

in session



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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OUR IDEALS

Vision

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

Strategic Objectives

- Strengthening oversight and accountability;
- enhancing public involvement;
- deepening engagement in international fora;
- strengthening cooperative government;
- strengthening legislative capacity.

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Parliament committed to implement State Capture report



ZONDO COMMISSION: Parliament has assured the nation that it is currently in the process of implementing the recommendations of the commission's report.

Parliament remains committed to implementing the recommendations of the State Capture Commission to improve accountability and prevent fraud and corruption in the public sector, said National Assembly (NA) Speaker Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Addressing members of the media in Gauteng, following a meeting between Chief Justice Raymond Zondo and Parliament's Presiding Officers, the Speaker of the NA Ms Mapisa-Nqakula, the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) Mr Amos Masondo, as well as the NCOP Deputy Chairperson Ms Sylvia Lucas, Ms Mapisa-Nqakula rejected any suggestions that nothing was being done.

The meeting occurred to address the comments the Chief Justice made recently about Parliament's implementation of the State Capture Report that arose out of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State, better known as the Zondo Commission.

The Presiding Officers said there was no formal requirement for Parliament to provide progress reports to the Chief Justice on the implementation of the commission's recommendations. This may have resulted in a situation where Justice Zondo may have been unaware of the progress the institution has been making.

"Parliament remains fully committed to implementing the State Capture Commission's recommendations . . . You cannot say Parliament failed in its execution of tasks. Parliament did everything relevant in terms of the implementation of the commission's recommendations," the Speaker said.

The commission's report, which was tabled in Parliament in October 2022, made 16 recommendations on Parliament's role, in addition to three recommendations relating to legislation and the work of the Joint Committee on Ethics and Members' Interests.

Most of the commission's recommendations to Parliament related to the need to improve capacity, strengthen oversight mechanisms, and possible legislative interventions that could strengthen accountability to the citizens.

In response to the commission's recommendations Parliament

has developed a comprehensive implementation plan structured around four key focus areas. They are: oversight and accountability; oversight of the executive's response plan; monitoring Parliament's implementation plan; and parliamentary reforms to strengthen Parliament's constitutional mandate.

Parliament has also considered establishing a committee to oversee aspects of the Presidency that are currently not supervised by existing structures, as recommended by the State Capture Commission. The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) researched this matter to identify aspects of the Presidency not currently subjected to parliamentary scrutiny. The PBO concluded that Parliament should strengthen its oversight over the Presidency and recommended further research. The Rules Committee agreed that the PBO's desk top research should be supplemented with a fact-finding mission to explore international best practices on the matter.

Parliament also dismissed criticism that the study tour was second-guessing the recommendations of the commission, saying that it was part of research. "Benchmarking is not second-guessing the work of the Zondo commission but to see how it is done. It is still part of conducting research

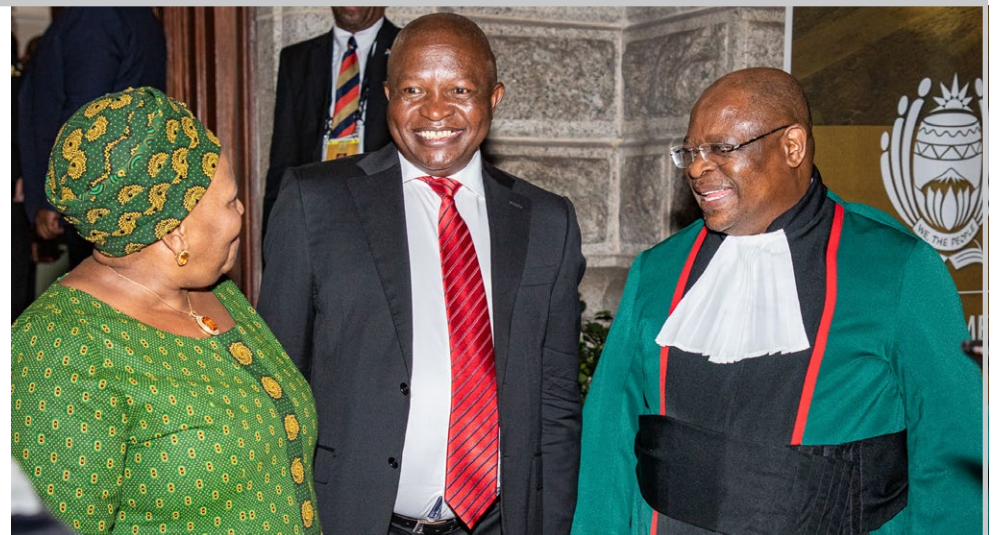
with intention to implement.

“South Africa has never had this experience of conducting oversight over the office of the Presidency. We need to look at what is done elsewhere and how is it done before we decide which model do we want for oversight over the Presidency,” said Secretary to Parliament Mr Xolile George.

The Presiding Officers also emphasised that Parliament was not immune to criticism and public scrutiny. “We are not averse to public scrutiny, but it depends on who does it and how, we must not create an impression that there is instability in South Africa,” said Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula.

On the commission’s recommendation that more parliamentary committees should be chaired by members of opposition parties, the POs said committees have their own procedures and rules on how they choose who they want to chair the committee. The multiparty rules committee agreed that it is not desirable to interfere with democratic decision-making processes within committees, which includes the election of chairpersons.

The Presiding Officers said the meeting with the Chief Justice took place in “a cordial atmosphere, underscoring the recognition of the need for continued engagement on matter of mutual interest pertaining the constitutional obligations of both institutions.



THREE ARMS OF STATE: Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula, Deputy President Mabasa and Chief-Justice Zondo.

“Both the judiciary and the legislature remain committed to upholding the principles of our democracy and working together to address the challenges and fulfil their respective constitutional obligations. Parliament assures

the public that it is dedicated to implementing the commission’s recommendations diligently and transparently, ensuring accountability and safeguarding the integrity of our democratic institutions,” concluded the Speaker. 🙏

Parliament’s Presiding Officers call for investment in SA’s young people



HEIRS TO THE FUTURE: South Africa’s young people face many challenges that Parliament is helping them address.

The Presiding Officers of Parliament, led by Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), Mr Amos Masondo, call on government, the business community, civil society and all sectors to commit resources to invest

in young people as a way of commemorating Youth Day.

2023 marks the 47th anniversary of the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprising, when scores of young people were brutally shot and killed by the apartheid police force. The event led to many subsequent uprisings that inspired strong resistance against the regime that shook the foundations of the minority government, throwing it into crisis and forcing the declaration

of the state of emergency in July 1985.

Youth Day is a solemn occasion to reflect on these tragic events, which became a catalyst, inspiring a nation and its people to intensify the fight against the oppressive apartheid system. Since 1994, 16 June has been designated National Youth Day. This year, the theme of National Youth Day and Youth Month will be: Accelerating youth economic emancipation for a sustainable future.

Parliament acknowledges the importance of investing in the

youth, ensuring their economic empowerment and securing a sustainable future for all. Together, we strive to create an environment where young people can thrive, contribute to the economy and fulfil their potential.

Through its sectoral parliament programme, the national legislature is launching a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) drive across all nine provinces, to identify and encourage

young people with robotics and coding skills to harness 4IR and integrate it into the world of work. This initiative is expected to serve as a launch pad for youth participation in the economy and reduce the rising number of unemployed people.

The recent budgets presented by government departments in May 2023 must provide the necessary assistance and resources young people need to overcome the socio-economic challenges and take up their rightful place in the economic development of their nation.

