

BULLETIN 29

PAKISTAN CORONAVIRUS CIVACTS CAMPAIGN (CCC)

WHAT'S INSIDE

- COVID UPDATES
- ROLE OF RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM TO COUNTER THE EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION
- STEPS INVOLVED TO STOP THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS

Preamble

For over two years, the Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC), supported by the Open Society Foundation (OSF), debunked fake news, misinformation, and myths around COVID-19. The campaign now focuses on building healthy information ecosystems where we will lead and support efforts to stop the spread of fake news and misinformation in Pakistan in a broader manner. The focus of our work might not necessarily be around COVID-19 unless, of course, we face a new wave. We plan to tackle fake news around health emergencies (remember, polio is still a challenge in Pakistan, and fake news is responsible for creating perennial vaccine hesitation), politics, sociocultural taboos, and other similar phenomena.

COVID-19 DASHBOARD (PAKISTAN)



Confirmed Cases
1,576,085
Last 24h : 5



Critical Cases
709
Last 24h : 0

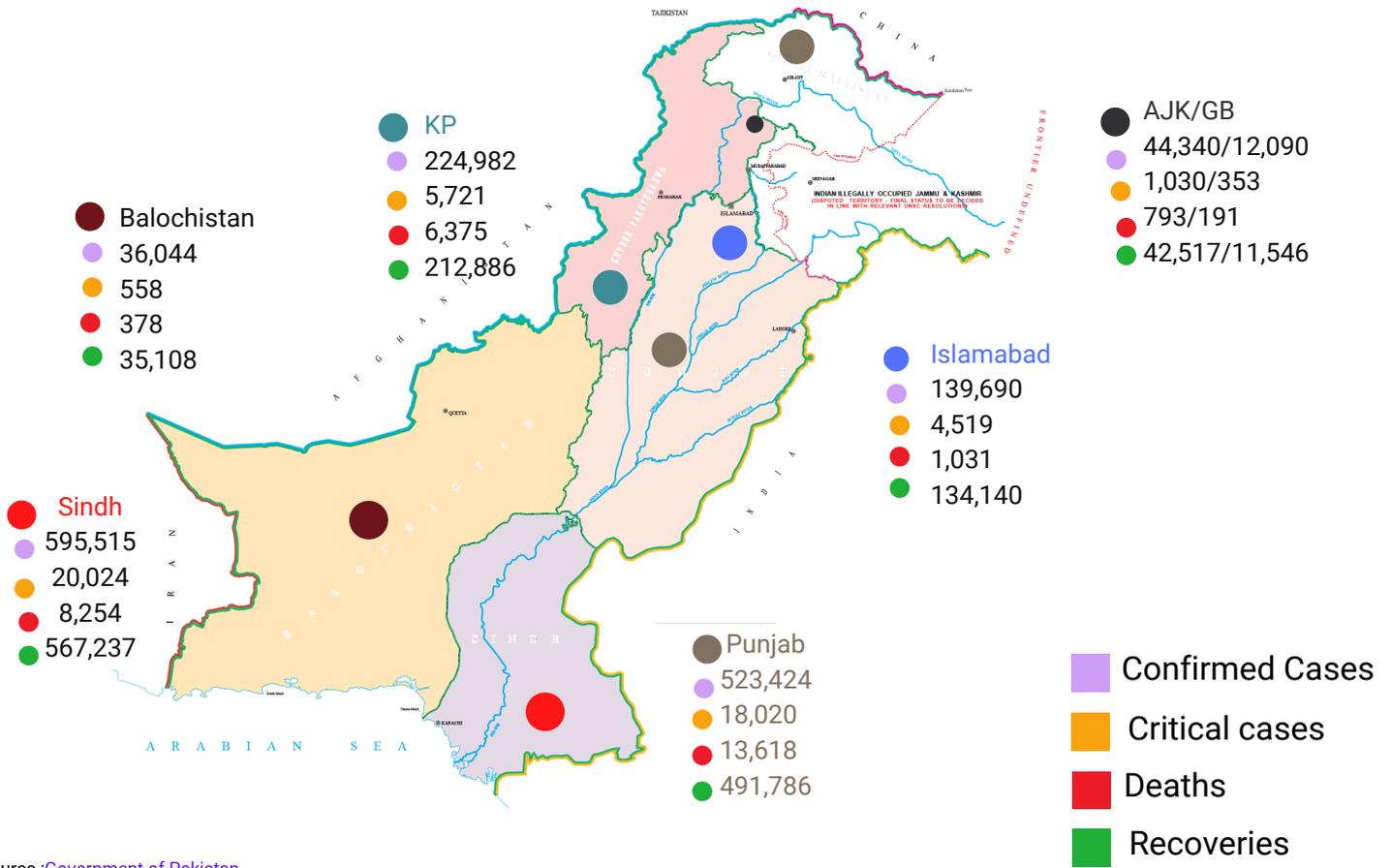


Deaths
30,640
Last 24h : 19.7



Recoveries
1,544,736
Last 24h : 16





Source : [Government of Pakistan](https://www.government.gov.pk)

