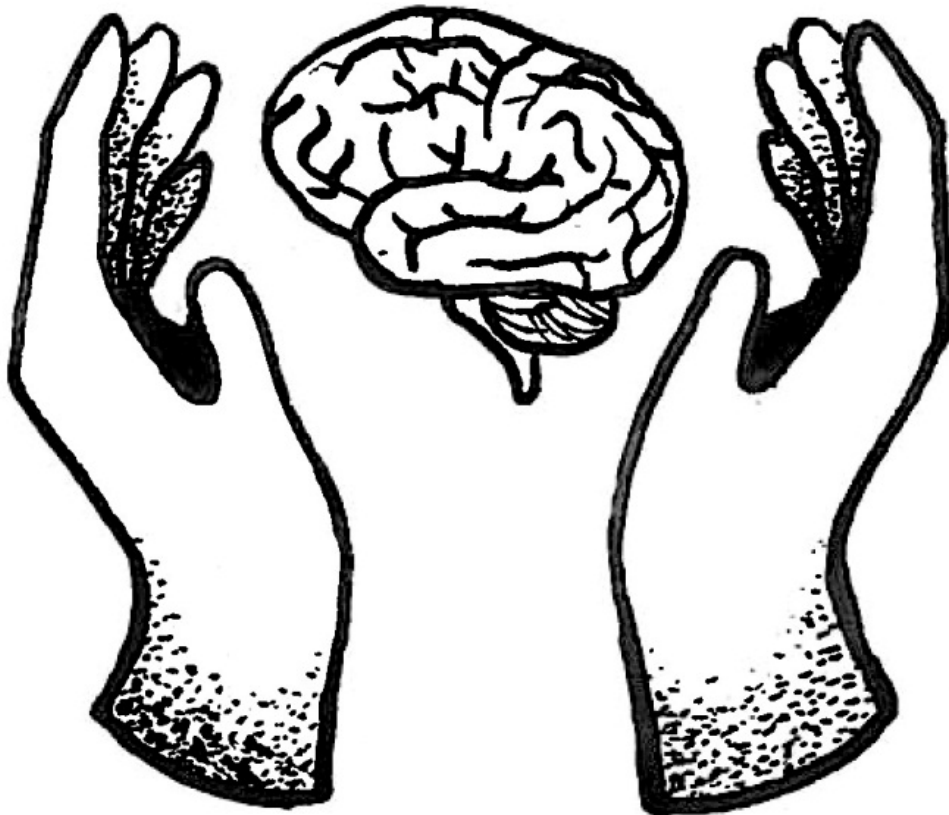


NEWSCLIPPINGS

JANUARY TO JUNE 2021

HEALTH



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Nursing excellence

IN a refreshing bit of news, eight Pakistani nurses and midwives have been included among the Global-2020 100 Outstanding Women Nurses and Midwives. The list comprises 100 professionals from a total of 43 countries who have been recognised by global agencies including WHO, UNFPA, the International Council of Nursing and International Confederation of Midwives for their contribution to raising healthcare standards across the world. Interestingly, all eight Pakistani nurses acknowledged for their services are graduates of the Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery. This list comes at an appropriate time; the services of healthcare workers have never been more significant in a world reeling from the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As front-line fighters against Covid-19, workers in the medical field have been greatly lauded. However, the discourse — at least in Pakistan — has revolved mostly around doctors, and not enough has been said about the nursing profession whose members are equally, if not more, exposed to Covid-19 as they carry out their duties at various public and private hospitals. Though this worldwide list of 100 best nurses comes at the conclusion of a year-long WHO campaign, it is a good effort towards drawing attention towards the significance of the profession itself.

Indeed, the ambit of services nurses provide, from specialised critical care to family planning at homes, is the bedrock of any country's healthcare system. It is therefore unfortunate that the government has greatly neglected this profession. The Pakistan Nursing Council has failed to function as an autonomous body due to the indifference of successive federal and provincial governments. This is why very few of the approximately 160 nursing schools in the country provide adequate teaching to students, leaving them untrained and unskilled. In fact, the shortage of trained and skilled nursing staff has been one of the major issues faced by tertiary care hospitals treating critical Covid-19 patients. One hopes that the government invests in producing skilled nursing staff, thus improving the quality of healthcare services overall.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 02/01/2021)

Hearing on NICVD's plea against FIA inquiry adjourned indefinitely

The Sindh High Court adjourned the hearing of plea challenging the Federal Investigation Agency's graft inquiry against the National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases indefinitely on Tuesday.

The NICVD administration's plea maintains that the health facility falls under the provincial government. Therefore, contends the plea, an inquiry by the FIA on any matters pertaining to the NICVD is illegal and federal authority should be restricted.

The court has already issued notices to the Sindh advocate-general and the attorney-general of Pakistan, and has sought progress reports and records pertaining to the inquiry from the FIA.

Demolitions

Meanwhile, residents of Mehmoodabad approached SHC over the anti-encroachment operation in their area.

The residents have contended in their plea that the authorities are misinterpreting the Supreme Court's orders and are razing houses that have been leased for years.

The petitioners maintain that their houses are part of the official layout plan. They have moved the court to restrict the Anti-Encroachment Cell and other authorities from demolishing houses and appoint the court's nazir to inspect houses.

The National Disaster Management Authority managing director, provincial chief secretary, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and Karachi commissioner have been nominated as parties in the plea.

The anti-encroachment teams have continued their operation on Mehmoodabad Nullah this past week and are scheduled to begin demolitions of houses constructed on drain's land tomorrow (Friday).

Accused cop

Separately, a two-member bench, headed by Justice Iqbal Kalhoro, directed the trial court to record statements of the witnesses over a plea challenging the inclusion of sections of the Anti-Terrorism Act in an extortion case.

The petitioner, Anti-Vehicle Lifting Cell Sub-inspector Muhammad Rizwan, accused of extortion of motorcycle mechanics worker, argued that the case against him is false.

He maintained that he launched an operation on the directives of his superiors. Rizwan stated that they were informed of a stolen motorcycle being modified but the wrong person with the same name as the suspect was arrested. The detained motorcycle workers were released the next day when they realised their mistake, said the inspector. But, he added, the Khokhrapar SHO booked him in a case of extortion and terrorism.

Where is the actual suspect, Jameel, who was to be detained for investigation, asked Justice Kalhoro.

Rizwan informed the court that the actual suspect has not been arrested as yet.

When Justice Kalhoro asked the petitioner to inform the court on exactly what had happened, Rizwan maintained that an official, named Bahadur, had collected money from Jameel.

At this, Justice Kalhoro inquired from the investigation officer whether he was trying to protect his fellow police official.

The bench remarked that the trial court will take a decision on this on basis of merit.

The court directed the trial court to record the statements of witnesses within a month.

Smuggling liquor

Besides, the court issued notices to customs officials over the bail plea of the accused in a case pertaining to smuggling of 6,000 liquor bottles.

During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel claimed that the case against his client, Shehzada Amin Tariq, is a false case. The counsel moved the court to release Tariq on bail.

The court issued notices to customs officials seeking their replies.

According to customs officials, Pakistan Peoples PartyMPA Roshan Junejo and other accused smuggled liquor under the guise of diplomatic immunity.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 07/01/2021)

Committee set up to ensure oxygen supply to hospitals

The Sindh health department formed on Thursday a three-member committee to ensure uninterrupted supply of oxygen to hospitals in Karachi, after it emerged that the supply was being affected as sit-ins over Machh killings and road blocks continued for the third day - with protesters' demands remaining unaddressed - in the port city

The management of Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital told The Express Tribune that the management of the Pakistan Oxygen Supply Company, which supplies oxygen to health facilities in Karachi, had informed them that its trucks couldn't reach the hospital due to blocked arteries.

Confirming this, the management of the Pakistan Oxygen Supply Company said it had notified Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and other health facilities of the reason behind the delay in the supply of oxygen. They said their trucks weren't able to go past Port Qasim since 4am on Thursday.

Oxygen is supplied to hospitals on a daily basis, which is in addition to the stock they have in store for emergency use.

When asked about the situation, the management of the Indus Hospital said it had medicines and oxygen in stock, though, adding that the supplies may run short if the sit-ins continued in the following days.

They further said patients were facing difficulties in reaching the hospital due to the closure of roads.

Sindh Infectious Diseases Hospital medical superintendent Dr Wahid too said the stock of oxygen at his hospital was enough to last for two days, but problems may arise if the routine supply remains affected beyond that.

Moreover, JPMC executive director Dr Seemin Jamali said the assistance of law enforcers had been sought to ensure the uninterrupted supply oxygen to hospitals.

The hospitals' managements were of the view that ensuring the persistent supply of oxygen to hospital was of increased importance at present, given the prevalence of the coronavirus pandemic.

When the health department was intimated of the situation, it formed the three-member committee, which is to facilitate correspondence between hospitals' managements, the oxygen supplier and law enforcement agencies. The committee comprises of Sindh health department focal persons Dr Dabir Ahmed Khan, Dr Sikandar Ali Memon and Dr Syed Ashiq Hussain Shah.

Sit-ins continue

Sit-ins were underway in the city at at least 24 spots, including Gulshan Chowrangi, Nipa, Shah Faisal Colony, Port Qasim, Quaidabad and Abbas Town, on Thursday.

The leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Pak Sarzameen Party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and other parties also addressed the protests held by Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM).

The protesters expressed solidarity with the families of the 11 miners of the Hazara community who were shot dead in Machh last week.

Speaking on the occasion, MWM's Sindh chapter secretary general Allama Baqir Abbas Zaidi said that the sit-ins would continue across the country in solidarity with the families of the slain miners and until the heirs called of protests and agreed to bury the bodies.

He said Prime Minister Imran Khan delaying his visit to Quetta was complicating the matters.

"The government must accept the demands of families who are sitting in the streets, in biting cold, with the bodies of their loved ones," he added.

Meanwhile, multiple arteries in the city were choked as others remained blocked for traffic.

A traffic police representative said traffic from blocked roads was being diverted towards alternative routes, though the flow of the traffic in the city had slowed down.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 08/01/2021)

Drive against polio begins as Covid cases cross 500,000 mark

As countrywide Covid-19 cases surpassed the 500,000 mark and the number of deaths reached 10,644 on Sunday, Pakistan will start the current year's first polio campaign under strict precautionary measures and protocols on Monday (today).

According to data of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), 2,899 cases and 46 deaths from Covid-19 were reported in a single day. With the latest figure, the total number of infected people in the country has surged to 502,416 with 456,969 having recovered.

The data about federating units showed that the highest number of cases was reported from Sindh which was 225,509. Though Punjab's population is around 50 per cent of the total population of the country, 144,909 people have contracted the virus in the province.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has recorded 61,148 cases while Islamabad, which is a city with only two million people, has reported 39,120 patients.

The data further revealed that 18,373 people were infected in Balochistan, 8,478 in Azad Kashmir and 4,879 in Gilgit-Baltistan. The total number of active cases in the country stood at 34,803 as of Sunday.

Out of the total number of ventilators allocated for Covid-19 patients, Multan had the highest percentage of occupancy at 51pc, followed by Bahawalpur at 41pc, Lahore at 34pc and Islamabad at 33pc.

According to data on oxygenated beds, Peshawar was on top with 49pc of beds in use, 35pc in Karachi, 34pc in Multan and 31pc occupied in Islamabad.

Nationwide polio drive

A five-day national polio immunisation drive will start from Monday during which over 40 million children under the age of five will be vaccinated across the country.

A supplementary dose of Vitamin A drops will also be administered to the children aged six to 59 months. This will help build general immunity among susceptible children to protect them from polio and other diseases.

According to data issued by the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for Polio, around 285,000 polio frontline workers will visit parents and caregivers at their doorsteps, adhering to strict Covid-19 precautionary measures and protocols while vaccinating children. These measures will include wearing a mask, using hand sanitisers and maintaining a safe distance during vaccination.

"Our aim is to ensure timely and repeated vaccination of children. This is key to reducing immunity gap and protecting children against polio and other diseases. The government is committed to reaching the goal of a polio-free Pakistan which requires full support of the nation, especially from communities and the parents and caregivers of children under the age of five years," said Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services Dr Faisal Sultan.

"The year 2021 presents a unique opportunity to leverage the gains made in 2020. The programme implemented six high-quality campaigns in 2020 with the support of various stakeholders and the dedication of our heroes — the frontline workers — who defied the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and safely implemented high-quality campaigns," he added.

Director General of Health and NEOC Coordinator Dr Rana Mohammad Safdar said that in 2021 the country was looking forward to sustaining the gains achieved in 2020.

"Alongside our plans to conduct quality polio campaigns, we are continuing our efforts to enhance essential immunisation coverage across Pakistan. Repeated campaigns are imperative to give a quick immunity boost to children under the age of five," he said.

"With our highly committed frontline workers and the cooperation of parents and caregivers, the programme aims to restrict the geographic scope of poliovirus circulation to the high-risk areas only and get closer to the goal of eradication in 2021," Dr Rana added.

