

K-Electric, mercy

KARACHI: As soon as the authorities began to sense that the coronavirus pandemic is going to wreak unimaginable havoc on society, especially those who run the Sindh government, measures were announced to alleviate people's pain as much as it was possible at the time.

The first two suggested (I repeat: suggested) steps that immediately spring to mind were that there would be some sort of relief for citizens in paying electricity and gas bills; and landlords were requested to show compassion to their tenants. This showed, among other things, that the government was mindful of what was about to come and cared for citizens' physical and mental well-being.

A couple of months down the line, one doesn't know whether the virus cases have peaked; what has peaked, though, is the summer season. It's unbearably hot, and one shudders to think to step out of one's house in the daytime to avoid heatstroke because already people are trying to practise social distancing to keep the virus at bay. Think for a moment, in such a situation, the electricity goes kaput!

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Power outages are not new to the country, and Karachi has faced some of the worst of the blackouts. But this time around the situation is dangerous. Here's why: there would hardly be any neighbourhood or locality in the city where there are no Covid-19 patients. It wouldn't be wrong to say that people have now begun to realise the hazards involved with the disease, foremost of which is that you can pass it on to other people in no time, so they immediately quarantine themselves. Now not all households have air-conditioners (besides, cold atmosphere is generally considered favourable for the virus to spread), so usually the patient closes himself or herself in a room with a ceiling fan for as long as s/he doesn't test negative. If someone has isolated himself/herself in a house to protect loved ones and to recuperate, and if electricity disappears for hours, it can surely affect both physical and mental health of the patient. No power means no connection (through computers, phones etc) with the rest of the world. This is doubly dangerous.

Apparently, K-Electric's complaint addressing time is four and a half hours. If that's true, it's painfully long. These are unprecedented times. There shouldn't be disruptions in essential services. There-fore, apart from physical aloofness, compassion and mercy will help us pull through. In the last few weeks, the number of electricity 'faults' has increased considerably; social media is often abuzz with people bemoaning there's been no 'light' in their house for hours.

It's time K-Electric proved that it's not just a company with employees and employers; it's also an organisation that cares for its fellow citizens.