

PublicSector

MANAGER

THE MAGAZINE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS

MARCH 2021



SoNA 2021

Time for change,
progress and rebirth

Medical marvel

Dr Thakgalo
Thibela is all
about excellence



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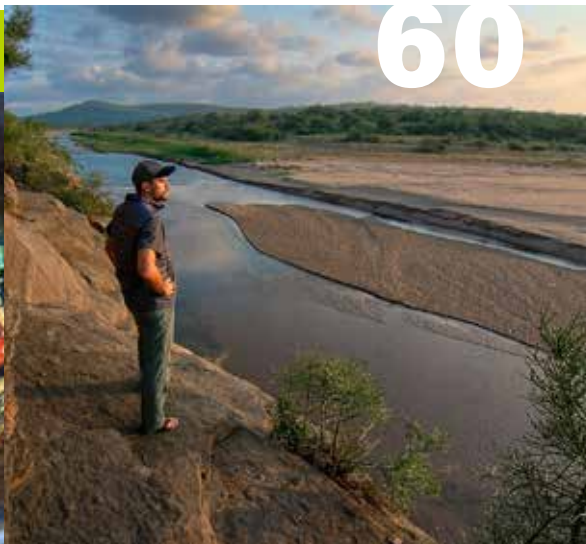
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Giving life to the vision of a capable State



Acting Minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni

Before the Coronavirus Disease made its destructive presence felt, South Africa was already burdened by unemployment, lack of economic growth, inequality and corruption.

The pandemic has worsened the nation's outlook and when President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered his State of the Nation Address (SoNA) in February, he laid bare the many challenges we face.

The President did so not in a state of despair, however, but with optimism and hope brought about by the undeniable fact that we have overcome insurmountable problems in the past and can do so again.

The address did not deliver a magic elixir but rather spoke about the plans already in place, including the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, to reduce public and private sector corruption, and vehicles aimed at professionalising the Public Service.

The main takeaway of the

SoNA is that the future of the country depends on the actions we now take, as public servants, community leaders, business owners and individuals.

Government, in partnership with civil society, has laid the groundwork for an interventionist, growth-oriented state. As highlighted in the SoNA, it aims to rebuild and reform the economy, focusing on infrastructure and investment, job creation, inclusive growth, anti-corruption strategies and improved education and skills.

Ensuring that the plans outlined in the SoNA are achieved is mainly the responsibility of our country's public servants.

A well-trained, professional, trustworthy and ethical Public Service will be capable of driving South Africa's development goals, ensuring effective service delivery and restoring public confidence in government.

Government has put in place regulations aimed at improving public servants'

productivity and ensuring public sector accountability. It has created the means for ongoing learning through the National School of Government and has made ending corruption a national priority.

Local government – so crucial to achieving the country's development goals – has been strengthened, most notably through the District Development Model, which fundamentally changes government's approach to local development.

All spheres of government will collaborate to fast-track service delivery and ensure that municipalities are adequately supported and resourced to carry out their mandate.

This new approach has the potential to radically improve service delivery in areas such as water provision, infrastructure build and maintenance.

Without an efficient and service-oriented Public Service, all government's efforts to improve the lives of

citizens will be in vain.

Public servants should cultivate the passion to grow South Africa and improve the lives of our people, and also ensure that the culture of service delivery flourishes.

A culture of accountability should start with exposing and charging corrupt officials, but we must equally celebrate professional and dedicated public servants by telling their stories, rewarding them and making them role models. Positive stories will create a vision of how the Public Service should be functioning.

We need to give life to the vision of a capable state not only through communication but by also demonstrating our commitment to improve the lives of our people.

Quality service delivery has the potential to reverberate in the form of happier citizens, confidence in government, investor confidence and ultimately, a well-functioning country.

COVID-19

**Help prevent the spread of
respiratory diseases like COVID-19**



**Wash your hands often with soap
and water for at least 20 seconds.**

COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



COVID-19 reveals human rights challenges

When South Africa commemorated

Human Rights Day on 21 March 2020, we had no idea how our world was about to change.

At the time, the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) had just hit our shores and South Africa had 240 confirmed cases, and there were 299 000 known infections worldwide. Today, the global figure has surpassed over 110 million cases and South Africa has over 1.5 million cases.

Last year, two days after Human Rights Day, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the implementation of a national lockdown to enable the country's health system to adequately prepare for the pandemic.

As the President explained at the time: "The threat posed by this formidable adversary [COVID-19] has compelled us to take unprecedented steps to protect the most



Phumla Williams, GCIS Director-General.

fundamental human right of all, and that is the right to life."

While government's efforts to curb COVID-19 may have dictated what people could do and when, there is little doubt that without the action taken, our cases and death rate would be exponentially higher.

Despite the State doing everything it could to cushion people from the effects of the various levels of lockdown – through social grants and relief schemes – it was poorer communities who were

hardest hit.

The pandemic has highlighted, and also exacerbated, South Africa's equality shortcomings.

Never has the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' been so sharply illustrated. Although the virus is indiscriminate in who it infects, it has generally plunged destitute people into dark despair.

This has been acknowledged in the country's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, which aims to not only recover what we lost, but to build a better society that ad-

dresses the human rights weaknesses exposed by COVID-19.

Human Rights Day 2021 allows us to reflect on government's commitment to people's rights, through vigorous efforts to end inequality, create jobs and grow our economy.

Of significance this year are the very real steps being taken to fight corruption – a scourge that both enables human rights violations and, as summed up by the United Nations, "hinders the effective discharge of human rights obligations".

Despite having the progressive Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and Bill of Rights, our country still faces considerable human rights challenges.

However, like the people of Sharpeville who united to protest against the pass laws about 61 years ago, we are also resilient and determined to meet such challenges head-on.

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Striving for Public Service excellence

When I was elected to the position of President of South Africa, I said that building an efficient, capable and ethical State free from corruption was among my foremost priorities.

Only a capable, efficient, ethical and development-oriented

State can deliver on the commitment to improve the lives of the people of this country.

This means that the Public Service must be staffed by men and women who are professional, skilled, selfless and honest.

They must be committed to upholding the

values of the Constitution, and must, as I said in my inaugural speech, “faithfully serve no other cause than that of the public”.

Recently, public consultations took place on an important policy document that will give greater impetus to our efforts to bolster,

strengthen and capacitate the civil service.

The draft National Implementation Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service aims to build a State that better serves our people, that is insulated from undue political interference and where appointments are

made on merit.

The framework was approved by Cabinet in November last year and structured consultation with various sectors of society took place recently.

Twenty-seven years into democracy, it can be said of the Public Service that while several pockets of excellence exist, we have serious challenges in many government departments with regards to skills, competence and professionalism.

Government performance

All too often, people have been hired into and promoted to key positions for which they are neither suitable nor qualified. This affects government performance, but also contributes to nepotism, political interference in the work of departments, lack of accountability, mismanagement and corruption.

There is also the related problem of political and executive interfer-

ence in the administration of the Public Service. One need only to look at the instability in government departments when senior managers are swapped or replaced each time a new Minister is appointed.

Directors-General (DGs) and provincial heads of departments (HoDs) are particularly affected. In some departments, DGs, HoDs and executive managers have had stability of tenure, enabling the departments to function

with little disruption.

In most of these departments where there is leadership stability, audit outcomes tend to be positive and public funds can be accounted for. Where there is a high turnover of HoDs, there is often administrative turmoil.

Professionalisation

One of the key recommendations made in the draft framework is that the Public Service must be depoliticised and that government depart-

ments must be insulated from politics.

Professionalisation is necessary for stability in the Public Service, especially in the senior ranks.

Public servants must be able to continue doing their jobs “regardless of any changes of Ministers, members of the Executive Council or councillors within the governing party in charge of the administration, or changes to political parties after elections”.

We are proposing a



number of far-reaching reforms, such as extending the tenure of HoDs based on merit and performance, doing occupation-based competency assessments and involving the Public Service Commission in the interviews of DGs and Deputy DGs.

Introducing integrity tests for all shortlisted individuals will help so that we can recruit civil servants who can serve honestly.

We also need to extend the compulsory entrance exams that we introduced in April 2020 beyond senior management. Successful developmental states have similar measures which help advance professionalism within the Public Service.

As we note in the draft framework, “the bureaucracy must continue to loyally and diligently implement the political mandate set by voters and the party, but to refrain from being political actors themselves”.

“The Public Service does not belong to any one party, nor should it be the domain of any particular interest group. It should not be a law unto itself”.

Recruitment and selection

We are suggesting a more rigorous approach towards recruitment and selection of public servants, induction and performance management. This includes continuous learning and a clear professional development path for every public servant.

The draft framework puts emphasis on the need to hold public servants accountable for irregularities, to do away with a culture of impunity in the mismanagement and misappropriation of State resources.

Training

Professionalising the Public Service involves training for accounting officers across all spheres of government

on the applicable legislative provisions.

The National School of Government has a vital role to play in this regard.

Professionalism is not only about having the right qualifications and technical skills, but also about having appropriate standards of respect, courtesy and integrity in dealing with members of the public.

Specialised skills

The Public Service is diverse, with a huge range of skills, qualifications and capabilities.

Many public servants have specialised skills that are necessary for the effective provision of services.

It is therefore not necessarily the case that we need a smaller

Public Service: what we actually need is a fit-for-purpose Public Service with suitable skills, a professional ethic and a commitment to serving the people.

The men and women of the Public Service need to be capacitated to play their role in driving development and consolidating democracy. This is our best guarantee of a capable State that serves the interests of citizens.

The Public Service does not belong to any one party, nor should it be the domain of any particular interest group. It should not be a law unto itself.

The Public Service belongs to the people of South Africa. It must serve them and them alone.

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Budget prioritises

support for economy, public health

The 2021 Budget is focuses on providing support to the economy and public health in the short-term, while ensuring the sustainability of public finances in the medium term.

Delivering the 2021 Budget Speech recently, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni said the main budget revenue was projected to be R1.35 trillion or 25.3% as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021/22.

"This rises to R1.52 trillion in the outer year (2023/24) of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)," he added.

Non-interest spending will remain steady at approximately R1.56 trillion over the next three years, but will decline as a share of GDP from 29.2% in



Finance Minister
Tito Mboweni
delivers the 2021
Budget Speech.

2021/22 to 26.2% of GDP in 2023/24.

