

PublicSector MANAGER

THE MAGAZINE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS



OCTOBER 2021

Decoding COVID-19

Dr Ridhwaan Suliman
makes sense of
COVID-19 stats

The sky's no limit

Orefile Mthombeni's
aviation career takes off

Digital transformation

How to build trust in
government



Contents: October 2021

30

REGULARS

- 4 Trailblazer**
Dr Rihwaan Suliman –
the COVID-19 numbers man

- 8 Women in the public sector**
Orefile Mthombeni blazes
a trail in aviation

- 10 From the Union Buildings**
Government is forging ahead
with efforts to instil a culture
of ethics in the public
service

- 30 International relations**
BRICS celebrates 15 years
since formation



FEATURES

- 12 Newly-launched unit strengthens fight against corruption**
The Public Administration
Ethics Integrity and

- 14 COVID-19, cancer vaccines initiative to revolutionise SA's healthcare**
The launch of a new
Disciplinary Technical
Assistance Unit is boosting
the fight against corruption
in the public sector

- 16 Get your digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate**
A vaccine certificate has
COVID-19 and cancer
vaccine initiative will be a
game changer for South
Africa's healthcare and
pharmaceutical industry



16

been rolled out as proof that a person has been vaccinated against COVID-19

18 Treasury strengthens supplier payment efforts

Government is ensuring State suppliers receive payment of invoices and continue to flourish

20 Local Government Elections: Exercise your right

Exercise your right to vote in the 6th Local Government Elections

24 Communities benefit from investment in infrastructure

The construction of Msikaba Bridge in the Eastern Cape is an example of a

government at work

26 Opinion: Building trust in government through digital transformation

Governments across the world move to digital to better serve citizens

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

LIFESTYLE

22 Health and wellbeing
COVID-19 vaccines:
Your questions
answered

32 Food and wine
Make-it-yourself
mocktail magic

35 Nice-to-haves
Lounge around in style

36 Grooming and style
The art of
accessorising

38 Travel
Johannesburg to Cape
Town and the beauty
in between

38



Become a vaccination ambassador



Mondli Gungubele
Minister in The
Presidency

This is my first message to public servants in my role as Minister in The Presidency and it is one that gives me great pride, particularly when I consider your contribution to largest mass vaccination programme ever rolled out in South Africa

The significant strides we are making in the fight against COVID-19

is largely thanks to the sterling efforts of public servants.

The target of administering 300 000 vaccines per day is now in sight.

As of 8 October 2021, more than 18 700 000 vaccines had been administered.

The success of the campaign is proof of what government can collectively achieve, and those involved deserve high praise.

Vaccination is our best defence against COVID-19. Health Minister Joe Phaahla has explained that we could face a number of waves in the future, but that mutations and viral loads will decrease as the percentage of vaccinated people increases. This will eventually result in fewer surges in infections.

Unlike most medicines, which treat or help cure diseases, vaccines actually help prevent them – this is the message we need to convey to the public to

counteract any vaccine hesitancy.

History has many examples of how vaccines prevented countless deaths. At its peak, polio paralysed or killed over half a million people worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation, polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988, from an estimated 350 000 cases to 22 reported cases in 2017. This reduction is the result of a global vaccination campaign.

In the 1950s, between three and four million people in the United States contracted measles each year. Of these, 400 to 500 people died, 48 000 were hospitalised and 1 000 suffered swelling of the brain. Today, thanks to the development of a vaccine in the 1960s, measles outbreaks are rare and occur largely in communities with low vaccination coverage.

Our people need to know that vaccines are safe, they are effective and they are essential to grow

our economy and both save and create jobs.

South Africa's entire adult population is now eligible to be vaccinated – and the process has been made very easy.

Walk-ins by people not registered on the Electronic Vaccination Data System are allowed at all vaccination sites – and this includes people who do not belong to a medical aid. Spread the word!

Another commendable aspect of our vaccination campaign is the out-of-the-box ideas, such as pop-up vaccination sites, drive-through vaccination sites and partnerships with religious and business sectors.

Public servants must be vaccination ambassadors. It is our duty to help spread the word that while being vaccinated might not prevent COVID-19, it will lower the risks of severe symptoms and death and will ultimately help defeat the pandemic.

A government that cares

Social Development Month, commemorated annually in October, highlights government's commitment to the well-being of the most vulnerable in society.

With the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) taking a huge toll on the economy, and the recent unrest destroying many livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, providing a safety net for at-risk people is a responsibility our caring government takes very seriously.

The COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant of R350 is one government's mechanisms for cushioning people from the blows of poverty. It benefits unemployed people, many of whom lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement in July that the grant was being reintroduced brought hope to many people. At the end of

August, the first payments had already been made.

The SRD grant and caregiver allowance proved hugely effectively last year, with the National Income Dynamics Study: Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey estimating that between March and June 2020, COVID-19 relief measures reduced the number of households with incomes below the food poverty line from 20.6% to 18.8%. Research confirmed that the majority of recipients used the money to buy food.

This time around, more people are eligible for the grant – which is set to run until the end of March 2022, because government has extended it to unemployed caregivers who receive a child support grant, but do not receive a personal grant.

By the beginning of September, nearly 12 million people had applied for the grant.

Our public service is to



Phumla Williams,
GCIS Director-General.

be applauded for understanding the everyday challenges imposed by poverty. It has responded to these by making the application process as accessible as possible, through a user-friendly application system and the introduction of new application channels, such as the GovChat app and Facebook Messenger.

Government's other responses to the hardships faced by so many include widespread food relief and assistance to small businesses impacted by the unrest.

In addition, government is contributing R400 million to the Humanitarian Crisis Relief Fund established by the Solidarity Fund. The COVID-19 TERS scheme has also been extended to those sectors affected by Alert Level 4 restrictions.

Regrettably, some public servants have fraudulently applied for the SRD grant, as well as other social grants. I call on all government employees to remember the ubuntu values that make up the backbone of the public service.

Recommit yourselves to putting the people of South Africa first and acknowledge how fortunate you are to have a job that pays a decent living wage, unlike so many of the people we are here to serve. They deserve our humanity and tireless service to bettering their lives.

This Social Development Month, let us unite in the spirit of caring and rekindle our passion for South Africa and its people. Let's also protect each other by stepping up to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Dr Ridhwaan Suliman – the COVID-19 numbers man

Dr Ridhwaan Suliman (35) has become renowned in South Africa for his accurate and credible daily Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) data analysis, trends and updates.

What started as a personal hobby to keep him busy during the hard lockdown in March 2020, has seen the Senior Researcher in the NextGen Enterprises and Institutions Cluster at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) become the country's go-to guy for the analysis of COVID-19 data.

Suliman's ability to objectively and accurately turn complex daily data, derived from reputable sources, into simple, clear messages that are understood by everyone,

has seen his reputation – along with his Twitter following – grow exponentially.

"When I started updates on Twitter, I had a following of approximately 90 people, who were primarily friends and people I had met in person. Almost 18 months later, that following has grown to just under 29 000," says Suliman.

He explains that he tries to share data consistently, making use of graphics to visually represent and explain the trends in the various data metrics, in an easily digestible manner.

"I also try to remain open and honest in the communication of all data and use the data to drive communication efforts."

Suliman conducts regular interviews and is

happy to explain COVID-19 trends, anomalies, limitations and nuances in the data and what they mean in South Africa's efforts to curb the spread of the virus.

Social media

Initially he tracked and analysed COVID-19 data and trends in his personal capacity and shared this on his personal social media platforms.

"I now continue to do this analysis as part of the National Policy Data Observatory, which is a government-led data observatory currently incubated at the CSIR," says Suliman.

The tracking and analysis of COVID-19 data is one component of the National Policy Data Observatory.