According to a statement, the programme will continue to sustain high levels of leadership support across the political and society segments and will further strengthen programme implementation structures, engage better with priority communities, reinforce essential immunisation, deliver integrated services to under-served communities and maintain its coordination with Afghanistan counterparts for synergy in planned campaigns in 2021 with the aim to interrupt the spread of poliovirus across the shared epidemiological block between both countries.

It is pertinent to mention that the polio programme is working in partnership with various segments of society and organisations, including communities, local influencers, pediatric and medical associations, media, social activists, religious leaders, sports associations and the Pakistan Cricket Board. They are all supportive of vaccination and the goal of reaching a polio-free Pakistan. Pakistan is one of the two polio-endemic countries in the world along with its neighbour, Afghanistan.
(By Ikrans Junaidi Dawn, 01, 11/01/2021)

Fighting against rabies, for the love of man... and dog

Hearing the word, literally translating to 'dog' and more often than not used as an expletive on Karachi's streets, is not an unusual occurrence for the city's residents. Such has been the case for Muhammad Nadeem of Ibrahim Hyderi too.

The street outside is house, home to stray dogs and serving as a make-do playground for children simultaneously, would often resound with the word - at times being shouted out of fear and at other instances, out of disgust and hostility.

This would sadden Nadeem, who had always been bothered by the cruelty stray dogs are often subjected to.

"Killing them is cruel," he said.

But then, what else could be done? Children being bitten by rabid canines was not a rare occurrence in his neighbourhood.

"They [children] are at risk of being bitten by stray dogs while playing in the streets and their lives are imperilled," he said. "I too have children and I understand the pain of losing a child."

However, he realised that dog-culling was not the solution for the problem.

It was his will to partake in an endeavour aimed at saving the man as well as the dog that made him become a part of The Indus Hospital's Rabies Free Karachi Programme.

He was one of the first ones to have joined the programme four years ago, and since then he has dedicated himself to the fight against rabies, keeping both, children and dogs safe from the virus.

Nadeem, along with his team members, was trained for 10 to twelve days before they set out in Karachi's streets with the mission to curb, and eventually eradicate, rabies.

"We were taught dog psychology, how to catch a dog and vaccinate the canines," he told The Express Tribune.

After the completion of the training, Nadeem began working under the campaign, starting from Ibrahim Hyderi.

"I have come to realise that this is no easy task. It is dangerous and I, as well as my team members, are often attacked and bitten by dogs. Hence, we are regularly vaccinated," he said, however, adding that neither him, nor any of his team members had contracted rabies so far. Nevertheless, he doesn't find the dangerous nature of the work a reason enough to switch to his previous profession of a rickshaw driver.

He works relentlessly from 9am to 4pm, roaming the streets in search of dogs that need to be safeguarded against the nemesis of rabies.

"These days I am working in neighbourhoods in Ramswami area, near Jama Cloth Market and in Marwari para," said Nadeem, lamenting that he often found himself at the receiving end of people's disdain for his job.

"Some say we kill dogs, and others that we sell them of," he regretted. "It feels bad, but this can never make me give up my mission of fighting against rabies and raising awareness about the need to vaccinate dogs against the virus," he added with determination. "Those who realise the importance of our job also encourage us."

Then, again turning his attention to the need to address and stop the cruelty meted out to stray dogs, he pointed out that children would often throw stones at canines for no reason at all.

"What else would a dog do if not attack someone who seems to be his enemy?" he questioned. "If they get the vibe that their litter is threatened by your children, why wouldn't they attack them?"

He stressed the need for parents to inculcate the love for animals in their children.

"Animals understand the language of love," he said.

This story is part of a weekly series that seeks to bring to light the unsung heroes of Karachi - the hawkers, traders, doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers and daily-wage labourers. It is they who make Karachi the city of lights.
(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 05, 11/01/2021)

Saifee Institute given back to trust

The charge of Saifee Eide Zahabi Institute of Technology has been handed over to Saifee Golden Jubilee Educational Trust of the Dawoodi Bohra Community on Monday, says a statement.

A delegation comprising of the trustees of the Saifee Golden Jubilee Trust and representatives of the Dawoodi Bohra community visited the institute on Monday. Officials of Sindh Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (Stevta) handed over the charge of the institute to the trust.

Director Stevta expressed good wishes for the institute.

It may be recalled that the Saifee Eide Zahabi Institute located in North Nazimabad was established by the Dawoodi Bohra community in 1963 with the aim to be recognized as a centre of excellence and a leader in technical education which would eventually empower the students to develop the required technical skill set to excel in the industrial development of Pakistan.
(From the Newspaper Dawn, 14, 13/01/2021)

Sindh vows to retain control over city's three major hospitals

The already strained relationship between the centre and Sindh soured further on Tuesday after the provincial authorities ruled out any possibility to return control of Karachi's three major health facilities to Islamabad.

The resolve was expressed during a press conference by Sindh government's spokesman Barrister Murtaza Wahab when he clearly denied any compromise over the administrative control of the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) and National Institute of Child Health (NICH).

The three major health facilities have been added to the Schedule of Federal Medical Teaching Institutes Ordinance, 2020 — a move being seen as a first step of the federal government to take over control of JPMC, NICH and NICVD.

PA body okays draft bill to declare making, use of 'ice drug' a crime

"The NICVD and other two hospitals do not belong to anyone," he said in response to a question about what would the Sindh government do against Islamabad's move. "These three hospitals have treated patients from all over Pakistan and have served the public for free with transparency. These three hospitals will remain with us."

The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination has recently released a notification under which four health facilities — three of them located in Karachi and one in Lahore — have been added to the Schedule of Federal Medical Teaching Institutes Ordinance, 2020.

These institutions are Karachi's JPMC, NICVD, NICH and Lahore's Sheikh Zayed Postgraduate Medical Institute (SZPMI).

Interestingly, the notification dated Jan 7, 2021 is not marked to the Sindh health department — a major stakeholder that has been claiming administrative control over the three Karachi hospitals for a decade.

Draft law declares use of 'ice' a crime

Meanwhile, Barrister Wahab shared sketchy details about two new laws pertaining to the Succession Bill and the Bill on Drugs 2012.

"In today's meeting, the Standing Committee on Law has approved the Succession Bill, including the Amendment Bill on Drugs 2012," he said. "Similarly, making and using synthetic drugs, including cocaine and ice, has been declared a crime. No matter how powerful a person is, if he is found involved in drugs, he will not be released. There will be severe penalties for the manufacture, use and supply of drugs such as cocaine and ice. In addition, the public must support the government so that we can keep our future generations away from the ill effects of drugs."

He said that unlike the federation, the Sindh Assembly was carrying out its constitutional work and soon death certificates would be obtained from the National Database and Registration Authority, which would be done in shortest possible time.
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 13/01/2021)

'33,309 cancer cases recorded in three years in Karachi'

Over 33,000 cases of malignant cancer were recorded by Karachi Cancer Registry in the city over three years, the majority of which pertained to breast and oral cancer. This is an alarming situation, requiring immediate intervention at different levels.

This was stated by Dr Shahid Pervez, chairperson of the Karachi Cancer Registry, while speaking at an online public awareness seminar on 'Cancer and Karachi Cancer Registry' organised by Dr Panjwani Centre for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research (PCMD) at Karachi University on Wednesday.

"Breast cancer is the leading cancer in Karachi followed by oral cancer, a largely preventable disease," said Dr Pervez, also professor at the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine of the Aga Khan University Hospital.

Sharing data of the cancer registry, he said it recorded a total of 33,309 cases of malignant cancer affecting 17,490 (52.5 per cent) women and 15,819 (47.5pc) men from Jan 2017 till Dec 2019.

Breast cancer is the leading cancer in the city, says an expert

"This is an alarming situation, demanding urgent attention to increase awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the highly damaging effects of chewing various hazardous concoctions. We need screening programmes for early detection of breast and oral cancer."

Among children and adolescents, the experts found leukaemia and malignancies in the brain and the central nervous system common.

"Colorectal cancer that occurs in the colon and rectum affects both genders. Liver Cancer is also a very common cancer due to a high burden of hepatitis B & C in our population."

Prof Pervez, also the co-chair of National Cancer Registry, pointed out that cancer was the second leading cause of death in Pakistan, while the same disease was the leading cause of death in developed countries.

He said that the purpose of the cancer registries was to collect cancer incidence data to provide essential information to healthcare providers, government, and researchers to identify major risk factors in a population, based on their lifestyle.

"Cancer registries are the foremost requirement for cancer control programmes in any country. They also have the purpose to prioritise government policies and fund allocation."

He informed participants that the Karachi Cancer Registry was part of the National Cancer Registry established under the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in Islamabad.

The registry in Karachi started the collection of cancer data from 2017 and invited all cancer diagnosing and treating hospitals to send data on a voluntary basis.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 14/01/2021)

Polio dangers

IN the first incident of its kind this year, a policeman guarding polio vaccinators was gunned down in KP's Karak district. Earlier last month, a similar killing took place in Bannu district when gunmen attacked an assistant sub-inspector who was returning to the police station after providing security to polio workers. At times, it seems that the battle against extremist mindsets is harder than the battle against poliovirus. No one would feel this more acutely than the thousands of polio workers — and those protecting them. Yet, they courageously keep coming back to this long-drawn fight when they are called, putting themselves in danger each time. At present, polio teams in the country are engaged in a five-day national immunisation drive. With the raging Covid-19 pandemic, however, their job has become even more difficult. Polio immunisation was halted for more than four months in the first half of 2020 as a precautionary step against the spread of Covid-19 — meaning that many children could not be inoculated against polio. This situation was aggravated because of the aggressive resurgence of the polio virus since 2019. Meanwhile, the attacks on polio teams in KP show there is still much resistance to polio vaccination thanks to fallacious theories. The result is that thousands of children are not vaccinated against the crippling disease. Suspicious mindsets are perhaps the biggest impediment to polio eradication in the country.

Though successive governments have promised to end the curse of polio, their efforts are more for show as structural and consistent steps towards this goal are not taken. Earlier, the prime minister had stated that it was a "shame" that Pakistan was one of two countries where polio was still endemic. If the government is sincere about overcoming the challenge, it should immediately start working towards rooting out the sources of misinformation regarding the vaccine and persuade our elected representatives to personally engage in raising awareness and addressing the concerns of those resisting immunisation for their children.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 14/01/2021)

DUHS opens pacemaker clinic

A pacemaker clinic was opened at the Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) on Tuesday.

The clinic is the second facility for pacemaker implants in the public sector in the city after the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), which offers free-of-cost pacemaker implants.

"The field of cardiac electrophysiology, the science of diagnosing and treating heart's electrical activities, has become advanced in this day and age and we felt that the cardiac institute at DUHS should have a dedicated facility for patients reporting with irregular heartbeat that could be life threatening," said Dr Tariq Farman, the chairman of the Dow Institute of Cardiology (DIC), while speaking at a ceremony held at the Dow International Medical College.

The treatment, which costs between Rs500,000 and Rs1 million at private hospitals, would be provided at a highly subsidized rate at the clinic, he said.

Highlighting the services of the institute established in 2016, Dr Farman said it was offering diagnosis and treatment of heart diseases, including angiography, angioplasty and bypass surgery, apart from being an academic institution for postgraduate training.

"Last year, we launched FCPS (Fellowship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons) cardiology and postgraduate diploma while work is under way to establish a paediatric cardiology centre and other facilities including valvular intervention programme and advanced cardiac by the end of this year."

Prof Muhammad Saeed Quraishy, the DUHS Vice Chancellor, said the establishment of a pacemaker clinic was a step forward for the second largest public sector cardiology centre in the city.

"The institute has given positive results in five years. More than 100,000 patients get treatment here annually. In early 2022, when the institute will celebrate its sixth anniversary, there will be a facility for paediatric cardiology," he hoped.

The university would extend all possible support for the advancement of DIC and for patients' convenience, he added.

Prof Zarnaz Wahid, the pro vice chancellor of DUHS, said the institute in a short span had established its reputation and was rapidly moving towards a complete and modern heart hospital. The performance of this institution was satisfactory.

Speakers included director Ojha campus Prof Kartar Dawani and DUHS medical superintendent Dr Zahid Azam.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 21/01/2021)

'Open merit policy has caused doctors' acute shortage at healthcare facilities'

There is an urgent need to address acute shortage of doctors at healthcare facilities. The situation has resulted mainly because women constituting the majority of medical college students do not become part of the workforce and those who do fail to fulfil their professional requirements.

This issue was raised at a seminar titled 'Educational chaos in the country' organised by the Human Rights Committee of the Pakistan Medical Association at the PMA House on Saturday.

Highlighting how grave doctors' shortage is at hospitals, Dr Amjad Siraj Memon, the principal of Dow Medical College, said it's so serious that doctors were hard to find especially at night shifts.

"The problem is societal mindset hasn't changed while we let our girls pursue higher education. The open merit policy in place at medical colleges for over two decades has encouraged more and more women to get admission to medical colleges over time. But, a significant number of them are either forced to abandon their studies or leave their profession as soon as they get married," he explained.