The Minister said the total consolidated spending amounts to R2 trillion each year, over the medium term, the majority of which goes towards social services.

He added that government was on track to

achieve its goal of closing the main budget primary deficit and would achieve a primary surplus on the main budget in 2024/25.

GDP is projected to grow by 3.3% in 2021, following a 7.2% contraction in 2020.

According to National Treasury: "The economy

has started to recover in response to improved global conditions and the easing of lockdown restrictions and, in the months ahead, a mass vaccine roll-out will support a full reopening of the economy."

However, the outlook remains highly uncertain



and the economic effects of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) are far reaching.

By the third quarter of 2020, there were 1.7 million fewer jobs than in the same period in 2019.

"Rising unemployment and income losses have entrenched existing inequalities. GDP is only expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels in late 2023. Given South Africa's structural constraints, its recovery will be slower than many of its developing-country peers," said National Treasury.

Recovery plan

Alongside a robust public health response to the pandemic and immediate support to households and businesses, government's recovery plan focuses on raising the economy's long-term

growth rate.

"Structural reforms will lower barriers to faster, inclusive growth by improving access to reliable electricity, water and sanitation services; enabling cost-effective digital services; promoting the green economy; and supporting industries with high employment potential, such as tourism and agriculture.

"Given these circumstances, the 2021 Budget strikes a difficult balance between providing immediate support for the economy and shoring up the country's public finances," it added.

Over the next three years, the fiscal policy will focus on:

- extending temporary support in response to COVID-19.
- narrowing the budget deficit and stabilising debt.

- exercising continued restraint in non-interest expenditure growth while improving the composition of expenditure.

Budget deficit

"Since the 2020 Budget Review, the budget deficit has doubled, and the in-year revenue shortfall is estimated at R213.2 billion.

"These changes reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as government's response, which prioritised relief for households and businesses, alongside a major effort to protect public health.

"The consolidated deficit in the current year – estimated at 14% of GDP – is the largest on record."

National Treasury said gross national debt is projected to rise from 80.3% of GDP in 2020/21 to 87.3% of GDP by 2023/24,

with debt-service costs reaching R338.6 billion in that year.

In light of the continuing pandemic, the fiscal framework provides short-term support to low-income households and funding for the health policy response.

"Changes since the 2020 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement include a three-month extension of the special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant and the Unemployment Insurance Fund's Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme, and funding for the public employment initiative and for provincial hospitals in 2021/22."

Vaccine programme

In support of government's quest to inoculate 67% of the South African population, National

Treasury will inject R9 billion into the country's COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Over the medium term, R9 billion has been allocated for the vaccine roll-out. Of this amount, the Department of Health has been allocated R6.5 billion to procure and distribute vaccines. An amount of R100 million will be transferred to the South African Medical Research Council for vaccine research.

"Government allocated R1.3 billion in the current year for vaccine purchases. Given uncertainty around final costs, an estimated R9 billion could be drawn on from the contingency reserve and emergency allocations, bringing total potential funding for the vaccination programme to

about R19.3 billion," said National Treasury.

It acknowledged that vaccines will play a pivotal role in saving lives and livelihoods, and supporting economic recovery.

"Ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines is government's immediate priority," it added.

Funding for vaccine procurement and roll-out is drawn from the national budget.

"Since the State is procuring vaccines on behalf of both the public and private sectors, some revenue will return to the fiscus when private providers buy vaccines from the State."

Provincial health departments will be allocated R2.4 billion over 12 months to administer vaccines while the Government Communication and Information System

will receive R50 million for an associated communications campaign.

Wage bill

The bulk of National Treasury's fiscal consolidation measures will come from the Public Service wage bill.

This comes as government provided one of the largest fiscal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic among developing countries, resulting in consolidated government spending reaching a record 41.7% of GDP, compared with 29.6% during the economic meltdown in 2008/09.

"Narrowing the budget deficit and stabilising the debt-to-GDP ratio requires continued restraint in expenditure growth. These efforts remain on

"Ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines is government's immediate priority."



“Allowing the wage bill to continue rising in line with recent trends is not sustainable.”



course,” said National Treasury.

“Compared with the 2020 Budget, main budget non-interest expenditure will be reduced by R264.9 billion, or 4.6% of GDP, over the MTEF period.

“Most of these adjustments are to the wage bill. Excluding compensation reductions, consolidated non-interest expenditure grows by an annual average of 0.4% in real terms.”

Public Service compensation absorbed 41% of government revenue in 2019/20 and 47% in 2020/21.

“Allowing the wage bill to continue rising in line with recent trends is

not sustainable. It would require a substantial reduction in funding for capital investment, and critical public goods and services,” it added.

In December 2020, following government’s decision to not implement a wage increase in 2020/21, the Labour Appeal Court reaffirmed National Treasury’s constitutional role in safeguarding the public finances.

“In this regard, the approach to future wage negotiations will align with the fiscal position and prevailing economic conditions. The 2021 Budget proposes a significant moderation in spending on the consolidated

wage bill, which grows by an average of 1.2% over the medium term,” said National Treasury.

Funding policies

Expenditure failure accountability is also expected to take centre stage as National Treasury is set to review provincial infrastructure sector funding policies.


National Treasury said this will be accompanied by proposals of how grants, incentives and other funding can best be structured to coordinate planning and budgeting.

This is in line with the District Development Model, which aims to improve

coordination between national, provincial and local government, including state-owned entities, to strengthen accountability and service delivery.

Introduced in 2019, the model focuses on 52 district and metropolitan spaces as convergence points for public and private sector investment, supported by joint planning, budgeting and implementation processes.

“If a province or municipality is not spending its allocated funds or does not comply with grant conditions, then further transfers can be withheld or reallocated to another recipient,” said National Treasury.



President Cyril Ramaphosa delivering the State of the Nation Address.

The path to recovery and advancement

Government is concentrating its efforts on overcoming the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), accelerating economic recovery, driving economic reform to create sustainable jobs and drive inclusive growth, and fighting corruption and

strengthening the State.

These were the priorities for 2021 that President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined in his recent State of the Nation Address.

The President said government is in discussions with all vaccine manufacturers to ensure

it secures sufficient quantities of vaccines that are suitable to South African conditions.

The first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, targeted at healthcare workers, kicked off with the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine, which has been

shown to be effective against the 501Y.V2 variant.

President Ramaphosa and Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize were among those vaccinated when the first batch of J&J vaccines arrived in the country.

So far, nine million

“We have developed an infrastructure investment project pipeline worth R340 billion in network industries...”

doses of the J&J vaccine have been secured.

In addition, 12 million vaccine doses have been secured from the global COVAX facility, which will be complemented by other vaccines that are available to South Africa through the African Union's (AU) African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team Facility.

Pfizer has committed 20 million vaccine doses, commencing with deliveries at the end of the first quarter.

The President stressed that the success of the vaccination programme would rely on active collaboration between all sectors of society.

Accelerating economic recovery

Over the past year, South Africa has experienced a sharp decline in

growth and a significant increase in unemployment. Poverty is on the rise and inequality is deepening, the President said.

He explained that in the third quarter of 2020, the economy was 6% percent smaller than it was in the last quarter of 2019. There were 1.7 million fewer people employed in the third quarter of 2020 than there were in the first quarter, before the pandemic struck, and the unemployment rate is 30.8%.

“As a result of relief measures implemented and the phased reopening of the economy, we expect to see a strong recovery in employment by the end of 2021,” the President said.

Government's R500 billion COVID-19 relief package saw 18 million

people receiving additional grant payments.

In addition, over R57 billion in wage support was paid to over 4.5 million workers through the special Unemployment Insurance Fund Temporary Employee/Employer Relief Scheme.

Small- and medium-sized businesses received over R1.3 billion in support, over R70 billion in tax relief was given to businesses in distress and around R18.9 billion in loans was approved for 13 000 businesses through the loan guarantee scheme.

Since the launch of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) government has focused on various priority interventions, namely a massive increase in local production, an employment stimulus to

create jobs and support livelihoods and the rapid expansion of the country's energy generation capacity.

“We have developed an infrastructure investment project pipeline worth R340 billion in network industries such as energy, water, transport and telecommunications. Construction has started and progress is being made on a number of projects,” the President said.

The Infrastructure Investment Plan identified roads projects worth R19 billion covering the spine of the South African road network.

Work is underway to finalise project finance structuring for these projects, which will lead to the revival of the construction industry and the creation of much-needed jobs.



The R100 billion Infrastructure Fund is in full operation and will blend resources from the fiscus with financing from the private sector and development institutions. Its approved project pipeline for 2021 is varied.

Local production

The second ERRP priority intervention is to support a massive increase in local production and

to make South African exports globally competitive.

All social partners who participated in the development of the ERRP will work together to reduce reliance on imports by 20% over the next five years.

They have identified 42 products that can be sourced locally. "If we achieve our target, we will significantly expand our productive economy,

potentially returning more than R200 billion to the country's annual output."

Government's vision for industrialisation is underpinned by sector masterplans to rejuvenate and grow key industries. Four master plans have been completed and signed and have already had an impact in their respective industries, the President said.

Creating jobs and supporting livelihoods

The third ERRP priority intervention is an employment stimulus to create jobs and support livelihoods.

The largest number of jobs will be created by the private sector in a number of industries as the economy recovers. "Our compact with the private sector is underpinned by a clear

commitment to grow our economy and create jobs,” the President said.

The Presidential Employment Stimulus is one of the most significant expansions of public and social employment in South Africa’s history.

By the end of January 2021, over 430 000 opportunities had already been supported through the stimulus and another 180 000 opportunities are in the recruitment process, the President said.

These opportunities are in areas like education, arts and culture, global business services, early childhood development and small-scale and subsistence farming.

The National Youth Development Agency and the Department of Small Business Development have also met their target of providing grant funding and business support to 1 000 young entrepreneurs within 100 days.

“This provides a firm foundation for our efforts to support 15 000 start-ups by 2024,” the

President said.

He also encouraged the youth to join over 1.2 million others who have already joined the national Pathway Management Network, which provides support and opportunities to youth across the country.

Expanding energy generation capacity

The fourth ERRP priority is to rapidly expand energy generation capacity. Restoring Eskom to operational and financial health and accelerating its restructuring process is central to this objective.

In line with this, Eskom has been restructured into three separate entities for generation, transmission and distribution.

“Eskom is making substantial progress with its intensive maintenance and operational excellence programmes to improve the reliability of its coal fleet.

