

OUR VIEWPOINT

GUIDED BY THE FACTS

IN Professor Salim Abdool Karim, South Africans have found their Anthony Fauci. It is to Dr Fauci that Americans, and indeed citizens of many other countries, turn for intelligible, unadorned information about the Covid-19 pandemic. In the United States this is a more urgent need than elsewhere because of the blizzard of nonsense that emanates from the White House.

Here, fortunately, the necessity has not arisen

to undo harm caused at the executive level, and South Africans count their blessings every day that the president is Cyril Ramaphosa and the Health minister Zweli Mkhize.

But Karim is without doubt the man of the moment. He is the chairperson of Mkhize's advisory group, which consists of four ministerial advisory committees, including committees on public health and epidemiology. Its job is to feed into

the Covid-19 National Command Council, chaired by Ramaphosa, which serves as the main advisory body to government.

On Monday evening, Karim led an extraordinary public briefing on the progression of the epidemic and the detailed steps government is following to deal with it.

Transparency is without peer in a crisis. People hunger for information, and are equally desperate

for authoritative sources of it.

It is not that Karim offered much cheer. He said the worst is yet to come, lockdown in some form is here to stay, and all we've done up to now is buy time the better to manage the deluge of cases down the road. But this served as a reassurance. It is the unadorned truth, which obviates so many of the unproductive, even destructive debates that proliferate without it. It is the essential

guide through a bleak period.

The business of politicians is to spin reality according to their interests. It is a relief to have experts present facts without ideological baggage, and Karim's credibility will engender confidence in the very difficult steps government still has to implement.

Long may government continue with this unprecedented engagement with citizens.