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in session



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#SONA21

*Following up on our
commitments:
Making your future
work better*

PRESONA
2021

11 FEBRUARY
7PM

A hybrid #SONA21 will be conducted under strict Covid-19 protocols & highly reduced budget



Ms Thandi Modise, Speaker of the NA

Mr Amos Masondo, NCOP Chairperson

The Presiding Officers of Parliament (POs), the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA) Ms Thandi Modise, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) Mr Amos Masondo, have announced that the 2021 SONA to the joint sitting of Parliament under the theme: “Following up on our commitments: making your future work better”, is going to take place on Thursday, February 11 at 7pm.

Briefing the media on the state of readiness of Parliament to host the State of the Nation Address (SONA), the POs said Parliament will heed President Cyril Ramaphosa’s call, in his address to the nation on 11 January 2021, where he emphasised that caution should be taken as the new coronavirus variant is infecting people at a rapid rate.

The POs assured the nation that Parliament will continue to exercise its vigilance in conducting oversight over the executive as it implements its plans to reduce the rate of Covid-19 infections.

In strict adherence to the National State of Disaster regulations, this year’s SONA will take the form of a hybrid joint sitting, with no more than 50 Members of Parliament, and representatives from the judiciary and the executive in the physical chamber, while the remainder of participants

will attend virtually.

President Cyril Ramaphosa will physically deliver the SONA from the National Assembly Chamber.

Other categories that will virtually form part of this important event include Premiers, Speakers and other special delegates representing provinces in the NCOP, eminent persons, diplomatic corps, distinguished guests and members of the public.

Due to the limited number of persons permitted within the precincts of Parliament, and Parliament’s sensitivity to the prevailing conditions, various ceremonial aspects that usually characterise the SONA have been suspended. In this regard, there will be no red carpet and procession of the three arms of the state, physical participation of junior and civil guard of honour, eminent persons, imbongi, military parade that lead the presidential procession onto

a saluting dais on the steps of the National Assembly, the guard of honour by the National Ceremonial Guard and the 21-gun salute.

The POs said where possible and appropriate, some of these traditional features shall take place virtually in keeping with the significance and character of the address.

After the delivery of the address by the President, the two Houses will again converge jointly on a hybrid platform to debate the address of the President, over two days, 16 and 17 February. The President will reply to the debate by Members of Parliament on 18 February.

Due to the hybrid nature of this year’s SONA, the event will cost the most minimum of the budget envisaged, which is R2.2 million. The significant savings expected will be redirected to modernising the technological capabilities of Parliament to enhance its

constitutional functions of public participation, oversight and law-making.

The POs emphasised to members of the media that the money will be used only for webinar, on providing refreshments in the form of bottled water in the chamber and for boosting ICT capacity and connectivity. 🇿🇦



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SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY: Blackrod

State of the Nation Address (SONA)



What is the State of the Nation Address (SONA)?

The State of the Nation Address (SONA) is one of the most important annual events in the parliamentary calendar.

- The President delivers a speech focusing on the plans of government for the coming years.
- This speech is delivered to Parliament (during a Joint Sitting of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP)).
- It is commonly known as “the Opening of Parliament”.
- All the three (3) Arms of the State, namely; the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary attend this annual event.

When and where does SONA take place?

SONA takes place in February annually and is scheduled for Thursday, 11 February 2021 at 19h00.

- The National Assembly Chamber is used for the purpose of SONA.
- It is hosted by both the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA) and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

What happens during SONA?

The President uses the occasion to make a speech to the nation as both the Head of State and of Government to:

- Set out the governments priorities for the coming years.
- Highlight the achievements and challenges of the previous year.

Why is SONA important?

It grants government (Executive) an opportunity to account to Parliament and the South African public. It is also about celebrating our nation and nation-building.

SONA and Parliament’s oversight function

One of Parliament’s key functions is to monitor and oversee the actions of government.

- The State of the Nation Address forms part of Parliament’s oversight (monitoring) function.
- It does this monitoring to improve service delivery and to achieve a better quality of life for all living in South Africa.

The public’s involvement and participation in SONA

During the State of the Nation Address, the public has an opportunity to be informed about government’s planned priorities for the year ahead. The public can participate more meaningfully in SONA by:

- Voicing their expectations of government by sending recommendations to the President in the lead-up to SONA using the #SONA2021 or our Parliament of RSA Facebook page
- Watching SONA live on Parliament TV (DSTV408).
- Requesting an invitation to virtually attend and observe the SONA debate which happens Thursday, 18 February 2021 after SONA. Access can be arranged through the Public Relations (PR) office, publicrelations@parliament.gov.za.

SONA and the Budget

Two weeks after SONA, the Minister of Finance introduces the Budget for the coming year. The budget speech is based on governments priorities set out by the President in his speech.

For more information on how to get involved and participate in YOUR parliament please visit our website parliament.gov.za or request printed copies from info@parliament.gov.za 📧

Citizens tell the President their priorities for 2021: Covid, the economy and crime top of the list

*South Africans have diverse expectations from President Cyril Ramaphosa’s hybrid State of the Nation Address. Some want to hear how the government will deal with future waves of Covid-19, while others are interested in the government’s economic plans for the year. They spoke to **Mava Lukani** about their expectations.*

Rev Yvette Moses, Bishop of the Cape of Good Hope Synod of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Honourable President, in humility and recognition of the immense responsibility and hope that you carry for our beautiful nation, I would

love to hear you say that the government is committed to the implementation of the Basic Income Grant for all the people of our county, as a measure to ensure that no one is without a meagre means to survive.

