

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS POLITICAL ECONOMIC IMPLICATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

A terrible pandemic called COVID-19 has significantly altered the global situation. It spread from one person to another, affecting millions of individuals, until it reached every part of the world. Pakistan is one of the nations that are reportedly impacted by the deadly sickness known as Covid-19. Every institution of the Pakistani government, which already suffered from institutional weakness and volatility, was severely afflicted by this sickness. The Covid-19 has an impact on many facets of human life and society. The goal of the current study is to determine how Pakistan would be affected politically and economically by this epidemic. This investigation is qualitative in style. The full material is collected using a variety of techniques. Information is gathered using data gathered from a variety of sources, including both primary and secondary sources. Newspapers, Covid-19 articles, various journals, research theses, newspaper editorials, Covid-19 government reports, and various websites are also used in data collection projects. The government of Pakistan has also declared numerous packages and relief monies for the populace as well as for managing the crisis, but due to the country's weak economy, dire health state, and lack of social security, the situation for the populace has gotten worse and they are still suffering from the epidemic. The government's efforts to contain the pandemic have proven ineffective and unresponsive to the needs of the populace. According to the study's findings, the lack of adequate health facilities, a lack of correlating recognition, a fall in annual productivity, a low GDP growth rate, and a poor economic climate will make the pandemic era more difficult to manage. The study recommended coordinating efforts to manage this lethal infection and lessen the likelihood of unfavorable assumptions in the future.

Keywords: : Covid-19, Pakistan, Pandemic, Economic, Political. Implications.

Introduction

The corona virus disease of 2019 originated in Wuhan, in the Chinese province of Hubei, where there were numerous victims of this severe virus kind. Between 2019 and the beginning of 2020, the disease travelled globally and eventually affected every corner in the entire world. The pandemic has a dangerous impact on people's lives since the virus that causes it spreads from one person to another, killing the majority of those who contract it and leaving the globe. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated the advent of the hazardous corona virus disease as a public health emergency under the jurisdiction of International Health Regulation. On March 11, 2020, the illness was classified as a pandemic, hitting 169 nations across nearly every continent, including Pakistan. The COVID-19 posed a major threat to peoples' physical health, but it also had a detrimental effect on their social, psychological, and emotional well-being. The first case of Covid-19 was discovered in Pakistan in February 2020, and the country has been on high alert ever since. The government and medical authorities have urged adopting preventive measures to halt the spread of the disease.¹

The covid-19 pandemic has been responsible for bringing Pakistan's economy, which had already slowed after 2018, to its lowest point. The pandemic's effects prompted Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to issue a massive appeal, ask for international debt relief, postpone IMF programmes, and endure many natural calamities while also coming under heavy criticism from the opposition.² Health professionals in Pakistan accuse both the government and the opposition of giving the pandemic a political tone, which has led to widespread public ignorance about the illness and worsened its effects on local populations. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on Pakistan's nation economy, which is already in a precarious state.

As a result, Pakistan's economy is unable to withstand the additional disruption brought on by the pandemic, even though most other nations are also affected. However, because of their developed economies and their ability to combat the disease, foreign nations are able to do so more successfully than Pakistan.³ The Covid-19 pandemic has compelled the majority of nations to take significant actions and implement crucial reforms that affect not only the nation's economy but also its politics, foreign policy, and security policy. However, Pakistan, which prioritizes national security, continues to manage its government and economy according to the status quo even though it also has to make certain changes to its foreign and political systems. It is undeniably true that Pakistan uses the Covid-19 pandemic as an excuse to extort concessions from other nations and borrow money from them in exchange for debt relief while highlighting the negative effects the disease has had on the nation. The first confirmed case of Covid-19 in Pakistan appeared in the month of February.