Doctors call for restoration of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council

He regretted that several female doctors, who were able to practice, declined to treat male patients and do night shifts. "It's ironic that on the one hand we talk of open merit policy and on the other harbour gender discrimination. A doctor must be able to look after all his or her patients without any gender bias."

He pointed out that the open merit policy introduced on court's orders had brought about drastic change in the healthcare system in 23 years and needed urgent intervention.

Additionally, he noted, the country had been experiencing brain drain for many years, making the situation worse.

Speaking about the positive changes, he said today it's possible for a poor man's child to get medical education as institutions offered funding support and scholarships.

Violation of rights

The event also saw speakers criticising the federal government for introducing a medical examination system that favoured students of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and described it as a "violation of Sindh's fundamental right to education".

There was strong condemnation of the Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC).

"Under the medical tribunal bill approved in the joint sitting of parliament, a doctor can get seven-year imprisonment and fine of Rs50 million," Dr Qaiser Sajjad representing the PMA-Centre said, arguing that the government should have legislated for cancelling the licence of the doctor found guilty of medical negligence.

He also criticised the federal government for introducing an exam after MBBS that, in his opinion, would open doors for corruption. He called for the restoration of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council as an elected, independent and transparent body.

Highlighting flaws in the police education and training system, DSP Mohammad Tariq Mughal, the principal of School of Investigation, said there were no police reforms in seven decades and the current police system of 1861 needed to be changed, if there was a political will to improve police operation.

"It suited the British needs and was made with an aim to keep the locals away from top administrative posts," he said, emphasizing that it was critical to bring major police reforms since the department had the fundamental job to ensure law and order in society.

Sharing her concern over the dismal state of education, bureaucrat-turned politician Mehtab Akbar Rashdi said so much needed to be done to rectify the education system that could never get priority status by the state.

“One single step that could bring immediate change would be to make it mandatory for all government officers to enrol their children in public sector schools. If this is implemented, I am sure that government schools currently deprived of basic facilities will soon be upgraded.”

Dr Mirza Ali Azhar, Dr Tipu Sultan and Dr Jaipal Chhabria also spoke.
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 24/01/2021)

Hospital or dispensary?

There is nothing new in this. Health and education of the people are the two most important things that need to get the government's attention on a priority basis. A sound mind, they say, in a sound body. But these two vital sectors continue to defy this time-tested adage. There are many public hospitals in the country which lack medicines and related services. Now there is news that there is a severe shortage of medicines and other health-related facilities in a government hospital in Rehri Goth, located on the outskirts of Karachi, so locals describe it as a dispensary and not as a proper hospital.

The health facility is meant to serve 500,000 residents of four union councils. Those residing in these villages have to go to hospitals in the city to get proper treatment, even though the travelling expense is as high as Rs3,000. This is a prohibitive cost for many of the villagers. Most villagers are from the low income group. Women of these villages need to be sensitised on breast cancer and also about the importance of birth control. However, counseling on these basic issues affecting women's lives is not available, let alone diagnosis and treatment facilities for such diseases and issues. In the absence of proper facilities in the area hospital, villagers have to depend on medical camps set up by NGOs. So these voluntary organisations are trying to fill the gap left by the government.

Recently, there were news reports that another government hospital supposedly catering to the needs of villagers residing on the periphery of the city does not have enough medicines and also lacks the required facilities. This hospital functions for only four hours daily, a fact endorsed by those working at the hospital. It has a shining and impressive building though. Even at big hospitals where most of the needed facilities are available, their toilets are so dirty that many vomit there. Even the common people understand where such unhygienic conditions lead to. Applaud those who suffer.

9By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 28/01/2021)

Many health services non-functional in conflict-hit areas, study finds

A recently published study has found that maternal and child health services in the conflict-hit parts of Pakistan are severely affected due to insecurity, unavailability of staff and damage to healthcare facilities, suggesting the need for customised strategies to promote women and child health in these areas.

The study on healthcare in Pakistan's violence-affected areas is published in BioMed Central's Conflict and Health journal.

It was conducted by researchers at the Aga Khan University (AKU) and the Centre for Global Child Health at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada, in two areas of Pakistan: Balochistan — with a specific focus on the Makran belt that includes the districts of Gwadar, Kech and Panjgur — and (former) Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) due to the chronic nature of conflict in these areas.

The study consisted of a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the provision of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition services comparing coverage in districts facing minimal, moderate and severe levels of conflict. Researchers found significantly lower levels of contraceptive use, facility delivery, exclusive breastfeeding, Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccinations, and care seeking for acute respiratory infections in Balochistan's districts severely hit by violence when compared to those areas with minimal conflict.

There was no significant difference in coverage levels between moderate and severe conflict areas. A similar quantitative assessment of coverage levels in (former) Fata was not possible due to a lack of reliable quantitative data.

Suggests customised healthcare strategies in such regions

The study found that many primary healthcare facilities in (former) Fata and a few areas in the Makran division of Balochistan were not functional due to insecurity, unavailability of staff and damage to healthcare facilities. Researchers added that roadblocks and curfews in conflict-hit areas further exacerbated supply chain challenges and compromised healthcare by restricting the availability of essential medicines and commodities.

It showed incidents of harassment, targeted killing, security threats and kidnapping of health workforce, specifically polio workers, in conflict-hit areas.

Other factors hampering delivery of health services included stringent government regulations on non-profit organisations and non-availability of health professionals of all cadres, especially female workers.

On a positive note, the study pointed to the success of a health workforce strategy adopted in district Kech in Balochistan. This involved sending senior staff on rotations between the district centre and far-flung areas for a week in a month, thereby helping expand access to healthcare in remote areas.

“Pakistan must develop customised strategies to promote women and child health services in conflict-hit areas,” said AKU’s Dr Jai Das, the lead author of the case study. “At present, we have broad guidance on aiding women and children that do not take into account the long-lasting impact of persistent conflict on the local population and the healthcare infrastructure.”

AKU researchers Zahra Ali Padhani, Sultana Jabeen, Arjumand Rizvi, Uzair Ansari, Malika Fatima, Ghulam Akbar, Wardah Ahmed and Zulfiqar A. Bhutta are co-authors of the paper.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 29/01/2021)

‘Govt ambulances not meant for transporting dead’

The director general of health, Sindh, Dr Irshad Memon, has asked all the officials concerned to discourage use of government ambulance services for transporting dead bodies from hospitals to other places.

“These vehicles are only for shifting critically sick people from one to another health facility on medical advice, the Sindh health DG said in a letter addressed to all district health officers (DHOs) and medical superintendents of the district headquarter and tehsil headquarter hospitals, as well as heads of rural and urban health centres.

The officials have been advised to disseminate awareness about proper utilisation of government ambulance services in public interest.

Dr Memon elaborated that the deceased deserved profound honour and, where necessary, their movement should be carried out in graceful manner using neat and clean coffin carries and vehicles. “The use of ambulances for the purpose should be discouraged,” he stressed.

The ambulances are for transportation of people needing urgent medical help, he said, and proposed placement of standees at important points in hospitals which, according to him, would prove helpful in disseminating awareness regarding utilisation of ambulances.

The letter asked all DHOs, medical superintendents of all tertiary care hospitals, DHQs, THQs, RHCs and UHCs to place such standees, inscribed with awareness material in three different languages, at prominent points within their respective health facility.

(By APP Dawn, 13, 01/02/2021)

Mental illness and possession

I FIRST learned about jinns in school. One afternoon, our Islamiyat teacher, a dour woman with a tendency to scare us, began to talk about jinns. Like the rest of the class, I listened with rapt attention. Jinns were invisible, she told us, and were often around in desolate and unfrequented places. Unlike humans who are made of earth, the jinns were made of smokeless fire we were told.



All of this was new information for me. Terrified, I convinced myself that the stories were meant only to scare us girls. Later that day, after getting home, I brought up the topic with my mother, hoping to be reassured that this wasn’t true. No such reassurance came my way. Instead, my mother told me that the teacher was right, that jinns do exist and like humans they can be good or bad. I was 10 or 11 years old at the time and I was terrified in the way only children can be. From then on, I began to recite the quls every time I was

alone. It’s a habit that has served me well.

As an adult, I began to hear jinns spoken of in conjunction with stories of being possessed. One distant family acquaintance, a woman with children, was rumored to be possessed by a jinn. The proof of this lay in the fact that the woman in question would speak in a deep voice and foreign language every time she fell into a trance-like, possessed state. Like most other such cases, this woman was being treated by a faith healer. This, of course, is what takes place most of the time such cases surface in Pakistan, in fact, much of the Muslim world.

This is markedly different from the rest of the world where symptoms such as those exhibited by this woman, speaking in different voices, reporting hallucinations, doing things that are socially inappropriate, loss of inhibition, etc are considered symptoms of mental illness. Psychiatric care for those with these symptoms relies on medications and forms of therapy other than faith healing. In Muslim societies, the question is which of these approaches — faith healing or psychiatry — is the best approach.

One wonders how many people with mental illness in Pakistan have been viewed as being possessed by a jinn.

Some direction comes from religious beliefs themselves as the scriptures mention jinns a number of times. According to these, like my teacher said, they are constituted of smokeless fire. However, they are supposed to inhabit a separate plane of existence as humans. Mediaeval Islamic studies scholar Ali Olomi says that some folklore even holds that a jinn civilisation existed on earth prior to human civilisation and seven jinn kings ruled the earth. At the same time, there is no mention of jinn possession in religious texts

as relating to mental illness. In this sense, no connection is drawn between jinn, mental illness and possession at all. Many Islamic scholars hold that magic and possession are pre-Islamic beliefs that became a part of folklore.

Most Muslims continue to believe in possession and black magic today. Studies from around the Islamic world have revealed that a very large number of Muslims studying medicine believe in this supernatural phenomenon. This is in stark contrast to Western medicine, which is purely empirical, based on science alone and reliant on pharmaceutical and other biomedical approaches to treat a patient who exhibits symptoms of 'possession'.

This is a deep and consequential conundrum. One wonders how many people with mental illness in Pakistan have been viewed as being possessed by a jinn when their anxiety, withdrawn and inappropriate behaviour and psychotic episodes are in reality mental illness. The predilection to allot a supernatural cause, imagine the person possessed, sequestering and socially excluding them as examples of evil, can severely impede their ability to get the right kind of help. And yet, this is just what happens.

Reiterating the earlier observation, recent surveys of Muslim nursing students showed that they believe in possession, black magic and the evil eye, though studying medicine. It is an open question as to which of the two sets of beliefs would dominate patient care if they had to treat a patient with symptoms that cannot easily be discerned as psychiatric or somehow supernatural.

One way to proceed in Muslim societies, where the belief in prayer is strongly rooted, is to avail the services of both those who are seen as spiritual healers and medical personnel in the treatment of patients who exhibit symptoms of psychosis. Intelligently done, and with checks, the integration of the two methods of treatment means that those perceived as having the ability to soothe and comfort with prayer and spiritual advice could provide emotional support in keeping with the religious convictions of a patient, while medical teams could ensure that all the appropriate therapies and medicines alleviate a sick person's anguish. The combination of the two therapies, ideally with care providers working in tandem, are likely to have the best outcome for the patient.

This is not currently happening. In most of Pakistan, there is little awareness about the scientific and medical nature of symptoms like anxiety, psychosis (which can manifest themselves in various ways such as speaking in different voices, thinking you're someone else etc) and inappropriate behaviour and the only treatment that is provided is that by faith healers, who often abuse the trust reposed in their perceived abilities. This lack of awareness means that individuals who would otherwise be able to have a complete recovery with medical intervention do not avail this option. This is a tragedy, because the evil associated with some of these phenomena are attached to these individuals and they and their families live with that stigma for the rest of their lives. The very empathy that religion prescribes is required to change this status quo and the task of doing so must begin now.

(By Rafia Zakaria Dawn, 06, 03/02/2021)

Solar health units

IN a laudable decision, the Punjab government has decided to run all Basic Health Units on solar energy. At a signing ceremony in Lahore, the provincial government's health minister, Dr Yasmin Rashid, told reporters that BHUs in Sargodha, Jhelum and Mandi Bahauddin would be converted to solar to eventually be followed up by all other BHUs around the province. The project will not only save money in the long run for the health department by reducing their power bills, but also aid in providing continuous power to the BHUs. But more importantly, it is a step in the right direction to catalyse the solar revolution in Pakistan that is still slow in taking off compared to the rest of the world.