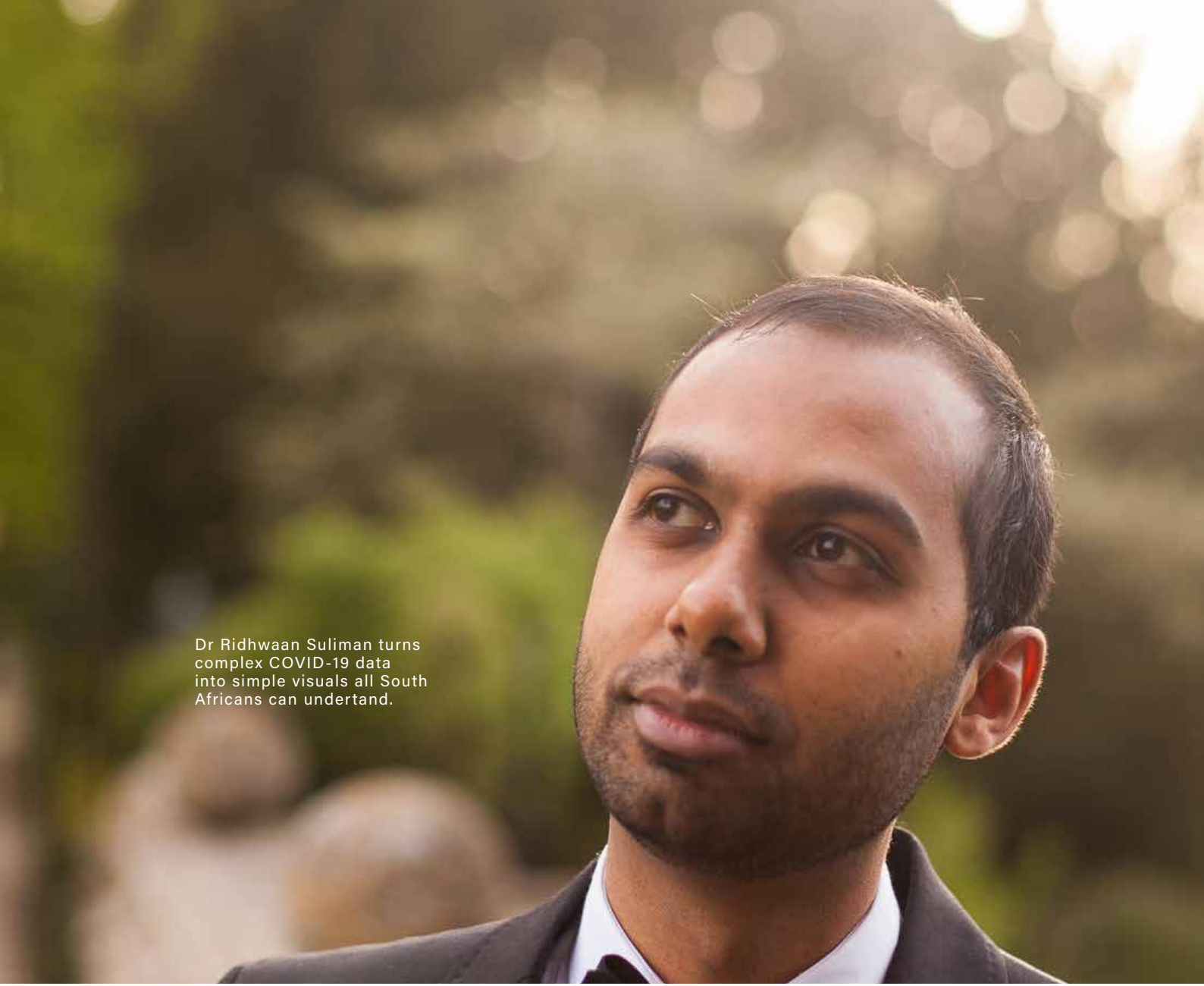
The insights are a

significant input for the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure, Inter-Ministerial Committee on Vaccination and other government departments, such as the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and Government Communication and Information System.

"I started tracking the daily statistics to make sense of the numbers. I wanted to understand if the trends were improving, to determine if we would exit the hard Level 5 lockdown initiated in March 2020," says Suliman.

From numbers to graphs

He decided to transform the daily numbers into graphs to better understand national and



Dr Ridhwaan Suliman turns complex COVID-19 data into simple visuals all South Africans can understand.

provincial trends.

“There was a lot of fear, uncertainty and conspiracy theories around the pandemic (there still is), so I wanted to use the data to counteract the fear and conspiracy theories, and to make sense of the various statistics.

“Just like a picture can tell a thousand words, so too can a graphic put

numbers and quantities into perspective to tell a better story. I saw it as my way to help during this unprecedented time,” he adds.

The role of technology

Technology plays a key role in examining and analysing the COVID-19 data, says Suliman.

“This ranges from data collection tools and data storage facilities to the use and development of software to automatically update the data and generate data visualisations and graphics.

“Most of the metrics are reported daily, with a large set of data to track and analyse. As the data accumulates, it is impos-

sible to analyse and manage this without the smart and effective use of technology.”

Suliman joined the CSIR’s Aeronautics group within defence, peace, safety and security as a candidate researcher in 2009, while completing a master’s degree in mechanical and aeronautical engineering.

"I remained in the group for several years, before taking up an opportunity to pursue a PhD in applied mathematics at the University of Cambridge."

When he returned to the CSIR and it restructured, he moved to modelling and digital science, which merged to form the NextGen Enterprises and Institutions Cluster.

Suliman's primary role is in applied mathematical modelling, computational modelling and simulation.

"I work on developing mathematical models and computational tools, to understand and simulate physical systems, primarily involving the flow of fluids or dynamic behaviour of structures and the interaction of both."

Examples include modelling wing flutter of aircrafts in flight, the combustion of coal in a power plant and the simulation of smart biomaterials in tissue engineering applications.

Informing policy

In addition to this, his analysis of COVID-19

data and trends is used to drive decision making and inform policy.

Suliman, who has been working from home since the start of the pandemic, goes into the office when needed.

"My days now vary, depending on where in the epidemiological trajectory of COVID-19 we are, with COVID-19 commentary taking up more time as the numbers surge."

He typically spends a few hours a day updating virus indicators, a few hours in meetings and the remaining time on

project-specific deliverables.

Suliman highlights publishing research in international scientific indexing-rated, peer-reviewed journals and presenting research at international scientific conferences as two of his professional milestones.

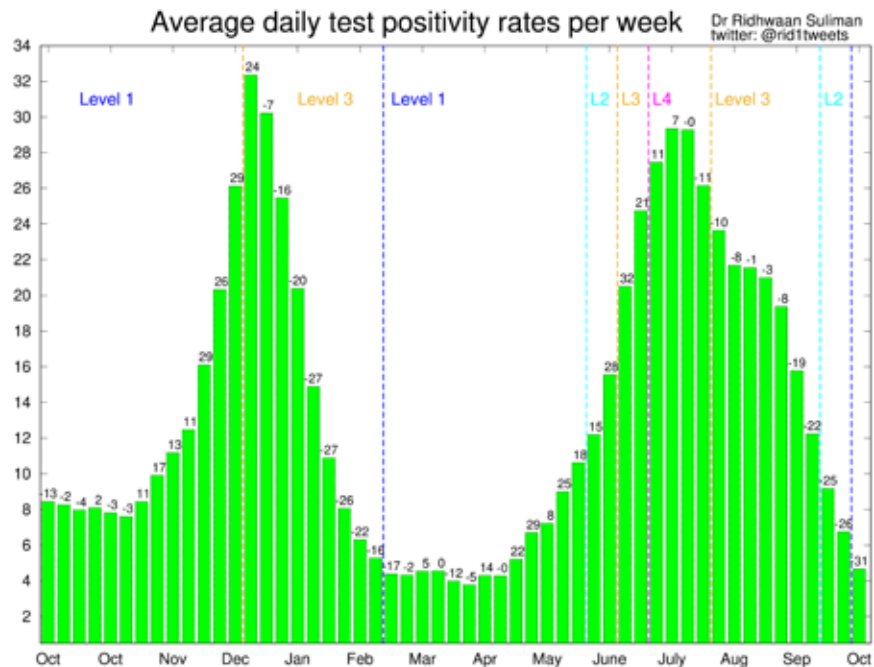
"Completing my PhD abroad was a significant milestone, as it came with multiple challenges, but I believe it created opportunities for my career too.

"More recently, I value being involved in and serving on national research working groups

and advisory councils, and being invited to deliver keynote addresses at national and international events," he says.

Suliman's personal milestones include summiting Mount Kilimanjaro, surviving a week in the Amazon, memorising the Quran, completing a half-marathon and meeting the late iconic physicist Professor Stephen Hawking.

In his spare time, he enjoys nature and hiking; sport, particularly squash and road-running; reading; travelling and good food.



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Orefile Mthombeni is reaching new heights in the aviation industry.

Orefile Mthombeni blazes a trail in aviation

At just 30 years of age, Orefile Mthombeni is already shattering the glass ceiling in the aviation industry.

Bloemfontein-born Mthombeni is a technical standards specialist at state-owned company Air Traffic and Navigation Services (ATNS). She is also the Executive President of the South African Air Traffic Safety Electronics Personnel Association (SAATSEPA), which ATNS launched in 2017.

"Women do not usually occupy these positions. I am the first female technical standards specialist

within ATNS, as well as the first female SAATSEPA executive president," she says.

ATNS provides air traffic, navigation, training and other related services to South Africa as well as 10% of the world's airspace.

Mthombeni joined the company in 2012 through the Aviation Training Academy, where she completed practical components of her National Diploma in Electrical Engineering (Light Current). She obtained that qualification from the Central University of Technology (CUT) in 2013.

In 2019, she obtained a Bachelor of Technology in Business Administration from CUT and she is currently studying towards a Bachelor of Commerce: Honours (Business Management) at the University of South Africa.

Lift-off

Mthombeni's career in the aviation industry took off in the same year, when she accepted a trainee position at Air Traffic Safety Electronics Personnel (ATSEP) at OR Tambo International Airport.

After a stint at the Cape Town International Airport, she moved to Bram Fis-

cher International Airport in Bloemfontein.

In 2018 she was promoted to her current position at the ATNS Safety Office.

As a technical standards specialist, Mthombeni is responsible for the assurance, development and maintenance of a technical standards oversight system.

She also ensures that there is compliance with the regulatory requirements of the ATNS communications, navigation and surveillance (CNS) systems.