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The Ministry of National Health Service warned the nation about the virus' negative effects, but the public paid little attention at first. As a result, the disease quickly spread to every corner in Pakistan by the end of February. The spread of the pandemic forced the government to take some strict actions and measures to combat the virus.⁴ Although the Covid-19 pandemic affected the lives of Pakistani citizens and was a major factor in the country's economy's decline and the spread of poverty throughout the country, it also disrupted people's lives by making them fearful and making local Pakistani communities responsible for all these unfavorable conditions. As a result, Covid-19 destroyed people's lives and brought Pakistan's leadership into disrepute.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The subject at hand is distinct and crucial in character. There isn't a single book or thesis on the subject at hand in any library. The effects of Covid-19 are briefly discussed in a few publications and journals linked to this subject, but the whole knowledge regarding this subject is not available in any one particular book or article. Many academics have studied the Covid-19 epidemic and its impact on poor nations on the global level, but very little research has been done on the pandemic's political and economic repercussions in Pakistan. The deadly Covid-19 pandemic has been the subject of numerous thesis and thousands of articles and editorials in newspapers, but most of them have ignored the disease's detrimental effects on social, economic, and political institutions, particularly in nations that already experience unstable political, social, and economic conditions.

Covid-19 pandemic and its political and economic implication; A study of Pakistan, (2020) is written by Uzma Shaheen, in this research article the writer describe about the Covid-19 pandemic and its political and economic implication in Pakistan writer investigate the affects of Covid-19 on the economy of the Pakistan writer describe how the pandemic affected the economic system of the Pakistan in the articles author define that Covid-19 adversely affected the export system of Pakistan major trade friends country of Pakistan like China, UK, Germany and Russia all of these are also suffering from pandemic at the same time after imposing lock down on the country the business system of Pakistan internally and externally badly affected due to lock down the foreign investment also become the low the export material of Pakistan are not reached to the another countries and pandemic fastly suffer from one people to another and reach each and every corner of Pakistan and affected the millions of people and numbers of Covid-19 effected people are become thousand in a day and death rate also become higher day by day and the law and order situation of the country is not good it become impossible for leadership of the Pakistan to balance the system of country the export become very low and expenses of the country reached at the higher point the hospitals are filled with patients and staff and place for another

patients are insufficient. The author also defined about the political implications of Pakistan leadership discuss about their policies important steps which taken by the government and future plans to fight against corona pandemic but this article is not properly defined the political practical steps which take by government in real sense and also not cover the aspects of international debt and reliefs which government take by using the name of Covid-19 pandemic.⁵

Covid-19 and Pakistan; The Economic Fallout, (2020) is written by Sushant Sareen, in this article writer analyze the economic fallout condition of Pakistan before and after the dangerous Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on the various economic institution of Pakistan writer analyze that before covid-19 the economy of Pakistan was continuously struggling for better condition and not face any big or dangerous fallout but after covid-19 breakout the economy of Pakistan badly affected which still are not balanced at any improve level before the covid-19 the PM Imran khan ensure the public that struggle continue to stabilize the economic growth and development of the country and also declared that this is to be the year of growth, creation and also called as year of development for the prosperity of people of Pakistan but after the breakout of pandemic the economy of Pakistan become low day by day seventy percent reduction in import, annual GDP also become the low increase in foreign exchange reservoir which was largely based on borrowed money from the developed and foreign countries such as China, Saudi Arabia and UAE and the internal and external debt on Pakistan increase day by day and the value of Pakistan rupee thirty percent comes to the reduction so loans are automatically become double and triple Pakistan came under the curse of debt internally and externally. Writer also investigate the after Covid-19 dire prediction which are taken by the government crises which suffering from covid-19 by both government and leadership its effects on the Growth of the country the condition of unemployment and poverty and also about foreign trade and balance of payment, fiscal policies and balance, energy, debt internal and external, some government rescue packages which adopted for welfare of people after this pandemic and also investigate the political and strategic fallout which faced by leadership in the hand of opposition but this article is silent about the social effects of covid-19 on the life of common people how it affects the poor family of the local people of Pakistan so this current research work is done to fill all these loop holes.⁶ *Covid-19 Challenges for Pakistan* (2020) is written by Farah Naz in this article writer descriptively investigate the impact of Covid-19 at the whole world including Pakistan writer define country context in the Covid-19s scenario how it suffer from one country to another and make the whole chain of countries who suffered from pandemic also through geographical analysis its impacts on different level the spread of disease comparison between provincial level, National level, district level and rural urban level and also analyze at which level it spread quickly and at which level the

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spread of pandemic is low as compared to another places. Also describe about the initial response of the government toward Covid-19 and the framework of the government which adopted after suffering from disease and some important measures which adopted by the government for protecting the life of children, women, old people, poor people first fundamental policy of the government health first and protecting health services during the crisis, impacts on different essential healthcare services, and also discuss about the government medium and long term measures which are taken during the pandemic, the another important policy of the government maintain the food system and essential nutrition services suggested policies and measures.

