

# Violating regulations over Easter weekend 'could undo Covid-19 progress'

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EPIDEMIOLOGIST and infectious diseases specialist, Professor Salim Abdool Karim, said the most likely scenario was that the third wave would hit South Africa in winter.

Abdool Karim, who announced he was stepping down as co-chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Covid-19 yesterday, said he was optimistic South Africa was in a very good situation in the fight against the spread of the virus.

"As it stands right now we can't really predict when the third wave will

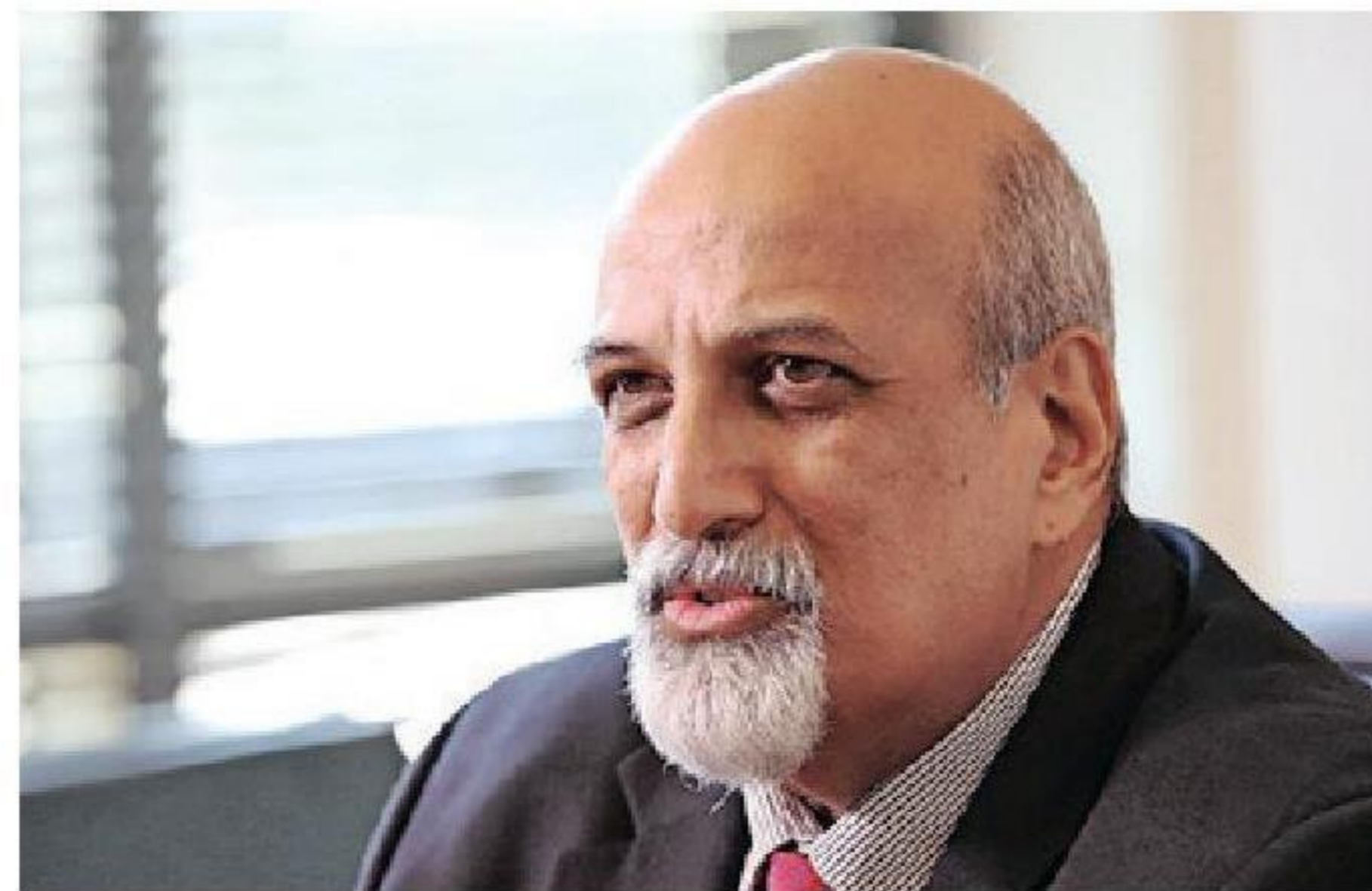
happen and we can't predict how bad it's going to be.

"This was due to the fact that there were only a handful of countries in the world who have had a third wave," he said.

He said South Africa was unable to learn from these countries.

"Those countries which have had third waves, they haven't had a second wave like ours, so we actually don't have any basis on which to predict when the next wave will occur."

Abdool Karim believes the third wave would likely hit South Africa in June or July when people start closing their doors and windows.



Professor Salim Abdool Karim

He said at the moment, the country was experiencing a low transmission which was the best place to be, where

the cases were between 1 000 and 2 000 per day. "We want to prolong this situation for as long as possible and avoid a situation where we ignite a third wave."

Abdool Karim said an important marker used to determine where we are in an epidemic is called a positive test proportion.

He said the World Health Organization recommends that this percentage should be below 5%.

"We are well below 5% for the last five weeks. So we are in a very good situation as far as the positive test proportion is concerned."

He said there had been small spikes in the Northern and Eastern Capes but

this was not concerning as the numbers were low. He said despite these small outbreaks, the other provinces had for the past four weeks been doing very well.

"Our goal is to keep it this way and by the time we get to the middle of April, we want to be in exactly the same position that we are now.

"That means we have to avoid super-spreading events over the Easter weekend," said Abdool Karim, adding he was worried about religious and family gatherings during this period.

"We want to avoid a situation where we end up with one or two big functions that break the rules."

Reflecting on the first two waves,

Abdool Karim said the first wave was very different to the second.

"We were all expecting a much worse wave and it turned out that it wasn't as bad as we were expecting, as two field hospitals never reached capacity."

Abdool Karim said the country did not really feel the pressure in the first wave, because all the restrictions prevented the number of cases from increasing fast.

He said when the second wave "took off" the numbers rose rapidly, shooting way above the first wave.

"Within a matter of days the hospitals all got full and pressure was placed on the health-care service."