**The smart lockdown-II**

[**Najm us Saqib**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/najm-us-saqib)

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Pakistan is moving fast towards a complete lockdown while pondering over its repercussions on the yet-to-take-off economy and the daily wagers. The third wave of Covid-19 and its lethal effects are being ascertained to devise a doable policy for countering various variants of the virus in the face of an almost totally indifferent society. The numerous calls, appeals and requests made by the government to at least address ‘fifty percent’ of the issue by using masks are seemingly not heeded to. Scarcity of the vaccine and an uncertainty attached to its provision to all, coupled with a ban on all non-essential activities from the evening until the time of Sahar, seems to be the solution to the remaining fifty percent of the problem.

Hospitals, paramedics, doctors and health workers are running short of answers as they face an unprecedented and unannounced inflow of patients in need of oxygen and related medical treatment. Requesting the army to help other security forces in persuading the 222 million people of Pakistan to adhere to the oft-repeated SOPs certainly indicate towards the existence of a real crisis situation. How many of us are willing to join hands with the government, the National Coordination Committee (NCC) and the National Command & Operation Center (NCOC) in facing the challenge of the century is anybody’s guess.

[Head of UK Labour party accused of undermining Muslims](https://nation.com.pk/27-Apr-2021/head-of-uk-labour-party-accused-of-undermining-muslims)

Perhaps the population’s belief that the time, date and place of death could not be changed helped the country in surviving the first two waves of the pandemic successfully. Maybe the same belief is restricting the majority of the people to discontinue their routines, take precautions and follow the prescribed SOPs. The non-compliant segment of society might feel that defying instructions in this regard and following their instincts to question anything coming from an incumbent government.

Perhaps they don’t want to follow SOPs considering it is a favour being extended to the government. Perhaps some of them still feel that the whole game of this deadly virus is a hoax and an easy way to make tons of money. Perhaps the longevity of this invisible incarceration is taking its toll on the minds of the people. Perhaps the worries of their children’s education, making both ends meet, shrinking pockets, an uncertain future and the feelings of losing out on time are greater issues for them. Otherwise, why wouldn’t they follow SOPs on their own? After all, these SOPs are for their own safety.

[Iran's IRGC vessels Harass US ships in Persian Gulf](https://nation.com.pk/27-Apr-2021/iran-s-irgc-vessels-harass-us-ships-in-persian-gulf)

Islamabad is presently faced with multiple challenges, both internally and in the foreign policy domain. Imagine how comparatively easier would it be to tackle Covid-19 if the growth rate was less than 6 percent, circular debt was controlled, electricity was cheaper, the prices of commodities, especially of food, were manageable, there was peace in the Parliament and on the roads, the kids were allowed to go to schools under supervision, the media refrained from sensationalising issues and the people had confidence in the government to deliver. Some of us feel that such an environment could have come in handy and the resilient people of Pakistan would have complied with all kinds of SOPs voluntarily.

Pakistan is perhaps the world’s number one country in the domain of charity. Why the rich and famous people of Pakistan have not come forward to assist the government in addressing Covid-19 within the country is not understandable. Neither does one see the numerous NGOs, microfinance establishments, business tycoons, political figures, philanthropists and volunteers offering their personal, professional or monetary assistance to the government in its endeavours to combat Covid-19. Why would a Pakistani based philanthropist offer pandemic related assistance to India and not to his own country? Why has combating the virus been considered the sole responsibility of the government, is not understood either. As if, Covid-19 was the creation of the ruling party or it was a political ploy to win the next elections. As if, following SOPs was some kind of a development agenda sponsored by the government to gain some extra political mileage. As if, Covid-19 belonged to a specific political party and not a worldwide pandemic phenomenon. There is more to it than meets the eye.

[Biden pledges US support as India faces COVID wave](https://nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2021/biden-pledges-us-support-as-india-faces-covid-wave)

One tends to agree with Oscar Munoz, a Mexican-American businessman, “Uncertainty always creates doubt, and doubt creates fear.” The worldwide fear created by the ongoing pandemic entails a number of uncertainties and doubts such as the usefulness of vaccines and the duration of the pandemic. Such doubts cannot be removed by any vaccine or through any number of psychotherapies. This fear and these doubts would only be removed from our minds once the current pandemic is completely out of sight. That takes us to another uncertainty; when are we going to be completely out of it?

There is no guarantee against the occurrence of the fourth or fifth wave of Covid-19 or how long the third wave might take to complete. Even the psychological dimensions of the pandemic cannot be fathomed by the best scientific minds of the world. A vaccine is not the only consolation. Neither is it the following of SOPs. The only certain aspect of the pandemic is its attached uncertainty. Hence, the governments and psychologists of the world need to find a way out of dealing with this uncertainty and the resultant doubts and fears so that we could go through this unsure period with reasonable consciousness.

[Qureshi says Islamic world is united on protection of Prophet's (PBUH) sanctity](https://nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2021/islamic-world-is-united-on-protection-of-prophet-s-pbuh-sanctity-fm-qureshi)

The government of Pakistan would not like to part with the credit of handling the first phase by clamping ‘smart lockdowns’ as this concept received applause from all over the world. As we await the arrival of the vaccine and hope the law enforcing agencies will be successful in getting the prescribed SOPs complied with by all and sundry, perhaps Islamabad would like to come up with the idea of ‘Smart Lockdown-II’ before it is considered imperative to go for the hitherto unprecedented complete lockdown. The NCC, NCOC and other related organs of the government are well placed to suggest the contours, scope, extent and nature of this penultimate lockdown.

Meanwhile, the government may wish to address a couple of pertinent questions for the good of its people. In the absence of any plausible and definite solution to the pandemic, how helpful is it to constantly update the death toll and number of positive results on the media? Is it creating more fear and skepticism than the desired awareness? Can we find a way out to minimise the ever increasing fear of the pandemic by at least not allowing it to be sensationalised in the media? We all know that the fear of death is scarier than death itself.