

The coronavirus is leaving empty spaces everywhere



A cleric prays in an empty mosque in Baghdad, Iraq, on March 20. *Khalid al-Mousily/Reuters*

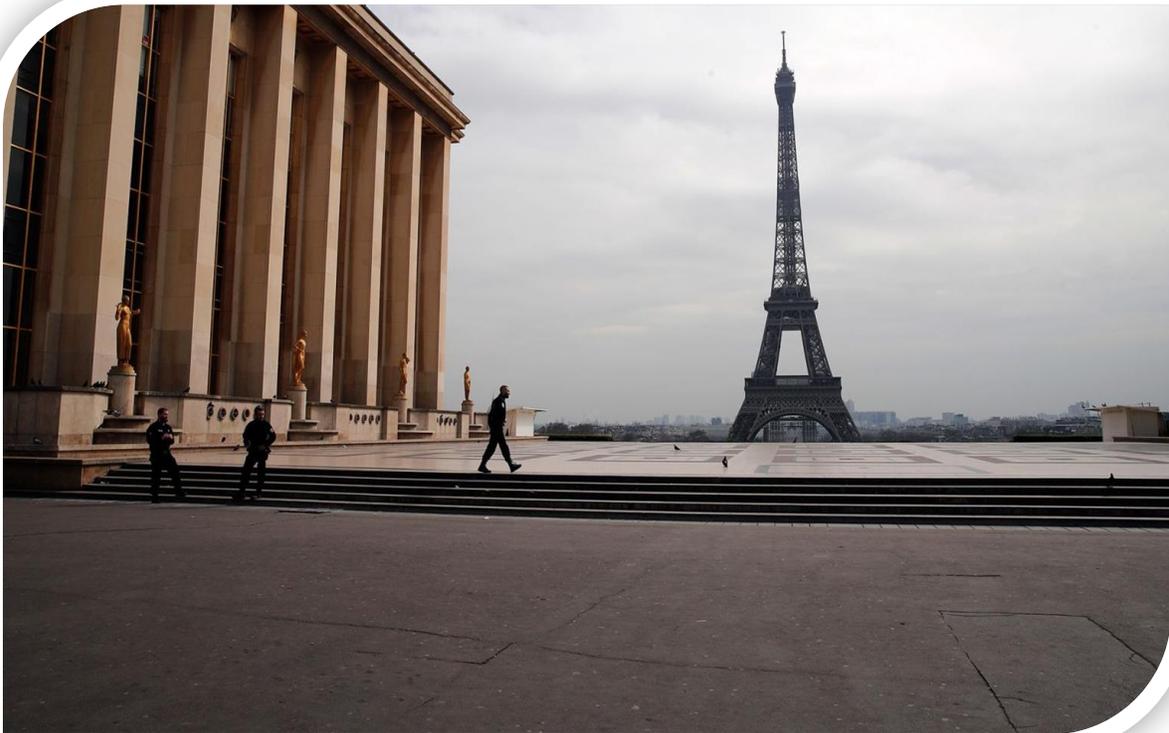
Global News

- The U.S. now has the world's most reported coronavirus cases with 81,321, according to Times data. Over 1,000 deaths have been linked to the virus.
- U.S. weekly jobless claims soar past 3 million amid COVID-19.
- Australia's central bank to buy semi-govt bonds as state revenues hit.
- China to suspend foreigners' entry due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Up to 30% of coronavirus cases asymptomatic.
- Boeing shuts down Washington state factories due to coronavirus threat.

Global Response

- The S&P 500 had its best three-day run since 1933, buoyed by a huge stimulus plan, as investors looked past record unemployment claims.
- Xi replies to WHO chief's letter, stresses joint efforts on COVID-19.
- G20 leaders agree on injecting \$5 trillion into global economy.
- Wuhan automobile plants re-open as epidemic fades.
- Ford joins GE, 3M in speeding up ventilator, respirator production.
- Medical workers forced to get creative as face mask shortages in 'developed' West complicate battle with Covid-19.
- US puts new sanctions on Iran, despite calls for relief amid massive coronavirus outbreak.

