Short Communication

Impact of COVID-19 in North Eastern States of India

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ABSTRACT

The first case of COVID-19 reported in December 2019 from the Wuhan city, China. As on 26 May 2020 the confirmed cases globally reached to 5,404,512 and 343, 514 deaths, whereas India has 138,845 confirmed cases and 4,021 deaths. The first COVID-19 case in North East India was detected on 24 March 2020 in Manipur in a 23 years old student returned from UK. As on 26 May 2020, Assam has 526, Tripura has194, Manipur has 39, Meghalaya has 14, Mizoram had 01, Arunachal Pradesh has 02, Sikkim has 01, and Nagaland has 03 confirmed cases. The government of India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a nationwide Lockdown on 24 March 2020 till 17 May 2020.Due to prolonged lockdown entire Northeast India is facing many difficulties and challenges. About 12.2 Crore people in India including Northeast lost their jobs in the month of April. There have been huge lose in the tea Industry, tourism Industry, agriculture and rural economy etc. Lockdown has also led to technological reform in the Northeast states. It has significantly improved people efficiency towards the use of Technology. To beat COVID-19; it is very essential that people maintain discipline and abide by the rules even after the lockdown. It is very important that people practice frequent hand washing and social distancing.

Keywords: Coronavirus, COVID-19 impact, Lockdown, Northeast India

INTRODUCTION

The whole world was in a partying and celebrating mood for welcoming the New Year 2020, and then something very disastrous was going to make its entry to the humankind. It all started at Hubei province, China when people started falling sick due to some unknown cause. It came to light only when the first case of COVID-19 reported to World Health Organization on 31st December 2019 from the Wuhan city, China when a patient was detected with Pneumonia of unknown origin. World Health Organization declared the outbreak of Corona disease to be a public health emergency of International concern on 30 January 2020 and announced the name of the disease caused by the new outbreak of corona virus as COVID -19 on 11 February 2020. On 13 January 2020, the first case of COVID-19 confirmed in Thailand which is also the first case of COVID-19 found outside China. World Health Organization announced the name of the disease caused by the new outbreak of corona virus as COVID -19 on 11 February 2020. [1]

The SARS CoV-2:

The Corona virus is a RNA virus protected with a lipid layer whose surface is covered with spiky crown known as CORONA. The virus gets entry into the body through the droplet transmission from infected person. Coronaviruses belong to a large family of viruses which can cause illnesses varying from common cold to severe respiratory syndrome like SARS and MERS. The novel Corona Virus is a new mutated strain of Corona virus which was unknown to human previously. [2] The novel

corona virus was given the name as SARS-CoV-2 on 11 February 2020 by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses as the virus resembles closely to the corona virus that lead to SARS outbreak in 2003. [3] Many studies have suggested that bats are the common reservoir for Corona virus, so it is very likely that the SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted to humans from the bats. The origin of Novel corona virus is linked with the seafood market of the Wuhan city where bats are sold. However, its origin is still not confirmed, and it has become a matter of debatable. [4]

Scenario of COVID-19 Pandemic: World

Ministry of Public Health Thailand confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the Country on 13 January 2020 which is also the first case of COVID-19 found outside China. The case was a 61 year old Chinese woman who travelled to Thailand from Wuhan City on 8 January 2020 along with a tour group of 16 people. [5] Data as reported by situation report, WHO on 31 January 2020 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally was 9826 out of which 9720 cases were from China. The first few countries affected were Thailand, Japan, Korea and US. Very soon the Coronavirus infected more than 180 countries by the immigration of infected people from China. Globally on 29 February 2020, the confirmed cases reached to 85,403 out of which 79,394 cases were from China.. On 31 March 2020 confirmed cases reached to 750,890 and on 30 April 2020 it reached to 3,090,445. As on 26 May 2020 the confirmed cases globally reached to 5,404,512 and 343, 514 deaths. The most affected Countries are USA, Russia, Brazil, Spain and Italy. [6]

The Scenario of COVID-19 Pandemic: North Eastern states of India

According to situation report, India-WHO, the first confirmed case in India was detected in Kerala on 30 Jan. 2020 in a student returned from Wuhan City. On 14 March 2020 the confirmed cases reached to 84 and on 28 March it reached 909 in India. [7] As on 26 May 2020 since after first case on 30 Jan 2020, India having

138,845 confirmed cases and 4,021 deaths with highest numbers includes the States of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. [8] The first COVID-19 case in North East India was detected on 24 March 2020 in Manipur in a 23 year old student returned from UK. [9] In Assam first case was confirmed on 31 March 2020. The case was a 52 old man returned from Delhi after attending Nizamuddin Markaz. [10] Tripura had its first case confirmed on 5 April 2020. The case was a 45 years old woman who returned from Kamakya Temple in Guwahati. [11] In Meghalaya the first case was confirmed on 13 April 2020 in a 69 years old Doctor at Shillong who died later. [12] Arunachal Pradesh has 02 confirmed and 01 recovered cases, Sikkim has 01 and Nagaland has 03 fresh confirmed cases. Mizoram had only one positive case that got recovered later. The number of confirmed cases in entire North East reached to 50 on 17 March and 100 on 5 May2020. [13]

