



Country Reports on COVID-19

Azerbaijan

Bahrain

China

Iran

Thailand

Timor-Leste

Turkey



MILLI MAJLIS OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE

AZ 1152, BAKU, PARLIAMENT AVE. 1

www.meclis.gov.az

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9 June

2020

Dear Colleagues,

The sustained fight against the “COVID-19” pandemic in your countries is commendable. We express our support and solidarity to you in the fight against this virus that is sweeping the world. On behalf of myself and the members of the delegation of the Azerbaijan Republic to Asian Parliamentary Assembly, I express my condolences to the families and relatives of the victims and wish speedy recovery to those affected by the pandemic. I believe that the effective measures taken by the APA member countries will ensure the immediate defeat of the “invisible foe”.

Azerbaijan took prompt and necessary measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Following President Ilham Aliyev’s executive order at the beginning of the year, the Operational Headquarters was set up under the Cabinet of Ministers. During the pandemic, the priority for us is the protection of people’s health and their social protection. All public events that were supposed to be held within the territory of the country have been postponed or cancelled. Since 3rd March, teaching at all educational institutions across the country was gradually suspended. We immediately closed all land and air borders, except charter flights in order to return our compatriots. In total, more than 20,000 Azerbaijani citizens were returned to their homeland. A special regime was introduced on 14th March, including a series of measures of social distancing all over the country.

A Presidential Decree was signed on a number of measures to reduce the negative consequences of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Cabinet of Ministers was allocated with 1 billion Manats from the state budget to finance the measures. According to the Decree, Support Fund Against Coronavirus was established. Initially 20 million Manats allocated from President's Contingency Fund to enhance effectiveness of fight against coronavirus. Moreover, President Ilham Aliyev and First Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva donated their annual salary to the fund.

In a short period of time more than 20 hospitals have been allocated for the treatment of patients with coronavirus. Laboratory tests, some medical equipment and supplies, necessary for the diagnosis and treatment of the virus were delivered to Azerbaijan. There are 23 testing laboratories in the country. To date, over 340,000 tests have been administered. Furthermore, during this period New Clinic medical institution and the first modular hospital complex were inaugurated in Baku.

We can defeat COVID-19 with mutual support, without locking ourselves up and by joint efforts only. We appreciate the announcement by UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the global humanitarian response plan to combat coronavirus, the adoption of relevant resolutions in the UN General Assembly and the important role that the World Health Organization plays in the global fight against the pandemic. From the first days of the pandemic, our country has been in close contact with the World Health Organization. Based on our appeal, in March a delegation comprised of leading specialists of the organization visited our country and acquainted with the situation. According to the World Health Organization, Azerbaijan is considered as one of the model countries in the fight against the pandemic. We have also allocated major funds to support the sectors of the economy affected by the pandemic, as well as the unemployed, those who have lost their jobs, the low-income people and even those informally employed, we have allocated more than 3 billions Manats.

The coronavirus pandemic has completely changed the situation in the world, bringing about new realities as a result. Azerbaijan reacted to the new situation quickly and adequately. This is evidenced by the Summit of the Contact Group of the Non-Aligned Movement against Coronavirus initiated by Azerbaijan. The United Against COVID-19 Summit was attended by over 40 top officials from the various countries around the world. The high-level meeting addressed ongoing efforts led by United Nations and World Health Organization and concluded with a call for international cooperation to control, relieve and defeat the pandemic by facilitating knowledge sharing and implementing best practices. Moreover, a Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States, where Azerbaijan carries out the Presidency currently, was held upon initiative taken by President Aliyev of Azerbaijan. This Summit was also dedicated to the ongoing efforts to defeat COVID-19 in the member-countries. Exchanging of views among the Heads of States paved a good way for a fruitful cooperation within this organization.

Joining the international efforts of “we are all in this together,” during the lockdown period Azerbaijan also has helped 13 countries and 3 international organizations by sending disinfectants, protective supplies, facial and medical masks and other necessary equipment. Azerbaijan has donated 5 million US Dollars to WHO and additional 5 million US Dollars to provide support to member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that are most in need of assistance, another 5 million US Dollars to Iran, 1 million US Dollars to Pakistan, sent humanitarian aid to fight the coronavirus to number of countries.

As parliamentarians, we would like to highlight the efforts of the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Parliament has held 15 plenary meetings and has taken urgent decisions to alleviate the consequences of the pandemic.

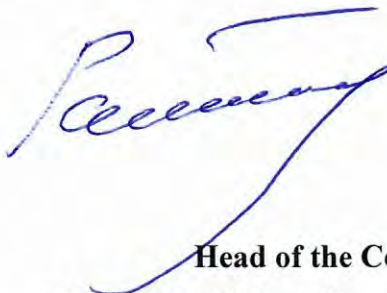
Milli Majlis continues to hold physical meetings by following all the necessary restrictions and recommendations of W.H.O.; by respecting social distancing measures. Both MPs and staff members are using masks, gloves and Hand Sanitizer Gel. The number of Committee meetings has been reduced and were taking place by video conference. On 17th June our parliamentarians will participate in TURKPA member state's Speakers online conference on the subject of Roles of member-state Parliaments in fighting COVID-19.

During this challenging period Heydar Aliyev Foundation of Azerbaijan has launched a plenty of social actions aiming to support the measures being taken by the state. Furthermore, Foundation has demonstrated the exemplary cooperation with WHO to overcome the pandemic.

The global COVID-19 pandemic adversely affects all countries of the world. We deeply believed, that cooperation in this crucial period is necessary. It is important to share the experience, information and scientific knowledge gained in the fight against the virus and provide assistance to countries in need. We can overcome COVID-19 with mutual support, self-control and joint efforts only. By working together, we must demonstrate that we are states that serve great goals.

Considering current situation, we - Azerbaijani delegation to APA - would like to take an initiative to call on an online meeting of states of Asian Parliamentary Assembly to exchange our experience in fighting Corona Pandemic.

Best regards,



Ganira Pashaeva
Head of the Committee on Culture
Head of the Delegation of Azerbaijan to APA



A Study on the Council of Representatives efforts and achievements in confronting the outbreak of the emerging Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
February 25 - May 18, 2020

Executive Summary

This study addresses the efforts of the Council of Representatives in the Kingdom of Bahrain in addressing the outbreak of the emerging Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by highlighting the efforts of the Council in the field of legislation, health care, education, electronic services, the return of citizens living abroad, economic and financial aspects and the field of diplomatic work. In addition, the efforts of the General Secretariat of the Council of Representatives, during the period from February 25 until the adjournment of the annual session on May 18, 2020. Whereas, the Council of Representatives last Sitting in the Second Session of the Fifth Legislative Term was held on May 12, 2020.

The study concluded that the Council of Representatives was able to harness all its available capabilities in light of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic crisis by taking advantage of it and turning it into a positive factor for continuing and performing the work tasks entrusted to the Council of Representatives. The organs of the Council continued to work at a regular pace, and the number of meetings, especially the Committees meetings, increased. The average Sitting duration increased to more than 5 hours in light of the precautionary measures and virtual meetings. At the level of the General Secretariat, the directives of Her Excellency the Speaker of Council of Representatives and the decisions of His Excellency the Secretary-General regarding working remotely came in light through the availability of all the requirements for this work in order to enhance the efforts and work of the General Secretariat in providing all the services and tasks entrusted to it. This indicates that this crisis has provided new opportunities for science and various methods that can be pursued even after the end of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic crisis. It has also highlighted the Council of Representatives potentials and ability to adapt and develop under the circumstances and challenges it is facing.



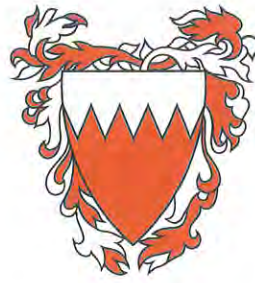
Introduction:

The Kingdom of Bahrain at the regional and international levels has presented a distinguished model through its various efforts to contain and prevent the spread of the emerging Coronavirus in all official and civil bodies to preserve the health and safety of citizens and residents. Whereas, this process was through forming a national team to develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy to contain and prevent the spread of the virus. As well as, Bahrain's early preparedness was through taking all precautionary and preventive measures that are in line with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), along with setting plans to strengthen diagnostic, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms, securing ports through suspending and reducing flights from some of the countries where the virus is endemic.

Moreover, among these efforts, the Council of Representatives had a prominent role in facing and challenging the spread of the virus both internally and externally by supporting the work of the government and the competent authorities through its follow-up. The Council of Representatives, through its General Secretariat, had set an integrated plan of action to achieve and implement precautionary and preventive measures. This is in line with the exceptional circumstances that the Kingdom of Bahrain and the world is facing. As well as, on the importance of the role and work of the Council of Representatives at the legislative, oversight and financial levels, and also in seeking to support the efforts to counter the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Accordingly, this study came to discuss the achievements and efforts made by the Council of Representatives in the field of social welfare, especially education and health, the efforts related to strengthening the role of the judiciary and achieving social security, the efforts in the field of economic and financial affairs and parliamentary diplomatic work. As well as, through noting the efforts made at the level of the General Secretariat to counter the spread of the emerging Coronavirus, during the period from February 25 to May 18, 2020.

1. The Council of Representatives efforts and achievements in addressing the emerging Coronavirus pandemic:

- The Judiciary and Supporting Litigation Procedures field:



The Council of Representatives contributed in supporting the national efforts to address the spread of the emerging Coronavirus pandemic by passing a draft law on amending some provisions of the Criminal Procedure Law, that was issued by Decree Law No. (46) of 2002, it is accompanying Decree No. (21) of 2019. The Council of Representatives has approved a draft law on amending some provisions of the Criminal Procedure Law, that was issued by Decree Law No. (46) of 2002, it is accompanying Decree No. (21) of 2019. It includes amending 40 articles related to criminal procedures. Whereas, the draft law supports digital transformation on remotely investigation and trial procedures. The foregoing had facilitated and expedited the process of litigation and as well facilitating person accused on March 17, 2020. Furthermore, His Majesty the King issued it as a law on April 2, 2020.