It also discuss about Covid-19 impacts on enterprises and entrepreneurship and long term and short measures for enterprises the government budget, their relief and incentives packages for the help of the poor people although writer discussing each and every social impacts of Covid-19 on the nation of Pakistan from common men to leadership but this article is silent about the other aspects of Covid-19 in which included political condition after pandemic the behavior of the peoples after from suffering pandemic and also silent about the rate of inflation which become high and high day by day.⁷ This research work is done to cover the each aspects of Covid-19 which remain undiscovered and to fulfill all loopholes about the dangerous pandemic which cause the death of millions of human at the whole world also including Pakistan.

COVID-19 AS A PANDEMIC

A contagious virus that breaks out and spreads unchecked and rapidly is referred to as a pandemic. It may swiftly and thoroughly affect a large number of people. Pakistan was a part of the world on a global scale. Additionally, the epidemic not only resulted in significant human casualties but also negatively impacted every institution in the nation. The first case was reported on December 19 in China, and that country informed the WHO of the spread of a pandemic-like virus with symptoms similar to those of pneumonia, including coughing, sneezing, dryness, fever, an excruciating sore throat, and periodic gastrointestinal symptoms. When people touched the affected person, the virus was transmitted to that person, who is now suffering from the pandemic.⁸ Quickly avoid touching the infected person and keep your distance. Therefore, the epidemic started in China and spread to almost 169 other countries on Earth within a short period of time.⁶ The World Health Organization (WHO) first informed the nations about the rapid transmission of a new pneumonia-like disease from Wuhan, China, on January 4th. Just two months later, on March 11th, 2020, WHO declared this disease to be a global pandemic and gave it the name Covid-19 pandemic. At this time, there are more than 10 million cases of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, and more than five million people have

died as a result. Pakistan is currently the 12th most impacted country in the world by the Covid-19 epidemic.⁹

COVID-19 AND PAKISTAN

The Covid-19 pandemic hit every country in the world, including Pakistan, which was severely affected by the virus and suffered great damage as a result of the epidemic. Karachi (Sindh) will record the first instance in Pakistan on February 26, 2020. Yahya Jaffery, age 22, who was the first patient, returned from Iran with all the signs of the pandemic. By the middle of March, there were 28 cases worldwide, and the disease spread swiftly. Although travelers, commuters, and pilgrims returning from other countries brought the virus to Pakistan, Similar to Iran, the Middle East, and Europe, Pakistan also had pandemic symptoms at the time. As a result, Pakistan had thousands of cases of the virus at the time, with a 2700 fatality rate that was rising day per day.¹⁰ The pandemic spread quickly in Pakistan, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency throughout the nation in March, which persisted until May. Although the lockdown had a negative impact on the country's economy and people's way of thinking, it also had some positive effects, such as helping the country prepare for the Covid-19 pandemic.¹¹

PAKISTANI ECONOMY BEFORE COVID-19

There was no pandemic in the nation from 2018 to 2019 when the PTI government was in power. The Pakistani prime minister stated that 2019 is seen as a year of growth, progress, expanding exports of the country wealth and creation as the country's economy began to stabilize. Although Pakistan's industrial sector experienced crises, the leadership attempted to complete each task for the country one at a time. It is also claimed that the debt has increased by 40% in 2019 as a result of the fiscal deficit and the country's GDP increasing annually, improving Pakistan's economic situation from unstable to positive and its business index during Imran Khan's reign. As a result, the Covid-19 pandemic struck Pakistan around this time, drastically altering the state of every Institution.¹²