“We are working closely with Eskom on proposals to improve its

financial position, manage its debt and reduce its dependence on the fiscus,” the President said.

In December, government and its social partners signed the Eskom Social Compact which outlines necessary actions needed to meet the country’s energy needs now and into the future.

“We have taken action to urgently and substantially increase generation capacity in addition to what Eskom generates.”

The President explained that the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy would announce successful bids for 2 000 megawatts of emergency power.

“The necessary regulations have been amended and the requirements clarified for municipalities to buy power from independent power producers. Systems are being put in place to support qualifying municipalities.”

Government will also initiate the procurement of an additional 11 800 megawatts of power

from renewable energy, natural gas, battery storage and coal, in line with the Integrated Resource Plan 2019.

Reform in SOEs

The Presidential State-owned Enterprises Council has outlined a clear set of reforms that will enable state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to fulfil their mandate of growth and development.

President Ramaphosa said overarching SOE legislation will be tabled in Cabinet this financial year, and in Parliament in the next financial year.

“A centralised SOE model is being implemented this financial year, which will ensure standardised governance, financial management and operational performance framework for all SOEs.”

In addition, all SOE mandates are being re-evaluated to ensure they are responsive to the country’s needs and the implementation of the National Development Plan.

Strengthening the State



Bolstering the capacity of the State and fighting corruption are among government's priorities for 2021.

Delivering his State of the Nation Address recently, President Cyril Ramaphosa highlighted the important role played by the Public Service and the efforts being made to strengthen it.

"The Public Service is at the coalface of govern-

ment and a lack of professionalism doesn't just impact service delivery, it also dents public confidence.

"Advancing honesty, ethics and integrity in the Public Service is critical if we are to build a capable state," he stressed.

Government has been offering courses and training programmes for government officials, from entry level to senior man-

agement and the executive, through the National School of Government.

Accountability

In addition, in October last year, the President signed Ministerial Performance Agreements with all Ministers.

"These have now been published online. This will enhance accountability and focused performance by members of the ex-

ecutive," he said.

He added that government was on course to build a capable and professional civil service that delivers on its mandate and is accountable to South Africans.

Government is strengthening local government infrastructure and accelerating service delivery through the District Development Model (DDM).

The DDM brings all three spheres of government together to focus on key priorities and the implementation of critical high-impact projects.

Working with public and private sector partners, government is implementing a range of measures to support municipalities to address inadequate and inconsistent service delivery in areas such as water

provision, infrastructure build and maintenance.

"We are focusing on the appointment of properly qualified officials at local level to ensure effective management and provision of services."

Tackling corruption

President Ramaphosa said that corruption is one of the greatest impediments to the country's growth and development.

"The revelations from the Zondo Commission of Inquiry lay bare the extent of state capture and related corruption.

"Testimony at the commission has shown how the criminal justice system was compromised and weakened. It is therefore vital that we sustain the momentum of the rebuilding effort that we began three years ago."

He explained that there has been great progress in turning around law-enforcement bodies

and that critical leadership positions have been filled with capable, experienced and trustworthy professionals.

"There is improved cooperation and sharing of resources between the respective law-enforcement agencies, enabling a more integrated approach to investigations and prosecutions."

The President said the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which lays the basis for a comprehensive and integrated society-wide response to corruption, has commenced.

"We will shortly be appointing the members of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, which is a multi-sectoral body that will oversee the initial implementation of the strategy and the establishment of an independent statutory

anti-corruption body that reports to Parliament."

He added that when reports started to surface last year about possible fraud and corruption in the procurement of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)-related goods and services, government acted decisively to put a stop to these practices, investigate all allegations and act against those responsible.

"We established a Fusion Centre, which brings together key law-enforcement agencies to share information and resources. The Fusion Centre has brought many cases to trial and preserved or recovered millions in public funds," the President said.

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) was authorised to investigate allegations of unlawful conduct with respect to

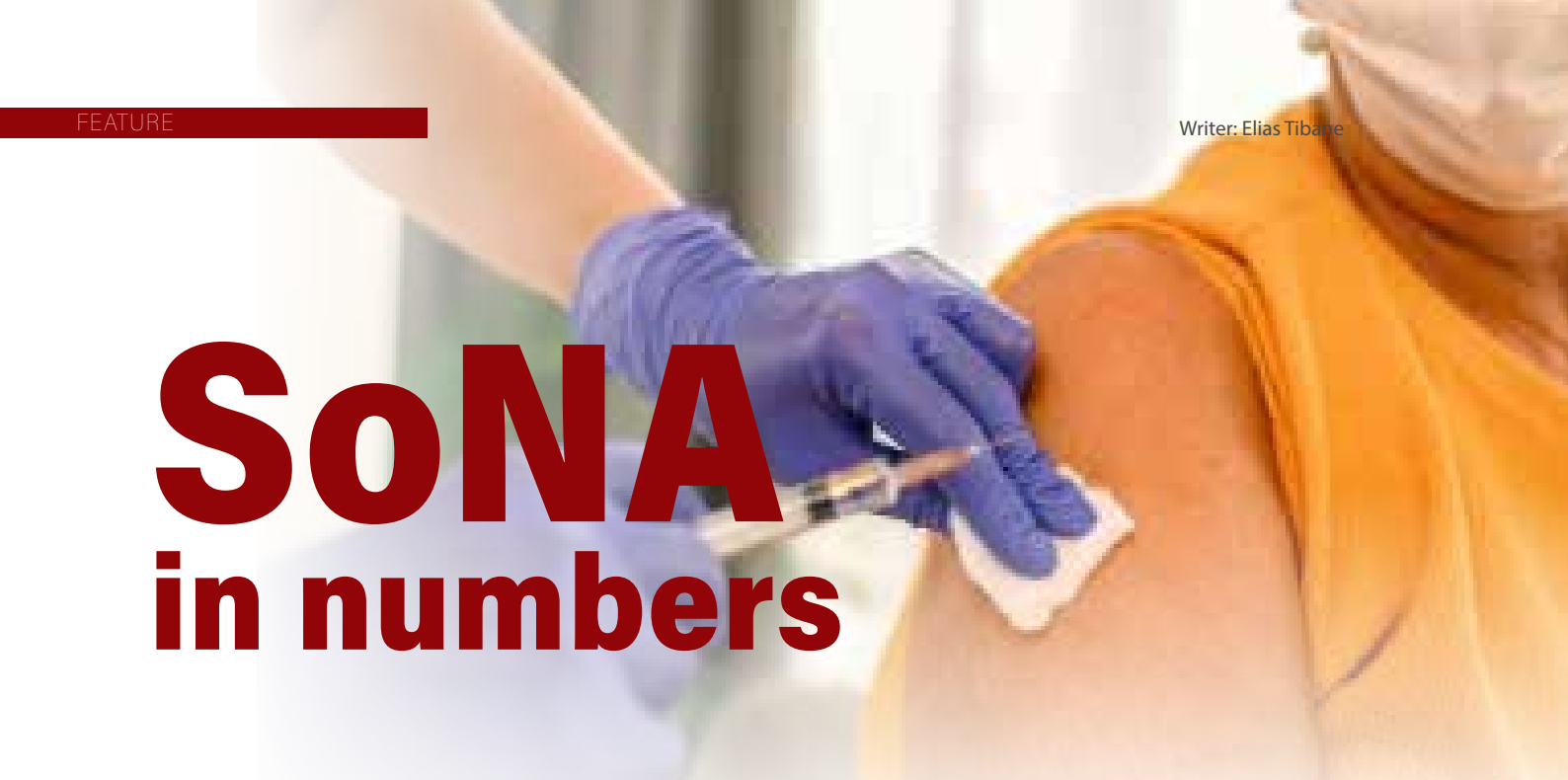
COVID-19 procurement by all State bodies during the National State of Disaster.

"The SIU has finalised investigations into 164 contracts, with a total value of R3.5 billion."

In a significant development for transparency and accountability, the Political Party Funding Act of 2018 will come into operation on 1 April.

"This will regulate the public and private funding of political parties. Among other things, it requires the disclosure of donations to parties and establishes two funds that will enable represented political parties to undertake their programmes," said President Ramaphosa.





SoNA in numbers

In his recent State of the Nation Address (SoNA), President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined how government will go about rebuilding, following the devastation of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). From fighting the pandemic to job creation, the President outlined the priorities for the year ahead. Here are some of the important numbers from the SoNA.

COVID-19

9 million – doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine that government has secured.

12 million – doses of the vaccine secured from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility.

20 million – vaccine doses Pfizer has committed, commencing with

deliveries at the end of the first quarter.

Economy and employment

1.7 million – fewer people employed in the third quarter of 2020 than in the first quarter, before the pandemic struck.

30.8% – the rate of unemployment in South Africa by 11 February 2021.

R500 billion – value of the social and economic relief package to provide cash directly to the poorest households, to provide wage support to workers and to provide various

forms of relief to struggling businesses.

18 million – people or close to one-third of the population who received additional grant payments through government's relief measures.

More than 5 million – poor people who benefitted from the social and economic relief package.

R57 billion – value of the wage support that has been paid to over 4.5 million workers through the Special Unemployment Insurance Fund TERS scheme.

Business support

More than R1.3 billion – money provided to support mainly small- and medium-sized businesses.



Over R70 billion – value of the tax relief extended to businesses in distress.

Around R18.9 billion – value of loans approved for 13 000 businesses through the Loan Guarantee Scheme.

Infrastructure

R340 billion – value of the infrastructure investment project pipeline that government has developed in network industries such as energy, water, transport and telecommunications.

68 000 – households in Gauteng that will benefit from homes provided through two major human settlement projects of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

350 000 to 500 000 – people expected to benefit from homes built within the next decade, as part of the Lanseria Smart City project.

R19 billion – value of roads projects, covering the spine of the South African road network, identified through the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

R100 billion – the budget



of the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

Local products

20% – the level of the planned reduction of South Africa's reliance on imports over the next five years.

More than R200 billion – money that could potentially be returned to the country's annual output by sourcing products locally.

1 000 – locally produced products that must be procured from small, medium and micro enterprises.

R800 million – funds invested to upgrade production through the

Poultry Master Plan.

1 million – additional chickens that South Africa produces every week through the Poultry Master Plan.

80% – quantity of sugar that large users of sugar have committed to procure from local growers, as part of the Sugar Master Plan.