Table No. (1): shows the most prominent draft laws approved by the Council of Representatives in the field of supporting litigation procedures that contributed in supporting the national efforts to address the spread of the emerging Coronavirus February 25 to May 12, 2020

No.	Date of Approval	Draft laws
1.	17/03/2020	Draft law on amending some provisions of the Criminal Procedure Law, that was issued by Decree Law No. (46) of 2002, it is accompanying Decree No. (21) of 2019. It includes amending 40

Source: [Bahrain Council of Representatives Website](#)

- The health care, education, electronic services and the return of citizens living abroad field

A. Proposals

Their Excellency's Members of Parliament had submitted 34 proposals on an urgent basis to address the outbreak of the emerging Coronavirus pandemic during the period from February 25 to May 12, 2020. Whereas, the proposals focused on supporting efforts to face the outbreak of the emerging Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in the field of ensuring the continuity and quality of health care, education and the need for the return of Bahraini citizens stranded abroad. Furthermore, to convert all the government services that are provided to the public into electronic



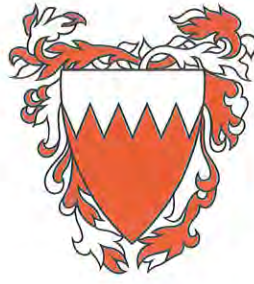
services, and facilitating the response procedures in facing the spread of the pandemic, as attached to the following table:

Table No. (2): shows the most prominent proposals approved by the Council of Representatives in the field of health care, education, electronic services and the return of citizens living abroad to address the spread of the emerging Coronavirus February 25 to May 12, 2020

No.	Date of Approval	Proposals
1.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) regarding the separation of the Coronavirus disease quarantine stations from the residential areas.
2.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) regarding the opening of volunteering for doctors and nurses seeking work , or the retired and paramedics who have international certificates, and the Bahraini Red Cross to confront "Coronavirus".
3.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the government to provide face masks, sanitizers, and whatever is necessary for citizens, to prevent the emerging Coronavirus.
4.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to suspend the studies in public and private schools for a month as a precautionary measure for the non-proliferation of Coronavirus.
5.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) regarding the provision of suitable isolation rooms for people coming from outside the Kingdom of Bahrain (endemic countries) to conduct the necessary tests of Coronavirus disease.
6.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the government to coordinate the return of the citizens stranded in Iran and to ensure that they are free of Coronavirus, and to support them financially for their temporary living until they return to the Kingdom.
7.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the government to undertake urgent measures to protect the society from the spread of Coronavirus threat.
8.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on undertaking measures to treat the infected Bahraini citizens in Iran until their recovery.
9.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to tighten supervisory on markets in regards to sanitary and preventive tools.



10.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) regarding the separation of the Coronavirus disease quarantine stations from the residential areas.
11.	25/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to provide infections proof clothing and special face masks for doctors and workers in health centers under the Ministry of Health.
12.	24/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to grant the educational authority similar leave like the students.
13.	24/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the various Ministries and service agencies to activate and convert all governmental services provided to the public into electronic services within the precautionary measures of Coronavirus.
14.	24/02/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to impose partial curfew throughout the Kingdom of Bahrain, from 6:00 PM until 5:00 AM, with an exception to those who work at that specific time.
15.	31/03/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on granting the first level relatives of persons with disabilities an emergency leave to provide them with care as a result of the studies suspension in the rehabilitation centers due to the precautionary measures to confront "Coronavirus" or grant them the opportunity to work remotely.
16.	31/03/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to compensate parents of persons with disabilities from paying the fees of the private rehabilitation centers, because of the studies suspension, due to the precautionary measures to counter the Coronavirus.
17.	14/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on the placement of all temporary contract doctors, nurses, and job seekers who have volunteered to work in countering Coronavirus at the Ministry of Health.
18.	14/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on sterilizing workers' housing in all governorates, raising awareness and engaging the relevant embassies in light of the precautionary measures to confront Coronavirus.
19.	14/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the official authorities to intervene in preventing gatherings in Zaid Ibn Omairah Avenue at the village of Damistan.



20.	14/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to implement an initiative to facilitate the departure of foreign violator workers and workers who are working under flexible visa.
21.	14/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on intensifying medical and preventive inspection campaigns towards workers.
22.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on facilitating flights intended for the deportation of expatriate workers those whose work contracts have expired, in particular household workers and likewise.
23.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on allowing Isha'a and Tarawih prayers to be held in the main mosques in all governorates, with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, whereas, the number of attendees shall not be more than 5 persons.
24.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Ministry of Education to oblige the private schools to reduce the school fees for parents in light of what Bahrain is going through due to Coronavirus pandemic.
25.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on reducing the number of official working hours in the holy month of Ramadan for this year, instead of the timings of the previous years in the public sector. The Government shall work to coordinate this with the private sector as well because of the crisis the world is going through due to Coronavirus.
26.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on adjusting the health center timings in the holy month of Ramadan.
27.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to find a way in order to help the unemployed, whose unemployment insurance eligibility period has expired, that is until the end of the Coronavirus "Covid-19" crisis.
28.	28/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to support the groups affected by the spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19), they are- taxi drivers, joint transport, buses, and driving trainers, without an exception to those who have commercial registrations (C-R) or pensions.
29.	28/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to deport irregular workers from the Kingdom of Bahrain.



30.	28/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to support and strengthen the health sector by qualifying the necessary cadres through the current academic year scholarship plan.
31.	12/05/2020	Report of the Committee on Legislative and Legal Affairs regarding the Proposal on the placement the Bahraini doctors, who are working under temporary contracts in the Ministry of Health.
32.	12/05/2020	Report of the Committee on Services regarding the Proposal on seeking support from (Tamkeen) labor fund to support Bahraini taxi drivers.
33.	12/05/2020	Report of the Committee on Services regarding the Proposal on supporting Bahraini students in private schools.
34.	12/05/2020	Report of the Committee on Public Utilities and Environment regarding the Proposal on activating the Cabinet Resolution No. (08-2189) on granting the elderly group a reduction in the electricity bill.

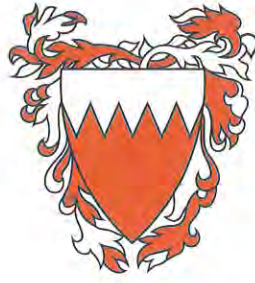
Source: [Bahrain Council of Representatives Website](#)

B. Meetings with representatives from the Executive Authority

On February 26, 2020: The Chairman and Members of the Committees on Services from both the Shura Council and Council of Representatives, as well as a number of Members from both Chambers,¹ met with representatives from the Ministry of Health to review developments related to Coronavirus. The meeting discussed the following axes:

- Emphasizing the importance of integrating with the Government on efforts to protect and prevent Coronavirus, and that is through the national responsibility to preserve the society. As well as, commending the sound directives of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, on providing all the preparations and services that the country needs to address this virus,

¹ Meeting of the Committees on Services from both the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council with representatives from the Ministry of Health, 26 February 2020:



and to prevent its spread among citizens, through advanced treatment programs and plans only.

- Commending the decision on suspending the studies in public and private educational institutions and higher education institutions for a period of two weeks, in order to ensure the safety of students, as well as the educational and administrative bodies.
- Identifying the nature of the health situation in the Kingdom in general, along with the measures taken by the Government to prevent and protect the society from the spread of the virus.
- The Committees on Services from both the Shura Council and Council of Representatives appreciated the efforts of the Bahraini Ministry of Health, and their willingness to provide any assistance related to the Legislative Authority in this regard.
- The Committees on Services from both Councils praised the high level of transparency and objectivity that the concerned parties are keen on, and on providing clarifications and information to the public opinion, in a way that reassures all the precautionary steps that are implemented at various levels.

- **The Economic and Financial field:**

In view of the evolving developments due to the outbreak of the emerging Coronavirus (Covid-19) (pandemic) and its economic and financial repercussions, the Council of Representatives discussed a draft law on the disbursement of 3-months wages from the unemployment fund. As well as, submitting several Proposals to the Government on an urgent basis, in addition to meeting with the Executive Authority with an aim of identifying developments and supporting the Executive Authority in taking speedy decisions to deal with the repercussions of the outbreak of the emerging Coronavirus pandemic, and on increasing the capacity of the relevant organs in the ease of dealing and taking the necessary precautions.

A. Draft Laws

The Council of Representatives approved a draft law on paying the salaries (wages) of Bahraini citizens in the private sector for a period of 3 months from the unemployment fund i.e. April, May and June 2020, at an amount of 215 million Bahraini Dinars.



Table No. (3): shows the most prominent draft laws approved by the Council of Representatives in the Economic and Financial field on supporting the national efforts to address the spread of the emerging Coronavirus

February 25 to May 12, 2020

No.	Date of Approval	Draft laws in the Economic and (Financial) Field
1.	09/03/2020	Draft law on adding a new item No. (3) to Paragraph (C), of Article (8), of Decree Law No. (78), of 2006 on unemployment insurance, it is accompanying Decree No. (15) of 2020.

Source: [Bahrain Council of Representatives Website](#)

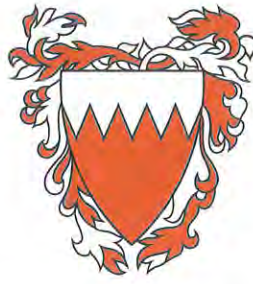
B. Proposals

In the framework of the efforts exerted by the Council of Representatives related to the financial and economic affairs, Their Excellencies the Members of the Council of Representatives submitted 36 Proposals on an urgent basis during the period from March 10 to May 5, 2020, in order to support the efforts made to deal with the financial and economic conditions as attached to the following table:

Table No. (4): shows the most prominent Proposals approved by the Council of Representatives in the Economic and Financial field on supporting the national efforts to address the spread of the emerging Coronavirus

February 25 to May 12, 2020

No.	Date of Approval	Proposals in the Economic and (Financial) Field
1.	10/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) for the Government to support the commercial sector in light of the Coronavirus (Covid 19) disease.
2.	24/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) for the Government represented by the Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) and the competent authorities to give the illegal workers time to correct their status and leave the Kingdom of Bahrain in order to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.
3.	24/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) on the payment of a promotional bonus to employees and a special bonus for



		volunteers from the cadres working in the front rows within the national campaign to counter Coronavirus.
4.	24/03/2020	To establish a Provident fund for all the contributions and donations from businessmen, national companies, banks and individuals in the Bahraini society. The fund shall be dedicated to efforts in countering and preventing the spread of Coronavirus and other disasters.
5.	24/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) on limiting the financial and economic stimulus package that was announced by the Government at a value of BHD 4.3 billion to counter the repercussions of the global spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Kingdom on small and medium enterprises in the private sector companies and institutions, that are proven to be negatively affected by cases of Coronavirus infection and due to the precautionary measures undertaken to counter it in Bahrain.
6.	24/03/2020	Proposal on postponing the payments due to citizens for pension, replacement and housing loans.
7.	24/03/2020	Proposal on including the application of remotely work system on the mothers working in companies, bodies and institutions in which the state owns 50% of the shares.
8.	24/03/2020	To drop the interest rate on the decision to postpone the loans for a period of six months.
9.	31/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) on exempting state-owned commercial tenants from the monthly rent for a period of three months in view of the circumstances of the spread of Coronavirus (COVID 19).
10.	31/03/2020	Deferment of all Governmental loan installments, to all sectors, Government bodies and companies (housing services loans - pension loans - replacement - internal loans).
11.	31/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) for the Government to find a suitable way to bear the installments due for a period of 6 months for those carrying out financial claims by a



