



08

Safety of health-care workers must be prioritised



04

Presiding Officers commend President Ramaphosa...



13

Committees in Brief

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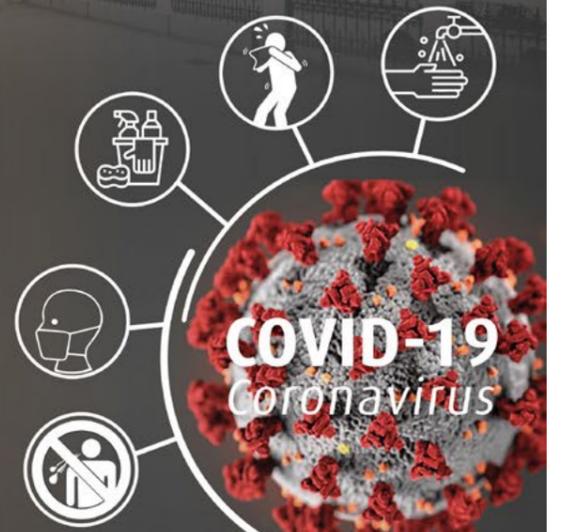
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MS. THANDI MODISE
Speaker of the National Assembly

MR. AMOS MASONDO
Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces



Houses of Parliament are Ready for Plenary Sitzings under lock-down restrictions

After the Presiding Officers of Parliament announced the resumption of the business of Parliament under virtual conditions in April, the meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Health with the Minister of Health Dr Zweli Mkhize on 10 April where the committee received an update on the latest developments relating to Covid-19 from the Minister marked the beginning of virtual meetings.

Since then, there have been 154 virtual committee meetings. The meetings have been largely joint meetings of the National Assembly's (NA's) portfolio committees, and the National Council of Provinces' (NCOP's) select of the committees of both Houses of Parliament.

In those virtual meetings, committees have conducted effective oversight over the departments of government and their entities, particularly on their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The committees used the virtual meeting platforms to

make the departments and their entities account for their work.

With the lifting of the national lockdown restrictions to level three, Parliament is preparing to hold its first virtual plenary sittings of both the NA and the NCOP and such preparations

have reached an advanced stage.

The programme of the virtual House Sitting of the NCOP includes the appearance of the Ministers of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and of Health, where the Ministers will brief the

permanent and special delegates to the NCOP on the impact and implementation of Covid-19 measures across the three spheres of government.

This sitting forms part of the NCOP's constitutional obligation to promote co-operative governance and to ensure the harmonious existence of the

three spheres of government. The briefing intends to ensure that proper co-ordination in the implementation of Covid-19 measures exists, to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

In the NA, the programme will include the appearance of the Ministers of Basic Education; Health; Higher Education, Science and Technology; Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation; Social Development; Sport, Arts and Culture; Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Ministry in the Presidency; Public Service and Administration and Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities to answer oral questions from the Members of NA.

The hybrid sitting will accommodate a limited number of Members of the NA in line with social distancing guidelines being physically present in the NA Chamber. Other Members will participate in the sitting remotely by means of virtual platforms.

On the readiness of the

parliamentary precinct for the return of Members of Parliament (MPs) and parliamentary support staff, all the parliamentary buildings, walkways and parking areas have been sanitised to ensure that the environment is safe and healthy. Walk-through sanitising booths have also been installed in all the three parliamentary entrances

The booths are part of Parliament's comprehensive anti-Covid-19 adjusted strategy, which is being rolled out in preparation for the hybrid plenary sessions of the NA. Currently, a few staff members have been granted clearance to work on the precinct.

Those who are required to be on the precinct early include Chamber support staff, IT support staff, security, interpreters, cleaners and a limited number of members of the media will be permitted.

The orders before the House Sittings during this term include the consideration of the 2020 Appropriation Bill, which was

presented by the Minister of Finance when he delivered the 2020 Budget Speech.

The NCOP will consider the Bill on 2 June, as it was passed by the NA on 18 March and sent to the NCOP for concurrence. The NA will also be finalising its programme of mini-plenaries to deal with budget votes, which will be followed by a full NA plenary sitting to consider the votes in the Appropriation Bill. Once Parliament has approved the 2020 Budget, the adjusted Budget will be on Parliament's agenda once the Minister of Finance tables it.

After putting in place measures to facilitate House plenaries, for both physical presence in the precinct and virtual platforms, Parliament is gradually rolling out its programme of processing legislation and exercising oversight over the executive through House plenary sittings.

For the first time, Members of both Houses will be able to join and cast their votes virtually on issues that are discussed

in plenary sittings of the Houses. This is because Rules for meetings and sittings have been amended to be applicable in the current extraordinary business of Parliament, of conducting the programme of Parliament through virtual platforms.

Due to the nature of the virtual platforms available currently in the market, only limited languages will be available for translation in these sittings. Parties have been requested to submit languages for which they will require translation services. Sign language translation will be provided through the virtual platform.

Parliament uses technology to ensure that it does not fail to meet its constitutional mandate of passing legislation, promotion of public involvement, promotion of cooperative governance and international participation, notwithstanding the difficult lockdown circumstances and health protocols brought about the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

On the Review of Women's Charter in the provinces, sessions for Northern Cape and Free State are scheduled. These review sessions take stock of progress made in the implementation of the articles of the 1994 Women's Charter for Effective Equality since the advent of freedom and democracy. The sessions will also assess the impact of changes made over the years to realise the goals of the Women's Charter on women. The first province to sessions of that nature was Western Cape, which hosted its session in November 2019.

Parliament has ensured, since its first virtual meeting, that it promotes public involvement in its business. Based on that commitment, information about the forthcoming virtual House sittings and the ongoing daily committee meetings of committees will always be communicated through various Parliament platforms such as Channel 408, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and community radio and television stations to raise public awareness about the proceedings.





Parliament's work continues during Covid-19 lockdown

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Thandi Modise, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Mr Amos Masondo, convened a virtual media briefing to announce the resumption of Parliament's business, writes Abel Mputing.

The Presiding Officers said that Parliament will resume business with immediate effect, following the conclusion of the constituency programme on 13 April. In addition, the leave period for Members of Parliament (MPs), which was scheduled from 28 April to 4 May, has been cancelled. The Presiding Officers also outlined how Parliament will operate during the course of the lockdown and thereafter, with Ms Modise explaining that it will not be business as usual.

The Presiding Officers highlighted that Parliament's constitutional role includes overseeing the executive, passing legislation, providing a forum for public consideration of issues, and facilitating public participation, a role that remains indispensable during this period of national lockdown.

In other words, there has never been a more important time for Parliament to work in an extraordinary manner and intensify "our technological capabilities for our transition to an e-Parliament, as also directed by our new strategic plan to ensure that the execution of our constitutional responsibilities continues uninterrupted".

Parliament has put in place the necessary communication

technology infrastructure to ensure that virtual meetings can take place and announced that Parliament "will prioritise a schedule of virtual meetings whose scope of oversight relates to government departments driving the Covid-19 response measures". Committees will be required to intensify their oversight engagements, particularly on Covid-19 matters, and will conduct joint meetings. "The Chief Whips represented in Parliament have agreed to draft guidelines and rules on how these virtual committee meetings and voting must be conducted," added the Presiding Officers during the briefing.

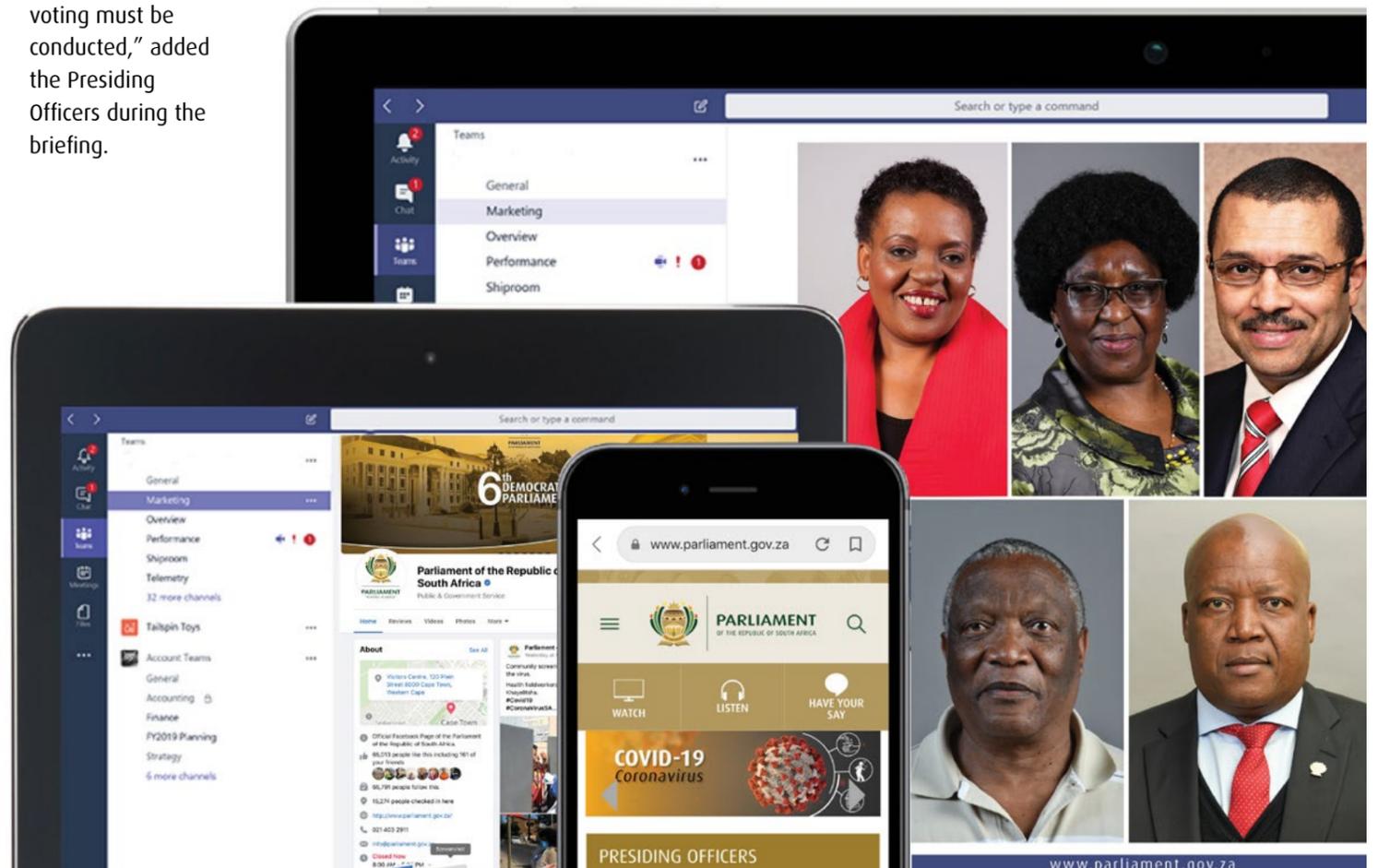
On the sitting of the two Houses of Parliament during the lockdown, the Presiding Officers said they have framed rules for virtual House sittings. Sittings of the Houses will deal with legislation and other matters that will need approval or consideration. The Division of Revenue Bill that was presented by the Minister of Finance in February this year, which is before the National Council of Provinces and which is envisaged to be passed on 2 June this year, was mentioned as an example of the priority matters to be considered by the

Houses of Parliament.

On questions and oral replies, Ms Modise explained that the Presiding Officers are still discussing a number of possible solutions with the Leader of Government Business. The budget may also require revision in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. During questions from journalists after the briefing, Ms Modise noted that budget adjustments would be made through the normal parliamentary procedures and would ensure that the Department of Health has

the resources it needs and that there is enough for the provision of food to vulnerable people.

On communicating the work of Parliament and public participation during this period, the Presiding Officers said existing electronic platforms of engagement are available for Parliament to communicate and interact with the public.





Presiding Officers commend President Ramaphosa and his executive for their leadership at this difficult time

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Thandi Modise, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Amos Masondo, commended President Cyril Ramaphosa and his executive for the manner in which they have led the nation in the battle against coronavirus, writes Mava Lukani.

The Presiding Officers also commended the men and women in healthcare, law enforcement, defence and essential goods retail stores, who “are risking their lives to defeat the coronavirus.

They also extended Parliament’s heartfelt condolence to the families and friends of those who passed away because of the coronavirus.

Addressing the nation during the Presiding Officers’ virtual media briefing they commended all those who have contributed to the Solidarity Fund created to fight Covid-19. “We welcome the decision of the political parties in Parliament to support the fund ... We have also decided to support this good initiative and we will donate one third of our monthly salaries to the fund for

the next three months.”

The Presiding Officers confirmed that “Members of Parliament fall under the category of essential services... So, despite the initial suspension” of the parliamentary programme, MPs will continue to work in the best interest of South Africa and support the President and his Executive in their efforts to curb the spread of the Coronavirus.





Mr Cedric Frolick, MP

Frolick - Committee oversight work continues during the lockdown

When the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Thandi Modise, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Mr Amos Maseko, addressed the media during the Covid-19 lockdown in April they told journalists that Parliament's oversight work is an essential service. Hence, Parliament's work would resume with immediate effect. Insession writer, Mava Lukani, spoke to the House Chairperson for Committees in the National Assembly, Mr Cedric Frolick, about Members of Parliament's constituency oversight work during the lockdown.

Political parties, according to Mr Frolick, are constitutionally empowered "to exercise control over their affairs, including who should represent them in Parliament and in the provincial legislatures."

"MPs are thus allocated constituency offices by their parties, not by Parliament, and are accountable to their parties for constituency work. MPs may, however, raise any matters that affect their constituencies in the Members' Statement, Motions, Questions to the Executive,

Debates, and so on."

After Parliament suspended its business on 18 March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all MPs returned to their constituencies to do constituency work. This work is determined by their respective political parties.

Mr Frolick continued that "political parties may request their members to conduct oversight work in their constituencies based on the portfolio committees on which they serve. During the

current period, it has become clear that most, if not all political parties, prioritised the Covid-19 pandemic as a key area of oversight."

During the lock-down committees were encouraged to hold joint virtual meetings. Mr Frolick added: "virtual meetings allow for flexibility in the scheduling of meetings that involve both Members from the NA and the NCOP because they are not restricted by venues and time. Meetings can take place after hours or even over the weekends, depending on the availability

of Members and the invitees."

As for a review of the Budget allocations, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr Frolick said: "The Speaker mentioned that possible changes are inevitable in the Appropriation Bill that was tabled on 26 February 2020 by the Minister of Finance due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Speaker emphasised that it is the responsibility and prerogative of the Minister of Finance to propose amendments to the Appropriation Bill."

Political parties agree that discipline is required to defeat Covid-19

The Parliamentary Communication Services spoke to the Presiding Officers of Parliament, leaders of political parties and Members of Parliament (MPs) about the lockdown and Covid-19. This is what they said.

THANDI MODISE: Speaker of the National Assembly

South Africa, we have as a nation faced challenges and difficulties before, we have united in action to overcome these. Today, we face a difficult and life-threatening virus, but we know we can beat it if we unite in heeding the directives of the President of the Republic.

We must not panic; we must be disciplined. Leadership starts from

within, discipline starts with us as individuals, so South Africans take the lead and stay at home. This action, this commitment is about you, it is for your family, it is for your neighbourhood, it is for your community, it is for your country and the world out there, so please stay at home.

Practise the measures published by the Department of Health. Proper and basic hygiene will help us flatten the Covid-19 curve. Please stay at home. This virus is serious,

beat it by heeding all the rules of the national lockdown. Remember, be safe, stay at home.

AMOS MASONDO: Chairperson of the NCOP

The coronavirus is upon us. This is a war effort; this is a global war. This is about our lives and our economy; this is about our future. We take this opportunity to make a call to all South Africans, let us all listen and heed the 21-day lockdown message.



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Vision

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

Strategic Objectives

- Strengthening oversight and accountability;
- Enhancing public involvement;
- Deepening engagement in international fora;
- Strengthening cooperative government;
- Strengthening legislative capacity.

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ANC

Thandiswa Marawu
ATM

Siviwe Gwarube
DA

Let us stop the spread of coronavirus by adhering to basic hygiene by, among other things, washing our hands regularly, covering our mouths and noses when coughing and sneezing, avoiding contact, staying at home and limiting movement. This call is directed at both the old and the young.

We urge all people and all South Africans in all small and big towns, in all cities and rural areas to do everything that enhances the protection of our health and to do nothing that compromises the goals that we have set for ourselves. Let us take responsibility and defeat this disease. Yesterday, we defeated the bubonic plague, leprosy, small pox and Spanish flu, let us stop this spread, let us defeat corona.

LECHESA TSENOLI:
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

It is absolutely important that in the coming weeks, we fulfil the requirements of the law, as declared by the President, that we should all stay at home, except for those who are doing essential jobs. All of us must do everything in our power to control and defeat coronavirus as it spreads in our country and in our neighbouring countries.

It is absolutely critical to resist defying advice from the government on this particular matter. It is absolutely critical that all of us be proud when we look back that we did the correct thing and we prevented the spread of this virus and its bad impact on the economy and in life in general. We appeal to our people throughout the country, in the urban and rural areas, whatever

difficulties we are facing, let us contain the spread of this virus. It is our duty. It is our responsibility.

SYLVIA LUCAS
NCOP Deputy Chairperson

Fellow South Africans, we have observed that it is still difficult for our people to adapt to the fact that what is requested from us is to stay indoors to make sure that we also contribute by making sure that we curb the spread of coronavirus. We have observed that this is serious, it is something that is really happening. So, what we want all of us to do is to make sure that we adhere to what is requested from us and we also make sure that we contribute by not spreading the virus any further.

We must also make sure that we educate and inform our fellow citizens, that it is better to stay at home and ensure that no one suffers unnecessarily, that there is no unnecessary death. The only way to curb the virus is to stay at home. So in this lockdown, we want to make sure that all South Africans sit together at home, keep your distance, but also make sure that you pray together and make sure that we strengthen the hand of the healthcare workers, the police and others who are assisting us in these difficult times.

All of us are requested to make that little contribution, a very small one, the one that says stay at home, keep your distance, and make sure you wash your hands. Also, make sure that you inform and educate those around you about this coronavirus. We wish you well during this lockdown

period, but we also want all of us to make sure that we are and remain safe and healthy.

PEMMY MAJODINA
African National Congress Chief Whip

Please stay at home, please be safe. Let's not take Covid-19 for granted, it is a reality. It is no longer on our doorstep, it is right in our rooms. Can you imagine, if one of your beloved family members becomes sick, you will not be able to visit that person in hospital.

If you or I get sick, no one will be able to visit us in hospital. Let's stop all the fake news. Let's support the government. Let's report matters where people are not adhering to the measures that are put in place.

Let's all be united, united in ensuring that we curb the spread of Covid-19. This is a global challenge and we must have all hands on deck to fight this enemy. Let's all respect our National Defence Force and our police, but it starts with me and you. It starts with us as a family, let's manage our families, let's also manage our neighbours, because Ubuntu is very important at this trying time.

THANDISWA MARAWU
African Transformation Movement (ATM) MP

We urge all South Africans to observe the regulations the government tells us to uphold in our homes, and we encourage those selfless South Africans such as doctors, nurses and others who do not sleep but continue to work to save the lives of the victims of coronavirus, we salute them. To the victims, we are saying

this problem is not beyond the grace of the Lord and is going to pass.

We are saluting the traffic officers who are keeping order on the South African roads. We urge the South African public to uphold all the regulations and that we should not do things that we know we should not do.

We are calling on the women of South Africa to stand and pray together. The time has come like the time that brought our forebears together in the past when they were faced with different disasters. They would ascend to the top of the hills to pray together and when they descended, the problem they prayed for would be resolved.

SIVIWE GWARUBE
Democratic Alliance (DA) MP

I want to encourage each and every one of us to please remain at home during this lockdown. If it is at all possible, only leave your home when it is absolutely necessary, when you are trying to get food, when you are trying to get medical services or trying to access your social grants. Other than that, please remain at home.

If we are to support the thousands of healthcare workers who are putting their lives on the line, who are dedicating their time and energy to delivering healthcare services to all of us, then we need to do all our best and remain at home. And while we are at home, it is also very important not to spread fake news. Fake news seeks to cause panic among the people, but also it takes away valuable resources when people are

trying to put up a valiant fight. Then professionals have to be pulled from their duties so that they can put together rebutting notes against fake news. So, please don't spread fake news and don't make South Africans panic. What you can do, though, is to make sure that you remain at home and practise proper hygiene to support the effort to curb the spread of this virus.

BANTU HOLOMISA
Leader of the United Democratic Movement (UDM) MP

The UDM supports the government's lockdown announcement. It is a proactive step intended to save the lives of many in this country, and to further contain the spread of this deadly virus. Yes, it is inconveniencing some people, but we cannot afford to be reckless.

NAREND SINGH
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) MP

The IFP welcomes these measures. We appreciate the fact that government ministers have acted as swiftly as they have done. We do realise that not everybody will be satisfied with the measures that are in place. Small businesses, informal settlements, informal businesses and traders are still concerned about some of the assistance that will be made available to them. They are also still concerned about the lack of delivery of water to many of our rural areas, but hopefully in the next few days during this lockdown, those essential services will be provided to all South Africans.

For now, Members of Parliament will be on



Bantu Holomisa
UDM

Narend Singh
IFP

Wayne Thring
ACDP

Omphile Maotwe
EFF

Lulama Ntshayisa
AIC

Mzwanele Nyhontso
PAC

Ahmed Shaik Emam
NFP

Ganief Hendricks
Al Jama'ah

standby to assist whenever and wherever we can. We appreciate the leadership shown by the Speaker of the National Assembly and by Parliament. And we just trust that from now onwards, at least, South Africans will stand together and in 21 days' time, we could say we flattened the scourge.

God bless you all. Take care and congratulations and well done to all those selfless individuals from security, health services and other sectors that are out there, still continuing, as proud South Africans, to protect all of us from this ghastly virus.

WAYNE THRING
African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) MP

On behalf of the President of the African Christian Democratic Party, the Rev Dr Kenneth Meshoe, as well as the leadership of the ACDP, I am able to confirm that the ACDP has come out in support, with some concern, of the call by President Cyril Ramaphosa, for a 21-day lockdown, effective from 26 March 2020.

The ACDP, while supporting the call by the President, expresses a concern for two reasons. One – we are already facing a fragile economy, our economy is facing some headwinds and our debt to gross domestic product is set to exceed by some 70%.

We are also concerned about the effect that the lockdown will have on the poor, the vulnerable and the indigent in South Africa. When implemented, those set to be most affected will be the poor and the vulnerable among us. Having said that, however, the

ACDP is calling on all South Africans to come together, let's fight this virus together. The regulations that have been set in place for this 21-day period are there to ensure the safety of all South Africans.

The ACDP will continue, through its MPs, to exercise its responsibility to hold the executive accountable. Now, as we face this together, we want to pronounce a blessing over South Africa. I pray, South Africa, that the Lord blesses you, and the Lord keeps you and the Lord makes his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, and the Lord gives you peace, South Africa. Together, we are able to defeat this Covid-19 virus.

OMPHILE MAOTWE
Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) MP

We are faced with the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, like many other countries are faced with currently. We urge everyone to adhere to the rules and regulations, as set out by the government. We call upon law enforcement officers to act decisively and arrest anyone who might be seen to be contravening any of the rules and regulations, as set out by the government.

We condemn, in the strongest terms, those employers who want to force their employees to work during this difficult time. We plead with them and urge them to please close down their offices. We call upon the law enforcement officers to shut down those offices that are open, that are not of essential services.

We want to continue to pray

for the nurses and the doctors, and everyone who is working around the clock to preserve the lives of our people.

LULAMA NTSHAYISA
African Independent Congress (AIC) MP

The African Independent Congress pledges our support for the lockdown pronounced by the President. We urge the people to remain inside their homes until this has passed. This will save our lives. People should try to be patient until this passes. People must adhere to the rules and regulations put in place by our President. In order to be patriots of this country, we should use the time to show that we love our country, our beloved country.

MZWANELE NYHONTSO
Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) MP

Fellow countrymen and women, *ma-Afrika amahle*, sons and daughters of the soil, the whole world is facing a common crisis that is spreading throughout the countries. Coronavirus is on our doorstep. We must do our part. To stop Covid-19 is to save many lives.

The South African government is correct to implement the lockdown because one of the ways to fight coronavirus is to stay at home, so that it should not affect more people. Stay at home ma-Afrika. Please observe clean hygiene, check yourself and your loved ones from being infected with flu-like symptoms. Do social distancing, 21 days later we might have stopped the attack of the virus from getting into our homes.

Let's all do our part. Observe

all the rules and regulations of the lockdown. We will win, our people deserve to live a better quality of life, Azania deserves better. Ma-Afrika, as the PAC, we are in this together, let's hold hands and be safe. Our children, our brothers and sisters are making a major sacrifice in the healthcare system, in the security cluster. Now it's time for us to support this countrywide effort to end coronavirus.

AHMED MUNZOR SHAIK EMAM
National Freedom Party (NFP) MP

What we see today is unacceptable. Panic buying is counter-productive, putting yourself at great risk. We want to plead with all of you South Africans and foreign nationals living in South Africa, there is no need to panic. Retailers have given us the assurance that stock and food products will be available, so indeed you do not need to panic buy, leading to long queues of people putting themselves at high risk.

One of the sole reasons for having a lockdown is to restrict the movement of people so as to limit the number of infections, identify those that are infected, treat them, eradicate the virus and then have a virus-free South Africa. We plead with all South Africans to comply, stop all parties, reduce the numbers attending funerals, postpone weddings if you can, do not visit others, stay at home.

The message is loud and clear, in your own interests and the interests of those you love and the country as a whole, we plead with you to stay at home and comply. It is time to be united against this deadly

pandemic. There is no room for exploitation and we call on all South Africans to report any exploitation, particularly in the sale of essential foodstuffs, in the sale of masks, in the sale of sanitisers and other necessities that we need on a day-to-day basis.

We also want to say, to all South Africans, that all government structures are open and are available, particularly the public representatives. Should you experience any challenges or difficulty, feel free to contact them. If you are unable to contact your public representatives in your area, you are free to call me on 081 439 4700.

GANIEF HENDRICKS
Al Jama'ah MP

Al Jama'ah supports the message introduced by President Cyril Ramaphosa and all our cabinet ministers who want to save our lives and lead the fightback against coronavirus. South Africa is proud to have such leadership and Al Jama'ah calls on all South Africans to strictly adhere to the regulations needed for the fightback against this killer virus during the lockdown.

For Muslims, it is also a jihad against the virus. Jihad is to stay at home and wash your hands with soap and water more than five times a day. Social distancing is the new jihad, as we try to prevent thousands of people in South Africa from dying. Follow the commander-in-chief's orders in relation to the lockdown. The war can only be won if we follow the regulations relating to the lockdown that the honourable President has made law for 21 days.



Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, MP

Safety of healthcare workers must be prioritised while combatting Covid-19

In a meeting with the Department of Health, where the committee was briefed on the department's annual plan, safety and the security of staff and patients was highlighted as a strategic priority writes Yoliswa Landu.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, wants to ensure that no frontline staff member dealing with patients infected with Covid-19 will be without protective clothing, especially masks.

The committee heard media reports about the absence or shortage of masks in public healthcare facilities, which had been reported by trade unions. The committee then urged the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, to investigate the complaints.

"Fortunately, I had the opportunity to meet with the Minister, who also indicated that the safety of healthcare workers remains a top priority of his department. He said an investigation into the matter will be conducted and there will be a report-back on the findings," Dr Dhlomo said.

The departmental investigation and report will give an

assurance to trade unions and healthcare workers that they are taken seriously and that their safety is given priority in its 2019/20 annual performance plan.

The committee also expressed its satisfaction with the progress made by the Department of Health and the Ministerial Task Team in curbing the spread of Covid-19 in South Africa.

The meeting with the Minister Mkhize was also attended by the Department of Health; Members of the Executive Councils (MECs) for Health from the nine provinces; Ministerial Advisory Team Chairperson, Prof Salim Abdool Karim; the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD); and the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA).

The committee received an update on the latest

developments relating to Covid-19 and engaged the Minister on issues covered in the media concerning protective equipment in healthcare facilities and the progress with regard to Covid-19 screening in various provinces.

The Minister provided an update on the measures undertaken by the Department of Health with the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal to close St Augustine's Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal. The committee heard that the hospital experienced increased numbers of patients and healthcare workers infected with the virus.

Prof Abdool Karim who is part of the Ministerial Health Advisory Committee, explained the epidemiology of the disease and highlighted what is happening at St Augustine's Hospital.

Prof Abdool Karim says the decision to go on a countrywide

lockdown was "timely (and) that the epidemic as we see in other countries is following a very conservative curve, not exponential, however, we should not rest but press on in this positive direction".

Dr Dhlomo commended the sterling work conducted by the task team headed by the Minister of Health. Members of the committee thanked the team for its hard work under difficult conditions, and on how the team has handled the outbreak of the pandemic.

Dr Dhlomo said the committee commends President Ramaphosa's call, which includes banning the sale of alcohol during the lockdown period. "The President should not give those who want to sell alcohol space to do so, as that might predispose them to being exposed to the pandemic unaware."

Dr Dhlomo said the committee also welcomed the innovative measures instituted at

Mbumbulu Clinic in KwaZulu-Natal to prevent congestion at the clinic and to ensure social distancing. As part of the new measures, the clinic prioritised elderly patients by taking their cards at the gate, placing other patients in a separate space at the entrance, collecting their medication, and thereafter sending them home immediately. That strategy assisted in decongestion and keeps numbers to a minimum at the clinic.

Dr Dhlomo said he wanted to monitor how health facilities in his constituency are implementing the government regulations on social distancing to curb the spread of the virus. He said he was happy to hear and see how the clinic has made changes in controlling the spread of Covid-19. The clinic, said Dr Dhlomo, has created a mini-Central Chronic Medicines Dispensing and Distribution (CCMD) centre, to prevent patients from mixing with one another.





Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson, MP

Mr Cyril Xaba, MP

Committees express concern over use of force to control civilians during lockdown

The Portfolio Committees on Police and Defence have expressed their concern about the high number of claims against the South African Police Service (Saps) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) for murder and assault cases since the start of the coronavirus lockdown, write Felicia Lombard and Malatswa Molepo.

Committee Chairpersons, Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson (police) and Mr Cyril Xaba (defence and military veterans), called on the police, defence force and other law enforcement agencies to align themselves with President Cyril Ramaphosa's call "not to violate the rights of our people, either intentionally or unintentionally. Let us execute our task with respect. I want, after this mission, the people of our country to see you as the SANDF and the Saps, and know that you are the best in the world in that you were supportive of them and given them the assurance and assisted in every way you could."

Ms Joemat-Pettersson noted that when the committee welcomed the lockdown, it had emphasised the supremacy of the law and of the Constitution. "Thus, the law ought to be respected at all times, more especially by officers of the law," she said.

Mr Xaba appealed to members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) "to

conduct themselves in a manner befitting their stature, and consistent with their constitutional obligations to defend and protect the republic and its people in accordance with the Constitution, and the principles of international law regulating the use of force". Both committee chairpersons called "on citizens to cooperate" with and respect all law enforcement agencies.

As a result of all the complaints lodged against the police, the Portfolio Committee on Police has called on the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) to discuss all cases laid against members of the police. She has also requested a detailed analysis of the incidents and statistics relating to the investigations.

The police committee condemns in the strongest terms the burning and vandalism of property that has spiked in the past week, targeting schools and businesses. These acts are criminal and police must leave no stone unturned in investigating these callous acts and bringing the perpetrators to book. "The most treacherous action is burning a school that is meant to guarantee a better future for the next generation. Communities must work with police to isolate and expose these criminals," Ms Joemat-Pettersson said.

Also, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Mr Vusumzi Xaba said: "At this critical time, we should guard against the escalation of hostilities between citizens and law enforcement agencies, exercise maximum restraint, and strengthen public confidence in the abilities of these agencies to protect and defend the people".

The committee is mindful of difficulties in the maintenance of peace and stability in a multi-cultural and diverse society such as ours, especially under the conditions of a lockdown. Citizens are called upon to respect the lockdown regulations, not to resist arrest when breaches have been committed, and to report civil rights violations to the authorities.

Both Mr Xaba and Ms Joemat-Pettersson called on citizens and members of the law enforcement agencies to act responsibly and with restraint. Mr Xaba further expressed the committee's immense appreciation for the work and sacrifices by members of the SANDF, and members of the reserve force, who have made themselves available to contribute towards protecting citizens against coronavirus.

The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans fully supports the regulations issued in terms of the National Disaster Act, (2002), and welcomes the employment

of the South African National Defence Force to work in a supportive and cooperative role with the South African Police Service, as per its constitutional obligations.

This is so that the SANDF can bolster the Saps in its operational capabilities by carrying out the following tasks:

- Provision of cordons for Saps operations.
- Assistance with Saps roadblocks
- Armed support (back-up) for Saps raids
- Air support (helicopter and spotter planes) through the SA Air Force
- Medical facilities and back-up assistance for the SA Navy for maritime operations where required.

The committee supports this mandate in pursuit of curbing the spread of Covid-19 to save lives, and applauds the law enforcement personnel who have complied with the letter and spirit of the regulations, as declared by the President.

Notwithstanding these noble intentions and efforts, it is disheartening to note the various complaints, mostly from the media and ordinary citizens, exposing excessive use of force that undermines the dignity of citizens during the lockdown.

Ms Joemat-Pettersson also urged the police to continue enforcing the regulations within the confines of the law as directed by the President.





Mr Cyril Xaba, MP

Mr Elleck Nchabeleng, MP

More soldiers on South Africa's streets to fight pandemic

The Joint Standing Committee on Defence supports the placement of the entire South African National Defence Force on standby for assistance in the fight against the dreaded Covid-19 disease. President Cyril Ramaphosa informed Parliament in a letter that he was going to employ an additional 73 180 soldiers for the initial deployment of 2 820.

The 73 180 include regular, reserve and auxiliary forces that can now be deployed until at least 26 June 2020. The committee said in its recent virtual meeting that it supported the deployment because of the magnitude of the disease. "We are satisfied by the reasons given by the President and the necessity to employ an additional 73 180 members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in the fight against the spread of the Covid-19 virus, particularly in light of the information that South Africa is still in the early stages of the pandemic.

"Of critical importance is the deployment of the South African Military Health Services, as its capabilities are necessary to support the Department of Health when considering the trajectory of infections expected as per research by experts," said Mr Cyril Xaba, a Co-Chairperson of the committee.

The committee was informed that the initial 2 820 deployed is insufficient considering the expected scale of the disease that led to the deployment of more soldiers to assist particularly

in the enforcement of the lockdown regulations where the need arise.

Asked by the committee to give more information on the cost implications of the deployment of soldiers, the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, told the committee that the R4.5 billion at the disposal of the defence is inclusive of the entire SANDF's financial needs. "We have agreed with the senior command structures of the SANDF that any money that we don't use will be returned to the National Treasury," Mr Mapisa-Nqakula said.

The committee heard that some of the cost drivers include the procurement of personal protective equipment that is necessary for testing and analysis, and the preparation of field hospitals, all of which are necessary to protect SANDF members to carry on with the fight against the disease.

By Malatswa Molepo

The committee also heard that SANDF is preparing isolation and quarantine wards at military hospitals in Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Cape Town, and will also establish field hospitals across the country and in

Durban where there is military hospital.

Chief of the SANDF Joint Operations, Lieutenant-General Rudzani Maphwanya informed the committee that President Ramaphosa had instructed SANDF command structures to think about how the additional equipment and facilities being procured in the fight against Covid-19 could be used to improve the health system in the long term.

Regarding the abuse of power by the security establishment, the committee was informed that the Military Ombud was busy with investigations to ascertain the veracity of the reported cases. "The committee is confident that the Military Ombud is committed and capable to deal with this matter and that reports on the investigations will adequately address those worrying actions. The committee will await the completion of the investigation into these cases and then analyse it if the consequences are adequate," said Mr Mamagase Nchabeleng, a Co-Chairperson of the Committee.

Meanwhile, the committee has requested a written report on the incidents involving two South African Air Force's C-130 Hercules Aircraft in Goma and Waterkloof Airforce Base and the impact this will have on the deployment of this logistics capability especially with the expected increase in deployment.

Joint committee appeals to Minister for strong mitigation measures against mass retrenchments

Joint committee appeals to Minister and government for strong mitigation measures against mass retrenchments, writes Abel Mputing

The Joint meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour – and the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, Economic Development, Small Business Development, Tourism, Employment and Labour that took place recently received a briefing from the Department of Employment and Labour, Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), Compensation Fund (CF), and Inspections and Enforcement on, among other things, experiences, challenges and future plans regarding Covid-19 during the extended lockdown period, and going forward.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Labour and Employment, Ms Lindelwa Dunjwa, commended the stimulus package that was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in response to the immense challenges brought by Covid-19 on the workers and businesses that are currently in distress due to the pandemic.

Briefing the joint committee, the Minister of Employment and Labour, Mr Thulas Nxesi, said more than 600,000 workers have benefited from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) relief scheme

since the declaration of the Covid-19 lockdown.

According to Mr Nxesi his department continues to process claims as they come in and are also finalising applications which will be paid out shortly from the bargaining councils and employer associations in the engineering, textile and clothing, restaurants and catering as well as the metal sectors. Together these sectors, he said, represent almost 1.8-million workers.

Mr Nxesi, commended Members of Parliament for their effort to hold the executive accountable for its interventions during this period. He reiterated that the various stimulus funds that were introduced by government are meant to mitigate the severe effect of Covid-19 on labour and companies directly affected by the advent of the virus. To this effect, he told the joint committee that more than R1.6 billion relief fund has been set up for a temporary relief for affected employers and employees.

To date, the Minister claimed that his ministry is finalising applications from various

bargain councils for more than 1.8 million workers in order for them to benefit from the fund to ease their plight during the lockdown. "We encourage workers to pay and claim from the fund," he said.

Mr Nxesi said it was apparent to the department that it would be faced with a massive challenge of serving the 1.8 million UIF beneficiaries if the fund were to observe the current protocol governing social distancing, hence it turned to automation as a solution to that. This has, according to him, resulted in a mass disbursement of funds to date.

In his view, the department's idea of harnessing automated interventions to come up with a new disbursement regime that would make the stimulus package more accessible to the beneficiaries in a manner that is hassle-free, is currently paying off.

He said this involves, among other things, the enhancement of the capacity of the UIF call centre from 25 to 200 personnel to ensure that people are not just safe from infection, the process is also hassle-free. Members of the joint committee asked Minister Nxesi how the department intended to address claims by unions that health workers at some hospitals are not provided with the necessary equipment to prevent them from infections with coronavirus.

The Director-General of Department of Labour, Mr Thobile Lamati, replied that "as soon as the health and safety committees resume their work, they will ensure that employers comply with the required measures that govern those types of occupations deemed as essential services".

Ms Dunjwa concluded by reiterating that the joint committee saw it fit to invite the department to clarify some of its interventions as workers and businesses are more affected by the pandemic. He urged the Minister to ensure that the poor and the working class are cushioned against the devastating effects of the lockdown.



Ms Dikeledi Mahlangu, MP

Select Committee on Appropriations agrees on process for the 2020 Division of Revenue Bill

The Select Committee on Appropriations has agreed on the process to deal with the 2020 Division of Revenue Bill, while taking into consideration the discussions between the Minister of Finance, Mr Tito Mboweni, the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Thandi Modise, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Mr Amos Masondo, and other relevant stakeholders, writes Felicia Lombard.

The discussions can result in adjustments to the Bill, according to the committee, as a result of Covid-19. The Bill was tabled with other Bills on 26 February this year, together with the Budget Speech by Minister Mboweni.

The committee noted from the briefings it received from the National Treasury, the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) and the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) that there is a need for more provision to be made in the Bill for the implementation of Covid-19 regulations, and therefore some structural adjustments

need to be considered. The committee said it will only entertain those structural adjustments when they are tabled before it.

The committee notes that the 2020 Division of Revenue Bill had to make large reductions to previously announced estimates of budget transfers to provinces and municipalities, while protecting funding for social services, provinces and municipalities.

One of the largest changes to the provincial conditional grant included the addition of R1.4 billion to the early childhood development grant (ECDG) to improve the subsidy per child per day, which has increased from R15 in 2019/20 to R18.57 in 2022/23.

The committee further notes the intention to restructure certain conditional grants in the health sector. However, it is of the view that this should be done as a last resort after the support has been provided and the problems of capacity have been addressed to improve poorly performing conditional grants.

The committee welcomes additional allocations to the provincial equitable share (PES), which reprioritises social spending over the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) to include R625 million for sanitary dignity, R316 million for gender-based violence support, and R398 million for social worker support.

The committee is cognisant of the FFC's view, which suggested that although reductions in the local government conditional grant (LGCG) protect key services such as health, education and basic household services against inflation, not much provision has been made for demand growth and above-inflation costs increases.

For immediate response to Covid-19, the National Treasury indicated that several disaster provisions in the 2019 Division of Revenue Act have already been activated. These included a R466 million transfer to provincial health departments for the purchase of personal protective equipment and other allowances. That was done according to section 20(6) of the Division of Revenue Act, where an existing conditional grant can be reallocated for disaster alleviation and this can only be done in consultation with transferring officers and the relevant provincial treasuries.

Enacting the 2020 Division of Revenue Bill will thus enable the use of similar provisions to provide further assistance through the reprioritisation of conditional grants. While the committee welcomed the R500 billion stimulus package that was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa, there were questions on where the R130 billion, which will be reprioritised in the current budget, will come from? Members of the Provincial

Legislatures (MPLs) who were part of the meeting, requested that the National Treasury should consider additional allocations to assist provincial departments of health to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, they requested that municipalities, which have already been facing liquidity challenges, be taken into consideration during this process.

The committee acknowledged that the stimulus package will have far-reaching implications on the Division of Revenue Bill in its current form, but it was also mindful about the importance of processing the Bill for the funds to be released, especially for the implementation of the Covid-19 regulations.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Dikeledi Mahlangu, said the interventions announced by President Ramaphosa would go a long way in cushioning the economy and vulnerable groups. "We are also mindful that the year 2020 has not been easy for our country and the world. The manner in which things are going, we will be among the hardest-hit countries by Covid-19 economically and otherwise," she said.

Ms Mahlangu emphasised the committee's commitment to advancing the interests of poor and vulnerable South Africans, and those who are on the forefront in the fight against the scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Committee welcomes funding relief plan for the vulnerable during lockdown

The Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities welcomed the funding relief plan budget announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, at the beginning of April, writes, Yoliswa Landu.

The committee noted that the planned budget was gender-responsive, in that 40% of the budget was allocated to women, 20% to youth and 20% to persons with disabilities. The R1.2 billion budget was ring-fenced to target mainly financially distressed small-scale farmers by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.

Committee Chairperson Ms Nonhlanhla Ncube-Ndaba noted that "The ministry's pointed intervention is profound for its increased recognition of alleviating the plight of the hard-pressed citizens in the coalface of food production in the difficult times of the pandemic."

The committee called on other departments to apply not only gender-responsive budgeting, but also a youth development approach and disability rights

perspective when providing assistance to various sectors of the economy amidst the pandemic. To this end, the National Youth Development Agency was urged to work collaboratively with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to assist young farmers in this regard.

The committee also expressed its concern about the cases of gender-based violence (GBV) reported in the media at the beginning of the lockdown. The committee urged law-enforcement agencies to ensure that perpetrators of all forms of GBV are brought to book.

Ms Ncube-Ndaba said that GBV is exacerbated by the lockdown. "We need to be united in fighting the pandemic at our homes. Women are victims inside and outside of their homes. Women and children should feel much safer at homes rather than on the street," added Ms Ncube-Ndaba.

The committee said the Interim Steering Committee on gender-based violence and femicide under the auspices of the Minister for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, was expected to demonstrate, now more than ever before, strong leadership to implement the Cabinet-approved National Strategic Plan.



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Municipalities to stop evictions during lockdown: Human Settlements Committee

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Ms Machwene Semenya, has raised concerns over the alleged evictions carried out by municipalities in Durban, Lawley in Johannesburg and in Cape Town, writes Malatswa Molepo.

Ms Semenya said the evictions were unfortunate and inappropriate especially during the lockdown that was declared by President Cyril Ramaphosa to curb the spread of Covid-19. The evictions diminish the intentions of the lockdown and expose already vulnerable people to Covid-19 and other harmful elements, such as crime and bad weather.

"When the President and the executive announced that there will be no

evictions, we understood that those instructions would be respected by all. It is therefore unacceptable that municipalities have undermined the spirit of the lockdown and have shown clear disdain and lack of empathy for the people, especially the poor," Ms Semenya said.

Furthermore, Ms Semenya said: "We urge the municipalities to desist and refrain from any planned evictions henceforth, and to abide by the regulations."

Although Ms Semenya also cautioned communities against the illegal occupation of land during the lockdown. She added: "Illegal occupation of the land undermines the law of the country and should not be tolerated."

The committee welcomes the plan by the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation to interact with the mayors of the identified municipalities to ensure that evictions are stopped.

Committees in Brief

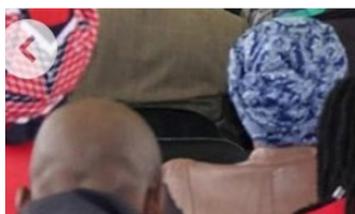
These are some of the matters that came before Parliament's committee's this month.



Portfolio Committee on Basic Education – The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, Ms Bongwiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba, noted with grave concern the great number of schools that have been vandalised during the national lockdown period.

“Our country is going through a crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Resources have already been redirected to address the challenges caused by the pandemic, including financial resources. Now schools will have to be repaired as criminal elements in our communities saw an opportunity to destroy much-needed resources that our learners will need once the lockdown is lifted,” said Ms Mbinqo-Gigaba.

According to reports, 183 schools across the country have been targeted by vandals, arsonists and burglars. In some cases, equipment has been stolen or entire schools burnt down. All schools were closed on 18 March when the President declared the lockdown. Learners were given work to do over the lockdown period in an effort to make up for some of the school hours.



The Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration commends the national executive, comprising the President, Deputy President, Ministers and Deputy Ministers, for sacrificing one third of their salaries for the next three months as a contribution towards the Solidarity Fund.

Following the example set by national executive, the Forum for South African Directors-General (DGs) has also announced a voluntary contribution to the Fund by its individual members of R30 000 each, to be made over six months. The committee has noted this announcement with appreciation and also commends the forum of the DGs.

In light of these contributions, the Chairperson of the committee, Mr Tyoty James, has encouraged all government employees to voluntarily contribute to the fund.



In March 2020, the **Select Committee on Appropriations** invited all stakeholders and interested parties to make written submissions on the 2020 Division of Revenue Bill, which was tabled together with the 2020/21 Budget by the Minister of Finance in Parliament on 26 February 2020.

Public hearings for oral submissions were scheduled to take place in Parliament on 6 May 2020. However, due to the lockdown and its impact on the committee's programme, the committee has resolved to cancel the scheduled public hearings. The committee will indicate if it decides otherwise after receiving the written submissions.

Stakeholders and interested parties who wish to make oral submissions, and those who still wished to comment on the Bill were encouraged to make written submissions by Wednesday, 29 April 2020. All written submissions received will be considered during a committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday, 13 May 2020.

Submissions must be directed to the Committee Secretariat, Mr Lubabalo Nodada, 083 412 1526 / Lnodada@parliament.gov.za or Ms Estelle Grunewald: 071 363 2257 / egrunewald@parliament.gov.za

Copies of the Division of Revenue Bill are available at www.treasury.gov.za or www.parliament.gov.za



The Portfolio Committee on Transport – The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Transport, Mr Mosebenzi Zwane, has called on the minibus taxi leadership in the minibus taxi industry to work with the government in enforcing Covid-19 directives.

Mr Zwane said it was concerning that a number of taxis from the Western Cape would continue to drive despite clear communication and guidance from the government for everyone to stay at home.

“The committee wishes to reiterate the government’s call that people should stay at home ... The priority for all sectors should be to flatten the curve of infections.”



The Portfolio Committee on Tourism welcomes the Covid-19 Tourism Relief Fund that was announced by the Minister of Tourism, Ms Mmamaloko Kubayi-Ngubane.

The tourism sector has been hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and many businesses such as hotels, lodges, among others, are closed in compliance with the government’s lockdown regulations to curb the spread of this virus. Unfortunately, this strategy had to be done internationally to keep people safe.

The Department of Tourism has made an amount of R200 million available through the Tourism Relief Fund. This intervention to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 on the tourism sector is a once-off capped grant assistance to small, micro, and medium-sized enterprises to ensure sustainability during the crisis is welcomed, and these funds will ensure that these businesses survive beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, calls on the Department of Tourism to carefully look at the criteria set for applications for funding so that the smaller players in the tourism value chain in villages and townships can be accommodated and assisted.

Coronavirus: SA on Level 4 from 1 May

After five weeks of lockdown, President Cyril Ramaphosa told the nation that government would follow a "five-level phased approach" towards lifting lockdown restrictions.

He warned that the lockdown cannot be ended abruptly and that government will implement a risk adjusted strategy through which it will take

a deliberate and cautious approach to the easing of current lockdown restrictions.

"Our people need to eat. They need to earn a living. Companies need to be able to produce and to trade, they need to generate revenue and keep their employees in employment. We have accordingly decided that beyond Thursday 30 April,

we should begin a gradual and phased recovery of economic activity," the President said.

"We have decided on this approach because there is still much that is unknown about the rate and manner of the spread of the virus within our population. The action we take now must therefore be measured and incremental," the President

said.

This approach is guided by advice from scientists who have advised that an abrupt and uncontrolled lifting of restrictions could cause a massive resurgence in infections.

The country is currently on level 5 of lockdown which means that drastic measures are required to contain the

spread of the virus to save lives. Level 4, which will begin on the 1st of May, would mean that some activity can be allowed to resume subject to extreme precautions required to limit community transmission and outbreaks.

Ministers will be communicating the regulations of Level 4 as we move forward.