85 000 – workers employed in the sugar industry.

More than half a billion rand – money invested by the clothing, textile, footwear and leather industry to expand local manufacturing facilities, including small, medium and micro enterprises.

R16 billion – value of the investment by Ford Motor Company to expand its manufacturing facility in Tshwane for the next generation Ford Ranger bakkie.

12 – small and medium enterprises in automotive component manufacturing to be supported to grow through the **R16 billion** investment by Ford Motor Company.

R1.7 billion – value of procurement opportunities from nearly half of the procurement spend on construction of the bulk earthworks and top structure at the Tshwane Special Economic Zone to be allocated to small,

medium and micro enterprises.

R108 billion – value of additional investment commitments raised by the third South Africa Investment Conference in November 2020.

R773 billion – value of investment commitments received by 11 February 2021 towards government's five-year target of R1.2 trillion.

R183 billion – value of investments that have reportedly flowed into projects that benefit the South African economy.



Job creation

Over 430 000 – job opportunities supported through the Presidential Employment Stimulus by the end of January 2021.

180 000 – job opportunities supported through the Presidential Employment Stimulus still in the recruitment process by 11 February 2021.

Nearly half a million – people receiving an income, developing new skills and contributing to their community and the country's economy through environmental programmes.

Youth economic empowerment

1 000 – young entrepreneurs benefited from grant funding and business support provided by the National Youth Development Agency and the Department of Small Business Development, by International Youth Day on 12 August 2020.

15 000 – start-ups to be supported by the National Youth Development Agency and the Department of Small Business Development by 2024.

1.2 million – youth on

the National Pathway Management Network, which provides support and opportunities to young people across the country.

Energy

2 000 – megawatts of emergency power to be supplied by the successful bids to be announced by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy.

11 800 – additional megawatts of power from renewable energy, natural gas, battery storage and

coal that government will procure in line with the Integrated Resource Plan 2019.

2 600 – megawatts from wind and solar energy to be supplied as part of Bid Window 5 to address the estimated electricity supply shortfall over the next five years.

5 000 – megawatts of additional capacity to be unlocked by the easing of licensing requirements for new embedded generation projects to help ease the impact of loadshedding.

COVID-19

**Help prevent the spread of
respiratory diseases like COVID-19**



**Wash your hands often with soap
and water for at least 20 seconds.**

COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999

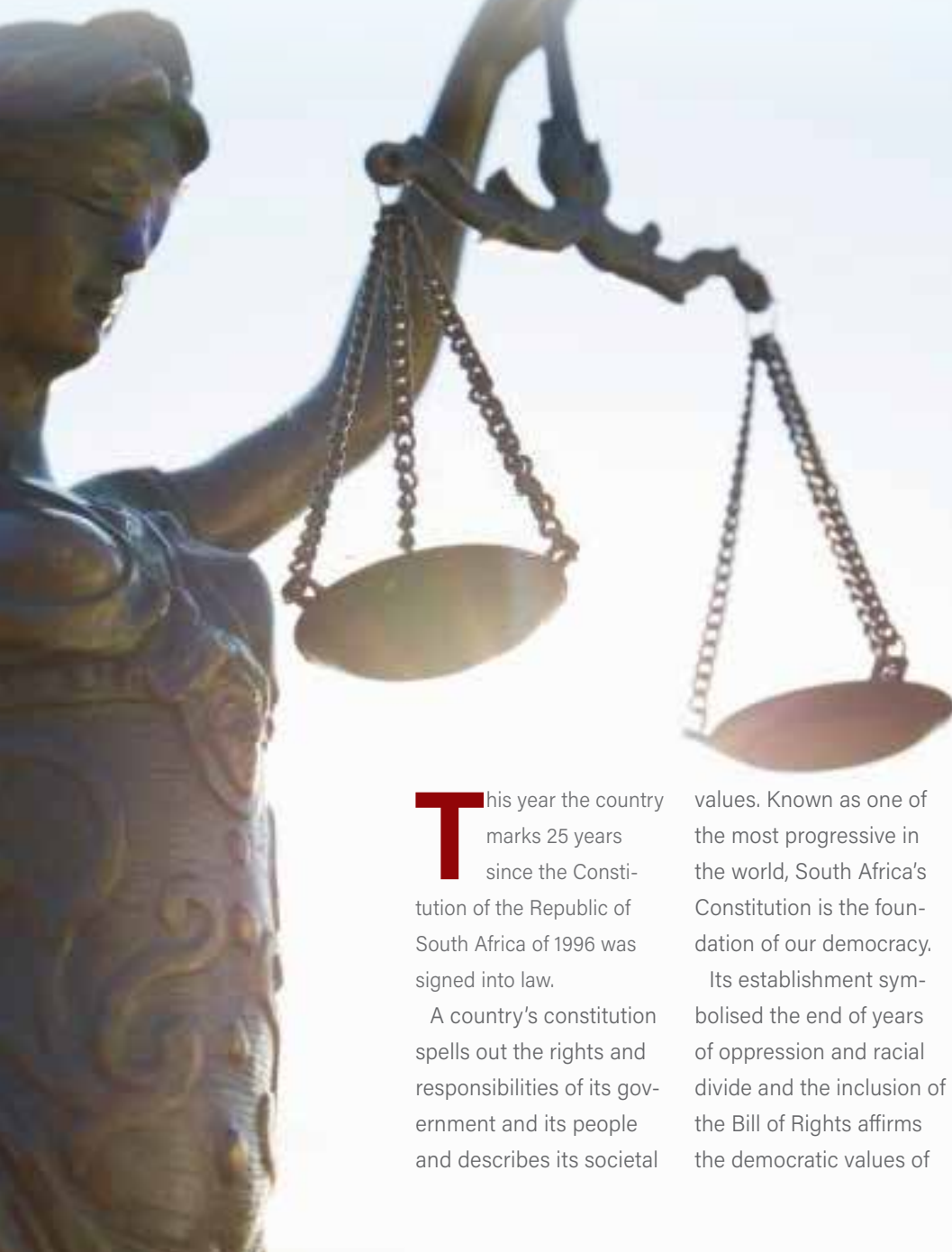


health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Justice and human rights must co-exist



This year the country marks 25 years since the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 was signed into law.

A country's constitution spells out the rights and responsibilities of its government and its people and describes its societal

values. Known as one of the most progressive in the world, South Africa's Constitution is the foundation of our democracy.

Its establishment symbolised the end of years of oppression and racial divide and the inclusion of the Bill of Rights affirms the democratic values of

human dignity, equality and freedom.

The Bill also spells out people's right to access courts for legal intervention and security.

Justice and Correctional Services Deputy Minister John Jeffery says the 25th anniversary of the Constitution emphasises the importance of Human Rights Month – celebrated each March in commemoration of the Sharpeville Massacre – because both celebrations are interwoven.

Equally co-dependent are human rights and justice, he says. The one cannot exist without the other.

The Deputy Minister explains that justice can be viewed in two contexts.

The first is the narrow sense of people having access to avenues which allow them to have their dispute heard or adjudi-

cated before a legitimate body or institution, like a court. "In the end, people would talk about justice being served.

"The other, broader meaning is in the context of social justice and equality before the law. This includes the right to a decent life, the right to education and all other human rights," he adds.

Human rights

In general terms, human rights are known as moral principles or norms that describe certain standards of human behaviour. In South Africa, these are protected by law, which is why you cannot have justice without human rights and vice versa.

"This is why our Constitution has that special connection between the values of human dignity, freedom and equality on the one hand, and the Bill of Rights on the other, because it affirms that relationship between justice and human rights," Deputy Minister Jeffery says.

He believes that the strengthening of South

Africa's democracy means most people have access to justice and enjoy their human rights.

"There's been significant progress in the past 25 years, particularly with socio-economic rights. For example, there were approximately 14.6 million learners in school in 2019.

"Participation in education institutions is virtually universal," he emphasises, adding that 96.6% of 15 year olds – which is the last compulsory school age in the country – attend school. The number of learners attending no-fee schools increased from 21.4% in 2007 to 66.2% in 2019.

"More people are getting social grants, more people are residing in formal dwellings and access to water and electricity is increasing. However, we still have a long way to go as government in ensuring that even more people enjoy access to justice and their human rights are always protected," he explains.

The Deputy Minister says it is important for people to be aware of

their human rights and explains that the Bill of Rights does not only apply to citizens, but to everyone living in the country.

Fighting GBVF

He says the ongoing incidents of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) have a profound effect on the country's human rights record.

Levels remain alarmingly high, despite government's concerted efforts to fight what President Cyril Ramaphosa has referred to as the second pandemic.

"I do not know if we properly understand the reasons why we as a country have much higher levels of GBVF than any other country in the southern region.

"It is interesting that the banning of alcohol during many stages of the national lockdown, which was implemented to fight the spread of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, had an impact on the reduction of GBV and sexual offences. That is something we ought to

look into," he says.

Additionally, he thinks the country has serious toxic masculinity and patriarchy issues.

"There is this entitlement by men of all race groups when it comes to women's bodies. We must pay attention to how we bring up our boy children.

"This is not a crime that you can protect people from because you cannot have a police official in every home to stop the man from beating up his wife. It is a societal issue."

Deputy Minister Jeffery says the Department Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJCD) spearheads various domestic violence awareness campaigns.

"We have the Sexual Offences Courts and the accompanying services, such as intermediaries and court preparation officers. We also have 55 Thuthuzela Care Centres across the country, with five more on the way, to provide care and support to survivors of GBV."

He adds that the department plays a significant role in the implementation



Justice and
Correctional
Services
Deputy Minister
John Jeffery.

of the National Strategic Plan on GBV, through its Promotion of the Rights of Vulnerable Groups Unit and through legislative development.

In response to the public call made by President Ramaphosa to all men to end patriarchy, the department introduced the Under-the-Tree Dialogues programme.

It creates a shared space for various men's organisations and formations to collectively craft interventions to address male dominance and its

ramifications.

The DoJCD also recently upgraded several regional courts into Sexual Offences Courts, mostly based in rural communities.

"Within a short space of time, over 12 000 government officials were vetted against the National Register for Sex Offenders to ensure that no registered sex offenders work as officials at service points which have direct access to children and persons with mental disabilities," he says.

The Deputy Minister

urges public servants to treat survivors of GBV with care and compassion, whether they encounter them in their work in the South African Police Service, hospitals, clinics, shelters or courts.