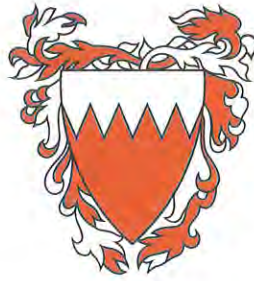
		criminal court ruling in observance of them in light of the precautionary measures to confront Coronavirus
12.	31/03/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) on stopping the deduction of pension and housing loan installments for retired citizens without profits for a period of six months due to the emergency conditions caused by Coronavirus (COVID19).
13.	14/04/2020	Proposal on granting a 3-month financial grant for Bahraini citizens working in unsecured professions and trades, such as fishers, farmers, livestock keepers, student bus drivers, and temporary contract workers affected by the closure of their workplaces.
14.	14/04/2020	Proposal on depositing the salaries of Bahrainis in the private sector directly into their bank accounts.
15.	14/04/2020	Proposal on (an urgent basis) on the disbursement of an additional salary for all who were in direct confrontation in order to protect citizens from Coronavirus, in addition to all medical personnel who were in the first rows working against Coronavirus.
16.	14/04/2020	Proposal to double the monetary compensation of meat subsidy once a year in the holy month of Ramadan.
17.	14/04/2020	Proposal to include all employees registered in March to benefit from the Bahraini wages subsidy in the private sector for the months April, May and June.
18.	14/04/2020	Proposal for the Government represented by the Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) and the competent authorities, with the exception of requests from business owners to renew the permits of workers located outside the Kingdom of Bahrain.
19.	14/04/2020	Proposal to urge all banks to implement the royal directives to stop the loans of all business owners affected by the current crisis in the country.
20.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to stop the measures taken against the butchers in the central market, and to schedule and correct their debts and conditions.



21.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) to establish an immediate and urgent support fund to support the institutions affected by Coronavirus crisis.
22.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on granting a special incentive reward to all mothers working in the health sector who do not meet the conditions of working remotely in accordance with the royal directives, within the framework of the efforts made by the Kingdom of Bahrain in confronting the emerging Coronavirus (COVID-19).
23.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to find a way to help the unemployed, whose eligibility period for the unemployment insurance has expired, until the end of the Coronavirus "COVID-19" crisis.
24.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on obligating banks and financial institutions to implement the decision to postpone loan installments for all groups such as retirees from the date of disbursement of the salary or pension.
25.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on including citizens working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as part of Government support for the disbursement of private sector salaries for a period of three months.
26.	21/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government represented by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and the Ministry of Health to exempt the owners of the affected commercial registrations - C-R from renewing the fees, as well as the fees of the Ministry of Health. Moreover, to renew their C-R for a period of six months for those who come to renew their registrations in the period of closing their activities or due to direct damage during this period.
27.	28/04/2020	Proposal for the Government to postpone the fees of commercial registration- C-R, and to postpone the collection of violations fees related to these registrations, as well as to have installment payments for the value added tax- VAT for at least three months.



28.	28/04/2020	Proposal for the Government represented by Tamkeen Labor Support Fund, to extend the registration period in the Business Continuity Support Program for Small and Medium Enterprises for an additional two weeks.
29.	28/04/2020	Proposal for the Government to extend registration support to enable Tamkeen to open the way for business owners to register via the website for a period of two weeks.
30.	28/04/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) for the Government to tighten control over telecommunications companies that provide citizens with Internet service, in order to prevent them from raising the unit price, and to compel them to provide and maintain the service until the end of the Coronavirus pandemic.
31.	05/05/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on opening the registration again to compensate those affected by Coronavirus pandemic, provided that the compensation shall be for the owners of gyms and men's and women's salons, that includes a remuneration.
32.	05/05/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on supporting the registrations C-R of tourism, travel, Hajj (Pilgrimage) and Umrah.
33.	05/05/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on reducing the prices of all kinds of gasoline.
34.	05/05/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on increasing the compensation offered by Tamkeen to owners of small and medium enterprises in order to cover their operating expenses.
35.	05/05/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on requesting the Executive Authorities to expedite the disbursement of unemployment benefits and compensation, so that it does not exceed one month after the unemployed is registered in the register approved by the Ministry of Labor.
36.	05/05/2020	Proposal (on an urgent basis) on taking firm measures against companies that tamper with the rights of Bahraini workers in light of the exceptional



circumstances the kingdom is going through, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Source: [Bahrain Council of Representatives Website](#)

B. The Executive and Legislative Authority meeting on reviewing the details of the Economic and Financial ²stimulus package to confront Coronavirus:

On March 20, 2020: The Legislative and Executive Authorities held a joint meeting chaired by Her Excellency Mrs. Fawzia bint Abdulla Zainal, Speaker of the Council of Representatives, in presence of His Excellency Mr. Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, Speaker of the Shura Council, His Excellency Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister, a number of Ministers, and Members of the Council Bureau from both the Shura Council and Council of Representatives, to inform both Councils of the details of the financial and development stimulus package launched by the Government in accordance with the royal directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Country. Whereas, the stimulus package is at a value of BHD 4.3 billion. It is based on the decisions and measures that it includes to support citizens, private sector and to continue to achieve the desired development goals in light of the exceptional circumstances facing the Kingdom and the world to confront the risk of Coronavirus (COVID- 19) outbreak. The meeting resulted in the following:

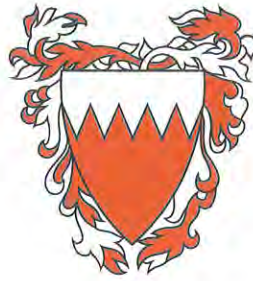
- **Her Excellency the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and His Excellency the Speaker of the Shura Council affirmed that the Legislative Authority is keen to activate its constitutional tools and to give high priority, as well as great attention to implementing the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Country, in working to accelerate the Legislative procedures to activate the Financial and Economic stimulus package that was announced by the Government recently, in the interest of citizens and continued growth in the private sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain.**
- Emphasizing on the Legislative Authority's support for all decisions, initiatives and measures aimed at enabling the country to overcome all the

² The Government briefs the Parliament on the Economic and Financial stimulus package to confront Coronavirus, March 20, 2020:



consequences of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), in a way that achieves safety for citizens and residents, and ensures the sustainable growth of various sectors.

- Emphasizing on that the two Councils will harness all potentials and efforts in researching and studying legislations that enhance the implementation of wise leadership directives, especially the Draft laws on supporting the salaries of citizens working in the private sector.
- Emphasizing that the Legislative Authority has an important role in achieving one of the most important resolutions included in the financial and development stimulus package, that is the approval of a Draft law that will be referred to the legislature as a matter of urgency, pursuant to the text of Article (87) of the Constitution. The Draft law aims to pay the salaries of citizens working in the private sector through the unemployment fund for the months of (April, May and June) 2020, in accordance to the maximum salary stipulated in the Social Insurance Law, with a total value of BHD 215 million.
- The Legislative Authority with its two chambers was also briefed on the other initiatives that was included in the financial and development stimulus package and the efforts that resulted in coordination with local banks, which are as follows:
 - The Government sponsored the electricity and water bills for all individuals and corporate subscribers for each of the months "April, May and June" of the current year, not to exceed the bills for the same period of last year for each subscriber. The total value was BHD 150 million, provided that the Government restructures the administrative expenses of Government agencies in a manner that does not affect the state budget.
 - Exempting the commercial establishments from municipality fees for the months of April, May and June of this year, with a total value of BHD 25 million.
 - Exempting the industrial and commercial institutions from the fees due on the leasing of Governmental industrial lands for the months of April, May and June of this year.
 - Exempting the tourist establishments and facilities from the tourism fees for the months of April, May and June of this year, and doubling the size of the liquidity fund by BHD 100 million, so that it shall reach BHD 200 million.



- As well as, a stimulus package of resolutions from the Central Bank of Bahrain to raise the lending capacity of banks by equivalent of BHD 3.7 billion, in order to give it the flexibility to deal with customer requests to postpone premiums or additional financing. Moreover, reorienting the Tamkeen Labor Fund programs for companies affected by the current situation to address the Coronavirus (COVID- 19), while restructuring loans in cooperation with banks, with a total value of BHD 60 million.

- **The Council of Representatives approved the Draft law on the disbursement of 3-month wages from the unemployment fund³:**

On April 1, 2020: During the Parliamentary Sitting chaired by Her Excellency Mrs. Fawzia bint Abdulla Zainal, Speaker of the Council of Representatives, with an unanimous attendance of 38 MPs, the Draft law was approved on the disbursement of Bahraini employees wages in the private sector for the months of April, May and June 2020, from the unemployment insurance fund. The total value was BHD 215 million. The Draft law was referred to the Shura Council, which was also approved by the Shura Council on 5 April 2020. This was indicated to in the Economic and Financial field Draft laws

C. Issuance of a Parliamentary Statement on supporting “Feena Khair” national campaign

On April 14, 2020, the Council of Representatives issued a Parliamentary Statement commending the launching of (Feena Khair) national campaign in implementation of the high directives of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the King’s Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor and Head of the Royal Guard, this benevolent initiative, where the statement indicated:

- ❖ This initiative is a documentation of the principle of societal partnership between members of the Bahraini community, which is known for its love for good and giving, and is known throughout history for its solidarity among all its members and spectrum.
- ❖ The Council called on all institutions of the private sector, companies, individuals, citizens and residents, to contribute effectively and positively, in

³ Parliamentary consensus on disbursement of 3-month wages from the unemployment fund, April 2020:



supporting the efforts of the State, and enhancing cooperation, integration and solidarity, in light of the precautionary measures to address Coronavirus.

- ❖ The campaign supports the Kingdom of Bahrain to continue the path of achievement and success in various fields, and to overcome all challenges in accordance with adherence to the solid national principles, unity of class and word, and continuous community awareness.

D. The Council of Representatives contributed financially to support the national campaign "Feena Khair" against the Coronavirus pandemic:

On April 17, 2020: The Council of Representatives contributed BHD 100,000⁴ to the “Feena_Khair” national campaign in solidarity with the high directives of the wise leadership, the homeland, and the citizen against Coronavirus pandemic and the current exceptional circumstances. Her Excellency Mrs. Fawzia Bint Abdulla Zainal, Speaker of the Council of Representatives⁵, announced that the contribution of the Council to the (Feena Khair) campaign with this amount was approved unanimously by the Members of the Council Bureau and with the blessing of the rest of the Members of Parliament, whereas, this is a small part of what the State offers to us, and this amount was provided from the surplus of the Council’s budget allocated for parliamentary participation and within the Council’s plan to rationalize general expenses.

