

S.Africa says virus tally rising slower than thought

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The coronavirus epidemic has killed five people and infected 1,353 in South Africa, the health minister announced Tuesday, saying the spread of the virus was not as rapid as expected.

Zweli Mkhize said despite huge backlogs at lab services, 39,500 tests have been conducted as the country observed the fifth day of a 21-day

lockdown, in a bid to contain the outbreak.

"The rate of increase is not as high as anticipated," Mkhize said.

"We are observing the trend. We anticipated 4,000-5,000 but we haven't reached that."

Mkhize attributed a large part of the lower than expected infection numbers to the closure of ports of entry, saying up to last week 70 percent of positive cases were passengers coming into the country.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's government has since last Friday morning enforced a nationwide military-patrolled lockdown for 21 days.

Police say they have made hundreds of arrests of people violating the [lockdown](#).

South Africa, which has the highest numbers of confirmed coronavirus infections on the continent, will start mass door-to-door screening and testing for [coronavirus](#) within the next few days.

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