I would hope for



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OUR IDEALS

Vision
An activist and responsive people’s Parliament that improves the quality of life of South Africans and ensures enduring equality in our society.

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enhancing public involvement;
deepening engagement in international fora;
strengthening cooperative government;
strengthening legislative capacity.

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announcements on greater resources being put into the area of public healthcare, education and housing, particularly following the hardships that have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. I hope to hear of the strengthening of employment initiatives for youth and graduates in particular. I hope to hear of a greater commitment, backed by tangible action, to root out corruption at every level of society and a clear message that no one is above the law.

Lastly, I hope for the courage to say that in order to ensure that the rights and responsibility of every citizen of the Republic of South Africa are upheld, you would be willing to uphold the Constitution and its ideals at every level of governance, even if it is unpopular with the political party that you represent.

Pharmacist **Ingrid Ferguson** said: "What I would really want the President to say is that people who benefitted irregularly from PPE tenders especially in a time like this, will be brought to book and that more will be done to address that. It is seriously frustrating to see people buying expensive and luxury cars using monies that were intended to fight this crisis."

Lizzelle Kilowan: "What

I want to hear from President Ramaphosa is the government's economic recovery plan for the next three years. This Covid-19 pandemic has destroyed the economy. We always want to hear recovery measures of the economy from the President."

Security guard **Bafana Dino** said: "What I expect from the President is, first of all, that he must be honest and doesn't lie to the nation, as this Covid-19 crisis demands an honest and scientific response. Secondly, I expect him to say something along the lines of the creation of a university that will specialise in medicine, especially vaccines to fight viruses, so that if there is an outbreak of any virus, we are certain about the availability of vaccines. This thing of thinking about a vaccine when the virus is killing people is regrettable and renders us vulnerable to harsh judgement."

Barry Glanz: I would like to hear the President saying something about crime in the country and also about appropriation of the land without compensation. That is all I want to hear from him from his 2021 State of the Nation Address.

Mr Sherwin Uren, who is a farmer, said: I want to hear President Ramaphosa saying something on the protection

of farmers against crime. Farmers are killed on a daily basis and government's response to that is very poor. He is definitely going to talk about food security and production, and the source of that food is a farmer, so the state has a huge responsibility to protect the farmers from the onslaught of crime."

Siya Dlisana: I expect him to tell the nation more about the R500 billion stimulus package. We want a clear and a detailed report on it from him. He must tell the nation about the consequences to those who diverted the money from the intended destination to their personal interests by means of corruption and theft." 🇿🇦



Ms Ingrid Ferguson



Ms Lizzelle Kilowan



Mr Barry Glanz



Mr Sherwin Uren



Rev Yvette Moses



Mr Bafana Dino



Mr Siya Dlisana



Parliament must use the media as a strategic communications partner to amplify its messages

Parliament needs the media to perform its constitutional mandate and this partnership should be deliberate. These were the words of Mr Kouffou Kouakou, of the Institute for Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), when he addressed the chairpersons of parliamentary committees and provincial whips during a two-day media training session, writes Mava Lukani.



Mr Kouakou defined media as a go-between or a mediator. He said the media is an instrument of communication which is there for the committee chairpersons and Members of Parliament (MPs) to use as a strategic tool to communicate the work and programmes of Parliament to the citizens. "I urge you to get a sense of how to use the media to enhance your work. Understand more about the media to use your power and influence," he said.

He likened the media to midwives of communication. He advised the chairpersons and whips to determine the narrative for the media and said the State of the Nation Address (SONA) and the budget speech which is going to be delivered by the Minister of Finance immediately after the delivery of the SONA were the right occasions to do this.

The chairpersons and whips highlighted some of the obstacles that diminish any opportunity of partnership between them with the media. Those obstacles, according to the chairpersons, included the hostility of the media towards Parliament and the tendency of the print media to distort parliamentary stories.

Mr Kouakou advised MPs to maintain and manage their relationship with the media. He said they must do so by, among other things, keeping close interaction with newsrooms and talking to

journalists on a regular basis. "Visit media houses and go twice in a year to them for example," he said.

He said the distortion of parliamentary stories and adversarial relationship happen because MPs are strangers to journalists. "They don't know you, that's why they lie about you. Expose their lies," emphasised Mr Kouakou.

Mr Kouakou also highlighted the problem of committee chairpersons not responding to media deadlines particularly on topical issues. Among the reasons that cause this problem, according to Mr Lukhona Mnguni, one of the KwaZulu-Natal-based political analysts and who shared his insights with the chairpersons and whips during the day-two media training, is political hierarchy. He said chairpersons wait for Luthuli House (headquarters of the ANC) to pronounce on the issue first, and then toe the line.

Mr Mnguni said the consultation of the headquarters by the chairpersons compromises the work of committees. In most cases newsrooms go to print without the voice of Parliament on many important issues.

Mr Mnguni advised the chairpersons to turn the hostile tension that exists between the media and Parliament into a constructive one to ensure that they use

the media to amplify their messages, particularly on legislation, their primary responsibility.