– The Diplomatic Work (Parliamentary Group) Field⁶:

In line with the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and its role in developing and strengthening foreign parliamentary relations, as well as in building bridges of friendship and cooperation between national parliaments of countries of the world in order to contribute to the international peace and cooperation process. The Parliamentary Group is always keen on foreign participation in the activities and conferences of international, Islamic and Arab unions and organizations, and other parliamentary institutions and unions. This is to represent the Kingdom of Bahrain and regulate its contribution in the work of federations, international, Islamic and

⁴ Feena Khair national Campaign, Al-Watan Bahraini newspaper, April 17, 2020:

⁵ Speaker of the Council of Representatives: “Feena Khair” national campaign, a translation of the people's originality and a source of pride in front of the world, April 18, 2020:

⁶ The precautionary measures of the Council of Representatives:

<https://www.bna.bh/news?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwlzON1%2BDqKOOYhGHudxb1kY2yAAfQA%3D>

<http://www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1204884>

<https://www.alayam.com/alayam/Parliament/849768/News.html>



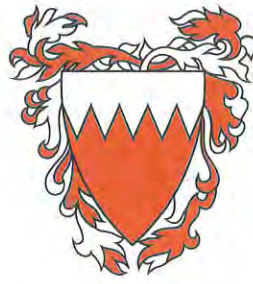
Arab parliamentary bodies and institutions. Whereas, the Council decides to participate in its membership or contribute to its work, however, in light of the exceptional circumstances faced by the entire world due to the spread of Coronavirus CoVID-19 pandemic, and within the framework of preventive precautionary measures taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain, as well as in implementation of the high directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, First Deputy Prime Minister, the Legislative Authority with its both chambers (Council of Representatives and Shura Council) decided the following:

- To suspend the participation of all Members and employees, in official or foreign training assignments, for any kind of purpose for all countries, until further notice.
- In order to continue following up the work, or preparing for any developments to communicate with countries and parliamentary unions at all levels, the follow-up is limited and continued through working by modern means of communication, i.e. electronic technologies or by phone.
- The Parliamentary Group Executive meetings are also held using video conference system, due to the current circumstances, in order to discuss a various topic listed on the agenda, or letters from Arab, Islamic and International parliamentary unions, etc.
- International parliaments are provided with the efforts of the legislature, especially the Council of Representatives, in responding and addressing the emerging Coronavirus and maintaining a workflow in accordance with the highest standards of protection and safety.

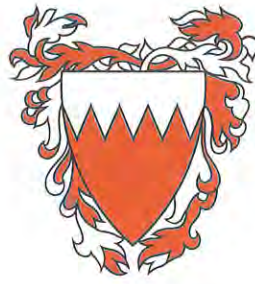
II. Meetings of the Council Organs:

In accordance to Article 9 in Chapter Two of the Internal Regulations of the Council of Representatives. The organs of the Council are made up of the Speaker of the Council, Council's Bureau, and Council's Committees, all of which operate remotely according to the following table:

Table No. (3) shows: The Council of Representatives Organs Remotely Meetings (March 22 - May 18, 2020)			
No.	Date of Meetings	Council Organs and Parliamentary Committees	Number of meetings



1.	25 March 2020, 16, 29 April 2020	Council's Bureau Remotely Meetings	3
2.	14, 21, 28 April, 5, 12, May 2020	Parliamentary Sitting Remotely	5
Committee Remotely Meetings - Standing Committees			
3.	23,29,30 March 2020 6,13,20,27 April 5,7,11,18 May 2020	Committee on Legislative and Legal Affairs (Discussed more than 74 Subject - matter)	11
4.	22,25,29 March 2020 1,5,9,12,19,29 April 6,13 May 2020	Committee on Financial and Economic Affairs (Discussed more than 13 Subject - matter)	11
5.	26 March 2020 5, 12,20 April 2020	Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and National Security (Discussed more than 7 Subject - matter)	4
6.	23, 29 March 2020 9, 13, 16, 27 April 4,13, May 2020	Committee on Services (Discussed more than 15 Subject - matter)	10
7.	30 March 2020 6,13, 20 April 4, 18 May 2020	Committee on Public Utilities and Environment (Discussed more than 31 Subject - matter)	6
Committee Remotely Meetings – Standing Select Committees			
8.	15 April 2020	Standing Select Committee on Women and Children Affairs	1
	23 April 9 May 2020	Standing Select Committee on Youth and Sports	2
Inquiry Committee Remotely Meetings			
9.	16, 23 April 2020	Parliamentary Inquiry Committee on the Fairness of Housing Requests Standards	2
Joint Meetings with Their Excellencies the Ministers and Officials			
10.	13 April 2020	Committee on Services + Tamkeen Labor Fund (Remotely)	1
11.	09 April 2020	Committee on Services + Minister of Education (Remotely)	1



12.	16 April 2020	Committee on Services + Minister of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning + Minister of Labor and Social Development (Remotely)	1
13.	30 March 2020	Committee on Services + Minister of Finance (Remotely)	1
14.	27 March 2020 02 April 2020	General Secretariat of the Council of Representatives + Derasat	2
15.	25 March 2020	Parliamentary Group Remotely Meetings	1

III. The Efforts of the General Secretariat in the Council of Representatives:

The General Secretariat of the Council of Representatives has been keen on issuing a number of preventive and precautionary measures to address “Coronavirus” pandemic. This came in implementation of the high directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander, First Deputy Prime Minister, and under the directives of Her Excellency the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, as well as the follow-up by His Excellency the Secretary-General to address Coronavirus, and to ensure the health and safety of all Members of the Legislative Authority and the General Secretariat employees in the Council. Moreover, this is also considered to be an effort to prepare for any urgent developments that may be imposed by the current situation and its developments. Whereas, the following measures have been taken:

- Staff Orientation: A circular was issued to the General Secretariat employees instructing them as of February 25, 2020 that if any of them come into contact with any person coming from abroad from one of the countries infected with the virus or in the event of their return from these countries, they must isolate themselves at home for a period of at least 14 days, as this will be considered an exceptional paid leave, to ensure that no infection is transmitted to them or others.
- Sign in fingerprint attendance system has been suspended: The sign in attendance fingerprint system was canceled for all employees of the Secretariat, and it was replaced with paper-based signature sheets, and then



this was also replaced by swipe attendance magnetic cards to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

- Sterilization of offices and Sitting halls: The Council offices, Committee and Sitting meeting halls and its facilities are sanitized and sterilized on a daily basis, in order to ensure public cleanliness, and to prevent the spread of any germs or viruses, while providing all the required health supplies.
- Organizing an educational lecture: On February 27, 2020, the General Secretariat of the Council of Representatives, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, held an educational and training awareness lectures for employees on the prevention of Coronavirus and how to deal with it in the event of contacting a person infected or being infected.
- Training and development of employees: The General Secretariat, under the guidance of His Excellency the Secretary-General, was keen on continuing the training of staff and their participation in remotely training workshops, whether held by the Parliamentary Studies and Training Center, or through cooperation between the center and discreet training destinations. Whereas, the first training workshop organized by the center was on March 15, 2020. Then, the training workshops took place with the aim of continuing to refine the skills of employees.
- Research Services: The pace of work continued in the field of political, social, financial and economic research and studies despite working remotely.
- Guidelines: The General Secretariat of the Council of Representatives, in cooperation with the Public Relations Section, has been keen on educating employees periodically through advisory guidance boards and educational videos that was issued by the relevant authorities in the Kingdom. This urges and trains employees of the General Secretariat on the need to follow preventive measures on how to prevent the infection, as well as learn how to act in the event of being infected.
- Measuring temperature: The General Secretariat, in coordination with security officials, was keen to measure the temperature on a daily basis, that is done by measuring the temperature of all those entering the Council without exception. Whereas, it is strictly forbidden to enter the Council if the temperature measured is high.
- Reducing the number of employees: Based on the high royal directive, to reduce the number of employees present in all governmental departments to the minimum, in a way that does not hinder the work process in governmental institutions, while allowing women who have children to work from home.



Accordingly, the working from home system has been applied to employees in the General Secretariat of the following categories: working mothers, pregnant women, persons with special needs, elderly, those who suffer from chronic diseases and those who provide care for a person with disability to work from home. In addition, implementing work shifts for the remaining employees present in at work, and this is what the General Secretariat has been committed to. This reduced the presence of employees at the General Secretariat headquarters to the lowest possible number by 70% of the workforce, in the interest of the general health, to prevent the spread of the infection.

- Medical examinations procedures: On March 17, 2020, the General Secretariat, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, conducted a scheduled medical examination as part of the precautionary measures undertaken by the competent authorities in the Kingdom of Bahrain regarding the detection of the Coronavirus. The examination was carried out to Their Excellencies, Members of Parliament and employees, in order to ensure Everyone's safety.
- Postponing the good loan installments: Based on the directives of His Excellency the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the General Secretariat, it was taken necessary to postpone the good loan installments for the members of the Council for a period of 6 months from March to August 2020, taking into account and supporting the General Secretariat employees, and supporting them under these current conditions, in a way that guarantees stability For their living conditions.: On March 17, 2020 AD, the General Secretariat, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, conducted the scheduled medical examination as part of the precautionary measures undertaken by the competent authorities in the Kingdom of Bahrain regarding the detection of the Corona virus, and the examination was carried out to Excellencies, deputies and employees, in order to ensure Everyone's safety.
- Postponing the payment of the Interest -free loan installments: Based on the directives of Her Excellency the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of the General Secretariat, the necessary was undertaken to postpone the payment of the Interest - free loan installments for the employees of the Council for a period of 6 months, starting from March to August 2020. This came as a support to the General Secretariat employees, under these current circumstances, in a way that guarantees stability for their living conditions.
- Activating electronic systems remotely: The General Secretariat, in coordination with the Directorate of Information and Technology at the



Council, was keen on activating the following electronic systems: for Committee meetings: (Microsoft Teams) system, as for the Council's employees, the e-mail system was updated through the use of (Microsoft office 365) system, as well as a file storage system (One drive) for cloud storage of shared files, and Zoom program was also used to participate in parliamentary courses remotely. Furthermore, this required the development and upgrading of infrastructure and the speed of Internet connection, to keep pace with the requirements of the aforementioned systems, as well as to contain the sudden increase in the amount of data exchange within the Council electronic network. Secure access was also provided for the Council internal systems for some of the General Secretariat employees, in coordination with the Information and eGovernment Authority, in order to conduct the Council's work remotely.

