

Covid-19 hot spots to also move to Level 3

The whole country will move to Level 3 lockdown from 1 June, including areas identified as hot spots. However, if these areas are not able to curb the rapid spread of Covid-19, they may be forced up to Level 5, said Health Minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize.



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Mkhize clarified this after the confusion was created when an old slide was presented stating hot spots would remain at Level 4 and was also making rounds on social media.

"The slide was part of a presentation previously done by Health Department prior to the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) resolving on the final approach to be adopted for the country," Mkhize said.

He said measures to identify areas that have been defined as epidemiological hot spots, which have more than five infected people per 100,000 population, or places where the infections are increasing at a fast pace.

"As it stands, government has immediately taken steps to intervene in areas that are regarded as hot spots by deploying experts and specialists who will implement measures to curb the spread."

Cluster outbreaks

To curb transmission, Mkhize said these areas also require heightened levels of tracing of contacts of positive patients, ensuring that those who are positive remain in quarantine or isolation and those who cannot self-quarantine are accommodated in quarantine facilities provided for by provinces.

"In some of these hot spots, cluster outbreaks have also been identified. This means, positive cases arising from people participating in the same activity within a specific area including factories, grocery shops, farms and so on."

He raised concerns about cluster outbreaks to drive the pandemic because the spread occurs within the cluster then individuals take the virus home with them, thus causing community outbreaks.

"This, therefore, means that as the whole country moves to Level 3, there will be a constant assessment of each and every area and its rate of infection, in which case, further containment measures and restrictions may be considered."

"If the spread of the infection is not contained despite the above-mentioned interventions, government will make a determination on whether to return that specific area, (metropolitan, district, sub-district or ward) to alert Level 4 or 5," he said.

He said this will be done rapidly and in an effort to contain and manage the spread, and also to ensure that the health facilities are not overwhelmed by the rapid rise of positive cases in that area.

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