**Corona Virus- Global Scare**

Rehman malik January 29, 2020

While studying various reports on Corona virus, I remembered an English movie in which a similar kind of virus is created and spread across the city creating fear among the public as it was life-threatening. Viruses are epidemics that are spread across a large region; for instance multiple continents, or even worldwide. The moment an epidemic crosses the international boundaries, it becomes a pandemic that moves from the first few infections in humans and prevalent over a whole country or the world. The Spanish flu, from 1918 to 1920 has been the deadliest Pandemic to date which infected 500 million people around the world, including people on remote Pacific islands and in the arctic, and resulting in the deaths of 50 to 100 million people. It is understood that Coronavirus is a pandemic as it has now crossed the international boundaries. The virus might have come from snakes but on what basis and how it originated from snakes is yet being assessed on medical grounds as nobody is sure of what gave rise to it. The Chinese province, Wuhan, is a hub of tourism and a main junction of trains hence it has become riskier for China and subsequently for the world. The available information is showing that this virus is spreading all over the world as it is multiplying the victims through the air medium which is unstoppable. It is not possible to curb it as Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. There is no authentic proven research on it yet. Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans which are built-in immune systems in the human body. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, and cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death. There are no vaccines or antiviral drugs that are approved for prevention or treatment. A virus similar to the Sars pathogen has claimed 81 lives since emerging in a market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and spread around the world as of yesterday.

Animals are suspected to be the primary source of the outbreak, with Chinese health officials saying the virus originated from a market where wild animals were illegally sold but what about the source of supply of such infected animals. Unconfirmed studies so far done and made public this week suggest that the virus may have originated from bats or snakes but it is not sure. China must look into it if it is a modified genetic virus spread and is going undetected. According to the latest information, in China, as of Monday, more than 2,700 people have been infected by the virus, the bulk of them in and around Wuhan. Nearly all of the 81 who have died were in that region, but officials have confirmed at least five deaths elsewhere. The city of Macau, a gambling hub and very popular with mainland tourists, has confirmed six cases as of Monday. In Hong Kong, eight people are known to have the disease. Of those, six arrived via a newly built high-speed train terminal that connects with the mainland whereas France has also reported three known cases of the coronavirus in France, the first European country to be affected by the outbreak as France has a number of immigrants settled, and who came to France before and after Vietnam War All three victims had recently traveled to China and they have been placed in isolation. Japan’s health authorities confirmed the country’s fourth case this week: a man in his 40s, visiting Japan from Wuhan, who is in hospital in a stable condition whereas three more are in the hospitals. On the other hand, United States: has confirmed five cases of the virus in patients who had recently entered the country from Wuhan.

The thing of major concern to me is Pakistan, which is comparatively at higher risk as a maximum number of Chinese work in almost whole of Pakistan and especially the friends coming from China could carry the virus along. Although Pakistani authorities have already deputed teams at international airports to screen passengers coming in from China but there is news that a Chinese man suspected to have contracted the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has been admitted to a hospital in Multan, the National Institute of Health (NIH) said. The man had returned to Pakistan from Wuhan 10 days ago. His clinical condition is reported stable but he could be a victim of this deadly virus. While we all know that Islam is referred to as the religion of cleanliness. “Truly, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves.” (Quran 2:222), the religion, hundreds of years ago, instituted health strategies that are being implemented by the doctors and scientists today as we find clear evidence of Islam’s stance on coughing and sneezing openly. Prophet Muhammad instructed the followers and believers to cover their faces when sneezing since the most obvious effect of sneezing and coughing without covering the mouth is the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses which have today been proven by the Centre for Disease Control in the USA as well. The viruses especially the (SARS) are transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets, known as droplet spread that is propelled through an infected person to others from coughing or sneezing.

Today, the doctors also advise that the least which could be done to lower the risk of this disease is by taking a few Ppeventive cautions as there are currently no vaccines available to protect you against human coronavirus infection. You may be able to reduce your risk of infection through the following practices:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands

Avoid contact with people who are suffering from cough and cold

We have a border with China and it has numerous projects in Pakistan so we would not like to be rude with China by not allowing the return of Chinese workers to Pakistan.

We can probably avoid the disease which is highly contagious as well as deadly at individual levels, so, to keep ourselves safe from this following advisory has been issued from our health experts:

Keep your throat moist by drinking water from time to time as once the membrane in your throat is dried, the virus will invade in your body in 10 minutes.

Do not go to crowded/ public places

Wear masks as needed especially when going out or in public transports.

Get your bodies loaded with a good amount of Vitamin C which can be consumed through foods that are high in Vitamin C such as Oranges, Lemons, Strawberries and Kiwis, etc.

Islam not only emphasizes cleanliness but also contains directions on infection control which include isolation and quarantine. These are the measures that are being arranged by quarantine officials today during this worldwide outbreak of SARS/Coronavirus that include medical isolation and restricted travel movements. Our Prophet Mohammad (SAW) had instructed the believers about the quarantine strategy that is today being implemented by public health authorities as he said: “If you hear that there is a plague in a land, do not enter it; and if it (plague) visits a land while you are therein, do not go out of it”.

However, I propose a few SOS measures as under:

All Chinese before and after coming to Pakistan must have a Virus-free certificate in hand so that it could be produced at the airline counters before boarding the plane and also at the time of booking seats.

Proper checking counters must be installed and the screening should be done under the supervision of a team of qualified doctors.

All big hospitals should be ready for extra beds and measures to ensure the safety of victims and their isolation from others.

All passengers arriving in Pakistan from any country should be screened properly for the safety of both Pakistanis as well as the foreigners living here.

Pakistan’s health department, Pak embassy in Beijing, Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and Interior Ministries of both states should devise a workable plan for the safety of passengers traveling both sides.

All of the CPEC’s projects locations and sites should be facilitated by the Health Ministry by installing virus-free camps.

Ministry of health should introduce a Coronavirus awareness and management center to deal with this risk at both Federal & Provincial levels.

Health ministry through Mofa should issue an advisory note for Chinese and Pakistani moving across borders containing all precautionary measures.

It is unfortunate to note that the disease can harm us to death if we failed to have effective monitoring. Our capabilities are limited as the public has seen in the recent past how dengue cost us the lives of our loved ones and how helpless were we to cater to the situation effectively.

Let us pray that May God save us from this forthcoming mass killer.

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