- Remotely meetings: The number of meetings held within the premises of the Council of Representatives has been reduced, whether for Members or employees of the General Secretariat. Whereas, in the event that it is necessary to convene a meeting, the system of determining the necessary distance between people is applied according to the health standards followed among the participants. In addition, reducing the number of participants to the lowest possible. Whereas, an expansion of the meeting shall be through using "Video conference" technology, whether for the meetings of the Council Committees or the employees of the General Secretariat, as well as activities and training courses with various parties, the majority of the meetings are implemented remotely using modern technologies. The Directorate of Information Technology had also prepared a number of awareness videos on the use of these electronic systems and ways on installing them on their devices. Furthermore, remotely training workshops for MPs and employees to explain the process of using the new systems such as Zoom and Teams was also provided. The Directorate of Information Technology was keen to provide the necessary and immediate technical support to the MPs and the General Secretariat employees during the remotely meetings in order to ensure the success of the meetings.
- Holding the Weekly Sitting of the Council of Representatives Remotely: The first Sitting was held remotely, on April 14, 2020, it was broadcasted by the media via the frequency (801 AM). Whereas, the electronic broadcast was via the Council of Representatives channel on YouTube. It was held by providing all the approved electronic systems, that contributed to holding "Remotely"



meetings. It has achieved remarkable and effective success, especially for meetings inside and outside the Council premises. In addition, to activating electronic and regulation procedures. The holding of the remotely Sitting was the first of its kind in the history of parliamentary work in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in light of the prosperous era and the comprehensive development process led by His Majesty the King of the Country. This comes in implementation of the directives of Her Excellency the Speaker in supporting the national efforts undertaken by the Coordination Committee chaired by the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister.

- Wearing face masks: The General Secretariat was keen to obligate the Council employees to wear face masks, when at the workplace and from any location therein, in order to preserve the health and safety of all and in compliance with the precautionary and preventive measures taken by the national team to face these exceptional circumstances. The General Secretariat has provided face masks to all Employees present on the job.

IV. The Main Findings of the Study:

Despite the events that the world is facing, that led to a decline in the work and the suspension of meetings of many Parliaments across the world, the Bahraini Parliament, especially the Council of Representatives, witnessed important developments, most notably the following:

- ✓ Speeding up the work to complete and pass Draft laws related to the government in dealing with measures to address the emergence of Coronavirus, and to contain social, economic and financial conditions.
- ✓ Continuation of the Council organs meetings and the General Secretariat, and accomplishing many of its tasks despite meeting and working remotely. This indicates benefiting from the challenges in turning them into opportunities and achievements in the process of Parliamentary work.
- ✓ The number of Standing Committee remotely meetings increased, and they did not stop working. The Committee on Services held 10 meetings, the Committee on Financial and Economic Affairs held 11 meetings, the Committee on Legislative and Legal Affairs held 11 meetings, the Committee on Public utilities and Environment held 6 meetings, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and National Security held 4 Meetings during the period from (March 22 to May 18, 2020). Whereas, previously, meetings were



held at a rate of one time for any Committee or body per week, and this matter was overlooked through the Remotely meeting, as the number of remotely meetings per week for some Committees reached up to two times or more.

- ✓ The ability to continue Parliamentary Sittings Remotely for a longer period and complete many Draft laws and Proposals. Whereas, the 28th Sitting of the Council of Representatives, in the Second Ordinary Annual Session, of the Fifth Legislative Term, which was held "Remotely" continued its work for more than 10 hours. This indicates the willingness of the Council Representatives to manage the work in light of the challenges of working Remotely. In addition, the keenness and ability of Their Excellencies, the Members of Parliament to continue working and dealing with the developments of the emerging Coronavirus crisis with ease.
- ✓ The General Secretariat of the Council of Representatives provided all the certified electronic systems, which have contributed to holding "Remotely" meetings. It has achieved remarkable and effective success, in the meetings of the Council Bureau, the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Group, Parliamentary Committees, and meetings with Their Excellencies, Ministers and officials, in addition to holding electronic training courses Remotely, inside and outside the Council premises.
- ✓ Explaining the extent of concern the General Secretariat had in preserving the health and safety of employees in the Bahraini Council of Representatives, by issuing a number of preventive and precautionary measures to address the "Coronavirus" pandemic, and urged everyone to abide by them under these exceptional circumstances, in order to continue the work of the Council of Representatives regularly.
- ✓ Increasing the issuance of Proposals, by the Council of Representatives, which were about 70 Proposals on an urgent basis. They were referred to by the Committees in various fields on dealing and countering the spread of the emerging Coronavirus pandemic, during the period from February 25 to April 28, 2020.
- ✓ The Legislative Authority cooperates and supports all decisions, initiatives and measures aimed at enabling the country to overcome all the effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19), in a manner that achieves safety for citizens and residents. As well as, ensures the sustainable growth of various sectors, through research and study of legislation.
- ✓ The solidarity of the Council of Representatives with the high directives of the wise leadership, the homeland and the citizen against the Coronavirus

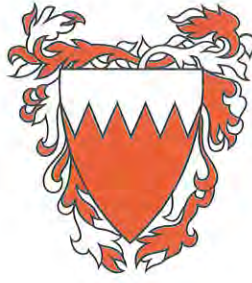


pandemic and the current exceptional circumstances by contributing BHD 100,000 to the national campaign "Feena Khair" against the Coronavirus Pandemic.

- ✓ Continuation of the services provided by the General Secretariat in all fields, especially training and development for employees. As well as, workshops and lectures for Their Excellencies the Members of Parliament, which exceeded 30 training and development programs remotely. Moreover, following up 15 projects during the period from 19 March to 18 May 2020.

Conclusion:

This crisis has created new opportunities and modalities for the Parliamentary work that can be pursued even after the end of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic crisis. Furthermore, it has also highlighted the potential of the Bahraini parliament, especially the Council of Representatives, and its ability to adapt and develop in light of the realities and challenges it is facing.



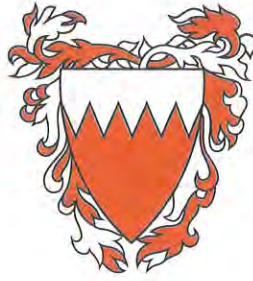
Measures of the Shura Council and its General Secretariat in combating the Corona pandemic

Since the beginning of the spread of Corona virus "Covid 19" amongst the countries of the world, national efforts joined forces in the Kingdom to fight the virus in various fields and on different levels. The numerous precautionary and preventive measures that have been put into practice have won local, regional and international praise, and the Kingdom has thus become a role model in crisis management and conservation of citizens' and residents' health.

In view of this unprecedented circumstances the Shura Council adopted a number of measures to tackle the virus in a manner that transformed this ordeal into a success story that portrayed the efficiency and expertise of the General Secretariat employees. Proactive work plans were formulated to ensure that the legislative process would not be interrupted. Among the measures taken, are the following:

First: At the legislative level:

1. The Shura Council is considered a pioneer in holding the first "remote" session in the history of the legislature since its inception. It also continued to hold its committee meetings remotely, thus applying social distancing.
2. Several parliamentary questions related to the effects and repercussions of the Corona virus were submitted.



3. Several statements commending official and national efforts in tackling the virus were issued, and full support for national efforts and actions was declared.

Second: On the administrative level:

1. The Council was able to capitalize on national expertise in the field of information technology and use it to develop work mechanisms where the best facilities and advanced programs were used for electronic transformation.
2. Training its employees on the practical application and use of modern technologies and programs that enable them to perform their daily tasks smoothly and efficiently.
3. Issuing a pronouncement organizing a rotating schedule for its employees to 'work from home' as of March 22, 2020 while women could work entirely from home without rotation.
4. Accentuating the commitment to all preventive measures and obliging employees to wear masks during working hours.
5. Sterilization and disinfection of the offices and facilities of the Council and the main hall of the sessions, relying on the cadres of the General Secretariat and former contracts with cleaning services companies.
6. Distributing educational material to spread awareness on how to maintain the highest levels of prevention via email.
7. Increasing the number of sterilizer suspension devices in the buildings and departments of the Council and the General Secretariat.



8. Coaching cleaning and services companies' employees on the correct methods of cleaning and wiping floors and surfaces and using soap and the use of hand sanitizer.
9. Reducing the use of all dinning glassware and replacing it with disposable ones.
10. Urging employees to contact the Human Resources Department if they experienced any symptoms of the Corona virus.

China's Actions in fighting Covid-19

The Covid-19 global pandemic, a serious crisis and a daunting challenge for the entire world, is the most extensive to afflict humanity in a century.

Facing this unknown, unexpected, and devastating disease, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government have addressed the epidemic as a top priority, and taken swift action. General Secretary Xi Jinping has taken personal command, planned the response, overseen the general situation and acted decisively, pointing the way forward in the fight against the epidemic. This has bolstered the Chinese people's confidence and rallied their strength. Under the leadership of the CPC, the whole nation has followed the general principle of "remaining confident, coming together in solidarity, adopting a science-based approach, and taking targeted measures", and waged an all-out people's war on the virus. Putting people's lives and health first, the Chinese government has acted swiftly to fight the virus and provide medical treatment for patients. It has adopted the most thorough, rigorous and comprehensive prevention and control measures, enforced quarantine and isolation on a scale never seen before, and mobilized medical resources across the country. It has ensured that all those in need have been tested, quarantined, hospitalized or treated. In order to break the chains of transmission through early intervention, the strictest closure

and traffic restrictions were enforced on all outbound routes from Wuhan and Hubei. International passenger flights, and ferries and long-distance passenger transport services in many parts of the province were suspended, as were road and waterway passenger services bound for Wuhan from other places of the country. Airports and railway stations were closed and intra-city public transport halted in Wuhan and many other parts of Hubei. Other parts of China adopted a targeted, tiered, and region-specific approach. They exercised a dynamic control over urban and rural road transport services and strengthened health and quarantine measures for domestic routes. Rigorous measures were taken to prevent public gatherings and cross-infection. The Chinese New Year holiday was extended, public gatherings were canceled or postponed, and the spring semester was postponed in schools. Cinemas, theaters, internet cafés, and gyms were all closed. Strict procedures had to be followed in essential public facilities, including bus stations, airports, ports, farmers markets, shopping malls, supermarkets, restaurants and hotels, and in enclosed transport vehicles such as buses, trains and planes. All persons were required to wear masks and undergo temperature monitoring when accessing these venues or vehicles. In addition, all such facilities had to be disinfected, meet certain hygiene standards, ensure good ventilation, monitor visitors' temperature, and control the number of passengers or visitors at a given period of time. Government services were provided

online and through prior reservation, non-physical-contact delivery or services were extended, people were encouraged to stay at home and work from home, and businesses were encouraged to telecommute – all these measures effectively reduced population flows and public gatherings. Clear signs urging people to maintain at least one meter of distance and avoid close contact could be seen in all public places. Strict health and quarantine measures were enforced at points of entry and exit across China to prevent inbound and outbound spread of the virus. The strictest-ever measures were applied at border control to suspend non-urgent and nonessential outbound travel by Chinese citizens.