Mthombeni helps investigate failures of these systems and provides

recommendations.

"What I most enjoy about my work is assuring safety through technical audits and technical investigations on our CNS equipment, which are navigational aids used by the aircraft.

"I love the fact that I am part of the bigger picture, and that when an aircraft lands safely, I played a role in that," she adds.

Mthombeni also enjoys engaging with internal and external stakeholders, and ensuring there is a common understanding of aviation safety.

Room for growth

Becoming a technical standards specialist is one of the highlights of her career.

"It showed me that I continue to grow in ways that I had never imagined possible," she says.

Another highlight for Mthombeni was being awarded the CEO's Award as the specialist of the year at the annual ATNS Heroes Rewards and Recognition Ceremony in 2019, in her very first year as a technical standards specialist.

"Being elected executive

president of SAATSEPA is another milestone," she says.

SAATSEPA is a voluntary, independent, non-profit association of individuals who exchange experience and technical knowledge on technical support for air traffic control and management. These individuals have the collective goal of making the skies safer.

Overcoming challenges

Any leadership position comes with challenges, which Mthombeni strategically navigates.

These challenges include ensuring the regulatory compliance of different business units within the organisation, which sometimes necessitates change.

"This is not always well received and can come with great resistance if not properly understood," she says.

Mthombeni says that the key to overcoming such resistance is being able to translate the need for change in an organisation into a desire for change.

"I ensure that regulatory requirements are well communicated and make



myself available for further engagements," she adds.

Time for change

With the aviation industry being hard hit by the Coronavirus Disease pandemic, Mthombeni and her team have had to change the way in which they operate.

"I could no longer travel to airports for the mandatory safety inspections due to the lockdown travel restrictions. However, I overcame this by ensuring that my team and I started to conduct virtual inspections using Microsoft Teams," she explains.

During the virtual inspections, documents used in the operational field for compliance are verified, such as preventive maintenance and

corrective maintenance records for conducted maintenance, service level agreements, training record and maintenance contracts.

"As soon as the lockdown restrictions were eased to allow for safe domestic travel, I was able to go and verify what was found during the virtual inspections at the various airports and CNS equipment sites," she adds.

Mthombeni encourages young women who would like to hold leadership positions to not allow other people's opinions or intimidation to dictate their success trajectory.

"Stay true to what you believe in and always remember that it is on you to get you where you want to be," she says.



No room for corruption in the public service

The revelation in Parliament that thousands of public servants have been illegally receiving social grants every month shows we still have a long way to go towards instilling a culture of ethics in the public service.

Earlier this year, it was

also found that around 16 000 employees on the government payroll were irregularly paid the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant. It is common knowledge that applicants with other sources of income do not qualify for this grant. It is also self-evident that

those who receive an income from the State are not eligible to apply.

And yet they did. Some 17 000 people employed at national and provincial government submitted applications in a bid to top up their salaries with money meant for the poor. Given the extent of

need in the country, one that our public servants know too well, this willful intent to steal from the public purse is unforgivable.

Government is now stepping up its efforts to prevent this kind of abuse and act against anyone in the public ser-

vice involved in wrongdoing.

Recently, government launched a new Public Administration Ethics, Integrity and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit. The unit will build capacity within public bodies to institute disciplinary proceedings in cases of misconduct and cooperate with other organs of State in holding those responsible to account.

The unit will refer corruption cases to government's Anti-Corruption Task Team and follow up with departments to ensure criminal cases involving public servants translate into disciplinary cases. Working with the multi-agency Fusion Centre, the unit will help identify employees in priority cases investigated by law enforcement authorities.

The unit will monitor the conduct of lifestyle audits of public service employees. Where departments identify cor-

ruption and unexplained wealth, the cases will be referred to the South African Police Service.

The new unit has already begun its work in earnest, helping to identify public servants involved in cases related to COVID-19 procurement, the special COVID-19 grant and Unemployment Insurance Fund fraud.

The cases of government officials referred by the Special Investigating Unit for disciplinary action will be monitored by the unit to assess their progress.

Another important aspect of the unit's work will be institutionalising ethics and integrity in the ranks of the public service. A few public servants have over the years taken the view that doing business with or unduly benefiting from the State is permissible for them, their friends and their families, provided there has been no illegality. We must do

everything we can to change this attitude.

As we work to end corruption, there must be equal focus on inculcating ethical behaviour, because what may not necessarily be illegal can be unethical and unbecoming of a public servant.

The new unit will set norms and standards on ethics, integrity and conduct. It will also build the capacity of departments to discipline officials found guilty of misconduct. Last year more than 200 employees were trained as presiding officers and initiators.

Building an ethical, capable State continues to be a focus of this administration.

As a number of scandals involving public servants illegally benefiting from the State have shown, the process will be difficult and will take some time. We are nonetheless committed to stay the course.

A capable State is

the foundation for the attainment of all our national priorities. Without improving accountability and promoting ethical conduct, none can be achieved.

The vast majority of our public servants are committed, law-abiding and ethical.

The task before us is to work together to root out those who are not, and correct the misconception that all those employed in government are either self-serving or corrupt.

I call on all the men and women who serve our country every day to recommit themselves to the values of selflessness and service, and to recall that their conduct must at all times be both legal and ethical.

The establishment of this unit is another one of the ways that we are working on to end corruption in government and indeed in all spheres of South African life.

Newly-launched unit strengthens fight against corruption

The Public Administration Ethics Integrity and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit is bolstering government's efforts to fight corruption in the public sector.

The unit, which has already started its work, was launched by Public Service and Administration Minister Ayanda Dlodlo recently.

The Minister emphasised that the unit has no criminal jurisdiction or investigative mandate, but as part of the Anti-Corruption Task Team, collectively contributes to the fight against corruption.

"Cooperation between the unit, law enforcement and other relevant agencies are key to identify public administration employees involved in corruption," she said.

The Minister added that



Public Service and Administration Minister Ayanda Dlodlo has launched a unit that is tackling corruption in the public sector.

the unit has assisted to curb the tide on employees conducting business with the State.

"When the Department of Public Service and Administration first started to monitor this in

2017, approximately 8 500 employees were listed as suppliers on the Central Supplier Database. As at the end of July 2021, this amount stands at 96, and is interrogated to ensure no contracts

are concluded with these employees," she said.

Ethics

The unit has also been dealing with the issue of precautionary suspensions in the public sector.

“The work of the unit in addressing the issue of whistle-blowing has to increase going forward, especially by holding departments which do not have reporting policies accountable.”

“With the assistance of the Canadian Government, through the Strengthening of Ethics and Integrity Project, the unit adopted strategies to address the increase in precautionary suspensions that contributes to high costs.”

Last year the unit launched a project, which saw it have discussions with departments that had officials on lengthy precautionary suspensions, to discuss the challenges.

“This was followed-up with workshops conducted by the unit. Departments were provided with an electronic tool, developed under the Strengthening Ethics and Integrity Project, to

provide regular progress reports.”

The result was an improvement in discipline management, with a reduction in backlogs from provinces and a decrease in costs for precautionary suspensions.

The Strengthening Ethics and Integrity Project is developing a case backlog reduction strategy, which will be rolled-out across the public service, after it has been piloted.

Protection for whistle-blowers

The Minister stressed that any anti-corruption and professionalisation initiative must allow employees to blow the whistle on corruption

and offer protection to whistle-blowers.

“It is time that we revisit South Africa’s whistle-blowing regime and examine it vigorously, not only the legislation and its effectiveness, but also the lack of a single repository that can be used for research to strengthen the system and practice.”

She added that better cooperation is needed across government to protect whistle-blowers and identify those who abuse their power to stop whistle-blowing from happening.

“The work of the unit in addressing the issue of whistle-blowing has to increase going forward, especially by holding de-

partments which do not have reporting policies accountable,” said the Minister.

While the unit is doing its bit in tackling corruption and promoting ethical conduct, the Minister reminded public servants that it is their individual duty to behave ethically.

“Section 195 of the Constitution requires the maintenance and promotion of a high level of professional ethics in the Public Administration. This not only speaks to the role of public servants performing their work in an efficient and ethical way, but also for those in leadership positions to act ethically at all times,” she added.

COVID-19, cancer vaccines initiative to revolutionise SA's healthcare

President Cyril Ramaphosa has hailed a new COVID-19 and cancer vaccine initiative launched by Dr Patrick Soon-Shiong as a game changer for South Africa's healthcare and the

pharmaceutical industry. The initiative was launched by Dr Soon-Shiong's digital healthcare company NantWorks and is aimed at building pharmaceutical and vaccine capacity not only in South Africa but for the entire African continent.

This will kickstart the transfer technology used in the manufacturing of COVID-19 and cancer vaccines and next-generation cell-based immunotherapies.

"The investment by

NantWorks is most timely. For our fight against COVID-19, for infectious disease management, for cancer research and treatment, and for future pandemic preparedness," President Ramaphosa said.

The initiative is a collaboration between NantWorks' African division NantAfrica, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the South African Medical Research Council.

Dr Soon-Shiong, who

was born in South Africa but left the country during Apartheid, said the initiative is the realisation of a lifelong ambition.

