

Positive Post

A Publication by Department of Mass Communication & Media Studies and the Diplomatic Academy



Greenwich University
Pakistan - Mauritius

May in History

May 18, 1950:

The Peshawar University comes into being.

May 11, 1951:

University of Karachi is established.

May 1, 1972:

Labour Day is celebrated for the first time in Pakistan.

May 26, 1980:

Establishment of Federal Shariat Court is announced.

May 16, 1991:

National Assembly adopts Shariat Bill.

May 21, 1997:

Saeed Anwar slams world record score of 194 runs against India.

May 12, 2000:

Supreme Court validated the October 1999 coup and granted General Pervez Musharraf executive and legislative authority for three years.

May 22, 2004:

Pakistan readmitted to Commonwealth.

May 14, 2006:

Charter of democracy (CoD) is signed by two former prime ministers of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in London.

23 May-15 July 2009:

Pakistan Army launched Operation Rah-e-Rast and cleared Swat Valley of all Taliban elements. It is regarded as one of the most successful counter-insurgency operation in modern age.

May 19, 2015:

Zimbabwe cricket team toured Pakistan to play International Cricket Series for the first time since 2009 attack on the Sri Lanka national cricket team.

Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

Overview

Pakistan observed a slight improvement in the overall international rankings in 2018 covering socio-economic and political outcomes of the country. Several elements complemented the prospects including successful democratic transition, efficient counter-terrorism measures leading to enhanced peace and security, and foreign direct investment inflows under CPEC, among others. Albeit, decoupling economic growth from human development suggests that the country needs to enhance its scores in health, education and standard of living by ensuring political will, equitable financing and efficient governance to ensure parallel growth for marginalized segments as well. Civil and political liberties must grow hand in hand to ensure a conducive environment for democratic dialogue and accountability which ultimately supports its nation building process.

DEMOCRACY INDEX

Pakistan ranked 112th out of 167 countries in the Democracy Index scoring 4.17 out of 10 in 2018 compared to 4.26 in 2017.

Index from 0 (authoritarian regime) to 10 (full democracy)

Compiled based on indicators covering: Electoral process and pluralism, Civil liberties, Functioning of government, Political participation, and Political culture.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Pakistan ranked 150th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index scoring 0.562 out of 1.000 in 2018 compared to 0.560 out of 1.000 in 2017.

Index from 0 (low development) to 1 (very high development)

Compiled based on indicators covering: life expectancy, education, and per capita income

PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 139th out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index scoring 43.24 out of 100 in 2018 compared to 43.55 in 2017.

Index from 0 (most press freedom) to 100 (least press freedom)

Compiled based on indicators covering: pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure.

TERRORISM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 5th out of 163 countries in the Terrorism Index scoring 8.18 out of 10 in 2018 compared to 8.40 in 2017.

Index from 0 (lowest impact) to 10 (highest impact)

Compiled based on indicators covering: Total number of terrorist incidents in a given year, total number of fatalities caused by terrorism in a given year, total number of injuries caused by terrorism in a given year and the approximate level of total property damage from terrorist incidents in a given year.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 131st out of 180 countries in the Economic Freedom Index scoring 54.4 out of 100 in 2018 compared to 52.8 out of 100 in 2017.

Index from 0 (repressed) to 100 (free)

Compiled based on indicators covering: Market openness, Regulatory efficiency, Government size and the rule of law.

Positive Post is a strategic effort to project achievement and contributions of Pakistan. While showcasing Greenwich University's cultural diplomacy initiatives, it also encapsulates a compilation of different developments complementing Pakistan's socio-cultural, economic and Political outcomes.

GREENWICH WEB TV_COVID 19 TRANSMISSION

The advent of globalization has transformed the concept of education, expanding its horizons from a physical classroom unto the infinitude of the virtual realm, and so has been the case for knowledge-production processes. The emergence of cutting-edge technologi-

cal advancements have enhanced access to education as well as knowledge transmission beyond bounds. COVID 19 has tested the metal of our online communication infrastructure but also paved way for innovation in both epistemic as well as dissemination approaches.

Reckoning the fact that there is no definitive end line for COVID 19, Greenwich has been a pioneer in switching online maintaining the same diversity and quality of its programs.

Greenwich Web TV has started a series of programs to provide diverse content fo-

cusings academics, entertainment as well as governance reforms. The programs emphasize the establishment of a civic infrastructure that mobilizes collective reflection and collaborative action to help mold societal consciousness to the new normal amid and post COVID 19.