As Parliament is the site of democracy, media is an important ingredient of that democracy, he said. Sometimes tension between the media and MPs is perpetuated by the failure of the MPs to separate the media from public discourse and the plurality of views that is promoted by democracy. He said the MPs are unable to see the line that exists there and attribute those views to the media. He said the media is a vehicle that distributes public views.

The chairpersons, one after another, appreciated Mr Mnguni's insight and advice on how they should deal with the media. They told him and Mr Kouakou that they would emerge from the training with a totally new perspective and insight about the media.

Ms Lindelwa Dunjwa, who is the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour, thanked Mr Mnguni for, among other things, indicating the shortcomings of the chairpersons. "You have exposed our weaknesses and thank you for that," added Ms Dunjwa.

The chairpersons and the provincial whips agreed that media training of MPs needs to take place regularly. 🇿🇦



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**"THEY DON'T
KNOW YOU,
THAT'S WHY
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EXPOSE
THEIR LIES."**

- Mr Kouakou



THREE ARMS OF STATE: Joint Sitting of Parliament

One-stop border post touted as solution to challenges at Beitbridge

Long snaking lines of trucks were remnants of the previous chaos at the Beitbridge port of entry from South Africa to Zimbabwe. The South African government's decision on Monday, 11 January 2020, to close all land borders to the public meant that only a few of the thousands of people were reporting at the border, writes Malatswa Molepo.



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“WE URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO QUICKLY ROLL OUT THE BMA, WHICH WILL ENSURE THAT ONE AGENCY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PORTS OF ENTRY AND WILL ENSURE EFFECTIVE PLANNING.”

- Adv Bongo

The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs visited the border and identified the implementation of a one-stop border post and the rollout of the Border Management Authority (BMA) as the keys to resolving the challenges at all land borders. This, the committee believes, will ensure the seamless movement of people in and out of the country.

In February 2020, the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, announced plans to implement one-stop border posts, particularly with Zimbabwe, due to the high number of people and goods moving between the two countries. One-stop posts are intended to harmonise the crossing of the border by people and goods.

“To alleviate the perpetual crisis at this border, the government must move with speed to implement an already-agreed policy position to establish one-stop border posts. The tardiness in implementing this policy position is both unacceptable and a contributing factor to problems at this port of entry,” said Adv Bongani Bongo, the Chairperson of the committee.

The Department of Home Affairs highlighted that one of the contributing factors to the challenges at the border is that while South Africa uses electronic systems for movement of people, Zimbabwe still uses a manual paper-based system. “The implementation of the one-stop border post will ensure that the two countries utilise

similar systems and will make the clearing of the post quicker,” Adv Bongo emphasised.

The committee also called for the speedy implementation of the BMA, which it believes will enhance solutions to challenges at the border area. “We urge the government to quickly roll out the BMA, which will ensure that one agency is responsible for the ports of entry and will ensure effective planning,” Adv Bongo emphasised.

According to the Department of Home Affairs, one of the factors contributing to problems at Beitbridge in the past two months is the inadequate capacity to process stringent health requirements for the huge number of people

and trucks using the border. This situation worsened after Botswana trucks were prevented from using the Groblersburg border crossing with Botswana and were diverted to Beitbridge. This led to 21 800 trucks crossing Beitbridge in December 2020, compared to 19 800 during the same period in 2019. Some 20 to 30 trucks can be processed per hour on the Zimbabwean side of the crossing.

The committee highlighted that some of the interventions recently implemented that proved successful in reducing congestion should be strengthened in the short- and medium-term as the country awaits the implementation of both the one-stop border post and the BMA. 🇿🇦



Adv Bongani Bongo



Political will is required to resolve congestion at Lebombo border post

The Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs was critical of the congestion that remained evident at the Lebombo border post between South Africa and Mozambique and said political will was required to resolve the challenges, writes Malatswa Molepo.



The committee visited the border at the beginning of January as part of its oversight to Beitbridge and Lebombo to assess progress in implementing interventions to the humanitarian and health risks prevalent during the festive season.

“We find it unacceptable that people were forced to wait for a long time at the border due to inadequate capacity, particularly of port health practitioners to test returning South Africans and migrant workers who have permission to cross the border in terms of regulations. The situation has

the potential to become a super-spreader event and requires urgent intervention. We have also called for accountability for the challenges faced there,” said Adv Bongani Bongo, the Chairperson of the committee.

The committee’s criticisms come in the context of the closure of 20 land borders, which meant that the ports of entry processed a limited number of people. “The situation undermines the intentions of the border closure and paints a negative picture of the stakeholder departments’ ability to process more people when the borders open again,” Adv Bongo emphasised.

The committee also highlighted that the closure of borders did not mean the stakeholder departments can relax. Instead, the intention is to give these departments space to plan for the eventual opening of the borders.

The committee was unhappy with the lack of adherence to health protocols, such as social distancing, the correct wearing of masks and the availability of sanitisers, which have been proven as effective tools to fight Covid-19.

Travellers who were interviewed by the committee mentioned

various challenges, including limited availability of health practitioners and the non-functioning of speed point machines, contributing to slow-moving queues, which prolonged their presence at the border post. “We have been here for over two days and we are worried that we will be infected with Covid-19 at this border,” a traveller told the committee.

The committee said the lack of coordination at the border contributed to its call for the urgent implementation of the Border Management Authority (BMA) Act, signed into law by the President last year. The Act

intends to centralise command and control at ports of entry and ensure that people are held accountable for the operation. “Right now, all we see are departments accusing each other as contributors to the challenges, a situation that will be remedied by the BMA,” Adv Bongo said.

