**Covid needs global response**

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The prevalent crisis due to COVID-19 must be treated as a global emergency. It is unlike a routine seasonal storm, or an earthquake, or a Tsunami, or an eruption, or an epidemic in Africa or elsewhere. COVID-19 is unique in its nature and characteristics. The entire world is facing a lockdown which is unprecedented in recorded history. Travel, tourism, entertainment, and sports are hard hit areas, besides industry and agriculture. The aviation industry may still recover as the lockdowns are eased, but cruise travel may not be so lucky due to the limitations of dealing with an evolving emergency. Educational institutions never before experienced a situation whereby children are at risk of losing an academic year in many countries. Health systems across the globe are under tremendous pressure from within and without. The situation around the world demands that mutual assistance and mutual support to other nations — regardless of political or ideological affinities — is extended to help states fight this invisible enemy.

COVID-19, a small bacterial agent which cannot be seen unless enlarged by 100,000 times, has shaken the world. It was first discovered in Wuhan, China in November 2019. However, at that time nobody could imagine that it would turn into a pandemic, inflicting serious harm to human lives in over 200 states and territories. As of now, some 145 million people worldwide are affected and over three million people have died globally; with no end to this crisis in sight, perhaps a synergetic global response is lacking.

While a third peak in Pakistan is creating an alarming situation, a second wave in India has swiftly become a national disaster. India at this time must be helped regardless of historical animosity due to its actions in Kashmir. If India is saved from this disaster, may be its leadership would review its hardened policies towards the unarmed people of Kashmir.

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The response to this novel virus has been handled differently; from nation to nation or even within individual countries and regions. However, even the most advanced and developed nations are finding it hard to contain the spread of virus and control the numbers of dead and affected. The situation in developing countries may not look as bad, but that is primarily due to the lack of testing capacity, and not because the virus is not affecting them. However, the real test for the developing countries is to keep their people adequately fed with food supplies while lockdowns remain in place.

Remember, the world is experiencing something different, and therefore needs to be handled differently. While expecting magic from the developed world, it remains the responsibility of the Third World — if, indeed, it is not as badly affected as the majority — to rush to help those countries which have been hit harder than initially estimated.

COVID-19 has amply proved that no matter how developed, advanced, and modern some nations are, they are still dependent on nature. Be it the Tsunami, or a pandemic — no nation can fight such threats alone; whereas collective wisdom and the cooperation can. Imagine the state of those nations which cannot offer subsistence allowance to their poor at this time, while, by contrast, the First World can disburse trillions to its people and businesses.

The very least that can be done, at this time of global crises, is for all wars and conflicts across the world to be frozen, and loans written off against poor nations so that they can do their bit to assist those hit hardest due to COVID-19. Sanctions against Iran must be lifted immediately for this very reason.

The two-year lockdown in Indian-held Kashmir must also be lifted at the earliest and new citizenship and domicile laws to undermine Muslims in India should be held in abeyance to give peace a chance; or at least until the world affairs return to normal. The people of Palestine deserve a break and assistance in fighting this pandemic, too. The ceasefire announced by Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war is welcomed, but it should be permanent and other options to end this five-year war need to be explored.

This pandemic is a global emergency, and we must reach out to people regardless of their religion, race, cast, or creed. The need of the hour is to join hands and think of saving humanity and the world, instead of oneself and a particular state.

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