



RAWALPINDI: A large number of people throng to Bara Market for Eid shopping without any precautionary measures and social distancing after relaxation in lockdown.

COVID-19 pandemic to cause profound health issues globally

The Business Report

ISLAMABAD: The coronavirus pandemic's life-altering effects are likely to result in lasting physical and mental health consequences for several people, warn researchers.

For the findings, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the research team studied low-income women from New Orleans in the US, who were surveyed the year prior to, and at intervals after Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005.

The women reported a range of traumatic experiences during Katrina, many of which are similar to those now occurring during the pandemic, including bereavement, lack of access to medical care and scarcity of medications. The research showed that at one, four and 12 years after the hurricane, the exposures most strongly associated with post-traumatic stress, psychological distress, general health and physical health symptoms were those most common to the current pandemic, Medical Daily reported.

The pandemic continues to cause widespread death and sickness, as well as job loss and severe economic hardship for many.

"This pandemic is likely to have profound short- and long-term conse-

quences for physical and mental health," said researcher Sarah Lowe, Assistant Professor at Yale University in the US. "These impacts are likely to be even larger than what we have seen in previous disasters like Hurricane Katrina, given the distinctive qualities of the pandemic as a disaster," Lowe added.

The study did not include other exposures that are taking place during the pandemic, such as financial losses and unemployment, which are also likely to have additional and significant impacts on public health.

The results suggest that, in addition to promoting actions to reduce COVID-19 transmission and addressing longstanding health disparities contributing to COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, public health measures should also prevent and mitigate exposures that will have indirect effects on mental and physical health.

This includes preventing lapses in medical care and medication access. Additionally, another key exposure in the study was fear for one's own safety and the safety of others.

As such, public health messaging should provide tips for managing anxiety and fear, in addition to promoting efforts to increase safety from COVID-19 transmission. "Supplemental health services should be pro-

vided to those who are bereaved or are experiencing clinically significant fear and anxiety-related the pandemic," Lowe said.

"This study represents a step toward disentangling the health consequences of disasters, while also recognising more longstanding factors that contribute to health disparities," she wrote. Recently, another study, published in The Lancet Psychiatry journal, revealed that people taken ill by coronavirus infections may experience psychiatric problems while hospitalised and potentially after they recover.

70 Christian families given ration bags

Members of the Christian community who were affected by coronavirus lockdown were given ration bags at the office of the Social Welfare Department.

As many as 70 families were given ration bags on the occasion, total 300 families of minority communities will be given ration bags in this phase whereas 250 families have also received ration bags in the previous phase. Additional Deputy Commissioner Aamir Nazir Khichi, Divisional Director Social Welfare Sahar Siddiqua and Sather Samuel Feroze gave away ration bags to deserving Christian families.

Dairy sector can play crucial role in boosting rural economy

— 1pc increase in market share of packaged milk business can create 2,500 new jobs and transfer additional Rs36b into the rural economy

Raja Adeel Ashfaq

Pakistan is one of the five largest milk producers in the world and yet it remains a milk deficient country.

The tradable surplus constitutes only 25.2 billion litres – or 44 percent of annual milk output of 57.3 billion litres.

The remainder is mostly wasted or used in the preparation traditional products – ghee, butter, sweets, yogurt, etc. A whopping 92 percent, or 23.2 billion litres, of the surplus is sold untreated in the market by informal sector through a supply chain that lacks suitable storage and proper temperature conditions, jeopardising its nutritious value and food safety at the expense of public health.

The unprocessed milk is mostly contaminated and adulterated, which makes it more unsafe for human consumption and causes spread of multiple diseases like tuberculosis. The processed, packaged milk is less than eight percent of the tradable surplus due to failure of successive governments to implement policies and laws to regulate the huge unprocessed milk trade.

Countries like Turkey, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, etc have increased the processed milk consumption to 80-98 percent of their tradable surplus by implementing policies discouraging trade of untreated, raw milk.

The unavailability of low-cost healthy, nutritious packaged milk is often blamed for growing malnutrition in Pakistan, causing an annual economic loss of \$7.2 billion in the form of increased health expenditure, lower life expectancy, reduced physical productivity. It also is major cause of stunting and wasting among children.

According to the Planning Commission of Pakistan, the stunting in children below five years in the country has grown by seven percent to 43.7 percent and wasting by three percent to 15.1 percent since 1994. About 31.5 percent children are underweight.