As a result of the challenges, the committee instructed departmental stakeholders to develop and implement an urgent intervention plan to clear the backlog. The committee also called for urgent implementation of basic health protocols to save lives.

The committee further instructed the stakeholder departments to develop a joint report, setting out challenges and solutions to be tabled before a joint meeting with sister portfolio committees in Parliament. The committee also resolved to invite the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, to account for the challenges at Lebombo.

Regarding the issue of illegal crossing of the border, the committee was unanimous in its appreciation for the work of the South African National Defence Force, which has made a number of arrests in an effort to deter illegal crossings. 🇿🇦



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Health Committee Chairperson welcomes arrival of first batch of Covid-19 Vaccine

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseno Dhlomo, has welcomed in South Africa the first shipment of one million doses of the Oxford University-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII), writes Yoliswa Landu.



Dr Dhlomo said the arrival of the first consignment of the vaccine not only marks the start of the vaccine rollout programme, but also shows the government's commitment towards fighting the pandemic so that protection for all South Africans can be achieved. This is one of the biggest programmes the government has ever undertaken, given the number of people that need to be inoculated and the committee will monitor it closely.

President Cyril Ramaphosa and Deputy President David Mabuza, who chairs the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Vaccines, received South

Africa's first consignment of COVID-19 vaccine at the OR Tambo International Airport recently.

The arrival of the first consignment at OR Tambo International Airport marks the start of the vaccine rollout, which President Ramaphosa described as the largest and most complex logistical vaccine undertaking in South Africa's history. The scale of delivery is unprecedented in terms of the number of people to be reached within a short space of time.

The aim of the vaccination programme is to achieve immunity across the

population. According to the Department of Health, the first phase of this rollout programme will prioritise around 1.2 million frontline health workers. Government is coordinating the vaccine programme through the committee chaired by the Deputy President, which is focused on procurement, distribution, vaccination, monitoring, communication and mobilisation.

The committee received a briefing in the first week of January from the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, on the status of healthcare services in the provinces in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the rollout

strategy for the vaccine.

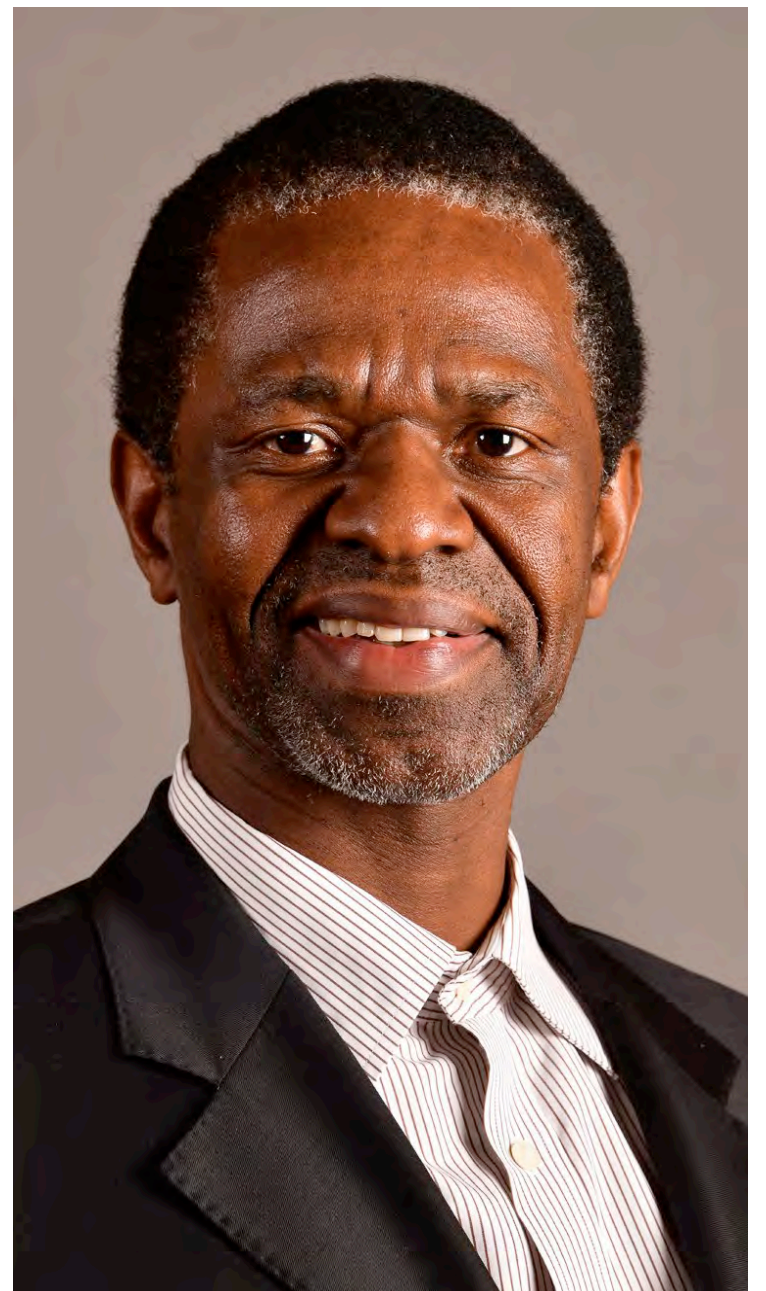
Dr Mkhize told the committee that the South African government will be the sole purchaser of vaccines for South Africa. The Department of Health will contract with suppliers to purchase stock and then allocate it to provincial departments of health and the private health sector.

