

SIVIWE FEKETHA

THE government continues to pile up critical Covid-19 medical supplies as experts warn that the country is headed for a massive surge in coronavirus infections in the coming months.

Yesterday, International Relations Minister Naledi Pandor and Health Minister Zweli Mkhize received the donation of Covid-19 medical supplies and equipment from China, including 95 respirators, 50 000 surgical masks, 3 000 goggles, face shields, diagnostic kits, 11 000 protective face masks and clothing.

The chairperson of the ministerial advisory committee on Covid-19, Professor Salim Abdool Karim, has indicated that the surge in infections of the global pandemic would continue once the national lockdown, which is set to last until the end of April, is lifted.

Mkhize said the government was hard at work to ensure it was well prepared and with enough supplies.

China helps SA with supplies

“As we speak right now we are working very closely with the private sector looking at the entire stock of our requirements in the country to make sure that such is expedited,” Mkhize said.

Mkhize revealed that confirmed Covid-19 infections had significantly increased to 2 415 cases, up from 2 175 on Monday.

“We are now seeing a lot more of the testing that is coming from the public sector. We’ve got teams out there screening our community, and then referring more and more people for testing, and we believe that this is the way SA will be able to deal with this pandemic – sending out more teams to identify people

who might be at risk even before they land in the hospital,” he said.

Gauteng continues to be the epicentre of the virus, with 909 cases, followed by the Western Cape at 643 while KwaZulu-Natal has 489 confirmed infections.

Eastern Cape cases have risen to 174, the Free State to 98, Limpopo to 24, Mpumalanga and North West to 22 and the Northern Cape to 16.

According to Mkhize, about 87 000 tests had been performed so far. He said the department was very sensitive about the protection of professionals who were front-line workers in the battle against the virus, adding that the Chinese donation would significantly help in ensuring that they were protected.

Pandor hailed the Chinese government for its open declaration of willingness to support South Africa and other African countries in their battle against Covid-19.

She avoided weighing in on the recent allegations relating to the discrimination against Africans in China.