



**SENATE OF PAKISTAN**

**Report No.6 of 2020**

**REPORT OF THE**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES,**  
**REGULATIONS AND COORDINATION**

**Starred question No.51 regarding “The number of pilgrims diagnosed with Corona Virus in quarantine center established in Taftan for the pilgrims returning”, moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2020**

**PRESENTED BY**  
**SENATOR KHUSHBAKHT SHUJAT**  
**Chairperson SSC on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination**

## SENATE SECRETARIAT

### REPORT OF THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES, REGULATIONS AND COORDINATION

I, Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination have the honor to present the report, on behalf of the Committee on Starred question No.51 regarding “**The number of pilgrims diagnosed with Corona Virus in quarantine center established in Taftan for the pilgrims returning**”, moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 2020.

2. The matter was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination for consideration and report to the House.

3. The composition of the Committee is as under:-

1. Senator Khushbakht Shujat	Chairperson
2. Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq	Member
3. Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi	Member
4. Senator Dilawar Khan	Member
5. Senator Dr. Asad Ashraf	Member
6. Senator Dr. Ashok Kumar	Member
7. Senator Sikandar Mandhro	Member
8. Senator Dr. Ghous Muhammad Khan Niazi	Member
9. Senator Liaqat Khan Tarakai	Member
10. Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani	Member
11. Senator Sana Jamali	Member
12. Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen	Member
13. Senator Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Jamot	Member
14. Minister for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination	Ex-Officio Member

4. The Standing Committee considered the issue in its meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2020. The Committee disposed of the matter and decided to submit the report to the House. The meeting was attended by the following members, namely:-

1. Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi	Member
2. Senator Dilawar Khan	Member

3. Senator Dr. Asad Ashraf	Member
4. Senator Dr. Ashok Kumar	Member
5. Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani	Member
6. Senator Sana Jamali	Member
7. Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen	Member/Mover
8. Advisor for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination	Ex-Officio Member
9. Senator Usman Khan Kakar	Mover
10. Senator Mushtaq Ahmed	Mover
11. Senator Sajjad Hussain Turi	Mover
12. Senator Hidayat ullah	Mover

### SUMMARY

The Mover briefed the Committee that Pakistan was fortunate enough that we did not detect a single case of corona virus till 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2020. Till this date we were quite safe and sound. Many of Pakistani students were in China. China being the best friend of Pakistan gave a good advice and decided not to send Pakistani students back to home. The Mover was of the view that had we handled the returning pilgrims from Iran carefully, the proportion of spreading corona virus could be far lesser than what it was. In his view, the Taftan quarantine center was not a place for human beings. It could be seen in different videos/clips still present on social media. It was no less than a stable meant for the horses, divided into separate stalls for individual animals.

The Committee deplored the violence caused by pilgrims because of pitiable plight they were in. The Committee also observed that we had sufficient time for home work, proper planning and also to devise mechanism for combating the corona virus and proliferation threats. The Mover emphasized that COVID-19 emergency should have been taken at the very beginning as a national security priority aimed at supporting initiatives and framing decision making



structure at all levels. The matter of pilgrims should have been the subject of talks between Iran and Pakistan and a comprehensive approach could be adopted in the context of crisis, more reflective of a responsive attitude to the needs of the neighboring states.

The Ministry briefed that the total number of Tests conducted by Mobile lab sent from NIH w.e.f. 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 till date for Quarantine center established at Taftan are as under:

<b>COVID-19 Tests Conducted</b>	<b>2158</b>
<b>Positive</b>	<b>146</b>

While replying to a question, the Ministry stated that there are total 972 quarantine facilities established in the country. Ten are in Baluchistan and two in Sindh. Initially the pilgrims were sent to quarantine centers established at Dera Ghazi Khan, Sukkur, Dera Ismail Khan and Gilgit.

The Ministry confessed that COVID-19 was an out-break declared as a public health emergency of international scale recognized by WHO. Prior to COVID-19 we had no disease out-break response system. We never experienced such a pandemic. So much so that even the developed countries with an advance health care system also failed to make a quick response to the disease. The Advisor on Health agreed that in the beginning, the pilgrims returning from Taftan border were mishandled because of difficult terrain, lack of preparedness and response from authorities; no concrete structure was present to house and host the pilgrims returning. It was also briefed that injection of virus was multi-sourced and Taftan was one of them. Thousands of pilgrims were brought at the door and being Pakistani citizens, they could not be denied entry into their homeland. It was also discussed that COVID-19 was a challenge but at the same time it brought an opportunity to review the health care system and build infrastructure to combat with such an emergency.



The Committee observed that it is a research opportunity forcing health care system to disregard conventional practices and adopt innovations to contain the infection.

We remained unable to pro-actively advance in the right direction as evidenced during these challenging times. Quality clinical research is critical during public health emergency to identify treatment and solutions and it requires innovative strategy in research design, onward transfer and dissemination at local levels. We must quickly ramp up research capacity and contribute significantly to combat not only the COVID-19 but also beef-up our system to fight such an emergency in future as well.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Committee disposed of the matter with the recommendation that:

- (i) Loophole in the system should be plugged to avoid further proliferation of the disease. The Ministry should strive to have an overarching infrastructure of emergency departments in all the provinces and remote regions, intensive care units, isolation wards and other rapid diagnostic tools be applied to fight with COVID-19.
- (ii) The Ministry should also focus on research studies, the best practices of clinical trials, assessing risks, infectivity and treatment. The research should include substantial cost savings, an all-inclusive plan of the health departments with the help of academia, health information system, international accreditation and international collaboration.

  
(Javaid Iqbal)  
Secretary Committee

  
(Senator Khushbakht Shujat)  
Chairperson Committee