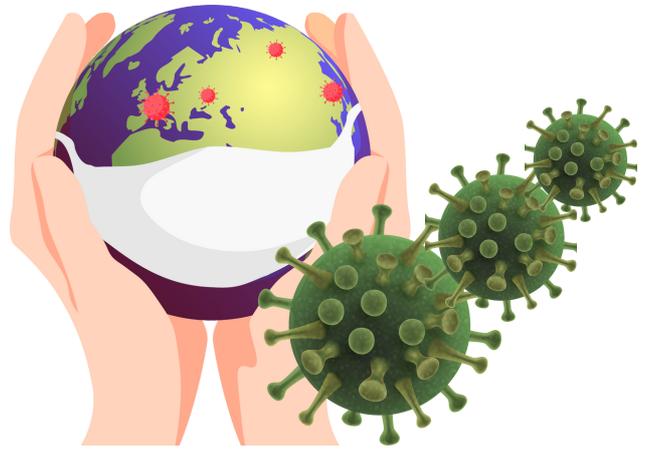
SECTION I: WHO Panel debates COVID Emergency Status The Emergency Phase of the Pandemic is yet not over

The World Health Organization’s emergency committee on COVID-19 held a meeting in January 2023 to discuss whether the pandemic still merits the highest global alert level.

The emergency phase of the pandemic is not over yet, said WHO chief Tedros; the weekly death rate fell below 10,000 in October but rose again in December. A rise in deaths was also attributed to the removal of COVID regulations in China.

Tedros stated in a meeting, "As we enter the fourth year of the epidemic, we are undoubtedly in a much better position now than we were a year ago, when the Omicron wave was at its highest, and more than 70,000 deaths were being reported to WHO each week".

Over half of the almost 40,000 COVID deaths recorded last week occurred in China, but the actual death toll "is substantially higher," according to Tedros.



The panel held its 14th meeting on the crisis nearly three years to the day after it initially raised the WHO's highest emergency alarm.

Every three months, the independent committee gathers to analyze the pandemic and present its findings to Tedros, who decides whether it should continue to be considered a worldwide emergency.

Source: [The News](#)

SECTION II:

Role of Responsible Journalism to Counter the Effects of Fake News and Misinformation

In a Seminar on the effects of fake news and misinformation on society, arranged by the Accountability Lab Pakistan held at the Rawalpindi Press Club, speakers discussed the key drivers and impacts of fake news and disinformation on society, especially our youth. They also highlighted the role of media in countering misinformation and fake news.

Ms. Shazia Mehboob, Editor of the Digital Media Platform, The PenPK.com, and Mr. Javed Rana, CEO and the Editor of The Digital Dispatch, an Investigative Multimedia Digital Magazine, were among the key speakers at the event.

While speaking at the occasion, Javed Rana said that digital media had overtaken mainstream media. People, especially the youth, are keen to know what is happening in the country and tend to believe whatever they see on social media. He added that as responsible journalists, we must seek facts and provide verified information to the public to reduce the risk of spreading misinformation and fake news.

Ms. Shazia Mehboob deliberated that with the massive growth in the digital media industry, the flow of information has increased, and a single piece of information shared by a few influencers may spread in a hundred different ways. Since many people follow such influencers, they quickly accept the credibility of the news without knowing it. She further said responsible journalists must provide factual information and educate the public about media literacy and the right to information.

In-charge of Rawalpindi Press Club, Shakila Jalil said that the concept of fake news and misinformation is old, but social media and the internet have increased this trend. It is essential to save our youth from the negative effects of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation.



Anecdotes

Ms. Shazia Mehboob
Editor Digital Media Platform "The PenPK.com"



Digitalizing media has increased the challenges of misinformation and disinformation for the journalist community. Such discussions, debates, awareness sessions, and training are significant to digitally preparing people. Perceptions around misinformation cannot be eradicated as it is universally entrenched but can be reduced. Therefore, we should sensitize the people and the journalist community so that they can use digital tools, methods, or technologies in their reporting fields, helping them to avoid spreading misinformation and improve their credibility.

Javed Rana

Senior Journalist and Analyst CEO/The Editor of The Digital Dispatch, An Investigative Multimedia Digital Magazine

Sessions like this are crucial when fake media, fake news, and, more importantly, misguided analysis is on the rise, which has many harmful effects on our society. In the mainstream media, we only get a little information except the different narratives propagated by various stakeholders in Pakistan; People, therefore, seek accurate information on social media.



Another problem with mainstream media is that the owners of news channels belong to the business backgrounds. They try to propagate certain news aligned with specific political parties of their interests and other stakeholders. Hence, a journalist is bound to do biased reporting that can boost the channel's ratings.

Ms. Shakila Jalil

In charge Rawalpindi Press Club

Journalists face challenges in differentiating between fake and accurate news and their sources. Hence, such sessions are critical to educating them on how to deal with misinformation and where they can verify the information. Our journalists must be educated to publish something with proper research and to be more vigilant in this era of fake news and misinformation. Unfortunately, some media persons also make mistakes in breaking news and getting more views, hence becoming a source of spreading false information.



HOW TO STOP FAKE NEWS

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks, What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

DO a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story?



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to the current event.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too oldish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if you have your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

