

South Africa toughens restrictions to combat Delta variant



Authorities say the peak of the third wave will surpass that of earlier waves as the country struggles to quickly roll out vaccines [File: AP Photo]

Pretoria, June 27 (RHC)-- South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has reimposed restrictions for two weeks to combat a surge in the highly contagious Delta coronavirus variant. The worst-hit country on the African continent “is facing a massive resurgence of infection”, the president said in a televised address to the nation on Sunday.

“Our health facilities are stretched to the limit ... ICU beds are in short supply,” he said as he placed the country on alert level four, just one level below a full lockdown.

He banned all gatherings, except for funerals where numbers will be capped at 50, and also ordered a ban on the sale of alcohol. Eateries and restaurants can no longer serve sit-down meals, and will only be allowed to sell food for take-away or delivery. A nighttime curfew has been lengthened by an hour.

Authorities say the peak of the third wave – fuelled by the Delta variant first identified in India – will surpass that of earlier waves as the country struggles to quickly roll out vaccinations. “We are in the grip of a devastating wave that by all indications seems like it will be worse than those that preceded it,” the president said.

“The peak of this third wave looks set to be higher than the previous two,” he added.

South Africa has reported 1,928,897 cases after recording 15,036 cases on Sunday, a drop from the previous day when 18,762 new infections were diagnosed. The country has recorded 59,900 coronavirus deaths.

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