GOVERNMENT'S FIRST REACTION TO COVID-19

The Pakistani government, along with any federal or provincial governments, reacted to the Covid-19 outbreak fairly promptly. Additionally, a quick response is required if the virus that disturbed social and economic movement is to be successfully combated. All educational institutions are closed until May 2020, despite the fact that this affects people's families and erases a year's worth of academic progress for students. The federal and provincial governments are encouraging people to remain socially distant from one another for a while, while also restricting public activity and enforcing a mandatory shutdown. These actions will have an adverse effect on businesses and household income, particularly those who depend on daily wages. In places that were significantly impacted by the virus, the government also put strict limitations on people's freedom of movement. The government also tried to block the

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movement of individuals during the pandemic by closing all domestic and international flights as well as land entry points. Facilities for education have been shut down.¹³ These initial steps taken by the government to control the disease in the nation also had negative effects on Pakistan's economy. They severely destroyed Pakistani citizens' quality of life and made it difficult for the government to combat this severe and dangerous disease, which also caused numerous deaths throughout the entire world, including Pakistan.

COVID-19'S ECONOMIC IMPACT IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan experienced numerous economic issues as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, and its economy fell to its lowest point. Prior to the epidemic, the IMF estimated that Pakistan's GDP was growing at a 2.4% annual rate while its inflation rate was double digits. Government actions during the pandemic, such as the lockdown, disseminated adverse economic shocks and made Pakistan's economic position worse. The COVID-19 pandemic's economic effects are hazardous since they had an impact on both Pakistan's supply and demand slides the manufacture and the distribution of the commodities were impacted by the COVID-19. Because Pakistan's main trading partner enforced a lockdown due to the virus, the trade market was severely disrupted. This had a negative impact on the Pakistani trade system. Due to the lack of available raw materials, finished goods, machinery, and technical equipment, imports from Pakistan were also negatively impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak. As a result, imports decreased. Millions of people lost their employment as a result of the covid-19 epidemic, and the middle class population of Pakistan has suffered greatly as a result, especially the daily wage earners or labor force of Pakistan.¹⁴ Due to the pandemic deadly virus, Pakistan is dealing with four significant economic challenges:

- 1) A slowdown in economic growth.*
- 2) An increase in unemployment and poverty*
- 3) A growing fiscal and external imbalance.*

4) Both domestic and external debt is raising the country's debt rate and its inflation rate. The government signed numerous agreements with the IMF in order to handle the poor economic situation in the nation. Pakistan formally began the IMF programme on July 1, 2019, and inflation reached its highest level at that time.¹⁵

COVID-19'S EFFECT ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

The Covid-19 epidemic created a serious threat to public health and the nation's food chain and resulted in a disconcerting loss of human life on a global scale. The whole global food system, including Pakistan, has been impacted by the covid-19 virus.¹⁶ Millions of Pakistani agricultural workers both salaried and self-employed regularly experience high levels of working poverty, malnutrition, and ill health; they lack adequate safety and labor protection; they endure other forms of abuse; they face

threats of death; and as a result, their mental health is also disrupted. It is imperative to approach the situation with humility and work for the welfare of the lower community, which is primarily affected and suppressed by the dangerous virus, as the Covid-19 crisis affects food security and public health. As a result, the leadership was forced to seek assistance in the form of debt from other neighboring countries.¹⁷

COVID-19'S EFFECT ON PAKISTAN'S GROWTH

The Covid-19 also has a negative impact on Pakistan's economic development. The analysis estimates that the Pakistani economy would lose almost US\$ 16 million in both the best and worst case scenarios. The severity of the crisis is predicted to have a detrimental impact on Pakistan's growth.¹⁸ The pandemic of cholera severely and quickly affected Pakistan's growth sector, which led to a number of issues for the sector and leadership that worsened as a result of the country's lack of everything. As a result of these crises, which also affected the sector, the country's GDP fell to its lowest point, its debt level rose, and unemployment and poverty also reached their highest points.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN TRADE

The Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on Pakistan's foreign commerce as well. Nearly 60% of Pakistan's exports are textiles, which heavily rely on the import of raw materials; as a result of the lockdown and travel restrictions, imports have decreased, which has had an adverse effect on the country's growth as well as exports. According to the most recent data made public by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, imports decreased by 20% and exports by 15%, while textile exports decreased by 18%, equipment exports by 15%, petroleum imports by 40%, and exports of raw textile materials by 20%. There is also a plan to cut back on the remittances that Pakistanis living abroad send home, which further exacerbates the country's institutional, economic, and commercial issues.¹⁹ The pandemic has had a particularly negative impact on Pakistan's trade; as a result, the country's exports and imports have declined and its expenses have increased as a result of the need for additional healthcare facilities, medications, and proper treatment for affected citizens. As a result, Pakistan has taken on a significant amount of foreign debt to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

COVID-19'S EFFECT ON PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The education system in Pakistan has also been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic due to the widespread nature of the disease, the high prevalence of positive cases among students, and the risk of the disease spreading from one student to another. As a result, the government of Pakistan has taken very drastic action to protect the country's educational institutions. All educational institutions will be closed on March 20, 2020 as a result of the widespread Covid-19 pandemic, and everyone has been recommended to stay home and isolate. The country was placed under lockdown and educational institutions were closed, which had a negative

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impact on the economy and the process of student teacher learning.²⁰ Due to the closure of educational institutions, students are spending a lot of time at home, wasting valuable learning time. New educational policies were introduced and put into place. First, the online learning process was started while students were studying at home, and teachers delivered lectures using various online methods. However, this process did not produce any positive outcomes, and students paid little attention to online classes. ²¹The second step, in which all students were passed for a year without exams and moved on to the next class, was likewise a major failure because both brilliant and illiterate pupils were still passed. So the epidemic also had an impact on students' futures and had a detrimental mental impact on Pakistani citizens.

PANDEMIC EFFECTS ON PAKISTAN'S AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Pakistan's agriculture industry is regarded as the country's main source of employment and economic support. Pakistan ranks eighth in the world for production of wheat, tenth for production of rice, fifth for production of sugarcane, and fourth for production of milk. However, the pandemic period has presented numerous difficulties for Pakistan's agriculture industry, which have interrupted production by reducing the labor force and limiting the transportation options for moving products from town to city. Before the pandemic broke out, Pakistan's agriculture system was suffering from the effects of a large-scale locus attack disease that severely damaged the country's various crops and reduced annual crop production. As a result of this attack, trade between countries was halted, and after the pandemic broke out, the situation deteriorated and some vegetables and fruits' prices spiked during the lockdown, making them unaffordable to the general populace.²² The epidemic immediately had an impact on Pakistan's agriculture industry, which lost many farmers. As a result of this low rate of production, Pakistan's yearly GDP fell.

TRADE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

The Pakistani economy was already facing a number of issues before to the Covid-19 outbreak, but as a result of the pandemic's massive and dangerous spread, its situation has been far worse than in other wealthy nations. The covid19 pandemic has an impact on every nation's economic system globally, including In addition to suffering during the pandemic, Pakistan's trade and business sectors also suffered losses in trade and business; 50% of Pakistan's exports were diverted to nations that were already severely impacted by the virus. More than two thirds of all textile exported to western countries from Pakistan are affected by the pandemic, and after the pandemic there is a decline in the demand for textile because the western countries put lockdowns and took some strict measures to fight the virus so they did not pay first attention. Other major exports from Pakistan include leather, surgical instrument, and some chemicals the Pakistani export. The Covid-19 outbreak caused Pakistan's trade to fall. However, Pakistan's economy is unable to import these goods

from the West, and as a result, trade and business is in poor condition during the pandemic. Pakistan imports 68% of its goods from western nations, including intermediate goods, capital goods, raw materials, and other items. These imports are then used for domestic consumption before being exported to the rest of the world. When compared to the previous PMLN administration, Pakistan's total debt and liabilities increased from PKR30 trillion to PKR41 trillion.