No room for corruption

With regard to the fight against corruption, he says the department and Minister Ronald Lamola play a significant role in the Anti-Corruption Task Team.

In addition, the depart-

ment is providing support to the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture (Zondo Commission) and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy is at the core of the department's developmental trajectory.

"Law-enforcement agencies, particularly the National Prosecuting Authority and the Hawks, both financially and from a human resource perspective, are being capacitated to ensure they are more effective.

"The establishment of the Special Tribunal has enhanced the ability of the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to recoup funds embezzled from the State. We applaud the SIU for their biggest recovery to date, against ABB South Africa, amounting to R1.5 billion."

The Deputy Minister appeals to public servants to help fight corruption.

"Corruption diminishes the public's faith in government and detracts from the gains we have made as a country," he says.

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?



Police: 10111
Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150
Childline: 0800 055 555

There is no excuse for abuse.
People can only help if they know.
TELL SOMEONE.

Violence and abuse are poison to society. Let's make it stop.



government
communications

Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Meet public health's new whizz-kid

At the tender age of 21, the youngest active female doctor in South Africa is making a difference in the public health system.

Dr Thakgalo Thibela, who hails from a village in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, matriculated at the age of 15, in 2015, with seven distinctions.

Six years later she received her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Despite her tender age, she is already hard at work on the frontlines of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, working as a doctor at a busy public hospital.

Dr Thibela says she

knew from Grade One that she wanted to be a doctor and when asked by teachers what she wanted to be when she grew up, she was always very quick to say: "A doctor!"

Making her dream a reality

In January, her lifelong dream became a reality when she started working at the Helen Joseph Hospital in Johannesburg, making her one of the youngest people to practise as a medical doctor in South Africa and proving that a person's circumstances do not have to dictate their future.

She is following close in the footsteps of Sand-

ile Kubheka, who made South African history in 2014 by qualifying as the youngest doctor ever at the age of 20.

The go-getter says being a doctor at such a young age has not posed extra challenges for her.

"When I treat the patients who come to the hospital, they always ask me about my age and are full of compliments when I tell them," says Dr Thibela.

Starting her career in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a unique experience. She says it has reinforced the need for healthcare workers to be mindful of their own personal safety when treating patients.

"When you are in the emergency department, you must get to the next patient quickly, but in treating patients in the time of COVID-19, I have learnt that you have to protect yourself first by wearing personal protective equipment.

"It is only when I am protected that I am able to help other people. When I consult a patient, especially one who has tested positive for COVID-19, I must wear gloves, a mask, a face shield and gown."

Helping those in need

The doctor loves working in the public health system because she gets to save the lives of those

most in need of medical services, which is why she chose to work at Helen Joseph for the next two years.

"As much as the hospital is demanding, I enjoy working here," she says.

Despite the heartache and tragedy, she witnesses as a result of the pandemic, she says she cannot imagine switching careers and intends to make the time she spends at Helen Joseph as meaningful as possible.

Dr Thibela says the country's public health service could be improved by investing in equipment and resources.

"The public health service is under-resourced. If it was properly resourced, more could be achieved. Right now, the only thing that is hampering the public health system of South Africa is a lack of resources."

Back-up plan

When she completed her matric in 2015, she wanted to apply to study medicine only but was persuaded to have a back-up plan by her

older sister and thus also applied to study nuclear science.

She was accepted for the latter and was about to register for the course when her dream came calling.

"I was set to go register to study nuclear science when I received a call from Wits University, saying that I had been accepted to their medical school and that I should go and register the following day."

In a class of her own

The youngster grabbed the opportunity with both hands and left her home in the rural village of Violet Bank for the bustling city of Johannesburg, where she quickly had to adapt to independent living and a faster pace of life.

Being in a class with people who were older than her was not intimidating, however, because, having skipped two grades in school, being the young student in class was nothing new.

Due to her academic prowess, the young Thibela skipped Grade



Dr Thakgalo Thibela is living her dream.

Seven at Farel Primary School. She repeated the remarkable feat at Lehla-sedi High School when she was promoted to Grade 10 without having to do Grade Nine.

"In high school, I was always the youngest in my class so by the time Wits came around, I was

used to it. I never really felt the age gap because I matured early in life," Dr Thibela says, explaining that no-one at university made her feel that her age was an issue.

Dr Thibela says that the next step in her journey is to pursue a career as a surgeon.

Zoliswa Gidi-Dyosi becomes the first person to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine as part of government's vaccination programme.

What you need to know about the J&J vaccine

South Africa kick-started its first phase of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) vaccination roll-out programme using the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine, with President Cyril Ramaphosa among the first South Africans to receive the jab.

"At first I was a bit terrified of this long needle that was going to be embedded into my arm. But it happened so quickly, so easily. It was just a prick on my flesh and I really did not feel much pain," said the President about the experience.

He, together with Health

Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize and healthcare workers in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape, received the vaccine shortly after they arrived in the country in February.

"This day represents a real milestone for us as South Africans that finally the vaccines are here and

they are being administered. I was rather pleased that there were five people who were vaccinated before me and they are health workers," said the President.

The first South African to receive the J&J vaccine was healthcare worker Zoliswa Gidi-Dyosi.

Leading by example, the President encouraged South Africans to take the vaccine, stressing that it is safe.

"I would like to invite South Africans to take this up [get vaccinated], so that we can all be safe, so that we all can be healthy."

The J&J vaccine has been shown to be safe and efficacious in extensive trials. So why is it a good choice for the country and how effective is it? The National Department of Health tackles these and other questions below.

Why is the J&J vaccine a good first choice for the National Vaccination Programme?

It was tested in a large trial of almost 44 000 people from four continents, of whom 7 000 are from South Africa.

The study also provided a good picture of how the vaccine works against the new 501Y.V2 variant, which is dominant in South Africa and currently responsible for around

nine in 10 of all COVID-19 infections detected during the second wave.

The South African trial showed that while the J&J vaccine is not going to prevent mild symptoms, it provides 57% protection against moderate-severe disease, 85% protection against severe disease and 100% protection against death.

By way of comparison, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine provided only 27% protection against mild to moderate COVID-19 caused by the new 501Y.V2 variant.

How does the J&J vaccine compare with other COVID-19 vaccines?

Like all COVID-19 vaccines, the jab contains instructions for the spike protein on the Coronavirus.

These instructions are delivered to the immune system by a modified adenovirus that has also been used in other vaccines, such as the Ebola and Zika shots.

The adenovirus is safe to

use in vaccines as it has been modified so that it cannot cause disease or replicate in humans.

Non-active ingredients in the vaccine include sodium chloride, citric acid monohydrate buffer, polysorbate 80, 2 hydroxypropyl- β -cyclodextrin (HBCD), ethanol (absolute), sodium hydroxide and water for injection.

All of these ingredients are safe for human consumption.

The vaccine does not contain any animal products and is halal.

How does the vaccine protect you against COVID-19?

When injected, the vaccine trains your immune system to fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

The vaccine does not contain the Coronavirus and will not give you COVID-19.

Some mild side effects include tenderness at the injection site, feeling unwell, feverish and getting a headache for a few days. These are posi-

tive signs that the body is mounting an immune response to the Coronavirus.

When you encounter real Coronavirus particles in future, your immune system will be able to disarm the virus so that you either do not fall ill at all or if you do, the symptoms are mild and your chances of being hospitalised or dying are much lower.

How is it stored?

The vaccine has a long shelf life of two years at minus 20 degrees Celsius and can be safely stored in a domestic fridge for a month.

This makes it suitable for widespread roll-out in warmer countries like South Africa, as ultra-cold freezers are not needed.

How is the vaccine given and when does protection start?

The vaccine is given as a single dose into the upper arm.

Protection starts around 10 to 14 days after vaccination and even as early



as seven days for severe disease. It can also rise to good levels around a month after vaccination.

It is currently the only vaccine available that uses a single dose, while others require two shots.

Researchers are still waiting for further results on how effective the vaccine is at preventing asymptomatic transmission.

It is important you continue to use masks, practise social distancing and good hand hygiene.

If you are a healthcare worker, you still need to wear your personal

protective equipment and stay vigilant, even after you are vaccinated.

Why is a research programme being used to make the vaccine available?

Manufacturers apply for vaccines to be licensed after trials to show them to be safe and effective.

The J&J trial results were released in early February and applications for licensing are underway in the United States, Europe and South Africa.

The Sisonke 'Together' Programme allows the government to make this safe and effective vaccine immediately available to healthcare workers using a research study.

Sisonke is not the same as a clinical trial, rather a way that research can help to make it available while the licensing process takes place.

The South African Government has chosen to move ahead with this programme because it would be unethical to withhold a vaccine known to be safe and effective.

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority has approved the use of the vaccine for the programme while it processes the full licensing.

It is important to understand although it is not yet licenced, it is still safe and effective.

The third wave of COVID-19 is predicted to begin in South Africa this winter and protecting healthcare workers is a priority. It is thus important to start vaccinating healthcare workers before the third wave arrives.

COVID-19

**Help prevent the spread of
respiratory diseases like COVID-19**

**Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue,
then throw the tissue
in the trash.**



COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Promoting and protecting human rights

While South Africa is at the forefront of the promotion of human rights in Africa, the country still has some way to go as issues of inequality and corruption persist.

As the country commemorates Human Rights Month, the Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Professor Bongani Majola, spoke to *PSM* about what is being done to safeguard human rights in the country.

The SAHRC is tasked with promoting, protecting and monitoring the attainment of human rights, as set out in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the Bill of Rights.

It has held several investigative hearings and national inquiries that have contributed to the advancement of human rights.



Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, Professor Bongani Majola.

The SAHRC has also litigated at various levels of the country's judicial system, seeking appropriate redress for victims of human rights violations.

Given the country's history, Prof Majola believes South Africa is championing human rights, particularly when compared to other African countries.

He points to the coun-

try's robust Constitution which enshrines human rights.

"Under the Constitution, South Africa has done a lot to reverse the harm done by apartheid. Those who were discriminated against on the basis of race now have the right to equal treatment.

"In addition, government has built millions

of houses for the poor, provided access to water and sanitation to a majority of them, significantly improved their rights to access healthcare, social security, education and other socio-economic rights."

While there has been significant progress, there is much that still needs to be done.

Prof Majola notes that the World Bank has declared South Africa as one of the most unequal countries in the world and that poverty is also a major concern.

