



**Online Interactive Series Report**  
**"COVID-19: Pakistan's Comprehensive Response"**

 Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad Online Interactive Series  
9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**"COVID-19: PAKISTAN'S  
COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE"**

[www.cgss.com.pk](http://www.cgss.com.pk) [infocgss@yahoo.com](mailto:infocgss@yahoo.com)

**Organized by**  
**Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad**  
**9<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

## **BRIEF OF THE EVENT**

On 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, CGSS organized an “**Online Interactive Series**” on the topic “**COVID-19: Pakistan’s Comprehensive Response**”. Keeping in view the recent situation of COVID-19 in Pakistan, CGSS organized this online session to analyze and discuss suggestive recommendations in response to this novel virus.

The Online Interactive Session was attended by 20 participants, out of which 12 were the panelists. The conference was moderated by Lieutenant Colonel Khalid Taimur Akram (Retd), Executive Director CGSS. The panelists included experts from different fields to calculate the impact in every sector. The panelists included the following:

- Lieutenant General Asad Durani (Retd), Senior Analyst
- Lieutenant General Khalid Naeem Lodhi (Retd), Former Federal Defense Minister & Senior Member Advisory Board CGSS
- Mr. Kamal-ud-Din Tipu – Former Inspector General of Police
- Dr. Basharat Hassan- Advisor, Pakistan Engineering Council, Public Health Engineering Specialist.
- Mr. Tahir Alam – Former Inspector General of Police
- Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan - Regional Geopolitical Analyst & Member Board of Experts, CGSS
- Mr. Makhdoom Babar- Editor in Chief, Daily Mail
- Mr. Kanwar Muhammad Javed Iqbal – Senior Researcher at National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA)
- Lieutenant Colonel Athar Sultan (Retd), Logistic Expert
- Mr. Khushnood Ali Khan- Expert on Hospitality Industry
- Mr. Amer Durrani, President Reenergia & Financial Expert
- Mr. Pervaiz Bhatti, International Relation Expert, Lahore

## **COVID-19 and Pakistan's Response**

The participants of the session stated that unfortunately we live in present and are usually in a state of denial and do not understand the seriousness of situations like these until they get worse. However, the Government of Pakistan has performed well within its limited resources but there can be multiple steps that can be taken to effectively tackle this situation. Firstly, the Government must establish a workable cycle and ensure its implementation by all the stakeholders. We have to mobilize the community to analyze the situation first. The political leadership of Pakistan has taken good preemptive measures and we must seriously reflect what we are doing as a nation and as a society.

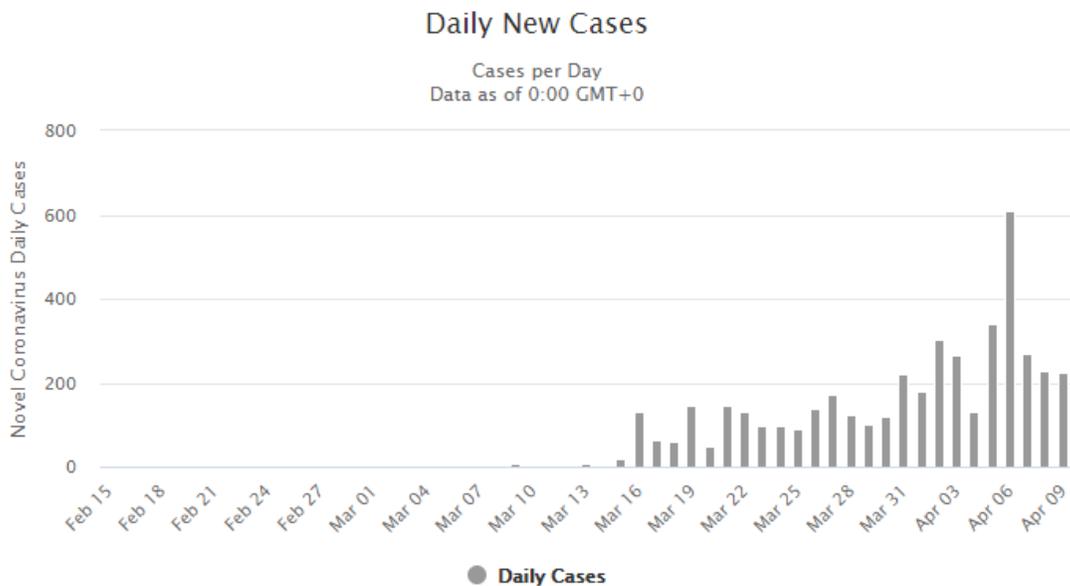
An effective lockdown can be established in disciplined societies like China and South Korea, our society and system are not prepared for such lockdowns and it will burden the law enforcement agencies. There are many reasons that we could not establish an effective lockdown, as the economic situation of our country is different from others. However, if the Government decides to extend the lockdown then it must be strictly enforced by the law enforcement agencies, proper SOPs must be made in this regard. Coronavirus sees no borders, religion or ethnicity, media must create awareness amongst the society. This awareness-raising should have been done in the first phase.