During his budget vote speech, the Minister of Higher Education and Training set his department a target of creating 110 500 workplace-based learning opportunities, registering 149 000 learners in skills development programmes, 23 000 learners in artisanal programmes, 21 000 learners to study artisanal trades, 32 550 learners to complete learnerships, and 6 450 learners to complete internships.

The recently adopted Appropriation Bill proposed an allocation of 74% to transfers and subsidies, including payment of university subsidies and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. NSFAS administration and other role players are expected to ensure quick disbursements of allowances to students and service providers to avoid disruption of lessons and unnecessary

Parliament is monitoring government's commitment to drawing more young people into the economy



INNOVATION: Deputy Speaker Tsenoli (far right) welcomes young people Parliament for discussing exploring how technology can help society advance and grow.

stress to learners.

Through the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) as an implementing agency, the Ministry of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities has a three-year allocation of transfers amounting to R1.8 billion to support and foster entrepreneurship among young people and create employment pathways through cross-sectoral collaborations. A further R250 million has been allocated to the agency for the 2023/2024 financial year for the national youth service programme, a component of the presidential employment initiative that is aimed at training young people through participation in community services.

Parliament is closely monitoring and ensuring appropriate oversight over government's commitment to draw more young people into the economy, through programmes such as the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, among others, including formal education and training opportunities, learnerships and internships, as well as comprehensive support for youth entrepreneurship.

High levels of unemployment pose a major impediment to the economic empowerment and social mobility of young people. With government agencies leading the way in curbing unemployment, we also call on the private sector to intensify efforts and find initiatives to empower the youth for a brighter and sustainable future.

Despite the challenges, Parliament celebrates the resilience, resourcefulness and active engagement of South Africa's youth in various aspects of society. 🌱

Parliament launches search for South African youth innovators

Young people hailed Covid-19 as the catalyst that propelled South Africa to embrace technological advances that saw many people having to work from home, while schools operated through remote learning. They were speaking in Parliament in nationwide Youth Innovation Exhibition sessions launched recently by Parliament as part of creating a dialogue with young people on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Jabulani Majozi reports.

Parliament, through the Office of the Deputy Speaker, Mr Lechesa Tsenoli, plans to hold more information sessions on: "Celebrating Youth Innovation in the 4IR and Beyond". The sessions will consist of information sharing and awareness sessions in the country's nine provinces.

The 4IR launch was attended by student innovators from Sinenjongo High School in Milnerton, who represented South Africa during the World Robotic Olympiad held in Germany. Other students attended the launch from Spine Road High School in Mitchells Plain and Wesbank High School in Malmesbury. Other stakeholders included the

Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA).

Delivering his opening remarks, Mr Tsenoli said the programme is designed to find out what young people are doing to harness the power of technology, while finding innovative solutions to some of South Africa's problems. "There are problems that need solving and we need to link young people with leading technology industries in the country to help shape their visions." Mr Tsenoli also spoke about how during the Covid-19 pandemic Members of Parliament had to adapt and embrace new technologies.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Ms Nompandolo Mkhathshwa, said it is important to harness innovations to achieve more inclusive and better societies. "We must view technology as a helping aid," she added.

The CSIR told young people about the many homegrown solutions it has formulated and explained how it offers support to young innovators. The CSIR also urged young innovators to look at the potential to commercialise technological innovation.

The TIA is a public entity that aims to bridge the gap between research and development conducted in tertiary institutions, science

councils and public entities and the private sector. Through the TIA, innovators like Swelihle Magubane from KwaZulu-Natal have seen their innovations become a reality. Swelihle devised an innovative way to assist his neighbour, who is wheelchair bound, to deal with rainy weather conditions by operating a wheelchair umbrella-like cover.

Another young innovator supported by TIA, Senzo Masumpa, said Khayelitsha is known for crime, unemployment and substance abuse. However, they have now come up with an online platform that incentivises young people to do well in their communities by volunteering or job shadowing. They then earn a digital reward called Z'lato points that they can use to buy airtime or data.

Mr Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, said young innovators should also consider studying at TVET colleges where they will receive practical skills.

In closing the launch session, Mr Tsenoli said: "We need to capture these young people at the forefront of innovative solutions and see what support we can provide to them." He further welcomed the fact that the innovations discussed yesterday display a human element that showcased how the innovations solve human problems. 🌱

Speaker calls for improvements in capacity of legislative sector



Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, has called for the capacity of the South African Legislative Sector to be improved to defend democracy and ensure effective service delivery to the people.

By enhancing and measuring qualitative, impact-driven oversight, improving transparency and accountability and promoting citizen participation, the sector can promote good governance and safeguard democracy more effectively. The Speaker was addressing the Speakers' Forum of South Africa, which held a two-day meeting in Pretoria in Gauteng recently.

Also addressing the forum on the topic of complementary oversight of Parliament, provincial legislatures and institutions supporting democracy (ISD), the Chairperson of the ISD Forum, Dr Nombeko Mbava, together with Public Service Commissioner, Dr Somadoda Fikeni, expressed the urgent need for better collaboration and complementary oversight on the part of the ISDs.

As these sectors are interdependent,

it is important for them to develop integrated mechanisms to ensure that they work in an effective and complimentary manner, they said. They also highlighted the frustrations facing the ISDs, including the low rate of implementation of recommendations by some of the institutions.

They added that part of the solution is honest conversations and the formulation of mechanisms to ensure a better rate of implementing the ISD recommendations aimed at addressing South Africa's many developmental challenges.

They proposed to hold joint induction programmes for Members of Parliament and provincial legislatures in collaboration with ISDs to strengthen relations and collaboration between Parliament and the provincial legislatures towards effective oversight. Reviewing the current funding model to ensure that all ISDs are adequately funded to execute their mandate was also suggested as a mechanism to assist in ensuring the effectiveness of these institutions.

Also addressing the Speakers' Forum was the European Union Ambassador to South Africa, Ms Sandra Kramer. She praised the levels of collaboration between the legislatures as a solid foundation to raise Parliament's delivery on its mandate of citizen participation and oversight.

The Speakers' Forum is a decision-making body that oversees management and coordination of legislative sector programmes. It comprises the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces and the Speakers and Deputy Speakers of all nine provincial legislatures. 🇿🇦



BUDGET MATTERS: NCOP Chief Whip Mohai opened the debate on Parliament's budget vote.

Chief Whip opens NCOP Budget Vote policy debate with call to ensure parliaments answer to the people

The Chief Whip of the NCOP, Mr Seiso Mohai, said the 2023 policy debate on Parliament's budget vote arrives at a time when parliaments around the world are challenged with the question of how to ensure that governments remain answerable to the people and drive solutions to the problems presented by poverty, unemployment and inequality.

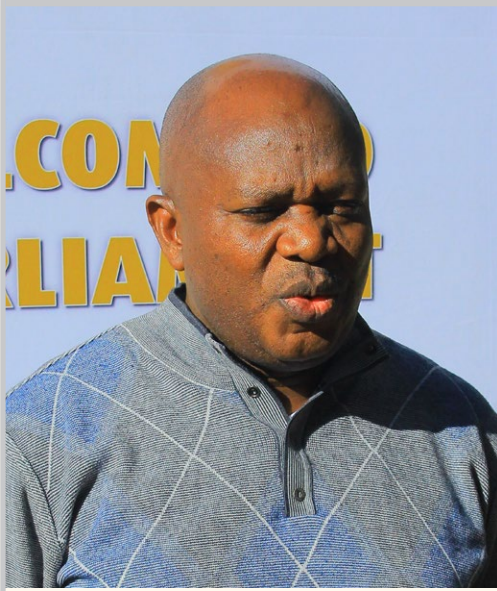
"At the core of this existential threat to the credibility of parliaments across the globe is, among others, the persistence of the global economic meltdown and the failure of parliaments to pave the way forward for democratic institutions to address the deteriorating levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality," he said.