"The principle of giving them [people] a progressive realisation of their rights has almost stalled, as corruption and other factors eat away the resources that government needs to effect that progressive realisation of socio-economic rights," he says.

Corruption

Prof Majola is also concerned about corruption in the country, particularly the corrupt activities linked to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) procurement.

He says the international community has appealed to governments, including South Africa's, to put human rights at the centre of all of their responses to COVID-19.

"It is said that South Africa saw a massive spike in police brutality, gender-based violence (GBV), corruption and many others.

"Some of the violations stem from the prevailing culture of impunity and lawlessness, where even law-enforcement officials break the law with impunity."

He adds that government can address these issues by insisting on accountability.

"The SAHRC recognises that corruption impacts human rights, as services which are linked to rights fail to be delivered on adequately and thus impact negatively on human rights.

"The commission, as part of its strategic focus for the next five years, has resolved to focus and act on the negative impact corruption has on human rights," says Prof Majola.

Fighting GBV

Prof Majola says there are troubling levels of GBV in the country.

Because the SAHRC's mandate extends to the promotion, protection and monitoring of equality, which entails equality in terms of sex and gender, the SAHRC has focused much of its attention on gender equality, inclusive of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming persons.

Prof Majola says the commission has intervened in many matters dealing with discrimination on the basis of gender, sex and sexual orientation.

The commission's sister institution – the Commission for Gender Equality – was constitutionally established to focus on gender equality, dealing

specifically with GBV.

"The commission, in exercising its broad mandate, sees gender equality as being central to all rights," he says.

25 years strong

The SAHRC commemorated its 25th anniversary on 2 October 2020.

"The commission has used the past 25 years to engage in litigation; alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as arbitration, mediation and negotiation; and using the media and advocacy to promote human rights.

"These activities span numerous human rights' themes, with the most prominent relating to equality and race in particular," says Prof Majola.

Like most organisations, the SAHRC has had to do things differently during the COVID-19 pandemic, holding its engagements that promote human rights online.

"The commission, in recognising the impact, import and use of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is ensuring its website is upgraded and is accessible to persons with disabili-

ties. We are also finalising a mobile app, specifically designed for receiving complaints from persons who wish to report human rights violations," he says.

Both of these innovations are planned for the end of the current financial year.

About Prof Bongani Majola

As an admitted Advocate of the Republic of South Africa with decades of work experience in the public and private sectors, Prof Majola's seven-year term commenced in January 2017.

His experience includes working in a number of capacities as a public servant, including as prosecutor and magistrate.

One of his main responsibilities as the Chairperson of the SAHRC is to coordinate the work of all eight commissioners on a broad, strategic level, to ensure that the commission's key strategic goals are met.

Vuk'uzenzele:

200 editions of putting people first

In March 2021, *Vuk'uzenzele* celebrates an important milestone: the publishing of its 200th edition.

Since it was first published in October 2005, the newspaper has reached millions of South Africans living in rural areas with no access to government news.

Published by Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) twice a month, *Vuk'uzenzele* aims to help people access important information on government programmes and policies, provide work opportunities and connect fellow South Africans.

Access to information

GCIS Director-General Phumla Williams says

the publishing of the 200th edition of *Vuk'uzenzele* is more than a celebration for GCIS.

"This is a celebration of underprivileged and vulnerable communities being able to access information that empowers them to change their lives.

"This occasion also celebrates GCIS's ability to meet its mandate from 1998, which guarantees South Africans the right to information that empowers them."

With over 254 million copies of *Vuk'uzenzele* published and distributed free of charge since its launch, *Vuk'uzenzele* also has the largest print run in the local print industry.

"When we started *Vuk'uzenzele* we wanted





it to reach those in rural communities. One of the issues we had to grapple with was how to make this publication accessible. How do we make sure we have a version of the newspaper for those who can't read English?

"Vuk'uzenzele is available in part in all 11 official languages and Braille. It is the only newspaper that has been able to respond to that need.

We needed to make sure we provided a publication that is easy to read, accessible, inclusive and talks to the reader," she adds.

Changing lives

Williams says over the years she has witnessed how Vuk'uzenzele has changed lives.

"What is exciting about Vuk'uzenzele is that it tells stories about real

people that motivate anyone who might be thinking, 'What do I do with my life?'

"A young person may read the newspaper and see someone who has started a green pepper farm. When they see that story it helps them realise that they are also capable of doing it.

"Vuk'uzenzele also gives readers information on how to get help to improve their lives. South Africans want to know how to help themselves, but many often don't know how or where to begin. We have managed to provide government information and respond to the needs of South Africans."

Vuk'uzenzele also carries government job op-

portunities, which opens doors for unemployed citizens, says Williams.

"We understand that many people are unemployed and cannot afford to buy newspapers, which carry many government jobs.

"We reached out to departments to advertise in Vuk'uzenzele because it is a free newspaper and reaches a wide audience. Our ideal is to get all government departments to advertise in Vuk'uzenzele."

Digital footprint

Williams says the future of Vuk'uzenzele includes plans to increase its digital footprint and to continue listening to the needs of its readers.

"It is helpful to hear what readers want. Our readers must tell us more about the stories they would like to read, like stories about land or agriculture or the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We need to give readers the opportunity to have their say and find out how they are consuming our content," she adds.

Philisiwe

Mthethwa is an empowerment powerhouse

As the Chief Executive Officer of the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), Philisiwe Mthethwa is at the forefront of growing black participation in the economy through financial and non-financial support, and by promoting a culture of savings and investment among black people.

Her passion for creating an equal economic stance in the country is not new; it started when she was a youngster.

"The realisation first dawned on me as a child, whenever our parents would take us to town. It gradually

became clear to my siblings and I that we lived in different worlds, one poor and black and the other, white and rich.

"From discussions at home, my political consciousness deepened, and by the time I went to university, it was long clear to me that when freedom finally arrives, change would have to happen in the economic sphere," she says.

Mthethwa adds that in her early working years at the South African Reserve Bank as a senior analyst in the Supervision Department, she realised that not much had changed.

"I was among the only

four black professionals. It was a culture shock. The internal directory virtually had no black people.

"Another alarming discovery was that many of the white Afrikaner males were either relatives, their parents



had gone to university together or they shared one connection or the other. I felt like I was an outsider. That is when my resolve to work in the service of transformation took root."

Defining moments

While employed at the now Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) as Chief Director for Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), Mthethwa was invited by the then Minister Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, who headed the Department of Minerals and Energy, to serve on a task team that conceptualised and crafted the Mining Charter.

"This was a critical and formative period in my career, where I felt that I was doing something meaningful and direct in the pursuit of economic transformation.

"After the work on the Mining Charter, I was tasked by then

Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin to play a leading role in the conceptualisation, formulation and finalisation of the government's Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Strategy, the BEE Act, the various sector-charters and the Code of Good Practice on BEE.

"My path was set, my vocation had been decided and it has been a privilege to serve in the quest for our country's economic liberation," she says.

Challenges of B-BBEE

Eighteen years after the implementation of the B-BBEE, it would seem South Africa is still battling to achieve broader economic participation and inclusion of black people in the economic mainstream.

"The black majority are still largely excluded and exploited, where they contend against high inequality, unemployment and high levels of

poverty.

"For the B-BBEE Act to be effective, to enable its effective implementation, it should be supported by government through making capital and resources available," adds Mthethwa.

She says that lack of access to adequate capital has proven to be an impediment to policy implementation and has resulted in considerable value leakages in the BEE transactions that have been concluded to date and a lack of consolidation of the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the B-BBEE Commission.

"For example, practices such as transfer pricing have the effect of shifting profits from one entity to the other, where those entities would not have a common shareholding.

"It undermines the objectives of transformation because the real value in these transactions accruing to black people is diluted when this practice is

employed in transaction structuring and implementation of BEE transactions," Mthethwa points out.

Fulfilment

Being at the helm of the NEF has brought Mthethwa much joy.

Mandated to grow black economic participation across the country, the NEF has approved in excess R10.9 billion across all sectors of the economy since 2005.

She says the fund has supported in excess of 103 081 jobs.

"We derive incredible joy when we visit our investees to see South Africans hard at work, knowing that each person supports between five and 10 dependents. That, for us, is the fuel that keeps us energised."

Recently, the NEF in partnership with the dtic, established an Economic Distress Fund to provide concessionary business loans to black-owned and -managed



enterprises that are under financial distress as a result of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The aim is to aid their recovery, sustain existing jobs and improve productive capacity, says Mthethwa.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the South African economy and placed the livelihoods of businesses and employees at stake.

"Black businesses, which historically have been constrained by the lack of access to affordable capital, have been dealt a particularly heavy blow," she adds.

Against this backdrop, the fund will support black companies in accordance with the legislated mandate of the NEF, to mitigate the challenges that have been caused by the ongoing pandemic.

"Funding will be in the

form of loan and equity and a maximum interest rate of 2.5% will apply."

Mthethwa says the work of the NEF is essentially to help make dreams come true.

"You must see the joy when applicants receive the good news of ap-

proval, and even better, when funds have been disbursed. The knowledge that we are elevating the dignity of people and their ability to take our country forward, is the reward of patriots," she says.

About Philisiwe Mthethwa

Mthethwa has seven siblings and her parents were school principals. Her older sister, Phumi Gwala, is South Africa's Ambassador to Argentina, while her older brother, S'fiso Buthelezi, is the former Deputy Minister of Finance and currently the Chairperson of Parliament's Standing Committee on Appropriations.

Mthethwa holds a BA Economics degree from the University of the North; a French Language Diploma from the Institute of Languages, France; Maitrise en science économique (equivalent to an MSc Economics), from the University Paris 2, in Sorbonne, France (thesis not defended); and a Master of Business Administration in Corporate Finance from the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom.

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?



Police: 10111
Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150
Childline: 0800 055 555

There is no excuse for abuse.
People can only help if they know.
TELL SOMEONE.

Violence and abuse are poison to society. Let's make it stop.



government
communications

Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





5G opens new tech frontiers

Fifth generation cellular technologies (5G) have the potential to develop State capacity and communication services for the public.

According to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) chief researcher Dr Fisseha Mekuria,

5G technologies can play a significant role in developing technological innovations, such as smart cities.


Despite the many benefits of 5G, there is widespread speculation that 5G technologies pose a range of health threats to humans, including

cancer, skin and ocular effects, male infertility and the mutation and spread of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

"Many of these supposed health threats are unfounded and are based on pseudoscience, misinformation and fake news," says Dr Essa Sule-

man, the CSIR's senior researcher in the Next Generation Health Unit.

