

*By Jeje Muhinde;*

Rwanda has reimposed a ten-day lockdown in capital Kigali and eight other districts namely Rutsiro, Rwamagana, Rubavu, Gicumbi, Burera, Kamonyi, Nyagatare and Musanze from July 17 to 26, 2021 as coronavirus infections continue to rise in the country.

The decision was made by the cabinet in a meeting chaired by President Paul Kagame on Wednesday, in an attempt to stem out a growing trend in the rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths in recent weeks.

“Given the rise in covid-19 cases, emergency of new variants and increase of Covid-19 related deaths, the government has decided to further tighten the existing control measures in the following districts; Burera, Gicumbi, Kamonyi, Musanze Nyagatare, Rubavu, Rwamagana and Rutsiro starting July 17th till July 26th, 2021.” the Cabinet resolutions read in part.

The cabinet has adopted strong measures to fight the Covid-19 epidemic in Kigali and in the most affected districts.

Only in an emergency, vehicles transporting goods will be allowed to continue traveling from one district to another with not more than two people on board. Bars and outdoor sports activities remain closed.

Needless movements and visits outside the home are banned except for essential services, such as personal food shopping, banking, and for health care services. Transportation of personnel, to carry out the above mentioned activities will continue.

Meetings will continue but must not exceed 40% in capacity. Negative covid-19 results will be mandatory. Public transport and recreation activities are prohibited.

Motorcycles and bicycles are not allowed to carry passengers but may offer delivery services. Transportation of personnel, carrying out the above mentioned activities will continue to function.

However, transportation of personnel carrying out the above-mentioned activities will continue to function while motorcycles and bicycles are not permitted to carry passengers but may offer delivery services.

Businesses will remain closed except shops selling food, pharmacies, petrol stations, and markets provided they comply with government health regulations to operate at 30 per cent capacity and must close at 5 p.m.

Citizens are reminded to comply with measures including washing hands with sanitizers, physical distancing, and wearing of masks. Penalties will be applied for non-compliance" the statement added.

Schools and higher education institutions are closed; provisions for students sitting National exams will be communicated by the Ministry of Education.

Gaming activities are prohibited from operating and movements between districts are not allowed, except for medical reasons.

All social Gatherings, including celebrations of all kinds are prohibited, both in public and in private settings. Traditional, civil and religious weddings remain suspended.

Public offices will continue working only with essential staff at no more than 15% of all employees. Others will continue working from home on a rotation basis.

Private businesses will continue to operate with essential staff not exceeding 50 percent capacity while other employees will work from home on a rotational basis.

Kigali International airport will continue both arriving and departing passengers however they must present a negative Covid-19 PCR test taken within 72 hours before departure.

Places of worship; churches and mosques will continue to operate at 40 percent capacity and must observe the health procedures. Funeral gatherings should not exceed 15 people and restaurants and cafes will operate at 30% capacity and will not receive customers up until 5 p.m.

Restaurants and cafes shall operate at 30% capacity and will receive clients until 5 p.m.

Tourism activities will continue in strict adherence to covid-19 health guidelines. This includes hotels, tour operators and transport services assisting guests.

Swimming pools and spas will remain closed except for those at hotels hosting tested guests.

Vehicles transporting merchandise and goods will continue to operate with a limited number of only two people on board.

Physical meetings will continue but must not exceed 40% capacity.

All social gatherings, including traditional, weddings, and other celebrations both in public and in private remain suspended, in other parts of the country movements are forbidden between 6 p.m. and 4 a.m.

The new restrictions will remain in place for a period while assessment will be conducted to determine if the restrictions can be renewed or not.

On Wednesday, Rwanda recorded 934 new cases and 9 deaths, bringing the total number infected with coronavirus to 50,742 and deaths to 607.