

# Covid-19 could be with us potentially for years



## Hunger epidemic:

Homeless people queue for parcels from a food distribution programme near the Kwa Mai Mai market in the central business district of Johannesburg on Monday.

/Alon Skuy  
(More reports inside)

## ● Lockdown bought SA time to prepare health system

Tamar Kahn  
and Carol Paton

SA's lockdown has bought the country time to prepare the health system for Covid-19, but there is no escape from the highly contagious virus, which could take months if not years to overcome, members of health minister Zweli Mkhize's advisory committee warned on Monday night.

"No one has encountered this virus. We have no immunity, no vaccine, no treatment.

"That means we are all at risk," said Salim Abdool Karim, the co-director of the Centre for Aids Research in Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and chair of the minister's 45-mem-

ber advisory committee on Covid-19.

"We cannot escape, not unless SA has a special protective factor not present anywhere else in the world. Our population will be at high risk again after the lockdown because all of us are vulnerable," he said.

Medical Research Council president Glenda Gray, a member of the advisory committee, said the Covid-19 epidemic would be with SA for months and possibly years to come.

"This is a long-term march, not a sprint," she said.

Covid-19 has spread rapidly around the world since it emerged in China late in 2019, prompting a growing number of countries to order lockdowns

to try to slow transmission of the highly contagious virus.

By Monday evening, more than 1.8-million cases and 116,000 deaths had been reported in 185 countries and regions, according to the Johns Hopkins University tracker.

The government has moved swiftly to try to slow the spread of Covid-19 after the first case was confirmed in SA on March 5. Ten days later, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced what were at the time Africa's most stringent restrictions on travel and mass gatherings, which were quickly followed by a national lockdown that began on March 27. Initially slated for

Continued on Page 2