"As noted by some leading scholars in development policy, the persistence of these challenges has not only eroded the confidence of the people in democracies across the world, but most critically,

precipitated a global upsurge of populism, intense geopolitical rivalries and competition for scarce resources and the international disintegration of the neoliberal consensus on the so-called 'the new global order' fashioned on the neoliberal paradigm."

As was aptly articulated by the Inter Parliamentary Union in its 2007 report on the strengthening of parliaments: "The paradox of our times is that we hail the victory of democracy while lamenting the fact that, in many countries, parliaments – the central institutions of democracy – are facing a crisis of legitimacy. The executive branch dominates the agenda, international co-operation and globalisation have led to decision making that lacks democratic control, and people question whether the current political processes are really able to produce parliaments that can represent their interests in all their diversity."

In the evolving South African context, he said, this threat is manifested by the persistence of voter apathy and political and civic disengagement by the majority of the people, a



Chief Whip Mohai.

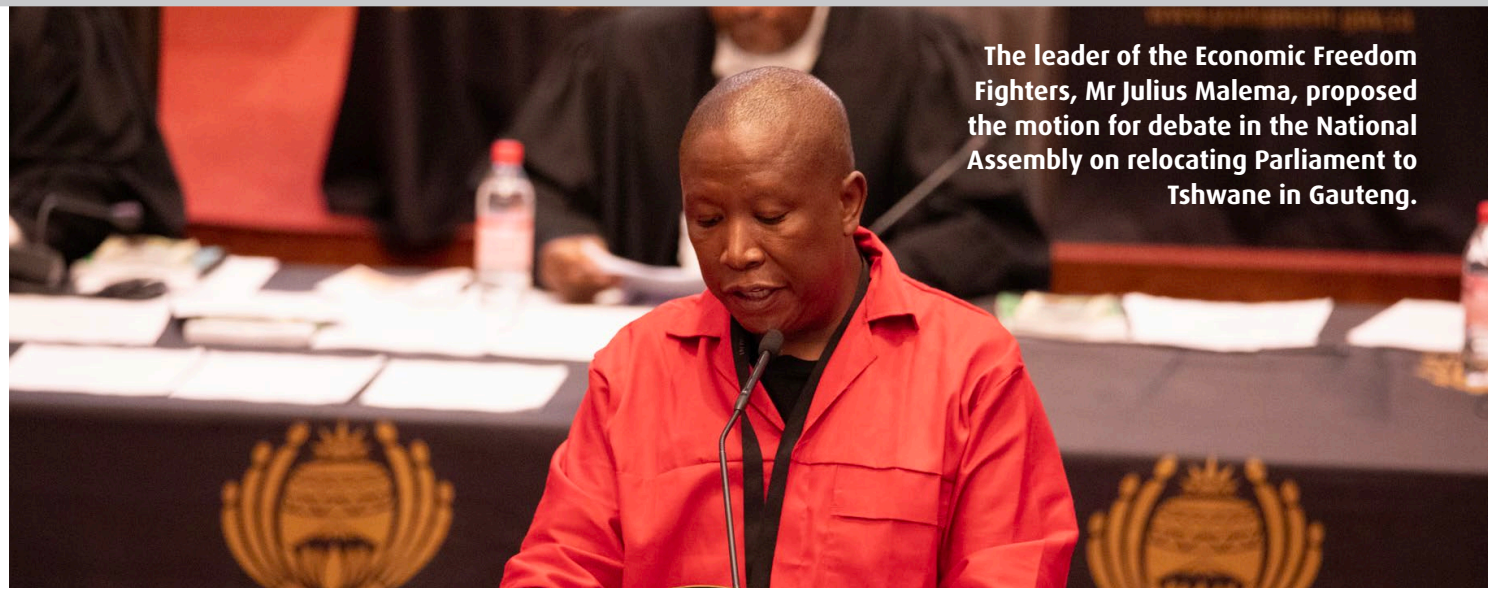
renewed upsurge of left wing and right populism, and the proliferation of violent grassroots protests as new alternative forms of political expression and mobilisation occasioned by the significant decline in the capacity of the democratic state, especially the local government, to deliver basic services and goods to the people.

This makes a compelling case for this budget policy debate to make preliminary reflections on the effectiveness of the NCOP's oversight role as the voice of provinces and local government in pushing back the frontiers of poverty, unemployment and inequality. It is also an opportunity to draw lessons from the past 30 years of South Africa's democracy to improve how Parliament does its work.

Mr Mohai reminded delegates that in 2019 the NCOP adopted the concept of ministerial briefing sessions. This was to be a strategic oversight mechanism to provide periodic review and monitoring of the implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects, to ensure that they:

- Achieve the expected results
- Represent good value for money
- Comply with applicable policies, laws, regulations and ethical standards.

He said through the ministerial briefing sessions, the NCOP has been able to advance its mandate of representing the interests of provinces and provide leadership on the implementing of measures to address South Africa's various challenges. 🌱



The leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, Mr Julius Malema, proposed the motion for debate in the National Assembly on relocating Parliament to Tshwane in Gauteng.

National Assembly holds debate on Bill to relocate seat of Parliament



RELOCATING PARLIAMENT?: In early January 2022, Parliament's buildings suffered a fire that devastated the National Assembly chamber.

Leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Mr Julius Malema tabled a Private Member's Bill, the Relocation of the Seat of Parliament Bill, which proposes that Parliament be moved from Cape Town to Tshwane in Gauteng. The National Assembly recently held a debate on the Bill where Members of Parliament exchanged their views on the possibilities of relocating Parliament to Tshwane. Sakhile Mokoena reports from the debate.

Opening the debate, the EFF leader gave historical background to the current set up with the executive, legislature and judiciary all in different cities, which was an arrangement arising from the Anglo-Boer War peace agreement. "Today, we do not have reason to continue

upholding this colonial and racial pact that the liberation party has imposed on our people – the same party that continues to impose "Die Stem" on the National Anthem, on all of us, same way they continue to impose Paul Kruger on us at Church Square in Tshwane, the statue of Louis Botha outside Parliament, and the colonial imperialist and racist Victoria behind the NCOP chambers.

"The Bill will make this Parliament a Parliament of many of our people. Our people must come to participate and be part of law-making and holding the executive accountable. The legislature and administration must be in one place to make accountability easier," Mr Malema said.

Representing the Democratic Alliance (DA) during the debate Dr Annelie Lotriet called the debate "the wrong debate, at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons". She warned that the relocation

of Parliament should not be done based on party political or ideological considerations but should be based on comprehensive and current studies. "Relocating Parliament is not what the country needs now. We should focus on helping people to survive, helping people to improve their lives ... The country is in desperate economic strain. Costs are rising, unemployment is rising, infrastructure is falling apart. We have no power and the government is doing everything it can to wreck our economic future," said Dr Lotriet.

She also dismissed the argument that the move will save on travel costs. Rather than move Parliament, it would be better to cut the size of the Cabinet, work more efficiently and make better use of technology.

Mr Narend Singh of the Inkatha Freedom Party said whilst it was desirable that the administration and Parliament should be in the same area, the move was currently unaffordable. In terms of the Heritage Resources Act, Parliament is obliged to reconstruct and refurbish the burned down building and it estimated that it's going to cost between R2 to 3 billion. "When we look into figures for relocation, they run into almost R13 to R14 billion. We can ill-afford to spend state resources in that kind of manner. If we base our consideration of the relocation on a cost benefit analysis and the fact that we have to rebuild the current Parliament precinct, the facts are irrevocably clear that we simply cannot afford to relocate at this time," Mr Singh said.