"5G technologies have been rolled out in several countries globally. Many countries and regions that do not have 5G technologies have had significant COVID-19 infections. Therefore, there



is no correlation between 5G distribution and COVID-19 distribution," says Dr Suleman.

"When you look at the World Health Organisation's dashboard, which tracks COVID-19 globally, you will see that many parts of the world that have no significant 5G deployment still have a significant number of COVID-19 cases," he states.

Dr Mekuria adds that all wireless technology standards are highly regulated, with checks and balances in place.

Reducing costs

5G is built around three technology standards, namely enhanced mobile broadband (eMBB), ultra-reliable and available low-latency network communications (URLLC) and massive machine-type communications (mMTC).

Dr Mekuria says eMBB will enable the move towards reducing the

cost of using the internet, spectrum sharing between 4G and 5G and hologram communication, among other things.

It can also be used in education, as online education becomes a more common feature in our lives.

He explains URLLC will help meet the performance demands of industrial automation processes, such as those needed in drones, robotics and self-driving vehicles.

mMTC is about connecting smart sensors. Dr Mekuria says such technologies can have real-life applications for eHealth systems, precision farming and smart cities.

These applications can be made possible when there are smart networks, smart sensor networks and low-power radios that are embedded in 5G network standards.

"In low-income economies, we have pushed for

affordable broadband to be integrated with 5G," says Dr Mekuria.

Technological developments

5G technology is the result of technological developments which started in 1987, with 1G. 1G was a more analogue-based wireless connection, with speeds of up to 900 megahertz (MHz).

This was followed by the development of the 2G network, with a connectivity speed of 2.8 gigahertz (GHz). 2G, much like 1G, was designed for voice connections but had a broader range.

The development of 3G introduced the consideration of data in network development.

3G was created with a connectivity speed of 2.1 GHz. The 4G network was primarily built for using data and encompasses features such as LTE connectivity. It has a connectivity ability of 2.6 GHz.

"Data communication over wireless networks has become important because people want to access their banking information, entertainment and different types of information via their smartphones. This implies that we have to increase the bandwidth," says Dr Mekuria.

He adds that 5G technology can provide two gigabits of data per second and can process high volumes of data at high speeds, for things such as controlling self-driving cars.

"The other application of 5G is the smart city application, where there is a lot of machine-type communication or internet of things. We can put a lot of sensors out in cities, utilities and industries."

Dr Mekuria says being able to get real-time data and information will allow for the optimisation of utilities and resources.

Pioneering cost-effective solutions through technology

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) is working on an initiative that has the potential to change the water and sanitation sector in South Africa.

In September 2020, SALGA launched the Integrated Water and Sanitation Technology and Innovation 7 Platforms initiative in conjunction with the Water Research Commission (WRC).

The Ministries of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs provided support.

The initiative's objective is to unearth proven and emerging water and sanitation technologies within the sector and to introduce it to municipali-

ties, says William Moraka, head of technology and innovation at SALGA, who is overseeing the initiative.

Embracing technology

According to Moraka, the initiative came about after a research project by SALGA on how municipalities use technologies in their water and wastewater treatment facilities.

It emerged that 44% of those 18 test sites used inappropriate technologies. These findings prompted SALGA to look at ways to help municipalities embrace technology innovation and to be aware of cost-effective solutions.

"Innovation should be part of the new normal. It should be part of our ingredients in a quest of improving service delivery.

"It is paramount in the optimal management of drinking water quality and effluent discharge, and in minimising pollution and ensuring the provision of cost-effective water and sanitation services to the end consumer," says Moraka.

While in the past the focus has been on finding solutions to policy, institutional, financial and regulatory challenges, this has now changed.

"In essence, technology and innovation have now taken centre stage as a result of new ways of doing water business."

Solutions

Currently Moraka, in collaboration with stakeholders, is hard at work in taking forward the following solutions as part of the

Technology and Innovation Integrated Platforms:

● **Non-sewered sanitation:**

The key focus is on the promotion of non-water borne sanitation, including the promotion of developed standards for such. SALGA is also working with the WRC and other key stakeholders, particularly the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to explore the deployment of non-sewered sanitation technological options. It is anticipated that the deployment of non-sewered sanitation will limit volumes treated at treatment facilities.

● **Resource recovery:** Using developed guidelines in the management of digesters to harvest

biogas to energy, as well as improving energy management at wastewater treatment facilities. Conventionally, these facilities were designed to solely treat drinking water and effluent discharge. However, through technological interventions, by-products such as biogas, water reuse, hydro power and sludge to fertiliser have been harvested. Of significant importance is the use of energy harvested from biogas to power the plants in the event of loadshedding.

- **National Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)**

surveillance: SALGA and member municipalities are part of the National COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance Initiative that seeks to monitor COVID-19 in our wastewater facilities. SALGA is part of a network of scientists, engineers and municipalities that constantly test

for COVID-19 in our wastewater facilities.

- **Non-revenue water simulation training facility:** This facility uses new technological innovation to detect leaks illegal connections.

The facility was constructed with the support of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and the Department of Water and Sanitation.

The purpose of the facility is to practically train municipalities in the management of non-revenue water by simulating a typical water business in municipalities.

- **Water saving device:** SALGA, working with the WRC, piloted the AquaTrip in Gauteng schools and saved substantial water costs. The technology cuts off water in the event of a leak or in situations where a tap is left running unattended. These types of interventions were necessary in a

water-scarce country such as South Africa.

Implementation

Moraka says that these interventions are at various stages of implementation. SALGA is also in the process of securing additional partners to help deploy these interventions at scale.

"If we are to successfully implement these seven platforms it will bring a great deal of change in terms of how we run our water business in this country.

"It will help reduce the cost of doing business. In other words, it will help minimise the cost of delivering water and ensure correct costing and pricing," he explains.

Municipalities that have benefited from these interventions include eThekweni and Tshwane (non-sewered sanitation); City of Cape Town (trained on biogas to energy harvesting); and Mopani, JB Marks and Ekurhuleni (trained on non-revenue water technology and innovation).



Partnership set to boost 4IR

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and tech company Siemens are pulling together to hasten Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) adaptation in South Africa.

A recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two will see the country acquire much-needed critical, technical and digital skills for the local workforce.

According to the CSIR, the MoU is meant to foster technical and vocational education and training (TVET), particularly in 4IR, to enhance the quality of job profiles and in so doing improve employability.

CSIR CEO Dr Thulani Dlamini says the venture is part of efforts to promote partnerships between the private and public sector to respond to the needs of industry.

"We are very pleased to join hands with Siemens in this

huge and compelling task of ensuring that our country does not miss out on the gains of the 4IR."

He adds that the CSIR strategy requires it to work closely with the private sector to to use science and technology to fast-track digital skills of the future.

"To achieve this, the organisation is leveraging emerging technologies, especially those rooted in the 4IR, as well as its current capabilities and those of its partners," says Dr Dlamini.

Accelerating digitisation

As part of the partnership, Siemens will now be a part of the South Africa Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR-SA) hosted by the CSIR.

The C4IR-SA, which was initially launched by Professor Klaus Schwab – founder

and executive chairperson of the World Economic Forum (WEF) – in Pretoria in 2018, is a hub for public-private collaboration to shape the development and application of emerging technologies.

Speaking at the time, Prof Schwab said the centre would be one of many across the globe.

"The centres are looking at eight different technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, drone technology, big data, precision medicine and so on, to develop the necessary policies and regulations around these technologies which can be applied internationally," he said.

"Through partnerships with the CSIR and the Department of Science and Technology (now Department of Science and Innovation), we are hoping that this effort will be advanced. Of course South Africa is the place to be as it



has proven to be a gateway into Africa as a whole,” he added.

4IR roadmap

In a bid to align with the WEF network of centres, Siemens has developed a comprehensive South Africa 4IR roadmap, which will empower the country to seize the opportunities of digitalisation while upskilling the local workforce and creating new high-quality jobs.

“Siemens is proud to partner with the CSIR on this initiative and is ready to deliver on the 4IR roadmap.

“Our goal as a company is to make sure that while we focus on continuously adapting, we’re also contributing to uplifting and building a sustainable economy,” says Siemens Southern and Eastern Africa CEO, Sabine Dall’Omo.

Country strategy on 4IR

The acceleration of the digitisation has been top of the government’s agenda.

Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation Dr Blade Nzimande says government is developing an integrat-

ed country strategy on 4IR.

“The plan will include detailed interventions to be carried out in order to achieve global competitiveness through addressing national developmental imperatives in key economic sectors like agriculture, finance, mining, manufacturing and ICT,” he says.

The Minister adds that changes are also needed in TVET education.

“We want to see a change where we have students coming to college as apprentices in the workplace, as opposed to an academically-based model.

“In addition I intend availing some government resources to support and harness innovation in the TVET college sector through, amongst other things, the establishment of technology stations in colleges.”

Dr Dlamini says 4IR has the potential to create high-quality employment opportunities across industries if South Africans are strategically skilled in future-oriented jobs.

“Our partnership with Siemens will foster vocational education and training on critical technical and digital skills,” he adds.

Dine in with SA's finest foodies



Graze your way from sunrise to sunset with these delectable recipes, courtesy of a few of our country's leading food influencers, bloggers and authors.

Breakfast by Ilhaam

Banoobhai-Anwar

 [@myhungryhusband](https://www.instagram.com/myhungryhusband)

www.myhungryhusband.com

This gastronomic specialist hosts a blog inspired by her penchant for feeding her "hungry husband," and oh, does she do it well.

Savoury sweetcorn muffins

Ingredients:

- 2 cups, corn kernels
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup grated cheese
- A few basil leaves
- 1 spring onion
- Seasoning of choice – chilli

flakes, black pepper, etc.

- 2 cups cake flour, sifted
- 2 tsp baking powder

Directions:

Preheat oven to 180°C, grease a muffin tray and dust lightly with flour. Add the corn, eggs, oil, milk, sugar, salt, cheese, basil and spring onion into a bowl as well as other seasoning if desired.

Sift the flour and baking powder into the bowl and fold into wet ingredients. Scoop mixture into a muffin tray and bake for 20 minutes until golden brown on top.

Tip: 2 cups of corn kernels would equal roughly 4 full corncobs.