During the briefing, the committee called on the department to strengthen its communication strategies to ensure that communities are educated about the pandemic and the measures they need to take when diagnosed. This communication drive will dispel inaccuracies.

The committee told the department that it has a constitutional oversight responsibility over the rollout of the vaccine and, therefore, it must receive regular updates on developments with the pandemic and on the vaccine rollout strategy. 🇿🇦



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Committee chairperson says COVID-19 Vaccine arrival is fruit of good international relations



Ms Tandi Mahambehala

Ms Mahambehala said: “We congratulate the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, through its missions abroad, for their candid vaccine diplomacy. This has been demonstrated through its successful initiation of negotiations, which secured the first batch of Covid-19 vaccines for South Africa. We also extend our gratitude to the friendly government of India, a true friend in need and a trusted partner in the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa] formation, for prioritising South Africa to receive its first batch of the vaccine to fight the pandemic.”

The Chairperson applauded the cabinet decision to endorse and nominate the “Cuban Medical Brigade”,

which is deployed throughout the world, for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. “We thank these gallant heroes and heroines of Cuba for their selfless and unwavering sacrifice to assist the world in the fight against the coronavirus.” About 400 Cuban doctors are deployed in South Africa to help in the fight against Covid-19.

Ms Mahambehala said the arrival of the vaccines is significant and testament to the success of South Africa’s diplomatic relations. “The importance of diplomacy has once again been proved and is apparent for all to see during this era of the pandemic outbreak. The country under the capable stewardship of President Cyril Ramaphosa should work hard and enhance bilateral and multilateral relations with countries and

multinational pharmaceutical companies that have shown capability in manufacturing the vaccines.”

President Ramaphosa recently led a government delegation to welcome the arrival of the first batch of AstraZeneca vaccines from India. The vaccine has undergone successful trials at Oxford University with South Africa’s scientists making valuable contributions.

Ms Mahambehala also pointed out that South Africa should make the vaccine available to immigrants and neighbouring countries, and appreciated President Ramaphosa’s successful chairing of the African Union during a period that coincided with the outbreak of Covid-19. The committee also noted

South Africa’s successful two-year term membership of the United Nations’ Security Council, which has now come to an end. 🇺🇳

“The importance of diplomacy has once again been proved and is apparent for all to see during this era of the pandemic outbreak. The country under the capable stewardship of President Cyril Ramaphosa should work hard and enhance bilateral and multilateral relations with countries and multinational pharmaceutical companies that have shown capability in manufacturing the vaccines.”



Committee on Health asks the Western and Eastern Cape Departments' of Health to improve their facilities and service

Members of the Portfolio Committee on Health told the leaders of the Eastern and Western Cape Provincial Departments of Health that people are choosing to die in their homes rather than go to public hospitals. Citizens view hospitals as death traps rather than places of salvation, according to members of the committee.

Crumbling infrastructure and poor service were cited as reasons for this attitude, especially in the Eastern Cape. The provincial departments were briefing the committee on the status of healthcare services in relation to Covid-19. They updated the committee on, among other things, the availability of hospital beds, oxygen, medicine and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as vaccination rollout strategies and plans. The Eastern Cape presentation included an update on circumcision and the exhumation of graves on cultural grounds.

The Acting MEC for Health in the Eastern Cape, Mr Xolile Nqatha, and the Acting Head of the Provincial Department of Health in the province, Dr Sibongile Zungu, told the committee that at the time of the briefing, the province had 182 507 cases, 166 000 recoveries and 9 000 deaths. Although these numbers were still unacceptably high, the rate of infection has slowed in the province, particularly

in the Nelson Mandela and Sarah Baartman districts after the implementation of the adjusted alert level three regulations.

The committee advised the two departments to improve their health facilities in preparation for the anticipated third and fourth waves. It told Mr Nqatha and Dr Zungu that the state of infrastructure in their province must be addressed to ensure optimal operations at healthcare facilities.

The committee noted with appreciation the approval of posts in the Eastern Cape's Department of Health for the appointment of community service officers. It said this move should alleviate staffing shortages.

It further called on both departments to consider employing community healthcare workers permanently in order to provide assistance in municipal wards and to address staffing challenges that have been

exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding the vaccine rollout plan, the committee told Mr Nqatha and Dr Zungu that the Eastern Cape lacked a detailed and comprehensive plan and told them to address this issue. In welcoming the Eastern Cape update, the committee urged the province to ensure that during the first phase of the vaccine rollout, all healthcare workers in both public and private sectors in the province are prioritised.

In the Western Cape briefing, the head of the Provincial Department of Health, Dr Keith Cloete, told the committee that healthcare workers continued to experience significant physical and emotional strain. "We need to provide relief for our healthcare workers and their families," he said. "It is essential to maintain a strong focus on behavioural change to ensure containment for six months, while we gear up to provide access to vaccines." Dr Cloete said the province's

objective with the vaccine "is to reduce morbidity and mortality in vulnerable people, reduce community transmission through herd immunity, and protect the capacity of the provincial health system". He explained that to flatten the curve of the second wave, the province was using law enforcement agencies to enforce the level 3 regulations in all hotspot districts, especially where there is a high degree of non-adherence to health protocols.