His concerns about costs were shared

by the Freedom Front Plus, with leader Dr Pieter Groenewald saying the figures mentioned in the draft Bill were underestimated. "For the FF Plus it is all about costs, what will it really cost the taxpayer at the end of the day. I don't accept the figures given in the Bill, it is underestimated," he said.

The African National Congress also rejected the EFF Private Members Bill saying the reasons given in the Bill were not convincing and that the relocation of Parliament was not a priority given the country's current economic situation. "Faced with other economic and social priorities for the country, this Bill is not a priority and

we therefore do not support this Bill.

"In this difficult economic climate, it will be highly irresponsible to restore damaged parliamentary buildings and thereafter abandon them and move to Gauteng because of a dislike of the WC as if residents are not part of one united South Africa," said ANC MP Mr Hope Papo.

He said the hybrid model of working, which only requires investment in network upgrades, IT gadgets and data, was the way to work for many workplaces for now and in the future, as it cuts travel and accommodation costs. 🤖



UP FOR DEBATE: African National Congress Members of Parliament have mixed responses to Mr Malema's proposal.

Home Affairs Minister announces major plans to upgrade South Africa's busiest border posts



UPGRADE: Home Affairs Minister Motsoaledi announces major upgrades to six border posts.

The Minister of Home Affairs Dr Aaron Motsoaledi has announced a multibillion-rand project to upgrade six of South Africa's border posts, writes Sakhile Mokoena. Tabling the department's Budget Vote Policy in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) recently, the Minister said the massive project to completely redesign and redevelop the country's six busiest

ports of entry would be a huge infrastructure and technological injection into the management of the borders.

The planned project will see Beitbridge between South Africa and Zimbabwe; Lebombo between South Africa and Mozambique; Oshoek between South Africa and Eswatini; Maseru and Ficksburg, both bordering South Africa and Lesotho; as well as Kopfontein, South Africa's border with Botswana, undergo major structural facelifts with advanced technologies for the

efficient movement of people and goods.

"It will be a multibillion-rand project between the state and the private sector in the form of a public-private partnership. The actual costs will be known after the bidding process has been concluded. The project will breathe life into the much-vaunted Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement," Minister Motsoaledi said.

The Minister also commended the Border Management Authority (BMA) for working hard to stabilise border security since its inception last year.

He reported to the NCOP that the agency has been able to intercept thousands of people trying to enter the country illegally, along with many stolen vehicles.

On civil services, the Minister shared the public's concern about the perennial problem of system downtime, which has been going on for years, and which is now aggravated by loadshedding. "In our relentless efforts to find solutions, we have engaged with the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and they are devising some solutions for us. We will be connecting some of our major offices to the CSIR network. Other than Sita (the State Information Technology Agency), all universities and research institutions using the CSIR network do not experience system downtime the way we do," said Dr Motsoaledi.

The Minister also gave an update on the announcement made by the President during the State of the Nation Address two years ago, to hire 10 000 unemployed graduates to work on the project to digitalise the department's records, which date back to the year 1895.

"We are happy to announce that National Treasury has given us R2.4 billion over a period of four years to digitise the records. The first cohort of 2 000 young men and women are already at work, while interviews are underway to recruit 4 000. We will later recruit 4 000 to meet the total of 10 000," said the Minister. 🤖

Home Affairs budget vote receives mixed reactions in NCOP



PLANS AND IMPROVEMENTS: The NCOP held of debate on the Department of Home Affairs' budget vote.

The Chairperson of the Select Committee on Security and Justice, Ms Shahidabibi Shaik, commended Minister of Home Affairs Dr Aaron Motsoaledi's plans, which he mentioned recently in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) during his department's budget vote, to upgrade some of South Africa's busiest border posts, writes Sakhile Mokoena.

Ms Shaik said this will help improve security and ease the movement of goods and people between South Africa and its neighbours. "The issue of border management is critical for ensuring the legal movement of people and goods across our borders. We have noted the positive developments since the establishment of the BMA. We also welcome the digitalisation project, which will help cut fraud and corruption, as it will make it easier to track the original documents," she said.

The committee Chairperson said her committee will play its oversight role to ensure that commitments and

plans announced in the department's budget vote policy are implemented. She also shared some of the committee's recommendations for the department to consider. These include steps to curb corruption and protect whistle-blowers, as well as possible legislative changes to extend operating hours to address the challenges of long queues in Home Affairs offices. The committee also wants the department to continue inspections of the employment of undocumented foreign nationals.

Also participating in the policy debate, Mr Frederik Badenhorst of the Democratic Alliance in the NCOP was concerned about long queues, delays in processing applications for documents and the backlog in processing applications for permanent residency.

"The department is marred with corruption and bribery. Six years after Project Lokisa exposed corruption in the department's refuge offices, we are still waiting to hear what happened to officials who make money out of keeping the problem going on," he said.

An Economic Freedom Fighters' permanent delegate to the NCOP, Ms Mbali Dlamini, said the EFF does not support the department's proposed budget and accused the Minister of compromising the dignity of foreign nationals. "The Minister compromises the dignity of African nationals, in particular Zimbabweans, through the continued wavering of the Zimbabwe exemption permit, leaving Zimbabweans in the country dangling for another six months, facing challenges obtaining bank cards, driver's licences and having to spend a lot of money on waiver applications," Ms Dlamini said.

She said foreign nationals were scapegoated for various problems in South Africa, such as crime, unemployment and the lack of medical services. "Refuges and asylum seekers are facing difficulty accessing their rights due to the department's failure to provide efficient immigration services. Home Affairs is also contributing to the overcrowding in our prisons by failing to process immigrant offenders who are due for deportation," she said.

Mr Michiel de Bruyn from the Freedom Front Plus accused the department of failing in its mandate, especially on the management of the country's borders. "The department has effectively failed to manage migration, unable to track undocumented immigrants and persons whose documents have expired, resulting in a number of negative consequences for the country such as crime, unemployment and strain on our social services," he said.

Mr de Bruyn called on the department to take a proactive approach to strengthen border control and ensure only those who meet South Africa's immigration criteria are allowed to enter the country. 🇿🇦



National Assembly passes National Health Insurance Bill



DRAFT LAW: The NA passed two important pieces of legislation recently - the National Health Insurance Bill and the Land Court Bill.

The National Assembly (NA) passed the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill and the Land Court Bill.

The NHI Bill seeks to provide for universal access to health care services in accordance with the National Health Insurance White Paper and the Constitution of South Africa. The Bill envisages the establishment of a National Health Insurance Fund and sets out its powers, functions and governance structures. The Fund will purchase health care services for all users who are registered with it.

The Bill will also create mechanisms for the equitable, effective and efficient utilisation of the resources of the fund to meet the health needs of users and preclude or limit undesirable, unethical and unlawful practices in relation to the Fund. It further seeks to address barriers to access.

The NHI Bill was initially tabled in Parliament and introduced to the Portfolio Committee on Health on 8 August 2019 for processing. The committee received its first briefing on the Bill from the Department of Health on 29 August 2019 and was

subsequently briefed on the NHI pilot districts on 4 March 2020.

In facilitating effective public participation on the NHI Bill, the committee conducted nationwide public hearings in all nine provinces, from 26 October 2019 to 24 February 2020. The public hearings were attended by 11 564 members of the public and various stakeholders across 33 district municipalities. A total of 961 oral submissions were heard by the committee during these hearings.

