

The measures that we put in place for the past 28 days, alongside the continued adherence of South Africans to basic health precautions, have been effective in reducing the rate of infection.

The average number of daily new infections over the last week was around 12,000 new cases a day, which represents a 20 per cent drop from the previous week.

In the last two weeks, the number of new infections in Gauteng – which has been the epicentre of the third wave – has steadily been declining.

However, as we have observed before, there are significant differences between provinces.

As infections in Gauteng fall, daily new infections in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal continue to rise.

There has also been a concerning rise of infections in the Northern Cape after a period of relative stability.

In all these cases, infections are being driven by the Delta variant, which as we said before is far more transmissible than previous variants.

Now, more than ever, we need to adhere to the basic precautions to limit the spread of the virus from one person to another.

We know that indoor gatherings, particularly in places that have poor ventilation, are the major cause of outbreaks and super spreader events.

We must continue wearing our masks at all times when in public, keep our distance from others and always ensure that windows are open and that there is a flow of fresh air.

The overall decline in new infections means that it is possible to gradually ease some of the restrictions on gatherings, movement and the sale of alcohol.

Based on the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19, and inputs from the President's Coordinating Council, Cabinet this afternoon decided that the country should be moved from Adjusted Alert Level 4 and be placed on Adjusted Alert Level 3.

This will take effect later this evening once the regulations have been gazetted.

This means that:

- The hours of curfew will stay the same, starting at 10pm and end at 4am.
- Interprovincial travel for leisure may resume.
- Non-essential establishments like restaurants, taverns, bars and fitness centres may be opened. These establishments will however need to close by 9pm to allow their employees and patrons to travel home before the start of the curfew.
- Gatherings will be allowed but will be limited to a maximum of 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors.

Where the venue is too small to accommodate these numbers with appropriate social distancing, then no more than 50 per cent of the capacity of the venue may be used.

Gatherings include religious services, political events and social gatherings.

The limits on venue capacity also apply to restaurants, gyms, fitness centres, bars, taverns and similar places.

- Attendance at funerals and cremations may not exceed 50 people and all social distancing and health protocols must be observed.

Night vigils and after-funeral gatherings are still not allowed.

- The sale of alcohol from retail outlets for off-site consumption will be permitted between 10am and 6pm from Monday to Thursday.

Alcohol sales for on-site consumption will be permitted as per licence conditions up to 8pm.

- Schools will re-open tomorrow, Monday the 26th of July, according to strict health protocols and other measures announced by the Minister of Basic Education.

It remains mandatory for every person to wear a face mask that always covers their nose and mouth at all times when in public spaces.

The owners and managers of public buildings, centres, shops, restaurants, taxis and buses all have a responsibility to ensure that people on their premises or in their vehicles wear masks.

They must also ensure that the appropriate social distancing measures are in place and are adhered to.

It is important to remember that it is a criminal offence if the number of people on these premises exceeds the maximum number of customers or employees allowed.

As we ease restrictions, we must remember that infections remain high and that we need to continue to exercise caution.

As we have always said, our most effective weapon in the fight against COVID-19 is an effective and comprehensive vaccination programme.

In the last few weeks, our vaccination campaign has made huge strides.

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We are still counting the cost of this violence, and coming to terms with the destruction that it left in its wake.

This has been made possible by the slight improvement we have seen in our revenue collection.

We are expanding the number of people who are eligible for this grant by allowing unemployed caregivers who currently receive a Child Support Grant to apply.

Details on the reinstatement of the grant, including the process for application, will be announced shortly.

This will build on the strength of our existing social protection system, which is one of the greatest achievements of our democracy.

In addition to the food relief being provided by the Department of Social Development, government is contributing R400 million to the Humanitarian Crisis Relief Fund established by the Solidarity Fund to assist with the immediate needs of affected communities.

We are also implementing measures to help businesses to rebuild.

The most immediate need is to ensure that those businesses that were damaged or looted are able to rebuild and reopen as quickly as possible.

We are one of the few countries in the world to have a state-owned insurance company, SASRIA, which provides cover against incidents of public violence, strikes, riots and unrest.

Businesses that are insured will be covered by SASRIA.

SASRIA has committed to expedite the payment of all valid claims, and is working together with private insurers to ensure that assessments are completed without delay.

Government will ensure that SASRIA is able to honour all of its obligations and will provide whatever support is necessary in this regard.

In addition, however, some businesses that were victims of this violence may not have been insured.

This includes many small and medium-sized businesses, whether formal or informal.

Many of these businesses have lost everything, and will not be able to rebuild on their own.

We will not abandon them in their time of need.

We are therefore working to extend support to uninsured businesses that were affected by the violence.

Government will set aside dedicated funds for this purpose and we will soon announce a mechanism for these businesses to apply for support.

We will also be reprioritising funding for SMMEs affected by the pandemic through a once-off business survival funding mechanism.

We are also working with large business to determine their contribution to the support of SMMEs, job creation and eradication of hunger and poverty.

Two weeks ago, we announced that the COVID-19 TERS scheme would be extended for those sectors which were affected by Alert Level 4 restrictions during the past 28 days.

Applications for this period are open, and the UIF will facilitate payments as quickly as possible to support workers who have not received an income.

Most importantly, the UIF will provide income support to all those employees who have lost jobs as a result of the recent unrest.

This will ensure that jobs are protected and that workers can continue to earn an income as will those businesses take time to rebuild.

While the TERS scheme has provided crucial support to those businesses that have been impacted by the current situation, it is important to ensure that the scheme is sustainable and that it can continue to provide support to those businesses that are still struggling.

