

■ COVID-19

Reflecting on how to lead in a pandemic

SUKAINA ISHMAIL

sukaina.ishmail@inl.co.za

AFRICAN leaders who had to make difficult decisions on how to combat Covid-19 have shared their experiences.

They are hopeful that the lessons learnt will encourage innovative thinking among many people.

Salim Abdool Karim, South African epidemiologist and member of the African Task Force for Coronavirus, said: "It was the uncertainty of this virus with such little data on what to do about it... but it's in these periods of uncertainty that leadership is so important. The ability to make the difficult decisions is where leadership comes in.

"There were those who have chosen to go with individualism and have seen more disasters. This can be seen in the US."

Premier Alan Winde said: "We mainly didn't want to run out of beds in our hospitals. We saw how the pandemic consumed everything in other parts of the world and we didn't want to see coffins piling up and people not being served in this country."

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Alan Winde
PREMIER

Winde said the province had been fortunate of being ahead of the curve in terms of its preparation for the peak of the infections, as well as the economic impact of the lockdown.

"The virus was the first part of the pandemic and the second part is the recovery stage," he said.

Karim said: "We had to take the difficult with the easy. We knew from the beginning that we will have to depend on two key strategies: social distancing and hand washing."

The real challenges were in the townships, he said, as well as the role of essential services such as retail stores would play at the height of the outbreak.

"We are proud to say now that our Covid-19 threat is at a minimum. The country is now at a stage of moving on and continuing to do the things that we do, keeping the health restrictions in mind," Karim said.

"The way we focused on this pandemic has changed government. Everything that we tackle now will be done differently."

Mayor Dan Plato said: "The issue with regards to basic services were linked very closely to fighting the virus. Critical service delivery had to stay in place. The staff had to ensure that there was clean water in the taps."