The committee also conducted virtual public hearings from 18 May 2021 to 23 February 2022. The virtual public hearings gave stakeholders an opportunity to make oral presentations of their written submissions. In total, 114 stakeholders participated in the virtual public hearings including professional associations, civil society organisations, medical aid schemes, faith-based organisations, academics, public health entities, hospital groups, labour unions, political organisations and other interested stakeholders.

NATIONWIDE CONSULTATION: The Portfolio Committee on Health held extensive public hearings on both bills.



In addition to the provincial and virtual public hearings, the committee received approximately 338 891 written submissions from the public. The committee further consulted and sought extensive legal advice from Parliament's Legal Unit and the State Law Advisors on the Bill. The committee's report was tabled in the NA recently and the Bill was passed by the House and will be sent to the NCOP for concurrence.

The National Assembly also passed the Land Court Bill, which was before the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Correctional Services. The committee, having considered the proposed amendments of the National Council of Provinces, agreed to amendments without changes.

The Bill provides for the establishment of a Land Court and a Land Court of Appeal; to make provision for the administration and judicial functions of the Land Court and Land Court of Appeal; to make provision for budgetary matters; to provide for the exclusive jurisdiction of the Land Court and Land Court of Appeal for certain matters; to provide for mediation and arbitration procedures; to amend certain laws relating to the adjudication of land matters by other courts; and to provide for matters connected therewith. 🇿🇦

PUBLIC HEARINGS: The COGTA portfolio committee is travelling the length and breadth of the country holding public hearings on the proposed Bill.



COGTA committee hosts public hearings on Municipal Demarcation Board

Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
Chairperson Mr Fikile Xasa.



The Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) started its nationwide public hearings on the Independent Municipal Demarcation Authority (IMDA) Bill in the Eastern Cape with public hearings in the OR Tambo and Amathole

district municipalities and in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality.

The Bill was supported by most residents who participated in the hearings, who welcomed the establishment of the Independent Demarcations Appeal's Authority. They also welcomed the fact that it will be completely independent and impartial and will perform its functions without fear, favour or

prejudice. This will enable them to lodge their complaints directly with an independent authority.

They were also happy with the proposal that the Board may only determine or redetermine a municipal boundary every 10 years. The committee heard that the residents trusted that the Demarcation Appeal's Authority will help to restore stability in their municipalities, as

the five-year period has caused so much damage. They also expressed their hope that the Bill will give the board an opportunity to engage with communities to determine the demarcation of municipal boundaries.

Some residents, however, were against the Bill, highlighting their frustration that demarcation has caused a lot of damage in

communities and had a big negative impact on service delivery. The IMDA Bill seeks to repeal and replace the current Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998, so as to align and update the legislation with current Demarcation Board practices. This includes migration of the current Municipal Demarcation Board's functions from the Municipal Structure Act of 1998 to the new Bill. It proposes, among other things, to provide for the establishment, functions and powers of the Independent Municipal Demarcation Authority; and to provide for the criteria and procedures for the determination and redetermination of municipal boundaries.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Fikile Xasa, said the committee is very happy with the quality of inputs it received in the Eastern Cape. "There was a general support of the Bill and understanding that the Bill itself is a solution to some of the problems they have experienced, especially about ward delimitation," he said. Next up for public hearings on the Bill is the Northern Cape. 🇿🇦

The Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development started its nationwide public hearings on the Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land (PDAL) Bill in Limpopo where the Bill was supported by most residents, writes Nolizwi Magwagwa.



LAND AND FOOD SECURITY: The Preservation and Development of Agricultural Land Bill is currently before the Agriculture Portfolio Committee.

Committee on Agriculture starts public hearings on PDAL bill in Limpopo

The residents told the committee that the Bill will address a lot of challenges facing the agricultural sector in South Africa. Attendance and participation in the public hearings was high in all the Mopani, Sekhukhune and Waterberg districts of Limpopo where the public hearings were held.

Participants included community members, representatives of farmers' organisations, community members, representatives of communal property associations, community-based organisations, political organisations and business owners. Overall, they welcomed the Bill and expressed their support for it.

Outlining the purpose of the Bill on the first day of the public hearings in Tzaneen in the Mopani District Municipality, the Acting Chairperson of the committee, Dr Manketsi Tlhape said: "We are here as this committee to engage directly with you as our stakeholders. We want to solicit your views and inputs on the Bill. We don't only want to hear that you agree or disagree with the Bill but give us reasons that will help us to take the process further as this committee."

Some of the stakeholders agreed that the Bill is in the national interest to preserve and promote

the sustainable development of agricultural land for production of food and other agricultural products for the primary purpose of sustaining and enhancing human life for the benefit of present and future generations.

The committee was told that the Bill will help to promote the preservation and sustainable development of agricultural land, to demarcate protected agricultural areas to ensure that agricultural land is preserved and protected against non-agricultural uses to promote long-term agricultural production.

The participants said high value agricultural land is scarce and the pressure exerted on the agricultural land makes it increasingly difficult to produce sufficient food.

Some of the residents called for a change of strategies, highlighting that the systems that are currently in place do not help. They do not have title deeds, which means they can be

evicted at any time and anyone can demolish what they have worked hard for. They called for the full and adequate implementation of the Bill and expressed their hope that it will lead to change in the agricultural sector.

A few participants asked if game farming is part of agricultural activities or not, as the Bill classifies it with other general agricultural activities. This is confusing, as game farming currently falls under the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). Furthermore, game farming as part of wild biodiversity falls under the DFFE, while domestic biodiversity is under the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

According to the Bill, 'Agricultural Purposes' means practices associated with the use of agricultural land for crop and animal production, keeping of animals, including wild animals, forestry and logging, fishing and aquaculture, including the use of land for structures, buildings and dwelling units reasonably necessary for, or related to, the agricultural use of land. This means that the Bill recognises the keeping of wild animals as an agricultural activity and there is now a need for clarity on whether game farming is an agricultural activity or a nature conservation activity.

The committee heard that there is a need for a decision to be made on the meaning of preservation. In terms of agriculture, preservation means a right to farm, make money and development, while preservation according to the DFFE, means to preserve wild life. Game farmers who participated in the public hearings asked Parliament how this will be settled between the two departments. They told the committee that they want to be under DALRRD because, they said, they manage and produce wildlife for the benefit of the people.

The PDAL Bill was introduced in Parliament and referred to the committee on 2 February 2021. It seeks, among other things, to provide that the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act of 1970 applies to all agricultural land in the country; to provide principles for the management of agricultural land; to provide for agricultural land evaluation and classification; to provide for the preparation, purpose and content of provincial agricultural sector plans; and to provide for the declaration of protected agricultural areas.

The committee is conducting the nationwide public hearings to ensure that the final Bill reflects the views of the people and the affected South Africans. 🌱



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD: The public hearings on the Bill have been well attended in all the provinces.

SCOPA puts Tutuka power station under microscope



ELECTRICITY OVERSIGHT: SCOPA Chairperson Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa led the visit.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) visited Tutuka Power Station in Sanderton in Mpumalanga on a fact-finding mission after reports that it is the worst performing in the country and that its supply chain management and procurement systems are infiltrated by criminal cartels. Armed members of the South African Defence Force (SANDF) are now stationed on its premises. Abel Mputing reports on the visit.

At the outset of the meeting between the committee and Tutuka management, the SCOPA Chairperson, Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, explained the reason for the visit. "We are here partly to understand why this plant is at 14 to 17% energy generation capacity and why it has been characterised as a crime scene. The allegation of a former general manager who was working at this plant with a bullet-proof vest on and an extension of a threat to his children are one of the issues that brought us here today."