However, the debt increased during the period of the PTI government. The central government debt increased during this time. Pakistan's public finances were already in poor condition before the pandemic.²³ The pandemic crisis gives Pakistan the chance to take on a significant amount of domestic and external debt under the Covid-19 relief programme, pushing the country's debt rate higher than it was in the past. As a result of the Government of Pakistan's efforts to repay foreign debt, the inflation rate is now higher than it was previously, and the poor population is experiencing a lot of difficulties. However, in order to manage the country's external debt, Pakistan has agreed to accept US\$ 4 billion from the IMF, WB, ADB, as well as several Islamic institutions. The Paris Club and the G20 announced on April 15, 2020, a one-year debt relief programme for the world's poorest nations, which included Pakistan during the challenging Pandemic period. The nation anticipates receiving US\$ 10-12 billion in debt relief, which the prime minister and foreign minister eagerly welcome. Since Pakistan is under a lot of financial pressure and will eventually have to pay it back in installments, the country's economy is not moving in the right direction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICS

The Covid-19 pandemic is also putting the world's political leaders to the test. It will be interesting to see how they respond to the economy of their own nation. Some leaders will show themselves to be capable of handling the situation, while others will be unable to do so and will only impose lockdowns while doing nothing to improve the lives of their own citizens. While Pakistan's leadership has proven to be effective and set a fantastic example for the rest of the globe in managing the state of the nation and launching reform for the benefit of the country's native citizens. A \$30 billion economic package was offered to help the building industry, investors received income tax relief, and "Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme" will launch in the nation to provide employment for many daily wage earners.

The Pakistani Prime Minister, on the other hand, announced the formation of the Tiger Force, a group of volunteers whose primary mission is to provide the most afflicted areas of Pakistan with rapid access to basic requirements of life. A national relief fund has been established to handle the additional costs associated with the Covid-19 outbreak and other significant actions made by the government to bring back Pakistan's expatriate population. Despite all of these efforts, the Pakistani government was unable to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak adequately and

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appropriately, and as a result, many people are struggling to meet their basic needs and are in poor health.²⁴ The Covid-19 outbreak has hurt Pakistan's economy, which is already in dire straits. The Pakistani government wants to reevaluate its economic assistance relations with the US on a bilateral basis. On April 6, USIP organized a conversation to examine the economic consequences of the risky Covid-19 pandemic for Pakistan.²⁵

CONCLUSION

To sum up the entire research project, the Covid-19 pandemic destroyed peoples' lives and adversely affected every institution of Pakistan at the national and international levels. This posed a significant challenge to Pakistan's leadership and government. Both the federal and provincial governments sought to combat the disease and take immediate action to stop its spread. The government offers a number of assistance programmes to aid the populace in coping with the worsening pandemic conditions, but they are ultimately insufficient and there is still a dearth of the necessities of life for the average person. The Government give the health sector a lot of attention, increasing the budgets for medical facilities and swear to provide the general population with all health facilities, but this will still fall short as the majority of deaths are caused by inappropriate care and a lack of first aid supplies. Along with the health institutions, the pandemic had an impact on the country's economic growth and development. The leadership was forced to borrow money from foreign nations and international banks to deal with Pakistan's dire situation, and all of the country's development projects were halted during the pandemic, making it appear impossible for the government to maintain the status quo. To stop the spread of the epidemic from one place to another, the government declared a state of emergency and advised citizens to stay at home and maintain social distance from one another. Every institution remained closed for control because of the long-term lockdown's detrimental effects on the public's minds. Because of the constant lockdown, common people's businesses were destroyed and schools were forced to close. However, cases continued to rise and the death rate rose due to the pandemic, which claimed thousands of lives in a day and affected millions of people in a matter of hours. Due to this terrible pandemic, which has spread a fear of death and hunger among the people of Pakistan, the economy of the nation is slipping downward at an alarming rate, and poverty is rising as well. After a protracted difficult period, things returned to normal in the nation and a pandemic vaccine was discovered in other nations. Pakistan also imports vaccine from other countries for its citizens, and vaccination programmes there began at various ages, but the majority of the population is unwilling to undergo vaccinations due to the widespread spread of hundreds of falsehoods regarding the harmful effects of vaccines, despite government regulations requiring everyone to do so in order to protect themselves from further harm..



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