

Crowds to be managed better at shops

As the national lockdown takes a firm hold over the nation, Trade and Industry Minister Ebrahim Patel has urged retailers to manage crowds and queues at their establishments, so as to slow the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).



©Livio Monti via [123RF](#)

With reports and footage of crowded grocery stores in some parts of the country – even as the country has entered lockdown and is in a state of national disaster – Patel has acknowledged that the timing of payday for the vast majority of South Africans has played a role in the overcrowding of shops on Friday, as hundreds queued for grocery shopping at centres in some of the country’s big townships.

At a ministerial briefing on Friday, Patel said talks are underway with retailers to shorten queues and observe social distancing. “We must shorten the queues outside the retailers’ stores. We must decrease the number of people in the stores to prevent the spread of the virus.

“We are having a conversation with the retail sector, police and in the Command Centre to see what sensible ways we can enable people to get the basic foods and goods that they need to avoid large congregations that can spread the virus.”



Consumer behaviour intensifies as Covid-19 outbreak forces new shopping patterns

26 Mar 2020



The Minister said trolleys will be given to shoppers as a means to create distance between people waiting in queues. He also assured South Africans that retailers will be restocking their shelves to ensure that people have their basic needs met.

“Food production will keep going over this period. The production line was working today. We had workers on the farms and in the trucks that bring food from the factories to the shops, and the retailers were generally open and they’re beginning to restock after the big rush in the shops that took place [on Thursday],” Patel said.

Furthermore, South Africans will be relieved to know that government and the relevant authorities are [taking action on companies](#) that are flouting the competition rules and inflating the prices of basic and essential goods in order to profiteer from the outbreak.



30 companies investigated for excessive price hikes

27 Mar 2020



Compliance

Patel, however, was enthusiastic that the majority of South Africans have heeded to the call of the lockdown. “We have seen major cities that are empty. We have seen office blocks deserted, and we would like to thank fellow South Africans for that.

“Whilst we had reports of some companies which stayed open – that were not essential services – these were relatively small exceptions. Most companies in those sectors of the economy that are not essential services obeyed the President’s call to stay at home. Workers and employers stood together in enabling people to stay at home,” Patel said.

The shutdown will affect many businesses, with the exception of essential services. “Over the next three weeks, grocery stores and spaza shops will be the one place where South Africans need to go for basic and essential goods.

“We call on our people to have patience as we introduce the necessary measures to ensure that social distance is maintained and limit the spread of the virus,” the Minister said.

Better cover

Patel said new regulations have been approved, which specify essential goods and services, and are now in the Government Gazette. These include products for babies and toiletries such as facewash and deodorant.

Patel said by [Friday] afternoon, more than 50,000 companies had already registered as providers of essential goods and services. “We will provide a further update on communication platforms as to the number of registered businesses during the lockdown period,” the Minister said.

Most of these have been in food supply, medical and pharmaceutical services and transport services. The Minister also warned companies not to take advantage of the situation and make a profit from the outbreak.



Essential services and businesses allowed to operate under lockdown

24 Mar 2020



Meanwhile, the Minister said government has engaged with hotels to avail more beds for quarantine.

Only companies permitted in terms of the lockdown regulations will be allowed to continue operating through the period of the lockdown.

Companies interested in registering can log on to: www.bizportal.gov.za.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>