**[Coronavirus: rumours, panic go rampage](https://nation.com.pk/01-Feb-2020/coronavirus-rumours-panic-go-rampage" \t "_new)**

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At the critical time when the best efforts are afoot to defeat Coronavirus, speculations and panic have run amok emerging as formidable threats than its breakneck sprawl and fatality rate around the world especially in Pakistan.

With declaration of global emergency against the Coronavirus, global unity is dire need of hour to quell series of mythical rumours and panic state reigning supreme worldwide especially in Pakistan.

Principally speaking it is not a fear of spread and how virus is killing the people with breakneck speed rather it is dissemination of prank information that have been playing havoc. Since misleading hoaxes have being gripping people especially students of various countries including Pakistan, grave sense of panic has run deep.

It is highly commendable that first demonstration of global response has been manifested by World Health Organization by declaring a global emergency against Coronavirus. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also revealed “Let me be clear, this declaration is not a vote of no confidence in China,” He praised the “extraordinary measures” Chinese authorities had taken, and said there was no reason to limit trade or travel to China.

Ridiculous rumours and panic are suspected to be bedeviling people by those forces which discredit CPEC and BRI, China’s signature projects that uphold the supremacy of globalization and promise to unleash era of shared destiny.

With regard to case study of some groups of Pakistani students studying in Wuhan, epic center of lethal virus also called the 2019-nCoV, panic and hearsays are on rise.

A rubbish rumour which is making a round is that once any person contracts Coronavirus, death looms large. Later it has been proved that fatality rate ranges between only 2 percent to 3 percent. University  Malaya Tropical Infectious Diseases Research and Education Centre (TIDREC) director Professor Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar said unlike SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), the 2019-nCoV had a case fatality ratio (CFR) of only about three per cent, thus giving patients a high chance of recovery. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that SARS’ CFR ranged from zero to 50 per cent, depending on the age group affected, with an overall estimate case fatality ratio of 14 to 15 per cent, while the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome’s (MERS-CoV) CFR stood at 35 per cent.

Speculations are speculation and have no limit of imagination. Even religion has been dragged into the situation..  Some conspiracy theorists say that Coronavirus is wakeup call to Chinese and all who eat those meats that are prohibited in Islam.

Some of the speculations are engulfing the people with the bizarre theory that Coranavirus outbreak is a result of accidental leakage of biological weapons research being conducted secretly at a virology institute in Wuhan. Experts debunked the hypothesis “Based on the virus genome and properties there is no indication whatsoever that it was an engineered virus,” said Richard Ebright, a professor of chemical biology at Rutgers University.

Soon after the coronavirus outbreak sent child down the spine of world, also surfaced claims connecting it with a patent by the Pirbright Institute in England. The patent was filed in 2015 for developing a version of coronavirus for curing respiratory infections and diseases. Conspiracy theorists termed it a planned eruption for the financial gains of pharma companies engaged with coronavirus vaccination.

In Pakistan and globally, video of bat soup set the internet ablaze. The video clip displaying a woman with eating bat gave rise to theory that coronavirus reached humans due to the eating habits of the Chinese people.

Later it proved that it was three years old video and was filed at a Palau in western Pacific Ocean instead of Wuhan.

One rumour that gripped the stranded foreigners including Pakistanis was that China had been using dilly-dally tactics to allow countries to fly their citizen to their homelands. This fueled immense panic. Finally fear receded and rumour wound down after the US and Japan airlifted around 400 their nationals mostly diplomats and businesspersons from Wuhan in Hubei province. However, none of student from any country has been evacuated from China so far.

Tendency of Coronavirus as airborne disease was another rumour that freaked out already panic-stricken students. They had to lock down their windows and did not dare going out of their hostel rooms even in their universities’ vicinities for many days scaring to contract virus through air. Later information came that it was just a hoax.

Looking into Pakistani students’ case, it comes to light that issue is creepy panic due to outcome of rampant speculations. Although there might be many challenges about smooth flow of food supplies, availability of money after banks’ closure, evacuation possibilities, delivery of masks and medical aids in some areas, but prank information and lack of clarity on future course of action have been adding fuel to fire to the situation.

Some students also doubted trust on authenticity of statement of Pakistan authorities. They observed that Pakistan authorities downplayed the numbers of students studying in Wuhan and Hubei Province. Official figures in this regard were quoted around 500 students with 4 confirmed cases. But as per many students there might be more than 2000 students with saying only one student was confirmed and rest of others three were just suspected cases.

Both Chinese and Pakistan authorities have been working jointly to facilitate Pakistani students who are numbered more than 500 in Wuhan and Hubei Province. However most of groups of students, though are satisfied with Chinese authorities, but they are divided on response and facilitation by Pakistan authorities. Some are claiming that Pakistan government left them in lurch and did not bother to stay in contact with them to address their issues. Some have eulogized the efforts of Pakistan embassy in China and Pakistan government for providing them all out help.

A Pakistan student Maqsood ur Rehman from China university of Geo Sciences Wuhan termed the rumours about disservice by Pakistan and Chinese governments as conspiracy, saying on the ground students were being provided all possible facilities.  Another student Amjad Hussain from Geo Sciences Wuhan appealed to Pakistani parents not to be worried as all measures being taken so far are meeting the daily needs. “We are safe definitely and evacuation will never serve the purpose,” he added.

“The University has designated representatives who are available for 24 hours to help with welfare needs. There is no shortage of anything else. It is unfortunate that some students are expressing untrue information. We really appreciate the efforts of local government and university administration,” Naseem Baloch, a student at Central China Normal University Wuhan said.

Contrary to them, Muhammad Ibrahim who is forth year student of MBBS in Hubei University of Science and Technology had requested for prompt evacuation, saying Indonesian and Indian students have got green signal for flying back to their countries as negotiation with Chinese authorizes have entered in final stage. He commended Chinese’s government steps but squabbled against Pakistan authorities for poor response.

Having manifested his concerns about food and mask shortage, he said students were in want of money as banks were closed.  “There is news that university might close their sessions. If it happens what we will do in six months onward,” he added.

However World Health Organization director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus have firmly recommended for no evacuation from Wuhan.  He said there was no need to overreact and people should remain calm.

Muhammad Asad, who is graduate from Wuhan University and now working in private company in Wuhan was of a view that Pakistan did not have best medical facilities against Coronavirus even during dengue outbreak last time situation was out of control. “If students are evacuated and in case anyone carries the virus in Pakistan, it will be, then, worst scenario,” he added.