Government departments can play a critical role in pushing the solar revolution along by shifting their own consumption to renewable, point-of-consumption sources. This will not only create more demand for solar technology in the country, but also provide an impetus to others to follow. Every new solar installation, especially in a location where it enjoys high public visibility, has a demonstration effect and plays a role in helping to mainstream solar power in the eyes of the public. Other government departments in Punjab, as well as the other provinces, should follow suit and shift more and more of their premises towards solar technology like the health department in Punjab has done. Eventually, the provincial assemblies can also be shifted to solar, and provincial regulations could be designed to encourage fuel pumps to introduce the technology on their premises too. These kinds of initiatives will help power the solar revolution in critical ways. Since many of these departments work mostly during daylight hours it makes their transition to solar more viable. Commercial and government establishments have to lead the way in pushing this revolution along in Pakistan, and the Punjab government has shown the way forward with this initiative.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 05/02/2021)

Doctor suspended for vaccinating 2 citizens

Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazl Pechuho ordered on Sunday suspension of East district health officer Dr Aneela Qureshi, who was deployed at Covid-19 vaccination Centre at the Dow University of Health Sciences' (DUHS') Ojha campus, after two common citizens were reportedly inoculated at the facility.

The photos of both the citizens, shared by them on social media, have gone viral.

It is alleged that the said citizens, said to have been vaccinated on Saturday, are the daughter and son-in-law of a politician.

Sindh emergency operation centre coordinator for immunisation and polio in Karachi Fayyaz Hussain Abbasi has been tasked with inquiring into the matter and submitting a report within the next three days.

Taking notice of the incident, Federal Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar tweeted: "A complaint has been received that Covid-19 vaccine is being administered to not just health workers in Karachi, but also acquaintances. Taking immediate notice, [special

assistant to the prime minister on health] Dr Faisal Sultan chaired a meeting today (Sunday), attended by the National Command and Operation Centre team and representatives of the Sindh government. In the meeting, it was stressed that only health workers are to be inoculated."

Meanwhile, the DUHS spokesperson stated that the suspended doctor was not employed at the facility.

Separately, according to a statement issued by the Sindh health department on Thursday, a total of 7,349 health workers in Sindh were vaccinated by then. In the metropolis, 1,192 healthcare professionals were vaccinated at Khaliq Dina Hall, 462 at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, 558 at DUHS' Ojha Campus, 551 at Sindh Government Qatar Hospital Orangi, 255 at Sindh Government Hospital New Karachi, 615 at Sindh Government Hospital Liaquatabad, 268 at Sindh Government Children Hospital, 722 at Sindh Government Hospital Korangi No5 and 881 at Malir Hospital.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 08/02/2021)

Karachi Port air hazardous to health: SEPA

The Sindh High Court (SHC) directed the Keamari SSP on Thursday to take action on Keamari deaths, allegedly caused by a gas leak, after the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) submitted a report concluding that the quality of air at the Karachi port, the oil terminal and the port's nearby areas was injurious to health.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Amjad Ali Sahito, was issued the directive during the hearing of a plea pertaining to the deaths.

According to the SEPA's report submitted to the court, a team of the environmental watchdog visited the port a day after the deaths were reported.

Elaborating on the team's findings, the report stated that containers of toxic chemicals were being kept at the port for the past several years, garbage heaps surrounded the oil terminal, pipeline were in abysmal condition, posing a risk of accidents, air quality at the port was highly injurious to health and ships carrying soybean and pet food were docked at the port.

The report further stated that the concentrations of carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide and sulphur dioxide were found alarmingly high, and standard operating procedures for unloading ships were being ignored.

According to the report, samples for testing the air quality were also collected from Railway Colony, Dr Ziauddin Hospital, Mussan Chowk and Bhatta Chowk on February 17, 2020 and February 18, 2020. Besides, the team again visited the port on December 24, 2020, and reported the presence of soybean in the air following the unloading of the legume from a ship.

Following the submission of the report, the court enquired from the investigation officer (IO) why the case was closed when it was categorised as A-class.

The IO replied that an autopsy on one of the bodies was performed and it was found that the said person had died of a drug overdose.

"No further autopsies were performed [and the case was closed]," the IO replied.

Making the observation that the police seemed to have been negligent in pursuing the case, the court stated, "No attention was paid to the statements of the victims... The police failed to fulfill its responsibility and the investigation was not conducted properly." It also observed that the gas leak was reported on February 16 and the samples for testing were collected two days later.

The court directed the Keamari SSP to take action in the case in the light of the SEPPA's report and adjourned the hearing until March 16.

At least 14 persons were killed and several others were injured, reportedly due to a gas leak in Keamari on February 16, 2020.

Records sought

Meanwhile, a two-member bench headed by SHC Chief Justice Ahmed Ali Shaikh sought the records of all cases registered against an accused, Sarmad Siddiqui, in an extortion case.

During the hearing of Siddiqui's bail plea, the court enquired from SSP Junaid Sheikh how many cases had been registered against Siddiqui.

The SSP informed the court that 15 cases were registered against Siddiqui and his accomplices.

At this, the court directed Siddiqui's lawyer to explain how come so many cases were registered against his client.

Sindh High Court has sought records of cases registered against accused Sarmad Siddiqui who was acquitted in the airport attack case.

The lawyer claimed that Siddiqui had filed a plea against Counter Terrorism Department officials and multiple cases were registered against him in retaliation.

Extending Siddiqui's bail until the next hearing on February 25, the court directed the relevant authorities to submit the records of cases registered against the accused by then.

Earlier, Siddiqui was accused and booked for facilitating banned outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan in perpetrating an attack on the Karachi airport in 2014. He was later acquitted in the case.

Missing persons case

At another hearing of a plea seeking the recovery of missing persons, a two-member bench headed by Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto expressed annoyance when the relevant authorities failed to submit a progress report on the matter.

The court directed the focal person to submit a separate report for each case relating to missing persons.

Besides, the court sought reports on missing persons from detention centres.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 12/02/2021)

New dialysis unit opened at KIKD

City Administrator Laeeq Ahmed on Thursday inaugurated another dialysis unit at the Karachi Institute of Kidney Diseases, the second state-of-the-art facility of its kind run by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation.

The unit-II, equipped with 25 modern dialysis machines, took the total number of machines to 50 at the KIKD where around 150 patients are given dialysis treatment on a daily basis.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, the administrator said that the KIKD served the masses by inducting modern techniques for dialysis and other facilities. He added that the facilities at the institute would further be expanded.

Mr Ahmed also visited urology, lithotripsy, ICU, laboratory, ultrasound clinic and other parts of the institute and inquired after the health of patients.

He said that patients from the interior of Sindh as well as Balochistan came to the KIKD for treatment and added that measures were being taken for starting kidney transplantation facility at the institute.

KMDC principal Prof Nargis Anjum said that this year's theme of World Kidney Day was 'Live healthy life'.

She said that women were more affected by kidney diseases than males and added that diabetes, high and low blood pressure, weak bones, lack of blood and excessive use of painkillers were the main reasons behind the kidney-related problems among people.

She said that people over 50 years of age should get their kidney check-up done on regular basis.

In-charge nephrology department Prof Khurram Danial said that the number of patients facing kidney diseases was increasing considerably. "Preventive measures are more important than cure," he added.

He said that the KIKD had become the second largest public-sector kidney hospital after the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation. "CT scan facility would also be available while 200 patients would be given dialysis facility soon," he added.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 13/03/2021)

PMA, OSP slam incidents of violence against doctors

Representatives of the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) and Ophthalmological Society of Pakistan (OSP) on Friday condemned the incidents of violence against doctors in Sindh and demanded that the government take immediate action against culprits and provide protection to healthcare providers.

Speaking at a press conference held at the PMA House, they regretted that doctors were being harassed and tortured at a time when the country had already lost 190 medics, including specialists, to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"This is extremely unfortunate. People are attacking and harassing doctors, who are serving them at the cost of their lives. These front-line workers are being praised and respected around the globe but the way they are being treated in their own country is condemnable," said Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro of the PMA-Karachi.

He warned that if this hostility against healthcare providers continued, many of those still working would be forced to leave the country, aggravating the public health crisis.

Recalling a recent case reported at one of the major tertiary care private hospitals in the city, Dr Qazi Wasiq of the OSP-Karachi said a lady doctor and a senior consultant ophthalmologist were verbally abused and attacked by a patient's family member, causing them injuries.

"It's the state's responsibility to provide security to doctors while the Sindh Health Care Commission (SHCC) should monitor such situations and play its due role prescribed in its charter," he added.

The incidents of violence, according to doctors, have also been reported from Johi town in Dadu district, and Daharki in Ghotki district in recent days.

Silence of SHCC questioned

"In both the cases, furious family members of patients tortured doctors, causing them serious injuries. They also broke furniture and costly medical equipment of their clinics," Dr Shoro said, questioning the silence of the government and the SHCC.

He said the eye specialist attacked at a private hospital was one of the few retina specialists left in the country and it would be a great loss if he decided to leave Pakistan.

Asked about the SHCC's role in taking up these cases, he said one of the main reasons for setting up the commission was to prevent violence against doctors and medical negligence.

"These cases have been widely reported in the media but the commission hasn't taken any action yet. It is supposed to take up such cases, investigate them, fix responsibility and play its role in awarding punishment."

The speakers demanded that the prime minister, the chief justice of Pakistan, the chief of the army staff and Sindh chief minister initiate an impartial judicial inquiry into these cases and bring the culprits to book as per the law.

They also criticised administrations of private hospitals and said if they failed in providing protection to their staff, how one could expect doctors to work in a peaceful environment in remote areas.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 13/03/2021)

Violence against doctors

It is an unfortunate reality in Pakistan that doctors and other health professionals often have to face the wrath of angry attendants in case of death or injury to a patient. A number of such ugly incidents have been reported from Sindh recently, prompting medical professionals to call for the highest offices in the country to intervene and protect them from such violence. Addressing a press conference in Karachi on Friday, doctors belonging to the Pakistan Medical Association and the Ophthalmological Society of Pakistan demanded the prime minister, chief justice, army chief and Sindh chief minister initiate a judicial inquiry and bring elements involved in attacking medical professionals to book. Giving details of the incidents, the doctors said a senior eye specialist at a private hospital in Karachi — said to be one of the few retina specialists left in Pakistan — was attacked by attendants after a procedure allegedly went awry, while doctors were also attacked in Dadu and Ghotki.

Medical negligence is a very serious matter, especially when the death of a patient or disability occurs. However, there can be no justification for attacking medical staff and ransacking hospitals. As doctors have rightly pointed out, protecting medical professionals and probing cases of medical negligence is the job of the Sindh Health Care Commission and its corresponding bodies in other provinces. However, medics say cases of violence are rising because the regulatory body is not doing its job. To prevent this situation from deteriorating, it must be made absolutely clear by the state that violence against health professionals will not be tolerated and that those involved will be punished. Moreover, there should be a well-defined, transparent procedure if allegations of medical negligence do emerge, and doctors found guilty must be penalised. Already Pakistan faces a brain drain. If more doctors and other medical professionals decide to pack up and leave because they want a safer working environment, it will mean greater distress for this country's fragile health sector.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 15/03/2021)

SHC suspends two MPAs over rising dog-bite cases in their constituencies

The membership of two Sindh Assembly lawmakers was suspended by the Sindh High Court's Sukkur bench on a petition about dog-bite incidents in their constituencies on Thursday.

The court issued written orders about dog-bite incidents in two constituencies — Ratodero and Jamshoro — and not supervising campaign to kill stray dogs and growing cases of dog-bite incidents in these areas.

According to details, the court ordered suspension of memberships of MPAs from Ratodero and Jamshoro.

The court also strictly warned MPAs who failed to supervise campaign of killing stray dogs in their constituencies.

In the written orders, the court called explanation from the secretary of the Sindh Assembly as to why the MPAs were not supervising the dog-killing campaign despite court orders.

The court also sought reports about incidents of dog bite from deputy commissioners of Larkana and Shikarpur districts by March 31.

It is the work of MPAs to look after and protect people, says court

It may be mentioned that the court during previous hearing had warned about the suspension of memberships of five MPAs and also expressed its displeasure over non-supervision of the campaign by the lawmakers.

Additional Advocate General Shafi Mohammad Chandio while submitting report in the court had informed that 110,000 stray dogs had been killed in Sindh. However, the court by showing no confidence in the report, said that only figures may not be furnished, adding that if the dogs had been killed then why the incidents were increasing.

The bodies of dead dogs were being thrown on streets after killing them which was also spreading diseases.

The additional advocate general informed the court that the work of MPAs was to make legislation, not kill dogs.

On this plea Justice Aftab Ahmed Gorar expressed his anger and said that what legislation was made by MPAs during the past 15 years; it was the work of MPAs to look after and protect their people, nor going to Karachi and sitting there after their election.

The dogs were biting children of poor people and that the eyesight of a minor child was lost in an attack of a dog. Who was responsible for that and how the eyesight of the child could be returned, the court asked and issued the orders.

Six people injured by stray dogs in Jacobabad

Six persons, including four children, were injured by stray dogs in different areas of Jacobabad on Thursday.

According to a spokesman of the Jacobabad Institute of Medical Sciences (JIMS) Hospital, Khalid, a girl Umeedan Brohi, 10, resident of Shah Ghazi Mohalla; a boy, Asad Jamali, 10, resident of Nawazoo Jagir; Naseebo Kato, 50, a resident of Mubarakpur; Mohammad Yousuf Khoso, 35, resident of Thull; were injured by dogs.

