

Ramaphosa announces nationwide lockdown

South Africa will enter a nationwide lockdown for 21-days with effect from midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa said.



President Cyril Ramaphosa

The lockdown, announced in a televised address to the nation on Monday night, is part of efforts to curb the rapid spread of the coronavirus in the country.

“This is a decisive measure to save millions of South Africans from infection and save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

“While this measure will have a considerable impact on people’s livelihoods, on the life of our society and on our economy, the human cost of delaying this action would be far, far greater,” he said.

The announcement of the nationwide lockdown, comes as the number of confirmed cases in South Africa increased six-fold in just eight days from 61 cases to 402 cases.

During the nationwide lockdown, all South Africans will have to stay at home. Individuals will not be allowed to leave their homes except under strict controlled circumstances. These circumstances include the seeking of medical care, buying food, medicine and other supplies or the collection of social grants.

Enacted in terms of the Disaster Management Act, the lockdown will end on Thursday 16 April 2020.

Travel restrictions

In a bid to contain the virus and slow down its spread, Ramaphosa announced a number of additional measures that will be implemented with immediate effect to strengthen prevention measures.

These measures include the automatic placement of South African citizens and residents arriving from high-risk countries under quarantine for 14 days.

Non-South Africans arriving on flights from high-risk countries announced last week, will be prohibited and turned back.

International flights to Lanseria Airport will be temporarily suspended.

In addition, international travellers who arrived in South Africa after 9 March 2020 from high-risk countries will be confined to their hotels until they have completed a 14-day quarantine period.

To ensure that measure announced are implemented, Ramaphosa also announced the deployment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to support the South African Police Service.

This nationwide lockdown will be accompanied by a public health management programme which will significantly increase screening, testing, contact tracing and medical management.

Workers exempt from lockdown

Exempt from the lockdown are health workers in the public and private sectors.

Emergency personnel, those in security services (such as the police, traffic officers, military medical personnel, soldiers), and other persons necessary in response to Covid-19 are exempt from the lockdown.

It will also include those involved in the production, distribution and supply of food and basic goods, essential banking services, the maintenance of power, water and telecommunications services, laboratory services, and the provision of medical and hygiene products.

In addition, temporary shelters that meet the necessary hygiene standards will be identified for homeless people.

Sites are also being identified for quarantine and self-isolation for people who cannot self-isolate at home.

While emphasising the importance of a lockdown, the president urged that firms that are able to continue their operations remotely should do so.

The nation-wide lockdown is necessary to disrupt the chain of transmission across society.