

RESIGNATION

Prof Karim praised as he bows out

SIHLE MAVUSO and VIASEN SOOBRAMONEY

PROFESSOR Salim Abdool Karim's resignation as co-chair of the ministerial advisory committee (MAC) on Covid-19 has elicited mixed reactions.

Stakeholders in the health sector praised his work and one political party expressed sadness at his departure while another welcomed it.

Karim's departure from the committee, which was tasked with advising Minister of Health Dr Zweli Mkhize and the Cabinet on how to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the country, became public knowledge yesterday.

In a statement he issued yesterday, Abdool Karim said it was a singular honour to serve on the MAC and that as his one-year term drew to an end, the committee was still in capable hands. He would now return to his academic commitments and his research on HIV.

The Health Ministry said while he was at the helm of the committee it "positioned South Africa as one of the leading nations in the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He has become a trusted figure for so many South Africans, who have grown accustomed to his ability of explaining

complex scientific concepts in simple terms that all of us can understand".

The IFP's Mkhuleko Hlengwa said the party was sad to see him leave. "We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to Prof Karim for his contribution in fighting the devastating coronavirus pandemic. Thanks in part to his guidance and expertise, South Africa was able to weather the first two waves of Covid-19, and further, save the lives of hundreds of thousands of South Africans."

While the ANC and the DA did not comment on his departure, the EFF was scathing towards him, saying it welcomed his departure because he had failed to execute his duties. EFF spokesperson Vuyani Pambo said his departure was overdue as he kept on making inaccurate predictions.

Spokesperson for the SA Medical Research Council, Alfred Thutloa, said they wished Abdool Karim well with his future endeavours, and Dr Angelique Coetzee, chairperson of the SA Medical Association, saluted him for his work. "He did sterling work but his passion and great love is doing research and he feels that the past year took a lot of his time away from his great love," Coetzee said.