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Police officers patrol the empty Trocadero plaza next to the Eiffel Tower in Paris. *Francois Mori/AP*

Local News

- Two more vicinities sealed in Islamabad after coronavirus victims unearthed.
- Sindh government limits congregational prayers to five persons till April 5.
- Chinese medical experts to help Pakistan in fight against coronavirus.
- Saudi Arabia tells Pakistan to not prepare Hajj agreement amid coronavirus outbreak.

Local Response

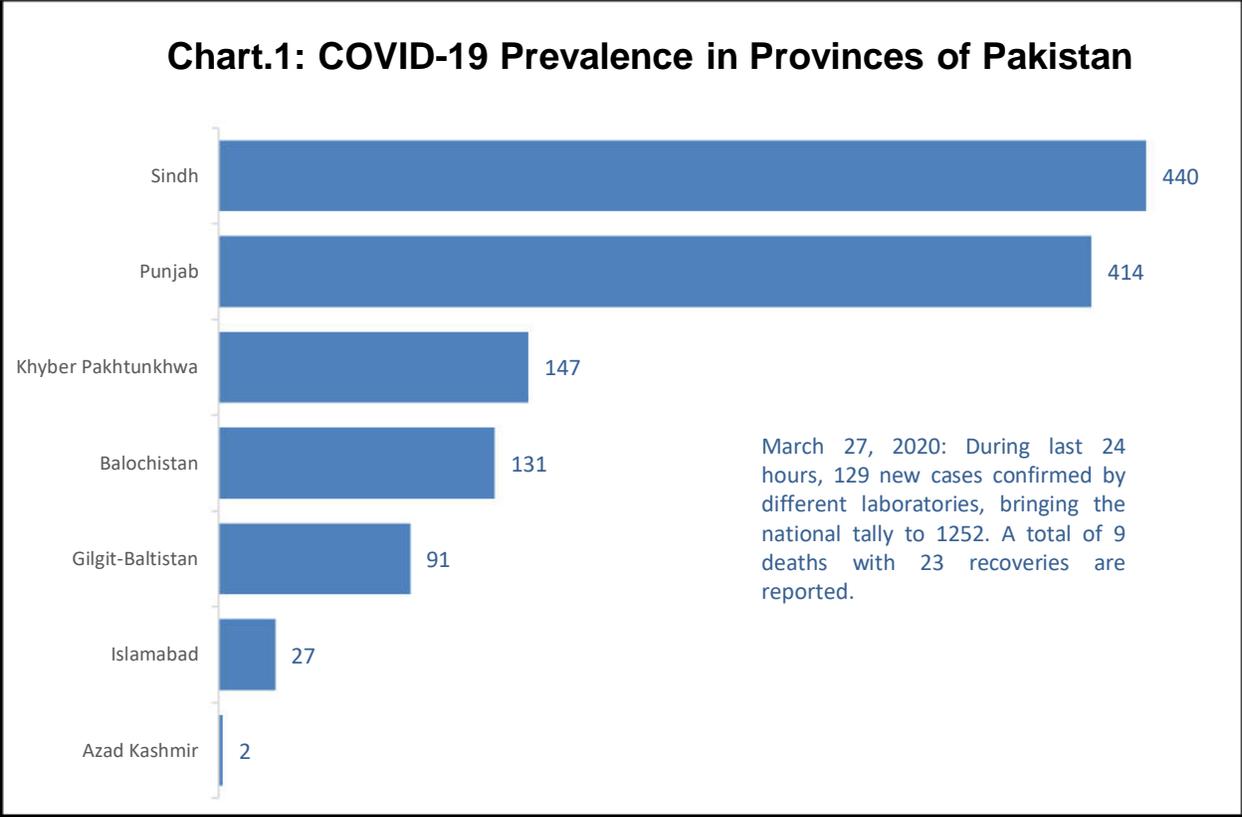
- Congregational prayers in mosques limited to five persons.
- Government will not let businesses go bankrupt: Abdul Razzak Dawood.
- SBP announces comprehensive relief package for households, businesses.

