

'Move to higher alert level before Easter'

Karim issues Covid lockdown warning

By **Suthentira Govender** and **Ivan Pijoos**

Epidemiologist Prof Salim Abdool Karim says the government should move SA to alert level 2 before the Easter holidays as a precaution.

Karim, who is also co-chair of the ministerial advisory committee (MAC), told Sowetan's sister publication, Times-LIVE, yesterday he was "deeply concerned" about gatherings across all religious groups.

A News24 report said the national command council (NCC) was advised last week in a MAC advisory to restrict gatherings to 50, impose a 10pm curfew and revert to selling alcohol only from Mondays to Thursdays, 10am to 6pm. The report said the NCC was expected to meet today.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's acting spokesperson, Tyrone Seale, said yesterday: "The national coronavirus command council and the cabinet are continuously monitoring developments in the pandemic and in the economy, and consult with different stakeholders in society as part of decision-making.

"Such decisions are communicated by government as and when they are taken."

Under alert level 1, the hours of curfew were reduced from



Epidemiologist Professor Salim Abdool Karim.

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midnight to 4am, and public gatherings – including social, political and religious – are restricted to 100 people indoors and 250 for outdoor events.

The sale of alcohol both for on- and off-site consumption is permitted during normal pre-lockdown trading hours.

Karim said: "It's my view that we should go to a higher alert level and we should institute a few restrictions that would reduce the risk of super-spreading events ... over the Easter weekend.

"I don't know if we will have a third wave after Easter. But I don't want to wait to find out. I would rather take the precautions and reduce our chances of a third wave.

"... the second wave hit us badly because of [superspreading] events. This time we want to avoid the risk ...," said Karim. "I think we should do that pretty soon."