

War against COVID-19 costly - Kapofi

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By Eliaser Ndeyanale and Marianne Nghidengwa

IN a bid to enforce a nationwide lockdown, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration and Security has requested an additional N\$23.3 million for its April budget from treasury, Confidante has reliably unearthed.

Of this amount up to N\$15 million of the additional money requested is for the repair of police vehicles to be used during the operations to enforce the lockdown regulations.

Although it is not clear whether this request was granted, Minister of Home Affairs, Safety and Security Frans Kapofi has said the extensive effort of the army, police and correctional services to suppress the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic by enforcing the state of emergency regulations will be a costly exercise.

The issue of rising law enforcement costs came to the fore after President Hage Geingob on Tuesday extended the lockdown to the whole country, starting at midnight Friday - April 17 until midnight May 4. The country will effectively reopen on May 5, the President said.

Without giving exact figures of the extended lockdown budget, Kapofi said that the nation-wide lockdown which is expected to last on average three weeks is not going to be cheap.

"It will be expensive. It's not going to be cheap but I have not been briefed...I don't have the breakdown here with me. It is not only going to cost police but the whole government. The cost implication will be a lot," Kapofi said.

Police Inspector General Sebastian Ndeitunga declined to reveal exact figures, but said the police have already submitted their budget to central government for approval to be able to effectively enforce regulations. "We are waiting for the response from them," he told *Confidante* on Wednesday.

Ndeitunga's deputy, Major General Oscar Embumbulu, also declined to discuss the figures involved, but noted that more resources were needed to enforce the state of emergency regulations across the country and sustain other policing operations.

"I can't tell you, but we need more resources to mitigate our operations, including accommodation and food. We need personnel at all the border posts, points of crossing and roadblocks. It's a big budget that I cannot tell you now," he said.

President Geingob declared a state of emergency last month, in the process shutting all schools, churches and non-essential service providers in a bid to nip the spread of the pandemic in the bud.

Meanwhile, Health and Social Services Minister Dr Kalumbi Shangula said his ministry has revised its testing strategy to assess the degree of community transmission. Namibia has so far recorded 16 confirmed Covid-19 cases out of 430 tests conducted, with three recovered.

"Amid an ever increasing number of new cases in the world, the stagnating figure of 16 in Namibia attracts great interest. The job is not done yet. Let us have no illusions that there will be no more cases. The worse may still come.

"The success we have scored thus far is a result of the central leadership provided by the President and single command structure. Public awareness was key and I must commend the establishment of the Covid-19 Communication Centre by MICT in which

the media played a critical role," Shingula said.