Through novel coronavirus, our capabilities have been tested particularly in the health sector. Coronavirus has challenged the religious, national and security narrative. The post corona world will have adverse effects on various industries including trade, aviation, maritime and oil. Only the environment has gained. It is about time to invest our resources in the health sector and educating the masses.

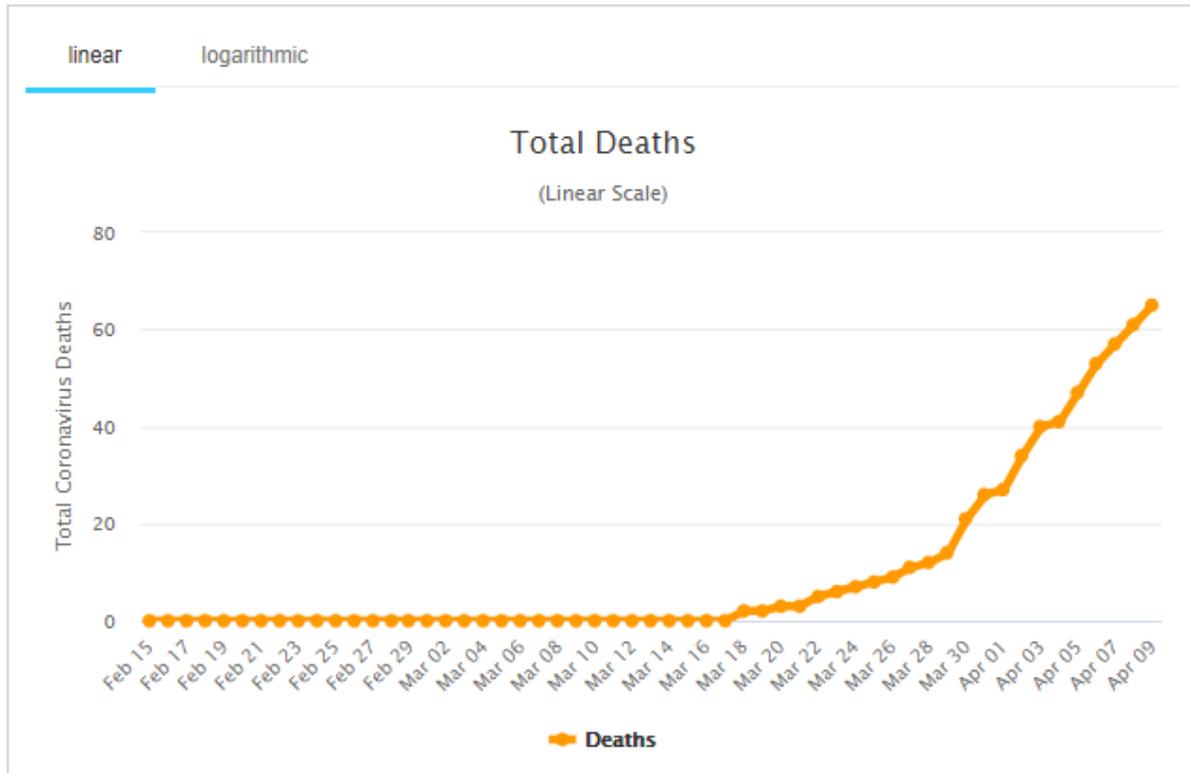
To initiate and launch projects like the Tiger force is very difficult. The establishment of 'Tiger Force' can be dangerous, the reasons for creating such forces is always political. The Army must play a significant role by assisting in relief and welfare work. Every individual holds the responsibility and the role of religious scholars is very important in this regard. We all must play a supportive role rather than scratching others back.

The satisfactory model can only be seen in China, they controlled the spread of the virus in other parts of the country and contained it in Wuhan. They realized the outbreak and limited the spread of the virus in Wuhan by an effective

lockdown and the mortality rate is also low. Currently, America has the worst-case scenario, last week the reported cases were 24000 and it has exponentially grown. In Pakistan's perspective, the current situation is not satisfactory. On 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020, there can be seen a massive rise in reported coronavirus cases. We must see if we are properly testing the cases and if they are being reported or not. Ideally, we should have observed the lockdown in the initial stages, which we failed due to which we can see the rising number of reported cases on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April. This figure shows that the situation will go worse if no concrete measure is taken. Our system is not compatible and we have left things unattended.