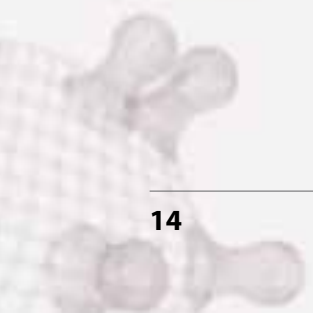
"It has been a dream of mine, since I left the country as a young physician, to bring state-of-the-art, 21st century medical care to South Africa and to enable the country to serve as a scientific hub for the continent.

"There is such an unmet need to treat life-threatening infectious diseases such as AIDS, TB and now COVID-19. Of equal concern is the poor survival rate of patients suffering from cancer in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa."

He said advances in science have enabled new paradigms of care involving activating the immune system and changing outcomes for these diseases.

The multi-layered collaboration will give rise to:

- The implementation of state-of-the-art





biologics manufacturing capacity to expedite transfer of COVID-19 and cancer vaccine biologics between CSIR and NantAfrica.

- The launch of the Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation with the help of the Universities of Stellenbosch and KwaZulu-Natal, which will enhance rapid genomic surveillance of and response to viral mutations occur-

ring in Africa.

- The launch of clinical centres of excellence for the treatment of cancers and infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, HIV/AIDS and TB, with the help of Wits University and the Universities of Stellenbosch and KwaZulu-Natal.

President Ramaphosa said the initiative will boost the country's healthcare sector as the country battles the high-

est COVID-19 caseload in Africa, the largest number of people living with HIV and AIDS, and a massive TB problem.

"We do have current treatment programmes for all of these, but COVID-19 has brought new challenges, not least of all resource constraints. The setting up clinical centres of excellence will contribute to quality improvement in managing these other diseases."

He added that the collaboration will place

South Africa and Africa at the cutting edge of healthcare, science, technology and innovation.

The collaboration is the third investment into the country's pharmaceutical sector following the R10 billion investment into Aspen Pharmacare for the production of Africa's COVID-19 vaccines and the World Health Organisation's establishment of the mRNA manufacturing hub in the country.

Get your digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate



People living in South Africa can now access their digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate as proof that they have been vaccinated.

According to Minis-

ter of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla, the certificate can be used for travel and tourism, sport and recreation events, music festivals, and at shops that are providing discounts and prizes for

people who are vaccinated.

“Our role is to make this tool available to the nation to provide people with the proof of vaccination so they can have access to many the ameni-

ties and activities that some have been missing,” he explained.

The first phase of the vaccination certificate has been launched and more improvements to the certificate are



People queue to receive their vaccines at the Sekgosese Wholesale Taxi Rank in Limpopo during the Vooma Weekend Vaccination Campaign.

expected in the coming months.

The certificate was developed by the Department of Health and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

National Electronic Vaccination Data System project manager, Milani Wolmarans, said the certificate can be downloaded through a web portal by anyone who has received the COVID-19 vaccine in South Africa.

"You'll need your vaccination code from the SMS you received after your vaccination, South African ID or Foreign Passport number or Asylum or Refugee number. This should be

the same document that you presented when you got vaccinated and the cell phone you included on your registration," she said.

Vaccination codes are being sent to people via SMS. The code can also be accessed from the COVID-19 call centre on 0800 029 999.

"With regards to the recognition of the digital certificate, most countries around the globe would accept the certificate. It is, however, dependent on the policy of the country that you would be visiting and also what their verification requirements would be.

"Towards the end of the

next two months, there will be an app that you can use to download the certificate," Wolmarans said.

Vooma Vaccination Weekends

South Africa is aiming to ensure that 70% of country's population is vaccinated by December this year.

To encourage vaccination, government launched the Vooma Vaccination Weekend Campaign on 1 October 2021. It aims to mobilise people to get vaccinated as a means of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the cam-

paign, public and private health sectors, organised labour, business and community and faith-based formations will join forces in the vaccination drive on Fridays and Saturdays.

During Vooma Vaccination Weekends, vaccination centres and points, including pop-ups, will be open all day across the country.

President Cyril Ramaphosa commended the more than 353 000 people who heeded the call to be vaccinated against COVID-19 during the first Vooma Vaccination Weekend.

"We can all be proud of the more than 350 000 people who seized this opportunity to get vaccinated during hours that were convenient for everyone.

"We would have liked this number to be higher but this was a very surge towards greater protection of our nation," he said.

To obtain your vaccination certificate, go to <https://vaccine.certificate.health.gov.za>

Treasury strengthens supplier payment efforts

A hand is shown using a calculator on a desk. In the background, there is a laptop, a pair of glasses, and some papers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a professional or office environment.

Government is strengthening efforts to ensure suppliers do not run into financial difficulty because of the non-payment of

invoices by the State.

According to the National Treasury, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the economy, busi-

nesses and many small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs). As a result, some SMMEs have been forced to close their doors, which has led

to the retrenchment of employees.

“To ensure that suppliers' operations continue without strain, government institutions

are urged to pay their suppliers on time and not contribute to the dire effects of the pandemic that is already putting strain on these suppliers to remain sustainable," says the department, in its Annual Report on Non-Compliance with Payment of Suppliers' Invoices within 30 Days.

Queries portal

To assist suppliers, the National Treasury established a 30-day queries portal, which is a centralised email that can be accessed by suppliers to address their non-payment queries.

The department follows up with transgressing institutions and suppliers are given reasons for the delay, and the date on which payment can be expected.

At a provincial level, these queries are escalated to provincial Accountants-General to elevate the matter to the respective Chief Financial Officers.

To monitor progress on payment of suppli-

ers' invoices within the prescribed period, the National Treasury issued Treasury Instruction Note Number 34.

It requires departments to submit 30 days' exception reports to the relevant treasuries by the 7th day of each month. This report has information pertaining to the preceding month.

Invoices

The information that departments are required to submit includes the number and value of invoices paid after 30 days of receipt of the invoices; the number and value of invoices that are older than 30 days, which remained unpaid; and the reasons for the late and non-payment of the invoices.

Treasury Instruction Note Number 34 requires departments to implement manual or electronic systems and processes that will enable departments to track invoices from the time they are received at the relevant cost centres, to the time

that a payment is made.

The report on non-compliance shows that eight national departments or entities paid all their invoices within the 30-day timeframe in the 2020/21 financial year.

These were the National School of Government, Departments of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Public Service and Administration, Traditional Affairs, Communications and Digital Technologies; Small Business Development; Sports, Arts and Culture; and Trade, Industry and Competition.

According to the report on non-compliance, common reasons provided by departments for late and/or non-payment of invoices include:

- Misfiled, misplaced or unrecorded invoices;
- Inadequate budget and/or cash flow management;
- Inadequate internal capacity;
- IT system issues.
- Standard Chart of Account related system problems;

- Unresolved invoice discrepancies;
- Incomplete supporting documents.

The reasons for the late and non-payment of invoices as provided by departments during the 2020/2021 financial year were the same reasons as those provided during the 2019/2020 financial year.

"This is mainly due to the fact that the root causes identified in the 2019/2020 financial year were not addressed in the 2020/2021 financial year. Furthermore, recommendations provided in the 2019/2020 financial year were also not considered in the 2020/2021 financial year," notes the report.

Departments have been urged to address the root causes of the payment delays and non-payments. They were also asked to implement the recommendations.

**For the full report,
go to www.treasury.gov.za**

Local Government Elections: Exercise your right

South Africans will soon have an opportunity to exercise their right to vote, when they cast their ballots in the sixth Local Government Elections since democracy.

Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, recently gazetted the date for the municipal elections, which will take place on 1 November 2021.

"We are now all looking towards voting day. We urge all South Africans to ensure peaceful, credible, free and fair municipal elections.

"Our actions have thus far proved true - our noble intentions to keep the flame of democracy burning by voting on 1 November 2021," said the Minister.

While the voter's roll

is now sealed, the last voter registration weekend before the elections, on 18 and 19 September, resulted in more than 1.7 million people turning up at voter registration stations to either register for the first time or check their registration details.

The Electoral Commission's Chief Electoral Officer, Sy Mamabolo, said 433 198 people registered as first time voters. This accounts for 25% of the total registration activity.

Voters who re-registered in the same voting district or changed their voting district accounted for 1 277 811 applications.

The province with the highest registration activity was KwaZulu-Natal with 358 384, followed by Gauteng with 315 282 and the Eastern Cape with 240 514.

Young persons in the

age category 16-29 accounted for 402 401 of the new registrations, which is 91%.

According to Mamabolo, innovations such as the voter management device, increased the speed at which voter registration applications were processed.

"Previously, it would have taken weeks to capture address details of new applicants following a registration event," he said.

Since its inception in July, the online registration portal has processed 499 488 applications.

"This digital channel provides voters the convenience of use in terms of time of application as well as place of application. It will become an anchor mechanism of registration in the future.



