



NATIONAL SEMINAR

# GLOBAL, STRATEGIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 AND PAKISTAN

10<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021

INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS (ISSRA)  
NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

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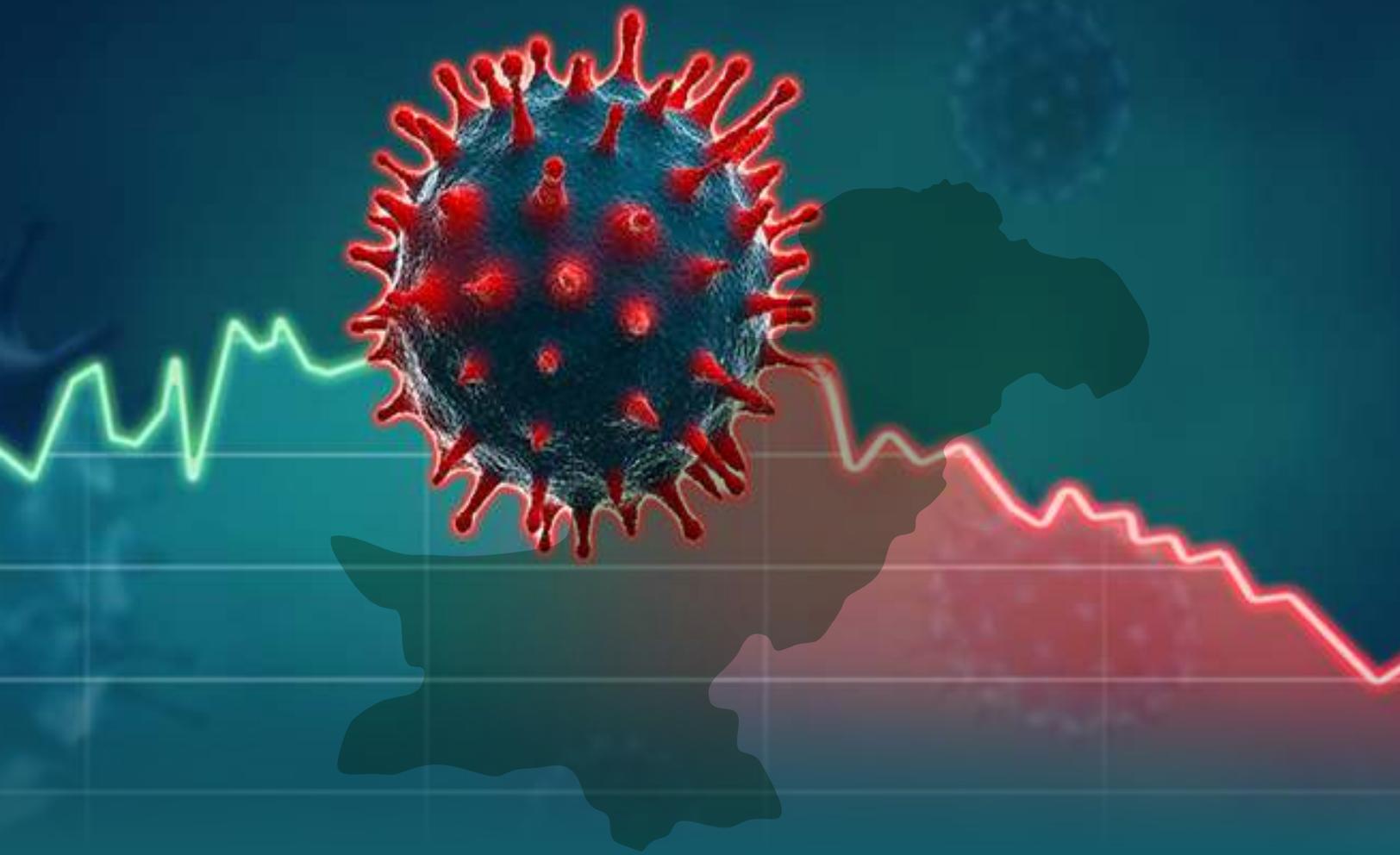
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IMPACTS OF COVID-19 AND PAKISTAN**

**10<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

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**Lieutenant General Muhammad Saeed, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military)**

President  
National Defence University

# Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread to 198 countries, with approximately 115 million cumulative confirmed cases and 2.5 million global deaths. As the pandemic rages, the rising number of cases has overburdened the social, health, economic and political sectors of both the developed and under developed world. Even in the wealthiest part of the world, countries have been under immense pressure to maintain their health services.

In a crisis-stricken world gripped by challenges, COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities of the global international system. The spike in cases has overwhelmed Pakistan's health system, slashing growth, derailing recovery and pushing the country's most vulnerable further into poverty. Due the pandemic, Pakistan's real GDP growth declined by 3%, with downturn in services and manufacturing industries. Agriculture sector is also expected to plummet if the lockdown continues as it will disrupt needed transportation, logistical support and labor input.

While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale. Due to its deep-rooted impacts, the pandemic has become more than a health crisis and has the potential to impact individual economies and the global world order at large. I believe that together, as a resilient nation, we can work in synergy for the prevention, mitigation and normalization of this Pandemic situation in a holistic manner and expect great improvements in each sector of our country.

I congratulate DG ISSRA, Major General Asif Ali, HI (M), Director Defence Studies Branch, Brigadier Masroor Ahmed (Retd) and his team for timely organizing the seminar on “Global, Strategic And Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 And Pakistan” as the findings and recommendations acquired would surely help the policymaking circle to formulate, improve and ensure smooth execution of the strategies proposed in this comprehensive report.



**Major General Asif Ali, Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military)**

Director General  
Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA)

## Preface

While Pakistan has been able to demonstrate its ability to deliver and provide health services to its citizens, the country's overall health sector is under immense pressure to fight the rising number of cases. Despite the challenges, Pakistan has been able to successfully curb the spread of COVID-19; however, the pandemic has had significant socioeconomic impacts on the vulnerable groups of the country. Financial uncertainty, decrease in income, job layoffs, and food insecurity are some of the major challenges facing Pakistan. Lack of community cooperation with the government and lack of awareness about the severity of the disease has further exacerbated the situation.

The pandemic has raised a debate on the future world as it has undermined the traditional cooperation attached to the crisis management mechanism affecting the states around the globe. This on-going outbreak will have long-lasting repercussions on world politics and the outcome of the geopolitical competition will hinge to a large degree on the relative socio-economic recovery of all the nations at large. With all the prospects of coping with COVID-19 and the subsequent policy making in Pakistan, there exist challenges and hurdles that need to be addressed in a way that we can strengthen our preparedness and response capacity while promoting social cohesion.

As a whole, the discussions during this one-day seminar provided an academic platform for policymakers, stakeholders, academicians and students to deliberate on the global, strategic and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and the challenges being faced by Pakistan. The discourse was intellectually rewarding and fruitful. The discussion addressed questions related to the impacts of COVID-19 on various fields of life and the condensed suggestions will be a base for the future policies and implementation domain. I hope that the recommendations we received from the intellectual discourse will serve as a road map for combating this pandemic in a better way for times to come.

# Executive Summary

A one-day national seminar titled “Global, Strategic and Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 and Pakistan” was organized at Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA), National Defence University (NDU) on 10th February 2021. The timely discourse on the subject was aimed to help policymakers learn from the experiences and responses of other nations identifying the challenges the country faces, and formulate strategies to mitigate and manage the Pandemic according to local environment and available resources. The audience of the seminar included scholars, practitioners and experts from public and private healthcare, IT, business sector, academia and research departments along with Armed Forces research institutes. The Guest of Honor for opening session of the event was Dr. Iqbal Chaudhary (HI, SI, TI, PhD, DSc), Coordinator General COMSTech and Member COVID-19 Task Force. The closing session of the seminar was graced by Dr. Faisal Sultan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health as the Chief Guest. The seminar elucidated on Global, Strategic and Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19, as well as challenges posed by this Pandemic specially for Pakistan's socio-economic sector and the way forward. The speakers and participants provided insight into Pakistan's healthcare dossier in terms of COVID-19 research, vaccine introduction, health care status and discussed the interrelated sectors such as economy, education system and how they should be adopting the Post-COVID-19 environment.



## Findings

Findings of the seminar are discussed below: -

- COVID-19 is a trans-boundary and a multidisciplinary issue. The pandemic has reinforced fundamental, structural, “Thucydidean rivalry” in which rapidly rising China, threatens to displace the established power, the US. Therefore, COVID-19 in general may change the social, political and global landscape.

- Due to COVID-19, the global economy is suffering from severe downturns. US-China rivalry has intensified, transatlantic alliances have frayed and important international institutions are facing legitimacy crisis. The interesting aspect of COVID-19 situation is that the hardest-hit countries are the advanced countries with the US being the worst hit.
- The institutional frameworks have become a thing of the past. They have not been reformed to cater to the changes taking place in the world.
- While the international economic and humanitarian cooperation failed miserably, scientific cooperation has thrived and strengthened as never in the history of humanity.
- The pandemic has magnified every existing inequality in our society like systemic racism, gender inequality and poverty. Pandemic exposed the importance of good governance, social justice, investment in health and education, and most importantly indigenous capacity building in science and technology.
- It is time that Pakistan expands its national security narrative to incorporate the evolving non-traditional security threats like the current pandemic. Failure to do so can cause significant losses to Pakistan impacting its various sectors, which will take years to recover.
- One of the worst economic consequences of the COVID-19 has been the surge in external debt. The developing economies have suffered badly and by the end of 2019, the total external debt of the low-income countries (77) stood at \$744 billion.
- According to the IMF, one-half of developing countries are at risk of falling further behind, which may fuel social unrest in these countries.
- While advanced economies have spent 24% of GDP on average, the emerging markets and low-income countries could spend only 6% and 2% respectively on support measures during the Pandemic.
- In Pakistan, there are several population segments, which constitute about 155 million who are at a higher risk of severity and fatality from the COVID-19 infection. A recent research by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics has found that poverty and unemployment are expected to rise in coming days. Poverty rate is expected to go up from 23.4 per cent to 58.6 per cent, depending on the level of economic recession due to lockdown.
- Global unemployment is expected to spike and reach millions depending upon the seriousness of economic crisis and a prolonged time period of the pandemic.
- Pakistan faces a shortage of doctors, nurses and allied staff along with an imbalance in distribution of resources with a scarcity of health professionals.
- Pakistan has the highest load of viral diseases in the world (per million population) with a very few trained professionals (scientists and clinicians) in the field of virology. Institutional infrastructure in virology and vaccine development is almost non-existent.
- In terms of healthcare governance, the health sector is devolved to provinces without devolution to the

level of districts. There are challenges associated with hospital autonomy and regulatory control in major cities.

- Despite limited resources, Pakistan's response to coronavirus has been among the world's best. 8 super labs were established with over 2000 tests per day and 19 private sector charity labs established their own testing services and genome surveillance was conducted for the very first time in the history of country.
- The pandemic has made us capable of indigenously producing most advance medical equipment like ventilators, medicines for respiratory infections and viruses along with sanitizers and masks.
- Pakistan's access to vaccines is expected to remain limited, and we require new vaccines every year, some especially designed for our own mutants.
- Because of COVID-19, Pakistan's education sector has been hit the most. However, massive improvement through digitization of the learning system was seen when all the educational institutions joined hands and adopted a 'Smart learning' or 'Distant learning' mode.
- During the initial stages of COVID-19 pandemic, over 50.0 million school going children have been



unable to attend school for four months as the government kept the schools closed to ensure the health and safety of students and teachers.

