

## Audio visual systems to enable court appearances

As government continues to implement measures to curb the spread of Covid-19, Justice and Correctional Services Minister Ronald Lamola says audio visual systems are to be used in courts to enable some proceedings to take place.



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The systems, which are available in 46 centres, will enable the magistrates, prosecutors, attorneys and lawyers or representatives of the inmates to communicate with the inmates from the correctional services centres.

“The audio visual remind systems will also enable the accused to consult their lawyers, through technological platforms, particularly where it may be necessary to run a trial. We are [also] looking at ways where technology can be used for inmates to interact with their family members,” Lamola said.

Addressing the media on the measures the department is implementing following the coronavirus (Covid-19) Disaster Management Regulations being promulgated on Friday, Lamola confirmed that no cases of Covid-19 have been reported in any of the correctional services centres across the country.

The department is looking at isolating officials who have recently travelled outside the country to high risk areas. Currently, four officials from KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng have been isolated as a precaution after displaying some coronavirus symptoms.

Other measures that have been implemented by the department across the centres to protect offenders, officials and stakeholders, as well as to prevent the infection, include the prohibition of visitors to all the correctional centres for a period of 50 days, the appointment of multi-disciplinary committees across all the regions, and the establishment of partnerships with strategic stakeholders to help prevent the spread of the virus.

“This has happened in all the five regions,” Lamola said.

The Minister said deep cleaning will take place in all centres, almost twice a day or more in some of the cells, to avoid any kind of contamination, either from the police station, court cells or correctional services centres.

He highlighted that this is an integrated approach from the police, National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and the Correctional Services, including Presiding Officers of the various courts, so that there is a clear integrated strategy aimed to deal with this issue across.

“These issues will deal with the sanitisation, cleaning, transportation of inmates availing basic hygienic essentials to offenders and officials who are currently distributing essential including gloves, masks, and disinfect, amongst others,” the Minister said.

He added that various awareness campaigns will be conducted among offenders.

## **Master’s Offices meetings cancelled**

The Minister said all meetings at the Master’s Office will be cancelled until 15 April 2020. These meetings include the reading of estates and wills.

The office will only be accepting documents to be submitted electronically, accompanied by affidavits.

Meanwhile, Lamola has conveyed his gratitude to the legal practitioners who have helped the Ministry in developing the regulations.

“This is a real ‘Thuma Mina’ moment, and we will need more of them, as and when the need arises.”