Two minor children Malook Odh and Imran Dayo were also injured by dogs adjacent to the Special Force Ground located within the airport police remit, Jacobabad, on Thursday.

The injured people were taken to the JIMS Hospital Jacobabad by their relatives.

They were later allowed to go home after they were administered with anti-rabies vaccine.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 19/03/2021)

Public hospitals

Commenting on the insufficient services being provided at government hospitals in Punjab, the provincial health minister says she will take effective steps to improve treatment facilities at these hospitals. However, had the minister undertaken surprise inspections of hospitals, the quality of services at the infirmaries would have improved considerably and she would not need to make the promise.

Specialist physicians and surgeons, reportedly, don't turn up at hospitals and there are complaints of late arrival of other doctors too. In order to ensure punctual presence of doctors, nurses and paramedics, the government tried to introduce the biometric system of attendance at hospitals but the proposal met with stiff resistance from healthcare providers. Hence the government's move was scuttled. Specialist doctors are seldom available in out-patients and emergency departments. Resultantly, patients, who cannot afford to consult private medical specialists due to their high fees, are denied access to specialist care and advice.

In the absence of specialist and senior doctors from OPDs and emergency departments, it is left to doctors doing house jobs and junior doctors to attend to patients in intensive care units, OPDs and emergency departments. Sometimes they receive instructions from seniors and specialists over the phone. Most government hospitals lack specialists for treatment of all diseases, so when some patients develop complications, they are sent to other hospitals where specialist doctors and state-of-the-art equipment are available.

Specialists and state-of-the-art facilities are available only at two public hospitals — Jinnah and Mayo hospitals — in Lahore. Those in need of consulting specialist doctors at government hospitals claim that only well-connected patients are allowed access to specialists; others are referred to private consultants.

Pakistan has a shortage of doctors, dentists and nurses. Moreover, instead of increasing the health budget, the government has only reduced it over the years.
(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 21/03/2021)

Sindh to approach centre for keeping control of NICH, JPMC, NICVD

The Sindh government on Monday decided to approach the federal government to keep the administrative control of three major hospitals of Karachi under the provincial set-up so that free-of-cost health services to the people of the province could be continued.

This decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House, about the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and National Institute of Child Health (NICH).

The meeting was attended by Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Advocate General Salman Talibuddin, Health Secretary Kazim Jatoi, Law Secretary Dr Mansoor Rizvi, JPMC executive director Dr Seemin Jamali, NICH director Prof Syed Jamal Raza and Prof Ameen Khawaja of the NICVD.

The chief minister was told that the federal government had decided to run the three hospitals under their board of governors.

The CM is told the federal govt wanted to run the three hospitals under their BoGs

At this, the chief minister said that the federal government's decision was contrary to the judgement of the Supreme Court.

Mr Shah said that the provincial government had worked day and night to make the hospitals amongst the best facilities in the country. "We have not only enhanced their budget but launched new initiatives such as CyberKnife in JPMC, established satellite centres of NICVD and upgraded NICH," he said.

The CM added that at this stage shifting of the administrative control of these hospitals from the provincial government to the federal government would badly affect their service delivery.

The chief minister directed the health department to write a letter to the federal government and apprise them of the situation.

"I will also write a letter to the prime minister with a request to sign a memorandum of understanding with the provincial government to run these three hospitals," he said.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 23/03/2021)

Sindh seeks agreement with centre to continue operations of three key hospitals

While seeking withdrawal of a notification on the establishment of a board of governors (BoG) for running three key tertiary care hospitals in Karachi, the Sindh government has proposed to the federal government to reach an agreement with it to manage and operate these facilities.

The suggestion has recently been communicated by the Sindh Health and Population Welfare Minister, Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, through a letter addressed to Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr Faisal Sultan.

The letter dated March 22 titled 'Transfer of hospitals from government of Sindh to the federal government' describes the federal notification relating to the establishment of a BoG for running the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), National Institute of Child Health (NICH) and National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) as a "violation of the Supreme Court judgement which requires that the federal government reimburse the government of Sindh all disbursements and financial outlays made and expenditures incurred by it from June 29, 2011 till the date of the return".

The Sindh government, according to the letter, has so far incurred Rs100 billion on the management and operations of these hospitals since 2011.

The provincial govt claims to have spent Rs100bn on JPMC, NICVD and NICH since 2011

Making a case for running the three hospitals under an agreement with the provincial government, the health minister refers to a federal cabinet's decision pertaining to the transfer of the Sheikh Zayed Postgraduate Medical Institute, Lahore, as well as JPMC, NICVD and NICH from the provinces to the federal government.

"The cabinet considered the summary dated 17 June, 2019 submitted by National Health Services Regulation Division for transfer of hospitals from provinces to the federal government and decided 'in principle' to hand over these hospitals to respective provincial governments with their mutual consent.

Management contract

"A report in this regard, with full justification including current financial constraints of the federal government, will be submitted by the National Health Services Regulation Division before the Supreme Court in order to avoid any adverse order of the Honourable Court," the letter read.

This matter, the health minister wrote, was pursued by Dr Zafar Mirza, the then SAPM health, who sent a letter dated July 8, 2019, to the attorney general of Pakistan, informing him about the cabinet's decision and requesting implementation of the same.

"In his letter, the then special assistant to the prime minister on health also shared the recommendations of the committee constituted in pursuance of the decision of the federal cabinet taken in its meeting held on May 28, 2019."

One of the recommendations of the committee, according to the letter, was that the federal government can have a management contract with provincial governments on mutually agreed terms encompassing all financial and governance-related aspects ensuring efficiency, accountability and transparency.

The health minister also cited a part of the Supreme Court's decision dated Jan 7, 2019 and argued that the judgement did not bar the federal government and the provincial government from entering into a management and operations agreement to enable the provincial government to manage and operate these three institutions.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 25/03/2021)

SHC seeks reports about cultivation of vegetables through sewage

The Sindh High Court has directed the additional deputy commissioners of Malir and Korangi to file comments till April 8 after it was informed that cultivation of vegetables through sewage still continued in both districts.

The two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar also asked the administration of the two districts to submit an action plan for implementation in future to curb such cultivation in their territorial limits.

When two petitions filed against cultivation of vegetables through sewage and industrial waste in Korangi, Malir, Landhi and others areas of the city came up for hearing, the additional deputy commissioners along with other officials of both districts turned up.

They contended that there was no cultivation of vegetables through sewage in their territorial jurisdictions as they have removed all such crops.

They maintained that whenever such cultivation started they took appropriate action and will continue this drive in future as well.

However, a lawyer for one of the petitioners has filed objections along with photographs taken on March 17 to show that cultivation of vegetables through sewage was still being carried out.

The bench directed both ADCs to file comments on the objections and pictures submitted by the lawyer for petitioner on next hearing and also produce an action plan for prevention of such cultivation in future in their areas.

In the past, the bench had also issued several directives to the administration of both districts to immediately stop the cultivation and devise a proper mechanism to ensure that vegetables will not be grown in future in such manner.

The petitions were filed last year in the SHC and they contended that vegetables were being grown through sewage and industrial waste in Korangi, Malir, Landhi and others areas located in the outskirts of the city and these vegetables were not fit for human consumption.

The petitioners further argued that government land was being used/encroached upon for cultivation of vegetables grown in an unhealthy fashion.

Orphanages law

The SHC on Thursday directed the secretary social welfare department to apprise it on April 14 about the efforts being taken to implement the orphanages law.

One of the petitioners, who is part of the orphanage board, submitted that the last meeting of the board was convened in January last year and no efforts have been made about registration as the orphanages were operating without being listed under the law.

When a two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar took up a petition seeking proper compliances under the Sindh Orphanages (Supervision and Control) Act, 1976 and Sindh Darul Atfal (Supervision and Control) Rules 1987 for hearing, the director general Sindh Child Protection Authority Dr Azeem-ur-Rehman filed reply.

The deputy director social welfare department Tahir Mehmood also turned up and sought time to file reply. The bench directed him to submit comments on next hearing.

However, the secretary social welfare department was found absent and the bench observed that he should be in attendance without any excuse at next hearing.

It also directed the secretary to apprise it as to what action is being taken under the provision of Sindh Orphanages Act, 1976 as according to a petitioner the last meeting of orphanage board was held around 14 months ago and no effort has been made thereafter for ensuring registration of orphanages which are operating without registration under the act.

The bench further asked that secretary will also produce the copy of minutes of the last meeting of the board as well as a separate list regarding registration of orphanages in the province.

Custody of seized lions

A provincial law officer on Thursday requested the same bench to grant time to file reply after it was informed that a wildlife sanctuary was to be established by the provincial government under the law but the same has not been done so far.

When a matter came up for hearing about the custody and auction of lions seized from a farmhouse in Gulshan-i-Hadeed in August, the bench was informed that after taking over the custody of the lions, the wildlife department had issued a notification for the auction, but it was stayed by the SHC in September last year.

The lawyer for Society for Protection of Animals, who petitioned the SHC, argued that the lions were smuggled whereas the counsel for intervener, who is the owner of the animals, contended that these lions were purchased from Punjab and produced some documents.

The intervener sought the custody of remaining lions as he said that two of the animals died during captivity.

An assistant conservator submitted that the health condition of both lions was not good and despite proper treatment they could not survive.

While referring to the Sindh Wildlife Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management Act 2020, the lawyer for petitioner argued that wildlife sanctuary was to be established by the Sindh government in terms of Section 13 which has not been done so far.

An assistant advocate general requested for time to seek instructions from provincial government as well as chief conservator wildlife. The hearing was adjourned till April 1.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 27/03/2021)

'Over 30,000 dogs vaccinated in city'

Sindh Local Government Secretary Syed Najam Ahmad Shah has said that over 30,000 stray dogs have been vaccinated in Karachi alone under the rabies control programme.

He said this on Monday.

He said that three places in Karachi were active in the field of sterilisation and surgery of dogs and similar measures would be taken across the province.

Mr Shah said that the LG department would keep following the orders of the court and protection of lives of the people would be ensured as no compromise on human lives would be made.

"The rabies control programme is now entering a new phase under which modern equipment, operating theatre tables, vaccines, vehicles, ID chips and medicines will be procured and the surgical procedure of sterilisation of stray dogs on a modern and scientific basis will play an important role in the protection of human lives," he added.

Successful efforts would be made in all districts of the province with the help of welfare organisations, he added.

He said that the Sindh government had designed a mechanism similar to that of developed countries to control the dog population which was "unique".

He said that the selection of a place for the operating theatre and treatment centre in Nawabshah had also been started.
(By APP Dawn, 14, 31/03/2021)

PMA criticises health commission for alleged failures, misdeeds

The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) on Friday said the Sindh Healthcare Commission (SHCC) was not playing its role effectively as it had totally failed to introduce a "comprehensive" strategy to eradicate quackery from Sindh.

This was stated by president of the PMA Sindh chapter Dr Mirza Ali Azhar and general secretary of PMA Karachi Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro in a joint press conference held at PMA House.

Dr Mirza Ali Azhar said the basic purpose of formation of the SHCC was to register doctors and healthcare facilities to act swiftly when there was a complaint of any mishap at any healthcare facility either due to negligence of doctor/staff or any complication during treatment and management of patients, and to eradicate quackery at all levels.

He lamented that the SHCC had miserably failed in this regard.

"As far as the registration of doctors is concerned the lower grade officials of the SHCC come to doctors, misbehave with them and with no valid reason seal their clinics."

He explained that the usual practice of a family physician's clinic was that a clinic was opened at least 30-40 minutes before arrival of doctors.

"The boys clean the premises and settle things before the arrival of doctors. In the meantime, usually patients start arriving and wait for the doctor. At this juncture, officials of the SHCC barge into the premises and claim that patients are being treated by compounders in the absence of doctor.

"Then the clinic is sealed and the process of humiliation of doctor goes on. Doctors are being treated as criminals. Secondly cases of alleged negligence and/or complications are also mishandled. The SHCC is not playing its role effectively."

The president of the PMA Sindh claimed there was no policy to check the menace of quackery, instead, in a way the SHCC was promoting quackery by registering a large number of hakims/homeopaths, who were doing illegal allopathic practice in connivance with the SHCC officials.

He alleged that the SHCC officials were taking protection money from these so-called "registered doctors".

Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro said PMA as a stakeholder had always been helpful to the SHCC and wanted it be a successful regulatory body without any corruption and mismanagement. But now the situation is rapidly going from bad to worse, he added.

He said that the PMA was compelled to bring this matter to all concerned with the help of media.

"We warn very strictly that if the behaviour of SHCC does not change, we as a stakeholder [will] go to the court of law and challenge all the unlawful activities of the SHCC. Our doctors are extremely enraged."

He said although the PMA as per its policy did not support strikes and closure of health facilities, but in these circumstances "we will be helpless if those enraged doctors decide to go on protest".