- COVID-19 is set to magnify the inequalities in the education system of Pakistan and is likely to prompt a rise in school dropout rates, thereby increasing the number of out-of-school children, especially girls.
- Over a thousand private schools have already been closed and many are planning to close-down as they are unable to meet their expenses such as rent, salaries, maintenance, etc. It is likely that hundreds of more private schools will also close down their businesses leading to a high number of students' dropout, and unemployment of teaching and non-teaching staff.
- While most private schools are offering distance learning through various digital technology platforms, children in the country's remote areas are disproportionately disadvantaged due to the lack of access to computers or the internet.
- The post-COVID-19 impact due to the prolong closure of schools will be massive on Pakistan's already fragile education system, such as learning gaps and social/emotional/mental well-being.



# Recommendations

The recommendations in the light of overall deliberations can be summarized as under:-

- The foreign office of Pakistan needs to be reorganized to be up to facing challenges both in the region and around the world. India will continue to be a huge challenge for Pakistan.
- SDGs need to be rearranged with health, nutrition and education as the critical goals. Basics such as education, food nutrition, health, clean water, sanitation, etc. should receive highest priorities in global and national agendas.
- The major powers must avoid the heightening of geo-political tension to strengthen the global economic recovery. Multilateral cooperation is also needed in supporting national health care systems.
- Given the structure of the debt of the low-income countries, it is necessary that along with G-20, the multi-lateral institutions (IMF/WB), as well as private creditors, should extend similar treatment to the low-income countries.
- The fiscal and monetary measures undertaken amid the Pandemic have played a vital role in minimizing the economic impacts of COVID-19, all these measures must continue for few more years to cement the recovery.
- The expansionary fiscal measures such as providing cash to the needy segments of the society (social protection), tax concessions to industries, and subsidizing utility charges of the industries must continue.
- The Central Banks around the world must continue with easy monetary policy. Keep interest rates low and remove liquidity constraints of the businesses and industries by providing them adequate liquidity at a cheaper rate.
- It is crucial to build on the progress made on the reform front so far and address the economy's



structural bottlenecks to boost competitiveness, improve the business environment and ultimately raise the economy's growth potential.

- There is need to strengthen foundations of health systems – workforce, financing, service delivery, technologies, information, and governance.
- There is a need to build a medical commission as an integral part which could ensure the training of work force and to improve the quality of our national physician manpower, nurses and other allied health professionals. There is also a need to bring reforms in the functioning of medical institutions through proper medical teaching and training.
- Training of at least 1000 young scientists and healthcare professionals in virology research and clinical practices is crucial in the present times as it would cater to the pressing challenge of untrained and under qualified professionals related to the present COVID-19 and further future calamities.
- Tiered public health laboratory system should be established.
- The establishment of National Disease Surveillance Center, with nodes/sample collection units in all major tertiary care hospitals is imperative.
- Expenditure on public health care is a must as research has immense strategic importance.
- There is a need of establishment of Consortium of Civil-Military research and development (R&D) Institutions with a clear plan of deliverables and funding mechanism.
- A “One Health Institute” needs to be established to coordinate research on human and animal-borne virus outbreaks for better preparedness and response for future.
- Primary healthcare should be the foremost priority to enhance the future national health preparedness in line with COVID-19 threats.
- Scientific research and exploration should form the basis of National Policy Regime, linking industries with research institutions through Government incentive via a triple helix model that will lead to discovery of new products and services, necessary for future in every domain.
- There is a need for extensive research on viral genomics, diagnostics and therapeutics and vaccine development with the strengthening of the existing virology laboratories.
- There should be establishment of BSL-4 high-containment laboratory at the National Institute of Virology, Karachi and establishment of at least one high tech viral disease diagnostic set up in provincial and national capitals.
- There is a need for indigenous innovation in both health care technologies particularly in production of vaccines and medicines.
- Way Forward for challenges of vaccination, poverty, inflation and circular debt can be addressed via reforming, restructuring and addressing governance-related woes especially in the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), public procurement procedures, circular debt, electricity and gas.
- The government should encourage and support private schools and revive this effective system of education.

- Provinces should develop and promote localized, free and open digital tools for education to make large-scale remote learning possible.
- A post-coronavirus scenario will require the provincial governments to monitor the drop-out rate, especially for girls and children from impoverished or marginalized families. It can be done through the databases maintained by the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).
- Revisit the budget allocation for education to ensure equitable allocation of funds and introduce game-changing investments for digital and online learning ventures, available to all.
- Promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education at all levels



should be encouraged.

- There is a need for effective response guidelines for governments and the need to plan for long-term disruptions and strategic adaptation, to coordinate, communicate with and support the education workforce.
- Policy planning for managing continuity of instruction when schools reopen, ensuring that the children return to schools, taking account of potential learning losses during the time when children were away from schools will be the necessary steps for education normalcy in the future to come.





# SYNOPSIS

## OF THE SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS



## Synopsis of the Seminar Proceedings



### Opening Session

The seminar started with a brief inaugural session. It was attended by all the guest speakers and participants. The Chief Guest for the session was General Nadeem Raza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. The Guest of Honor for opening session of the event was Dr. Iqbal Chaudhary (HI, SI, TI, PhD, DSc), Coordinator General COMSTECH and Member COVID-19 Task Force. Salient points of the speeches made by President NDU, CJCS, and the Guest of Honor are as under: -

#### Welcome Remarks Lt Gen Muhammad Saeed, HI (M), President NDU

The President NDU in his welcome remarks thanked the worthy speakers, scholars, practitioners and experts on the subject who joined the event to enlighten the audience on a very important subject. It was expressed that the

deliberative exercise was intended to highlight the impacts of the pandemic on Pakistan and the supportive role that various sectors of our country can play in the continuation of services, while shaping up the future course of action of the state as a whole.

The outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19)



continues to impact the lives of the people across the Globe. The world now is witnessing a stronger second wave of coronavirus. As the new variant threatens each country's preventive measures to curb the pandemic, Pakistan's coronavirus death toll has surged to 11,746 making the total confirmed cases up to approx. 5.50 lacs. Globally, the cases are reaching up to approx. 107 Million.

To combat the adverse effects of this pandemic in Pakistan, the government introduced the concept of National Command and Control Committee (NCOC), which is the nerve centre to synergize and articulate unified national effort against COVID-19 and to implement the decisions of National Coordination Committee on COVID-19. The concept has been a great success. Prime Minister's Special Task Force on COVID-19 and Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy have also been working in

support of the NCOC.

Government had also constituted a Coronavirus Tiger Force to reach out to poorest households to distribute food and other essential items in these difficult times. Furthermore, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which consists of members from each province and district, is managing operations and implementing precautionary measures to control this pandemic in Pakistan. The role of healthcare professionals has been commendable in our country. Similarly, the capacity of producing ventilators, medicines for respiratory infections and viruses, sanitizers, and masks has increased manifold. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many charity organizations, individuals, NGOs and educational institutions came forward to deliver food and other services to the needy and deserving segment of the society. The concept



of Smart lockdowns has also worked well and is being appreciated by the International community.

Pakistan has dealt with the 1st wave efficiently; however, we are now facing a second spell of COVID-19 since October 2020, which again is being fought with proper planning and implementation including smart lockdowns, closure of educational institutes, strict compliance of SOPs and best healthcare services provided to the citizens. As a result, the educational institutions are now open and there is a semblance of normalcy as a whole in our country. 17 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will reach Pakistan from China in the first half of 2021, with its first tranche received at Islamabad in February 2021.

The Pandemic is not over yet and its impacts have raised the need for a serious discussion on the future world order because the virus has undermined the traditional insight attached to the crisis management mechanism affecting the states around the globe. In short, there is a need for an intense deliberation of the post-COVID-19 global socio-economic and political environment that is based on realities of present times.

With all the prospects of coping with COVID-19 and the subsequent policy making in Pakistan, there exist challenges and hurdles that need to be addressed in a way that we can strengthen our preparedness and response capacity while promoting social cohesion.

### **Keynote Address By Chief Guest, General Nadeem Raza NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee**

The Chief Guest in his address highlighted that COVID-19 is a defining health crisis of the present times and the greatest challenge

humanity has faced since WWII. Countries are working to curb the virus by tracing, testing and treating of patients and through travel restrictions. COVID-19 has the potential to create social, economic and political crisis which can leave deep fractures in the international system.

He also highlighted that the global economy is suffering from severe downturns. US-China rivalry has intensified, transatlantic alliances have frayed and important international institutions are facing legitimacy crisis. Future of the world order could proceed along several paths ranging from breakdown of rules based global system to one where the system is revitalized and adapted for the 21st century.

He highlighted that while other countries were still thinking over the question to open the economy or not, Pakistan made a bold, rather interesting move to open the economy by enforcing smart lockdowns. With the success of tackling the first and deadliest wave of the pandemic and now fighting with the second wave, Pakistan has been quite successful in mitigating this health calamity with the help of all



state institutions as well as humanitarian intervention measures.

The arrival of COVID-19 vaccine in Pakistan marks the success of our concerted efforts as a nation during these difficult times. However, it remains imperative for the federal and provincial governments to synchronize their efforts in a more robust and futuristic manner to prevent and control the spread of this disease by ensuring strict compliance of the preventive SOPs by general masses.

Despite the successes achieved till today, there are several population segments, which constitute about 155 million who are at a higher risk of severity and fatality from COVID-19 infection. A recent research by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics has found that poverty and unemployment are expected to rise in coming days. Poverty rate is expected to go up

from 23.4 per cent to 58.6 per cent, depending on the level of economic recession. Likewise, unemployment is expected to spike around 0.21 million to 0.62 million (high impact scenario). Total unemployment might range from 4.07 million to 4.48 million depending upon the seriousness of economic crisis and a prolonged time period of the pandemic.

During these testing times, all the relevant sectors in Pakistan have contributed in the fight against this pandemic. The Chief Guest appreciated the doctors, frontline health workers and the civil society, who have been very active in assisting the Government in provision of much needed help while dealing with this crisis. They are providing relief to the community, through initiatives like patient care, telephone helplines, social media campaigns, WhatsApp Support Groups, provision of free medicine to needy



patients, distribution of food Ration packs, corona related informational material development and dissemination of telemedicine programs. Strict compliance of SOPs and proper distribution of vaccine would provide a COVID-19 - free environment in the near future.

During COVID-19, education sector has been hit the most. However, massive improvement through digitization of the learning system was seen when all the educational institutions joined hands and adopted a 'Smart learning' or 'Distant learning' mode. Online education has proved to be beneficial, although challenges and limitations always exist for new systemic changes in case of natural calamities. This has enabled Pakistan to grow technologically at social level and has also made us more tech-savvy according to the environment.

It is high time that Pakistan expands its national security narrative to incorporate the evolving non-traditional security threats like this pandemic. The state needs to formulate appropriate responses and strategies for the security threats emerging from issues other than the traditional security concerns. Failure to do so can cause significant losses to Pakistan impacting its various sectors, which will take years to recover. In the end, the chief guest thanked NDU, Guest of Honor, moderators, guest speakers and the participants for gracing the event and hoped that the seminar would prove to be a roadmap for improvement as regards to national policy and its implementation.

### Inaugural Address by Guest of Honor, Dr. Iqbal Chaudhary

The Guest of Honor started his address by explaining the economic model of national growth. The current model of economic growth has led to increased deforestation, loss of

biodiversity, accelerated urbanization and intensive animal farming. All these factors have known to increase the risk of zoonotic viruses jumping to human hosts and spreading with an alarming ease. COVID-19 has resulted in over 2.5 million deaths. Moreover, one third of global GDP and 45% of employments were lost in 2020 alone. Many countries went through a complete economic meltdown. This is evident now that this pandemic has magnified every existing inequality in our society – like systemic racism, gender inequality, and poverty. However, the most important thing is how science has responded to the human needs. Never in the history of humanity, was science and technology so promptly deployed to face a global pandemic.