1.4 billion Chinese people have exhibited enormous tenacity and solidarity in erecting a defensive rampart that demonstrates their power in the face of such natural disasters. The fight against the COVID-19 represents the largest medical assistance operation since the founding of the PRC. China mobilized all its medical resources to support the efforts in Wuhan and other locations in Hubei. From January 24 to March 8, it rallied 346 national medical teams, consisting of 42,600 medical workers and more than 900 public health professionals to the immediate aid of Hubei and the city of Wuhan. Nineteen provinces and equivalent administrative units assisted 16 other cities in Hubei in the form of paired

assistance. While burdened with the heavy responsibility of coronavirus prevention and control and treatment of patients in their home cities, they still pooled together quality medical resources to assist Hubei and Wuhan. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) dispatched over 4,000 medical personnel to Hubei to work in epidemic control. They took on medical work in three designated medical institutions, including Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan. The PLA Air Force dispatched aircraft to transport emergency medical supplies. Medical teams were formed within two hours of receiving the order, and they arrived at their destinations within 24 hours, carrying a seven-day stock of protective materials. On arrival, they started to treat patients right away. It mobilized 40,000 construction workers and several thousand sets of machinery and equipment to build two hospitals. The construction of the 1,000-bed Huoshenshan Hospital was completed in just 10 days, and that of the 1,600-bed Leishenshan Hospital in just 12 days. In 10 short days, 16 temporary treatment centers providing over 14,000 beds were built.

Through painstaking efforts and tremendous sacrifice, and having paid a heavy price, China has succeeded in turning the situation around. In little more than a single month, the rising spread of the virus was contained; in around two months, the daily increase in domestic coronavirus cases had fallen to single digits; and in approximately three months, a decisive

victory was secured in the battle to defend Hubei Province and its capital city of Wuhan. With these strategic achievements, China has protected its people's lives, safety and health, and made a significant contribution to safeguarding regional and global public health. As of 24:00 of May 31, 2020, a cumulative total of 83,017 confirmed cases had been reported on the Chinese mainland, 78,307 infected had been cured and discharged from hospital, and 4,634 people had died. This demonstrates a cure rate of 94.3 percent and a fatality rate of 5.6 percent.

Covid-19 has hit over 210 countries and regions, affected more than seven billion people around the world and claimed over 400,000 precious lives. In the face of this grim reality and numbers, there is no more important issue than saving lives, or more urgent task than international solidarity and cooperation. Governments should rise above differences and frictions, focus on enhancing international cooperation and focus on saving lives, in order to provide the leadership needed to win the fight against Covid-19. As countries battle the disease in light of their own situations, China calls for mutual understanding and respect for these efforts, and sharing and learning from each other's experience. Fighting Covid-19 is like putting out fire. Every minute counts when life is at stake. The global community should never be distracted in its collaborative response by finger-pointing or the blame game, still less should we allow

new tensions and divisions to be created as a result of politicization or stigmatization.

Having forged the idea that the world is a global community of shared future, and believing that it must act as a responsible member, China has fought shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world. In an open, transparent, and responsible manner and in accordance with the law, China gave timely notification to the international community of the onset of a new coronavirus, and shared without reserve its experience in containing the spread of the virus and treating the infected. President Xi has personally promoted international cooperation. In phone calls or meetings with nearly 50 foreign leaders and heads of international organizations, President Xi explained China's tactics and achievements in fighting the virus, and emphasized China's open, transparent and responsible approach towards releasing information and sharing its experience in virus control and the treatment of infected cases. He expressed empathy for the difficulties faced by other countries, saying that China would do all it can to help them. He called on all parties to build a global community of shared future, strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and support international organizations in order to work together to meet the challenge. President Xi delivered a speech at the G20 Extraordinary Leaders' Summit on Covid-19 on China's

experience. In a call on the international community to rise to the challenge and act swiftly, he put forward a series of cooperation initiatives and four key proposals – launch an all-out global war against Covid-19, establish a collective response for control and treatment at the international level, support international organizations in playing their roles, and strengthen coordination of international macroeconomic policies. On May 18, President Xi addressed the opening of the 73rd World Health Assembly, calling for a joint effort on the part of all countries to overcome the virus and build a global community of health for all. Six proposals were put forward: to do everything we can for Covid-19 control and treatment, to support the WHO in leading the global response, to provide greater support for Africa, to strengthen global governance in public health, to restore economic and social development, and to strengthen international cooperation. He also announced a series of major measures that China would take in supporting the global fight, including US\$2 billion of international aid over two years, the establishment of a global humanitarian response depot and hub in China in cooperation with the United Nations, the establishment of a cooperation mechanism for Chinese hospitals to pair up with 30 African hospitals, the Covid-19 vaccine to be used as a global public product once it is developed and deployed in China, and the implementation of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative for the poorest countries together with

other G20 members. China has actively participated in and acted upon the Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the G20. It has so far announced the suspension of debt repayments from 77 developing countries.

China has great empathy with victims all over the world, and has done all it can to provide humanitarian aid in support of the international community's endeavors to stem the pandemic. As of May 31, China had sent 29 medical expert teams to 27 countries, and offered assistance to 150 countries and 4 international organizations. It has instructed its medical teams stationed in 56 countries to support the local fight, and provide counseling and health information to local people and overseas Chinese. They have so far organized over 400 online and offline training sessions in this regard. Local governments, enterprises, non-governmental organizations and individuals in China have donated materials to more than 150 countries and regions, and international organizations through various channels. The Chinese government has always had at heart the lives and health of foreigners in China, and it has provided undifferentiated and timely treatment to those infected with the disease. Even while under the tremendous pressure of coronavirus control, China has moved quickly to provide as much assistance to the international community as it can. It has provided two batches of cash support totaling US\$50 million to the WHO, assisted the organization in purchasing

personal protective equipment and establishing reserve centers of supplies in China, and helped its Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund to raise funds in China. It has also participated in the WHO's "Access to Covid-19 Tools (act) Accelerator" initiative, aiming to speed up the development, production and equitable distribution of new tools.

The virus is currently wreaking havoc throughout the world. China grieves for those who have been killed and those who have sacrificed their lives in the fight, extends the greatest respect to those who are struggling to save lives, and offers true moral support to those who are infected and receiving treatment. China firmly believes that as long as all countries unite and cooperate to mount a collective response, the international community will succeed in overcoming the pandemic, and will emerge from this dark moment in human history into a brighter future.



The Report on the Measures Taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran Against Corona

From the very beginning of the Corona outbreak, and according to the announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the high rate of people's infection with the dangerous virus and the organization's recommendation to countries to take strict measures in order to prevent the spread of the disease, "the National Headquarters to Fight the Coronavirus", comprising of members of all relevant bodies for policy-making, monitoring and reviewing developments and making purposeful decisions, was established on February 25, 2020. Subsequently, provincial headquarters for combating and managing the corona disease were established in all provinces and the enactments of the National Headquarters to Fight the Coronavirus were executable for all bodies and institutions.

The duties of the headquarters are as follows:

- (1) Performing the duties in accordance with instructions, monitoring and reviewing developments, and performing expert work and purposeful decision-making for affirmative and negative measures to combat corona
- (2) Creating coordination, empathy, and synergy among all bodies and organizations related to the fight against corona and monitoring their performance
- (3) Presenting up-to-date and timely statistics on the number of sufferers, recovered patients, and deaths
- (4) Disseminating accurate information and news to inform the public about the prevention of disease and the observance of all health protocols, and coordination and positive interaction of the people with the institutions for the implementation of the enactments of the National Headquarters to Fight the Coronavirus

(5) Immediate adjustment of regulations and mechanisms, determination of the limits of powers and specified executive guarantee, and promulgation of them

Due to the specific conditions of US non-humanitarian and illegal economic sanctions against the Iranian people and in order to respond to their negative consequences on Iranians' economic activities and public health, the policymaking of the Islamic Republic of Iran to manage the epidemic and control the Coronavirus cycle was based on creating a balance between health and the economy. In this regard, the closure of high-risk centers, the gradual reopening of various economic sectors, social distancing, and the observance of health protocols were carried out.

- Instead of complete quarantine and full closure of social and economic activities, citizens were asked to observe social distancing and to avoid actions leading to the spread of the disease. Then, after the initial control of the Coronavirus cycle, smart social distancing was implemented.
- Based on an epidemiological study, provinces of the country and all regions were divided into two regions, i.e. white and red. Accordingly, regulations on traffic between these regions and regions within the provinces were implemented.
- All trips were canceled, and screening stations were set up at the country and cities' entrance points, including airports and border checkpoints on land and at sea, as a precautionary measure.
- All Iranian nationals entering the country from countries infected with the virus were quarantined and all tests and measures necessary for quarantine and treatment were taken.
- Informing the citizens to stay at home was carried out in the early stages of the spread of the disease in the country, especially in cities affected by the disease.
- Educational centers, schools and gathering places were closed, and calendar occasions and related gatherings were banned.
- The teleworking policy of the public and private sectors was implemented, and the employees were present at work, if necessary and with the least number, in working shifts.
- Initially, citizens were advised to use masks in public places. Afterwards, the use of masks in public places was declared mandatory.
- The production of masks and disinfectants and access to them increased in the country and they were exported abroad.
- In order to support families and businesses, the grace period of people's loans from banks was extended for two months from the time of the epidemic.
- The health sector and the Unemployment Insurance Fund were supported by the National Development Fund. Some three million heads of households were given grants while four million were given loans.

▪ Low-interest facilities have been granted to official and unofficial businesses affected by the Corona crisis, and the process continues.

▪ Coronavirus diagnostic kits were imported to Iran at the beginning of the outbreak. Later, with efforts made by Iranian experts, Iran-made kits were exported to many countries.

Quarantine centers in different parts of the country were equipped with Coronavirus-related equipment.

The army and other military forces built hospitals for Corona patients and provided the health sector with the hospitals. Moreover, temporary convalescence centers were built in major routes for travelers returning from their trips and for the identification of patients.

The disinfection of all public places and main centers and streets was carried out by municipalities in cooperation with other sectors.

▪ Businesses are reopening step by step, based on their risk and the conditions of each city, and their activities are carried out according to health protocols. However, some high-risk businesses are still not allowed to reopen.

The harsh conditions caused by cruel sanctions, continued pressures and the lack of full access to some health and pharmaceutical items have caused management and combating various aspects of this dangerous disease to be a serious challenge for Iran, and despite all efforts, the possibility of the spread of the dangerous epidemic still exists.

Actions and measures taken by the National Assembly of Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic

As of June 15, 2020

1. COVID-19 measures taken during the legislative recess

On March 26, 2020, while the National Assembly of Thailand was under prorogation, a national state of emergency has been declared by the Government in order to control the spread of COVID-19, requiring the National Assembly to adjust its work process of the operation as well as modify its procedures in response to the public health concern at that time.

To begin with, all meetings of parliamentary committees in both chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, were allowed to be held on the basis of necessity and encouraged to limit the number of participants down to a minimum, except for the ad-hoc committees that are tasked to work within a fixed time frame.

Before the end of the recess of the legislative branch, several standing committees of both Houses switched to virtual meetings using remote platforms such as Cisco Webex Meeting, Zoom Cloud Meeting and LINE application. Meanwhile, over 50 percent of parliamentary staff had been allowed to work from home during March 25 to May 15, 2020, depending on the nature of their jobs, using remote working tools as well as virtual meetings.