The industry says the government can overcome such public health issues by implementing policies encouraging use of processed milk and working closely with the industry to jointly launch subsidised school milk programme on the pattern of countries like Indonesia.

The dairy industry's share in the market is low because of absence of laws – like minimum pasteurization and milk packaging standards – to discourage the use of unprocessed milk, and higher cost of packaged milk to raw milk. Currently, the price differential between packaged milk and loose milk has increased to 90 percent from 77 percent, due to abolition of its zero-rating status in the budget 2016-17 that left an impact of 6-8 percent, sharp increase in its costs of inputs like packaging materials over hefty currency devaluation, and double digit inflation in last three years resulting in raw milk procurement costs.

Resultantly, according to the industry, the dairy industry, whose capacity utilization has come down to 50 percent from 68 percent in 2016, has witnessed 30 percent drop in its sales and 80 percent decline in profits as it finds it hard to pass on the full price impact of abolition of zero-rating facility that has made sales tax a part of its production cost, increased price of milk procurement and other inputs to consumers as the demand for processed milk is highly price sensitive because of availability of low-priced loose milk.

The industry sales fell by 17 percent when the packaged milk producers raised their prices by six percent in August 2017 to incorporate the impact of the withdrawal of zero-rating. The removal of zero-rating for dairy products is a divergence from international tax practices, and is impacting financial viability of stringently regulated dairy industry and eroding its competitiveness vis-à-vis loose milk.

The industry says the revival of zero-rating will involve tax relief of Rs3.5 billion but it will boost its income tax and sales tax contribution to government revenue by Rs10.5 billion, and attract non-debt creating FDI to the tune of \$1.5 billion in five years besides pushing exports and encouraging investment in value-added dairy products like cheese. The PDA also wants harmonization of federal and provincial GST on goods and services at 13 percent and reintroduction of tax credit on investments by existing players. Another area where the industry wants government intervention relates to multiple, competing food regulatory regimes being implemented at the federal and provincial levels at the expense of investment in and growth of processed milk industry.

The industry says nowhere in the world has any country succeeded in developing its dairy industry without active government support. Turkey has in a short time increased the use of processed milk by exempting the industry from VAT, giving grants to producers, enforcing minimum pasteurisation law and minimum packaging requirements to discourage sale of contaminated, unhygienic loose milk.

Similarly, Thailand heavily subsidise its dairy sector and India has invested millions of dollar for the development of cold chain for the industry.

Pakistan also needs to regulate its loose milk market by implementing a minimum pasteurisation law and packaging standards. This will create incentive for farmers to sell their produce directly to the industry, eliminate middleman and bring down price of packaged milk.

In the US, the farmers have successfully increased the yield per animal to 35 litres.

But its impact has been limited. The government should enforce policies and launch initiatives for improving animal breed, feed and yield.

The writer is a former EC Member of Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI)

WHO records highest daily number of COVID-19 cases

GENEVA: The World Health Organization expressed concern about the rising number of new coronavirus cases in poor countries, even as many rich nations have begun emerging from lockdown.

The global health body said 106,000 new cases of infections of the novel coronavirus had been recorded in the past 24 hours, the most in a single day since the outbreak began.

"We still have a long way to go in this pandemic," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference. "We are very concerned about rising cases in low and middle income countries."

Dr Mike Ryan, head of WHO's emergencies programme, said: "We will soon reach the tragic milestone of 5 million cases."

The WHO has come under fire from US President Donald Trump, who accuses it of having mishandled the outbreak and of favouring China, where the virus is believed to have emerged late last year. This week Trump threatened to withdraw from the WHO and permanently withhold funding.

Tedros acknowledged receiving a letter from Trump, but declined to comment further.

Tedros said he was committed to accountability and would carry out a review into the response to the pan-



dem. Such a review was demanded by member states in a resolution this week that was passed by consensus, although the United States expressed reservations about some elements of it. "I said it time and time again that WHO calls for accountability more than anyone. It has to be done and when it's done it has to be a comprehensive one," Tedros said of the review, while declining to say when it would start.

Ryan said such assessments are normally conducted after an emergency is over. "I for one would prefer, right now, to get on with doing

the job of an emergency response, of epidemic control, of developing and distributing vaccines, of improving our surveillance, of saving lives and distributing essential PPE to workers and finding medical oxygen for people in fragile settings, reducing the impact of this disease on refugees and migrants," he said.