During the discussion, the committee

heard that Tutuka is slowly improving and has started contributing more energy to the grid. Eskom group executive in the generation division Mr Bheki Nxumalo attributed the improved performance to high staff morale. "Yes, there have been bad elements at this plant, but many came to us as management and told us that they want to put their shoulders to the wheel and would do whatever it takes to avert the effect of load shedding on our economy."

Tutuka's general manager Mr Bruce Moyo, the decision to shut down the plant between 2030 to 2041 contributed to a lack of scheduled maintenance and the subsequent outages led to a deterioration in energy generation capacity. Mr Moyo attributed the recent improvements in performance to the streamlining of production processes and competencies and matching people's skills to the right jobs where they can perform optimally.

Questions from SCOPA included one from committee member Ms Benedicta van Minnen about the theft of petrol and the quality of the coal used at the plant. In reply, Mr Moyo said they now check the quality of the coal supplied to them and put in place a petrol verification process.

On the decision to shut down the Tutuka power station, committee

member Mr Sakhumzi Somyo asked Tutuka management if the shut-down will go ahead, given its contribution of power to the grid. In response, the station's general manager Mr Bheki Nxumalo said Eskom has been forced to rethink that decision.

Another SCOPA member Ms Nonhlanhla Mkhonto wanted to know if Eskom has conducted lifestyle audits of its employees. The Chairperson of the Eskom Board, Mr Mpho Makwana, said three steps must be resolved before this can be achieved. "We intend to engage an audit firm to assess the risk that the company is exposed to and what best practices can be implemented to out root fraud and corruption." A law firm will also be appointed to conduct a review of due diligence to determine Eskom's compliance with legislation aimed at arresting criminality. Eskom also plans to use the financial sector to ensure that Eskom employees and their relatives do not do business with Eskom.

In response to a question about criminality in the procurement department, Tutuka's general manager Mr Moyo said they are currently reviewing contracts to determine the existence of any wrong-doing. Another committee member Mr Bheki Hadebe wanted to know about the cartels that are

allegedly operating at Tutuka, but Mr Moyo replied by saying that he has not had any experience of cartels operating there.

Mr Hlengwa questioned why the previous general manager at the plant was forced to wear a bullet-proof vest and had to be accompanied by security personnel around the clock". But Mr Moyo again replied by saying that he had no personal experience of this, "... other than the incident in which our colleague's car, who was a witness at Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration, was recently shot at."

Mr Hlengwa pressed the point, saying, "Let's not downplay the reality of the criminality of cartels when the plant has a strong SANDF presence" Mr Hlengwa also criticised the action of the South African Police Service (SAPS) who have not fast-tracked the prosecution of those accused of illegality. "Where's the bottle neck in investigations when we are told of cartels and cabals running this plant. We are not feeling, let alone seeing the role of SAPS in convicting criminal elements. SAPS has just not been there when it is most needed."

Mr Hlengwa continued: "I am saying all this because investigations that result in prosecution have a deterrent to crime. When that is not happening, people dare to continue with their criminality." SAPS must "step up and shape up, you are a missing link", he insisted. Mr Hlengwa asked SAPS to take the committee into its confidence, because South Africa depends on its law enforcement agencies to fight cartels and cabals at power plants. 🇿🇦

Many came to us and told us that they wanted to put their shoulders to the wheel and do whatever it takes to avert the effect of loadshedding'



SITE VISIT: SCOPA has been visiting several power stations and meeting with various stakeholders to understand the power crisis currently bedeviling South Africa.

We want to root out corruption at Eskom, says SCOPA Chairperson



SCOPA committee member Mr Bheki Hadebe.

In the wake of various scandals that have engulfed Eskom in recent years, members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) are determined to unearth the root causes of the rot at the power utility. Abel Mputing reports from the committee's week-long oversight visit to Eskom in Gauteng recently, following its engagement with former Group CEO Mr Andre de Ruyter.

Mr de Ruyter appeared before the committee to discuss allegations of corruption, theft, maladministration, sabotage and lack of consequence management at Eskom. Some of the allegations he made were new

to the committee, while others had been previously revealed during prior engagements and oversight visits to Eskom, and at the Zondo Commission's State Capture Inquiry.

Of particular concern to the committee is the decision-making undertaken by Eskom's former board members and executives that resulted in breaches of the Public Finance Management Act, which sets out regulations for effective financial management and use of public funds. In performing its parliamentary oversight work, the committee is committed to getting to the bottom of the allegations made by the former Eskom CEO and holding all those responsible to account.

The committee is of the view that a site visit to Eskom will give more

insight into why the problems persist, thereby placing SCOPA in a better position to make appropriate recommendations on how these problems can be addressed. The committee further believes that interaction with the Eskom Board and management is crucial if any improvement is to be seen in areas of concern raised by the Auditor-General.

Explaining the committee's intention of conducting the oversight visit to Eskom this week, SCOPA Chairperson, Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, the committee wants to verify Mr de Ruyter's allegations. "The overarching intent of this visit is to improve the public trust and transparency at Eskom, to root out corruption and malfeasance, and to ensure that those responsible for these acts account, to enable Eskom to fulfil its commercial and developmental mandate of supplying sustainable energy."

The head of legal risk and audit at Eskom, Ms Mel Govender, answered some of the committee's questions about a privately funded intelligence report into Eskom's business. The committee also wanted to know about the possible breach of confidential information, any legal action that Eskom sought in this regard and Mr de Ruyter's sudden departure from the power utility.

The committee's Mr Bheki Hadebe asked whether the intelligence report was conducted in accordance with Eskom protocols or within the parameters of the former CEO's job description. Ms Govender replied: "We were told that the conducting of this investigation was brought to the previous Chairperson of the Board and the Minister. To my view, there was nothing untoward about it because it was meant to benefit Eskom to avert its exposure to risks." She further stated: "My advice was to spend less time on what the former group CEO of Eskom did but focus more on what lessons can be learnt from it and improve Eskom's future exposure to risks."

Mr Hadebe then asked if Ms Govender was aware, before the publication of the report, of law enforcement's lack of action in tackling the alleged fraud and corruption. She replied saying that she may have been aware of incidents of corruption, many of which were under investigation, but she was not aware of any organised cartels operating there.

She was then asked if there was anything untoward in a CEO disclosing information without the consent of the Board, to which she replied "... there's something unusual about a CEO who makes political statements and personal remarks which could expose him to civil litigations."

Mr Hlengwa then asked if, as head of risk at Eskom, she was not herself at risk by the formation of an intelligence report based on sensitive information from Eskom. Ms Govender then said that Mr de Ruyter claimed that the Board Chairperson and the Minister of Public Enterprises were aware of the investigation and thought it was authorised. Mr Hlengwa then asked what she thought about the Board firing Mr de Ruyter for commissioning an unauthorised report. Ms Govender claimed that she had qualms about the immediate termination of his employment. "The Board should have allowed a proper handover or perhaps it would now have the said report at its disposal."

The committee also heard a first-hand account of the widescale of sabotage, fraud, theft and corruption at Tutuka Power Station from its former General Manager, Mr Sello Mametja, who worked at this plant wearing a bullet-proof vest and was forced to employ armed guards to protect his family due to his efforts to thwart criminality at the plant.

Mr Mametja described the plant as bedevilled by sabotage, corruption and theft of copper, petrol and spares. He also described the criminality he encountered there and the way it affected his family life. "I went to Tutuka knowing that it had mechanical challenges and went there despite that because I wanted to make a change. But I didn't expect the extent of criminality I encountered. What I encountered there is hell that continues to affect my personal and family life to this day."