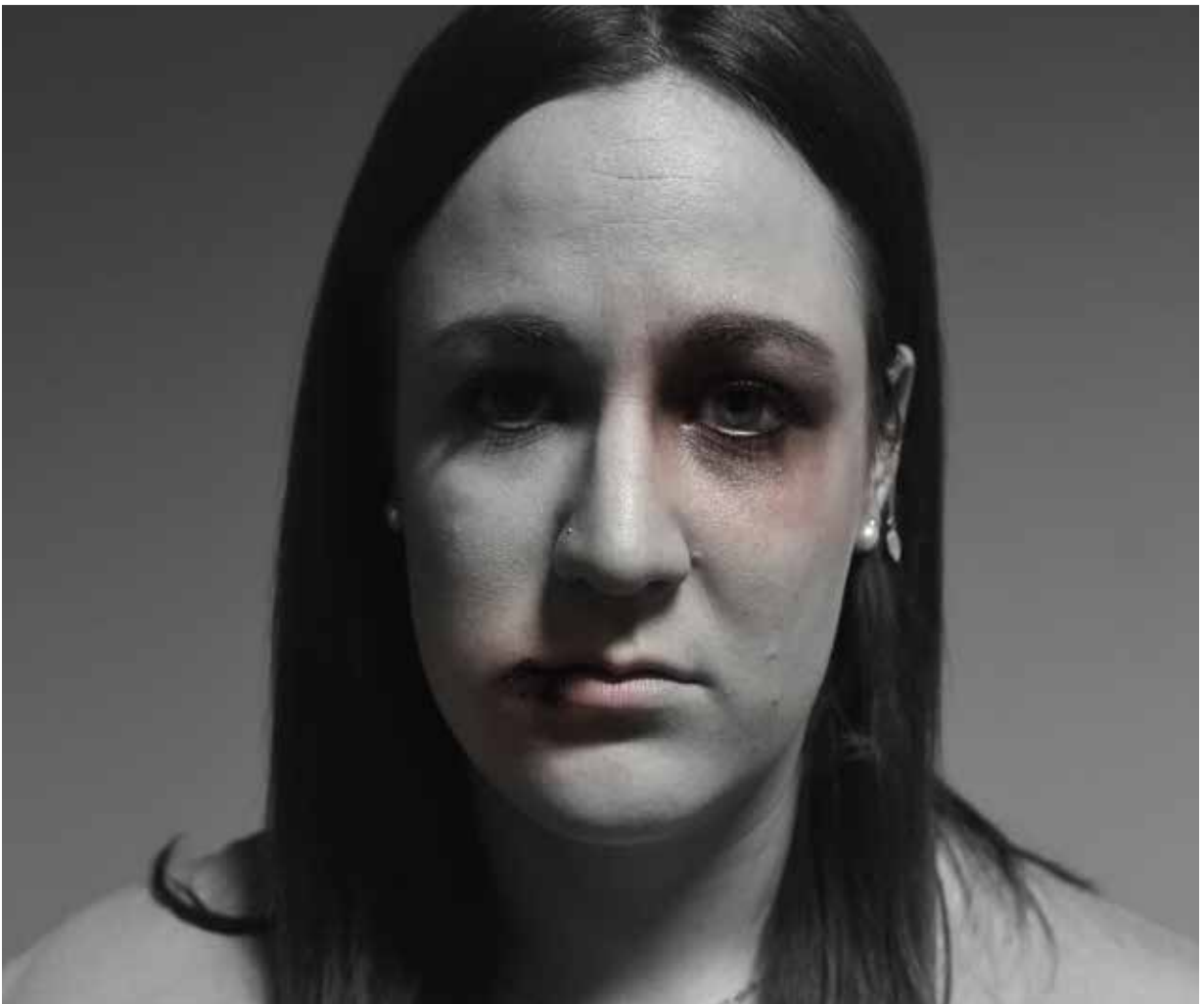
A solid basis was laid for its future use," said Mamabolo.

Special votes for the election will be cast on 30 and 31 October 2021.

Applicants who are unable to visit voting stations due to infirmity will be visited at their homes or places of confinement while all other successful candidates will cast special votes at the voting stations.

Once the election results are confirmed, councils for all 48 districts, eight metropolitan and 207 local municipalities in each of the country's nine provinces will be elected.

WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?



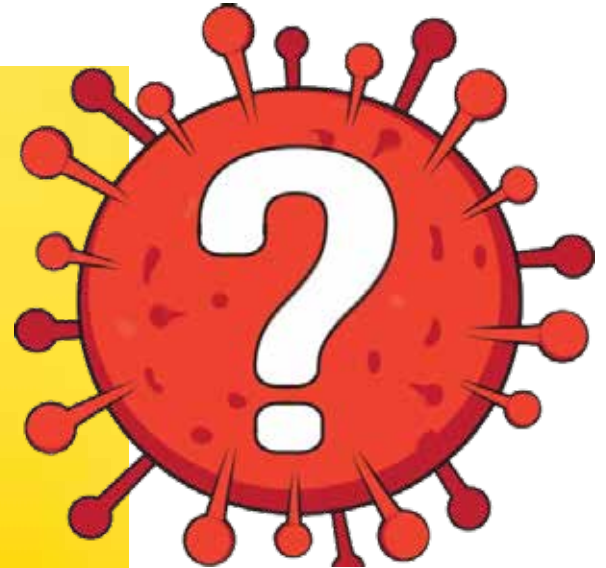
Police: 10111
Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150
Childline: 0800 055 555

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.

COVID-19 vaccines: Your questions answered



declare the ingredients to the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority before the vaccine is approved for use.

Q: I have heard that vaccines have the mark of the Beast – 666. Is this true?

A: Vaccines have no connection with any religious organisations and cannot be infused with spirits, demons or other abstract ingredients.

Q: Should I get vaccinated if I am pregnant?

With South Africa's COVID-19 vaccination programme now in full swing, PSM has put together information from the Department of Health to help answer some common questions about the vaccine.

Q: Can the vaccine cause COVID-19 or make me test positive?

A: None of the vaccines used in South Africa contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. It does not cause the virus and you will not test positive after receiving

the vaccine.

Q: Is it true that there's a microchip in the vaccines, that tracks people's movements?

A: There is no microchip or tracking device in the vaccines. Vaccine manufacturers are required to

A: Yes. A pregnant woman is more likely to get ill from COVID-19. Getting vaccinated can prevent a pregnant woman from being severely ill.

Q: Should I stop breastfeeding to get vaccinated?

A: The World Health Organisation and the Department of Health do not recommend stopping breastfeeding in order to get vaccinated. Vaccines are safe for use in breastfeeding mothers.

Q: Can I get a vaccine soon after being infected with COVID-19?

A: Anyone who has been infected with COVID-19 must wait at least 30 days from when their symptoms stop.

Q: I have COVID-19 symptoms, is it safe to get vaccinated?

A: You should not get the vaccine if you have symptoms of COVID-19. You should rather be tested.

Q: Can I get my second

dose of the Pfizer vaccine earlier than 42 days after my first shot.

A: You are only eligible for your second jab after 42 days.

Q: Do I need to be vaccinated if I have recovered from COVID-19? Can my body not fight the disease on its own, without suffering the side effects of the vaccine?

A: Evidence shows that your body's response, when you are sick from COVID-19, is much weaker and shorter than the response to the vaccine. Getting the vaccine will give you a much stronger and longer-lasting immune response. The side effects of the vaccine are mild and do not last more than a day or two, while getting sick from COVID-19 can cause hospitalisation or death.

Q: Can people with chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure, get the vaccine?

A: People with chronic diseases are at higher risk of getting severe COV-

ID-19. They will therefore benefit the most from getting the vaccine.

Q: If I previously had an allergic reaction to medication or a vaccine should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: Anyone with a history of allergic reactions to other vaccines or medicines should first speak to their health practitioner.

Q: How dangerous is an allergic reaction to the vaccine?

A: Severe allergic reactions are rare. An allergic reaction usually happens within seconds or minutes after getting the vaccine. This is why all people must wait in the observation area for 15 minutes after their vaccine.

Q: Is it safe to get the vaccine if you are allergic to eggs?

A: Yes. None of the COVID-19 vaccines have any egg proteins.

Q: I have heard of elderly people dying shortly after getting the vaccine.

Is the vaccine safe for the elderly?

A: The vaccine is safe and highly effective to prevent severe COVID-19 disease and death. Through the use of the vaccine, there has been a huge drop in COVID-19 deaths in the elderly in several countries.

Q: Why do some people still get COVID-19 within two weeks of getting the vaccine?

A: You are only fully vaccinated 30 days after getting the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or two weeks after the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine. If you are exposed to the virus before you are fully vaccinated, you may get the disease.

Q: Does the vaccine completely prevent COVID-19 infection?

A: No. Even after you are fully vaccinated you can still get COVID-19. However, the vaccine reduces risk of severe COVID-19 infection, hospitalisation and death.

Communities benefit from investment in infrastructure



President Cyril Ramaphosa assesses the progress of the construction of Msikaba Bridge in Eastern Cape.

 **SMEC**
Member of the Surban...

President Cyril Ramaphosa says the job creation and support for small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) resulting from the construction of Msikaba Bridge is an example of a government at work.

Speaking during a visit to assess the construction of the bridge in Lusikisiki, in the Eastern Cape, the President said the project is a sign of government's determination to proceed with infrastructure build.