As on 26 May 2020, the Government of India states that Assam has the highest number of active COVID-19 cases with 526 confirmed case, 62 recovered and 4 deaths, Tripura has 194 confirmed cases, 165 recovered and 0 death, Manipur has 39 confirmed cases, 04 recovered and 0 death, Meghalaya has 14 confirmed cases, 12 recovered and 01 death, Mizoram has 01 confirmed cases, 01 recovered and 0 death, Arunachal Pradesh has 02 confirmed cases, 01 recovered and 0 death, Sikkim has 01 confirmed cases, 0 recovered and 0 death, Nagaland has 03 confirmed cases, 0 recovered and 0 death. [14]

The impact of COVID-19:

The government of India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a nationwide Lockdown on 24 March 2020 for 21 days which was later extended on 14 April 2020 for another 18 days till 3 May 2020. As the end of 2nd phase of lockdown period approached, the Government declared the 3rd phase of Lockdown on 1 May 2020 for further 2 weeks till 17 May 2020 with considerable relaxation. [15] The

lockdown has made huge changes in nature as well. The satellite image of India captured by the Copernicus Sentinel-5P satellite showed the level of Nitrogen dioxide across the Country. It revealed that the Nitrogen dioxide level has decreased to 40 to 50% in big cities like Delhi and Mumbai due to lockdown. However, more concentration of Nitrogen dioxide is found in the North East regions. On further investigation, the concentration of nitrogen dioxide is found directly linked with locations of ongoing active coal- based power plants. [16]

Impact on Employment:

Northeast States of India are no exception in suffering economical losses due to the Lockdown. All the hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, many marketplaces, etc are closed. Taxi services were also put on halt during the first two phases of Lockdown period. In India including the North East States 12.2 Crore people lost their jobs and 27 million youths in the age group 20-30 years lost their jobs in April 2020 due to Lockdown. [17]

Impact on Agriculture& Tourism:

The lockdown came up in the harvesting season, due to which many of the crops got rotten in the field itself as the crops could not be supplied to the market due to lockdown. This has caused a heavy loss in the agriculture and rural economy as well. The North East State Sikkim, which is best known for its natural beauty and wild-life diversity rely its economy heavily on tourism. Every year there are 20 million tourists who visit the State. The lockdown has drastically brought down the tourism Industry. [18]

Impact on Education:

As all the educational Institutes are also closed, going as per the academic calendar is a major challenge. To tackle the situation North East India has taken many initiatives apart from following the guidelines of UCG and Govt. of India. Some of them are- CR School in Meghalaya which provide the platform for all the schools to be available online for e- learning

classes in Meghalaya. SEBA online classes in Assam which make classes available for class X students in Assam. Door-darshan Kendra Aizwal broadcast virtual classes in Mizoram. [19]

Impact on Tea Industry and petroleum Industry:

The North East Tea Association (NETA) states that Assam would be witnessing a loss of Rs. 1,218 crore in tea Industry due to Lockdown. Assam supplies more than 50% of India's tea production and due to prolonged lockdown 35% of the plantation needs to be skiffed (removal of overgrown leaves), which will add to extra cost. [20]

In the month of April 2020 during 40 days of lockdown, the consumption of fuel products declined to 80% in India. This has caused the government of India to loss revenue of Rs. 40,000 Crore in the month of April. [21] The government of Assam has taken a major decision to hike the fuel prices in Assam to cover up some of the losses. The Assam govt. increased petrol price from Rs. 71.61 to Rs. 77.46 and of diesel from Rs. 67.07 to Rs. 70.50 per liter with effect from 22 April 2020. [22]

Impact on Mental status:

The outbreak of COVID-19 outbreak has also created lots of tensions and anxiety in many people of Assam and other North East regions. People are getting distressed for being quarantined and many of them are trying to escape the quarantine center. The fear of the spread of the virus among people is on high rise. To help people manage their mental stress during this crisis, around 13,500 people in Assam volunteered themselves under the Assam State Disaster Management Authority. [23]

Impact on Social Change:

The Finance and health Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswas Sarma said that the normalcy return in the state would not be immediate. It will happen gradually, but it must be made sure that public health concerns should not go away from people's mind. Dr. Sarma also stated that the state Government is facing challenges as the new

rules allow interstate buses and trains, but they are putting best efforts in combating the situation. [24] Since the interstate travel of people allowed from 5 May 2020, more than 60, 000 people reached Assam till 24 May 2020 and 291 among them tested positive. The cases doubled just in 4 days due to people arriving from other states. [25] Among all the positive cases, 90 percentage of the cases are from quarantine centers. Dr. Sarma stated that if the government did not follow the ruthless policy of quarantine then it would have been spread to the community. [26]

Impact on Technology:

Amidst all the losses, some technology companies of North East India are gaining opportunities due to lockdown. As work from home is highly initiated and the students are also studying from home, most of the people are bound to depend on technology. The technology startup companies of Manipur made a revenue jump of 20-30 %. The Lockdown also helped to improve the efficiency of people of North East in using technology. It has significantly changed the way people use technology. [27]

CONCLUSION

It is very essential that people maintain discipline and abide by the rules even after lock down. It is very important that people practice hand hygiene by using soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub after touching any potential things that can be laden with corona virus. Always maintain a 2-meters distance from anyone who is coughing or sneezing. Avoid hand shaking and practice bowing head or doing Namaste to greet people. Maintain etiquettes by covering mouth and nose with handkerchief, tissue paper or bent elbow. If anyone is suffering from fever, cough and breathing difficulty should seek immediate medical attention. Government alone cannot fight with corona outbreak; people must join hand together to beat COVID-19.

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