Although he has since left the station, he feels that the threat of harm remains. To his utter dismay, however, his security detail has been terminated, after the head of security at Eskom told him that he was no longer exposed to any risk according to an assessment report. Mr Hlengwa asked Lieutenant-General Peter Jacobs, Chairperson of Energy Security Priority Committee at the South African Police Service, to follow up on the termination of Mr Mametja's security to determine if a necessary risk assessment was undertaken before the withdrawal of his security. 🙄



ACCOUNTABILITY IN ACTION: SCOPA committee members don hard hats to visit Tutuka Power Station.

SCOPA meets with Tutuka Power Station management

Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) met with the management of Eskom's Tutuka Power Station as part of its week-long oversight programme. Abel Mputing reports.

On the decision to shut down the Tutuka power station sometime in the near future, committee member Mr Sakhumzi Somyo asked Tutuka management if the shut-down will go ahead, given its contribution of power to the grid. In response, the station's General Manager Mr Bheki Nxumalo said Eskom has been forced to rethink that decision.

Another SCOPA member Ms Nonhlanhla Mkhonto wanted to know if Eskom has conducted lifestyle audits of its employees. The Chairperson of the Eskom Board, Mr Mpho Makwana, said three steps have to be resolved before this can be achieved. "We intend to engage an audit firm to assess the

risk that the company is exposed to. And what best practices can be implemented to out root fraud and corruption." A law firm will also be appointed to conduct a review of due diligence to determine Eskom's compliance with legislation aimed at arresting criminality. Eskom also plans to use the financial sector to ensure that Eskom employees and their relatives do not do business with Eskom.

In response to a question about criminality in the procurement department, Tutuka's general manager Mr Bruce Moyo said they are currently reviewing contracts to determine the existence of any wrong-doing.

Another committee member Mr Bheki Hadebe wanted to know about the cartels that are allegedly operating at Tutuka, but Mr Moyo replied by saying that he has not had any experience of cartels operating there.

SCOPA Chairperson Mr Mkhuleko

Hlengwa questioned why the previous general manager at the plant was forced to wear a bullet-proof vest and had to be accompanied by security personnel around the clock". But Mr Moyo again replied by saying that he had no personal experience of this, "... other than the incident in which our colleague's car, who was a witness at Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration, was recently shot at."

Mr Hlengwa pressed the point, saying, "Let's not downplay the reality of the criminality of cartels when the plant has a strong SANDF presence" Mr Hlengwa also criticised the action of the South African Police Service (SAPS) who have not fast-tracked the prosecution of those accused of illegality. "Where's the bottle neck in investigations when we are told of cartels and cabals running this plant. We are not feeling, let alone seeing the role of SAPS in convicting criminal elements. SAPS has just not been there when it is most needed."

Mr Hlengwa continued: "I am saying all this because investigations that result in prosecution have a deterrent to crime. When that is not happening, people dare to continue with their criminality." SAPS must "step up and shape up, you are a missing link", he insisted. Mr Hlengwa asked SAPS to take the committee into its confidence, because South Africa depends on its law enforcement agencies to fight cartels and cabals at power plants. 🙄



SCOPA struggles to gain access to RAF offices, then finds chaos within

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) concluded its recent week-long oversight to Gauteng at the Road Accident Fund (RAF) headquarters. On arrival,

Abel Mputing writes, the committee was barred from entering the building in Menlyn, Pretoria, despite RAF's executives being made aware of the visit beforehand.

IN PERSON VISIT: SCOPA Chairperson Hlengwa and other committee members gain access to RAF offices in Pretoria.



When the committee eventually gained access after a protracted telephone exchange between the committee, Department of

Transport officials and the RAF's executive, whose absence was conspicuous, SCOPA soon realised why it had struggled to enter the building. The reign of chaotic disorder that characterises RAF's working conditions soon became apparent.

The meandering hallway of RAF's offices was littered with boxes upon boxes lining the walls, spilling onto the floor in manner that resembled the clutter of a dumping site. The committee also learnt that most personnel are squatting in offices belonging to others and have brought their own chairs to sit on, because much of their office furniture has been confiscated by an order of the sheriff due to RAF's failure to abide by several court rulings. Office desks and chairs currently in use bear sheriff stickers, signalling their imminent attachment.

While the committee conducted its inspection, an RAF employee came bearing a bunch of new writs of defaulted court judgments. He told the committee if the writs are not settled more furniture will be confiscated.

"To say RAF's offices are not conducive for a working environment is an understatement. We had not imagined the situation we are confronted with. What we have seen here is a mess," commented the Chairperson of the committee, Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa. He continued: "Why RAF is in the public domain for the wrong reasons, we have experienced it today. Now we have recognised the magnitude of its problem." He further stated that he now knew why the Auditor-General (AG) shied away from conducting its work at RAF. "The AG doesn't even want to touch RAF because there's no integrity in doing so."

The chaos that besieges RAF is

'We have asked for a report on why a board that does not quorate is still in office, but we never got a reply from RAF's accounting officers'

a clear indication that RAF is an institution in crisis, he stated. Hence, there is a standoff between it and the AG. In his view, this is a result of a dysfunctional board, which does not quorate, but is in office illegally. He urged the Deputy Minister of Transport, Mr Lisa Mangcu, to look into this because it is one of the root causes of the crisis at RAF. "Minister, RAF is a car wreck and something's got to give. We have asked for a report on why a board that does not quorate is still in office, but we never got a reply from RAF's accounting officers."

"We have a discontent board and the executive which contribute to employees' trust deficit. A situation indicative of RAF that is in intensive care unit, leaderless and directionless and that cry for help. Deputy minister, please help," he urged him. RAF's refusal to let Members of Parliament conduct oversight over it constitutes a violation of the Constitution and is indicative that something untoward is going on at RAF, he claimed.

Mr Hlengwa went on to suggest: "Maybe, there's a need for a forensic investigation on the financial management of RAF; unveil what lies beneath its messy affairs. Because the greatest risk to RAF is RAF itself. Deputy minister, we would like to get a report on RAF efficacy in 30 days because what is going on at RAF is a national disaster." 🇿🇦

International Relations committee's European oversight visit a great success



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:
International Relations Portfolio
Committee Chairperson Supra
Mahumapelo.

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Supra Mahumapelo, has described the committee's oversight visit to Funchal (a city in the Portuguese territory of Maderia), Portugal and Germany a great success. The committee was interested to assess the South African embassies' implementation of South African foreign policy and their readiness to implement the Foreign Service Act. Noliswi Magwagwa reports.

The Chairperson said the visit had

to occur before the Department of International Relations and Cooperation begins its plan to dispose of vacant state-owned properties in Europe. "These properties are of high value, situated at prime areas and as the committee we need to assess the levels of dilapidation of the concerned properties before the department implements its decision to dispose of these properties."

The visit was also part of the committee's oversight programme to oversee and follow up on the department's undertakings, including ensuring that vacant state-owned land owned by South African missions is developed.

The oversight visit follows a presentation the committee received

from the department highlighting that there are 14 land parcels that have been undeveloped for more than 20 years in India, South Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Senegal, Mali, Swaziland and Botswana. There is more vacant or unused offices in Malawi, Namibia, Gambia, Brazil, Switzerland, Funchal in Portugal and in France.

The Auditor-General had previously made findings that the department is paying exorbitant rental fees for vacant properties in Europe. The committee also discovered that the department has to pay service providers for cleaning, security, painting and general maintenance for the upkeep of empty state-owned properties in Europe. It views this practice as creating a perpetual trend of fruitless and wasteful

expenditure for the department.