Tedros said he had long been looking for other sources of funding for the WHO, saying its US\$2.3 billion budget was "very, very small" for a global agency, around that of a medium sized hospital in the developed world. —AFP

US to sell Taiwan US\$180 million worth of torpedoes

TAIPEI: The US government has notified Congress of a possible sale of advanced torpedoes to Taiwan worth around US\$180 million, a move likely to further sour already tense ties between Washington and Beijing, which claims Taiwan as Chinese territory.

The United States, like most countries, has no official diplomatic ties with Taiwan, but is bound by law to provide the democratic island with the means to defend itself. China routinely denounces US arms sales to Taiwan.

The US State Department has approved a possible sale to Taiwan of 18 MK-48 Mod6 Advanced Technology Heavy Weight Torpedoes and related equipment for an estimated cost of US\$180 million, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement.

"The Defense Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required



certification notifying Congress of this possible sale today," it added.

The proposed sale serves US national, economic, and security interests by supporting Taiwan's "continuing efforts to modernise its armed forces and to maintain a credible defensive capability", the agency said.

The announcement came on the same day Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen was sworn in for her second term in office, saying she strongly rejecting China's sovereignty claims. China responded that "reunification" was inevitable and that it would never tolerate Taiwan's independence. —AFP

US masses planes at Japan base to show it can handle COVID-19



TOKYO: United States Air Force transport aircraft massed at Washington's key Asian military air transportation hub, Yokota Air Base in Japan, to show potential foes and allies it was ready for action despite the coronavirus emergency.

"It shows both our adversaries as well as our allies in Japan the importance of our placement, the importance of our ability to execute our mission," base vice commander, Colonel Jason Mills, said.

US forces are stationed in Japan to defend Washington's key Asian ally from attack from North Korea, but also to check China's growing influence in the wider region, including Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

As Washington tries to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, some officials worry outbreaks in the military may provide fodder for Beijing to question US strength in the region.

"When you're dealing with COVID-19 induced domestic chaos, you just can't pay as much attention to foreign affairs," said Grant Newsham, a research fellow at the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies and a former US Marine colonel who liaised with Japan's Self-Defence Forces. In April, the US aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt was forced to dock in Guam after a coronavirus outbreak infected several hundred sailors. Carriers such as the Ronald Reagan that is forward deployed in Japan and others that regularly pass through Asian waters are among the most conspicuous symbols of US military might. —AFP

Migrant boat crossings to UK surge during COVID-19 lockdown

LONDON: The number of unaccompanied young migrants crossing the Channel from France to Britain has spiked during the coronavirus outbreak, as travel restrictions force them onto boats rather than trucks.

Kent County Council in southeast England, which includes the major port of Dover, was dealing with "230 to 250" young migrants a year ago, its chief executive, Roger Gough, said.

"But that number has pretty much doubled. It's now nearly 470 and new arrivals are coming in all the time," he told AFP.

Channel crossing attempts have increased since the end of 2018, despite the danger of heavy maritime traffic, strong currents and low water temperatures.

In 2019, 2,758 migrants were rescued by the French and British authorities while trying to cross the strait - four times more than in 2018, according to French officials. —AFP

About 10,000 Iranian health workers infect with coronavirus

DUBAI: Around 10,000 Iranian health workers have been infected with the new coronavirus, the semi-official ILNA news agency quoted a deputy health minister as saying.

Health services are stretched thin in Iran, the Middle East country hardest hit by the respiratory pandemic, with 7,249 deaths and a total of 129,341 infections. The Health Ministry said in April that over 100 health workers had died of COVID-19.

No more details on infections among health workers were immediately available.

Earlier on Thursday, Health Minister Saeed Namaki appealed to Iranians to avoid travelling during the Eid al-Fitr religious holiday later this month to avoid the risk of a new



surge of coronavirus infections, state TV reported.

Iranians often travel to different cities around the country to mark the

end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, something Namaki said could lead to a disregard of social distancing rules and a fresh outbreak of COVID-19.

"I am urging you not to travel during the Eid. Definitely, such trips mean new cases of infection... People should not travel to and from those high-risk red areas," Namaki was quoted by state television as saying.

"Some 90 per cent of the population in many areas has not yet contracted the disease. In the case of a new outbreak, it will be very difficult for me and my colleagues to control it." A report by parliament's research centre suggested that the actual tally of infections and deaths in Iran might be almost twice that announced by the