Lunch with Melissa Delport

 [@melissa__delport](https://www.instagram.com/melissa__delport)

www.melissa-delport.com

As a holistic health coach, Delport has authored two cookbooks, *WHOLE – Bowl Food for Balance* and *HEAL – Begin with Food*.



Beer steamed mussel pot

Ingredients:

- ½ brown onion, chopped
- 1 tsp coconut oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ red pepper, sliced
- 2 red chillies, finely chopped (optional)
- 1 tsp honey
- 500g of the best quality mussels you can find
- Handful of coriander
- 330ml beer
- 1 small baguette
- Herb butter

Directions:

Preheat oven to 200°C. Defrost the mussels and put them in the fridge until you are ready to

work with them. Slice the baguette and butter both sides.

Place a medium frying pan over medium to high heat, and add the coconut oil and onions. Fry the onions until soft (about five minutes).

Add the garlic, red pepper and chilli and fry for a further five minutes. Add the honey and fry for a further minute.

Add the mussels to a cast iron pot – if you do not have one, any oven-proof dish with a lid will do. Add the onion and red pepper mix on top of the mussels.

Once everything has been added to the pot, top with 330ml beer and

seal the pot. Pop the mussels into the oven for 20 minutes to steam, or until the shells begin to pop open. For the last five minutes, add the baguette to the oven until toasted.

Dinner is served by

Kalpesh Dullabh

 **@foodiewhippedsa**

www.foodiewhippedsa.com

wordpress.com

As a proudly South African foodie, Dullabh takes pride in presenting authentically homegrown meals made with locally available ingredients.

Inkomazi oven-grilled chicken

Ingredients:

- 1 red onion, sliced

- 1 medium pepper, chopped
- 2 to 4 chicken breasts
- Half a cup Inkomazi
- ½ tsp turmeric powder;
- 1 tsp ground coriander powder
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- Salt to taste

Directions:

Defrost and wash the chicken breasts. In a medium mixing bowl, mix the Inkomazi, turmeric, chilli powder, salt and ground coriander. Mix well and let it sit for 10 minutes.

Drain the chicken, add it to the Inkomazi mixture and allow it to marinate for at least 20 minutes.

Heat a pan on medium heat with some olive oil. Add onion and peppers and sauté until translucent.

Once done, layer the bottom of a baking dish with the sautéed onion and peppers. Add the marinated chicken breasts and pour in the remaining marinade.

In a pre-heated oven, bake the chicken for about 20 to 25 minutes at



200°C until cooked and golden brown. Garnish with fresh coriander and serve with rice or naan bread.

Anyone for dessert with Bathandwa Nkambule?

 **@theearthycook**

www.theearthycook.com

Nkambule is a multi-talented stylist, yogi and activist and culinary creative with a knack for transforming ordinary meals into beauty on a plate.

Chocolate truffles

Ingredients:

- 2 slabs vegan chocolate
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- 2 tsp cocoa powder or Milo
- 1 handful of nuts of your choice
- ½ cup vegan fresh cream
- ½ handful hemp seeds
- Chilli flakes (optional)
- Milo (optional)
- Desiccated coconut (optional)

Method:

Place a small pot of boiling water over high heat and on top of the pot, place an enamel or ovenproof bowl.

Break the chocolate into pieces and place it on top of the heating bowl. Slowly mix the chocolate as it melts.

Add vanilla essence and cream and continue stirring until well combined. If you want to make it darker and richer, add cocoa powder.

When it's all mixed, place in a bowl and refrigerate until it is hard and set (preferably four hours or overnight).

Scoop out small amounts of the mixture and roll them into balls using your palms. Crush the nuts and lay them on a placemat or board along with the hemp seeds and cocoa powder.

Roll the truffles onto your ingredients until coated. Let them set in the fridge for 30 minutes or more.

Serve as is or with ice-cream.



COVID-19

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COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999



health

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Health
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Workout wardrobe essentials

Whether you are working out at home or the gym, it is important to feel comfortable and have the right gear. This gear should be practical too! Here are some items to add to your workout wardrobe.



1



4



3



2

1. REDX reversible crop top, **R70**, available at Mr Price Sport.
2. Nike Curve swoosh run tights, **R849**, available at Superbalist.
3. Adidas Novamotion shoes, **R1 299** available at Adidas.
4. Edition layered wrap blend vest, **R129**, available at Woolworths.
5. Puma x First Mile Xtreme training jacket, **R1 020** available, at Puma.



5



1

1. Puma depth white T-shirt, **R349.95**, available at Puma.
2. UA Vanish woven shorts, **R699**, available at Under Armour.
3. Adidas Essentials wind pants, **R799**, available at Adidas.
4. Nike MC trainer shoes, **R1299.95**, available at Nike.
5. REDX active hoodie, **R189.99**, available at Mr Price.



2



3



5



4

Find some order

A little bit of organisation can go a long way, whether it is in your office, bathroom or the kids' room. Decluttering these spaces will leave you feeling less overwhelmed and help you locate items easily. We've found some nifty products to help you achieve this.





1. The Desk Buddy from local brand Emerging Creatives will be your best friend when it comes to organising your workspace. It has designated spots for your phone, watch, keys and pens. Available at emergingcreatives.co.za, **R299**.
2. Foldable, stackable storage shelves that are perfect for storing stationery, toys or books. They are available at Typo in three sizes, **R99** for the small, **R149** for the midi and **R199** for the large.
3. Organise your bathroom essentials in a jiffy with the stylish Eco Lifestyle four-

piece ceramic set, available from zando.co.za, **R169**.

4. Use this magnetic planner with A3 sized tear-off sheets to keep your daily schedules and to-do lists clearly visible, Typo, **R199**.
5. Short on kitchen space? This innovative design by Joseph Joseph makes use of the space underneath your shelves with a handy pull-out compartment that holds up to seven spice jars, Yuppiechef.com, **R459**.
6. This trendy, gold multi-purpose storage tray from JAVING is perfect for any room

in the house, available from zando.co.za, **R179**.

7. If you're looking to brighten up your days, a yellow smiley penholder is the way to go. It can also double up as storage for your makeup or makeup brushes, Typo, **R149**.
8. Some food items need to be stored correctly, away from sunlight, for their own preservation, like onions and potatoes. These hessian bags from KitchenCraft are dark but breathable to ensure these items stay fresh, Yuppiechef.com, **R299**.

Five days with the Big Five



The sun rises, orange and red against the dusty horizon of the bushveld. The smell of campfire smoke mingles with the sweetness of dry winter grass, all of it carried on the crisp early morning air.

You snuggle deeper into your sleeping bag, relishing the last few moments of warmth and that sense of peace that comes from sleeping out under the stars.

Quiet voices and the clang of the coffee pot on



the fire grate convince you that it is time to emerge from your cocoon.

As you sit up and rub the sleep from your eyes, you scan the riverbed be-

low for any wild animals that might be having a morning drink, hoping that the lions you heard calling in the night might still be around.

This is the setting we found ourselves in while spending five glorious days in KwaZulu-Natal – waking up on our rocky perch above the iMfolozi River, where we'd sheltered like a troop of baboons against the dangers of the dark.

Five incredible days on foot in Big Five territory, walking game paths and exploring the hidden reaches of the iMfolozi Wilderness Area by day and at night, bivouacking under the star-studded night sky with fellow trail-ists and our guides from the Wilderness Leadership School.

Conservation history

Established by Dr Ian Player in 1957, the Wilderness Leadership School forms part of an impressive conservation history.

Wilderness areas provide spaces for people to connect with the environment, and one of South Africa's first proclaimed wilderness areas was in the iMfolozi Game Reserve.

This reserve was also



the site where the efforts of Dr Player and others saved South Africa's white rhino population from the brink of extinction in the 1960s.

Continuing the legacy of Dr Player and his friend Magqubu Ntombela, the mission of the Wilderness Leadership School is to reconnect people with nature.

Removed from the distractions of modern life, trailists on a wilderness walk have the unique opportunity to refresh and

reset.

Immersed in nature and bathed by the natural rhythms of life in the bush, one can't help but feel a deep sense of peace and purpose returning, as well as an appreciation for the sustaining power of nature itself.

On the trail, our days took on a gentle rhythm punctuated by the tasks essential for survival – collecting and sterilising drinking water from the river or gathering firewood for cooking and for

a light during the darkest hours of the night.

After a warming breakfast we set out for the day. Walking single file along game paths, our eyes and ears were on the lookout for animals in the bush.

We had complete faith in our guides, who used their vast experience to open the secrets of the wilderness to us – the 45-degree angle that a browsing black rhino cuts the twigs and branches it eats or the evening scratching post of a

leopard.

Tales from the bush

In the evenings, the warm campfire glow would draw us all into a cosy huddle as our guide, Mandla, regaled us with tales from the bush.

He would tell of an elephant that came and rested its head on the elevated rock that a previous group had chosen for their night's camp, or a lioness that wandered into camp unnoticed by the



night watchman standing guard. Somehow, he'd always be sure to end the evening with a story like that, just before wishing us goodnight and promptly falling asleep, leaving us to our sleeping bags and the dark.

Over the five-day trail a wonderful camaraderie developed among us

trailists – there's something about relying on one another for survival that will do that to a group.

Peaceful evenings around the campfire or under the shade of an acacia by day provided plenty of opportunities for bonding and a chance for self-reflection and introspection.

There is nothing like the rawness and peace of being immersed in wilderness to offer a fresh perspective and to re-energise you. How often do you get the chance to detox from life's distractions and reconnect with nature?

What you need to know before you go

The Wilderness Leadership School offers three- or five-day trails. Because of the inherent risk associated with being on foot in the wild, these trails are not suitable for young children.

Trails are all inclusive. Trailists are provided with all equipment necessary

for the trail, including sleeping bags.

Trailists are expected to help carry, prepare and cook meals as a group, as well as perform other daily tasks such as collecting firewood and drinking water, and standing guard for one or two hours during night watches.

Trails can be undertaken in six different locations, including the iMfolozi Wilderness Area or the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Wilderness Area.

Check the Wilderness Leadership School's website for updated information on trail availability at www.wildernesstrails.org.za

WHAT WOULD PEOPLE HAVE SAID?



Police: 10111
Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150
Childline: 0800 055 555

There is no excuse for abuse.
People can only help if they know.
TELL SOMEONE.

Violence and abuse are poison to society. Let's make it stop.



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