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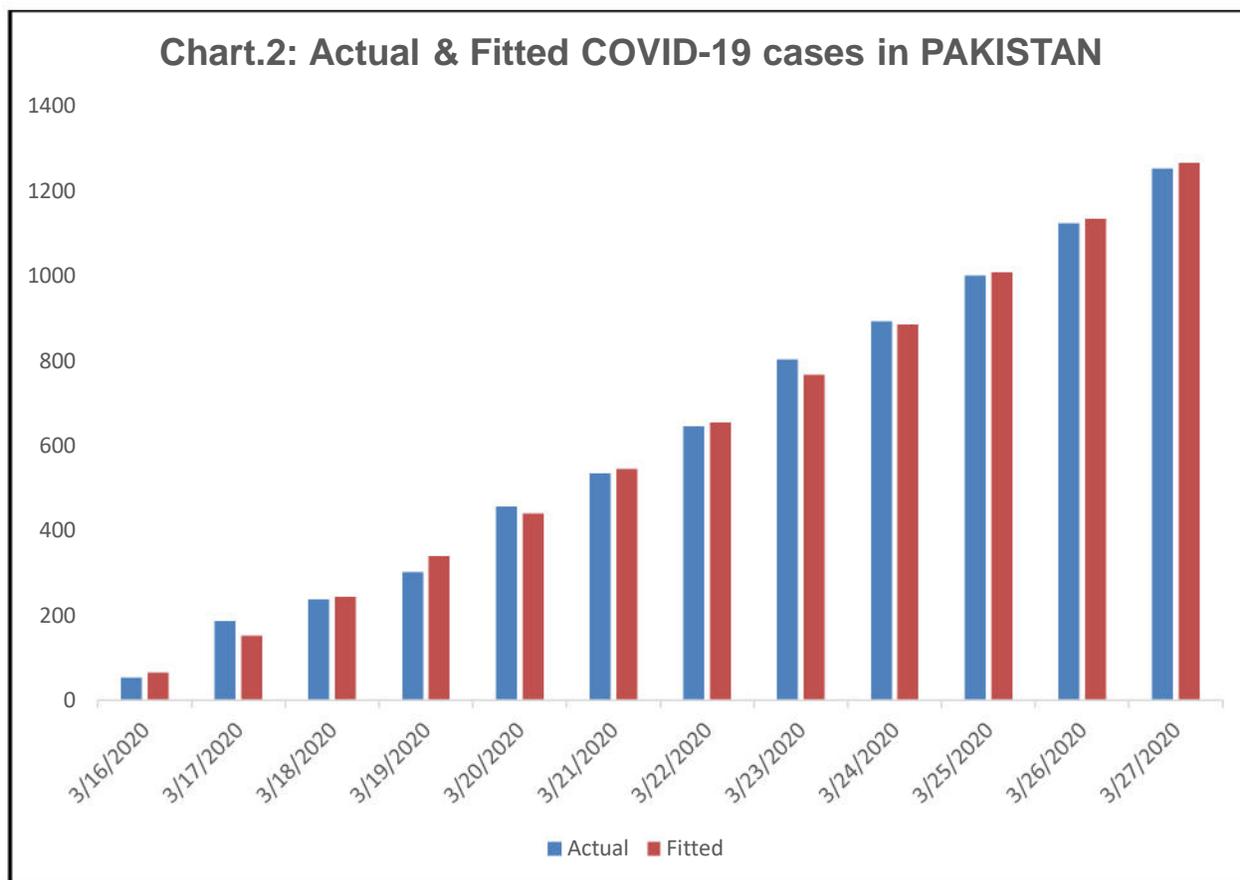


Pigeons crowd around a bench in Krakow, Poland, on March 25.
Artur Widak//NurPhoto/Getty Images

The segregated count of COVID-19 cases are presented in self-explanatory Chart.1. A recovery from Punjab is reported today.