He told the committee that there "are early signs that the province is reaching the peak of the second wave. Our local teams remain on high alert for surveillance and response to localised clusters that can be targeted for maximum impact, especially the vulnerable".

He also highlighted the poor supply of PPE in all health facilities in the province, as well as the shortage of staff. The committee said staffing remains a challenge in all provinces, exacerbated by the deaths of some healthcare

workers due to Covid-19. The committee welcomed the Western Cape Provincial Department of Health's vaccine rollout strategy. 🇿🇦



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Dignity of SASSA grant beneficiaries must be guaranteed, says social development committee

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Social Development, Mr Mondli Gungubele, told the Department of Social Development and Sassa (the South African Social Security Agency) that the committee wants to ensure that the department and Sassa implement measures guaranteeing the dignity of beneficiaries and compliance with Covid-19 lockdown regulations, writes Sibongile Maputi.



Mr Mondli Gungubele

"This pandemic has presented the social cluster with the biggest problems, where thousands of workers are losing their jobs and many businesses have had to close shop," he said.

Appearing before the committee recently, Minister Lindiwe Zulu led a strong departmental delegation of Sassa executives, who she said were working under difficult conditions. "We have been visiting the hotspots and saw how the pandemic is negatively impacting on our people," she said.

While the socio-economic conditions of the people were not improving, the department's revenue stream has also been reduced. This makes the job harder than it was three years ago. "But the work has to be done. The dignity of our people has always been a central issue," the minister maintained.

The committee heard that

2020 was a very challenging year, given that the economic disruption of Covid-19 grew into a poverty crisis. "It came with a lot of pain and a lot of opportunities to learn how better to service grant recipients," said Sassa CEO, Ms Busisiwe Memela.

Members of the committee asked questions about various things, including the quality of communication with beneficiaries, the water bombing of beneficiaries in Bellville in the Western Cape, the implementation of social distancing at pay points, poor call centre operations, disability assessments and the renewing of the temporary disability grant.

Committee member Ms Liesel van der Merwe said getting Sassa to move away from a crisis mode is the top priority, while another committee member, Ms Bridget Masango, said Sassa's capacity problems stem from poor planning. She wanted to know why

no ministerial directive had been issued extending the 31 December cut-off date for social assistance. Ms Masango also recognised the increased strain Sassa employees are experiencing due to the growing number of walk-ins.

Replying to these questions, Minister Zulu committed the department to providing a concrete plan with deliverables and clear timelines. She noted that R15 billion has been paid to six million South Africans in special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grants. Over 16 000 temporary disability grants have been reinstated and R98 million will be allocated for this purpose. She also explained that the disability grants lapsed because the Social Assistance Act only allows for their provision for a period of six to 12 months. 🙏



Serenading #SONA21 with a Poem

Opening #SONA21 with a Poem

Siphokazi Jonas holds an MA degree in English literature as well as an undergraduate degree in Drama and English. As a writer and performer, she has produced multiple one-woman poetry shows in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Siphokazi has been a featured act at numerous poetry sessions and festivals around the country. She started writing poetry at the age of 14!

Her experience as a poet, writer and performance artist has led to multiple invitations to judge poetry competitions throughout the country. She is co-producer of the #WeAreDyingHere short film that deals with gender-based violence, an adaptation of the stage production of the same name, which she co-wrote and directed.

Siphokazi has also performed alongside renowned musicians, including Siphosiphiso "Hotstix" Mabuse, Freshlyground, Pops Mohamed, Dizu Plaatjies and Dave Reynolds. She made history in 2016 as the first African poet ever to perform at Rhetoric in Los Angeles, in the United States, the biggest Christian spoken-

word event in the world. In 2016, she was the runner-up for the Sol Plaatje European Union Award.

Siphokazi was a teaching assistant at the University of Cape Town from 2015-2017, and she lectured on a part-time basis in South African literature and isiXhosa oral poetry. She is the English poetry editor for the New Contrast journal. She also works online as the performing arts director of an elementary school in Gainesville, Florida.

She will replace the traditional praise singer and introduce the #SONA21 with the reading of her poem "What does not sink". 🌟



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Servants of the people pass on

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa, Parliament has not been immune to its sting and Members of Parliament have been lost to the virus. During the recent festive season alone, five members passed on. They are Mr Jackson Mthembu, Dr Phumza Dyantyi, Adv Loyiso Mpumlwana, Ms Nomvuzo Shabalala and Mr Simo Mfayela.



