This week a headline caught Munier’s eye in the British press. The Daily Mail ran the story, “UK announces 210 more coronavirus victims—the lowest daily tally since March 26: taking the total death toll to 32,065.”

The article was published the same day Prime Minster Boris Johnson triumphantly announced that Brits would be able to return to work and schools were set to reopen. And the English Premier League season could resume on June 1.

Meanwhile back home, the South African government’s daily update indicated the national death toll had risen to 206.

The total number of deaths in SA, and 210 dead in the UK in one day.

Please let that sink in before you assess Cyril Ramaphosa’s management of this health crisis.

Now it’s no secret that the president’s National Coronavirus Command Council has taken a conservative “better safe than sorry” approach to the pandemic.

Support
Ramaphosa’s health-be-freedom, lives-before-livelihoods position has won him the moral high ground.

It’s also been reassuring to know that the lockdown policy has been informed by experts, data and global trends — and carefully explained by South Africa’s Covid-19 Ministerial Advisory Committee chief, Professor Salim Abdool Karim.

When Ramaphosa took to that podium – late or not – and communicated the differing risk-adjusted phases of the lockdown, we got a well-thought-through plan.

Every detail from international travel to washing your hands was covered.

And when the Reserve Bank announced a R500 billion cash injection for six months, our jaws dropped, we were all blown away by such a grand gesture.

People needed starve, businesses needed

folds, relief was on the way, we thought.

Only the smokers and drinkers were complaining, but hey, they can suck it up. We’ve got bigger worries.

One of those worries is the economy. Despite the

R500bn boost, companies are

closing, retrenchments are happening, industries are choking.

It was always going to be the biggest challenge – saving lives while also keeping the economy alive.

At the moment, government deserves credit for the former – 219 deaths sounds a lot better than 20,000, right? But the latter could spell catastrophe the longer we are suspended in a seemingly endless lockdown.

It’s been seven weeks now, and still no sign of the country being opened for business again.

On Wednesday night, the country held its breath in anticipation of Ramaphosa announcing an end to lockdown level 4.

It was a different Cyril, though. He stumbled through his address and came across as unprepared, unscripted, unconvincing, unemotional. It was as if he had nothing to say.

Munier, who normally takes copious notes during the speeches, looked down at his pad afterwards and, to his surprise, only saw a couple of scribbled lines.

The one read that the country would switch from level 4 to level 3 – but that infection hotspots would remain on level 4.

That was it, not much detail or clarity. The ministers would roll out the plans.

Quite frankly, it was a poor show by Ramaphosa, which can be forgiven after an intense seven weeks.

But the president can’t afford any store losses, which will cost him more support in the war against the Coronavirus.

He needs to be on top game, and up for the fight to save lives and the economy.