To respond COVID-19 pandemic, a careful track of prevailing data of infected cases and its sensible prediction is vital for necessary arrangements. In Pakistan, the figure of infected cases, remained in single digit during first 10 days. The count increases manifold after mid-March 2020. Data set of infected cases after mid-March 2020 to 26th March 2020 is used to predict an estimated number of infected cases. Dynamic Econometric routine is employed to get the predicted values. To check the reliability of technique utilized, Actual and Fitted values are presented in Chart.2 and Table below it. Closely Fitted values validate the reliability of predicting technique.

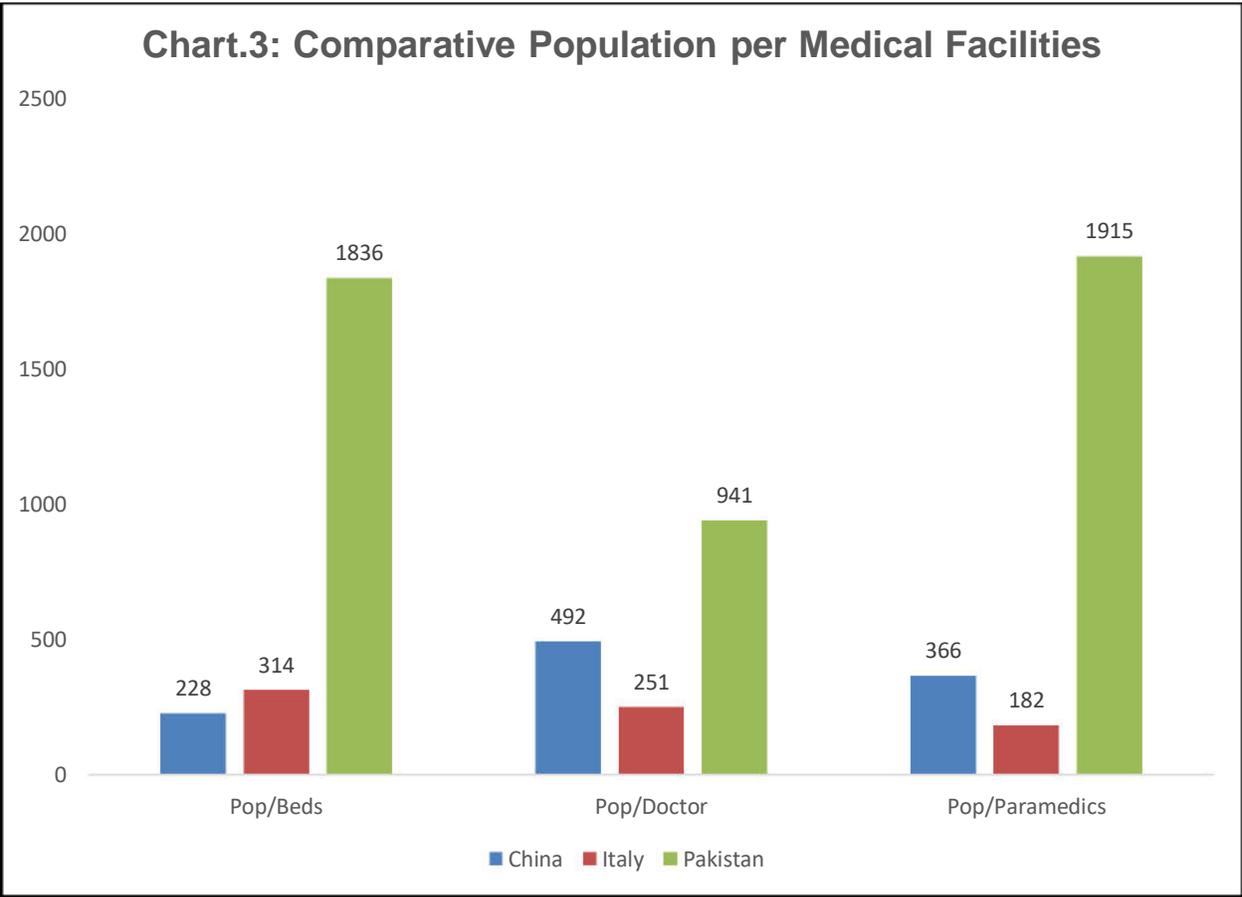


Actual	53	187	238	302	457	534	646	803	892	1000	1123	1252
Fitted	66	153	244	340	440	545	654	767	885	1007	1134	1266
Dates	3/16/20	3/17/20	3/18/20	3/19/20	3/20/20	3/21/20	3/22/20	3/23/20	3/24/20	3/25/20	3/26/20	3/27/20

Fitting a dynamic series against time is like shooting a still photograph of a moving object. No matter how good it is, interpretation of this ‘photograph’ can’t explain the next move of that object. To be justified and precise, only five days’ prediction is estimated using Econometric technique. These predicted values may help analyzing available capacity of health facilities, at Pakistan as a whole, such as basic infrastructure and number of Doctors/para Medics. According to prediction, by the end of month the total number of cases may rise to 1835, which is just a fraction of cases in China and Italy during one month after first case is reported.

In Pakistan, there are 14,351 Health related Facilities with 132,227 beds in total, this count doesn’t include Military Hospitals and other private health

units. Out of these Health facilities there are 1,279 big hospitals with 113,150 beds. It seems a good number but incomparable with highest COVID-19 hit countries China and Italy. In Population per health facilities, Pakistan is way below than China and Italy, see Chart.3. As far as the big hospitals are concerned, there is only one Doctor for 941 people, one paramedic for 1,915 people and one bed for 1,836 persons. This comparison is with respect to the big Hospitals' facilities only, if we consider all 14,351 Health Facility Units the numbers are improved, even better than Italy and China. Fortunately