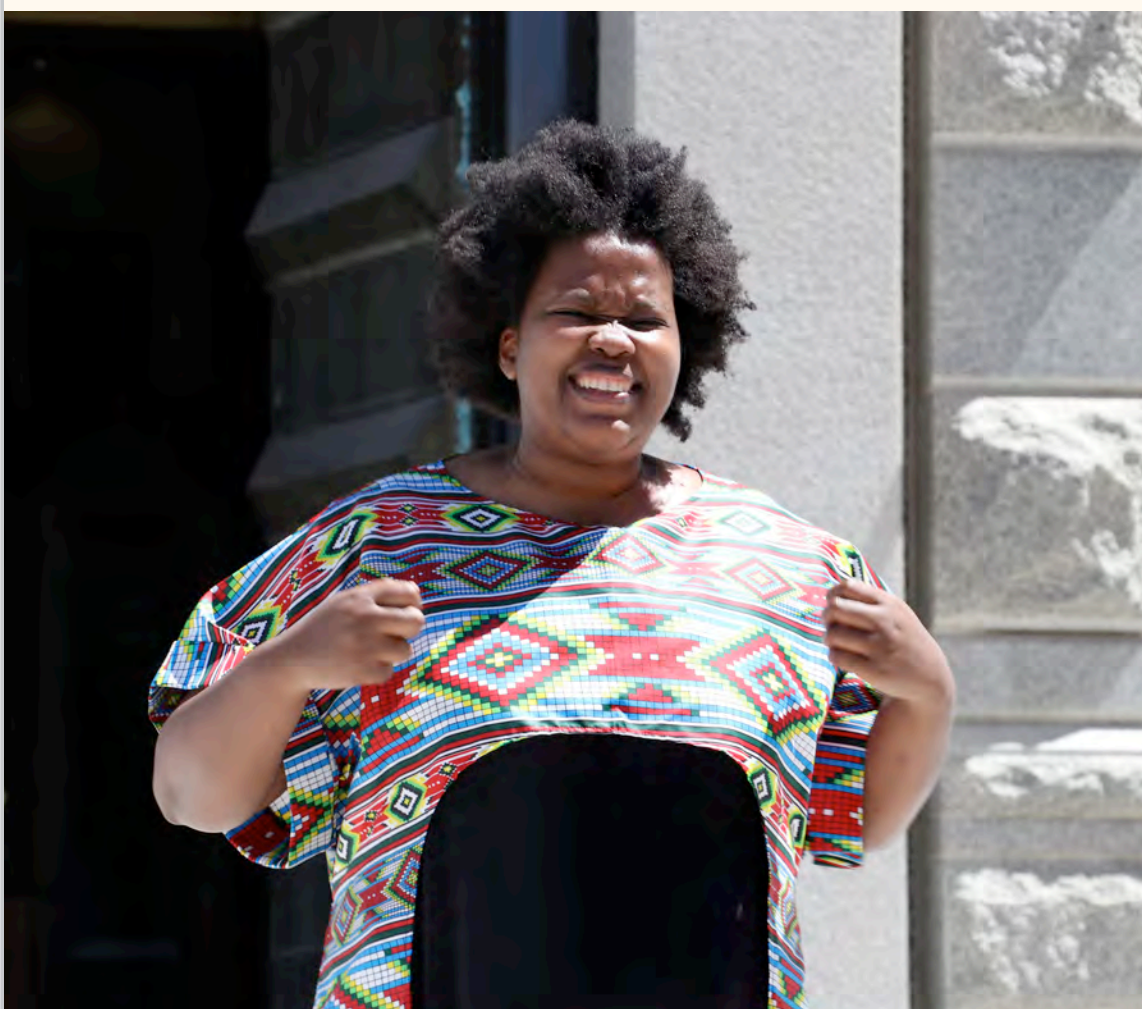
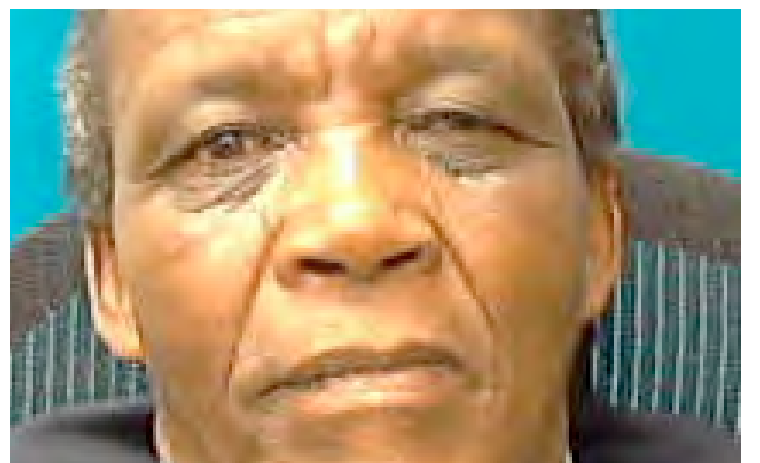
Dr Phumza Dyantyi



Ms Nomvuzo Shabalala



Mr Simo Mfayela



These members were all described by the Presiding Officers (POs) of Parliament as servants of the people who placed the interest of the people they represented in Parliament above their own individual interests. Their indelible legacy will be a shining light that remains behind to represent them.

Dr Phumza Dyantyi

Dr Dyantyi joined Parliament as a Member of the National Assembly after the 2019 general elections. She served on the Portfolio Committee on Health where she made a remarkable contribution. Her colleagues in the committee said Dr Dyantyi showed her patriotism by devoting her time towards achieving better healthcare for all South Africans.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, said Dr Dyantyi had a deep passion to improve the health of all South Africans and was never intimidated nor deflected from her point of focus by the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges. She used the committee as a strategic platform towards achieving her objective of better health for all.

The Presiding Officers said Dr Dyanti dedicated her life to the freedom and liberation of South Africans. They added that primary healthcare issues were close to her heart and she committed her time to the fight against HIV/Aids. As an HIV/ Aids activist, she inspired and galvanised both the young and the old in the fight against this disease and vigorously campaigned for universal healthcare and healthy communities.

