

■ APPROACH

Lockdown decision today

After his R500bn socio-economic response to Covid-19 pandemic, Ramaphosa expected to ease some rules



President Cyril Ramaphosa

LOYISO SIDIMBA AND SIHLE MAVUSO

ALL EYES are on President Cyril Ramaphosa as he prepares to address the nation yet again tonight with interest largely pinned on which lockdown regulations may be eased.

The president has, however, been advised to adopt a staggered approach to reopening the economy and ensure that workers are protected from Covid-19.

Ramaphosa unveiled his administration's R500 billion socio-economic response to the deadly coronavirus this week and undertook to provide details of measures to be undertaken to reopen the economy beyond the 35-day national lockdown.

The response he announced on Tuesday includes R100bn to protect and create jobs, R50bn in temporary social relief, R40bn for the health response and emergency water supply, increased sanitisation of public transport and facilities, food and shelter for the homeless.

Ramaphosa also secured a R200bn loan guarantee scheme with major banks, the National Treasury and the SA Reserve Bank to cover companies' operational costs such as salaries, rent and payment of suppliers.

Economist Mike Schussler yesterday said Ramaphosa had to allow most shops and factories to resume functioning with social distancing strictly enforced, while

schools should be reopened in such a manner as not to impact children.

Schussler suggested that restaurants should be kept closed for another week or two while members of the public should be forced to wear masks.

According to Schussler, public transport should also resume with social distancing room and subsidised trips for transport operators to endure fewer passengers. He said public transport subsidies should be in place for two months until the coronavirus curve is flattened and companies should co-ordinate their staggered opening at different times to ensure that public transport did not get full and social distancing was maintained.

Internationally-recognised epidemiologist and infectious diseases specialist Professor Salim Abdool Karim, also the government's chief adviser on Covid-19, also suggested a systematic approach to keeping infection rates low while easing the lockdown in stages.

Karim warned that an abrupt return to normality might increase the spread of the virus and the plan should include a systematic easing of the lockdown over several days and a stepwise approach to reduce risk of rapid transmission, taking into consideration economic imperatives and social disruption.

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