

SA to remain on Adjusted Alert Level 3 for another month

As Covid-19 second wave figures head towards a peak in South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa has announced the country will remain on Adjusted Alert Level 3 Lockdown until 15 February.



President Cyril Ramaphosa

The country had recorded 190,000 new infections and 4,600 related deaths since the start of the year. Cumulatively, South Africa has recorded over 1.2-million infections and 33,000 related deaths since March, when the country confirmed its first case.

Just over 15,000 patients are being treated in hospitals across the country. Around a third of all Covid-19 patients in hospitals are on oxygen.

“There is an intensive focus in our health facilities on increasing oxygen supply and activating field hospital beds,” said the president, adding that additional vacant posts were being filled. Beyond this, personal protective equipment stocks are being jointly monitored with the Office of Health Standards Compliance.

“Research undertaken by South African scientists has shown that the massive increase in infections is largely driven by a variant of the coronavirus known as 501.v2, a variant first identified in South Africa in November,” he said.

Adjustments

While most measures, including the ban on alcohol sales, remain in place, minor but significant adjustments will see the curfew shortened by an hour from 9am until 5am.

“ President [#Ramaphosa](#): The sale of alcohol from retail outlets and the on-site consumption of alcohol is still not be permitted. pic.twitter.com/mSUXrqrNv0— Presidency | South Africa 🇿🇦 (@PresidencyZA) [January 11, 2021](#) ”

Additionally, the country’s 20 land border posts will be closed until 15 February. These include the six busiest border posts, which are Beitbridge, Lebombo, Maseru Bridge, Oshoek, Ficksburg and Kopfontein.

“ President [#Ramaphosa](#): To reduce congestion and the high risk of transmission, Cabinet has decided that the 20 land ports of entry that are currently open will be closed until the 15th of February for general entry and departure. pic.twitter.com/bC7nZMRnms— Presidency | South Africa [@PresidencyZA](#) [January 11, 2021](#) ”

People transporting fuel, cargo and goods will be allowed to pass through the ports as will those travelling for emergency medical attention for a life-threatening condition. South African nationals, permanent residents or persons with other valid visas as well as diplomats will also be allowed to enter the country through the identified ports.

The ports will allow for the departure of foreign nationals and daily commuters from neighbouring countries who attend school in South Africa during this period.

Turning his attention to funerals, which have been described as super spreader events, President Ramaphosa pleaded with the public to adhere to government regulations of 50 people per funeral and do away with other customs.

Under the regulations, funerals may not be attended by more than 50 people, and there needs to be social distancing, hand sanitising and mask wearing.

“ Most indoor and outdoor gatherings will be prohibited [#COVID19](#) during the present level 3 pic.twitter.com/37vQ6RYfed— Department of Health ([@HealthZA](#)) [January 11, 2021](#) ”

“There are certain rituals that we perform in line with our respective cultures and traditions; not just at the funeral itself but in the days leading up to the burial,” he said. “But these are all things we simply cannot do at this time.”

He reiterated that these activities increased mourners to the exposure of risk for the public and the bereaved family.

Under Alert Level 3, the wearing of masks remains compulsory for every person in a public space. The sale of alcohol from retail outlets and the on-site consumption of alcohol is still not permitted. All beaches, dams, lakes, rivers, public parks and public swimming pools in hotspot areas will be closed to the public. As before, botanical gardens, national parks and other parks where access control measures and entry limitations are already in place may remain open to the public.

“ South Africa remains on level 3. Wearing of a mask or a similar covering over the nose and mouth is mandatory when in public [#COVID19](#) pic.twitter.com/INr2LUZC85— Department of Health ([@HealthZA](#)) [January 11, 2021](#) ”

In Level 3, most indoor and outdoor gatherings are not permitted. This includes social gatherings, religious gatherings, political events, traditional council meetings and gatherings at sports grounds.

As before, this does not include funerals and other limited exceptions as detailed in the regulations, such as restaurants, museums and gyms.

Ramaphosa said there is understandably concern about whether to open schools in the midst of a second wave of infections, and the situation is being monitored.

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