At the beginning of the coronavirus global outbreak, the President of the National Assembly has announced that all types of overseas trips by Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff be banned, including working visits, study visits, international conferences and other non-essential travels. Parliamentary officers who returned from the listed countries at risk were also ordered to be self-quarantined for 14 days, though without any symptoms.

2. COVID-19 measures taken during a legislative session

As the new ordinary legislative session has begun since May 22, 2020, necessary precautionary measures have been introduced in the context of COVID-19 such as social distancing, limiting numbers of MPs' support staff, and new seating arrangement for MPs. For example, in the plenary chambers as well as parliamentary committees meeting rooms, each person must keep 1-2 meter distance to observe social distancing requirement. Session must finish prior to 8.00 pm to comply with the current curfew commencing April 3, 2020.

MPs, parliamentary staff, the press, and visitors are required to wear face masks and have their body temperatures checked before entering the parliamentary buildings as well as maintain their personal hygiene while inside the parliament. Thermal scanners, infrared thermometers and UV disinfection tunnels have been set up at all entrances for this purpose. A special medical team is tasked with monitoring this screening process and

will promptly send anyone with high body temperature to the COVID-19 specialized hospitals for further examination. All tours of the parliamentary buildings and other non-essential visits are temporarily suspended, while Thai citizens who come for petitions are still welcomed. Furthermore, the smartphone-based special application was introduced to help track people in and out of the parliamentary buildings. QR codes are posted at all entrances to ensure that all visitors follow this procedure properly.

Many sensitive areas in the parliamentary buildings such as elevators, escalators, toilets, and cafeteria, as well as furniture and equipment are kept cleaned and sanitized by alcohol-based spray or disinfecting wipes twice a day. Hand sanitizers are also provided at various locations inside the parliamentary buildings.

3. Legislative actions in response to COVID-19

On June 2, 2020, the National Assembly endorsed three Emergency Decrees to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, allowing relevant authorities to provide special allowance to those affected by the pandemic, stabilizing the financial system, and rehabilitating the economy. The House of Representatives is also discussing on forming an ad-hoc committee to oversee the COVID-19 recovery programs by the Government.

Another Emergency Decree on electronic meetings was also approved by the National Assembly recently, enabling both the public and private sector to convene board meetings or shareholders meetings using digital medias. In addition to this, the House of Representatives is currently in the process of amending its own regulations to provide legal basis for online meetings.

4. The current situation in Thailand

According to the relief of the outbreak situation of COVID-19 in Thailand which makes the Global COVID-19 Index (GCI) has ranked Thailand to be the second in the Global COVID-19 recovery and the first in Asia by the same index. The government has lifted the curfew measure under a national state of emergency since June 15, 2020, to allow 11 more businesses and leisure activities to resume its businesses run throughout the country. However, the vulnerable businesses, such as, internet and game cafes, some massage parlours, fighting arenas, and the like are remain closed aiming for preventing the aggregation of the crowd and protecting the second wave of the pandemic resurrection.

Nonetheless, Thailand's borders still remain closed by land, sea, and air with the international flight ban scheduled for review at the end of June.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation and Measures in Thailand

As of June 26, 2020

1. Establishment of the Centre for the Administration of the Situation due to the Outbreak of the Communicable Disease Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

Whereas there was an outbreak of the communicable disease Coronavirus 2019 or COVID-19 which was a highly contagious disease and was very dangerous to the lives of those who had been infected, combined with the fact that at that moment there was no vaccine nor medicine; consequently there had been a worldwide escalation in the number of infected persons and deaths from this disease. As a result, the World Health Organization announced that the outbreak of the communicable disease Coronavirus 2019 was a pandemic and has requested countries in ASEAN to enforce more stringent measures. The said pandemic was therefore a situation that threatened public order and the safety of the people which necessitated stringent and urgent measures to prevent the widespread transmission of the disease. There had also been the hoarding of goods which were necessary for the monitoring and control of the outbreak, the prevention and treatment of the disease, as well as the hoarding of consumer goods and essentials necessary for the daily life of the people, which must be prevented so as not to create shortages resulting in the aggravation of the distress of the people. It was therefore necessary to adopt urgent measures to protect the people's safety and peaceful living of the people. Therefore, the Royal Thai Government had declared an Emergency Situation in all areas of the Kingdom of Thailand on 25th March 2020. That Order had been taken effect from 26th March – 30th April 2020. And on 25th March 2020, the Government had issued to set up the Centre for the Administration of the Situation due to the Outbreak of the Communicable Disease Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) referring to as the "Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA)" which had the following duties and powers:

(1) to perform duties in accordance with the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations B.E. 2548 (2005) and to carry out those duties to resolve the emergency situation;

(2) to procure and manage surgical masks and hand sanitiser gel to distribute to the public and medical personnel through distribution or sale;

(3) to arrange the structure of the organisation appropriate for the performance of its duties and establish an agency or operations centre to be the operational organisation, as deemed appropriate;

(4) to conduct public relations and disseminate accurate and factual information and news in order to enhance good understanding between the government and the public, including any related psychological operations;

(5) to organise manpower of police officers, military officers and civil servants to implement plans to maintain the security of various important persons and places, as well as to coordinate with the relevant government or state agencies responsible for those places, to protect themselves according to their abilities, as a first priority;

(6) to organise an operations unit from police officers, military officers and civil servants in order to suppress incidents in cases that lead to the incitement of unrest or to assist in alleviating the people's distress related to the emergency situation;

(7) to assign the relevant government and state agencies to give support that is related to personnel, budget, materials and hardware, vehicles and other tools and equipment to remedy the emergency situation;

(8) to call upon the relevant government and state agencies, government officials or government officers to attend meetings, give briefings, provide information, provide documents or carry out any other tasks as deemed appropriate; and

(9) to carry out other tasks assigned by the Prime Minister or the Council of Ministers; and

(10) that Order had been taken effect from 26th March 2020.

Additionally, the consequence of that declaration was that the government had further channels of control and management of the situation pursuant to the law. For example, there would be a temporary transfer of a number of Ministerial powers under certain laws to the Prime Minister as far as it was necessary, for expediency and integrated management. Regulations should be issued in the form of certain prohibitions and guidelines such as prohibitions from entering or leaving certain areas, prohibitions or limitations from entering or departing the Kingdom and the movement of large numbers of people across various areas, the control of the use of vehicles, transportation routes and the control of goods and medical supplies.

2. COVID-19 Measures in Thailand

The measures undertaken by Thailand are in line with the WHO International Health Regulations 2005 and focus on comprehensively addressing the outbreak through upstream, midstream and downstream measures.

On upstream measures, we focused on travel controls and the screening of those entering the country at airports and border checkpoints on land and by sea as well as natural border entry points as part of our preventive and precautionary efforts.

On midstream measures, the government launched a “**Stay home, Stop the Disease, for the Nation**” campaign, promoted social distancing, prepared state and local quarantine facilities for 14-day monitoring, used mobile applications to track and monitor quarantined individuals, closed high risk contagion areas, disseminated accurate information in a transparent manner and countered fake news as well as promoted community engagement through the work of more than one million village-level public health volunteers who have provided advice and assistance directly to many households. We have

also suspended the celebration of Thai New Year or Songkran Festival and religious gatherings.

On downstream measures, the key here was to treat patients and alleviate the economic impacts of COVID-19. On 7th April 2020, the Government approved an economic stimulus package of over 1.9 trillion Baht (approximately USD 60 billion) or 10% of our national GDP to help people and businesses affected by COVID-19. This included the provision of income compensation for those who had had to stop working at that time, a reduction in utility fees as well as tax and financial measures to increase liquidity for businesses, especially MSMEs. Furthermore, the Government had supported proactive research into the development and procurement of medical equipment, a COVID-19 vaccine and supporting systems based on information technology.

On 7 April 2020, Cabinet approved the third phase of joint measures to alleviate the direct and indirect effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the Thai economy with details as follows:

1. Improvement and rehabilitation of the economy impacted by COVID-19:

The Government had drafted a Royal Ordinance for the issuance of a line of credit not exceeding one Trillion baht. The loan thus issued would be used for the following purposes:

1.1 600 Billion baht for cash handouts for the individuals, farmers, and operators who are affected by COVID-19, as well as helping the medical and public health sectors.

1.2 400 Billion baht allocated to economy recovery measures, with the objective of: 1) increasing production and service capacity and quality in the major economic sectors of the country in order to create jobs and boost market promotion for products linked to tourism or other service sectors 2) creating basic development structure in communities in order to develop local products and boost the local economy 3) promoting and stimulating private and household consumption, as well as promoting and stimulating various private sector investments, that will bring consumption and investment conditions back to normal levels.

2. Measures for economic and financial stability: Together, the Ministry of Finance and Bank of Thailand had set up guidelines for economic and financial stability during the COVID-19 emergency. Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which comprise 80% of the country's employers, were experiencing liquidity problems, which might result in termination of employment and defaulted loan payments. At the same time, fluctuation in the financial markets might prevent companies from redeeming debt securities that are due. This affected investors' trust and reduces the efficiency of raising funds. Therefore, the Government had approved two Royal Ordinances as follows:

2.1 Provision of financial assistance to SMEs who are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak issuing soft loans up to THB 500 Billion. The Bank of Thailand was able to provide soft loans to commercial banks and specialized financial institutions at 0.01 percent annual limit, with a budget of 500 Billion baht, to release new loans to SMEs with the same outstanding credit amount not exceeding 500 million baht. The SME must not be

in the international market nor have Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) as of 31 December 2019. SMEs would receive additional credit not exceeding 20% of the original loan amount (up to a maximum amount of THB 100 million) and the interest rate would not exceed 2% per annum. Additionally, creditworthy debtors would enjoy a six-month grace period on principal and interest payments for both the new loan as well as the pre-existing loan.

2.2 Establishment of the Corporate Bond Stabilization Fund: BSF. The Bank of Thailand would buy and sell investment units in said fund in order to promote market functioning. The fund would buy bonds to help increase the liquidity of high-quality companies, which had experienced a temporary liquidity shortage due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Companies could roll over shares and the Bank of Thailand could buy investment units of the fund not exceeding 400 Billion baht. In addition, the Bank of Thailand could buy and sell private equities in the secondary market in the event that it was necessary and urgent to maintain stability of the private equities and financial system markets.

3. Other aid measures, which included three measures as follows:

3.1 One-year extension of deposit protection for deposits not exceeding 5 million baht to August 10, 2021 from August 10, 2020, in order to maintain economic stability and strengthen the financial system.

3.2 Low-interest credit measures for non-financial business operators (non-banks) issued by the Government Savings Bank in order to help small debtors with credit loans, leasing, hire purchase, car and motor vehicle leasing and purchasing, as well as car title loans.

3.3 Temporary interbank lending rate cuts to 0.23% per annum from 0.46% per annum, so that financial institutions will incur lower costs, leading to the reduction of interest rates and help alleviate the burden on businesses and individuals.