"We are committed to ensure that we grow our economy through infrastructure development. Infrastructure is the flywheel of our economic growth," he added.

Infrastructure investment is a central pillar of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, with 88 projects valued at more than R2.3 trillion in the pipeline.

The R1.65 billion Msikaba Bridge is one component of the 410km N2 Wild Coast road project, which will link four provinces and improve connectivity between South



Africa and Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho.

The President said infrastructure projects not only boost investor and business confidence, but also bring a wealth of benefits to communities.

"Mobility is a major challenge for our people in the province, especially rural communities. This highway will narrow travelling distances and time, and it will also be safer. There is the benefit to tourism from both inside and outside the province.

"There is the benefit to the provincial and national economy. This highway will support the transportation of goods and services to the entire southern African region," he said.

Job creation

Thousands of jobs are

set to be created during the lifespan of the N2 Wild Coast road project, with already 62% of the workforce at Msikaba Bridge alone being local people.

In addition, about R4 billion has been earmarked to flow to local SMMEs.

"Already, some R120 million has gone to local SMMEs as part of upgrading and linking of roads, and there are several more projects in the pipeline.

"Work on the N2 Wild Coast project will lead to the creation of 8 000 direct full-time jobs and between 21 000 and 28 000 indirect jobs during the construction phase."

Once the road is completed, ongoing maintenance work is anticipated to create another 900 direct, full-

time jobs and around 19 000 indirect jobs.

President Ramaphosa said the job creation and investment in SMMEs is a sign that government is working for the benefit of communities.

"What we are seeing here makes it clear it is not true that communities do not benefit from big government projects.

"This project has created jobs, especially for women and young people and it has supported livelihoods for entrepreneurs and SMMEs. More of such benefits will be realised as the project is being rolled out."

The N2 Wild Coast Road project is one of the country's biggest road infrastructure projects and is expected to be completed in 2024.



Building trust in government through digital transformation

Government organisations around the world are being pushed to become more digital and innovate to better serve their citizens.

While it is acknowledged that digital transformation

must play an essential role in today's government, it's important that its mindset, goal and long-term strategy must be built on trust. Regardless of the industry, digital transformation is an organisational reorienta-

tion that employs digital technology to put users first.

Understanding the trust game

How people experience government digital services influences their

trust and confidence in agencies.

There are two main reasons for the gap in trust between people and government departments:

- People are accessing government services during high-stress

situations, and failure to meet expectations can damage trust; and

- Expectations are formed by the private sector's services, but digital transformation is more challenging for public agencies because they have to navigate regulations and policies that the private sector doesn't need to worry about.

When people try to access government services, it's often during unpleasant situations, such as reporting an infrastructure failure or navigating immigration, taxes, child welfare or other services. They're frustrated and searching for solutions online.

When the government fails to meet expectations in these moments of need, it is the public trust that takes the hit. When we consider when and why people access government services, it's clear that what people are asking for is very reasonable: simple, fast and transparent processes that give them confidence that the government is working for them.

What makes a digital service trustworthy?

Not every problem requires complex solutions, and focusing on getting the detail right can often have bigger gains than re-vamping an entire system.

Here are some of the key tactics that the public sector can apply across its current web and mobile services to create experiences that build trust for citizens.

1. **Modern design and interfaces:** Interfaces that are simple and modern reassure people that they have found services that are up-to-date and relevant.
2. **Plain language:** Plain and friendly language in place of government jargon helps citizens feel that they are interacting with real people, rather than a faceless agency. Try to convey the message that the department is on the citizen's side to make services feel more approachable.
3. **Easy access to help:** Offer plenty of options for assistance, such as self-service portals, call centres or direc-

tions to a local office.

One of the reasons for distrust among people is that they worry that, if they make a mistake on a form, they will be denied services they should qualify for. Make it easy for people to ask questions and receive an accurate answer.

4. **Clear actions and next steps:** When a user arrives at a site, it should be immediately obvious what action they should take. By laying out clear steps, you can reassure users that they are following the correct process, whether they're filling out an application or just viewing a community calendar.
5. **Pre-screenings:** When applicable, short pre-screenings that confirm whether people qualify for services can save time and reduce later frustration. This can be as simple as a short survey or list of requirements for people to review.
6. **Familiar processes:** Many people have made online payments through an e-retailer, but not through a government service. If you can mimic that

purchase process so that it looks familiar to people, they will be more confident that the payment went through correctly.

7. **Consistency:** When applicable, departments should make sure they have a similar look and feel across every device on which their services may be used.

Developing the right digital skills

Beneath the service of use-centric, friendly digital services, one of the keys to sustaining trust is to take a careful look at how your agency designs and delivers these services on the back end.

The digital skills your team needs to develop aren't just about coding or hardware. They're about understanding the current technology landscape and embracing the innovation processes that others have found successful.

This includes the idea that more eyes on a project are a good thing, that good ideas won't necessarily come from people sitting in the room with you and that development



should be fast, transparent and open to empirical feedback, no matter what stage the project is in.

These are the principles that enable tech innovators to create the products they do, and government departments will benefit from incorporating the same ideas into their digital strategies.

Even something as simple as a self-service portal can benefit from modern development practices and standards. The best choice will depend on the department's goals and its current systems, but

striving to choose modern and innovative technology will create a better platform as digital services continue to evolve.

Initiating citizen engagement

Although engagement is a two-way activity, people will not engage if they believe it will be a waste of their time. While some input can be gathered through data and analytics, departments must also find a way to receive individual feedback from people to achieve true engagement.

You can take the first step in repairing any unfavourable perceptions and initiating fresh participation by putting effort into developing better services.

Here are some ideas:

1. **Open data:** People want insights into things like government salaries and data. Open data includes presenting the story behind the data, rather than daily dumps of numbers, so that people can understand the impact of what they're seeing and how it affects them.

2. **Accountability:** Share details on project statuses, survey results, future plans, and the thought behind current service offerings, including why certain pieces of information are needed, how long processes may take, and who a person can contact if they have questions.
3. **Community data:** Build community calendars with data on local events and activities open to the public. Information is itself a service, and you can build trust by being a connector between what citizens are looking for and what other groups in the community are offering. Digital services offer new ways to win people over while remaining productive and cost-efficient. By focusing on these as a means to build trust, government can give people personalised interactions and reduce the frustration or anxiety with which they regard government services.

*Greg Gatherer is an Account Manager at Liferay Africa.

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

BRICS celebrates 15 years since formation



The 13th Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit held recently, reflected on various developments that continue to affect the globe and the role that BRICS plays in shaping international developments.

The summit was held

virtually, for the second consecutive year, due to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which continues to disrupt global relations.

All BRICS leaders participated in the summit, which this year celebrates 15 years since its formation. It was chaired

by the Republic of India.

This year's theme was 'BRICS@15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus.'

The five leaders made their opening remarks, in an open session, to the media, before going into the closed leaders ses-

sion, which reflected on BRICS' future.

A call to end vaccine nationalism

President Cyril Ramaphosa called for an end to vaccine nationalism and equal access to vaccines by all countries.

"As the BRICS countries, we must continue to safeguard people's lives and livelihoods, support global economic recovery and enhance the resilience of all our public systems.

"We must ensure equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics," he said.

President Ramaphosa urged countries to contribute their fair share to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and support the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights waiver at the World Trade Organisation to ensure a rapid expansion of COVID-19 vaccine production across the world.

"We welcome the decision of our Ministers of Health to operationalise a virtual BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre," he added.

President Ramaphosa also thanked the New Development Bank for swiftly and efficiently disbursing COVID-19-related financial support to BRICS members.

South Africa received US \$2 billion in budgetary

support to respond to the health crisis and support its economic recovery.

New Delhi Declaration adopted

The summit adopted the BRICS 2021 New Delhi Declaration that emphasises the Indian Chair-ship's 2021 priorities.

These include reform of the multilateral system, counter-terrorism cooperation, the application of digital and technological solutions for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and enhancing people-to-people exchanges.

President Ramaphosa called on BRICS to be bold and determined in seeking reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), among other things, to enable Africa to take its rightful place among the collective of nations in the crucial body.

South Africa's call to be represented at the UNSC was endorsed.

"We recall the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the

UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of the developing countries so that it can adequately respond to global challenges," reads the declaration.

In addition, China and Russia reiterated the importance they attach to the status and role of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and supported their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.

This year, at least four BRICS members will be represented at the UNSC, thus the call for the representation of South Africa should gain more impetus.

Reflection on Afghanistan

The New Delhi Declaration also reflected on the situation in Afghanistan.

"We follow with concern the latest developments in Afghanistan. We call for refraining from violence and settling the situation by peaceful means. We stress the need to contribute to fostering an inclusive

intra-Afghan dialogue so as to ensure stability, civil peace, law and order in the country," read the declaration.

BRICS countries condemned the terrorist attacks near the Hamid Karzai Kabul International Airport that resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries.

"We underscore the priority of fighting terrorism, including preventing attempts by terrorist organisations to use Afghan territory as terrorist sanctuary and to carry out attacks against other countries, as well as drug trade within Afghanistan.

"We emphasise the need to address the humanitarian situation and to uphold human rights, including those of women, children and minorities," the declaration added.