Some of the developing countries were successfully able to transform this calamity into an opportunity. Pandemic exposed the importance of good governance, social justice, investment in health and education, and most importantly indigenous capacity building in science and technology. Science is important because only it has matched the pace spread of COVID-19. Within 6 weeks of the discovery of mysterious disease in Wuhan, Chinese and Australian scientists published the complete



genome of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. With genome publicly available, German and Chinese companies started manufacturing PCR - based test kits for diagnosis, and supplied them to the world. Biology of the virus was deciphered, its mechanism of infection was figured out, its capacity to spread through non-symptomatic individuals was reported and its surface and air-borne viability was established in over 7000 research papers published by April 15th 2020, enabling countries to devise containment of disease, tracing, and tracking policies. Entire molecular structure of the virus was resolved at an atomic level. Many drugs were re-allotted through over 350 clinical trials. Ventilators were manufactured in millions and supplied to the world. AI and IT were deployed for disease surveillance. In November 2020, within 10 months of genome discovery, over 90 vaccines were already in clinical phases of development. New technology for vaccine development i.e.

mRNA based vaccines was deployed. Over 400 million people have already been vaccinated, including substantial population of many smaller Gulf countries.

While the international economic and humanitarian cooperation failed miserably, scientific cooperation has thrived and strengthened, giving birth to a new and open science for a global common good. Developments during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate the speed at which science has progressed. This is reflected through the attention it has received, the trust it has developed, and the expectations it has created. This also represents the importance of science as a case to be presented to the whole world. So the world would have been a different place without science.

Pakistan's response to coronavirus has been among the world's best responses as it came up



with timely and one of the world's best National Response Programs against COVID-19. Expanding the testing facilities was the main aim. All TB diagnostic hospitals were converted to BSL-III facilities, and virology laboratories were converted to COVID-19 testing centers. From 0 to over 50,000 tests per day were achieved within 12 weeks. 8 super labs were established with over 2000 tests per day and 19 private sector charity labs established their own testing services. This indeed is a remarkable achievement for a country with little resources. A study of Pakistan Randomized and Observational Trial for Evaluation of COVID-19 Treatment was conducted at different places. We have developed our own indigenous ventilators. Genome Surveillance was conducted for the very first time in the history of country. We have completed the whole genome sequencing of 71 SARS-CoV-2 samples, isolated in hotspot regions of Pakistan. Our scientists are in the process of a genomic study of the waste and drinking waters for viral genome detection, surveillance to track the emerging and persistent viral diseases; time course study of the mutations in virus study and the vertical transmission of viral diseases from mother to child.

To understand some of the challenges and a way forward for Pakistan, we need to agree that business as usual will not work this time. The Pandemic has taught us a lesson that no one will come to help us in a time of global crises. A nation of 220 million strong cannot rely on others. Without indigenous science and technology capacity and its linkages with the industry, we will remain dependent on others. Therefore, expenditures on public health care research have strategic importance. The technology we will develop to fight the pandemic will have "dual use", and will help us in bio-risk

management and "National Biosecurity".

However, the challenges ahead of us are that Pakistan has the highest load of viral diseases in the world (per million population) with a very few trained professionals (scientists and clinicians) in the field of virology. Institutional infrastructure in virology and vaccine development is almost non-existing. COVID-19 is here to stay and it is fast mutating, creating a need of constant nation-wide genomic surveillance. Our access to vaccines will remain limited, and we would need new vaccines every year, some especially designed for our own mutants.

It is noteworthy that Science is the only way forward for Pakistan. Building strong science institutions with sustained funding is crucial to national preparedness. Science should form the basis of National Policy Regime, linking industries with research institutions through Government incentive in "triple helix model" that will lead to discovery of new products. More investment is needed in health care research distributed through a National Health Research Foundation. Training of at least 1000 young scientists and healthcare professionals in virology research and clinical practices would be beneficial. Moreover, there is a need for working on viral genomics, diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccine development with strengthening of the existing virology laboratories, establishment of BSL-4 high-containment lab at the National Institute of Virology, Karachi and establishment of at least one high tech viral disease diagnostic set up in provincial and national capitals.

· There is a need to establish a National Disease Surveillance Center, with nodes/samples collection units in all major tertiary care hospitals. State of the art health institutes need to be established to coordinate on human and animal-borne virus outbreaks' research. There

is a need to establish a National Disaster Management Training Center to have a concerted strength for any crises situation. Establishment of Consortium of Civil-Military Research & Development Institutions with a clear deliverable plan and funding mechanism is also important. It is necessary that national funding for the development of anti-viral drugs and development of academic linkages with virology and genomic research institutions is initiated keeping in view the present situation and possible future scenarios.

As the events unfold, the post COVID-19 scenario marks that health care will be elevated from a national and regional issue to a global issue. The emergence of Global Health Security Regime is required, in which the global strategy is in tandem with local delivery will take place. Humans will start living in harmony with the nature leading to the emergence of a “Biophilic

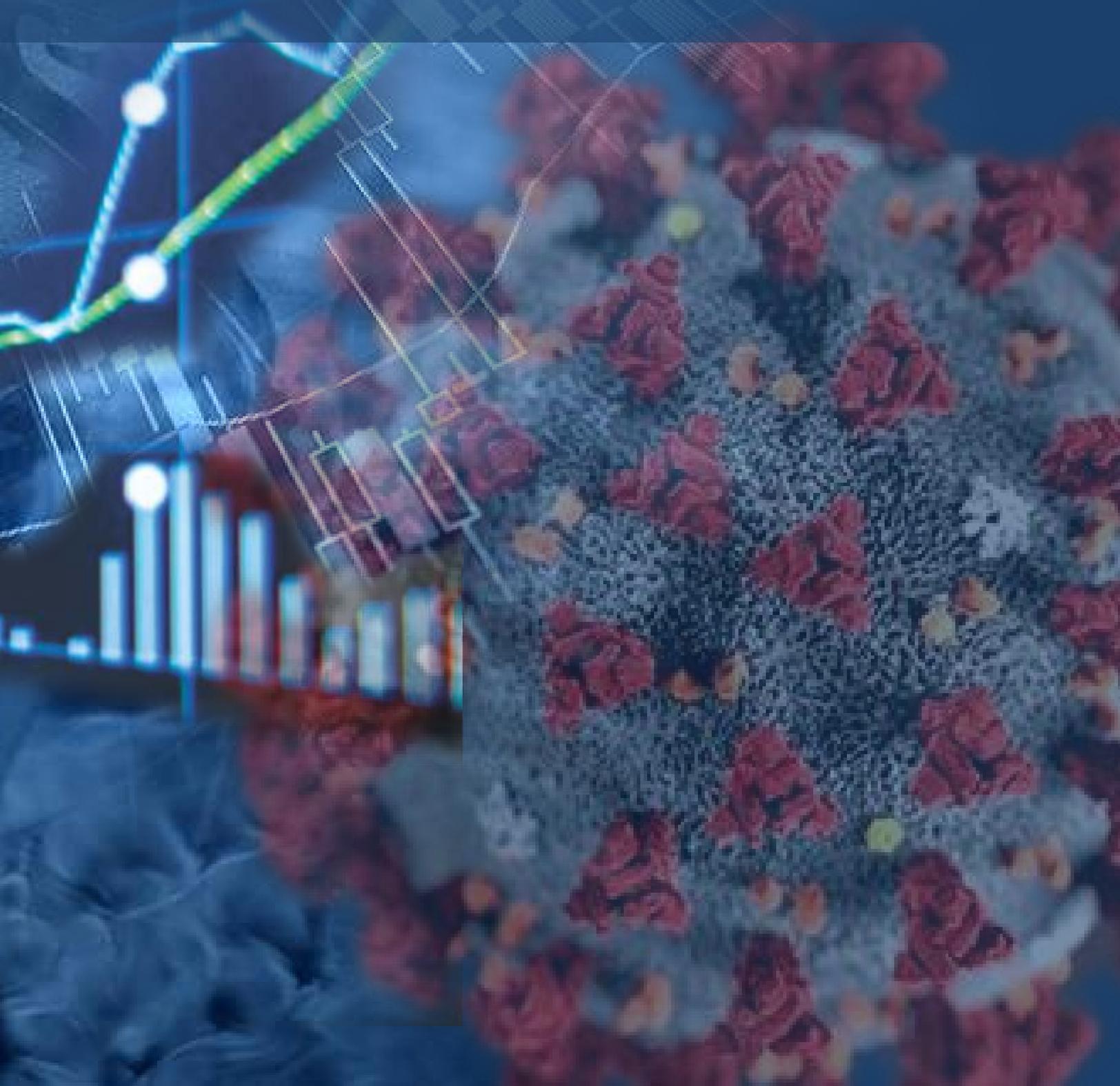
World”. Concept of one health solution and healthy planet will emerge more strongly. SDGs need to be rearranged with health, nutrition and education as the critical goals. Basics such as education, food nutrition, health, clean water, sanitation, etc. should receive highest priorities in global and national agendas. Healthcare research and development for better preparedness for the future pandemics should derive future scientific endeavors. Applications of modern sciences i.e. Nanotechnology, AI, Biotechnology, etc., will be focused on developing resilience against health challenges. Economies will become more interdependent and humanistic. The Post-COVID-19 era, will be a pre-pandemic period as we will have less than six years to prepare for the next big pandemic, since SARS-I (2003), and MERS (2013) were the early warnings and SARS-Cov-2 is the last warning.





# SESSION – I

**GLOBAL, STRATEGIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
IMPACTS OF COVID-19**



# Global, Strategic and Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19



The first session was Moderated by Ambassador Riaz Khokhar, Ex Foreign Secretary of Pakistan followed by enlightening presentations by the worthy panelist. The panelist included; Dr. Ashfaque Hasan Khan, Principal and Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, NUST, Islamabad, Amb (R) Abdul Basit, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad and Prof. Dr. Maj. Gen. Aamer Ikram SI (M), Executive Director of National Institute of Health, Islamabad. The brief synopsis of the session's presentations is as under: -

## Introductory Remarks by the Moderator Ambassador Riaz Khokhar

In his introductory remarks, Ambassador Khokhar highlighted that for the last 5 years the world has been going through a difficult time.

The ascension of President Trump changed the international environment and made it turbulent. During this time, the tensions between major powers increased, particularly between China, the US, and Russia.

COVID-19 made things worse. It's a game-changer for the entire world. Its impact is not only limited to the deeply affected societies but international relations as a whole. The interesting aspect of COVID-19 situation is that the hardest-hit countries are the advanced countries with the US being the worst hit. The medical system collapsed. Moreover, the international cooperation collapsed with every country left to itself. The countries particularly US and the EU that were supposed to lead in this global humanitarian crisis let down the international community. This led to the heightening of tensions, with Trump blaming China for the spread of the virus and walking out of the WHO. As a result, the world is still facing a

grim situation and much worse is in store for the humanity in the coming years.

## The Global Economic Impacts of COVID-19: Strategies for Mitigation and Suppression

By Dr. Ashfaque Hassan Khan

The COVID-19 was first diagnosed on December 31, 2019, in the Chinese city of Wuhan and spread like a wildfire, engulfing more than 219 countries and territories around the World. On March 11, 2020, the WHO termed the Virus as 'Pandemic' – the highest level of health emergency. The Pandemic has not only generated huge uncertainty but has brought colossal human suffering and major economic disruption around the world. As of February 4, 2020, the total number of cases around the world stood at 105 million with 2.3 million deaths. To contain the spread of the Virus, countries around the world closed their borders, cities, businesses, airlines, transport, tourism, and hospitality industries.

COVID-19 posed serious repercussion for the



global economy, although, the global economy prior to COVID-19 was already facing a downturn. The synchronized slowdown was a result of various events taking place from 2018-2020. The trade war between China and the US starting in July 2018 was one of the biggest factors that led to the slowing down of the world economy. Total trade between both countries stood at \$559 billion in 2019 with China



experiencing a surplus of \$345 billion. The growing trade deficit for the US became a major political issue in the 2016 US Presidential Election. This trade war between the two largest economies of the world dampened the global trade which grew only by 1.0 percent in 2019. Consequently, this slowdown badly affected industrial production which further led to a decline in the global economy.