There are measures of Thailand regarding the health security system as follows.

1. Multitasking village health volunteers: All over the country, 1,040,000 health volunteers are working in 75,032 villages near and far. They are mainly women who know their communities very well. These volunteers are working closely with health officials at all district and provincial levels. Furthermore, all 77 provinces have a communicable control disease unit. Precisely, this strong health system at all levels helps to mitigate the outbreak.

2. Deploying universal precaution: Thailand is the only country in Asean to have deployed the "universal precaution" in fighting against Covid-19. The public health officials urged everyone to wear a face mask at all times and take care of personal hygiene almost as soon as the first case was announced.

3. Resilient Thai public: Obviously, without public participation and cooperation, the outcome of anti-virus measures would be different. It must be noted that the Thais tend to follow guidelines from professional people, especially doctors.

4. Leadership quality: Government officials have given full credit to the government of Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha for overall decisiveness. Others have entertained

different views. Provincial and local authorities have also displayed their unique capacities to manage the pandemic in their localities and communities.

5. **Good timing for measures:** Judging from the timelines of each ASEAN member's lockdown and quarantine system, Thailand has pursued the middle path, which was neither too stringent nor too loose. Even when the government declared the emergency on March 24, it was careful as the public at large were still suspicious of its real intentions.

6. **Fact-based communication:** On March 23, when the CCSA appointed a spokesperson, Dr. Taweetilp Visanuyothin, the whole dynamic of discourse on the pandemic situation changed dramatically. This charismatic spokesperson has been able to generate public trust in his daily briefings. His official but raw data has generated acute awareness of what must be done to prevent the spread of the virus. Dr. Taweetilp was able to communicate directly with the public and this resulted in growing awareness and subsequently translated into solid understanding and cooperation.

7. **Thai Trials of COVID-19 Vaccine:** The National Vaccine Institute plans the human tests of a coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine when tests with monkey prove to be successful. The local vaccine production is expected to begin late next year. The vaccine development resulted from the collaboration of many organizations including the National Vaccine Institute, the National Research Council of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University, BioNet-Asia Co, the National Science and Technology Development Agency, Mahidol University and the Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital. In addition, the vaccine production is expected to start locally late next year and BioNet-Asia has the production potential but will need to import some technology. Thailand was cooperating with University of Pennsylvania and China for the purpose.

3. The Current Situation in Thailand

The Government has lifted the curfew measure under a national state of emergency since June 15, 2020, to allow 11 more businesses and leisure activities to resume its businesses run throughout the country. However, the vulnerable businesses, such as, internet and game cafes, some massage parlours, fighting arenas, and the like are remain closed aiming for preventing the aggregation of the crowd and protecting the second wave of the pandemic resurrection. Nonetheless, Thailand's borders still remain closed by land, sea, and air with the international flight ban scheduled for review at the end of June.

Furthermore, The Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) decided to extend the Emergency Decree enforced across Thailand until 30 June 2020.

On 25th June 2020, The CCSA reported one new coronavirus case detected in a Thai national returning from abroad, taking the country to 31 days without a local transmission. At the Present, The government has come up with a plan to open travel bubbles with several countries, a move crucial to restoring international links to boost the economy.



PARLAMENTO
NACIONAL
República Democrática de Timor-Leste

Lesson Learned from Timor-Leste how to anticipate the Covid-19 Pandemic

Author: Maria Terezinha Viegas, member of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly and Member of Parliament from the CNRT Party, and Mariano Assanami Sabino, member of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly and Member of Parliament from the Democratic Party.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has captured worldwide attention, and Timor-Leste is no exception. The disease has captured public attention in the country over the last five months, as there is nationwide recognition that the pre-existing public health system would not be able to cope with it.

The first case of COVID in Timor-Leste was confirmed on March 21. Less than a week later, on March 28, a state of emergency was declared by President Francisco Guterres. The state of emergency provides constitutional basis for the government to take some restrictive measures, including:

- suspension of nonessential public activities,
- suspension of school activities,
- limitation of public gathering,
- suspension of public transport,
- closing of Timor-Leste borders with neighboring countries, i.e Indonesia and Australia.

- suspension of international flights in and out of Timor-Leste

The National Parliament unanimously approved the state of emergency before the President of Republic declared it.

The state of emergency was renewed again on April 24 and on May 28 for another month. This time, the government adopted some more flexible measures, including allowing school activities, while strengthening border control, particularly along the border with Indonesia.

Timor-Leste's strategy relies on early intervention and a mandatory quarantine. Particular attention was given to returning Timorese from overseas. The mandatory quarantine has helped the health authorities to monitor the returnees and prevented the virus from spreading to the wider community.

Timor-Leste's strategy has brought some positive outcomes. All cases – mostly imported from Indonesia via returning Timorese students — were identified before reaching the community. This helped to prevent wider community transmission. Timor-Leste has not reported new cases since April 24 and as of May 15 there are no active cases of COVID-19 — all patients have recovered. So far, there have been no fatalities reported.

Timor-Leste also improved the capacity of the national laboratory to perform COVID-19 tests. Unlike in previous months, where the lab had to confirm tests results in Darwin, now Timor-Leste can run the

test independently. Since early March, it has carried out more than 1,500 tests, an average of one test for every 8,600 persons.

As seen in other countries, however, the social and economist costs of the state of emergency are high. Many businesses had to downsize or close their business either permanently or temporarily as there is no income. Consequently, they also had to lay off some of their workers.

As seen around the world, COVID-19 and the state of emergency worsened the social and economic conditions that already existed. Timor-Leste's economy was already in recession before COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic and the state of emergency, Timor-Leste already had multiple problems such as serious lack of access to food and nutrition, and very few formal and secure jobs.

In order to respond to such situation, the National Parliament unanimously approved Covid-19 Fund with the total amount of USD 250 million that aims to enable the government to provide immediate and necessary measures to the situation. Allocation of this amount include USD 150 million stimulus package targeting subsidy for household with an income below USD 500 per month.

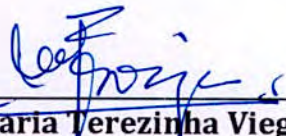
This approach delivered immediate impacts on their consumption level, and prevent vulnerable Timorese families from falling deep into even serious health problems in the short term. The subsidy also has multiplier effects for the informal economy in rural areas as well as in Dili, the capital. This could provide the basis for the economy to recover.



Currently, the health authority has expanded its monitoring system to the other municipalities through the "Sentinel Surveillance" system. A public campaign is being undertaken to educate Timorese on hygiene and physical distancing measures. The National Parliament have been proactive in monitoring the services delivered by the government to the people of Timor-Leste.

Despite being free from Covid-19 cases to date, Timor-Leste still maintains hygiene and social distancing measures. With the termination of State of Emergency since June 2020, Timor-Leste is set to reopen its borders with Indonesia and Australia, including reactivating operation of commercial flights from and to Timor-Leste. However, Timor-Leste will continue to apply mandatory quarantine for individuals entering the country from overseas.

As of July 2020, Timor-Leste has been successfully dealing with Covid-19 pandemic and the National Parliament of Timor-Leste wishes the best for the Parliament and the Government of Azerbaijan to overcome this pandemic as soon as possible.



Maria Terezinha Viegas
Timor-Leste



ASYA PARLAMENTER ASAMBLESİ (APA) TÜRK GRUBU
ASIAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (APA) TURKISH GROUP



Dear Colleague,

As parliamentarians from Turkey, we write to extend our solidarity to your country in the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak. We would like to express our sincere condolences to your people for their losses and wish speedy and full recovery for those who are still in the hospitals. We strongly believe that the fight against this global problem necessitates a joint effort among the nations. We deem it important to establish an extensive level of communication with our counterparts to extend our support in such a challenging moment in our history.

Humanity is going through one of the most challenging periods in recent memory. The emergence and the rapid spread of COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill. We all have lost loved ones, thousands of our residents have fallen ill and there is fear and anxiety among billions worldwide. Our economies suffered greatly from the outbreak. Millions of people lost their jobs and the long-term economic impact of the corona outbreak is yet to be seen.

As Turkey, we never lost hope and we acted swiftly. We took drastic action early in January by restricting international travel, aggressively monitoring, testing and contact tracing. Starting with the first case in our country, we implemented social distancing, conducted large numbers of tests, quarantined 30 major cities, imposed curfews on risky population groups and for the general public on weekends. Thanks to our years-long investment in our healthcare infrastructure with highest number of ICU beds per capita in Europe, only 66% of our hospital capacity was used and our healthcare system was never overwhelmed. As of May 12th, we were able to contain the spread and limit the fatality rate to 2.7% (compared to the world's 6.91%). Extreme and strict cautionary measures coupled with a robust healthcare system resulted in much lower ratios in metrics such as active cases (36.95%) and recoveries (59.36%) compared to the much higher world ratios.

We have been receiving requests for medical supply from every corner of the world in increasing numbers, whether in the form of donation, financial assistance, permission for purchase or export of medical equipment. ---So far, Turkey has received demands from 135 countries in total, 29 of which is from Asia. We have met 81 requests and continue assessing all other applications favorably, with humanitarian considerations.

We are glad that we were able to end our hand of solidarity and friendship also to some members of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly. With these numbers, we are currently ranked 3rd globally right after China and the U.S. On the other hand, we are thankful to those member-countries of the Assembly which have responded favorably to our requests for certain medical supply, particularly drugs against Covid-19 and related raw materials.

Thanks to the efforts of our health sector and strong health infrastructure, as well as success in diagnosis and treatment throughout the country, Turkey managed to get the pandemic under control and flatten the curve. The number of intensive care unit patients and those on ventilators continues to drop. We are seeing the positive results of starting drug therapy early in the process. Indications gives us a lot of optimism in terms of cases and recoveries. The new cases are going down, total recoveries exceed active cases.

Turkey entered the second phase in its fight and the pandemic is under control now. We believe that we will be at a much better point by the end of the month.



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So we decided to start a gradual process to return to normalcy during the Cabinet Meeting on May 4th in accordance with the advice of the Scientific Council. We will implement a gradual process to return to normalcy in several phases in May, June and July.

We believe on the importance of international solidarity against the Covid-19 pandemic which became a global threat. We think that international cooperation is essential in this period. So we will continue to support initiatives formed to fight against this pandemic.

This exemplary coordination between our countries will continue in the coming months and years. As the lawmakers of our nations, a serious responsibility falls upon our shoulders to ensure that our cooperation is even more robust in order to better prepare our nations, international institutions and norms and the world for the next pandemic or global challenge. In the spirit of our long-standing friendship, we look forward to working together to deepen our relationship during this crisis and thereafter.

Once we overcome this crisis together, we are looking forward to meeting you in person.

Best regards

Asuman ERDOĞAN

Head of APA Turkish Group

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey