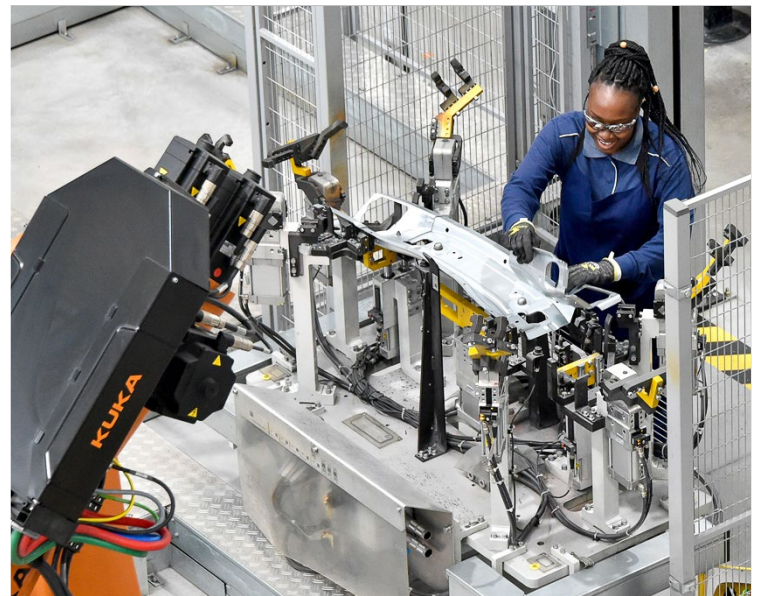


in session





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CAPACITY CHECK:
Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP
Ms Sylvia Lucas opened the conference.

Parliament hosts state capability conference

Parliament hosted a State Capability Conference recently on the theme “State Capability: Delineating Weaknesses, Devising Strategic Mechanisms to Accelerate Policy Implementation”, which was attended by government ministers and members of provincial legislatures as well as municipal councillors and experts in the field, writes Abel Mputing.



The aim of the conference was to analyse state capacity, assess public sector administration and bureaucratic weaknesses and propose solutions to strengthen state capacity.

Making opening remarks, the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Ms Sylvia Lucas, said it is important to define capacity-related challenges across all spheres of government. “Government defines itself as an interventionist, developmental state, which uses the bureaucracy and its resources as a

significant facilitator of growth and development. The foundations of a capable state have been laid, but there are major concerns about weaknesses in how these structures function, which constrain the state’s ability to pursue and attain its key developmental objectives.”

In welcoming delegates to the virtual conference, the Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr Amos Masondo, said although the South African democratic state had the necessary policies to improve

the quality of life of the citizens, it fell short on implementation. “Our aspiration is not to only become a state with the requisite capability. It is also to become a developmental state. This means that through state intervention, the policies we adopt and implement should help us to overcome the root causes of poverty and inequality and to build the state’s capacity to fulfil this role.”

Ms Lucas said the state was particularly hard-pressed to redouble its capacity to implement policies aimed at economic recovery and social transformation.

“State capacity should therefore not merely be viewed as an abstract concept that we make reference to when appropriate. It should be recognised as a fundamental determinant in the confluence of challenges that relate to policy implementation,” she said. 🗳️



Tsakani Maluleke
Auditor-General of South Africa



South Africa is blessed with strong institutions, state capability conference hears

Participating in the State Capability Conference, a senior lecturer at Wits School of Governance Dr TK Pooe cautioned that South Africa could lose its hegemonic role in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), while also arguing that South Africa is not a developmental state, but rather a fragile “quasi-state”, reports Sibongile Maputi.

Dr Pooe identified other challenges such as the rise of zombie municipalities and the lack of consequences for poor performance. However, he also mentioned that South Africa is blessed with strong institutions like the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Stats SA and the Auditor-General. Nonetheless, the three-tier governance system is too complex and should be revised, he believes.

The Head of Department, Developmental, Capable and Ethical State at the Human Sciences Research Council, cautioned that people’s needs must be addressed and they should also be encouraged to participate in policy-making. A capable state is an accountable state that is transparent and provides timely, accessible and accurate information, Prof Pooe said.

Professor Mzukisi Qobo from the Wits Business School said South Africa lacks



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“One cannot have a good policy without a good implementation plan”

Dr TK Pooe from the University of the Witwatersrand School of Governance

implementation plans. “There is a challenge in getting things done in fulfilling the targets that government sets for itself. Some of the programmes we have predated the pandemic, but government was caught unaware and underprepared by the pandemic where it had to shift much of what had planned.

“There was a slow drag in achieving some of the commitments because the capacity had to be placed elsewhere.

When we thought we were coming out of the crisis, government put in place institutions to unblock and implement reforms.”

Prof Qobo identified six aspects of state capacity: refining national government and key institutions; reforming local government; macro-embedded autonomy and political principles; and designation of rural and township regions as states of disasters and new sites of spatial economic zones.

National Assembly member Mr Narend Singh welcomed their presentations and called on academics to engage with political leaders to find programmes that work. He commented that the government’s District Development Model is not a new concept, but is nonetheless a valuable one.

The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said her department is in the process of undertaking a 21-year-review of local government and that academic input on the review would be welcome.

In conclusion, Dr Pooe said South Africa needs to rethink its public policy and its implementation. “One cannot have a good policy without a good implementation plan; that is nonsensical. Policies are too theoretical and do not think about implementation. It is important to think about how you will evaluate when thinking these policies.”

We need a reset button, Deputy Minister Gina tells State Capacity Conference



LET'S BE MORE COMPETITIVE: Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition Ms Nomalungelo Gina (left) encouraged government to put measures in place to ensure South African industry is able to compete on a world stage.

The Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Ms Nomalungelo Gina, has said that the South African state requires a different approach when she joined a panel discussion in a State Capacity Conference organised by the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) on the theme: Delineating Weaknesses, Devising Strategic Mechanisms to Accelerate Policy Implementation, reports Sibongile Maputi.

"This is a huge discussion in government, especially in the economic cluster. We need to industrialise our economy; the structure of the economy has to be anchored in manufacturing," Ms Gina said.

She said it was unfortunate that the conference took place at a time when the economy is experiencing unprecedented challenges that include weak growth, deindustrialisation and extreme fiscal pressures. "According to the Absa Purchase Index Managers released recently, manufacturing had dropped, but causal factors are

connected not only to the recent floods in KZN [KwaZulu-Natal], but also the impact of Covid-19 and lockdowns that effectively shut down the economy and the effect of which had been the shedding of jobs."

Other constraints on the economy include unreliable electricity supply, which is a major risk to the economy and the overall growth path. Furthermore, the auctioning of the digital spectrum, harbour congestion and regulatory delays, the impact of the 2021 unrest in KZN and Gauteng, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict are additional challenges.

"It is against this economic background that we must be strengthening the state capability to accelerate the economy, inclusive growth and competitiveness," she concluded. A representative of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr Henk Serfontein, told the conference that the local sphere has challenges with capacity. In addition, a lack of accountability and consequence management prevail. "Debts of municipalities are increasing and municipalities are unable to pay for bulk services they are getting, revenue services are decreasing and are unable to meet their obligations. There are no actions around addressing unauthorised, irregular and wasteful expenditure."

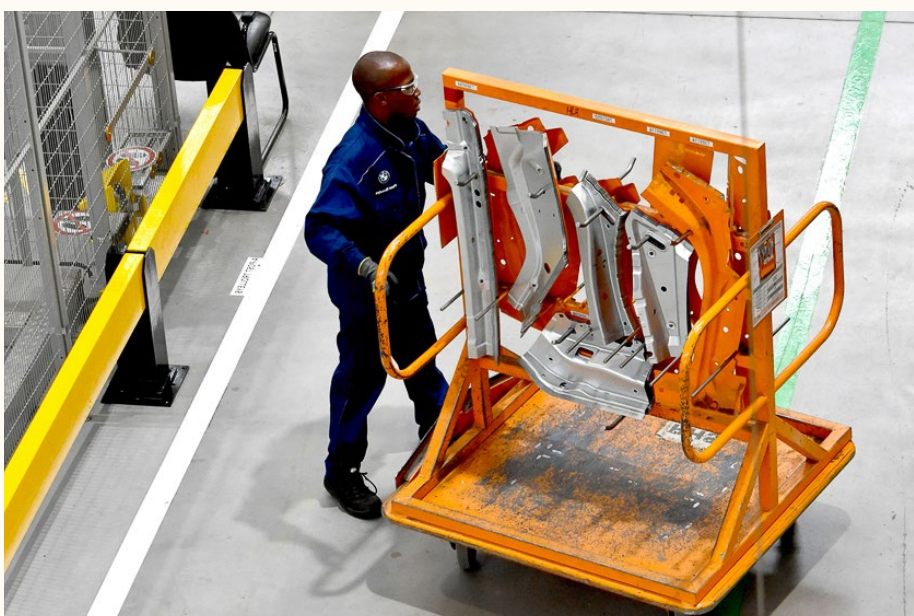
"Capabilities of councillors ward committees are not fully functional and this is reflected in the Auditor-General's report. We are not seeing the strengthening of government on financial management. Many municipalities are in dire financial position and there is a huge amount of concern around them."

He said the department has a local government improvement model that

has tried to assist some municipalities to improve. "But we are finding that we do not have resources and expertise to perform oversight, and internal audit units are not as required. To unblock these municipalities, maintenance and investment in infrastructure projects will look at restoration and maintenance, and will look at rehabilitation of energy distribution. We are seeing deterioration in the abilities and capabilities of local government, national and provincial.

The government's policies and interventions have not had the desired result and the improvement in the management of public finances has yet to materialise. He said as a result of lack of capability, the state's liability was R166 billion and R4.9 billion is still owed to suppliers after the 30 days prescribed in legislation.

The session Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Ms Sylvia Lucas, welcomed the input saying it will give Parliament an idea of the system's strengths and weaknesses. Follow-up workshops will build on conference recommendations, she concluded. 🇿🇦



Political parties deployed the least experienced representatives to the local sphere of government, the Conference on State Capability hosted by Parliament heard, writes Sibongile Maputi.

The Minister of Cooperative Governance, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, told the conference that municipalities are a battle ground in South Africa's developmental state and that citizens' patience with municipalities has waned, as evidenced by the declining voter numbers participating in the recent local elections. "Voter turnout is one indicator of a capable state and low turnouts signalled the deep problems democracies face today. The masses are losing hope in democracies; the local sphere is a battle ground."

Challenges include the fact that political parties send their least experience people to local government. The local government sphere is also the least-resourced in terms of skills and financial resources.

With the theme "State Capability: Delineating Weaknesses, Devising Strategic Mechanisms to Accelerate Policy Implementation", the conference was held virtually and was attended by Cabinet ministers, members of provincial legislatures, academics and councillors.

Dr Dlamini-Zuma said many municipalities have administrative challenges. "This is an issue even in the economy; the skills revolution needs to be implemented. But also at the root of the problems at local government is the political instability and the lack of economic development."

"Voter turnout is one indicator of a capable state and low turnouts signalled the deep problems democracies face today. The masses are losing hope in democracies; the local sphere is a battle ground."

Minister of Cooperative Governance, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma



CIVIL UNREST: South African voters are becoming disillusioned with democracy, the state and the services it provides to citizens, warned Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma at the conference. This disillusionment is expressed in riots and destruction of property, as seen here.

Parties deploy least experienced people at local government, Conference hears



She identified other challenges as high turnover of councillors, rural municipalities that lack revenue, corruption and low revenue collection. "The time for action is now. We must reposition ourselves to meet the demands of active citizenry." She said the department has started working with academic institutions. Dr Xolisile Ngumbela from the School of Public Management, Governance

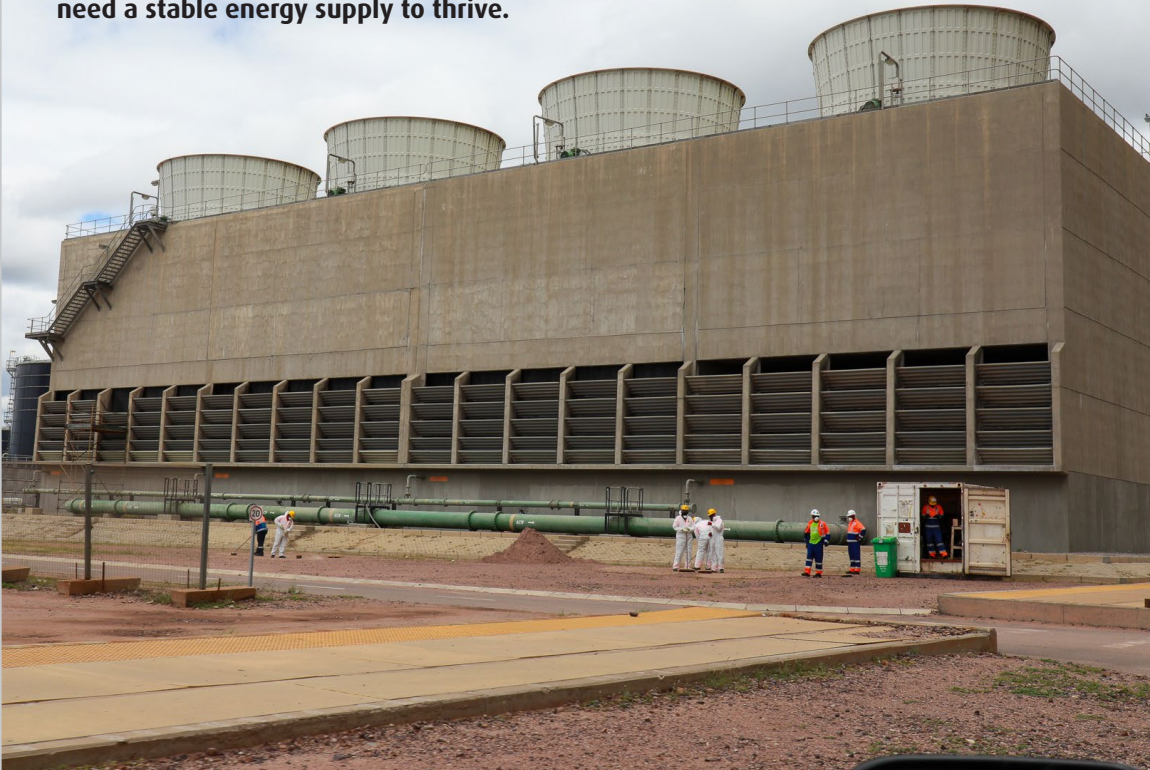
and Public Policy, College of Business and Economics at the University of Johannesburg said the state's failure to invest in rural development will result in people leaving for towns. "Rural municipalities are unable to generate revenue for the local folks. Even municipal managers, most of them do not stay in their municipalities. The retention of skills and political interference is rife."

He said for anyone to survive as municipal managers, they have to hide behind councillors, who he described as a law unto themselves in municipalities. "The state wishes to attract public value and trust, but fails to capacitate civil servants in order to deliver on their mandate. Developmental state requires investments."

He said service delivery is a basic human right and that services need to be provided impartially, fairly and without bias. Dr Ngumbela also highlighted that state-owned enterprises compete with government departments.

"Even when they spend on non-core functions, it's like they are not from SA and do not know how the financial systems work." He added that the government's programme monitoring system needs to be strengthened and adhere to the principles of a developmental state. 🗳️

ENERGY CRISIS: South Africa's economy and its people need a stable energy supply to thrive.



“Load-shedding cannot become South Africa’s default position. It is not a solution to our energy crisis. We need urgent action now, before we are left in the dark, permanently”

Inkatha Freedom Party Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa

National Assembly debates calls for urgent solution to electricity crisis

Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA), Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, recently sponsored a topic for debate in the National Assembly, “Energy crisis and the threat of a protracted failure of Eskom”, on South Africa’s electricity challenges, writes Sakhile Mokoena.



Members of Parliament from the various political parties represented in Parliament presented their party’s views on the situation. Mr Hlengwa began by saying that since March, there have been 26 days of load shedding thus far in 2022, with Eskom’s national control manager predicting at least 100 days of power cuts this winter. “While our economy is on the verge of collapse, Eskom has advised that blackouts that will cost South Africa billions of rands are on the cards, and yet it takes an opposition party – the IFP – to raise the alarm,” Mr Hlengwa said.

He argued in the hybrid sitting that

the state power utility is unable to fulfil its fundamental duty, which is to generate enough energy to power our national grid. “With the almost weekly breakdowns and other maintenance-related issues, it is clear that our energy infrastructure is ageing faster than Eskom can get its affairs in order. Eskom has become a national and international embarrassment,” he said.

The SCOPA Chairperson further added that South Africa’s reliance on coal flies in the face of international agreements we have signed to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change. “It is without question that we must ensure we fully pursue the

alternatives to coal in generating electricity, while safeguarding and climate-proofing our environment. We are a country with untapped opportunities and resourceful people. We have an economy that needs to rebound, but any green shoots are dependent on the certainty of its energy supply to move forward.

“Load-shedding cannot become South Africa’s default position. It is not a solution to our energy crisis. We need urgent action now, before we are left in the dark, permanently,” argued Mr Hlengwa.

Representing the African National Congress, Mr Mikateko Mahlaule launched an attack on the opposition and accused them, particularly the IFP and the Democratic Alliance, of lacking the correct understanding of the challenges facing Eskom. The DA has previously sponsored a similar motion for debate where it blamed the electricity problem on inefficiencies of the ANC.

Said Mr Mahlaule: “What we are witnessing with regard to Eskom is neither a threat nor a failure, it is merely a logical outcome of the instrumentalisation of democratic practices. Access to electricity is a fundamental democratic right and Eskom shows unwavering commitment to that, even though there is often a mismatch between access and energy security,” he said.

Mr Mahlaule also pointed out that the ANC government was committed to the energy-mix approach, which include Eskom’s procurement of energy from independent power producers (IPPs) and plans to implement the nuclear power programme framework to procure 2 500 megawatts of nuclear power. “Nuclear power in addition to IPPs and gas will allow Eskom to conduct maintenance without interruptions as well as sustain the South African economy. It is in the national interest that Eskom must be fixed and restructured to ensure that there is sufficient power to implement the economic reconstruction and recovery plan to reverse the effects of poverty, inequality and unemployment,” he said.

The DA’s Mr Kevin Mileham said the crisis at Eskom requires bold and urgent attention to quickly bring new energy generation online. “More than half of Eskom’s coal-powered fleet is offline for one reason or another. Our energy availability is at a record annual low of 58 per cent and the three-month outlook indicates a rough road ahead, with a high a high risk of load shedding.”

He also proposed that bottlenecks in connecting IPPs to the grid be removed, the transmission infrastructure be upgraded, and the framework for private generation and municipal procurement be simplified.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) believe that all interventions, including bailouts, to stabilise Eskom are misguided, as the ruling party refuses to address obvious challenges. This has led to a far deeper crisis at the utility. “Three years ago, former Minister of Finance Tito Mboweni introduced a special appropriations bill in the National Assembly to request Parliament to appropriate R59 billion to give to Eskom. Lots of promises and commitments were made. We were told the money will help to reduce the systemic risk of energy crisis and stabilize Eskom,” said EFF Member of Parliament Ms Omphile Maotwe.

She proposed that coal prices be pegged to stabilise Eskom finances. The EFF also does not believe that Eskom should be unbundled, but considers investment in nuclear energy in a financially responsive manner as a positive response to the situation.

“Eskom remains the biggest threat to South Africa’s fiscal stability because of its debt and nearly R400 billion in guarantees. It is a stumbling block to any efforts to kick start a dead economy,” she said.

Mr Wouter Wessels of the Freedom Front Plus questioned how Eskom runs at a loss when it is a monopoly. “It is an undisputable fact that it has always had a monopoly on electricity supply in South Africa. Now according to economics 101, a monopoly always makes a profit. It can never ever make a loss, except under the management of the ANC. You manage to break all rules, even economic principles,” he said.

He blamed the Eskom crisis on a bloated workforce, mismanagement, corruption, failed policies of affirmative action and black economic empowerment.



Closing the debate, the Minister of Public Enterprises Mr Pravin Gordhan admitted that load shedding costs the country dearly and causes great frustration among all South Africans. It creates hardship for households and businesses. This is why the government has committed to ensure energy security is achieved as soon as possible.

“It won’t be tomorrow, but it will be achieved. Government and Eskom are working to resolve the energy crisis affecting this country. And I can assure this House and the public that there is a lot of hard work, notwithstanding the hurdles and the difficulties that we face, going into this,” the Minister said. 🙏

Resilience Will Be Our Bedrock, Says Finance Minister

The Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana, presented his department’s budget vote in a mini-plenary of the National Assembly (NA), saying that resilience is the bedrock on which the department will build to address current difficult economic circumstances, writes Abel Mputing.



STEADY HAND: Minister of Finance Mr Enoch Godongwana.

“For National Treasury, this will require a determined effort in pursuing our ongoing endeavours to accelerate a growth economy, including tackling structural constraints, applying measures to restore investor confidence and public trust, safeguarding the fiscal framework, reducing policy uncertainty and

lowering the cost of doing business,” he said.

Although public finances remain under some strain, Mr Godongwana continued, the fiscal position has improved somewhat since last year. These improvements he attributed to the recommendations arising out

of the spending reviews that, when implemented correctly, improve expenditure efficiency and programme delivery over the medium term.

The crippling effect of dysfunctional municipalities, which are supposed to drive economic growth, cannot be overstated, the Minister went on to say. Healthy municipalities will boost the quality of life of citizens, encourage economic activity and investment, and will encourage ratepayers to pay their taxes and for the services they receive.

In its quest to curb borrowing, National Treasury will continue to impose funding and borrowing ceilings on state-owned enterprises, Mr Godongwana explained. However, Eskom’s large debt that it cannot service without government intervention and its role in South Africa’s economy make it an exception

to this rule. National Treasury is therefore working on a sustainable solution to deal with Eskom’s debt in a manner that is equitable and fair to all stakeholders, the Minister claimed.

In addition, National Treasury is proposing to amend tax legislation and eliminate loopholes in an effort to meet the government’s revenue needs. These proposals will only receive public support if people perceive that Treasury is championing an ethical government, Mr Godongwana said.

At the heart of this effort is the Public Procurement Bill. “We received over 4 000 submissions on the revised Procurement Bill and these have all been considered along with the recommendations from several recent commissions of enquiry. Consultations with Nedlac commenced on 6 May 2022 as the Bill progresses towards Parliament.

The department’s budget over the next three years is R2.8 trillion. Close to 60 per cent, or R1.7 trillion, is for transfers to provincial governments for the provincial equitable share. According to the Treasury’s projections, debt-service costs amount to 34.4 percent, or R1 trillion, of the department’s budget over the medium-term economic framework period. With an additional R3 billion, a total of R34.3 billion has been allocated to the South African Revenue Service, to build the capacity of human resources and implement ICT projects.



DEPENDABLE DATA: Minister in the Presidency Mondli Gungubele praised the quality of the data provided by StatsSA, saying it provided crucial information for government action.

Statistics SA is bedrock of our strong democracy, says Presidency Minister

Presenting the Statistic South Africa (StatsSA) Budget Vote yesterday, the Minister in the Presidency, Mr Mondli Gungubele, reassured South Africans that despite Covid-19 and poor economic growth that led to resource constraints, StatsSA is the bedrock of our strong democratic society and a yardstick that measures the extent to which we have responded to inequality, unemployment and poverty, reports Abel Mputing.

StatsSA is also a valuable resource for civil society and commerce, as its data determines our investment climate, reveals consumer behaviour and tracks development indicators. Furthermore, it provides the government with evidence-based research data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its policies.

Mr Gungubele also explained that the challenges posed to the 2022 census as a result of Covid-19 regulations have generated new data collection methodologies, which will now become routine. The census is now nearing its completion, but the analysis of its data and results will only be released next year.

Referring to some existing tension between policy makers and StatsSA, he assured his listeners that StatsSA insists on disseminating researched data without fear or favour. "We uphold this principle because it's part of our five-year plan to utilise our data ecosystem to deepen democracy and to be responsive to sustainable development, improve the lives of our people through evidence-based data." Mr Zakhele Mbhele of the Democratic Alliance mentioned declines in government resources and tax revenues, as well as vacancies at some government entities as challenges threatening StatsSA's mandate. In addition, he does not believe that the government makes good use of the data collected as he sees no benefit arising from its use in government policies and implementation.

The African National Congress's Ms Teliswa Mgweba replied by saying that StatsSA is an indispensable tool for national development and ensures that the government arrives at informed decisions. However, she recognised the decline in StatsSA's budget as a challenge. Nonetheless, she is optimistic that the 2022 census will reveal the underlying inefficiencies in economic reform and reconstruction policies.

Mr Rosina Komane of the Economic Freedom Fighters said we will not have a credible source of data as long as StatsSA is not an independent entity. In addition, in an austerity budget, StatsSA will be unable to fulfil its mandate to collect reliable quantitative data. Mr Russel Cebekhulu of the Inkatha Freedom Party registered his concern about the number of rural communities that are not yet counted in the 2022 census, as well as the online registration. "This means a vast number of people in these areas who don't have access to technology will be left uncounted." He urged StatsSA to reconsider this decision.

The budget allocated to StatsSA should be consistent with the priorities set for it in the National Development Plan and the development goals set out to achieve its objectives, contested Mr Steven Jafta of the African Independent Congress. However, if StatsSA is to form part of the data revolution and enhance its credibility, it must be supported with sufficient funds, unlike the allocations granted to it in the current financial year, he argued.

The Democratic Alliance's Dr Dion George responded to all this by saying that the mismanagement of the public purse will lead to starvation. He blamed this on government fiscal policy and black economic empowerment. He also blamed state-owned enterprises for draining public finances with minimal return on investment.

To turn the economic tide, he proposed that government place itself at the centre of tax breaks and a privatisation model that will create a conducive economic environment for business.

Meanwhile, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Finance, Mr Joe Maswanganyi, mentioned the committee's concerns with AfriForum's court challenge of the Preferential Procurement Act, which they fear might impact on the government's policy of transforming the economy and inclusive growth. He welcomed the Minister's assurances that black economic empowerment will not be affected.

The committee also welcomed the news that the Procurement Bill is on its way to Parliament, as it could enable procurement as a means to stimulate transformation and inclusive economic growth.

The Economic Freedom Fighters' Mr Floyd Shivambu mentioned rising unemployment as a big stumbling block, affecting over 12 million South Africans, who are fit to work but remain jobless, and impacting mostly black people and women in particular.

"We received over 4 000 submissions on the revised Procurement Bill and these have all been considered along with the recommendations from several recent commissions of enquiry."

**The Minister of Finance,
Mr Enoch Godongwana**

Inequality remains racialised in a status quo that "reflects the vision and plan of the architectures of colonialism and apartheid, which wanted the indigenous people to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water," he said.

Mr Shivambu also challenged what he perceived to be the South African Reserve Bank's tendency to punish black financial institutions. "It's task is to ensure black financial institutions thrive, but due to narrow political interests, all black financial institutions are destroyed by it," he alleged. He also criticised the South African Revenue Service's inability to collect tax from multinational corporations and the digital economy, and threatened court action against the privatisation of South African Airways (SAA). "We are against the privatisation of state-owned enterprises; we will soon be challenging the privatisation of SAA in court," he warned.



Minister Promises to Restore Public Trust in South African Police Service

Police Minister Mr Bheki Cele has told the National Assembly that his department's budget for the financial year 2022/23 will help restore public trust and confidence in the South African Police Service (SAPS). It will also re-establish community policing forums (CPFs) to boost the fight against crime, writes Sakhile Mokoena.



Minister of Police Mr Bheki Cele

The Minister made this commitment recently when he tabled the police's budget vote together with those of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) and the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service (CSPS) for debate in a virtual National Assembly (NA) mini-plenary.

"This administration is working with agility to improve community relations at all levels of governance. The three-legged pot [SAPS, IPID and CSPS] is hell-bent on restoring the trust deficit that impacts on our overall fight against crime. The organisation has taken up the challenge to rebuild itself and at the same time improve its image and regain the trust in the communities we serve," the Minister said.

Mr Cele dedicated the budget vote to rebuilding and strengthening community relations in the fight against crime. He also called on CPFs, the business sector and the police to establish and maintain partnerships with communities as well as promote communication between the police and the community.

"We need to promote cooperation and ensure that the police fulfil the needs of the community in respect of policing, improve the service of the police to the community, improve transparency and accountability of the SAPS and promote joint problem-identification and problem solving," he said.

The Minister further argued that the philosophy of community policing is not new and has shown that the more involved law enforcement is with residents, the more residents can help police achieve their goals of reducing crime.

The unrest that engulfed parts of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal in July last year called for clear reforms of security services and at the same time exposed the divide between the police and the communities they serve, said the Minister. "The police needed the community and the community needed the police. But it was clear community policing was at its weakest and there was little to no trust

between the police and the communities.

"As we roll out plans to rebuild and strengthen community relations in the fight against crime, key to this is to channel adequate and functional resources and manpower to police stations to ensure that the fight against crime is effective and efficient in winning public confidence in policing."

The Minister also announced that investigations arising out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995 are receiving the Directorate of Priority Crime Investigation attention.

The directorate has since hired investigators on a three-year contract basis and 34 of these investigators have been specifically assigned to investigate these TRC cases.

African National Congress Member of Parliament and the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Police, Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson, condemned the high levels of violence against women, mostly perpetrated by intimate partners, which she called "a blight on our national conscious and a betrayal of the country's constitutional order".

"We support the budget vote and welcome plans to prioritise the family violence, child protection and sexual offences (FCS) and the gender-based violence and femicide units. The police budget is enormous and must be applied effectively to fight violent crime in our country," she said. She also welcomed the state's focus on restoring police department infrastructure, including police stations.

Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament Mr Andrew Whitfield said South Africa deserves a professional police service characterised by high levels of discipline, merit-based appointments and a capable, fit-for-purpose management that inspires confidence through its ranks and in the public by reducing crime.

"A lack of professionalism, broken management systems and deteriorating quality of investigations have all contributed to taking SAPS to the brink of collapse. The chain of command has been compromised by politics and the promotion of unqualified cadres above qualified, capable police officers giving rise to declining levels of morale, poor performance and even corruption," he said.

Mr Andries Shembeni of the Economic Freedom Fighters accused the police of lacking a plan to deal with gender-based violence, and for allowing the DNA lab to collapse, placing thousands of cases of rape and murder in serious jeopardy. "You have allowed the firearms registry to collapse, leaving thousands of South African gun owners and prospective gun owners with nowhere to run, whilst exposing guns and ammunition to criminal networks across the country," he said.

The Inkatha Freedom Party's Mr Narend Singh said the SAPS has a long, difficult road ahead if it is to achieve the vision of the National Development Plan to build safer communities within the next eight years. "Our people need to be kept safe and in order to do this SAPS needs a well-resourced, properly trained, boots-on-the-ground personnel as well as adequate resources," he said. 🇿🇦

Public Works Budget Vote Highlights Department's Crucial Role in Economic Wealth and Wellbeing



REBUILDING FROM DISASTER: Restoring Parliament's buildings after the January fire is a big item on the Department of Public Works' budget, said Minister Patricia de Lille (left).



Tabling the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's budget vote recently in a National Assembly (NA) mini-plenary, the Minister Ms Patricia de Lille pointed out that the department has a critical role to play in growing the economy and in the wellbeing of South Africa's citizens, reports Abel Mputing.

The department is processing the final report on the cost of the work to restore Parliament to its former self after the fire that damaged buildings in January. As for rebuilding after the floods in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the Eastern Cape, Ms de Lille said that the department is focussing on 53 damaged government-owned buildings in KZN and 12 in the Eastern Cape.

She noted that the floods have alerted the department to the importance of building and maintaining infrastructure to withstand climate change. The Infrastructure Investment Plan is at the heart of the department's interventions in this regard, the Minister reported. To this end, the transport sector has completed five construction projects and four in procurement, while the social housing sector has completed

three projects, two are in construction, two are in procurement, while the rest are in the planning stages.

One such project was the Small Harbours Repairs and Maintenance programme, which created 925 jobs and empowered 142 local small, medium and micro enterprises worth over R116 million, of which 73 were level one black economic empowerment companies.

As part of building a capable state, the department awarded 173 bursaries in the past financial year to students to study in the field of the built environment, while 129 internship opportunities were created.

To get the Public Infrastructure Plan going, an additional R1.6 trillion in public sector infrastructure investment is required by 2030, over and above what is forecast for current public sector entities. This will be achieved by building private sector confidence in the capacity of the state to deliver bankable public infrastructure projects.

Giving a breakdown of her department's budget vote of R8.5 billion, over R7.4 billion is allocated to transfers and subsidies to the department's entities and the Extended Public Works Programme. On debt the department owes to municipalities, Ms de Lille confirmed an amount of R502 million, of which R337 million was paid in April. The remaining R165 million is still being

processed for payment.

Ms Madeleine Hicklin of the Democratic Alliance commended the Minister's bold move to place infrastructure at the centre of economic growth, but said the government had failed to achieve this.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms Nolitha Ntobongwana, said the department's budget will improve people's lives and stimulate growth. The committee also welcomes the department's strategic development, which will drive its culture of change. Nonetheless, the department requires people of skill to enhance the impact of its infrastructure mandates, which are critical in resuscitating economic development and inclusive growth.

The committee encourages collaboration between the state and the private sector to provide blended finance for infrastructure projects. The

committee also urges the department to enhance its capacity to mitigate risks associated with the awarding contracts to ensure that the state derives value for money from them.

Ms Naledi Chirwa of the Economic Freedom Fighters said the department has descended into chaos over the past years and is holding productive land for no apparent reason. She alleged that the state said in 2019 that it will release over 3 000 land parcels for redistribution, but today most of this land lies fallow and has not been released to black farmers.

Even worse, she said, is the fact that the department still leases private property to government departments, at huge cost, despite the government's extensive property portfolio. Compounding the error, the department also fails to maintain its property register and allows its properties to fall into ruin, as it has no record of them, Ms Chirwa said.



Department of Water and Sanitation Has Plan to Deal with Challenges, Says Minister

Delivering his department's budget vote recently in the National Assembly, the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mr Senzo Mchunu, said: "We are debating our budget at a difficult time, following devastating floods in various parts of the country, KwaZulu-Natal in particular." He assured those affected by floods that a war room has been established that, with the worst-affected municipalities, will address their basic water and sanitation needs.



**Minister of Water and Sanitation:
Mr Senzo Mchunu**

During a water and sanitation summit, the department was able to develop a good understanding of the country's water challenges and achieve a consensus on what needs to be done. One of the department's major turn-around strategies is the inception of National Water Resources Infrastructure Agency, which will be the custodian of national water resources, he told Members of Parliament. This agency will leverage large-scale investments in national water resource infrastructure to secure sufficient bulk water supply now and in future. This agency will be legislated after cabinet's approval and a draft business plan has been submitted to National Treasury for comment.

The minister went on to report on various provincial projects, including one in the Eastern Cape, the Mzimvubu Water Project, which aims to provide water to 750 000 people at a cost of R25 billion. In the Free State, a R10 billion project to build a major pipeline from the Xhariep Dam to augment water supply in Mangaung is at the feasibility stage. The department is also busy rationalising the water boards, which are inefficient and poorly governed, the minister said.

The department has been allocated R59.6 billion over the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF). Conditional infrastructure grants for municipal water services amount to R 3 439 billion over the MTEF, which includes R19 billion for the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant and R14 billion for the Water Services Infrastructure Grant. The Water Trading Entity was allocated R9.55 billion.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Sanitation, Ms Mfana Mashego, said that since 1994 the government has ensured that every household has access to water and sanitation, wherever they reside. She further advised that when the department hands over water infrastructure, it must ensure that municipalities have the capacity to maintain and manage them. She also welcomed the department's intention



to support municipalities to improve their debt collection and to generate their own revenues.

She also welcomed revised procurement regulations to support President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation call for procurement to be allocated to women, youth and people with disabilities.

Responding to the minister's address, Mr Leon Basson of the Democratic Alliance urged the minister to ask the Special Investigation Unit to investigate the R35 million "kickback" paid out for a SAP contract. He also expressed displeasure about the quality of South Africa's water supply. "The report reveals that 48% of the country's water supply systems were judged to be low risk, 18% medium risk and 34% high or critical risk."

Public/private partnerships are the solution to this crisis, he argued. "The DA believes that through meaningful public/private partnerships, a solution can be found. Water specialists indicated that more than R900 billion

will be needed in the next 10 years on infrastructure, to avoid a full-scale water crisis."

The grave lack of access to water and sanitation among some citizens requires extraordinary government measures, was the view of Economic Freedom Fighters' Ms Mathibe Mohlala. Only 5.3 million households have to access to clean water and adequate sanitation and the department's own master plan indicates a growing gap between demand and supply, she said.

The Inkatha Freedom Party's Ms Sbuyiselwe Buthelezi believes that most of South Africa's water problems stem from poor maintenance of bulk water infrastructure. The recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal should not be blamed for poor access to water, the IFP believes. "Those who will stand before this house and claim so will be misleading it. The department must come up with a draft budget to address the devastation caused by floods and further address the ongoing problem of the shortage of water in the province." 🌧️





Minister of Health concerned by budget decrease



Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla

In delivering the Health budget speech in the National Assembly (NA) recently, the Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla, said the budget allocation for financial year 2022/23 is R64,5 billion. However, he is concerned that in the medium term the health budget will decrease by 1,7% each year; before inflation has been considered, writes Yoliswa Landu.

Dr Phaahla informed Members of the NA that 86% of the total allocation, or some R55 billion will be transferred to provinces as conditional grants to support various health service activities related to HIV and TB, as well as human resource needs, such as medical interns and community services doctors, and infrastructure support.

He admitted that more healthcare workers are needed and said that at least R7.5 billion had been set aside for the hiring and training of community healthcare workers and medical interns over the next two financial years. Additionally, 2 429 medical interns and community service personnel, among them doctors, nurses and pharmacists, were employed during the current financial year.

Progress has been achieved in the employment of more than 47 000 community health workers. Dr Phaahla said: "We are grateful for an additional R2,1 billion over the next two financial years allocated for medical interns. And a total amount of R5,4 billion is allocated in this financial year to support various aspects of health professions' training in provinces, including additional personnel."

In the current financial year, provinces will share R6,8 billion in direct conditional grants managed by them under the Health Facilities Revitalisation grants to construct, revitalise and maintain hospitals, clinics and other facilities. Staffing of health facilities is the key to the improvement of quality service. The presidential stimulus package, which was announced by the President in 2020 for Covid-19, continued in 2021/22 and enabled the employment of over 73 000 additional staff, many of them on short-term contracts.

Participating in the debate, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Kenneth Jacobs, said the coronavirus pandemic has tested the health system's capacity and the commitment and resilience of healthcare workers. The pandemic also laid bare the weaknesses in our healthcare system, such infrastructure and health equipment backlogs.

The government has an obligation to provide a healthcare system that benefits every single man, woman and child and for this reason the Department of Health has proposed to transform health by introducing a National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill to ensure that every South African has access to healthcare services, regardless of their socio-economic status. Parliamentary processes are at an advanced stage on the Bill and will be with the committee soon.



HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL: Part of the Health department's budget has been ring-fenced to fund a National Health Insurance fund, which the government says will make the provision of health services for the rich and the poor more equitable.

Dr Phaahla informed Members of Parliament that the budget includes a ring-fenced provision to prepare for the NHI, such as the benefits design and pricing, provider accreditation, management of health products procurement, further development of the digital information systems and developing risk management and anti-corruption systems.

"The audits have been done on the equipment at all facilities and plans are in place to replace ageing equipment."

Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla

Committee Member Ms Michelle Clarke was of the view that the R8.8 billion already allocated towards the NHI should rather be used to alleviate the critical shortage of medical personnel.

In his speech during the budget vote debate, the Deputy Minister of

Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, highlighted the government's work to treat cancer. He acknowledged that South Africa faces a serious shortage of oncologists, but that nonetheless, these services have been expanded in most provinces, especially in areas such as childhood cancers and palliative care.

"The audits have been done on the equipment at all facilities and plans are in place to replace ageing equipment. During this financial year, R257 million has been allocated in NHI grant to six provinces to support oncology services," said Dr Dhlomo.

Dr Jacobs said the budget vote has addressed communicable and non-communicable diseases and the department will also be scaling up mental health promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Dr Dhlomo added that various interventions will be put in place to improve mental health services, including building capacity by establishing district specialist mental health teams to plan, coordinate and facilitate integrated mental health services across the priority programmes. 🙏

Land reform together with early warnings for extreme weather is what we need, says Agriculture Minister



Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza

Tabling her department's Budget Vote for debate in the National Assembly (NA), the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, called for the acceleration of the land and agrarian reform programmes, along with the development of early warning systems for extreme weather and climate events, reports Sakhile Mokoena.

The Minister said the intention of land and agrarian reform has always been about redressing land ownership inequality that arose from colonial and apartheid policies. "We must ensure tenure security for all, empower citizens to participate in the agricultural economy and ensure integrated rural development. Our interventions in policy, legislation and programmatic intervention must bring us closer in building an inclusive society, without leaving anyone behind," Minister Didiza said.

She also reported that the government's programme to commercialise black farmers is taking shape and some green shoots are showing in land development support for farmers on farms acquired through the Pro-Active Land Acquisition

Strategy (PLAS). Minister Didiza believes that the transformation of agriculture in South Africa depends on changing land ownership patterns, the growth of black commercial farming, and the accumulation of wealth to improve the quality of livelihoods of people directly and indirectly impacted by agricultural initiatives. Another important element of transformation and inclusive growth will be the use of public private partnerships.

Another growing problem is the intensity and frequency of extreme weather and climate events on the globe and particularly in Africa. South Africa needs to continue to strengthen the multi-hazards early warning system to preserve development gains and minimise losses in agriculture, livelihoods, property and human life.

"We also need to accelerate the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures, response and post-disaster recovery mechanisms to protect our sector. The recent floods experienced in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape serve as prime examples for the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures," she said.

The Minister tabled a total budget of R17.3 billion and announced that a sizeable portion of this budget was for transfers to provincial departments of agriculture, as part of the division of revenue as well as transfers to agricultural entities.

Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, supported the department's budget plan and programmes for the year. He said agriculture plays a critical role in food security and 80% of the world's food is grown on small or family farms. For this reason, it is important for government to support all players in the agriculture sector and acknowledge their role in ensuring peace and stability of our beloved South Africa.

"We must do more to ensure the

CHANGING WORLD: Minister Didiza highlighted the importance of budgeting to strengthen the department's response to climate change and other disasters.



success of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme. Through this programme, government seeks to increase the creation of wealth in the rural agricultural communities; create sustainable employment; improve on its foreign trade account; reduce poverty and inequalities in the ownership of the land and agricultural enterprises, thereby dismantling agricultural monopolies," Nkosi Mandela said.

The department is mandated to ensure the success of the AgriBEE Fund in order to support black emerging farmers. More needs to be done to ensure greater accessibility to this funding by black and emergent farmers, he went on to say. He also announced that his committee will conduct joint oversight visits with the Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour to look into the living and working conditions of farmworkers, farm dwellers and farmers.

"We hope that at the end of our oversight work, Parliament will deal with all the challenges faced and experienced by our farming and agricultural communities, posing a direct threat to the productivity of those affected farms and their economic livelihood," he added.

Ms Annette Steyn of the Democratic Alliance argued that her party's position is that "the failure of land reform is not the consequence of

any constitutional deficiency, nor is it due to the government's lack of funds to compensate owners for land purchased. We need political will to bring about clear land transformation, we need to provide certainty that property rights will be protected, and that expropriated land will be compensated and follow due process," she said.

She also made a point that the transfer of land alone will not secure the economic success of an agricultural enterprise. "We need knowledge, skills, infrastructure, markets, equipment, and access to water for irrigation is required to successfully farm on commercial scale, all of which form part of post-settlement support," Ms Steyn added.

Mr Nthako Matiase of the Economic Freedom Fighters said his party will not support the budget vote. He called it: "An uninspired budget, fundamentally out of touch with the reality of the land and agricultural challenges the country faces. At the core of these challenges is the lack of political will by this department to take tough decisions to salvage the little that is left of South African agriculture and to fundamentally restructure the entire structure of the agrarian economy to ensure that land reform is widely redistributive and that agriculture is largely responsible for growth in the country side," said Mr Matiase. 🌱



LET'S STAMP IT OUT: Illegal land occupation prevents government from planning fit and proper housing developments, Minister Kubayi pointed out.

Minister announces bold plans to upgrade informal settlements



Minister of Human Settlements, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi

The Minister of Human Settlements, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi, told the National Assembly (NA) that her department has identified and surveyed 2 700 informal settlements across the country, all of which need to be upgraded or relocated, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Tabling the department's Budget Vote for debate in a mini-plenary of the NA, Ms Kubayi said most informal settlements are located in unsuitable land that can cause various problems for housing. "I have been engaging communities in informal settlements. First priority is to discourage illegal

occupation of land and request municipalities to ensure that we don't allow anymore illegal occupation of land. This illegal occupation of land denies us an opportunity to plan and implement the human settlements programme properly. Moreover, these are the areas which have been mainly affected by disasters and leads to losses of lives," the Minister said.

She also announced that she will issue a ministerial directive, in accordance with section 29 of the Housing Development Agency Act, to authorise the agency to drive interventions on upgrading informal settlements and ensure faster turn-around time in providing basic services, to give dignity and comply with human rights in our communities.

