Did Winter come for us with COVID19?

By Sweety Samal

Those who are diehard fans of Game of Thrones (GoT) series are familiar with the phrase "Winter is Coming". It is the motto of Northern house Stark in the fictional kingdom of Westeros. The phrase "winter is coming," epitomizes the environmental changes followed by the harshness of the worst of situations. The White Walkers, the harbinger of the worst is the supernatural threat to humankind, dwell north of *The Wall* in Westeros. The phrase is a reminder for people in the North to prepare for the change and the fury. Coming to the real life, this winter, the world has encountered a new virus epidemic Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), a respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus, first emerged in late December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, Hubei province, China. The outbreak resulted in a declaration by WHO of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January 2020. To date (27th March 2020), there have been approximately 465,915 confirmed cases of SARS-CoV2 in 200+ countries and 21,031 deaths.

The global pandemic has changed how we live our lives. There's fear, panic, and severe disruption of lives – reminds of what we see in GoT for White Walkers. But it also showed how Winterfell prepared to fight the superpowers, how they worked on collaborating with the best fighters, the best leaders, the best strategists, and their ability to be always ready for the arrival of White Walkers. This is the learning which we should start adopting now.

The SARS-CoV2 virus has entered the nature and is going to stay for a while. Now we need to build a team, bring together scientific leaders, enthusiastic researchers, people, and the industry on one platform. This will ensure that every time we encounter an evil, we will fight back and win over too. But we need to prepare ourselves strategically and wisely; the army of these viruses might seem vast and exhaustible, but we can outsmart them. The viruses, like the White Walkers and their army, have the vast numbers, the ability to kill a human. For many episodes, the Winterfell was not able to overpower because the Northmen were mostly inexperienced, and only a handful of the people at Winterfell truly understood what they were facing. The fear alone could scatter the living. The same, maybe we are facing today with SARS-CoV2.

Most of us do not know the disease. The social media is flooded with misinformation. For some people the disease is mild and hence they do not think it's a big risk and on the other hand some of us are doing extensive preparation for outlandish scenarios. As time progresses, the dilemma is building up.

The one lesson GoT offers is to PREPARE. Panic and fear are both pointless. As of now, China has reported no new infections. We can look forward to a time when there will be no new infection. We should be wary of the fact that as winter comes, the virus may come back. If not SARS-CoV2, it will be pandemic flu or SARS or MERS. But if we start preparing today, we can fight back every aspect of this epidemic or pandemic risk we face as a society. Each year, as early November comes, maybe we should remember the words of the House Stark *'winter is coming'*, and we should be ready to ride out another winter if again it's going to be a daunting foe …!!!!!