Dr Shoro said PMA had decided to bring this matter in the notice of higher judiciary, the government of Sindh and media.

The PMA will write letters to everyone who matters, he added.
(By PPI Dawn, 13, 10/04/2021)

Country's first liver auto-transplantation procedure performed at DUHS

Pakistan has achieved a major milestone in healthcare and medical sciences as the doctors at Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) have successfully performed the first liver auto-transplantation procedure, a top official said here on Saturday.

Described as "one of the most complex and sophisticated procedures", the doctors at DUHS took out the liver of a 28-year-old cancer patient, surgically removed the tumour, reconstructed the damaged veins and then re-implanted it in the patient's body, who's now in the phase of recovery.

"The DUHS team of liver transplant surgeons has achieved this major breakthrough performing one of the most complex and sophisticated procedures, known as liver auto-transplantation," said DUHS Vice Chancellor Prof Saeed Quraishy.

"In this procedure, diseased liver is removed from the body. Then the cancer is surgically removed, damaged veins are reconstructed or artificial veins are inserted and finally the liver is re-implanted."

'Liver can regenerate itself, so people can [safely] donate parts of their livers to others'

Meanwhile, speaking at a seminar on 'Liver, Kidney and Bone Marrow Transplants at Dow University of Health Sciences Hospital — Meet the Experts', organised at the Ojha campus of the varsity, Prof Quraishy also shared details of the 28-year-old patient, who hails from Zhob, Balochistan.

"He came to DUHS with liver cancer, which had damaged some portion of his liver and some important veins," he said.

"Prof Dr Faisal Dar led our team of surgeons and doctors. Our team of experts including Dr Jahanzeb Hyder, Dr Muhammad Iqbal and others performed the country's first liver auto-transplantation. Before this one performed at DUHS, only around 20 such procedures have been performed in the world."

He said that regular liver transplants were also being carried out despite Covid-19, and so far around half a dozen such procedures had successfully been done at DUHS.

Liver transplant surgeon at DUHS Dr Jahanzeb Hyder said the country required hundreds of liver transplants every year due to the growing number of chronic patients.

"Liver is the only organ in the human body which can regenerate itself so people can donate parts of their livers to others for saving their lives," he said.

"In a liver transplant, an unhealthy part of a patient is surgically removed and a healthy portion of a liver from a donor is implanted. Following the surgery, both the donor and the recipient can live healthy lives."

Speaking on the occasion, Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) Surgeon Dr Farrukh Ali Khan said BMTs were performed to treat patients suffering from various types of blood cancer and genetic blood disorders, including thalassaemia and haemophilia.

"In most cases, bone marrow of the siblings or parents is used for the transplant," he said. "Bone marrow is also part of the body, which can grow again so there is no harm in donating bone marrow for the treatment of patients. There are now techniques where medicines are used to increase bone marrow in the patients with low marrow."

Prof Rashid Bin Hamid, a kidney transplant surgeon at DUHS, said in Pakistan more than 20,000,000 patients needed kidney transplants as the end-stage renal disease was on the rise.

"But only 1,000-1,200 people have the opportunity to get renal transplants while the remaining patients have to depend on dialysis for their entire life," he said. "At DUHS, we have the most advanced renal transplant programme of the country where dozens of these procedures are being performed on a monthly basis."

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 11/04/2021)

Health experts say diabetes growing amongst teenagers

Healthcare professionals and medical science experts have warned that teenagers as young as 13 to 15 years had now started developing type 2 diabetes in Pakistan and advised people to revert to active lifestyle by staying away from screens.

They also suggested that people resort to 40-50 minutes daily exercise and eat healthy and balanced diet to avoid getting the chronic illness.

"We are extremely concerned to see teenagers as young as 13 to 15 years of age developing type 2 diabetes in Pakistan," Dr Nadeem Naeem, consultant diabetologist told a news briefing following a diabetes screening camp at Karachi Press Club (KPC) on Monday.

"Girls are more prone to develop type 2 diabetes as compared to boys in Pakistan but we are seeing an increasing number of teenagers coming up with type 2 diabetes in the country."

The diabetes screening camp was organized by Ehad Medical Centre in collaboration with 'Discovering Diabetes' project at the KPC.

'Girls are more prone to develop type 2 diabetes'

Dr Naeem said Pakistan was currently facing an epidemic of diabetes, and warned that due to sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits, youngsters and teenagers were also developing diabetes in the country, which is extremely alarming.

"Earlier we used to see people developing diabetes in 40s, then in 30s but it is now very common in 20s and even among teenagers. This situation can lead to serious repercussions," he said and added that people would have to rethink their priorities.

Speaking about fasting in Ramazan, he said fasting was extremely good for overweight people, pre-diabetics and those who have recently been diagnosed with diabetes and added that people with moderate and severe diabetes should consult their physicians so that their medicines and diet could be adjusted in accordance with their health conditions.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 14/04/2021)

Doctor facing 'financial hardships' commits suicide

Amid reports that a doctor posted for Covid-19 duties in Kashmore district had recently committed suicide after experiencing financial hardships, representatives of young doctors hired last year under the Sindh Epidemic Act demanded on Monday that the government immediately release their salaries pending for months.

Dr Qadir Nawaz Jakhrani was posted at the Taluka Headquarter Hospital, Kashmore.

Speaking to Dawn, Dr Hussain Chandio, a friend of Dr Jakhrani and president of the Covid-19 Doctors' Forum, part of Young Doctors Association, said the doctor took his life a week ago.

"We didn't highlight his death in the media because we thought the matter would be politicised. Recently, however, his family contacted us in Karachi and told us that he took this extreme step out of frustration following persistent denial by the health department to pay his salary pending for the past few months."

Dr Jakhrani was married with three children and the sole breadwinner of his family, he added.

'We haven't been paid [our salaries] for six months'

According to Dr Chandio, the health department hasn't paid salaries since Nov 15 to a significant number of contractual staff.

"The department has paid the staff performing Covid-19 duties in 14 districts while the rest in 16 districts have been waiting for their salaries since Nov 15," he said, describing the government's attitude as highly unfair and cruel.

Meanwhile, the district health officer, Kashmore, in a letter to the director general of health, Hyderabad, has blamed the death on "mental health issues" that the doctor had been facing for quite some time.

"Dr Qadir Nawaz Jakhrani was sincere to his duties and did a wonderful job in Covid-19 sampling at the taluka headquarter hospital in Kashmore and fighting against the Covid-19 virus. Unfortunately, Dr Qadir Nawaz was suffering from mental health issues and was under the treatment of a psychiatrist.

"Suddenly, the news came on the media on April 14, 2021, that the above-named doctor has committed suicide at home by hanging himself from a ceiling fan," the letter says.

The health department had hired 1,100 doctors and 600 nurses for Covid-19 duties last year on a contractual basis. The staff has also been assured of job regularisation a few times, but there hasn't been any notification by the government so far on their status.

"We were hired for 89 days and our contract has been renewed for the fourth time. And, while we are continuously performing Covid-19 duties at the risk of our lives, the government doesn't pay us on time. In fact, this time, we haven't been paid for six months," said an affected doctor currently posted at the Kidney Centre in Landhi.

Inquiry body set up

The young doctors have also received support from the Pakistan Medical Association, Sindh chapter.

In a press statement, the association has expressed great sorrow over Dr Jakhrani's death and demanded that the government institute a fair inquiry into the incident and order immediate release of his salary and award a substantial amount to the aggrieved family in compensation.

"The reason behind this tragic incident is that he wasn't receiving his salary for the past few months, though he was performing his Covid-19 duties. This is shameful, to say the least. The PMA Sindh strongly condemns this inhumane behaviour of the Sindh government for neglecting the genuine rights of the people who are selflessly performing their duties," the statement said.

Meanwhile, the government has set up an inquiry committee to investigate Dr Jakhrani's death, which is required to submit its report within three days. Its members are: Dr Tasleem Khamisani (chairman), the medical superintendent of the GMM Medical College Hospital, Sukkur, Dr Jameel Ahmed Mahar, the director of health services, Sukkur, and Dr Inayat Awan, an associate professor of psychiatry at the GMM Medical College, Sukkur.

"While there has been some delay in salaries' release to some doctors, the government hasn't stopped the salary of anyone. The same will be released once the relevant district health officer submits the performance report of the doctors concerned," replied a health department spokesperson when asked about the non-payment of salaries.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 20/04/2021)

Who killed the doctor?

A young medical doctor, the sole breadwinner for his three minor children and wife, has committed suicide in Sindh after he was not paid his salary for the past four months. He was appointed by the provincial government on contractual basis to attend to Covid-19 patients. The physician killed himself a week ago, but the incident received little attention in the media as such news do. After getting fed up with official apathy, the doctor's dependents and colleagues have highlighted the issue. The physician's relatives are unable to support his wife and children. The young doctor has apparently been driven to take to the ultimate step due to his desperate economic circumstances. He has left no suicide note.

Both society and the government bear the responsibility for pushing a highly qualified young man to the point of taking his own life. When one is left high and dry and sees no help coming from any quarter, they are left with no choice but to turn their backs on society itself. Last year the provincial government had hired 1,100 doctors and 1,600 nurses on contract basis to deal with the situation arising out of the coronavirus pandemic. Informed circles claim that these physicians and nurses are being paid with considerable delay. This claim should be viewed in the light of the delays in the payment of salaries of other government departments' employees and the inordinate delays in clearance of retired employees' pension papers and their dues.

A total of 767 persons have committed suicide between 2016 and 2020 in Sindh. These are officially recorded cases. Tharparkar, Badin, Dadu, Umerkot and Sanghar districts top the list of suicides. Considering the gravity of the situation, the government should set up a commission to look into the causes of the rising incidents of self-annihilation and recommend corrective measures to stop the dangerous trend. How many suicides will be attributed to mental health issues? The authorities should be more focused on the economic needs of the people.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 21/04/2021)

Pakistan's first doctorate in nursing awarded to AKU fellow

Pakistan's first-ever doctorate in nursing has been awarded by the Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery to Khairunnissa Ajani.

As part of her PhD, Ms Ajani conducted research into hypertension or high blood pressure – a condition that affects one in every three adults in Pakistan.

Ms Ajani's research found low levels of physical activity and poor adherence to a hypertension-friendly diet among people with high blood pressure. Interestingly, women, in particular, tended to focus more on their family's well-being while neglecting their own. Her study also emphasises the importance of family support in encouraging a patient to take care of his or her health.

"Developing family support is the key to enhancing the health of patients," Ms Ajani said. "Healthcare providers have to develop practices that raise awareness about hypertension in both the patient and their families."

The study also found that nurses can play a key role in developing a positive relationship with patients which can help promote a deeper understanding of the need for self-care. It also highlighted the need for professionals to move away from traditional health education strategies designed for the public towards individual more personalised healthcare regimes.

Ms Ajani currently serves as assistant dean of teaching, learning and undergraduate programmes at the AKU school.

A total of eight faculty members at the school hold PhDs from top nursing schools in the US and Canada.

The AKU school is the first nursing institution in Pakistan to have launched bachelor's, master's and PhD qualifications in nursing.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 02/05/2021)

Rise in dog bites

ON Wednesday, an unusually high number of dog-bite cases were reported in Larkana, when 19 people — the majority of them children — were admitted to the accident and emergency unit of Chandka Medical College Hospital. The next day, taking notice of the worrying rise in cases, the Sindh high court tasked the local government secretary to set up a mechanism for weekly updates with the district municipal corporations, with regard to the dog-bite incidents in their areas. Keeping in mind the shortage of rabies vaccines in hospitals, even if most dogs are not carriers of the disease, the rise in dog-bite cases is very alarming. In Karachi alone, more than 7,000 cases have been recorded so far this year. Last year, around 200,000 cases were reported across the province. Each time such an incident appears in the news, there is outrage, outlandish statements are thrown about, and the authorities respond by carrying out mass culling operations, shooting or poisoning dogs on sight in the streets. And yet the problem only seems to get worse, while the stray dog population keeps increasing. Clearly, these knee-jerk 'solutions' are not working, and might even be exacerbating the issue. Instead, trap-neuter-release — TNR — programmes need to be carried out on a mass scale, even if the process is more expensive and time-consuming.

Along with TNR operations, there have to be popular campaigns that aim to change attitudes towards animals. Issues like these cannot be left to a handful of individuals to 'fix' or 'solve' because there is a deeper cultural problem at play, and this concerns the general population's treatment of stray dogs, which can range from demonisation to indifference. Few people with means are ready to adopt them, choosing breeds that are not local to the region. It is also not uncommon to see people treat stray animals with cruelty: teasing, torturing or beating them. Dogs are loyal companions and protectors, and only become a threat when they feel threatened. (By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 08/05/2021)

Young man bitten by dog in Nawabshah dies of rabies in Karachi

In less than a week, two dog-bite victims, one hailing from Karachi and the other from Nawabshah, died of rabies at the Indus Hospital (TIH), officials said on Tuesday.



The first death was of a six-year-old boy, Mustafa, from Garden, Karachi, who was bitten by a dog on May 3 and died on May 21 while the second case was of a 24-year-old man, Nadeem, from Nawabshah who died here on Tuesday.

Hospital sources said case histories gathered from their families showed that both the patients received improper and inadequate treatment at government hospitals.

Mother of boy narrates ordeal

"My boy was bitten by a dog on the face and shoulder on May 3 and taken immediately to the emergency ward of Civil Hospital (Karachi) where I was asked to wash his wounds, which I did for a minute or so," Rabia, mother of Mustafa, told *Dawn*.

The doctor saw the boy after half an hour and administered a vaccine four times in different locations, two shots on the cheek and two on the hip, she added.

Second rabies-related death in five days; both patients received improper treatment at govt hospitals

The family was advised to bring the patient for a follow-up and further treatment in the outpatient department on May 6, May 10 and May 17. On the second visit, however, the family was told that there was no need to come again as the treatment had been completed. Being unsatisfied, the family took the boy to the National Institute of Child Health (NICH).

"The doctor there examined him and briefed us about rabies' signs and symptoms in detail. He assured us that there is no need to worry given the fact that my son hasn't shown any signs of illness in a week," she said.

The family believed that their child was perfectly fine as his wounds gradually healed and he seemed to be recovering. But he wasn't. Mustafa complained of a headache on the fifth day of Eid. The following days, he had a fever with vomiting.

"On May 20, I was alarmed to see when he showed signs of fear when water was given to him. The doctor at NICH had told us about this symptom of rabies and we took him there immediately," she said.

At NICH, another ordeal awaited the family as doctors refused to touch the patient after seeing he had full-blown rabies.

"We reported at the NICH at 12.30 midnight and were finally given a bed at 6am after we posted videos of Mustafa's sufferings on social media," the mother recalled.

According to the family, doctors' non-cooperative attitude forced them to shift their child to TIH where the family was counselled about rabies and Mustafa was provided with palliative care.

"Mustafa was my only child. After him, I don't pray for another baby but for the safety of other children. There are so many stray dogs roaming in our area, which have made residents' lives terrible but there is no action from the government," she said.

Critical lapses

Sharing his opinion on Mustafa's case, Aftab Gohar, heading the rabies' prevention centre at TIH, said the CHK documents presented by the family had no mention that rabies immunoglobulin (RIG), a life-saving medicine, was administered along with the vaccine.

"Also, there was no mention of which procedure was adopted for the vaccine's administration as there are two methods; intramuscular and intradermal. Both are effective but have to be given in a proper way.

"The wound wasn't washed for 10 to 15 minutes with ordinary soap, another critical step in rabies prevention. Last but not the least, two of the injections were given in the buttock area, which reduced their efficacy due to slow absorption," he pointed out while explaining lapses in the case management.

According to Mr Gohar, administration of RIG is extremely important in serious dog-bite wounds to save life.

A case of misdiagnosis

About the case from Nawabshah, he said 24-year-old Nadeem with a critical wound on the forehead was initially taken to the Civil Hospital in the district and later to other health facilities when he developed rabies' signs.

"Doctors misdiagnosed his case and treated him for diarrhoea. One of the biggest mistakes in his case was that his wound was stitched. A dog-bite injury is never stitched as it increases the risk for infection. Also in this case, apparently there was no administration of RIG."

According to experts, rabies is primarily an animal disease and mainly transmitted to man by the bite or scratch of a rabid dog. Within a few days to weeks from a bite/scratch of an infected dog the virus gets into the brain and manifestation of the symptoms start and the disease becomes irreversible and invariably fatal.

Rabies is completely preventable if the WHO recommendations for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis are followed in time and effectively, which includes washing wound/s immediately and thoroughly with soap and flowing water, followed by an effective anti-rabies vaccine series and immunoglobulin.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 26/05/2021)

Govt urged not to allow sale of diseased poultry in market

Amid concerns over reports of widespread mortalities at poultry farms across the country due to a disease outbreak, health experts on Thursday called upon the government to activate its food regulatory bodies and ensure that poultry meat of diseased animals wasn't sold in the market.

"The reports regarding viral diseases in chicken have been circulating in a section of the media for quite some time. These reports are also confirmed by the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), which stated that there have been poultry mortalities that even forced some farmers to shut their farms," stated the Pakistan Medical Association.

It urged provincial governments to activate their respective food departments so that supplies of hygienic meat could be ensured to the general public and take action against those playing with the lives and health of innocent people.

"It seems diseases have widely spread in poultry farms and apparently unhealthy chicken is being sold in the market. Unfortunately, there are reports in the media that some shopkeepers are even selling dead chicken to customers at cheaper rates. The government must take action and punish them according to the law," it said.

'There are reports that some shopkeepers are selling dead chicken to customers at cheaper rates'

Meanwhile, the PPA clarified that the disease outbreak at poultry farms was caused by Newcastle disease — a highly contagious viral disease affecting poultry of all ages.

"It's only Newcastle disease and no other disease. The animal losses were up to 25 to 30 per cent but our recent survey shows that the situation has improved and these losses have been reduced to 15 to 20 per cent," said Abdul Maroof Siddiqui of PPA.

The disease, he said, was an infection of domestic poultry and a worldwide problem.

"The important thing is it's not transmitted to humans through poultry meat. It's a disease which comes almost every year but losses are generally not more than five to six per cent," he said, adding that poultry farm practices had improved significantly over the years and the majority of farmers had shifted from open-shed farming to controlled-shed farming.

"While many farmers have their own laboratories and do their job scientifically, the need for government support remains. It's important that the government set up laboratories at district level and devise a system in which a disease is diagnosed and contained immediately."

He was of the opinion that infected migratory birds brought the disease to Pakistan. "You can't stop birds' movement and since it's a viral disease it spreads rapidly if a few poultry birds get infected. It can only be prevented through vaccination."

The major reason behind high poultry prices, he pointed out, was also the disease outbreak which caused an acute shortage of supplies.

"Also, many farmers have been in losses for over two years due to difference in production cost and the market price they were getting," he said.

The disease is presented primarily as an acute respiratory disease, but depression, nervous manifestations, or diarrhoea may be the predominant clinical form. Severity depends on the virulence of the infecting virus and host susceptibility.
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 28/05/2021)

Sindh health minister favours culling of stray dogs to prevent rabies cases

Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho on Friday told the provincial assembly that the only practical solution to control stray dog bites was to cull the animals.

She was replying to a point of order raised by Khurram Sher Zaman of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf on the surge in dog-bite cases across the province.

She said that expanding population of stray dogs could not be controlled through vaccination or sterilisation.

The health minister said that it could take 10 years to control the population of stray dogs through vaccination and neutering in the province.

She said that deputy commissioners should be asked to arrange culling of stray dogs in their respective districts.

The health minister was of the opinion that stray dogs would still bite even after being vaccinated and sterilised.

Says population of stray dogs can't be controlled through vaccination; Murad accuses Punjab of 'stealing' Sindh's water

As for the recent death of children in parts of the province due to dog bites, she said that the dog bites on face and forehead caused major risk of death as the load of virus rapidly penetrated into the brain.

'Punjab stealing Sindh's water'

Giving a policy statement, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that Sindh had always faced shortage of water as Punjab got more water than its share under the Water Accord of 1991.

He said that a fair distribution of water had always been an issue in the region between upper and lower riparian.

Recalling the history of water issue in the region, he said that the British had initially started work on controlling the rivers in the subcontinent in 1859 when they made canals on Ravi and Chenab rivers. "This practice continued till 1920 and since then water share of Sindh has been slashed," he said.

The CM also referred to an agreement between Sindh and Punjab in 1945 under the Rao Commission that fixed 48.88 million acre-feet (MAF) for Punjab.

He said that Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal was completed in 1970 for managing surplus and flood water and in 1972 water was released to make it wet. Later, the release of water to the CJ canal was stopped after Sindh informed the centre that there was a water shortage downstream.

However, he said then Punjab governor Ghulam Jilani got the CJ canal opened forcibly. "They are stealing our water. What word other than stealing can be used in the scenario," he added.

The CM recalled that Water Accord between the two provinces was signed in 1991 despite strong reservations of the Pakistan Peoples Party as the water share of Punjab was enhanced "illegally and irregularly".

He said that water was being released to the CJ canal illegally in violation of the Water Accord and he took up the issue in the Council of Common Interests in 2013 with a request of resolve the issue once and for all.

Mr Shah said that Sindh had gotten 26.67 MAF lesser water than its due share since 1999.

He said that there was 37 per cent shortage of water in Sindh and 17pc in Punjab during last 20 days. "As of today, we (Sindh) have 37 per cent shortage while Punjab has only six per cent," he added.

Murad regrets PTI's opposition

At the outset of his speech, the CM expressed his dismay over the PTI for opposing a resolution asking the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) to release Sindh its due water share.

"You should be loyal to the people of Sindh who have elected you as it is not a political issue but a matter of survival for the province's people," the CM told the PTI members.

He regretted that it was for the first time in the history of the Sindh Assembly that a division between members from the two sides of the aisle was witnessed on the water crisis in the province. "The house has always emerged unanimous on water issue since the establishment of the Sindh Assembly," he added.

Opposition parties Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Grand Democratic Alliance and Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal assured their “full cooperation” to the provincial government for getting the rights of Sindh.

PTI parliamentary party Leader Bilal Ghaffar said that the issue should be resolved through negotiations. He said that from the very first day, they (PTI MPAs in Sindh Assembly) had offered to act as a bridge between PPP-led provincial and PTI-led federal governments.

Prolonged loadshedding condemned

On a point of order MMA’s Syed Abdul Rasheed said that K-Electric was carrying out loadshedding for more than 12 hours in almost every part of Karachi.

He said that the power disruption had made lives of people miserable. He asked the chief minister to look into the matter directly.

Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani said that there was power disruption of up to 14 hours in his constituency. “As such all the rural parts of Sindh face such a situation,” he deplored.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla said that there was an electricity crisis from Karachi to Kashmore.

He said that the CM would be requested to take up the matter with the authorities concerned.

Meanwhile, the house unanimously passed The Sindh Protection of Journalists and other Media Practitioners Bill 2021 with a slight amendment moved by Khawaja Izharul Hassan of the MQM-P for provision of legal assistance to journalists and media practitioners at government expense.

The Abdul Majid Bhurgari Institute of Language Engineering Bill, 2019 and The Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (Amendment) Bill, 2021 were also passed unanimously by the house.

Later, the speaker adjourned the house to Monday.
(By Tahri Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 29/05/2021)

Questions raised over govt’s back-peddalling on Rs1.25bn rabies control scheme

Reacting to a recent statement of the Sindh health minister in the provincial assembly in which she favoured culling as a method to control population of stray dogs and prevent deaths from rabies, experts on Saturday shared that the remarks reflected absolute confusion on part of the government as it had already released huge sums for vaccinating and neutering dogs under its rabies control programme.

The statement, they said, also demonstrated that government officials didn’t understand the whole dynamics of the problem as it’s not just a matter of uncontrolled population of the animal but also pertained to an acute lack of training of doctors handling cases of dog bites.

The media reports suggested, they pointed out, that a significant number of dog-bite patients across the province were contracting the deadly infection despite getting treatment at government hospitals including the Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK).

Experts say dog culling should be carried out as per WHO recommendations and not as a permanent strategy

“We want to ask why innocent people are dying of rabies if proper treatment is available at government hospitals. The fact is that doctors handling such cases don’t have the required training,” said Dr Mirza Ali Azhar, president of Pakistan Medical Association-Sindh chapter.

He added that media reports suggested that doctors particularly in rural Sindh weren’t even diagnosing patients with rabies.

He emphasised that it’s the state responsibility to train doctors and provide them with adequate doses of anti-rabies vaccines and rabies immunoglobulin, a life-saving medicine needed in cases of deep dog-bite wounds.

Govt should opt for one-time dog culling

About how to tackle the recent surge in dog population, he said that the government should opt for one-time culling of stray dogs but it shouldn’t be used as a permanent strategy.

“The government must put in place a system to vaccinate and neuter stray dogs, as is being done in the rest of the world, once their population comes under control through culling.

“Second, it’s prolonged official indifference towards civic issues that has led to an increase in dog population to an extent that the poor animal has now become a threat to human life and there is no sympathy for it except hate in the community,” he said.

Studies, he said, had linked the increase in dog population to heaps of solid waste and how efficient the government was in waste management is no secret.

Advocate Tariq Mansoor, who is pursuing a public-interest litigation against the government over its failure in preventing deaths from rabies and controlling dog population since 2019, criticised what he described as indecisiveness and confusion on part of the government.

Call for training in dog-bite case management

Sharing her comments, Dr Naseem Salahuddin, senior infectious diseases expert at the Indus Hospital where she also heads the Rabies Free Pakistan Project, regretted a persistent delay on part of the government to tackle the issue that had claimed so many lives over the years.

"I personally went to the health minister's office two years back and presented a plan to train doctors for dog-bite case management and control dog population. But, there has been no response from the government," she said.

The Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, the National Institute of Child Health and the Indus Hospital equipped with trained staff and having required medicines had been running dog-bite prevention clinics for many years successfully, she added.

"The government needs to think why patients are dying of rabies despite seeing a general practitioner or getting treatment at public sector hospitals including Civil Hospital Karachi. This is happening because the medical staff haven't been trained in dog-bite case management and non-availability of rabies immunoglobulin at government hospitals," she said.

On dog population control, she said one should understand the difference between mass killing and culling.

"Contrary to mass killing, which is indiscriminate, culling is selective and targets only diseased animals. We only endorse this method as recommended by the WHO."

She called for public awareness on how to manage an injury after a dog bite and vaccination in the dog population to eliminate virus transmission.

"The public should be told to wash the wound thoroughly for 15 minutes with soap at home before medical help is sought. This crucial first step significantly reduces chances of rabies."

Utilisation of Rs350m fund questioned

"Why the rabies control programme was launched if the government wanted to cull all dogs? Second, the government has already released a sum of Rs350 million out of the Rs1.25 billion amount allocated for the programme that was launched on the court's intervention. One wants to know where that amount was utilized," Mr Mansoor said, adding that one major hitch in setting up a mechanism for controlling dog population was absence of bye-laws on this subject.

"The government hasn't formulated bye-laws on how to control the population of stray animals for the past eight years under the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013. On the court's intervention again, a draft of the bye-laws has been submitted finally this year but it hasn't been notified," he said.

The bye-laws were important to assign responsibilities at the union and taluka level to government officials and make them accountable, he emphasised.

Advocate Mansoor, who is a human rights activist and member of the International Bar Association Human Rights Committee, UK, also mentioned that the helpline specifically launched for dog-bite complaints on court's orders had been turned into a facility for general complaints by the government.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 30/05/2021)

Tobacco kills over 160,000 Pakistanis every year: PM's aide

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan on Monday said that tobacco killed nearly eight million people globally every year.

"More than 7 million of these deaths are from direct tobacco use and around 1.2 million non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. According to Global Burden of disease study (2019) death toll caused by factors attributable to tobacco is 163,671.54 in Pakistan," he said while speaking to participants of an event held on World No-Tobacco Day.

During the event Ministry of National Health Services and World Health Organization (WHO) signed a Letter of Intent with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS).

Under the agreement, thousands of volunteers registered with the PRCS will be trained to participate in campaigns designed to promote awareness about the hazards of tobacco use and other substances inimical to health.

PRCS Chairman Abrarul Haq and Director of the Smoke-Free Cities Project Dr Minhajus Siraj also attended the ceremony.

Dr Sultan said the government would continue to strive to raise awareness and promote a smoke-free society by providing a counter-marketing campaign, awareness against nicotine use and empower young people to engage in the fight against tobacco. He called upon every Pakistani to contribute to this cause to safeguard the health and well being of present and future generations.

Head of WHO Country Office Dr Palitha Mahipala appreciated the initiatives of the government for tobacco control.

Pakistan has 29m smokers

According to a recent study published in the Lancet journal, The number of smokers in Pakistan have reached over 29 million while the total number of tobacco users in the world stands at 1.1 billion.

The UK based Lancet is one of the oldest international medical journal founded in 1823.

Dr Ziauddin Islam, former head of the Tobacco Control Cell, Pakistan and Country's former focal person for World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) said the government should increase tax on all tobacco products in the upcoming budget.

According to the study, half of all the countries had made no progress in stopping uptake among 15 to 24-year-old and the average age for someone to start smoking was 19, when it is legal in most places.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Hamza Shafqaat and Chromatic Trust have joined hands to raise awareness against Tobacco Consumption on the World No-tobacco Day.

In a unique event outside the National Press Club here on Monday, balloons were released carrying the Winner Design of "tobacco free youth postcard campaign" by Chromatic Trust. The aim was to tell the world that Islamabad was ready and willing to go the extra mile against a menace that is not only harmful, but actually plays with the future of our country.

Walk held

Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAHA) arranged a walk to create awareness among the people to quit smoking and adopt healthy life.

A walk was held from Liaquat Bagh to Rawalpindi Press Club, led by Dr Abdul Qayyum Awan, Senior Vice President of Panah, Ghulam Abbasi, Vice President, Sanauallah Ghumman, General Secretary and senior members of Panah.

Speaking on the occasion, Panah General Secretary Sanauallah Ghumman said World No-Tobacco Day aimed at drawing global attention to "tobacco and its untimely deaths and diseases."

He said that about 30 million of 15-year-old adults in Pakistan use tobacco, which causes a number of diseases, including heart disease, cancer, premature death and other deadly diseases.

Other speakers said that tobacco consumption faces an economic, health and health burden of Rs. 615 billion per year. The tobacco industry paid a total of Rs120 billion in taxes in 2019, which was only 20pc of the total cost of smoking.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 01/06/2021)

SC issues notices to two Clifton hospitals for operating on amenity plots

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued show-cause notices to two leading private hospitals of the city located in Clifton for running their health facilities on land meant for amenity purposes.

A three-judge SC bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed also directed the director general of the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) to come up with a comprehensive report on the next hearing regarding all the ST plots (amenity plots) located in Clifton and Kehkashan schemes as well as the rest of the city in the light of the master plan.

The bench also comprising Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan and Justice Qazi Muhammad Amin Ahmed also ordered the KDA chief to identify those who had encroached upon such plots and when, how and who had allowed such allotments as well as the current status of these plots and produce the same before it.

When KDA chief Nasir Abbas Soomro filed a report and plan of Clifton and Kehkashan schemes and a map produced by NGO Shehri about malls (Com 1, Com 3, Com 4, Com 5) adjacent to the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Park in Clifton, the bench noted that many other ST plots in the area had also been encroached upon.

A federal govt request seeking temporary halt of anti-encroachment drive along Gujjar, Orangi nullahs rejected

The bench issued show-cause notices to the South City Hospital and Ziauddin Hospital and asked them why the hospitals may not be removed from such plots since they were operating on land meant for amenity use.

The CJP came down hard on the KDA DG for allowing encroachments on ST plots instead of clearing them and also reminded him that the apex court had passed many orders to remove encroachments from 36,000 such plots across the city.

He remarked that shopping malls and restaurants were also built on amenity plots and asked who was altering the master plan of the city.

The DG claimed that the land of Com 3 Mall was allotted by the then chief minister in 1977. Justice Ahsan said that how a chief minister could allot the land reserved for amenity purposes. The bench also asked him to come up with the complete record regarding the land of Com 3 on the next hearing.

Demolition of Nasla Tower ordered

The bench directed the Karachi commissioner to demolish a 15-storey building, known as Nasla Tower, and file a compliance report. Appearing on behalf of the building owner, Barrister Salahuddin Ahmed argued that 780-sq-yds land in question was leased out in 1956 and for the remaining portion the Sindh Muslim Cooperative Housing Society had issued a letter in their favour.

However, Justice Ahsan said that around 400-sq-yds land meant for the service road was also used for constructing the high-rise and there was no additional lease and it could not be legalised on the basis of a letter issued by the society.

He further said that the report of the commissioner also highlighted irregularities in the allotment of the land in question and said that there was a 280-foot-wide service road.

The lawyer said that the entire tower might not be demolished since a major portion of the plot was leased. However, the CJP said that the building could not be sustained after partial demolition.

The bench also turned down a request of Attorney General Khalid Jawed Khan for a temporary stay against the ongoing anti-encroachment operation around the Gujjar and Orangi Town nullahs.

He submitted that it was a human disaster as around 40,000 people had been displaced overnight and requested the apex court to stay the drive for a week since the federal government was willing to discuss the issue with the chief minister and other provincial authorities for rehabilitation of the affected people.

The CJP asked him that they could sit with provincial authorities to chalk out a plan within a week, but the demolition drive could not be stayed.

K-IV to be completed by Oct 2023

Retired Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain, the chairman of the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda), informed the bench that the Greater Karachi Water Supply Scheme, commonly known K-IV, will be completed by October 2023.

However, he requested the bench to issue directives to the Sindh government to facilitate Wapda on the issue of the right of way (ROW) and to ensure timely provision of funds.

He said that the project was being jointly funded by the federal and Sindh governments and it would provide additional supply of 650mgd to the provincial metropolis.

The attorney general as well as the advocate general-Sindh assured the bench that they would instruct their respective governments for timely release of funds.

The chairman further said that this project was initiated around 13 years ago and Wapda had taken it over in January this year and completed the study work and consultants had also been appointed.

Pavilion End Club

The CJP expressed serious resentment with Karachi Administrator Laeeq Ahmed for not complying with its order to remove the Pavilion End Club and all commercial activities on the premises of Aladdin amusement park in Gulshan-i-Iqbal.

The administrator submitted that they were lacking manpower and machinery and needed funds to carry out the demolition exercise. The chief justice directed the administrator to get the required support from other departments and to comply with its order within a week and warned that in case of failure he would face the consequences.

He also expressed surprise over construction of a shopping plaza on the premises meant for a park when the administrator conceded that there were over 400 shops.

The apex court further asked the administrator to develop the premises along with an adjacent plot from which illegal construction was recently removed into a park/green belt.

The CJP berated Advocate Faisal Siddiqui for interfering when he was dictating the order.

Mr Siddiqui was representing the Pavilion End Club and requested the bench to allow the club to operate on a portion of the land in question and claimed that the shops were leased.

The CJP made it clear that no private company would be allowed to operate on the subject land and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation would run it as a park.

On June 14, the bench had ordered the demolition after observing that the Aladdin Park was converted into Pavilion End Club and membership was being offered against heavy fees along with other commercial activities.

Digitization of revenue record

The bench also expressed displeasure with the Sindh Board of Revenue (BoR) for not complying with its earlier orders and seeking further time to complete the digitization of the revenue record and also expressed dissatisfaction over a report filed by the senior member BoR.

It directed the BoR to implement its previous orders and immediately remove encroachments and illegal constructions from government land and warned the senior official that coercive action would be taken against him if he again failed to comply with its orders.

The bench also sought report about the digitization of record within three months.

The CJP deplored that despite the lapse of a considerable period even 50 per cent survey of the city could not be completed. The bench was told that over 8,000 acres of government land had been retrieved from encroachers.

A lawyer for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government submitted that the second phase of digitization of the revenue record would be completed in 2022.

An official of the Balochistan government submitted that they had completed the digitization of the revenue record of four districts and remaining task would be done soon.

(By Ishaq tanoli Dawn, 13, 17/06/2021)

Costly medicines stolen from NICVD, CHK recovered in raids

An anti-spurious drugs body and a pharmaceutical watchdog on Monday recovered a huge quantity of medicines stolen from two major government hospitals in the city in a series of raids in wholesale medicines markets.

The medicines were supplied to major public-sector hospitals in the city and meant to be distributed free among the deserving patients but were "stolen" from there and finally found their way to the retail and wholesale markets, officials and sources said.

They said that raids were conducted by a team of the National Task Force against Spurious Drugs on various shops and warehouses in the Katchi Gali and Hussainabad areas and a huge quantity of medicines stolen from the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) as well as well as the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi were seized.

'Sindh govt property'

"The National Task Force against Spurious Drugs today raided various shops and warehouses in the notorious Katchi Gali in district South as well as Hussainabad areas," said Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) chief Asim Rauf.

"The teams seized huge quantity of medicines stolen from the Sindh government's hospitals. The officials have also seized a large quantity of spurious drugs during these raids.

"During the raid on the Zeenat Extension in Katchi Gali, thousands of vials of injections, tablets and other medicines stolen from different public hospitals in Sindh were recovered and a large number of spurious drugs were also taken into custody, which were sent for lab analysis for investigation purposes," he added.

"There were a large number of injectable and oral medicines, which were stamped with 'Sindh government property; Sale Prohibited', he said. "It indicates that these medicines were stolen from the public hospitals and sold to traders in retail and wholesale markets. It's in fact a great success of the Drap officials, who have finally reached the culprits behind this nexus depriving deserving people of free medicines."

He said that the action was taken after months-long surveillance and efforts of the regulatory body.

"I would appeal to the people to report any such crime [on] Drap's toll-free number 0800-03727," Mr Rauf said, assuring complete secrecy for those helping the authorities.

ACE to launch probe

Meanwhile, a Sindh government official suspected that some officials in the provincial drug administration and government's central store in the I.I. Depot could be behind the racket that was stealing medicines from hospitals and selling them in markets across the country.

"Involvement of some drug inspectors cannot be ruled out as well," he said. "Law enforcement agencies and the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) are being approached to launch a probe against them. There are also people in the stores of medical institutions as well as at the central medicine store who must be behind this crime," he said.

On the other hand, Drap officials in Karachi disclosed that they had recovered medicines stolen from the NICVD and CHK, which included costly injections to give anaesthesia to patients as well as antibiotics, steroids and other medicines and added that drugs stolen from other healthcare facilities were also recovered during the raid.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 29/06/2021)