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SAMPLE PASSAGE

With the nation's attention divided between unending political intrigues and the economy's slow march to catastrophe, Covid-19 has once again crept up upon us, threatening to add another dimension to the multiple crises we already face. The disease has, yet again, become a major global concern, with new variants threatening to run riot in countries unprepared for another reckoning with a pandemic-scale public health challenge. Pakistan, in particular, seems quite unprepared, with the possibility of another outbreak figuring nowhere in the state's priorities till Monday evening. The National Command and Operation Centre had earlier said it was 'closely monitoring' the situation, but no measures had been taken to prevent the ingress of new Covid-19 variants through screening measures at airports.

This had considerably increased the risk of sick people travelling in from countries experiencing a renewed Covid-19 outbreak, and spreading the disease in Pakistan through the people they would come in contact with here. Thankfully, the National Disaster Management Authority has woken up to the challenge and asked the National Institute of Health to take stock of vaccine availability and arrangements in hospitals to deal with a possible outbreak.

Though the NCOC does not appear very concerned about an imminent outbreak, independent experts had been urging for more proactive measures. There was sound logic in their demand for a more proactive approach, as new variants can slip into the country at any time and start spreading rapidly if they find conducive conditions. The NCOC and NIH have now been directed by the NDMA to 'issue a precautionary Covid variant risk advisory for the public [...] and carry out selective mock drills for [a] Covid emergency'. This is much needed. The government needs to restart a public awareness drive and encourage basic prevention measures, such as wearing masks, avoiding crowded public gatherings, and washing or sanitising hands with regularity. It should also consider issuing guidelines for people who have recently travelled to countries that are known to be experiencing a surge in Covid-19 cases, such as India, China, and the United States. The old maxim should be kept in mind that prevention is better than cure. Awareness and prevention drives are a much cheaper disease mitigation strategy than waiting for another nationwide outbreak. Successful past vaccination drives and our apparently robust immune systems may help the authorities feel secure, but they should not make them complacent about dealing with this new challenge.

Word count= 412

Title: Resurgence of COVID-19: A Looming Health Crisis

COVID-19 is sliding in, thus, adding a new angle to crises of Pakistan when country is overwhelmed with political upheavals and economic slow downs. It appears to be at risk of another upsurge but is being reluctant to take steps to shield itself from looming health crisis. Return of travellers from COVID hot-spots is putting the population at risk. However, NCOE and NDMA has insisted the NIH to implement several preventive measures including screening at airports, observance of SOPs, review of combative resources and awareness campaigns. Seriousness of the government on the issue is much needed as precautionary measures and sensitization schemes are much cheaper mitigation strategies than combating another wave of COVID-19. So, in face of this emerging challenge, authorities must not be content with previous vaccination movements and effective immunity of people rather should sternly deal with the menace as the upcoming variant is more virile.

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