PANDEMIC IS A PROMISE FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET OVER PROFITS



The program featured Dr. Nadeem Malik from the University of Melbourne, Australia who is a renowned academician as well as author of several books. Mr. Umer Khan, VJ Greenwich Web TV hosted the show along with Mr. Ali Jillani, a development policy analyst who heads Diplomatic Affairs at Greenwich University. The show emphasized the rejuvenation of social consciousness around COVID 19 to assess the opportunities that the pandemic presents.

Dr. Nadeem Malik opined that the pandemic has shifted the policy mindset that could change global governance patterns for years to come. The renewed policy emphasis could mobilize political will diverting financing in defensive expenditures to key strategic

sectors like health and education. Mr. Ali Jillani contextualized the argument that the pandemic has exposed several governance flaws in presumably some of the best systemically efficient countries in the world. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) 2019 report reveals that the US spent US \$731 billion on defense whereas its readiness to deal with COVID proved to be awful; China's capability also was below par reckoning that it spent US \$261 billion on defense, and the story depicts a bleak picture of efficient health systems elsewhere also like in India with defensive expenditures of US \$71 billion, Russia with US \$65 billion and Saudi Arabia with US \$62 billion. The pandemic comes across as a reality check for such countries to revamp their governance mechanisms focused on human development, something that the civil society has advocated for decades. Dr. Nadeem Malik shared

that Global North could play a critical role in surmounting COVID 19 challenge given the technical, technological and financial supremacy that the developed nations possess. The global policy makers need to adopt efficient strategies to bring meaningful change for the global community. He shared that the conscious tax payer in the West could mobilize the political will necessary to transform development patterns around the world. The advents of globalization could be utilized by the first world to reshape human condition using the advanced communication infrastructure to rise above COVID 19. He also pressed the need for evidence-based advocacy in developing countries like Pakistan to help the government deliver on efficient reforms in social development. Mr. Ali Jillani added that more than being a question of capability, it is about responsibility reckoning that the developed nations have

exploited global south for generations through colonial maneuvers. Neo-imperialism offers the room for multinational corporations to exploit both the communities as well as their environment without any due accountability. Governments in the developing countries need to mobilize a collective resolve to rid themselves off the neo-liberal stranglehold by holding multinationals accountable for the costs to people and the planet in global south. He also shared that Karachi Research Chair - a policy think-tank affiliated with Greenwich University - is a vibrant force at the regional level pushing for a Regional Taxation Reform entity to help combat tax evasion and illicit financing from countries like Pakistan. VJ Umer concluded the show with a promising note that the pandemic could prove to be the catalyst for perception change to enable global reforms which prioritize people and the planet ahead of profits.

THE POLITICS OF THE PANDEMIC: SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMIC POST COVID 19

The program featured Advocate Fakhrudin Valika from Columbia University; Ms. Namrah Zafar, an educationist and a former journalist with Herald; Mr. Naveed

Ahmed Mughal, graduate from University of Warwick and Student Provost at Greenwich University; and, Mr. Ali Jillani, a policy analyst who heads Diplomatic Affairs

at Greenwich. The show focused on the socio-cultural, economic and geopolitical dynamic amid & post COVID 19, and what could be some of the reform strategies for na-

tional as well as global communities. Mr. Umer Khan, VJ Greenwich Web TV, hosted the show inviting participants to share their views on how the pandemic has affected



socio-cultural, economic and political functioning and what implications could it carry into the future of the globe.

Mr. Fakhruddin Valika shared that the pandemic has shaken the core of our governance mechanisms in health care provision in particular. At a larger level, the pandemic has exposed several flaws in the modern state and presses the need for re-imagining the concept of State as we know it. The pandemic has offered a great opportunity for us to reassess the efficiency of our systems and mobilizing global cooperation to address broader issues of inequality, poverty & hunger, and climate change around the world has become pertinent than ever. Mr. Valika also alluded to the fact that the pandemic has enabled promotion of specific national cultures and modes of governance. For instance, China's ability to take swift effective adaptation measures was driven by the authoritarian nature of the state, contrary to the western liberal democratic notions, brings forth a tug of war between political narratives questioning the credentials of each mode of

governance. So, the pandemic has made relevant questions like whether western liberal state is efficient enough or a rather authoritarian state is the answer for effective governance?