Trade protectionism badly affected the world economy. Trump administration moved from multilateralism to unilateralism by renegotiating trade agreements bilaterally with Canada and Mexico thereby ending NAFTA which was agreed in 1992. This renegotiation created more uncertainty in the multilateral trading arrangement. Moreover, the global technology supply chain was threatened by the prospects of US sanctions. Trump administration wanted to prevent the use of Chinese 5G technology and threatened European allies to stop the use of Chinese technology. This led to major European countries either banning or reducing the use of Chinese technology in domestic 5G mobile telecommunication networks. Such policies threatened the global technology supply chain and thus the international economic production. Furthermore, this posed a serious threat to the economic recovery of European countries. The trade and technology war unleashed by the US against China is a part of the former's strategy of encirclement and suppression of the latter.

Further developments that led down to the stagnation of the world economy before COVID-19 can be summarized as the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the rising geopolitical tension in the Persian Gulf and the use of tariffs to balance bilateral trade policies advocated by the Trump administration that affected US's trade relationship with the UK, Germany, and France.

The impact of the above aspects coupled with

the closing of borders and businesses and partial to complete lockdown in cities has deeply affected the already slowed down economy. The global supply chain was severely disrupted, which further led to a negative impact on global demand and supply. This was history's first deliberate "Lockdown Recession" resulting from closing down of the borders and shutting down of the economy and markets, or "great lockdown". All these developments threw the global economy into the deepest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The world's leading economies witnessed massive contraction even beyond imagination. Subsequently, it threw many millions out of jobs, pushing 90 million into poverty, and the per capita income in many developed, emerging, and developing countries shrunk, thus lowering the average living standards.

The 'Great Lockdown' resulted in 'Great Divergence'. Concerns about rising inequality received new fuel because lockdown entailed much greater hardship for people in informal jobs that could not be done from home. Women and the young workers in informal jobs were particularly the most hit. Informality continued to be an obstacle to developing social safety nets because governments failed to reach such workers who were badly hit by the lockdown. As a result, the lockdown has accentuated economic polarization and worsened income inequality around the world.

The need of the time is for the advanced economies and international finance Institutions to provide more resources. 'Great Divergence' is inevitable that could risk the stability and may trigger social unrest in low-income countries. According to the IMF, one-half of developing countries are at risk of falling further behind, which may fuel social unrest in these countries. While advanced economies have spent 24% of GDP on average, the emerging markets and

low-income countries could spend only 6% and 2% respectively on support measures during the Pandemic.

The Pandemic has given rise to uncertainty. Consumers are not spending to the extent they used to spend before the Pandemic. Business confidence has dropped as they became more risk-averse and have gone into wait and see mode. The international price of oil was already under pressure because of the slowing global economy. The collapse of negotiation between the OPEC led by Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC led by Russia to cut overall production of oil resulted in oil price declining to as low as \$24 per barrel. This decline in oil prices has been the greatest bonanza for the countries which are net importers of oil like Pakistan. The oil-producing countries witnessed their revenues plummeting, their developmental activities stalling and expatriate workers losing their jobs with serious consequences for the inflow of workers' remittances for countries like Pakistan.

One of the worst economic consequences of the COVID-19 has been the surge in external debt. While the debt of the rich countries has increased, they have the capacity to repay their debt. It is the poor developing countries whose economies have suffered badly and are now facing a serious debt crisis. By the end of 2019, the total external debt of the low-income countries (77) stood at \$744 billion. Pandemic has badly damaged their economies and these countries are facing serious difficulties in repaying their debts.

Despite the damages done to the global economy, several measures were also taken to stabilize the economy. Many economies gradually started to reopen from the Great Lockdown during 2020. Economic activities picked up thereafter. Several developed and developing economies launched massive support to their households and businesses to prop up demand and also improve the supply chain to improve the supply situation.



Discretionary revenue and expenditure measures announced by advanced economies amounted to more than 9 percent of GDP with another 11 percent of GDP worth of support that includes various forms of liquidity support, including equity injections, asset purchases, loans, and credit guarantees.

The United States pumped \$2 trillion into the economy. The country's Central Bank eased monetary policy by cutting interest rates to near zero. It injected liquidity by buying government papers (Quantitative Easing) and supported credit provision to a wide range of borrowers. The European Union also launched a bailout package amounting to €750 billion.

In other words, both expansionary fiscal and monetary policy were used to prop up aggregate demand on one hand and improve the supply situation on the other. These aggressive policy measures to minimize the devastating impact of the COVID-19 played a vital role in supporting business sentiment and preventing further amplification of the COVID-19 shocks. Since both the developed and developing countries have taken extra-ordinary countermeasures, the global economy is projected to climb from the ashes.

Though, a cursory look would be sufficient to see that despite a sharp recovery in 2021, the economies around the world would fail to reach the pre-COVID-19 level (2019). The continuation of the policies undertaken during the COVID-19 must continue for few more years to bring the economy at par with or above the 2019 level.

The Central Banks around the world must continue with easy monetary policy. Keep interest rates low and remove liquidity constraints of the businesses and industries by providing them adequate liquidity at a cheaper rate.



The major powers must avoid the heightening of geo-political tension to strengthen the global economic recovery. Multilateral cooperation in providing debt relief to the low-income countries is needed to ward off dis-orderly debt default in the near term. G-20 has provided temporary debt relief to low-income countries. Given the structure of the debt of the low-income countries, it is necessary that along with G-20, the multilateral institutions (IMF/WB), as well as private creditors, should extend similar treatment to the low-income countries. Multilateral cooperation is also needed in supporting the national health care systems. Funding of COVID-19 vaccines for the low-income developing countries would be necessary to avoid catastrophic risks and finally, accelerating vaccinations could add \$9 trillion to the global economy by 2025, with 60% benefits going to developing countries.

### COVID-19 and the New World Order By Ambassador Abdul Basit

COVID-19 has yet again manifested the fault lines in International Relations very starkly and has posed a major challenge since Cold War, showcasing our failure to cater to new era requirements both at systemic and sub systemic levels. COVID-19 is being dubbed as a “new normal”, and if it persists for a longer duration

then humanity is up against a humungous challenge with regards to how to cope up with it. The world has been trying to deal with this new normal in various forms since the pandemic started.

The few fundamentals already present that can be traced to the end of the cold war era cannot be washed away, few safe assertions can be made with regards to the world order in the years ahead. For this new world order that will need years to take some shape, few protrusions will be witnessed. It needs to be borne in view that the term “world order” is a misnomer in many ways as international relations do not have an order and its structure is anarchic and disorderly.

The first assumption that can be made with regards to the world situation during/post-pandemic is that Globalization processes will continue. There has been a growing interdependence among the countries due to global and regional supply chains but not enough to provide integration. This is important as economic integration leads to political integration. The interdependence will remain, but political integration will face difficulties. Since the end of the cold war, globalization has been about both integration and fragmentation. Hence, it can be anticipated that global cooperation will have to deal with a pandemic and other global challenges like climate change, terrorism, cyber warfare with confrontation/competition existing side by side.

The second assumption in this context is that the nation-state will continue to be the pivot of international relations and nationalism will be more pronounced in the foreign policies of the countries worldwide. Although non-state actors like multinational corporations and supranational organizations like the UN, WB, IMF will try to gain space because of the global challenges the world is facing but the countries will be more cautious about their national interest and will be



guarding their sovereignty and territorial integrity. They will be reluctant to concede their sovereignty to the extent where their national interest is compromised.

The third assumption is that the world is steadily moving towards a bipolar plus instead of multipolar with the US and China - the two poles and major countries like Russia, EU, Japan, Germany, UK promoting their national interest while remaining cognizant of their centered countries namely the US and China. They will not be taking positions in the international arena but will be cautious of the interest of the two major poles. Although much will hinge on how the US and China conduct their relations. China's rise is unstoppable, and there will be competition. If China succeeds in BRI then the Eurasian linkages will place it in a strong position. Hence, it will be difficult for the US and its allies to damage and stop the rise of China. The completion of BRI is crucial for China's rise in the next 10-20 years.

The fourth assumption is that the emphasis on issues like human rights, democracy (liberal value) will lessen. If China rises, the international rule based system will transform. Consequently, it will affect the capacity of liberal

democracies to influence the rest of the world. If China can become a superpower while maintaining its own social, political and economic model without any internal change it will become a model for other countries to develop. Thus, China will retain its social and political contract internally and the impact of liberal/democratic values will lessen on the world system as a whole. Hence, the onus lies with China – how it grows and develops its model and whether the communist party can maintain that social and political contract that is present at the moment since it will determine the standing of existing multilateral organizations like the UNO.

The fifth assumption is regarding India. It is no doubt that it is a rising power despite internal problems. Its strategic partnership with the US will create pressures on its relations with Russia and China. Organizations like BRICS and SCO will become irrelevant and it will be difficult for them to fulfill their mandate. Things

will not be settling down between China and India very easily though there is a level of interdependence. China needs Indian markets and at the same time certain fundamental issues do not allow SCO to move forward. Though China and Russia will try to accommodate India, yet its strategic partnership with the US will create many problems especially for the region. ECO has become irrelevant and SAARC has outlived its utility. Even though there is conflictual relation between India and China but there will be some movement towards India's aspiration to get to the UNSC as well as the NSG group. China and Russia will be able to accommodate India in the coming future, but it will not bode well with Pakistan.

The final assumption is that the gulf countries will have better relations with China in the years to come despite pressures on Saudi Arabia and UAE from the West. China will be playing a more active role in the rapprochement between Saudi



Arabia and Iran if the US doesn't return to the nuclear deal. Israel will try to ensure that the Biden administration doesn't return to the nuclear deal since it has made head way in the region with various Arab countries recognizing Israel.

In the wake of these assumptions, the situation will become increasingly difficult for Pakistan. There are two important things: 1) States must keep a low profile while growing their strength: 2) Foreign policy must be placed at the service of domestic economic development. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, a lot has been invested in multilateralism. Pakistan must invest in bilateral relations rather than multilateral because if you do not have strong substantive bilateral relations, it cannot be expected that multilateral institutions will provide any assistance.

Pakistan is seeking unnecessary new alliances. It is not the time. Seeking new alliances with Iran, Turkey, are all non-starters. Pakistan needs to stop punching above its weight. The country needs to be cognizant of its limitations and conduct diplomacy accordingly. It is high time that Pakistan organizes itself organizationally. The institutional frameworks have become a thing of the past. They have not been reformed to cater to the changes taking place in the world.



The foreign office of Pakistan needs to be reorganized to be up to facing challenges both in the region and around the world. India will continue to be a huge challenge for Pakistan.

Things are changing but there is no world order as such. Although the pandemic will leave some influence, it will not fundamentally impact the world order. International relations are inherently chaotic, but it is imperative that we have to manage ourselves in this chaos.

**Exploring Social Impact of  
COVID-19 at Global Level  
By  
Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri,  
Executive Director, Sustainable  
Development Policy Institute  
(SDPI)**

COVID-19 has raised three dimensional challenges including health Pandemic, global economic recession and food crisis. Pre-COVID-19 world was certainly not an ideal world as close to 10% of the world population was living below US\$ 1.90 per day, 264 million children were out of school, 800 million people did not have access to clean drinking water, 200 million people had no access to sanitation, one quarter population was moderately to severely food insecure and half of the world lacked access to essential healthcare services. As people with preexisting medical conditions are most susceptible to the virus, the countries (and areas within countries) with pre-existing social inequalities are most prone to social impact of COVID-19. During the disease phase, the developed economies suffered more than the developing countries. However, the post diseases/recovery phase will affect the developing countries severely. The UN's Framework for the 'Immediate Socio-Economic Response to the COVID-19 Crisis' warns that "the COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis. It is affecting societies and economies at their core.



