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Media Release

31 March 2020

As at today, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is 1353. This is an increase of 46 from the previously reported cases.

The provincial breakdown is as follows:

GAUTENG	633
WESTERN CAPE	325
KWAZULU – NATAL	179
FREE STATE	74
NORTH WEST	8
MPUMALANGA	12
LIMPOPO	14
EASTERN CAPE	12
NORTHERN CAPE	6
UNALLOCATED	90

Report of Two More Deaths

It is with sadness that we announce that two more deaths.

- A 79 year old male from Gauteng Province, who presented with respiratory distress
- A 46 year old female from KwaZulu-Natal, who had an underlying condition of hypertension chronic asthma and at the time of admission, presented with an acute asthmatic attack

Therefore, to date, this brings the total number of COVID-19 related deaths to five. We convey our sincere condolences to the loved ones of these departed citizens.

Positive Cases on MSC Cruise

We have previously received reports of two confirmed COVID-19 cases that were on the MSC Cruise. These cases are from KZN and Free State. We want to make this very important announcement to the public:

In relation to the MSC ORCHESTRA Cruise Liner that left Durban on 28th February 2020 to the Portuguese Island and returned on the 2nd March 2020;

And in relation to the second cruise with the same vessel on the 13th March 2020 and returning on the 16th March 2020;

IF YOU WERE PART OF THESE CRUISES, PLEASE KNOW THAT YOU ARE A CONTACT AND WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU. Please make contact with the Departments of Health in KwaZulu-Natal and Free State.

The Queen Mary 2

On 27 March 2020 a cruise ship, The Queen Mary 2, docked in the outer anchorage of the Durban port of entry after being denied entry into the port. This was due to the fact that a number of passengers on board that ship had been reported to be exhibiting flu like symptoms. The ship had departed Fremantle, Australia, on 16 March 2020.

All the passengers on board the ship are not South African however there were six South African crew members working on the ship

A total of 26 people were tested for COVID-19 and all tested negative.

Today the ship was allowed to enter the dock to permit the the South African crew members to disembark the ship and for the ship itself to take on fuel, water and supplies. No foreign nationals were allowed to disembark. The ship will henceforth depart for its destination

The six South African crew members have now been transported to a quarantine facility in in Durban.

Deployment of Community Health Care Workers as announced by President Ramaphosa

Fellow South Africans, as the Honourable President announced yesterday, 10 000 Community Health Care Workers will be deployed across the country to conduct door to door screening in our most vulnerable communities. I must emphasize that they will be conducting screening and not tests: the field workers will not conduct any tests but will refer any persons suspected of having Coronavirus to the nearest CHC, clinic or hospital. I also want to emphasize that, at this stage, only PCR tests will be conducted at health care facilities.

We are exploring the use of rapid antibody tests and Gene Xpert tests in the future when we have to process high numbers. The Ministerial Advisory Committee and the South African Health Products Authority (SAHPRA) are working hard to investigate all options and come to a consensus.

The deployment will be a phased, targeted approach: today 5400 field workers have already been mobilized and a dry run was done today at Alexandra by Gauteng Department of Health. The pilot was planned to do 10 households per hour- we will look at the report tomorrow to determine how effective this was and shape future deployment.

Other areas to be targeted at this stage are Diepsloot and Khayelitsha and by Friday 3 April we will have extended to other high density areas of concern.

We are redeploying our own CHW's from national and provinces and we are very grateful to donor organizations, such as PEPFAR, who will partner with us to ensure that we are able to boost numbers and double what we have already fielded.

Mobile testing units will be rolled out across the country and I look forward to launching some of these in the Free State on Thursday.

We also wish to reassure South Africans that the field workers, frontline workers and all workers coming into contact with COVID-19 positive patients and other infectious diseases will be provided with adequate personal protective equipment and no worker will be fielded without the necessary protection. Although we know there is a global crisis of PPE shortage, we have been very hard at work as a department and as a global community, partnering with business, to secure the availability of PPE's during this time of need. We have heard the concerns of our health care workers and engaged Unions on this matter. We wish to reassure our valued health professionals that their safety is in the forefront of our agenda as we cannot afford to lose one health care worker to COVID-19 or any disease for that matter.

Flattening the Curve

Looking at the trend we are seeing of the day to day new infections we are cautiously optimistic that we may not see the numbers rising as high as we had initially projected. We should, however, bear in mind that we are approaching Winter which could change the dynamics entirely. Be that as it may, it is clear from looking at other successful countries that we, As South Africa, can make a real impact and flatten the curve if we

continue to observe the regulations that have been set out by government. Therefore I would like to encourage South African to continue to stay at home, observe good hygienic practice and work together with government- this way we have a real chance of containing the spread of COVID-19.

Dr Zwelini Mkhize

Minister of Health

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