Adv Loyiso Mpumlwana

Adv Mpumlwana joined the fourth Parliament as a Member of the National Assembly after the 2014 general elections. He served on various parliamentary committees, including Justice and Constitutional

Development, International Relations and Cooperation, the Constitutional Review Committee, and the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Probing Violence Against Foreign Nationals. Adv Mpumlwana returned to the sixth Parliament after the 2019 general elections and served on the Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises.

The POs described Adv Mpumlwana as a human rights activist who was steadfast in fighting for justice and equality for all. He was a selfless leader who sacrificed his life for the emancipation of South Africans. His valuable contribution in the various committees on which he served greatly advanced Parliament’s oversight programme.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises, Mr Khaya Magaxa, said Adv Mpumlwana’s passing is a loss as he possessed knowledge that the committee needed. His contributions to committee meetings were effective and he leaves a shining legacy. “I wish to express my heartfelt condolences to the Mpumlwana family. May his soul rest in eternal peace,” said Mr Magaxa.

Former and current Members of Parliament described Adv Mpumlwana as distinguished from other patriots by his selflessness. This was clear when he abandoned his legal career and placed representation of the people of South Africa above it. He represented his constituency with commitment and accountability.

Ms Nomvuzo Shabalala

Ms Shabalala became a Member of the National Assembly after the 2019 general election. She served on the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education and on the Joint Committee on Ethics and Members Interests.

The Presiding Officers of Parliament said that despite being a relatively

new parliamentarian, Ms Shabalala swiftly familiarised herself with the workings and complex systems of Parliament. She was diligent and hardworking, particularly in the committees she served on and where she helped bolster oversight over the national basic education system and the ethical conduct of public representatives.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, Ms Bongwiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba said Ms Shabalala always ensured that the committee was of great assistance to the most vulnerable learners, especially in historically disadvantaged and impoverished communities.

Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba added that Ms Shabalala also distinguished herself from others by her deep passion for education and her commitment to see the realisation of the education clause of the Freedom Charter – that the “doors of learning and culture shall be opened” to all South Africans, particularly historically disadvantaged and marginalised people. She said Ms Shabalala leaves a remarkable and shining legacy behind.

Mr Simo Mfayela

Mr Mfayela was a Permanent Delegate to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) representing KwaZulu-Natal. He became a delegate to the NCOP after the 2019 general elections. He served on the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements; the Select Committee on Security and Justice; the Select Committee on Petitions and Executive Undertakings; the Joint Standing Committee on Defence; and the Joint Committee on Ethics and Members’ Interests.

The Presiding Officers of Parliament said Mr Mfayela

was a dedicated, selfless and hardworking parliamentarian. He brought a wealth of experience to the NCOP, and his extensive knowledge and expertise in local governance greatly enhanced its legislative and oversight work.

The Chairpersons of the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements; and the Select Committee on Security and Justice said death has robbed Parliament of a committed servant of the people who always ensured that they received quality service.

Although he only joined the NCOP after the 2019 elections, Mr Mfayela made a considerable impact in holding the executive accountable. According to the Chairpersons, despite his soft-spoken nature, he asked the executive pertinent and probing questions. His deep commitment to Parliament’s oversight work was indicated by the number of committees he served on, and the quality of the contributions he made. Parliament and the committees which he served on are the poorer today without his insightful contributions. 🌟



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Mthembu Understood the Deeper Meaning of People's Representation and placed Parliament's constitutional mandate above party politics, says Speaker



Mr Jackson Mthembu

Speaking at the funeral of former Minister in the Presidency, Mr Jackson Mthembu, the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Thandi Modise, described Mr Mthembu as a servant of the people who perfectly and appropriately understood the

true meaning of representing the people. "We have lost a representative of the people, a Chief Whip and a Member of Parliament, who would always say 'I am available', 'ngikhona', when we called him to say 'There is an issue'," Ms Modise

recalled. Listing other fallen, gallant comrades who fought courageously against apartheid alongside Mr Mthembu, including the late Parks Mankahlana (former President Nelson Mandela's spokesperson), Ms Modise

recalled that Mr Mthembu "held the bulls of apartheid by their horns". He distinguished himself by the deepness of his commitment towards establishing and defending our constitutional democracy in South Africa.

While tracing Mr Mthembu's parliamentary legacy, Ms Modise recollected that his service began when he was deployed by the African National Congress (ANC) to the Senate, which was to become the National Council of Provinces. Later, he was deployed to the Mpumalanga Legislature, where he became the Speaker of the Legislature and then MEC for roads and transport.

"Mr Mthembu understood that when you are a Member of Parliament you have not gone there for yourself, but for the people. You don't speak for yourself, but on their behalf and you hear on their behalf," Ms Modise said.

She also praised Mr Mthembu as a good mediator and someone who put his commitment to the principle of unity and Parliament's constitutional mandate above party politics.

Mr Mthembu was redeployed to Parliament after the 2009 general elections and became a Member of the NA. He remained there after the 2014 general elections, when he served on a number of parliamentary committees and was the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs, a position he held until he was appointed as the Chief Whip of the majority party in the NA. Ms Modise noted that Mr Mthembu was a good leader who understood that in this role you will experience conflict, not only between the political parties represented in Parliament, but also between the legislative and the executive arms of state.

Ms Modise called on all Members of Parliament to rededicate themselves to fighting the coronavirus pandemic in the name of Jackson Mthembu. 🕯️



PARLIAMENT
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