Ms. Namrah Zafar shared that the pandemic has changed the educational landscape by taking it to the next level. It has taken us out of our comfort zone giving this catalyzing push to transition online which was always planned but never substantiated. Ms. Zafar also shared that we were so used to the fast-paced life but the pandemic has jolted and it would take time to balance ourselves. In terms of economics, the vast inter linkages in trade through globalization had increased interdependence among nations and the disruption of global supply chains urges national self-reliance. For instance, most of the countries heavily depended on Chinese production from base to the most advanced technological products so the global political economy will undergo a massive shift.

Mr. Naveed Mughal shared that digitization has long been on the ra-

dar but never really inculcated into the conventional system of education. COVID 19 has forced shut down of schools around the world so digitization has become the only way out. Another aspect is the economic recession that could lead to higher inequality, higher drop out and an economic shock which can exacerbate the damage inflicting a huge cost on human welfare. It would require a consolidated effort for global governments to come together and change this challenge into opportunity, also recommended by a recent MIT study. The likes of IMF and World Bank have developed a framework to assess and formulate policies on coping, managing opportunity, and, accelerating education around the world. He also shared that the trade war between US and China will alter the growth trajectory of the world as it would create room for new players in producing manufactured goods reshaping the status quo. The COVID-triggered post-liberal international order would also determine the course for US-China geopolitical rivalry with a bearing on uni to bi and multipolar reality in international affairs.

Mr. Ali Jillani shared we are approaching the pandemic as a disease but it also has a diagnostic potential in exposing the fundamental systemic flaws as well as offer curative insights for our long endured issues. For instance, the assumed su-

premacy of United States with efficient governance systems in health care etc. was bitterly exposed by the pandemic where on the flipside it spent over US \$730 billion in defense expenditures in 2019. So, questions like reinventing the State and where its loyalty as well as accountability lie become relevant. He opined that we should not get carried away by the MIT proposing the formation of a world government, notwithstanding its scientific rigour or methodological exactitude building upto this proposition, but the political motivation of such a narrative that promotes the concentration of power in the global status quo. Rather, the formation of global communities, mobilized by people-power, could be considered so power can be redistributed and accountability can be located within the populace. Besides, it's long overdue that we synthesized the discourse to bring forth a reconciled pursuit of socialist outcomes operating within the established democratic structures, i.e. democratic socialism, which is proven as a modality in the Scandinavian countries, and this pandemic could be the right time to switch modes for better.

VJ Umer Khan thanked the participants for such a stimulating discussion hoping that the young intelligentsia will come forward to reshape national and global policy priorities for our future.

PAKISTAN ENDS COVID-19 LOCKDOWN EVEN AS INFECTIONS TICK HIGHER



COVID-19 infections in Pakistan trended higher in recent days and were approaching 50,000, official data showed, with total deaths crossing 1,000, as the government remained unsure over the consequences of its decision to end the nation's lockdown. Fearful of the economic and financial impact, and swayed by the acute hardship suffered by millions of poor families, Prime Minister Imran Khan has defended the lifting of the lockdown last week, saying the virus spread has been well below projections.

Education is the only major sector that remains closed. "The ending of the lockdown doesn't mean the threat is over," Yasmeen Rashid, the health minister of Punjab, the country's largest province, said in an interview on Pakistani television on Wednesday, adding that people needed to adopt safety measures themselves.

How the mostly Muslim nation of 207 million people behaves when the fasting month of Ramadan ends and festivities for Eid begins, which is expected on Sunday or Monday, could

influence the course of the contagion.

Usually Eid draws big crowds to malls and shops, and people travel in droves to reach their hometowns. While the government has advised people to act responsibly, and avoid going out for nonessential reasons, there has been little mention of special precautions needed over the festival period.

For a country of Pakistan's size, levels of testing remains low at around 14,000 a day. But Reuters calculations, using official data, suggest the infection rate has so far remained relatively steady, with total infections doubling every 9 to 11 days since April 1.

Doctors and experts fear Pakistan's under-funded and creaking health care system if the contagion gathers more pace.

In the first 20 days of May, over 630 people have died, compared to around 380 in the entire month of April, data tabulated by Reuters shows. There were less than

10 deaths in March.

The 32 deaths reported on Wednesday took the total to 1,017, a government website showed, making Pakistan the 25th country worldwide where the toll has crossed a thousand. On Tuesday, Pakistan reported the most deaths for a single day at 46.

Infections on Wednesday were reported at 2,193 – the second highest for a single day in the country – taking the total number of COVID-19 cases in Pakistan to 48,091.

Regardless of the final death toll, Pakistan expects to suffer an awful human cost, as the government expects millions more of its people to fall into poverty.

The International Monetary Fund has forecast Pakistan's economy will shrink 1.5% this year, and the government is expected to miss major revenue and deficit targets, making it more dependent on loans from multilateral lenders.

Sources: *dailysabah.com*

U.S. DIPLOMAT PRAISES PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS



In farewell briefing, Alice Wells has praised Islamabad's support for the Afghan peace process and actions against mil-

itant groups, saying Islamabad's commitment to peace in the region has grown.

Praising Pakistan's sup-

port for the Afghan peace process, outgoing Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells on Wednesday said Islamabad had not only encouraged the Taliban to pursue peace, but had also taken action against other militant groups and started dismantling terror financing structures.

Recalling how the United States upped the pressure on Pakistan to deliver on its counter-terrorism

expectations, the retiring senior diplomat said President Trump's strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia unequivocally made it clear to Pakistan that it needed to take "decisive action" against groups, and the subsequent suspension of security assistance demonstrated Washington's "resolve".

"Since then we have seen constructive steps by Pakistan to encourage the Taliban to advance the Afghan peace process. Pakistan has also taken initial steps

towards curtailing terrorist groups that threaten the region, such as arresting and prosecuting the LeT leader Hafiz Saeed and beginning to dismantle ter-

rorist financing structures,” she further said. Amb Wells said that the US-Pakistan ties, especially bilateral trade, expanded as Islamabad’s

commitment to peace in the region grew. She added that the peace process achieve success during the next five years. However, regarding terror

activities such as the recent ones by Daesh, Wells said both the Afghan government and the Taliban should commonly fight such groups. **The Nation**

PAKISTAN WELCOMES SCORES OF SIKH PILGRIMS TO GURDWARA DARBAR SAHIB IN LANDMARK CEREMONY

Hundreds of Indian Sikhs made a historic pilgrimage to Pakistan, crossing through a white gate to reach one of their religion’s holiest sites, after a landmark opening of the Kartarpur corridor on Saturday.

Cheering Sikhs walked joyfully along the road from Dera Baba Nanak in India towards the new immigration hall that would allow them to pass through a secure land corridor into Pakistan. Some fathers ran, carrying their children on their shoulders.

Buses were waiting on the Pakistani side to carry them along the corridor to the shrine to Sikhism’s founder Guru Nanak, which lies in Kartarpur, a small town just four kilometres (2.5 miles) inside Pakistan where he is believed to have died.

“Generally people say that God is everywhere. But this walk feels like I’m go-

ing to directly seek blessings from Guru Nanak,” Surjit Singh Bajwa told AFP as he walked towards the corridor, crying as he spoke.

Pilgrims on both sides of the border hoped the corridor might herald a thaw in South Asian tensions.

Among the first pilgrims was former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who told Pakistani state media that it was a “big moment”.

Many believe it has happened now because of the friendship between Prime Minister Imran Khan, a World Cup winning cricketer-turned politician, and India’s Navjot Singh



Sidhu — another cricketer-turned-politician.

Many were emotional, some in tears. Others posed for selfies before a giant gold-and silver-coloured kirpan, the dagger which Sikhs must carry with them at all times as an article of their faith.

“Life is short,” said one of the Indian pilgrims, Davinder Singh Wadah. “Every-

one has to go... so why not enjoy life and make this world a heaven, and I think this initiative is the beginning of it.”

The opening comes just days ahead of the Guru Nanak’s 550th birthday on November 12 — an anniversary of huge significance for the global Sikh community. **Source – Dawn**

PAKISTANI MAN BAGS HIS 30TH GUINNESS WORLD RECORD



SLAMABAD – Pakistani martial artist, Irfan Mehsood, has scored his 30th Guinness World Record with the latest record of most jumping jacks in

one minute carrying an 80 lb pack.

“I attempted the record in Dera Ismail Khan in January this year in which I did 70 jumping jacks in one minute and broke the record

of Silvio Sabba of Italy who had done 57 in a minute,” said Irfan, who hails from Ladha tehsil of South Waziristan.

Last month, Irfan broke four

other records which included most knuckle push-ups (59) carrying 60 lb pack in one minute, most side lunges (72) in a minute, most push-ups (39) on fingertips and carrying a 60-lb pack in one minute and most push-ups (40) with one leg raised and carrying an 80-lb pack in one minute. He also holds the record for most side lunges in one minute with 54 lunges in total.

The other records he broke included most full-contact knee

strikes 87 in one minute using one leg; most full contact knee strikes 83 in one minute (alternate legs); most push-ups (one leg raised, carrying a 40-lb pack) 31 in one minute; Most push-ups (one leg raised and carrying an 80-lb pack) 21 in one minute; most knuckle push-ups 25 (with one leg raised, carrying a 40-lb pack) in one minute; most thumb push-ups 35 in one minute; Most Bo staff strikes 261 in one minute.

Source – Daily Pakistan

PAKISTAN HIRES THOUSANDS OF NEWLY-UNEMPLOYED LABORERS FOR AMBITIOUS 10 BILLION TREE-PLANTING INITIATIVE



Although the novel coronavirus pandemic has driven thousands of workers into unemployment, the Pakistani government has found a way to provide jobs to their citizens while also reforesting the nation.

According to Reuters, Pakistan has created more than 63,000 jobs for unemployed day laborers by relaunching the nation's ambitious 10 Billion Tree Tsunami cam-

paign.

The 5-year initiative, which was started by Prime Minister Imran Khan back in 2018, was temporarily shut down in mid-March as a result of the country's quarantine. With thousands of agricultural workers facing unemployment amidst the lock downs, however, the program was relaunched earlier this month.

The laborers, who are still

required to wear face masks and respect social distancing guidelines, are now being given daily living wages as "jungle workers" planting saplings and protecting the trees from fires and illegal logging. The Pakistani government has reportedly been planting the majority of these trees in rural, low-income areas where locals can benefit from the work.

The nation's environmental ministers go on to say they hope to hire three times as many workers as last year in order to meet their goal of planting 20 million saplings by the end of 2020, bringing the project's total to 50 million trees.

This is not the first time that the nation has made headlines for planting trees; the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami is a continuation of another

extensive tree-planting government effort which resulted in more than 300,000 new jobs and millions of saplings planted across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province back in 2017.

Now Malik Amin Aslam, who is the climate change adviser for the prime minister, told Reuters that legislators hope to continue using the pandemic as a tool to ramp up their efforts against climate change.

"This tragic crisis provided an opportunity and we grabbed it," Aslam told the news outlet in a phone interview. "Nurturing nature has come to the economic rescue of thousands of people."

This is just one of many positive stories and updates that are coming out of the COVID-19 news coverage **Source – Good News Network**

ALI REZ ACHIEVES ANOTHER MILESTONE FOR PAKISTAN



Rez is the first Pakistani to make it on the global Top 20 ECDs list.

With over 400 awards under his belt over a 20-year career, Ali Rez, Regional ECD, Middle East & Pakistan, BBDO Worldwide, has been listed on the World Creative Rankings' Global Top 20 Executive Creative Directors list 2020. The World Creative Rankings (WCR) is "the definitive guide to the advertising industry's most

creative brands, agencies, and people". According to Rez, in order to shortlist an ECD for the prestigious list, WCR collates data by reviewing large bodies of work exhibited in shows over a period of time.

Rez believes that this is not only a milestone for himself and BBDO but for Pakistan as well, as it is the first time the country has shown up on the list. Elaborating on how he (and BBDO) usually manage to gain international recognition, Rez says "BBDO is all about the work. We put everything into it; heart, soul, sweat, coffee. We uncover specific human truths add some magic and constantly ask ourselves whether it's the

best possible solution. This is not a team that settles for the easy solution. We don't think an idea is big enough unless it scares us."

The top three ECDs listed on the 2020 WRC include Adrian Botan from McCann Worldgroup, Alex Grieve from AMV BBDO and Adrian Rossi from Grey London. According to Rez, Grieve is "an absolute inspiration" highlighting his work for Snickers, Libresse and Guinness as "truly outstanding and culture-defining." He adds that "Tim Gordon from Droga5 (#9 on the list) is another superstar. These are people who go beyond making successful advertising that lifts brands: they make un-ignorable art that influ-

ences people to greatness." Commenting on the future, Rez says the most important thing is to survive the current climate. "We don't know where the world is headed, and I am sad for the negative impact this pandemic has had on so many people's lives. I have always tried to focus on advertising as a force for good, and for helping people's lives improve, so perhaps this would be a good springboard to double down on this. Nobody knows where they will end up, so it's good to keep our heads down and focus on where creativity can lead us to, and how it can make the world a better place." **Source – Aurora**

TWO PAKISTANIS SHORTLISTED FOR COMMONWEALTH YOUTH AWARDS

Two Pakistanis were among 16 innovators, activists and entrepreneurs from 12 countries that have been shortlisted for the Commonwealth Youth Awards 2020, organisers said on Thursday.

A pan-Commonwealth judging panel met last week and selected the top individuals in each of the award's four regional categories.

This year, the awards received more than 500 entries from 40 countries. Of those shortlisted, the top candidate from each region will be named as a regional winner. One of these four regional winners will become the Commonwealth Young Person of the Year 2020.

All 16 finalists will each receive a trophy, a certificate and £1,000 to expand the scope of their projects.

Jaya Rajwani, who is the technical lead for 'Aurat Raaj'; a social enterprise which creates technology-based products and services to educate girls on health, hygiene and safety, was among the Pakistanis shortlisted for the awards in the Gender Equality category, according to the Commonwealth Secretariat's

press release.

She has led the development of the enterprise's chat-bot, a tool which uses artificial intelligence to provide young girls with accessible and non-judgmental information on reproductive health.

"Jaya's work has seen the ongoing development of the chat-bot to include local languages and videos while in-school training workshops have helped increase the tool's reach and impact", said the press release.

Hafiz Usama Tanveer – the founder of 'PakVitae'; a social enterprise that produces and supplies water treatment products to provide clean and accessible drinking water to rural communities and refugee camps in Pakistan – was shortlisted in the Clean Water and Sanitation category.

PakVitae has so far reached over 11,000 people including victims of the Kerala flood, Afghan refugee camps and remote schools in rural areas.

The regional winners will each earn a trip to London to attend the awards ceremony on 11 March 2020 and will receive £3,000. The

overall pan-Commonwealth winner will take home a total of £5,000.

The judging panel included high commissioners, development experts and youth



leaders from across the Commonwealth.

The awards recognise outstanding young people whose innovative projects have made a real impact in helping their countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The Commonwealth's head of social policy development Layne Robinson said: "Their talent paired with tangible solutions sends a strong signal that they should be equal partners in the devel-

opment agenda, not passive allies.

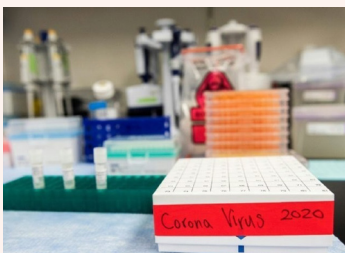
"With now only 10 years remaining to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the



Commonwealth takes great pleasure in bringing these young people's invaluable efforts to the global stage so their leadership can inspire others and accelerate meaningful youth participation."

Other finalists for the Commonwealth youth awards are from Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Bangladesh, India, Guyana, Canada, Jamaica, Fiji and Samoa. **Source – Express Tribune**

KARACHI UNIVERSITY TEAM IDENTIFIES POTENTIAL DRUGS FOR COVID-19 TREATMENT



A team of researchers from University of Karachi's (KU) Dr Panjwani Centre for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research (PCMD)

has identified multiple drugs that could be effective for treating Covid-19.

According to a statement issued by KU's International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), under which PCMD functions, on Sunday, the team, under the supervision of Dr Zaheerul Haq Qasmi and Dr Reazud Din, employed computational technology and

initiated a study for the purpose in February this year.

Published in the 'Journal of Biomolecular Structure and Dynamic', the study identifies Remdesivir, Saquinavir, Darunavir and two naturally occurring compounds as possible drugs to combat coronavirus-triggered Covid-19.

Notably, Remdesivir was earlier found effective

against the infection during an international drug trial and since then, has been under use for experimental Covid-19 treatment.

Lauding this achievement, KU vice-chancellor Dr Khalid Mehmood Iraqi, scientist Dr Attaur Rahman and ICCBS head Dr Iqbal Choudhry congratulated the team. **Source: The Express Tribune**

PAKISTANI FINTECH ENTREPRENEUR WINS AWARD

Adnan Ali, the CEO of Avanza Premier Payment Services (APPS) won the “Excellence in Finance Leaders”, award for his significant contribution towards the financial sector, at the FiNext Conference, held in Dubai on February 26 & 27, 2020. The award is not just an individual win, but a milestone for Pakistan, as it signifies recognition of domestic entities and talent on international forums.

FiNext Awards are one of the most prestigious awards in the world of finance where leading companies such as CareemPay, PayPal, Paytm and Dwolla have either participated in the conference or won the same award previously in Las Vegas in 2018 and in Singapore and Orlando in 2019. Short-listing of the award nominees was conducted by FiNext’s team in USA, the nominees included 25 Pakistanis and

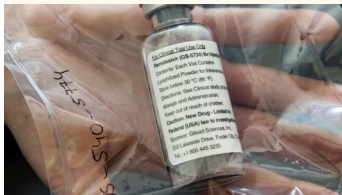
numerous global entrepreneurs. Adnan Ali has 18 years of diversified experience and is considered to be a visionary in leveraging innovation and technology. He has many accolades to his name, such as launching Pakistan’s first Co-Branded loyalty card with Dolmen Mall, envisaging the first real-time mutual funds redemption Visa debit card in Pakistan, working closely with Government of Pa-



kistan, regulators and the World Bank to conceive G2P program for Benazir Income Support Program.

Source – Business Recorder

REMDESIVIR: FIVE INDIAN AND PAKISTANI FIRMS TO MAKE DRUG TO ‘FIGHT CORONAVIRUS’



AUS pharmaceutical firm has signed agreements with drug makers in South Asia to expand supply of the drug remdesivir for treating Covid-19.

The agreement between Gilead and five generic pharmaceutical companies in India and Pakistan will help make the medicine for 127 countries. Remdesivir cut the duration of symptoms from 15 days to 11 in clinical trials at hospitals around the world.

The antiviral drug was originally developed as an Ebola treatment.

It works by attacking an enzyme that a virus needs in order to replicate inside our cells. Under the licensing agreement, the five companies have the “right to receive a technology transfer of the Gilead manufacturing process for remdesivir to enable them to scale up their production quickly”, a

statement from Gilead said.

The licences would be royalty-free until the World Health Organization (WHO) declares the end of the public health emergency arising out of Covid-19, or until another pharmaceutical product or a vaccine is approved to treat or prevent the disease, the statement said.

The agreements allow the Cipla Limited, Ferozsons Laboratories, Hetero Labs Ltd, Jubilant Lifesciences and Mylan to manufacture the drug.

The managing director of the privately-owned Hyderabad-based Hetero Labs told the BBC that it is “too early” to determine the pricing of the drug and when the manufacture will begin.

“Things will be clearer by June. We anticipate controlled usage [of the drug] through government institutions. Our main aim is that India should be self-sufficient in the drug if India chooses to use it,” Vamsi Krishna Bandi said.

The \$1bn firm is one of the world’s largest producers of anti-retroviral drugs, supplying

to nearly five million patients of HIV-Aids. Hetero Labs makes some 300 products at 36 manufacturing facilities worldwide. Indian medical science and drug control authorities will have to first decide how they want to use the drug on patients.

A senior scientist at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said that it will consider using the drug if Indian firms are able to make it.

“Initial data based on an observational study shows that the drug is effective. We will wait for the results from the WHO solidarity trial and also see if some other companies can work on this to proceed further,” Raman Gangakhedkar said.

The clinical trial of remdesivir was run by the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) in which 1,063 people took part. Some patients were given the drug while others received a placebo.

D Anthony Fauci who runs the NIAID said: “The data shows remdesivir has a clear-cut, significant, positive effect in dimin-

ishing the time to recovery.”

He said the results proved “a drug can block this virus” and were “opening the door to the fact that we now have the capability of treating” patients.

The impact on deaths, though, is not as clear-cut. The mortality rate was 8% in people given remdesivir and 11.6% in those given a placebo, but this result was not statistically significant, meaning scientists cannot tell if the difference is real.

The BBC’s health and science correspondent James Gallagher says it is also not clear who is benefiting from the drug and poses a few questions.

Is it allowing people who would have recovered anyway to do so more quickly? Or is it preventing people from needing treatment in intensive care? Did the drug work better in younger or older people? Or those with or without other diseases? Do patients have to be treated early when the virus is thought to peak in the body?

These will be important factors when the full details are eventually published, our correspondent says. **BBC NEWS**

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