

Gauteng "on fire" as Covid-19 infections skyrocket

Gauteng is in the midst of a Covid-19 crisis, as cases show no signs of slowing down. The situation is being exacerbated by staff shortages and the fact that one of the province's biggest hospitals is still closed after a fire earlier this year.



Gauteng premier, David Makhura. Source: sanews.gov.za

On Monday, South Africa reported 9,160 new Covid-19 cases, of which 6,292 were logged in Gauteng. "Our province is under fire. This place is burning with coronavirus. Everywhere in the province, the positivity rate is extremely high. The chances of getting infected are extremely high wherever you are," said Gauteng premier David Makhura. He was at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital, where he welcomed medics from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to help alleviate staff shortages.

The infection rate and hospital admissions are doubling up almost every other day. On Sunday, 1,470 people were receiving Covid-19 treatment at public hospitals and 3,448 in private health institutions in Gauteng.

Staffing and beds

According to the premier, private hospitals are also full. "They're facing similar challenges like additional staffing. I don't want to send the message that we have a lot of beds. Every two days, beds are filling up."

The provincial government has contracted over 5,000 healthcare workers to boost the staff component. "That's still not

enough. We can do with more healthcare workers.”

In the meantime, the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital remains closed after a fire. Apparently because the provincial health department is struggling to find the hospital's original building plans so that it can install fire doors. This is despite the evidence that the recent fire there has not caused any damage which could result in harm to patients. Rather, the Gauteng Health Department says it cannot reopen the hospital because it does not comply with health and safety standards, a report in the *Daily Maverick* said.



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Stricter lockdown regulations

He said the Gauteng's Provincial Command Council was meeting on Tuesday and will recommend stricter restrictions.

"I can't rule that out that we might need more restrictions. The pandemic is out of control. Something needs to be done," he said, adding that the final decision lies with the National Coronavirus Command Council.

In the meantime, the province is monitoring the situation at schools as well, while also asking the public to wear their masks, including those who have received their Covid-19 vaccine.

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