## Total Coronavirus Deaths in Pakistan



Keeping in the view the understanding and discipline level of our society, the government has opted for this partial lockdown. We do not have a proper mechanism for the implementation of laws, there is a huge gap between the law and order and its implementation.

It has been observed that in Pakistan, a mechanism and machinery is made and then becomes dormant, National Disaster Management Authority and Provincial Disaster Management Authority was established in 2005 after the Earthquake but they went inactive in 2010 after 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. A central command and control center must be established which is missing now to take swift action and ensure implementation of orders. There have been many speculations in terms of;

- To lockdown or not to lockdown
- Conducting COVID-19 tests
- Delivering the rations and aid

If there had been a central command and control center then we could develop an effective mechanism to curb this pandemic in a better way. Pakistan must focus on logistics and essential services and not shut these down in any case which includes port clearances, trade, and connectivity within Pakistan. Two essential elements within Pakistan including inter-ethnic fractions and political fallout must be eliminated to tackle this situation.

The total impact of coronavirus cannot be calculated now because it is new and in the process. Every country has responded differently to this virus. We have seen a different response from each country. Coronavirus will bring change to all the three spheres including geopolitics, geo-economics and geostrategic.

In terms of geo-economics, we can see the hegemony of the dollar in the current world order and is dominating the world. But now we will see dilution and rate of Yuan may increase.

In terms of geopolitics, we have always believed that democracy is the best political system, but now we will also have to learn which governance system is most effective and has provided welfare to the nation in situations like these rather than democracy. This is of utmost necessity before copying any model as Pakistan has a different context and culture. Even the US has not played this simulation.

### **Economic Aspects of COVID-19**

While the Government has implemented various measures to slow down the spread of COVID-19 and to provide relief measures to industries and the general public, the economy is likely to continue to deteriorate in the short run. It is important to ensure that all the relief packages announced by the government, are implemented swiftly, and reach the intended beneficiaries. The policy-makers should continue to closely monitor the situation and remain on standby for further interventions. While businesses should continue to plan tactically for sustaining current business operations and seeing through the lockdown period. The government should also plan for return to normalcy, and prepare revival plans for key sectors of the economy.

The international economy is under stress and Pakistan should also raise voice about this situation. We must demand to reschedule and wave off our loans because Pakistan cannot succeed without getting out of this vicious cycle. Our

agreements with various Independent Power Producers have had adverse effects on us. Keeping in view the current environment, our government must review all international agreements and talk to the international stakeholders about the economic viabilities of international commitments, as per the recession which the world is facing. The inputs must be cheap including gas and electricity. We cannot progress if our inputs are expensive and our export industry will never be able to make progress. Our gas agreements must also be reviewed.

The Government of Pakistan has announced an economic relief package in which the small and medium-income class has been neglected. The Ehsas Program must also provide relief and focus the lower-middle-income citizens. The rural economy is completely intoned and further marginalized in the recently announced national relief package which may have spillover repercussions.

It is Pakistan's strength that we are self-capable of producing our food which will help us in this situation. The countries which are dependent on their imports for food will suffer more. In the post corona world, changes will be big and profound. The international economic web must be broken and we must also review our global affiliations.

For the time being, we must focus on our internal markets rather than international markets. Internationally, we must focus on our relationship with America, China and governance systems which are evolving.

### **Effects of COVID-19 on the Maritime Industry**

Globally the data from the ships shows us that there have been many cases reported and the situation is serious including marine vessels that have the worst conditions. Stats from the last month shows that the import and export of Pakistan have been badly hit by COVID-19. The situation not only at the surface but also at sea is critically important including the functional aspect of the marine crew. Initially, it was speculated that the replication of the virus will be reduced in warm weather conditions, which seems not to be the case now. If we analyze the case of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, all these countries have the same weather patterns, there are also abnormal peaks in cases. The

prices of the commodities are increasing with the increasing reported cases. In the maritime perspective, if the lockdown continues, then we would have to see our oil reserves and how much mobility we can restrict. Furthermore, the security, safety and social distancing for the maritime crew must also be considered. Precautionary measures must be taken by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Pakistan National Shipping Corporation in this regard.

### **Impacts of COVID-19 on the Hotel Industry**

This pandemic has changed the world. It has also greatly affected the hospitality business. The hospitality industry is mainly dependent on tourism and commercial events. Under the prevailing conditions where the traveling has been restricted worldwide, the hotel industry has also collapsed consequently. All the hotels have either closed down or drastically reduced their daily routine operations.

With that, the hotels have sent their respective employees on unpaid leaves. This act has brought a lot of concern among the thousands of hospitality employees who are left without jobs and benefits.

Although the government is saying that they will do something about it, there's no defined policy regarding how to compensate the affected employees who are left stranded.

