

The Frontier Post

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

Regd. No. 241

SHABAN 25 1441 – SUNDAY, APRIL 19 2020

PESHAWAR EDITION

Religious flexibility must to defeat COVID-19

Asmat Shah Garwaki

STARTED from Wuhan city of Central China in December 2019, the novel COVID-19 spread across the globe like wildfire and claimed hundreds of thousands lives within three months and left millions affected. The indiscriminate spread of pandemic paralyzed every segment and sector of life resulting in closure of businesses, industries, educational institutions, judiciary, offices and last but not the least caused postponement of all religious obligations and rituals including Ummra, Friday prayers, Easter and mass worship practices by every religion.

Although China has managed to come out of difficult time and steadily contained the outspread of coronavirus through extreme measures and comprehensive approach but still the Chinese government is strictly implementing precautionary measures to wipe out the virus.

Among other broad and pragmatic measures taken by Chinese government one of the most practical step was emphasizing and maintaining social distancing. China essentially mandated lockdown and required every citizen in Wuhan to stay at home until the situation gets improved. The coronavirus patients were put in isolation until their conditions got improved.

The peoples' cooperation augmented the Chinese

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is basically Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV2) which is communicable and easily transmitted from one affected person to several others in no time. The disease causes respiratory illness similar to flu with other symptoms including, fever and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing. The health experts stress social distancing, washing hands frequently, avoiding touching face and avoiding close contact with one another especially who are suffering from flu like symptoms. Pakistan being an underdeveloped country with already overburdened healthcare system is not capable of handling any coronavirus like outbreak.

resulted in clashes between general public and security forces at some places in KP, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. Four people were killed in exchange of harsh arguments over offering of prayers in mosque between two groups. Recently, some Ulemas from different schools of thought held a press conference at the Karachi Press Club and refused to accept the decree of CII and said that the lockdown will no longer be accepted at Mosques.

Chairman Ruit Hilal Committee Mufti Muneebur-Rahman had also said that Tarawih prayers and Itikaf will continue in the Holy month of Ramdan as per schedule despite surging corona cases in the country. He asked the peo-

In the light of decree the government tried to stop people (if more than five in number) from attending Jumma congregations and offering five times' prayers at mosques. Such measures resulted in clashes between general public and security forces at some places in KP, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. Four people were killed in exchange of harsh arguments over offering of prayers in mosque between two groups.

ple to attend mosques but maintain safe distance from each other which does not seem practical.

Similarly, renowned religious scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani urged the government to not arrest people from within mosques and all those who have been arrested for coming to mosques should be released warning that it could push the country to another crisis. Such a situation will further aggravate encouraging people of other religions including Christians, Hindu and Sikh communities to also continue their religious practices without heeding for the safety of others. Islam and all other religions of the world give more importance to human lives and there are ample examples, practices from the past and holy sayings where people were stopped from entering pandemic hit areas or compromising on the lives of others.

Now it is need of the hour, that inter-faith harmony and religious flexibility should be demonstrated by all segments of society as per the teaching of all religions while keeping in view societal, religious and financial state of affairs of Pakistan.

There should be well managed arrangements for religious co-existence in all parts of the country. Many global actions happened in previous years, have bound the religious leaders to look for few new ways and tools to support inter-faith harmony. It is necessary for the supporters of all faiths to implement the strategy of tolerance, peace, patience and inter-faith harmony in vital interest of all. No doubt Islam teaches solutions of all diseases and problems and stresses upon more on human rights than other religious obligations.

government efforts enabling it to contain the spread and cure the affected patients. Wuhan which is among the largest, most populous and developed cities of China and a megacity in the world was looking like ghost town two months back as the people suspended all their activities and remained in quarantine at homes.

The government lacks both resources and infrastructure and in such a situation any outspread of a disease to a large scale could play havoc to human lives.

Although Pakistan is a Muslim state but there are people of different faiths, beliefs and religions with different practices. Major Muslim population indulges in multiple religious practices including offering of five time prayers at mosques and Jumma congregations on daily and weekly basis. Continuation of all these activities can greatly compromise social distancing. Similarly, hand shaking, hugging are also common in Pakistan.

Initially all coronavirus cases were travelled with no local case reported anywhere in Pakistan until February when local people came into contact with those coming back from Iran after visiting holy shrines there. Similarly contact with foreigner Tablighi scholars (some of whom were later found affected with coronavirus) who arrived in Pakistan to attend Raiwind congregation caused its spread in different parts of the country. Fed up with peoples' apathy the government of Pakistan recently consulted a body of Ulemas, "Council Islamic Ideology" (CII) with regard to group prayers and Jumma congregations. In a "Fatwa" (decree) the Ulema conveyed to the general public that during a pandemic people do not need to go mosques to offer group prayers and even other more important religious congregations can also be postponed.

In the light of decree the government tried to stop people (if more than five in number) from attending Jumma congregations and offering five times' prayers at mosques. Such measures

resulted in clashes between general public and security forces at some places in KP, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. Four people were killed in exchange of harsh arguments over offering of prayers in mosque between two groups.

Recently, some Ulemas from different schools of thought held a press conference at the Karachi Press Club and refused to accept the decree of CII and said that the lockdown will no longer be accepted at Mosques.

Chairman Ruit Hilal Committee Mufti Muneebur-Rahman had also said that Tarawih prayers and Itikaf will continue in the Holy month of Ramdan as per schedule despite surging corona cases in the country. He asked the peo-

ple to attend mosques but maintain safe distance from each other which does not seem practical.

Similarly, renowned religious scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani urged the government to not arrest people from within mosques and all those who have been arrested for coming to mosques should be released warning that it could push the country to another crisis. Such a situation will further aggravate encouraging people of other religions including Christians, Hindu and Sikh communities to also continue their religious practices without heeding for the safety of others. Islam and all other religions of the world give more importance to human lives and there are ample examples, practices from the past and holy sayings where people were stopped from entering pandemic hit areas or compromising on the lives of others.

Now it is need of the hour, that inter-faith harmony and religious flexibility should be demonstrated by all segments of society as per the teaching of all religions while keeping in view societal, religious and financial state of affairs of Pakistan.

There should be well managed arrangements for religious co-existence in all parts of the country. Many global actions happened in previous years, have bound the religious leaders to look for few new ways and tools to support inter-faith harmony. It is necessary for the supporters of all faiths to implement the strategy of tolerance, peace, patience and inter-faith harmony in vital interest of all. No doubt Islam teaches solutions of all diseases and problems and stresses upon more on human rights than other religious obligations.