Next year, the baton to lead BRICS will be taken over by China, as India hand overs chairpersonship.

***Sifiso Moshetsi is Chief Director: Social Sector, Government and Administration Cluster at GCIS.**

Make-it-yourself mocktail magic

If you're up for some make-it-yourself magic in the kitchen this season, look no further than this guide to how to make simple mocktails. We also have tips on how to jazz them up with creative touches and perfect food pairings. Inspired by iconic

flavours like rose, lime and grapefruit, these mocktails can be made in minutes (provided you have some ice handy).

Bed of roses mocktail

Ingredients:

- 200ml cherry flavoured

syrup

- 1l sparkling water
- Rose petals
- Water for your ice tray

Directions:

First, make rose-infused ice blocks by filling your ice tray with water and adding a petal (or two) to each block. Once the ice blocks have set, add the cherry flavoured syrup and sparkling water into a jug, stir and served chilled. Serves four.

Feeling creative?

- Swop the cherry flavoured syrup for watermelon syrup.
- Swop sparkling water for tonic water.
- Swop rose petals for other edible blooms like nasturtiums, pansies and honeysuckle.
- For crystal clear

ice blocks with the minimum amount of bubbles, use distilled water that is boiled and cooled before being poured into the ice tray.

- For a sweet finish, add three drops of elderflower syrup to the water in your ice tray before allowing to set.

Pairing tip:

As a general rule of thumb, rose-infused drinks go well with fruity flavours, so this mocktail works best as a dessert drink. Pair it with pavlova, chocolate mousse or homemade Turkish delight.

Faux mojito

Ingredients:

- 2-4 limes
- 1l sparkling water



- Fresh mint leaves
- Water for your ice tray
- 200ml simple syrup

Directions:

Prepare ice blocks and add them to four double rocks glasses. Squeeze the limes in a lemon squeezer and distribute between the glasses. Add mint leaves, sparkling water and simple syrup, stir and serve chilled. Serves four.

Feeling creative?

- Use a heavyweight blender or food processor to crush the ice before adding it to the glasses.

- Swop sparkling water for lemonade to add to the sweetness of the drink.
- Add crushed berries to make your own berry-flavoured variation.
- Mint is delicate, so never over stir or crush the mint before adding it to your mojito – it only needs a subtle touch to release its flavour.

Pairing tip:

Mint has an exceptional ability to add crispness to

nutty and neutral flavours, so pair your virgin mojito with dishes that contain avocado and you won't go wrong. Think salads or Mexican food like tacos or nachos with guacamole. You could even make your own avocado boats by adding grated cheese, fried bacon bits and scrambled eggs to halved avos and baking them for eight minutes.

Citrus drop spritzer

Ingredients:

- 1-2 oranges

- 1l sparkling water
- Water for your ice tray
- A few sprigs of rosemary
- 200ml simple syrup

Directions:

Prepare ice blocks and add them to four double rocks glasses. Cut the oranges into circular rounds and distribute between glasses. Add sparkling water and simple syrup, stir and garnish with a sprig of rosemary. Serves four.

Feeling creative?

- Add some mint leaves





before stirring, for a refreshing twist that complements the citrus and resinous notes.

- For a sugar-free alternative, you can swap the simple syrup for liquid stevia sweetener.
- For a boost of citrusy sweetness, swap the sparkling water for lemonade or replace the simple syrup with 200ml of Oros.
- Turn your mocktail into a strawberry-lemon-

ade virgin daiquiri by adding frozen berries, lemonade and crushed ice.

Pairing tip:

Lemon pairs excellently with spicy dishes, especially those that include cardamom, nutmeg, coriander or tarragon as main flavours. A seafood or meat curry dish would be the perfect pairing, with the lemon cutting through the spiciness and adding a zesty finishing

touch to the dish.

Virgin grapefruit sangria

Ingredients:

- 1–2 grapefruits
- 500ml white grape juice
- Water for your ice tray
- 4 tablespoons of lime juice
- 200ml soda water

Directions:

Prepare ice blocks and add them to four double rocks glasses. Cut the

grapefruits into circular rounds and distribute between glasses. Add white grape juice, lime juice and soda water, stir and serve chilled. Serves four.

Feeling creative?

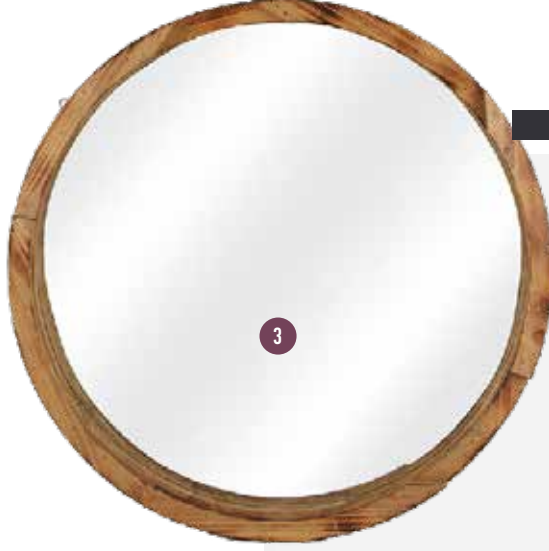
- Swap the soda water with ginger ale for a deliciously sugary spin on this mocktail.
- Use fresh limes instead of lime juice for the best results.
- Add two tablespoons of lemon juice for a zesty finish.
- Add canned peaches or slices of apple for a boost of fruity flavour.

Pairing tip:

Traditionally, sangria is a blend of sweet and citrusy fruits that are especially refreshing when the warm weather sneaks in. Pair your virgin sangria with pork dishes or gammon garnished with pineapple and cherries. Alternatively, dishes with lots of chilli work brilliantly with grapefruit so bring the heat – you'll have exactly what you need to cool yourself down.

Lounge around in style

The lounge is where most of us go to kick back and unwind. Whether it is binge watching a series or snuggling up with a good book, the lounge is the place to be. To add some character to this all-important living space, try mixing and matching these items.



1. Luna fabric three-seater couch, available at Decofurn, **R5 799**.
2. Ultrasonic USB fragrance diffuser, available at Woolworths, **R499**.
3. Cascade mango wood mirror, 60cm, available at Mr Price Home, **R699.99**.
4. Sixth Floor Jessie floor lamp, available at Superbalist.com, **R1 999**.
5. Potted bamboo, 46cm, available at @Home, **R349**.
6. Paros set of two tables available at Decofurn, **R799**.
7. Jacquard loop geometric Drummond rug, 160x240cm, available at Mr Price Home, **R1 500**.

** Prices correct at the time of publishing.*

The art of accessorising

A cost-effective way to spruce up your look, without acquiring a new wardrobe, is through accessories. Investing in some key pieces, such as a watch or hat, is a sure-fire way to elevate your outfit. Here are some items to help you get the most out of your wardrobe.



- 1 - These gold earrings by Parisian jewellery designer Isabelle Toledano are perfect for formal wear or to sleek up a smart-casual look, available from [24s.com](#), **R818**.
- 2 - Fashion and function can be found in one item. This black bag also has a vintage-inspired silhouette, Steve Madden, **R1 099**.
- 3 - There's nothing quite like a Panama hat. It never goes out of fashion, Rubi, [Superbalist.com](#), **R314**.
- 4 - The pastel shades on these retro-inspired trainers from Puma are perfect for summer. The shoes are also super comfortable, thanks to the cushioned sole, [Puma.com](#), **R1 300**.
- 5 - It's sophistication meets elegance with this gold-plated, rose gold and pink Tommy Hilfiger watch, with smooth leather straps, [takealot.com](#), **R2 995**.



6



7



8



9



6 – This classic range of New Balance sneakers combine heritage designs with a contemporary style, Newbalance.co.za, **R1 599**.

7 – Danish watch maker Skagen is known for its timeless range of watches. The colour contrast of the black and blue, with the sun dial face, makes this watch the perfect statement piece, Watch Republic, **R2 799**.

8 – Bucket hats have dominated the trend list for a while now and with summer almost here, why not try it out? This one from Kangol is available from takealot.com, **R1 095**.

9 – Keep it cool with these trendy Emporio Armani sunglasses. They have a square face and the lenses are available in black, brown and grey, Superbalist.com, **R1 980**.

10 – Looking for comfortable sandals to slip into? The Birkenstock brand comes in a variety of colours and fabrics, Superbalist.com, **R999**.

10



** Prices correct at the time of publishing.*

Johannesburg to Cape Town

and the beauty in between

Scenic mountain
landscapes in
the Boland.

The drive from Johannesburg to Cape Town may be long, but with plenty of interesting stops along the way, it is one you should definitely consider.

Jozi to Winburg

Like many small towns, Winburg seems to survive

thanks to the support of the local farming community. There is a peanut plantation and the nearest big supermarket is in Welkom (55km away) or Bloemfontein (114km away).

According to the local hotel manager, the elephant statue in Winburg

is the geographical centre of either the Free State or South Africa – you can decide as there is no plaque to confirm or deny either claim. It's just a pity that most travellers rarely take the 8km trip from the main road to discover this little gem.

