion, but cautioned that efforts were in the early stages. Recommendations have not yet reached the level of Trump's top national security team or the president, one official told Reuters. "There is a discussion as to how hard to hit China and how to calibrate it properly," one of the sources said as Washington walks a tightrope in



its ties with Beijing while it imports personal protection equipment (PPE) from there and is wary of harming a sensitive trade deal.

Trump made clear, however, that his concerns about China's role in the origin and spread of the coronavirus were taking priority for now over his efforts to

build on an initial trade agreement with Beijing that long dominated his dealings with the world's second-largest economy.

"We signed a trade deal where they're supposed to buy, and they've been buying a lot, actually. But that now becomes secondary to what took place with the virus," Trump told reporters. "The virus situation is just not acceptable."

The Washington Post, citing two people with knowledge of internal discussions, reported on Thursday that some officials had discussed the idea of canceling some of the massive US debt held by China as a way to strike at Beijing for perceived shortfalls in its candidness on the COVID-19 pandemic. Trump's top economic adviser denied the report. "The full faith and credit of US debt obligations is sacrosanct. Period. Full stop," White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told Reuters. Asked whether he would consider having the United States stop payment of its debt obligations as a way to punish Beijing. —AFP



**GENEVA:** A logo is pictured on the headquarters of the World Health Organisation (WHO) ahead of a meeting of the Emergency Committee on the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Geneva, Switzerland.

## UK is past the peak, says PM Johnson, promising lockdown exit plan



**LONDON:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Britain was now past the peak of its coronavirus outbreak and promised to set out a lockdown exit strategy next week, despite rising deaths and criticism of his government's response.

Holding his first news conference since recovering from COVID-19, and a day after his fiancée gave birth, Johnson offered hope to locked-down Britons, but urged them to stick with restrictions designed to slow the spread of the virus. "I can confirm today that for the first time, we are past the peak of this disease. We're past the peak and we're on the downward slope, and we have so many reasons to be hopeful for the long term," Johnson said.

Britain now has the second-highest official COVID-19 death toll in Europe with 26,711 deaths. The UK's number of confirmed cases rose by 6,032 to 171,253 on Thursday. That has put pressure on the government over its response to the outbreak - which lagged some European peers - and is fuelling caution in lifting restrictions on movement in case that leads to a second spike. "It is vital that we do not now lose control and run slap into a second, an even bigger mountain," Johnson said. But, with rising unemployment and many companies crippled, the government is coming under pressure to outline an exit strategy.

Johnson promised to set out next week a "menu of options" on how the lockdown could be relaxed, but said the exact dates of any change would be driven by scientific advice and data. The government is also facing questions over its likely failure to meet a target health minister Matt Hancock set of carrying out 100,000 daily tests for the virus by the end of April, with testing seen as key to ending the lockdown. —AFP

## Musk, Bezos land contracts to build NASA's astronaut moon lander

**HAWTHORNE, California:** NASA selected space firms SpaceX, Blue Origin and Dynetics to build lunar landing systems that can carry astronauts to the moon by 2024, the White House's accelerated deadline under the space agency's moon-to-Mars campaign.

The three companies, which include firms of tech billionaires Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, will share US\$967 million from NASA, though specific amounts each company will receive were not immediately known.

Bezos proposed a lander concept last year but was not selected. "This is the last piece that we need in order to get to the moon," NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine told reporters on Thursday, calling the agency's first lunar lander procurement since 1972 "historic".

Unlike the Apollo programme that put astronauts on the moon nearly 50 years ago, NASA is gearing up for a long-term presence on Earth's satellite that the agency says will eventually enable humans to reach Mars, leaning heavily on private companies built around shared visions for space exploration. Picking three providers allows NASA to have redundancy in case one company falls behind in development, Lisa Watson-Morgan, NASA's human landing system programme manager, told reporters on Thursday.

"I think we've got the potential for an incredibly exciting future in space with a base on the moon, and ultimately sending people and having a self-sustaining city on Mars," Musk, who also leads electric car firm Tesla, said Thursday. —AFP

## Australian PM says no evidence COVID-19 originated in China

**SYDNEY:** Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who has angered Beijing by calling for a global inquiry into the coronavirus outbreak, said he had no evidence to suggest the disease originated in a laboratory in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

US President Donald Trump said he was confident the coronavirus may have originated in a Chinese virology lab, but declined to describe the evidence he said he had seen.

Morrison said on Friday that Australia had no information to support that theory, and said the confusion supported his push for an inquiry to understand how the outbreak started and then spread rapidly around the world.

"What we have before us doesn't suggest that that is the likely source," Morrison told a news conference in Canberra when asked about Trump's comments.

"There's nothing we have that would indicate that was the likely source, though you can't rule anything out in these environments," he said.

"We know it started in China, we know it started in Wuhan, the most likely scenario that has been canvassed relates to wildlife wet markets, but that's a matter that would have to be thoroughly assessed." The Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), based in the city where the disease was first identified, has re-

jected suggestions the coronavirus came from its laboratory. Most scientists now say the virus originated in wildlife, with bats and pangolins identified as possible host species. Relations between Australia and China have been strained since the government began canvassing support in mid-April for an international inquiry into the outbreak. Beijing sees the inquiry call as part of US-led propaganda against China, while Morrison says the world needs to understand exactly what happened to prevent a repeat of an outbreak that has so far killed more than 200,000 people and shut down much of the global economy. "That's why it is just so important to understand what happened, to make sure that we can prevent such a broad-based global catastrophe from happening again," Morrison said.

Beijing's ambassador to Australia said that Chinese consumers could boycott Australian beef, wine, tourism and universities in response to the push for an inquiry, comments members of Morrison's government have called "threats of economic coercion".

Australia has successfully contained the outbreak so far, but measures implemented to do that are set to see unemployment surge, the economy sink into recession for the first time in three decades and government debt increase massively. —AFP

## Record ozone hole over Arctic in March closed: UN

**GENEVA:** Ozone depletion over the Arctic hit a "record level" in March, the biggest since 2011, but the hole has now closed, the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said.

The springtime phenomenon in the northern hemisphere was driven by ozone-depleting substances still in the atmosphere and a very cold winter in the stratosphere, WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis told a UN briefing in Geneva.

"These two factors combined to give a very high level of depletion which was worse than we saw in 2011. It's now back to normal again ... the ozone hole has closed," she said.

Nullis, asked whether less pollution during the pandemic had played a role, said: "It was completely unrelated to COVID." —Reuters