While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent.

The global leaders perceive that COVID-19 will accumulate multilayer challenges as a renowned economist Dani Rodrick says that Pandemic is hastening the “retreat from hyper globalization” that was already in strain before COVID-19. Globalization is the reality of modern world; however, post-COVID-19 world will have an upgraded version of globalization with more multilateral engagements to fight such challenges. Furthermore, Francis Fukuyama talking about political ambiguity says that it as a period of uncertainty. Noble Laureate, Sir Angus Deaton calls it a dark phase that takes 20 to 30 years before we see progress. The recovery in this regard demands an intact social fabric and combined efforts. Mr. Graham Allison, Founding Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School says that COVID-19 has reinforced fundamental, structural, “Thucydidean rivalry” in which rapidly rising China threatens to displace the established power, the US. Therefore, COVID-19 in general may change the social, political and global landscape. Noam Chomsky in this regard

insists on collective efforts to get out of this collective menace. He says, “We need to ask ourselves what world will come out of COVID-19? What is the world we want to live in? A world which is safe for everyone or where we live in a constant fear and uncertainty?”

COVID-19 has changed our world altogether as new trends and ways have become a part of our social lives. COVID-19 has underscored fundamental questions about governments' competence, the rise of populist nationalism, sidelining of expertise, decline of multilateralism and even the idea of liberal democracy itself. Certain governments postponed their elections in the name of COVID-19 SOPs hence taking advantage of the global pandemic. Besides lack of collective global response to the global issue epitomize weakness in the prevailing multilateralism frameworks. The phenomenon of Xenophobia has been increased hence reducing space for migrants and refugees. Above all, psychological support remained a missing element in COVID-19 treatment globally while the main focus has been on vaccine and the medical aspect. COVID-19 has adversely impacted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pre-COVID-19 world was already posing challenges to the SDGs, however, COVID-19 has made it further difficult to achieve these goals as the focus of the policy makers is on managing the pandemic. Moreover, the budgets are being spent on managing the pandemic thus affecting the SDGs.

The world after COVID-19 will have selected recovery and disruptions would accelerate hence there is a need to manage various sectors of society accordingly. Moreover, improving governance would become more difficult because the focus has been shifted to fight COVID-19 instead of other aspects of governance. Responses towards COVID-19 would increase the debt; however,



austerity is not a solution rather the need of a COVID-19 Marshal Plan is necessary.

There are opportunities in every crisis and COVID-19 is no exception. COVID-19 provides an opportunity to address the injustices of our economic and societal systems as there is possibility of fundamental restructuring in the upheaval. Furthermore, climate friendly practices, building health resilience, COVID-19 Marshal Plan and prospects of 4th industrial revolution in the ambit of digitalization are real possibilities. In conclusion, the fact that humanity needs leadership and solidarity to defeat COVID-19 cannot be denied.

### Impact of COVID-19 Second Wave and Status of Vaccine Introduction: Global Report Card and Pakistan's Progress

By

Prof Dr. Maj Gen Aamer Ikram SI (M), Executive Director, National Institute of Health

Almost every century has faced a pandemic. Such challenges bring lot of problems but there are opportunities as well. The challenges should be picked up, implemented in the form of policies and technicalities to take advantage of the challenges posed. Pakistan did the same which is why it has done far better than many advanced countries today. The first COVID-19 case was registered on 31st December, 2019 and within a

week a whole genome sequence was discovered. With the increasing numbers of cases, COVID-19 was eventually declared a pandemic by WHO with more than 100,000 cases across the globe. America is the most adversely affected region by the virus followed by the Europe, South East Asia and Eastern Mediterranean. In Pakistan, the strategy of tracing, testing and quarantine was implemented in coordination with Ministry of Health and National Command Operation Center. Furthermore, Tracing Testing and Quarantine technique, wearing of masks, sanitation campaigns, hotspot lockdown, SOP compliance, ban on events and closure of the schools helped in controlling the outbreak of the virus. National response of Pakistan has been very active and proficient against the pandemic as Pakistan was the first country to start the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and now the testing capacity has been increased with 150, 000 tests per day in public and private sector. The daily COVID-19 reporting system was channelized to ensure authentic information reaches the masses.

The collective efforts of all stake holders including NCOC, policy makers and implementers facilitated in controlling the first and second wave efficiently with less casualty rate as



compared to rest of the world. During the first wave of the virus 332,186 people were infected and there were 6795 casualties. During the second spell, which started in October 2020, the number of daily cases reached up to 750. As compared to the impact of COVID-19 in other countries, Pakistan has managed to prevent further viral spread with smart lockdown, public awareness and disease surveillance.

Component vaccines include protein subunit, virus like particles, DNA-based, RNA based, non-replicating viral vector and replicating viral vector. There is a huge gap in the vaccine market of the developing and developed world. 15% of the world population lives in developed world with 7% of the disease burden and 82% of vaccine production. As compared to it, the developing countries comprise 85% of the world population, 93% of the disease burden and 18% of vaccine production. The vaccines go through various step including animal trials, clinical trials etc. before it is ready for the masses. In case of COVID-19 there are many vaccines in the market, some are protein, DNA, RNA and viral vector inactive virus vaccines. More than 200 molecules are under study worldwide, out of which 63 are in clinical development and 174 are in pre-clinic development stage. Developed countries including China, USA, Israel and UK have major chunks of the COVID-19 vaccine per 100 people. There are various vaccines available including Moderna, Pfizer- BioNTech, Oxford-AstraZeneca, Sinopharm, Johnson & Johnson and Gamaleya with



different characteristics.

A comprehensive national policy has been devised for vaccination in Pakistan. Privatization has been done and for the first time a national immunization management system has been launched in collaboration with NADRA Centres with the help of public and private partners, Procurement planning and delivery has been planned along with communication strategy. Furthermore, proper monitoring by the Government has been planned in Phase - 4. In engagement with Sinopharm, National Institute of Health's team joined the Phase-3 trial in UAE, it has been registered with Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan. The nationwide COVID-19 vaccination started on 2nd February, 2021 and vaccination of initial 250000 healthcare workers is in progress. Whereas, with CanSinoBIO Pakistan is having first ever trial of COVID-19 vaccine in Phase - 3. For that matter more than 17500 volunteers have been recruited. The vaccine is also cost effective and China has promised the transfer of technology of the vaccine. 40 million doses are reserved in which AstraZeneca will supply 17,160,000 doses by 30th June, 2021. In conclusion, the situation in the country is well managed due to the dedicated efforts of all the stakeholders. NCOC also provided the platform for organized working. Vaccination and social distancing are keys to success in present time. However, the indigenous development of vaccines is an urgent need of the time.





### **Interactive Session:**

During the interactive session, numerous concerns of immense significance were highlighted by the participants regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its fallouts were discussed. Suggestions were given by the panelists to mitigate those challenges/concerns in the foreseeable future. The session mainly focused on exploring a variety of issues and problems including the changing world order in post pandemic scenario, US-China rivalry amid digital realpolitik. Role of new Biden regime, challenges of global economic recession, debt default & policy options for Pakistan, limitations of globalization, global pandemic interdependence, multilateralism in the post pandemic world and leadership strategy to handle COVID-19 regulators in banking sector.

In relation to changing world order in post pandemic scenario, the speakers mentioned that the COVID-19 had changed the world in many ways. The global order transited from unipolarity and it would be moving towards the notion of “bipolar plus” world, in which both the powers i.e. America and China, will dominate as global leaders of the world. The American international rule-based system would also experience big transformations with Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Responding to the query of US-China contention, the speaker highlighted that digital rivalry was already endured, even prior to the pandemic. There was a huge platform for conflict and cooperation between both since the pandemic accelerated the course of digital economy. In the current US administration under Biden, there were enormous trends to make efforts to move from realpolitik towards digital economic realpolitik, which was the manifestation of their existing undercurrent. China has already made incredible headways in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Furthermore, it was opined that the technological revolution will continue since cyber threats remained there. Countries are heavily investing in cyber warfare to technological confrontation, which could also bring several changes to the world.

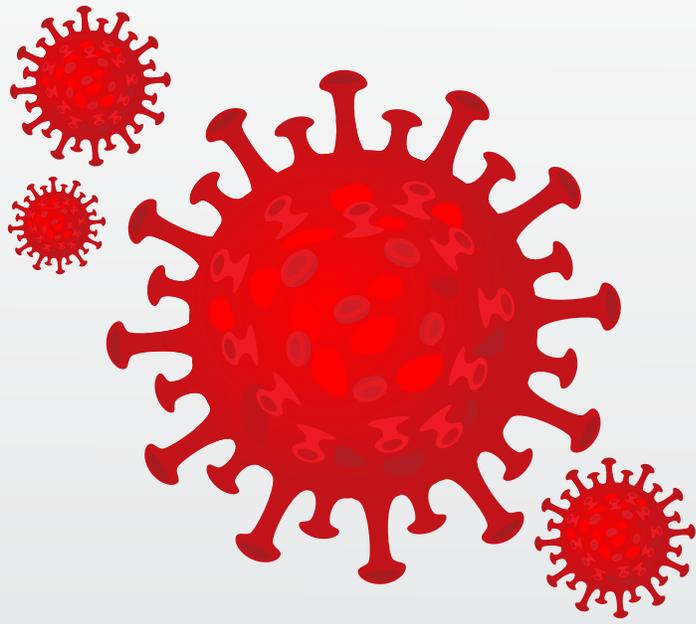
It was observed that in near future the world would see a lot of disorderly debt default particularly in low income developing countries due to their incapacity to repay debt. In the developing countries, out of the total debt, about 60% of it is multilateral in nature and rest about 18-20% is commercial debt. In comparison to it, advanced economies or developed countries i.e. USA and Europe, will experience burden but will not be defaulting. It was opined that G-20 has realized that burden needs a pragmatic global policy to do more in this regard. The speaker mentioned that in case of Pakistan, the debt is about 118 billion dollars. Out of this, only 20-22 % debt is bi-lateral, and the rest is multilateral debt. He suggested that every stakeholder; not only bi-lateral but, in fact, multilateral institutions and private creditors must play part in providing relief to the affected countries.

Owing to the interdependence for global COVID-19 pandemic, the speakers mentioned that the realization about the pandemic as global common enemy is there but a multilateral response is missing to overcome it. The need of the time is to be more aggressive in approach to protect the developing countries. President Trump`s hostile approach had not only harmed his own people but in fact, the international institutions as well. There is a realization that China is providing support to WHO and European Union to deal with the situation with firm hands.

To sum up, the speakers suggested that COVID-19 is Trans-boundary and a multidisciplinary issue. Social taboos, stigmas and animosity towards vaccine program are hindering the progress of science. NCOC and National Institute of Health (NIH) are doing phenomenal work as per the national guidelines. However, the foremost challenge our country has faced is lack of trained human resource and skilled manpower. China was able to translate its weakness of huge population into strength during the challenging times. Pakistan has a population of 220 million and must fully train its manpower on the prevention aspects.

