

## AJK PRESIDENT PAYS TRIBUTES TO COVID-19 FRONTLINE WARRIORS



MUZAFFARABAD, May 31: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan while paying tributes to the officials of the health department for their excellent performance said our doctors, nurses and paramedics in the field particularly deserve our appreciation for their courageous role during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Describing COVID-19 as an unprecedented health challenge, President Masood cautioned that the pandemic has not over and that people should not lower their guard.

He expressed these views after the presentation of the annual report of the Health Department for the year 2019-20 and the departmental briefing by the Director-General of Health, Dr. Sardar Aftab Hussain Khan.

“We need to keep our focus on awareness campaigns by involving public sector universities, educational institutions, frontline workers, NGOs, community-based organizations, and the media to create awareness and sensitizes the individual and communities about the threat of the pandemic,” the State President emphasized.

He said that it was a matter of great satisfaction that despite the sudden outbreak of the pandemic, the government and the health department had not only quickly and effectively responded by setting up PCR laboratories, isolation centers for coronavirus patients but also took steps for up-gradation of hospital care, provision of vaccine, installing machines and medical equipment for chest scanning and other related medical functions.

President Khan said it is important for the health department not only to maintain the same level of preparedness but also to take further steps to bring the fight against the pandemic to its logical conclusion.

He also thanked the NCOC, National Institute of Health, National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan Army and law enforcement agencies for their help during the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic and said that without close cooperation among these institutions and agencies, the desired results were impossible to achieve.

Earlier in his briefing, Director General of Health Dr. Sardar Aftab Hussain said that in the last two and a half years, the health department has successfully dealt with three major emergencies that included 2019 earthquake in Mirpur, the dengue epidemic and finally the coronavirus pandemic.

The Director-General of Health told the President that when the coronavirus pandemic broke out, we did not have any PCR lab. Now we have five PCR labs and seven PCR machines. There were only ten ventilators in the state and now we have a hundred plus ventilators. The DG Health told that earlier there were three intensive care units

which have now grown to ten.

He said that at present we have more than 600 beds equipped with oxygen systems while in the next year the number of beds with high and low flow oxygen system will be increased to three thousand.

Giving statistics of corona virus-infected people in Azad Kashmir, the Director-General of Health said that 197,000 coronavirus tests have been conducted in AJK and 19,000 people were found to be infected with the virus. Of these 19000 people 17000 have recovered and thus the rate of recovery is more than 85%.

He said that the first and second waves of coronavirus did not cause much loss of life but the third wave proved to be very deadly. So far 543 people have died due to coronavirus infection, most of them in Mirpur and in Poonch districts.

Giving statistics about vaccines in Azad Kashmir, the Director-General Health said that four types of vaccines are being provided in Azad Kashmir and so far 200,000 people have been vaccinated which is 8% of the total population.