the number of cases reported and predicted in Pakistan are way below than China and Italy during first month of COVID-19 outbreak, there is a lesson to learn from high hit countries, this is the right time to get prepared and aligned available resources. Utilizing all available resources through good management, Pakistan stands strong against COVID-19 hit.



Importance of social protection in coronavirus pandemic

Social protection programmes have often witnessed improvement and advancements after global disasters. Pakistan is observing a dangerous surge in the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic; the subsequent lockdown in major parts of the country has highlighted the need for extensive advancements in the social protection services more than ever. With the programmes like the Bait-ul-Mal and BISP, the majority of the poverty-stricken population of the country still has no viable social security present specifically for large scale disasters. The unique effect of COVID-19 has shut down social and economic processes and has directly affected wage workers. Similarly, the lack of proper social protection leaves the majority of the country's population without access to food, housing and healthcare thereby creating a high-risk environment for contracting the disease, spreading it and further burdening the economy and healthcare system. A proper framework of providing situational relief to the vulnerable factions of the economy is now evident. The current situation of social security in the country is one of the multiple reasons why a preferred lockdown of the country has been deemed impractical as it endangers more than the 50% population of the country with adverse economic effects. Pakistan needs to employ a thorough social protection scheme which can provide relief such as cash, utilities, rent/tax exemptions and healthcare in a systematic way to reduce the socio-economic inequality in addition to curbing the effects of large scale disasters like the current coronavirus pandemic. Disaster or no disaster, the social protection of the vulnerable is the responsibility of the government, specifically in a developing nation where the vulnerable exceed the socio-economically immune population. **(written by Shah Bakht Fatima, an alumna of the Department of Development Studies, PIDE)**

Experts' View

While short-term quarantine is essential to stop epidemics, long-term isolationism will lead to economic collapse without offering any real protection against infectious diseases. Just the opposite. The real antidote to epidemic is not segregation, but rather cooperation. **(Yuval Noah Harari, Historian & Philosopher)**

Shop when you need to (keeping six feet from other customers) and load items into your cart or basket. Keep your hands away from your face while shopping, and wash them as soon as you're home. Put away your groceries, and then wash your hands again. If you wait even a few hours before using anything you just purchased, most of the virus that was on any package will be significantly reduced. If you need to use something immediately, and want to take extra precautions, wipe the package down with a disinfectant. Last, wash all fruits and vegetables as you normally would. **(Joseph G. Allen, Washington Post)**

Experts' Opinion

Apart from social distancing and hand-washing, the experts concluded that face masks could play an important role in slowing down the spread of the virus, pointing out the low infection rates in Japan. **(Martin Fritz, DW)**

The dominant consensus among leading economists is that there is no quick recovery. They agree that 'V' shape recovery—a sharp drop in economic activity followed swiftly by a rebound in growth – is highly unlikely. **(Abid Hasan, The News)**

In his public—responses to combat the coronavirus outbreak, the Prime Minister's primary concern was the condition of those below the poverty line. In the absence of an official estimate, one can only say that the number is hugely large. Social distancing and the lockdown have added daily and casual wage earners in urban areas, rural workers and fisher folks to this figure. With the falling domestic and export demand, layoffs in the formal sector have already begun. It is these people, stupid, not the economy that deserves urgent attention! Yet the Rs1.3 trillion package plus the State Bank's intransigence on interest rate cater predominantly to the requirements of the neoliberal economy and its elite clients. The stock exchange, left out in the original privilege dole, was accommodated the next day by abolishing capital value tax (CVT). It's like Trump opening up the economy by the coming Easter, despite the World Health Organization (WHO) warning about the next epicenter. **(Pervaiz Tahir, The Express Tribune)**

COVID-19 READS

1. **Jumma prayers in Pakistan: An Islamic approach to community welfare during the covid-19 pandemic**
<https://www.pide.org.pk/pdf/PIDE-Covid-Blog-6.pdf>
2. **PIDE Covid-19 Bulletin**
<https://www.pide.org.pk/pdf/PIDE-COVID-Bulletin-7.pdf>
3. **Pakistan daily wagers struggle to survive in coronavirus lockdown**
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/pakistan-daily-wagers-struggle-survive-coronavirus-lockdown-200325115143152.html>
4. **Fear of Covid-19 is a mental contagion – and that’s something we can fight**
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/26/fear-of-covid-19-is-a-mental-contagion-ben-okri>
5. **Can we trust the Oxford study on Covid-19 infections?**
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/26/virus-infection-data-coronavirus-modelling>
6. **Sanitary workers risk their lives despite spread of coronavirus**
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/sanitary-workers-risk-lives-spread-coronavirus-200325051916407.html>
7. **World’s costliest offices are poised to enter tenants’ market as Hong Kong businesses reel from coronavirus, protest movement**
<https://www.scmp.com/property/hong-kong-china/article/3077163/worlds-costliest-offices-are-poised-enter-tenants-market>
8. **Coronavirus: What are social distancing and self-isolation?**
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-51506729>
9. **Don’t panic about shopping, getting delivery or accepting packages**
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/26/dont-panic-about-shopping-getting-delivery-or-accepting-packages/>
10. **Facing Two Pandemics: Coronavirus and Global Capital**
<https://www.pressenza.com/2020/03/facing-two-pandemics-coronavirus-and-global-capital/>
11. **How long does coronavirus live on different surfaces?**
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/25/how-long-coronavirus-lasts-on-surfaces-packages-groceries>
12. **Protect the people first**
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2184896/6-protect-people-first/>

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