### Closing Remarks by Moderator- Ambassador Riaz Khokhar

The moderator thanked the panelists for their thought-provoking and stimulating ideas and concluded the first session by thanking all the panelists for their outstanding presentations and deeply appreciated the intellectual participation from th

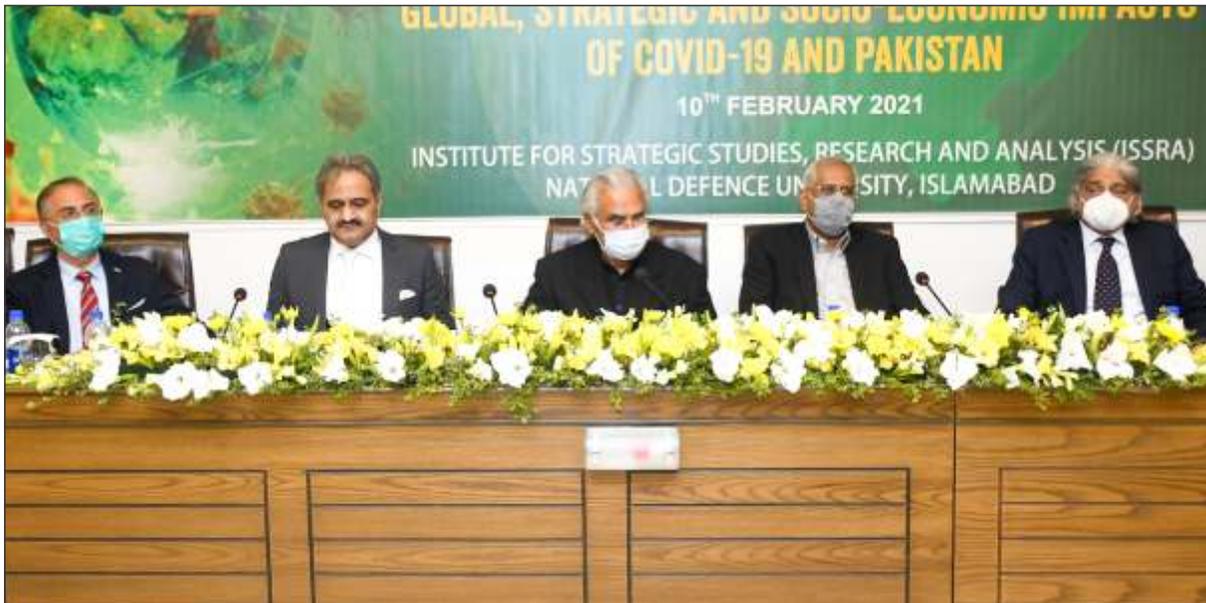


# SESSION – II

**COVID-19 and Pakistan: Challenges  
and Way Forward**



## Session II - COVID-19 and Pakistan: Challenges and Way Forward

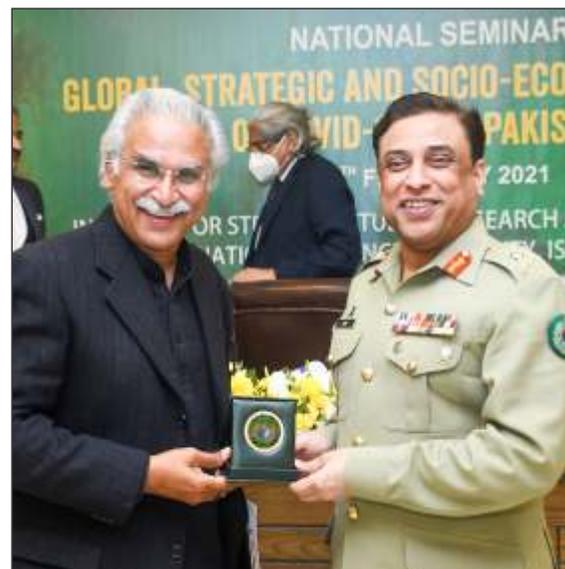


The second session of the seminar was moderated by Dr. Zafar Mirza, Ex-Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health. The worthy panelists included eminent speakers; Dr. Salman Shah, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab on Economic Affairs and Planning, Dr. Sameen Siddiqi, Chair Department of Community Health Sciences, Agha Khan University, Mr. Mirza Kashif Ali, President All Pakistan Private Schools Federation, Chaudhry Faisal Mushtaq, TI, Founder and CEO Roots Millennium Schools and Mr. Farrukh Saleem, an imminent Pakistani Political Scientist. Brief summary of the session proceedings is as under:

### Introductory Remarks By the Moderator Dr. Zafar Mirza, Ex-Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health

The moderator shared knowledge and information about on-going situation of COVID-

19. The upsurge of COVID-19 in Pakistan has greatly impacted the public health system. While Pakistan is already the highest in HIV and Tuberculosis cases, many other diseases are making the health a challenge at national level. Just as a case study, more than 40% of population in Balochistan is not vaccinated against basic diseases. COVID-19 situation has posed a challenge to our health system whereas



we are already weak in handling the social security and social welfare.

COVID-19 is not over yet. It has massively impacted the public health sector, linking the situation directly to our national security. The discussion on the pandemic cannot be completed without shedding light on the social security aspects. The upsurge of COVID-19 exposed Pakistan's national health preparedness. There is a need to change the mindset regarding national health and national development.

The COVID-19 vaccine is donated by China and supposed to be used for the frontline health workers. However, the vaccine is being used for political purposes as well which is an unfortunate aspect of governance in Pakistan. Primary healthcare should be the foremost priority to enhance the national health preparedness in line with COVID-19 threats.

## Economic Fallout of COVID-19 on Pakistan: Challenges and Way Forward

By Dr. Salman Shah

For the first time in Pakistan's history a global pandemic has disrupted and affected most of the economic activities in its tracks. The circular flow of the economy has been disrupted in the following manner.

The entities producing most goods and services were initially locked down and restricted from producing goods or providing the services. The workers working in these entities were temporarily laid off. The resultant loss of income disrupted the economic transactions in multiple ways.

Particularly the loss of income has led to a loss of consumption, savings, and investments. Loss of consumption means further drop in production



while the loss of investment means no expansion of the economy.

A vicious downward economic spiral was initiated that had to be stopped and reversed across all production and services supply chains to save the economy from total collapse and economic depression. There were many immediate, short term, medium term, and long-term initiatives that were needed.

Keeping the circular flows of the economy intact is a critical governmental function and it requires unconventional fiscal, monetary, and commercial policies.

It is critical to improve the efficiency of the flows to make the economy more sustainable, productive, and competitive for a post COVID-19 scenario.

Most countries designed their corona relief programs based on the expected economic loss to be incurred in the economy during a lockdown. On the average, most economies generate around 8.5% of the annual GDP every month. If a lockdown continues for 4 weeks, it is expected that more than half the monthly GDP would be lost. In other words, the GDP loss every month of a lockdown is around 4.5 to 5.0%. A two-month lockdown would cost the economy around 10 percent of GDP. USA's initial relief package was compensating around 10% of GDP to the economic players. Moreover, the GDP of an economy comprises the output of thousands of supply chains operating in that economy. How efficiently and productively these supply chains are organized in a country determines the country's prosperity and its competitiveness in domestic and global markets. The strength of a country's supply chain determines the strength of the country's economy. Traditionally, Pakistan's policy makers and bureaucracy have typically ignored the strategic importance of supply chains in



development and investment policies. This has dangerously manifested itself in the low levels of productivity, high cost of business and poor competitiveness of most Product chains in Pakistan.

While coping with the corona Pandemic, the global and domestic spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and ensuing containment measures, greatly disrupted the economy. In addition, manufacturing, retail, transport and trade-related activities were disrupted, causing a severe contraction in real GDP growth. Better macroeconomic fundamentals generated by the IMF program and subdued inflation risks provided space to extend relief measures to businesses and households.

In this backdrop, without these measures, the economic and social fallout of the COVID-19 crisis would have been much worse. While highlighting the economic loss of lockdown in Pakistan's services sector (60% of GDP), at least half of the services sector (primarily retail and wholesale markets, logistics, real estate) is greatly affected by lockdown. At least 30% of monthly GDP (2.5% of annual GDP) has been

affected. In two months of lockdown the impact is around 5% of annual GDP. Manufacturing comprising 20% of GDP has been affected up to 80%. In two months, Pakistan lost around 3% of annual GDP.

7R strategy would be needed for each chain (Rescue, Reopen, Revival, Relief, Refinance, Reform and Revitalizing). The strategy that aims to identify and prioritize each value chain consists of: -

- Rescue of laid off workforce across all supply chains with cash transfers (15-20 million workers).
- Reopen after lockdown with workplace following SOPs for each supply chain (Prepare thousands of outlets and intensive workers testing).
- Revival of hiring and the first few months' salaries of employees for entities and institutions (70 -100,000 entities).
- Relief for entities from taxes and charges to ease liquidity of entities (Power, Taxes. Input costs).
- Running finance from banks particularly for SMEs to continue operations and finance workforce and inventory irrespective of credit risk (Banking system Guarantee frameworks).
- Reform supply chain regulation institutions and ecosystems for enhanced flows and productivity improvements (availability of Technology up-gradation investment funds would be needed).
- Revitalize Infrastructure, up gradation for urban manufacturing and services Hubs for each supply chain for exports and domestic markets. Expedite and enhance CPEC projects.

The agriculture sector remained largely immune to the COVID-19 shock since major crops for the

year had already been harvested. However, repayment risks began to emerge in the farm segment of micro loans. Consequently, the scale and breadth of the needed efforts meant that the relief measures would entail large fiscal and quasi-fiscal costs, requiring adjustments in the consolidation agenda. Accordingly, the Government expanded the volume and outreach of its ongoing social uplift programs, enabling over 12 million households to receive emergency cash transfers (Rs. 12,000 per family) for meeting essential needs. Banking system also extended support to businesses and households to help them cope with mobility restrictions and ensuing supply-chain disruptions. Those in special need of immediate policy support included manufacturing firms as factory closures tightened the cash cycles and raised the risk of surging unemployment and a number of services concerns, especially in the hospitality industry, such as event management, catering, restaurants, food deliveries, salons/barber shops, travel and ticketing. Wherever possible, the adoption of digital channels (such as teleworking and e-commerce) supported the businesses' continuity.

While discussing the challenges, it was told that on the fiscal side, challenges remain as the Government continues to focus on addressing COVID-19 related economic and social outcomes while supporting the initial economic recovery. For the full year, the Government has



set the target for the fiscal deficit at 7% of GDP, with the primary balance also estimated to show a deficit of 0.5%. It is crucial to build on the progress made on the reform front so far and address the economy's structural bottlenecks to boost competitiveness, improve the business environment and ultimately raise the economy's growth potential over the medium term.

The IMF program must be restarted. The increased focus on low-cost housing and affordable mortgages would bring vibrancy in construction and allied industries. Importantly, the outreach efforts by the SBP and commercial banks for the provision of financing relief such as SME tracing, aggressive marketing, close working relationship with business chambers, frequent stock-taking, and grievance handling are proving helpful to ensure inclusivity of growth with stability. In terms of growth, the Government has set the GDP growth target at 2.1% for FY21. This year-on-year improvement is expected to come from agriculture and a recovery in the services sector, especially finance, insurance, transport, and communications. Industrial performance is also estimated to post a modest recovery, primarily on account of a much-contained contraction in large-scale manufacturing as compared to FY20. The SBP expects GDP growth to stay within the range of 1.5 – 2.5% during FY21.

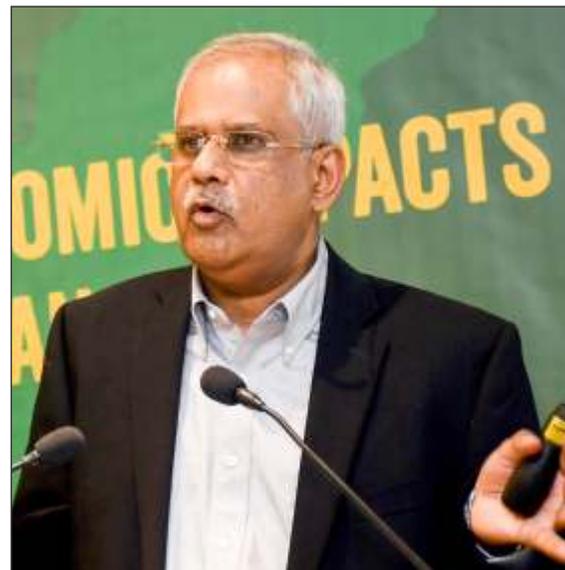
The improvement in the expected business confidence index was more pronounced, as it touched its second-highest level. Importantly, this optimism has also begun to reflect in planned investment activity in the country. Funding requests under the SBP's Temporary Economic Refinance Facility (TERF) have risen sharply in recent weeks. The scheme, which provides subsidized financing to businesses undertaking capex (BMR), has been exhausted. These developments along with optimism in the housing and construction sectors could help

accelerate the economy's recovery process in FY21.