The Minister said: "It has been heart-breaking to see the conditions of some of our communities, such Siyakhana informal settlement in Cape Town, Duncan Village in Buffalo City Municipality and Zandspruit in Johannesburg, amongst others. Hence we have to drastically improve this area of work."

Although the human settlements sector has had many challenges, Ms Kubayi pointed out that technical and policy mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that the sector embarks on a more progressive trajectory. The Minister believes that active participation and cooperation

between the government, the private sector, communities and organised labour will enable the sector to achieve its goals sooner rather than later.

The backlog in the issuing of title deeds is still an issue, but the department is now partnering with the Banking Association of South Africa and the Youth Employment Services programme, to fast-track their delivery to housing beneficiaries.

After a presidential announcement that state-owned land would be released to be used for human settlements, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure through the auspices of the Housing Development Agency gave the Human Settlements department 36 land parcels measuring 2 493 hectares. The remainder of the land will be released in phases. This land will be for the benefit of the rural housing programme to develop farm worker housing, affordable housing, land tenure upgrading and informal settlements upgrading.

In this financial year, the Human Settlement department will implement affordable housing in mining communities in partnership with mining companies. "To strengthen our partnership with mining companies, we are currently developing a partnership framework between government and mining companies that will guide the joint design and

implementation of partnership projects in identified municipalities," she said.

For the 2022/23 financial year, the department's budget allocation is R33 billion, of which R18.7 billion is allocated to provincial grants, R11.7 billion for municipal grants and R1.6 billion will be transferred to the department's entities.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements, Ms Machwene Semenya, welcomed the budget and said the housing finance scheme was a game-changer for citizens who earn too much to qualify for an RDP house, but also too little to afford a home loan from a bank.

The Minister also announced that to qualify for social housing, the income bands for households earning an income between R1 500 to R15 000 were revised to R1 850 to R22 000 gross monthly income. This came into effect on 1 April 2022.

Committee Chairperson Ms Semenya said that the Human Settlement Development Bank that was announced by the President a few years ago must be established urgently. "We support the budget on the basis of its commitment to ensuring our people have access to social housing. We want to ensure that the department achieves its planned programmes for this financial year and we will hold the department accountable for this budget," she said.

Opposition parties in the NA raised concerns about corruption in the housing waiting list, poorly built houses and delays in the issuing of title deeds to housing beneficiaries. Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament Ms Ntombi Khumalo alleged that in some parts of the country government officials have occupied houses that were built to benefit the poor. "We need to see corruption coming to an end in the allocation of houses. Provision of human settlements is one of the important tools to end poverty in our country," said Ms Khumalo.

The Economic Freedom Fighters said the budget is a gross underestimate of the money needed to address the problem of homelessness in the country. The EFF's Ms Noluvuyo Tafeni urged the government to stop evicting people in informal settlements. "It is not a crime to be poor; those people did not choose to be homeless," she said. 🌱

COGTA's Budget Vote overshadowed by recent floods, says minister



The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, delivered her department's budget vote in a National Assembly (NA) mini-plenary recently. She began by recognising the extent of the flood damage to infrastructure and human lives, but assured her listeners that the department is determined to rehabilitate and reconstruct all the damaged infrastructure, making use of over R157.1 million from the Municipal Disaster Relief Grant that has been allocated to deal with the floods.

She also told the plenary that the department will ensure that existing and future infrastructure is climate-change resilient by employing experts to advise on infrastructure development projects.

In addition, 382 youth were enrolled in the department's technical skills apprenticeships and learnerships or were supported with bursaries to complete various graduate programmes. Currently, well over 100 young graduates have gained practical experience, so that they may complete their professional registration processes.

Meanwhile, a major concern is that 39 municipalities continue to spend below the 70% benchmark in the



FLOOD DISASTER: The terrible impact of the recent floods in many parts of the country has put significant strain on the department's budget, Minister Dlamini-Zuma said.

third quarter. This is being addressed by making use of capacity within municipalities' district development hubs, especially those that are Water Service Authorities. The department is also reviewing the district development model so that the model becomes entrenched across all three spheres of government. This budget vote is mainly aimed at strengthening the capacity of municipalities, institutions of traditional leadership, community organisations and all



organs of state to implement and mainstream disaster risk reduction management strategies, the Minister said.

On the policy front, Dr Dlamini-Zuma mentioned inadequacies in the intergovernmental framework architecture, which is incapable of facilitating the One Plans and One Budgets concept. "We have revised the Intergovernmental Framework Act Regulations to enable better joint planning. The proposed revisions are currently in front of the state law advisor, after months of intensive and extensive consultations." The Minister also welcomed President Cyril Ramaphosa's promulgation of the

Local Government Municipal Structures Amendment Act, which will enable a code of conduct for councillors and allow the MEC to remove a councillor from office for a breach of the code.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Fikile Xasa, mentioned that now that the committee has received an update from the department on the coordination of disaster mitigation

efforts, it is ready to visit the areas affected by floods. The committee will also monitor disaster management centre programme plans to ensure that provincial and local governments can deal effectively with any disasters.

Mr Xasa also said that the committee has identified a lack of clarity in the legislation regulating intergovernmental interventions, particularly in local municipalities, which can make problems worse than they were to begin with. He welcomed the department's work to introduce a Bill to close these gaps, but criticised the slowness of its coming, as it has been in the works since the fourth administration.

Mr Xasa also noted the inappropriate allocation of functional roles between district and local municipalities and suggested that district functions should be revoked to enable them to fulfil their mandates. He called on the department to address the disproportional allocation of funds for administration overheads rather than to core mandates.

Mr Cilliers Brink of the Democratic Alliance blamed the looming water shortage crisis in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality on provincial and local government failures to act to avert it. This is a political crisis made worse by neglect and inaptitude, he maintained. He called on national government to come to the rescue, while also saying that this would not be necessary if provincial and local governments had done their jobs properly.

Ms Hlengiwe Mkhali of the Economic Freedom Fighters said she couldn't agree more with the sentiments stated above. She stressed that the dysfunctional state of municipalities has been public knowledge for some time, but there seems to be no appetite to fix the mess. Year in and year out, the Auditor-General makes findings about the lack of internal controls in municipalities, the inability to attract and retain competent staff or to manage and raise funds.

In the face of this, the department has no overarching vision on how to improve inefficiencies at local government level. She criticised the structure of local government that seems to favour urban municipalities at the expense of rural ones, which are then unable to pay salaries and deliver poor quality services.

The Inkatha Freedom Party's Ms Sbuyiselwe Buthelezi said that many institutional mechanisms are brought to life by the Constitution with the sole purpose of strengthening our democracy and building the vision of our nation. However, "these institutions can't be another form of lining the pockets of officials." And we need to ask "what do these institutions serve, if South Africans don't benefit from them?" 🙄