

Emergence of COVID-19 in Baluchistan: The Largest Province of Pakistan

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Commentary

The 2019-2020 corona virus pandemic is an unending dilemma of corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) which is caused by a virus from the family of corona viruses named as severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) [1]. Its occurrence was first identified in Wuhan city of China, in December 2019, and was declared as a pandemic on 11th March 2020 by World Health organization (WHO) [2]. More than 536,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 24100 deaths and 125000 have been recovered in 190 countries till 27th of March [3].

Pakistan, 6th most populous country on the planet is exposed to many diseases in past and present including endemic and epidemic ones, emerging infections, and an increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases [4]. Geographically and politically, China and Pakistan are closely connected. The outbreak of corona virus has appeared during the peak travel time when the Chinese from Pakistan and around the world are traveling to China, while the Pakistani community especially students, are traveling back to Pakistan due to winter break. One of such case has been reported on 24th January 2020 after a person traveled from China to Pakistan on 21st January 2020 via Dubai and was diagnosed for 2019-nCoV on 24th January [5] though the government of Pakistan denied this case. Despite the fact that Pakistan's national carrier had announced that all the passengers travelling from Beijing will undergo medical check-up at Beijing airport before boarding the flight [6]. On 26 February, Pakistan confirmed its two cases of the corona virus. Dr. Zafar Mirza, the Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Health, stated in a tweet: "I can confirm first two

cases of corona virus in Pakistan. Both cases are being taken care of according to clinical standard protocols & both of them are stable.

According to Ministry of National Health Regulations and Coordination (NHSRC), Government of Pakistan, the numbers of infected cases were 1022 by March 25th, 2020 with 08 deaths and 21 recoveries. Where 413 infected cases were reported from the province of Sindh, 310 from Punjab, 117 from Baluchistan, 81 from Gilgit Baltistan, 80 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 20 from Islamabad Capital Territory and 01 from Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Baluchistan's first corona virus case was reported in Quetta on Tuesday 10th of March 2020. Confirming the Quetta case, Dr Noorullah, Medical Superintendent of the Fatima Jinnah Hospital, said the patient was a 12-year-old boy who had travelled to Iran with his family and returned via the Taftan border crossing no other member of his family had tested positive for COVID-19 and the patient was a non smoker with no co morbidity.

Based on the mentioned preliminary findings, Pakistan received its early cases from the neighboring China (as per a well known ARY TV channel of the country) and Iran due to poor surveillance system despite the fact that some preventive measures such as; thermal scanners at four major airports in the country have been installed. Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar airports have been equipped with thermal scanners and all the flights coming from China will be scanned and suspicious passengers will be quarantined. But still much has to be done to cope up this pandemic cleverly else dreadful consequences are not far to erupt.

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