## Pakistan's Healthcare System and the Pandemic: Challenges and Way Forward

By Dr. Sameen Siddiqi

Pakistan's handling of the Pandemic has been a relative success and has been acknowledged on global forums. Bill Gates specially acknowledged Pakistan's flattened curve of COVID-19. While tackling the challenges of COVID-19 in Pakistan, wonders were expected from a fragile health system. Role of leadership and governance is also important. Pakistani leadership took the responsibility with apt care and handled the global pandemic in a serious way. Pakistan with its meager resources has been trying to curb the worsening situation of COVID-19. The fragile health system of Pakistan has improved with increased bed capacity and diagnostic ability. The people of the country with few exceptions have been compliant with the lock down procedures. However, the situation might change for the worse as the cases multiply and pandemic unfolds in the country. Pakistan has committed to achieve national health coverage through strengthening of the health system and



its global commitment as part of SDGs 2030.

In the healthcare delivery system, it is estimated that 70 to 75% of population uses private health service providers as first level of contact. However, Public Sector denotes 1,201 hospitals, 5,518 Basic Health Units, 683 Rural Health Clinics, 5,802 Dispensaries, 731 MCH Centers, 347 TB centers, 123,394 hospital beds, and 95,000 Lady Health Workers. On the other hand, private sector consists of over 50,000 private General Practitioners, 20-25% hospital beds including private pharmacies and private laboratories.

Pakistan has faced a shortage of doctors, nurses and allied staff along with an imbalance in distribution of resources with a scarcity of health professionals. Particularly, in rural areas, there are 1,94,000 registered medical practitioners of which 30,000 work in ICUs. The country has focused its efforts on the prevention and control of the new coronavirus. The number of health professionals in public and private sector hospitals is barely sufficient to deal with the incoming cases of COVID-19. They are also involved in the reverse tracing of household



contacts of positive cases. It is anticipated that a severe shortage of health professionals could arise in the country with an increasing number of COVID-19 patients. The National Institute of Health has begun a series of trainings for healthcare professionals and clinical laboratories on infection prevention and control. So far, more than 700 healthcare professionals have benefitted from such trainings in the country.

The existence of health ministries at federal and provincial levels, under the supervision of Prime Minister has been a blessing throughout the situation of COVID-19. The Ministry of National Health and NCOC prepared the National Action Plan for COVID-19 Pakistan, outlining the

## Health Workforce Density – Per 1,000 Population

Country	Year	Physicians	Nursing and Midwifery Personnel	Dentistry Personnel	Pharmaceutical Personnel	Laboratory Health Workers	Environmental and Public Health Workers	Community and Traditional Health Workers Density	Other Health Workers Density	Health Management & Support Workers
<b>Pakistan</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>1.29</b>
Iran	2011	0.89	1.41	0.19	0.54	0.29	0.143	0.36	1.21	2.15

strategic vision required by the health sector to control the disease. Advice on mitigation strategies was formed by the Government and mitigation measures were defined and demarcated. The standard operating procedures (SOP) for contact tracing, specimen collection, laboratory standards, case management, quarantine facilities, hospital waste management, waste management at the airports, and burial guidelines for COVID-19 were also elaborated to guide the health sector. Moreover, there are plans to upgrade the laboratories capacity from 14 to 50, adopt community screening in addition to contact screening and to build field hospitals in consultation with Chinese experts. There is however, constant friction between provincial and federal governments in terms of lockdown procedures and financial packages.

In terms of healthcare governance, the health sector is heavily devolved to provinces without devolution to the level of districts. There are challenges associated with hospital autonomy and regulatory control in major cities. Poor regulation of the private and public care providers and health professional's education program, absence of legislation in the event of public health emergencies, lack of transparency and accountability and limited participation in decision making process are a few factors that have added to the problems facing the healthcare system of the country.

According to the International Health Regulation, there is a need for continued and expanded multi-sectoral communication and coordination as well as a critical need for a sufficiently funded, widely supported country's five-year plan/roadmap to strengthen International Health Regulations' capabilities. A strong, visible, active surveillance and tiered public health laboratory system should be established. A national cross-sectoral approach

is needed to manage anti-microbial resistance and control of health care-associated infections.

There is also a need to establish and strengthen coordination mechanisms across sectors and between provinces and the federal ministry. Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination should identify gaps in the legal framework for the new system to institute without delay. Finally, the following themes need to be considered:

- Workforce development
- Polio eradication transition
- Legislative gaps
- Cross-sector preparedness
- Domestic and technical funding plan/roadmap should be allocated

Pakistan's health system has responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic despite multitude of challenges. Moreover, Pakistan's health system has dual goals to achieve, i.e., short term - become resilient to respond to health emergencies, long-term - to achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030. There is a need to strengthen foundations of health systems in terms of workforce, financing, service delivery, technologies, information and governance. It is important to give voice to the people, listen to them, and change mindset from 'ruling' to 'serving'. There is an urgent need to improve the level of transparency and accountability in the system and to enhance implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation capacity on ground.

## Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Based Education Closures on Teaching and Learning in the Private Sector

By Mr. Mirza Kashif Ali

Education systems in Pakistan and around the world are working to respond to the unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally,

188 countries closed educational institutions, leading to an estimated 1.60 billion students unable to attend schools. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the education system of Pakistan encompasses over 317,000 schools with enrolment of almost 50.3 million students and over 1.83 million teachers. The system further consists of almost 197,000 public schools and over 120,000 private schools. The public sector provides access to about 28.68 million students to complete their education while the remaining 21.60 million students are catered by the private sector of education.

According to “The Annual Status of Education Report” (ASER), private schooling in Pakistan has a significant presence (around 40 percent, according to both number of schools and student enrolment) both in urban and rural areas with several tiers in terms of quality standards. Majority of the private schools in Pakistan are low-cost affordable private schools, catering to the middle class and poor families who pay very low fees. These low-cost private schools are seen to produce better academic outcomes than public-sector schools in Pakistan. Several studies show that in public schools almost 50 percent of grade 5 students cannot read or write basic sentences of English or Urdu of grade 2 level. This continues to lead to low parental confidence in public sector schools; therefore, Pakistan has witnessed massive growth in low-cost private schooling.

During the initial stages of COVID-19 pandemic, over 50.0 million school going children have been unable to attend school for four months as the government kept the schools closed to ensure the health and safety of students and teachers. Pakistan already has over 22.5 million children that are out of school. In most of the countries, the academic year was fast approaching its tail-end and many countries adopted different strategies to address the crisis. In



Pakistan, the students from grade 1-8 were automatically promoted and a unanimous decision was made through the Inter Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC) for the promotion of secondary and higher secondary students based on the recommendations of the Inter Board Committee of Chairman (IBCC).

The post-COVID-19 impact due to the prolong closure of schools will be massive on Pakistan's already fragile education system, such as learning gaps and social/emotional/mental well-being. This could also lead to no promotion next year, ultimately leading to a halt in the continuity of education. The prolonged closure of schools has put the entire private education system into a deeper crisis. In private schools, the operational cost is dependent on the revenue generated through school tuition fees with no financial support available from the government. Since the lockdown, the government has enforced a 20 percent discount in private school fee however many parents have still refused to pay the school fee at all.

On average, only 25-30 percent of the fee is being recovered, leading to extreme situations including closing of schools by the owners for

good. Over a thousand schools have already been closed and many are planning to close-down as they are unable to meet their expenses such as rent, salaries, maintenance, etc. It is likely that hundreds of more private schools will also close down their businesses leading to a high number of students' dropout, and unemployment of teaching and non-teaching staff. The government institutions do not have the capacity to absorb these students within their system. In contrast, public schools' operational cost is covered through taxpayer money; therefore, the response from the public-sector towards closure of schools remains neutral as compared to the private sector.

In mid-March 2020, for the majority of the schools, the academic year was about to conclude when the government announced the closure of schools. An immediate response from both public and private schools was to shut down the schools for a while. All academic activities came to a complete halt in the public sector; however, the private schools (majority schools with high fee structure) continued the learning process using online systems such as Google classroom, lectures via Zoom and even WhatsApp. While some may argue that private schools continued the process of learning via basic or un-structured online system in order to collect the school fee, some applauded the seriousness of private schools towards the importance of education. Both arguments could be true, however, it is preferred to lean towards the latter and appreciate the positive attitude of the school leadership towards education.

There is a high potential with some schools to provide access to education via online or blended learning and maintain social distancing. Since the closure of schools, public and many private schools are in the process of preparing alternative systems to continue academics and the process of learning. Some ed-tech compa-



nies have already entered into a partnership with public and private schools to provide a structured teaching and learning solution in the form of Learning Management Systems (LMS) along with content that is aligned to the national curriculum. However, many students from rural areas (public and private sectors) and low-cost schools in urban areas may not be able to meet the demands of online education (IT literacy, access to internet and hardware within and outside etc.), therefore the issue of accessibility and affordability may continue to be a challenge. This could be addressed in the next phase when the online education system matures in Pakistan.

The COVID-19's impacts are expected to last for a long time. Millions of children have no access to schools and for our already fragile education system, this is indeed an unprecedented situation in the history of education. However, we must embrace this unexpected change and apply an alternate approach to ensure the continuity of the educational process. The government should encourage and support private schools to revive the efficacy of the education system. Parents also should not forget the positive role played by private schools for many years by delivering a better quality of education. It was primarily this deliverance of quality education that led to the parents' trust and confidence in private sector schools. Abandoning them now will only harm the future

of our children. If private schools cease their operation, it will create a huge void in the education sector of the country as the public sector is already running beyond its capacity.

## Post Pandemic Education Scenario, Digital Preparedness and its Impact on National Security

By Mr. Faisal Mushtaq

The worldwide closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, affecting more than 1.5 billion children. In countries like Pakistan, the situation poses a high risk to the students, especially girls, dropping out and not returning to schools upon the reopening of the educational institutions. Since March 16th 2020, when the government of Pakistan imposed a countrywide lockdown to contain the spread of the virus, around 46 million school kids have been forced to stay at home, in addition to the country's already 22 million out-of-school children. The spill-over effects of the economic recession prompted by the outbreak have further worsened the situation by weakening Pakistan's education system, especially as development funding has been slashed at the national and provincial levels. In the country where investment in the public sector is already meager, COVID-19 has caused further reduction in the resources available for the education system delivery.

COVID-19 is set to magnify the inequalities in the education system of Pakistan and is likely to prompt a rise in school dropout rates, thereby increasing the number of out-of-school children, especially girls. With economic recession and rising unemployment, families will give a preference to sending boys back to schools rather than girls, especially in the rural and peri-urban areas.

The potential learning losses incurred by

children and adolescents because of the pandemic are hard to fathom as the situation is still evolving, however, while most private schools are offering distance learning through various digital technology platforms, children in the country's remote areas are disproportionately disadvantaged due to the lack of access to computers or the internet. The longer their schools remain closed, the more difficult it will be for the already vulnerable children to catch up on learning. The gap between public and private sector schools is widening further.

The government and development partners have designed certain strategies to address the situation. The federal government has launched "Tele-School," which has become a single source of education for millions of Pakistani children. Programs are broadcast on PTV from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. every day with content for grades 1-12. At the provincial level, the government of Punjab launched "Taleem Ghar," an education program for public school students enrolled in grades 1-8. It is accessible through cable television, a mobile phone application and a website. However, much more needs to be done. As per the 18th amendment, education is the right of every child and is the bedrock of a just society. Pakistan has some of the world's worst



education indicators with 40 percent children not attending any form of formal education. The COVID-19 crisis has further aggravated the situation.