Reflecting on the visit to Germany, Mr Mahumapelo said the committee met with various embassy personnel and assessed the impact of the mission's bilateral relationship with Germany and how the mission assists South Africa to address the injustices of the past. Germany is one of South Africa's biggest trading partners; nonetheless, more investment from Germany in the South African economy is desirable. It is important for the mission to demonstrate how, both qualitatively and quantitatively, its work responds to the National Development Plan, Mr Mahumapelo added.

The committee's last stop was Portugal. "Bilateral relations with Portugal were found to be of strategic importance and Portugal as a worthy friend within the European Union. South African products are reported increasingly finding their way into local markets," Mr Mahumapelo said.

Issues such as ICT, assets, locally recruited personnel and property management were discussed. The committee delegation concluded its oversight visit by undertaking an inspection of a state-owned property in Funchal in Madeira.

The committee will make its own findings on the visit and develop oversight-related recommendations aimed at assisting the department to address the issue of vacant state-owned properties in Europe. 🇿🇦

The visit was also part of the committee's oversight programme to oversee and follow up on the department's undertakings, including ensuring that vacant state-owned land owned by South African missions is developed.



REGIONAL COOPERATION: Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula addressed the 53rd Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum recently and reported on South Africa's progress since the previous meeting.

Speaker presents progress report on implementation of 52nd plenary resolutions

In line with the theme of the 52nd Plenary Assembly, The Role of Parliaments in Strengthening Legislative Frameworks for Peace and Security in the SADC region, Ms Mapisa-Nqakula emphasised the critical role played by the SANDF in peacekeeping missions on the continent.

The Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, addressed the 53rd Plenary Assembly of the South African Development Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) in Arusha Tanzania, recently by presenting a report on the progress South Africa has made in implementing the

resolutions of the previous plenary assembly in Kinshasa, in Democratic Republic of Congo in December 2022.

In line with the theme of the 52nd Plenary Assembly, The Role of Parliaments in Strengthening Legislative Frameworks for Peace and Security in the SADC region, Ms Mapisa-Nqakula emphasised the critical role played by the SANDF

in peacekeeping missions on the continent.

She informed the assembly that the President of South Africa is the only one authorised to deploy SANDF for domestic or international operations. She said the President must inform Parliament about the deployment, and if Parliament is not in session, the President must alert the Joint Standing Committee on Defence which comprises Members of the NA and the National Council of Provinces.

Ms Mapisa-Nqakula reported that Parliament noted a letter received from President Cyril Ramaphosa in April informing them about the extension of employment of 1 495 members of the SANDF in Mozambique and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The deployment was from 16 April 2023 until 15 April 2024 in fulfilment of South Africa's commitment to maintaining peace and security in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

On the matter of the SADC PF's

transformation into a regional Parliament, she said South Africa remains committed to the integration of the region. President Ramaphosa signed the SADC Agreement amending the treaty in January 2023, aimed at recognising the SADC Parliament as an institution. The treaty was signed on the margins of the Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit of Heads and State and Government held in Windhoek Namibia. She urged other parliaments to follow suit and looked forward to receiving news that the requisite 12 out of 16 signatures needed for the amendment treaty to come into force had been obtained.

The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus, in their report to the 52nd Plenary Assembly, encouraged the SADC member states to work towards the attainment of 50-50 parity by domesticating the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Ms Mapisa-Nqakula said significant strides were made by South Africa as the NA approved the Agreement Amending the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development on June 06, 2023, as per section 231(2) of the Constitution.

The agreement requires state parties to enact and adopt appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights. Under this amendment, South Africa now has the obligation to develop and strengthen laws, policies and

programmes to achieve gender equality in decision-making positions in the political, public, and private sectors.

In line with the Forum's resolutions on addressing child marriage and gender-based violence, Members of the South African Parliament continue to raise questions and awareness on these matters. In March 2022, the Department of Home Affairs released the White Paper on Marriages in South Africa to recommend strategic interventions to make child marriage illegal. Furthermore, the South African Law Reform Commission additionally proposed the enactment of a draft Prohibition of Forced Marriage and Regulation of Related Matters Bill, which seeks to make forced and child marriage a criminal offence, as well as allow victims of such marriages to apply for a forced

marriage protection order. Through legislative efforts, South Africa is taking necessary steps to ensure compliance with its constitutional and international human rights commitments.

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee advocated for the SADC member states to put in place deliberate measures such as renewable energy tax rebates to attract the participation of local investors. Ms Mapisa-Nqakula acknowledged South Africa's struggle with load-shedding and informed the plenary that the country adopted various means to address the challenge.

One of the strategies in addressing the challenge was the announcement by the government of the new policy measures to increase the share of renewable energy in

the country's energy mix and reduce the pressure on the grid. She said the proposed measures, which form part of the 2023 draft Taxation Laws Amendment Bill, are:

* An enhanced renewable energy tax incentive: The incentive allows businesses to claim a 125 per cent tax deduction for capital expenditure on any renewable energy project, regardless of the generation capacity. It is valid for two years and applies to projects that started operating between 1 March 2023 and 1 March 2025.

* A rooftop solar tax incentive: The incentive offers individuals a tax rebate of 25 per cent of the cost of new and unused solar PV panels, up to a maximum of R15 000. It is valid for one year and applies to panels acquired and used for the first time between 1 March 2023 and 1 March 2024.

Speaker Mapisa-Nqakula concluded by acknowledging the government's efforts in contributing to strengthening the electricity grid and finding solutions through new renewable energy generation. She pledged that Parliament would use all the legislative tools and power to bring these efforts to fruition.

As the apex parliamentary body in the SADC region, the SADC Parliamentary Forum has a critical role to play in ensuring parliaments adopt a coordinated and collaborative approach in building the requisite capacity for parliamentarians and relevant parliamentary committees on how they can utilise their law-making and oversight mandate to ensure the effective implementation of resolutions taken at plenary sittings. 🌟

Tina Joemat-Pettersson

A true servant of the people

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, and the Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Mr Amos Masondo, described Ms Tina Joemat-Pettersson who passed away recently as a seasoned politician and lawmaker. Her passing is a great loss, not only to her family and political party, but to the nation she served in various capacities.

Ms Joemat-Pettersson served as a Member of the National Assembly representing the ANC and as the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Police. Recently, she served as a member of the Section 194 Ad hoc Committee and the Ad hoc Committee on Flood Disaster Relief and Recovery. She previously served the country as the Minister of Energy and Agriculture.

"Ms Joemat-Pettersson's passing has left us reeling with shock. She will be remembered as an astute politician who used her skills, talents and knowledge to advance legislative work to change the lives of

ordinary South Africans. She exuded great energy, passion and goodwill, and was not afraid to speak her mind. May her soul rest in peace," the Presiding Officers said.

The Portfolio Committee on Police and other stakeholders within the police portfolio, including the Minister of Police, the National Commissioner of the South African Police Service, the Executive Director of Independent Police Investigative Directorate, the Head of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, the Acting Head of the Civilian Secretariat for Police Service, the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority and the South African Human Rights Commission spoke with one voice in confirming that Ms Joemat-Pettersson was a dedicated, tough but fair leader who did not hesitate in ensuring safety of the people of South Africa.

All of them committed, in the memory of Ms Joemat-Pettersson, to pick up the spear she leaves in the fight against crime in the country. They are grateful to have worked with her and affirmed her commitment to the people of this country. She lived her life for the betterment of the people. 🌟