So, there should be a proper forum or platform through which, there should be a representation from the hotel industry employees and their problems should be heard and conveyed accordingly to the PM office

### **Transport and Logistics**

Initially, it was deemed that this virus is only limited to China but now it has taken the whole world under its influence. In this regard, there are two main challenges; food and medicine. In the planning phase, logistic planning was ignored which must also be incorporated now and provide funds to fulfill the logistic needs. There must also be logistic based fund allocation for effective dissemination of food and medical equipment. Transportation has been completely shut down. Ministry of Health should be at the frontline with the supportive role of logistics through the logistic board of Pakistan which is dormant now. A coordinated effort must be made by incorporating all the

stakeholders and institutions including NADRA and work under one umbrella. There are many NGO's and welfare societies that are working on funds raising, but the funds must be collected and one place and rooted through one channel so that everyone can equally benefit from it. At this hour of need, we need a comprehensive logistics policy and have to make sure that essential goods transport remains on move during the lockdown period.

### **Role of Police**

Police can play a very constructive role during this pandemic. Comparative to other institutions, Police is one department that has deep roots at provincial, district and union council level all over Pakistan and we must utilize it with all its strength. There are a total of 2000 police stations in Pakistan having information about all the residents of a locality. A specialized team must be created to ensure the implementation of Governmental orders through social distancing and practical implementation of lockdown. Police can also be used to ensure that the aid is being equally distributed and also to keep check and balance upon the tiger force. Reserve police can also be used. Tiger force is a new force and its efficiency is doubtful and uncertain. In this situation, police along with the zakat committees, polio teams can be utilized. The concept of community police can also be replicated in Pakistan which is being practiced by other countries.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

- Concrete efforts should be immediately institutionalized to formulate a comprehensive policy for “food and energy security” in the country. In terms of food, we are “self-sufficient” but in the case of energy we must further enhance our “national capacity” of “storage and “supplies”. There is an urgent need to take strong measures to protect our “strategic assets” in the ongoing crisis of COVID-19 which has already produced dint in the concept of national and as well as human “security paradigm”.
- The role of clergy has not been up to mark since the existence of COVID-19 in the country. Every sect has a different interpretation of social life and submission towards Allah Almighty which has badly spoiled “containment policies” of COVID-19 and efforts of all the provincial

governments in the country. The clergy of this country should realize the seriousness of national calamity and cooperate with local authorities in maintaining the law and order situation of the country which may be effective for controlling the further “collateral damage” in the country.

- Despite the ongoing national crisis of COVID-19, political griming is on the peak in the country. Every political party is still in the “state of denial” and trying its best to do through its political means. There is no “national comprehensive policy” to fight against COVID-19 which has put the lives of common people in danger zone.
- Moreover, “Invisible Pillars” of our society i.e. “bankers”, “bakers”, “peasants”, “bus drivers”, “garbage collectors” and last but not least, “local wagers” should also be honored as doctors, nurses and medical staff in the country. They are also “frontline soldiers” in the ongoing fight against COVID-19. They are “custodian” of the “financial fabric” of our society without which socio-economic survival may not be maintained and sustained. They are “champions” of national survival in terms of “connectivity”, “cleanliness” and food supplies. The special packages may also be announced for all of them.
- There is a drastic decline in “worker remittance” inflows in the country which needs to be ratified by concrete efforts to maintain it’s easy and smooth inflows in the country. Special “incentives” or “wavier of service charges” may be implemented at once.
- Standard Operating Procedures must be formulated for the Law Enforcement Agencies, which must ensure the implementation of the government orders strictly.
- Media being the fourth pillar of the state must be at the frontlines in creating awareness and educating the people by launching national awareness campaigns. The Government must also utilize media by creating a mechanism of ‘National Update on Corona’ on daily bases at a fixed time which will curb the panic among the society and will also curtail the spread of fake news.
- Institutions like the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has always focused on water-related issues and earthquakes and is not prepared for calamities as COVID-19. Therefore, immediate restructuring of NDMA should be done by the inclusion of experts of COVID-19.
- A coordination mechanism must be developed between the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Provincial Disaster

Management Authority (PDMA). District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) and Tehsil Disaster Management Authority (TDMA) must also be established under PDMA's as their outreach is to the individual level.

- The middle class has been completely ignored in the economic relief package, therefore, the Government must also announce a package for lower-income people.
- All rations/money should be on the centralized ID cards database. This should be available through APP and website to all Government and Private Sector Philanthropists to avoid duplication. The ration should be given at the address printed on ID cards.
- All industrialists should be made aware of the danger of COVID and they should be directed to provide masks and gloves to their workers and maintain a distance of 6 feet between them.
- Hand-washing facilities, electric hands dryers, and liquid soap dispensers should be made available for all workers at various points on construction sites and factories. Awareness campaign for all workers and Illiterate laborers should be given training on using the above facilities