It is time to ponder upon the measures the government needs to take, in order to make the education sector more sustainable, equitable, inclusive and resilient in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The provinces need to take the lead. They should develop and promote localized, free and open digital tools for education to make large-scale remote learning possible. There is a dire need to develop, print and distribute learning materials where there is a limited access to the internet and online resources.

A post-coronavirus scenario will require the provincial governments to monitor the drop-out rate, especially for girls and children from impoverished or marginalized families. It can be done through the databases maintained by the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). It is also high time to revisit the budget for education to ensure equitable allocation of funds and introduce game-changing investments for digital and online learning that is accessible by all.

The federal government along with the international organizations, civil society and private sector partners should join hands to prevent the current crisis from widening Pakistan's already huge educational inequality and to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education at all levels. The role of the government is key in mitigating the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education delivery and outcomes. The effective response guidelines for the government stress the need to plan for the long-term disruptions and strategic adaptation, to coordinate, communicate and support the education workforce, including the head teachers and teachers. Much like the health response to the pandemic, an effective



education response requires planning for phases. At the onset of the emergency, most of the countries mounted a rapid response by leveraging technology to start home-schooling mechanisms that can help cope with lost instructional time. The second phase requires policy planning for managing the continuity of instructions when the schools reopen, ensuring the children's return to schools, taking account of potential learning losses during the time away from schools, while fully supporting the teachers and school leaders as they work to realize these goals.

### Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Pakistan: Challenges and Way Forward By Dr. Farrukh Saleem

Former US President Theodore Roosevelt once said, 'Do what you can, with what you have, where you are'. This quote gives a practical lesson to all the people in the pandemic-ravaged world and contributing where they are, what they have and what they do. The world is shaken by the COVID-19 vis-a-vis loss of the human lives, economic meltdown of the world economies and most pronouncedly the socio-economic ramifications that are countless and are intended to hurt the human social interactions for a longer period of time.

Enlisting the losses incurred by the COVID-19, the world GDP dropped from 87% to 83%



causing a loss of 255 million jobs, rendering the growth of the world economies to a halt in 2020 except China. Pakistan being a developing economy has also faced repercussions of COVID-19 in many fields especially economic, health, and socio-economic more precisely. Economic sector is the worst-affected having a growth rate fallen from 5.8% to 1.5% causing rampant unemployment and a rise in inflation.

In this backdrop, Pakistan is faced with a number of challenges which include the vaccination drive undertaken at the fastest pace to protect the populace from the disease; and steps taken to reignite the country's economic engine, ensuring and sustaining its wellbeing. Chalking out a strategy to meet these challenges doesn't require much mental effort. One of the policy parameters is to focus on investment in vaccine production which would ensure best return. However, the government of Pakistan's investment in this domain is zero as the country received 500,000 doses of Chinese Sinopharm vaccine which is to vaccinate only 0.11% of the population. Moreover, wrong priorities by the government are not serving anyone. Pakistan Federal Board of Revenue collected Rs. 2.57 trillion in tax collection exceeding its target and Prime Minister Imran Khan also allocated Rs.

500 million for the lawmakers amidst the Senate elections instead of investing that money into the vaccine creation.

The second important challenge is the poverty reduction. In this area, "Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program" is worth-mentioning that helped in the poverty reduction by disbursing a total amount of Rs. 179.221 Billion to 14.8 million beneficiaries.

The third challenge that Pakistan faces is of mounting national debt that has reached new heights of Rs.18 billion in 2020. This national debt accumulation in terms of GDP is also alarming over the years; from 2009- 2013, 66% of GDP; from 2013-2018, 73% of GDP and 107% of GDP from 2019-2020. Inflation is another potent challenge to the national economy and security since the economic security guarantees national security in present times. Rising inflation can be gauged from the price hikes in the basic commodities of life such as flour that was being sold at Rs. 35 per kg in 2018 and now at the rate of Rs. 70, charging an additional amount of Rs. 950 from the masses. Same is the case with sugar and electricity prices, costing people an additional amount of Rs. 200 billion for sugar. While electricity's per unit cost has skyrocketed from 11 per unit in 2018 to 28 per unit in 2020.

The way forward lies in getting the nation's priorities right by improving the governance, thus generating sufficient money/revenue to meet the expenses. However, the government is left with meager finances after rendering 900 billion in grants to different government departments, 200 billion in subsidies on different commodities and 700 billion in debts. To address such losses to national revenue, the government needs to check on the expenditure of this huge amount of money. The solution lies in ending embezzlement in public procurements. The focal issue is that the Public Procurement



Regulatory Framework (PPRA) buys more than the public demand owing much to corruption, fraud and abuse in its operations, ending in the wastage of Rs. 7.5 trillion every year to national fund. Thus, restructuring of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) could yield a dividend of Rs. 3 trillion every year to the national income.

The way forward for the challenges of vaccina-

tion, poverty, inflation and circular debt can be addressed via reforming, restructuring and addressing the governance-related woes especially in the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), public procurement procedures, circular debt, electricity and gas. The low-hanging fruits available for the government to rely upon are available in SOEs, gas and electricity where structural reforms and restructuring will earn it Rs. 1800 billion from SOEs, Rs. 1100 billion from electricity and \$2.5 billion from gas. The government can get this drained money back by resorting to management and structural reforms at SOEs and preventing the electricity and gas theft. Only serious and effective reforms ensuring restructuring and overhauling of these three areas are going to guarantee a large sum of money to national revenue.





### Interactive Session:

During the interactive session, the discussion revolved around the challenges associated with the overall education system of Pakistan. The most crucial impediment that was highlighted was the irregularity and heterogeneity of the curriculum across the country. It was opined that a uniform education implies a single national curriculum, the mode of teaching which is uniform for all teachers along with unified teachers training mechanisms which can harness better results in the longer run as regards to imparting quality education. But unfortunately, the present elite, public, and private school systems are not letting this to happen. It is the need of hour to strive for a uniform education system at the national level.



### Closing Remarks By Chief Guest Dr. Faisal Sultan, Special Assistant to PM on Health

In the closing remarks, Chief Guest Dr. Faisal Sultan highlighted the initial efforts which were started in urgency as the first COVID-19 case had appeared in February 2020 surprising everyone. The whole effort was made to have a coherent response. It further evolved into a coordinated, data driven and flexible response in the form of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOCC). The government analyzed the problems and evolved a strategy to anticipate the challenges for a more efficient response. Due to this, Pakistan has been able to successfully tackle the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The initial challenges that the government faced included, inadequate oxygen supply, its near full utilization, Myocardial Perfusion Imaging (MPIs) which is the functioning of the heart muscle, the right dose of medicine and contact tracing. Currently, the government is successfully tracing cases at the average of 9:11 ratio of per person index. A number of other challenges are also being managed in a quick fashion such as lock downs, and the availability of beds and personal protective equipment (PPEs), which are fulfilling the demands of the general public more pragmatically.

The Government has allocated resources whether it is in the form of Ehsaas Emergency Cash reimbursement program or other stimulus packages i.e. fiscal packages of 50 billion rupees and support to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). This helped to achieve a position where the government was able to bring down the first epidemic break out to a sizeable and a reasonable number. In nutshell, under post 18th amendment scenario, in the domains which fundamentally belonged to provinces, the federal government coordinated all the aspects successfully. The entire process brought immense knowledge and experience, which can be utilized in the next phase. It was realized that viruses do not respect any international, national or provincial boundaries. Therefore, under a coordinated

response across the provinces, the whole nation must ensure its preparedness for mitigating and completely preventing the pandemic from reemerging. It is only possible with the improvement of primary care setups which include interventions to improve the basic health of population. In this regard, the Government has already built some permanent structures called as National Institute of Health-2 or a reformed National Institute of Health, in which new health facilities were merged with the existing ones introducing the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention expansion of the health data centers and improving the national health laboratories specifically for nutrition.

Beyond the reform agendas, it is necessary to improve the health departments in Pakistan. Among one of the most important preliminary steps is to improve and reform the quality of work force. There is a need to build a medical commission as an integral part which could ensure the training of work force and help in improving the quality of nurses and other allied health professionals. Furthermore, there is a need to bring reforms in the functioning of the medical institutions through proper medical teaching and training.

Furthermore, the speaker also explained that Pakistan is a nurse short country. It is important to ensure the presence of sufficient paramedical faculty and the upgradation of facilities for provision of care. 40% of our population suffers from malnutrition. Prime Minister Imran Khan has proposed ambitious plan of hundreds of billion rupees over the span of 5 years, which would address the issue with the help of provincial key nutritional benchmarks. The population uplift cannot be achieved unless and until government achieves success over the important aspects of that reform agenda.

In the end, the Guest Speaker opined that there was a need for indigenous local innovation in health care technologies, vaccines and medications. Legislative reforms are required that will bring in a new era where our nation will be allowed access to indigenous local healthcare. Thus, there is a need of a complete overhaul of how and in what fashion our regulations should be planned. Moreover, it is the need of the time that the Government of Pakistan plans its health security in a complete strategic manner.



## Vote of Thanks by President NDU

· President NDU thanked the honorable guest speakers who delivered valuable and thought provoking views on the crucial subject and hoped that it enlightened the audience on the subject in a holistic manner in order to gauge the impacts of COVID-19 in every field of life. The scholarly discussion of seminar proceedings elucidated on a subject that is of paramount concern in the present times. The COVID-19 has not only affected the lives of all but has also shaken the socio-economic fabric of the countries. From school closures, to stressed industries and millions of jobs lost – the social and economic costs of the pandemic can be measured in many ways. Millions of enterprises face an existential threat. According to few estimates, nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforce is at the risk of losing its livelihood. Workers in the informal sectors of economy are particularly vulnerable because the majority lacks social protection and access to quality health care. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many people are unable to feed themselves and their families. For most of them, no income means no food.

· The COVID-19 Pandemic has changed the world on the whole. It is an unprecedented crisis of a scale and intensity not experienced in the recent past, and has a potential to become a turning point in the modern human history. The world is undergoing far-reaching changes, and in the post-pandemic, it may be a new and a different world for all the nation states. Collectively however, humanity is now more technologically advanced compared to the past experiences of Pandemics. One can say, COVID-19 has brought changes in the pattern of globalization and it is now understood that world will use technology more than any other sources. To combat this situation there is a need to be more vigilant and adopt such policies that are beneficial for the people, especially those who are struggling due to poverty.

· Despite the significant challenges, Pakistan has succeeded in keeping the rate of COVID-19 cases and deaths relatively low, thanks in part to the rapid deployment of prevention and mitigation infrastructure. The social and economic disruptions have also brought significant opportunities. Companies in multiple sectors are already transforming their products, processes, and business models. Healthcare is improved as the indigenization of crucial equipment is taking place at a fast pace like ventilators, masks etc. On the business side, as FDI is expected to witness a major decline in Physical Tourism, Entertainment, Retail, Luxury goods, Aviation, Real estate, Coal, Oil, Gas and Automotive due to the social restrictions, there are growth opportunities that can be harnessed in food processing, consumer goods, logistics, entertainment and communications, financial services, e-commerce, EdTech, HealthTech, textile and tourism.

In the end, President NDU thanked the Chief Guest, Session Moderators, Guest speakers, representatives from all the relevant sectors including research, academia and practice, for joining the event at NDU. He particularly thanked all those who came from outside Islamabad, to show the commitment and dedication to be a part of the event amid the COVID-19 crisis. It was hoped that the one-day National Seminar would prove to be beneficial for crystallizing the policy recommendations and that the deliberations of eminent gathering would add new insights to the academic discourse.





# Picture Gallery























The background is a green-tinted photograph of a forest. A large, dark silhouette of a tree is centered in the upper half of the image. The text "The Team" is overlaid on a white rectangular area in the center of the image.

# The Team





National Defence University  
Islamabad-Pakistan