Winburg to Graaff-Reinet

After a leisurely Sunday breakfast, it was time to brave the rain and mist and head to our next overnight stop in Graaff-Reinet. A 500+km journey awaited us but thankfully, like all great road trips, there had to



Canola fields in full bloom.



Elegant accommodation is a highlight of this trip.

be stops along the way. Stops on a Sunday in this part of South Africa, we quickly realised, have to be planned in advance as most of the places we wanted to visit were closed!

A lunch stop in Nieu-Bethesda is always worth it as the coffee shop near the Owl House offers great food at reasonable prices.

On our departure, we discovered that the back road out of Nieu-Bethesda offers spectacular scenery and the road is in a far better condition. This meant that the rest of our drive towards Graaff-Reinet was pleasant.

Did you know that Graaff-Reinet, the fourth-oldest town in South Africa - after Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Swellendam

also used to be the centre of tequila production in South Africa? Roughly 20 years ago, the town became the only place outside of Mexico where tequila – marketed under a different name – was made by Agave Distillers.

Graaff-Reinet to Oudtshoorn

With a plethora of small shops and museums to visit, as well as the extravagant Dutch Reformed Church that dominates a part of the main road, we spent the morning exploring Graaff-Reinet before leaving on the next leg of our journey towards Oudtshoorn.

We decided to take the N9, via Aberdeen, Willowmore and De Rust. This is a well-maintained alternative to the N1 and

we stopped in each town along the way. Each town has its own charm. For the most part, there are coffee shops and antique stores in each town that give tourists a reason to stop and visit.

Oudtshoorn was the next overnight stop. The town and its surrounding areas offer plenty of things to do, such as visiting crocodile and ostrich farms as well as the spectacular Kango Caves.

The standard route in the caves is astounding, with its fantastic formations varying in age from 1.2 million years to baby formations of around 400 years old. If you are feeling daring and have the time, try the adventure tour!

We took Swartberg Pass on the route to Prince

Albert. The views were breathtaking and this route is an absolute must if you are in the area.

It seems as though this tiny hamlet consists of coffee shops, craft dealers, antique shops and B&B establishments. If you have the time, a visit to “Die Hel” is also worth the 37km (two hour) drive.

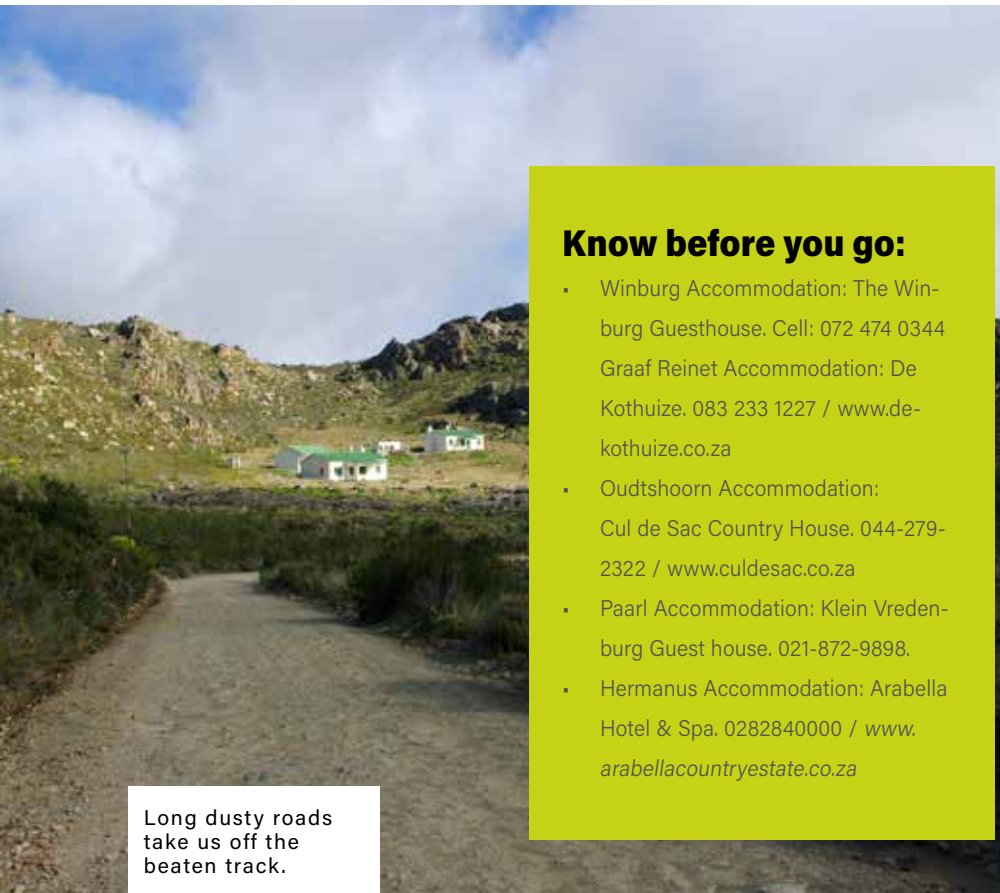
We returned to Oudtshoorn via Klaarwater and De Rust as the road is tarred all the way. The attraction of this route is that it crosses the Meiringspoort River 27 times and is as spectacular as the Swartberg Pass, but for different reasons.

Oudtshoorn to Paarl

We took the road to Paarl via Mossel Bay and Swellendam. The road



Locals gather outside a local shop in Kontrei.



Long dusty roads take us off the beaten track.

Know before you go:

- Winburg Accommodation: The Winburg Guesthouse. Cell: 072 474 0344
- Graaf Reinet Accommodation: De Kothuize. 083 233 1227 / www.de-kothuize.co.za
- Oudtshoorn Accommodation: Cul de Sac Country House. 044-279-2322 / www.culdesac.co.za
- Paarl Accommodation: Klein Vredenburg Guest house. 021-872-9898.
- Hermanus Accommodation: Arabella Hotel & Spa. 0282840000 / www.arabellacountryestate.co.za

from Swellendam to Paarl was less busy than the N2, there were no toll roads, and it was less than 10km longer than the toll road! By skipping the Huguenot Tunnel, we were also able to enjoy the stunning scenery that the Du Toits Kloof Pass offers.

Our guesthouse in Paarl was built in 1812, and the building that currently houses guest rooms used to contain an indoor swimming pool.

Paarl, like most of the other towns we visited, offered coffee shops and art galleries, one after the other, as well as various antique shops.

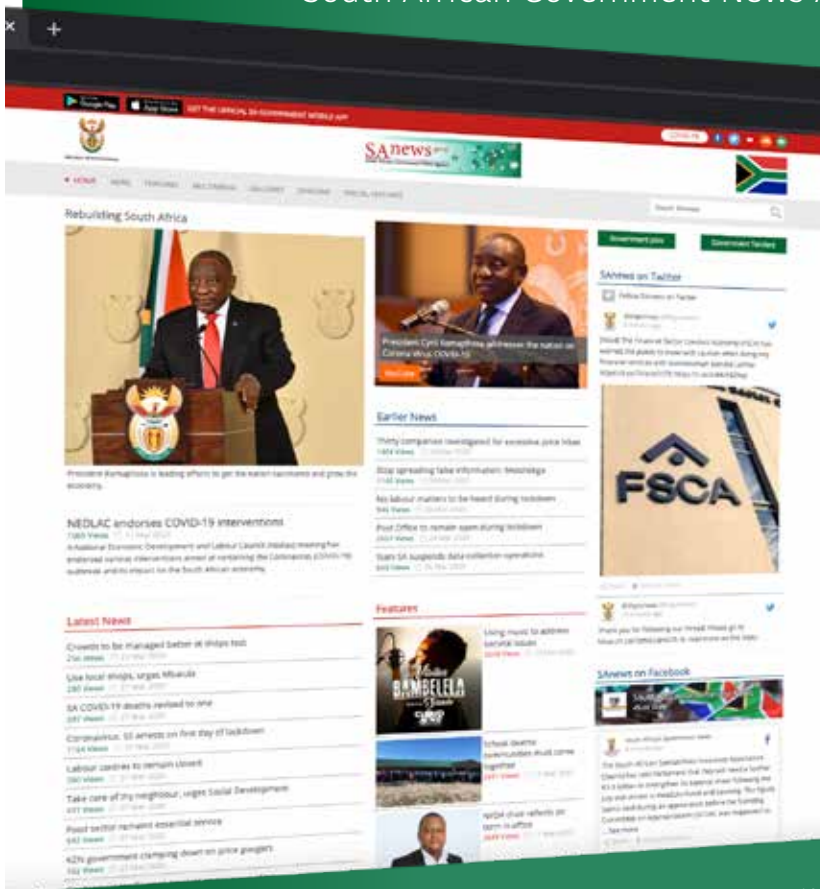
Paarl to Cape Town

To get to Cape Town, we took the coastal road via Pringle Bay and Gordon's Bay, hoping to see some Southern Right Whales in Walker Bay. Although there were a lot of whale watching boats visible, the whales were elusive.

Was it worth the cost in petrol and mileage? You bet it was, we got to see and appreciate so many special parts of South Africa.



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