

UNREVISED HANSARD

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The House met at Nieuwmeester Dome at 14:05.

The Speaker took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

NEW DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP

(Announcement)

The SPEAKER: Hon members, I would like to recognise hon Nkabane who has been appointed by the ANC as the Deputy Chief Whip for the Largest Party. [Applause.] Hon Nkabane, I hope you will be able to join the Whipery and work with your colleagues and make sure that this House is functional. As a Whip, that's part of your responsibilities.

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Mr D M SKOSANA: Madam Speaker, I'm a bit surprised. Why is it so hot in this hall? I think we must go back to the ad hoc committee. We are not used to what is happening here. It's too hot. There's no air condition. They can't run a simple thing, a simple air condition.

Setswana:

An HON MEMBER: Gape wena o bua thata.

English:

An HON MEMBER: You are unfit. "Awuzilolongi" [You don't exercise.]

IsiXhosa:

UMPHATHISWA WEZIMBIWA NEMITHOMBO YEPETROLIYAM: Unemenophozi wena.

English:

The SPEAKER: Hon Skosana, we do take note of what you are saying, but as you know there is heat wave. We have tried the best we can. Aircons were opened at 10:00 this morning to make sure that at least we cool the place. But seated here I also

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feel the heat. It is hot and I hope we will do the best as we can to finish the questions much earlier.

About the ad hoc committee, I'm not sure. You'll have to write a note to your chairperson if he wants you to go back.

Today, are questions to the President. It is the only item on the Order Paper – questions addressed to the President. Hon members will recall that on 2 December 2025, the National Assembly amended Rules on questions for oral reply. The amendments includes that the number of supplementary questions to the President is increased from four to five. The member in whose name the question stands will have the first and the last follow-up question. The question time allotted to the President remain three hours. Parties have given an indication on which questions their members wish to pose a supplementary question. Adequate notice was given to parties for this purpose.

Members who will pose a supplementary question will be recognised by the presiding officers. In allocating opportunities for supplementary questions, the principle of fairness, among others, has been applied. When all supplementary

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questions have been answered by the President, we will proceed to the next question on the Order Paper.

Hon members, you also know that in terms of our Rules, a member who had asked a question and is not in the House will ask another member to take a question on their behalf. Also, a member may be in the House but is not able to do so because of health reasons, he may request that their question be taken by another member in the House. I want to indicate that the hon Chief Whip, hon Ntuli, who asked the question to the President is here with us in the House, but he is unable to ask a follow-up question because his voice is not there. So, he has informed the Table that he has asked the hon Mikateko to take the follow-up question.

QUESTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT

Question 1:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker, Deputy President Paul Mashatile and hon members. To the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference and Corruption ... [Interjections.]

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Mr V G REDDY: Speaker on a point of order: I rise in terms of the Rule quoted by the Acting Speaker. He said that members answering questions should not take to the podium. I just like some clarity, please. I just want to know if this is allowed. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon member. I will consult with the hon Frolick in that new Rule. But as the Rule stands, the President can take the question on the podium. Mr President, you can take it from the podium.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: As I was saying, the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference, Corruption into the Criminal Justice System is, indeed, a matter of public interest. The commission's interim report, which I received in December, made recommendations with respect to matters where there exists prima facie evidence of wrongdoing. As directed by its terms of reference, the commission made recommendations that can be classed into three areas.

Firstly, the commission referred several matters where it found evidence of wrongdoing to the relevant institutions for

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immediate criminal investigation. Secondly, the commission directed that there should be urgent decisions on prosecution where required. Thirdly, with respect to individuals currently employed within the law and intelligence services where it found prima facie evidence that there was wrongdoing, the commission made a number of recommendations regarding the employment status of such individuals. This includes that they should be suspended pending the outcome of further investigations.

To ensure that these matters are given the necessary attention I directed the Minister of Police as well as the National Commissioner to constitute a special investigation task team reporting directly to the commissioner. The team institute investigations against those identified by the commission for such investigations. Matters that require disciplinary action are currently being attended to by the relevant departments. Some are resulting in suspensions and some are resulting in immediate disciplinary processes that are now underway.

The commission's work is ongoing. In its interim report, the commission noted that it will require further evidence from a number of people who had not yet appeared before it. Beyond the referrals and recommendations that I have made public, it would

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be unfair to witnesses whose testimony is not complete or individuals against whom the commission has not yet made any findings to publicise the information at this stage.

Furthermore, it may jeopardise investigations as well as lines of questioning of the commission to make unconcluded avenues with regards to the investigations that could be made public.

Given the short timeframe in which the commission is expected to complete its work, I will make all the reports public once the commission has submitted their final report. The commission has been given a tight timeframe within which they should produce another interim report whereafter a final report. This will be subject to any advice from the commission itself or other considerations on whether the publication of any portions of the report that may put persons who may have appeared before the commission in danger. We have already seen how a number of people who appeared before the commission have been targeted, and some of them have been in serious danger.

The information will be made public subject to the advice and discussions with the commission as well. Throughout this we have been guided by the fundamental principle of transparency and that South Africans must know the facts around the allegations

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that were made by Lieutenant Mkhwanazi and must know what action is being taken to address any wrongdoing or systemic weaknesses that are identified. I am on record as having said that we will implement the recommendations of the commission and we will take action. I thank you.

Mr M G MAHLAULE: Thank you very much, President for the response, particularly as it relates to your reason that it would be unfair to disclose the report because by doing so it will be prejudiced. It will prejudice witnesses who have not appeared as yet or concluded their evidence. However, you have referred for action a report you received on 17 December 2025 and on 29 January 2026 for action, a report accepted recommendations against individuals who had not appeared before the commission or given evidence. For instance, Brigadier Rachel Matjeng only appeared before the commission on 5 and 6 February 2026. Major General Richard Shibiri only appeared on 4 and 11 March 2026. How do you justify your response that disclosing the report will be unfair to witnesses whose evidence had not been concluded when you accepted recommendations relating to some people without having given evidence? How did you logically apply yourself in this regard? Thank you, Mr President.

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker. Yes, that's precisely what I was trying to address by saying that there are certain witnesses who have not yet appeared who, however, the commission has made some findings on. We will be taking all that in totality as we release all the reports. The reason, particularly the one that you are mentioning, is precisely that any witness who goes before the commission should not feel that they have been prejudiced by the upfront release of the information or the report. They should go to the commission and present their story even as the commission itself will already have said something about them – something which would have led to us taking certain actions. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr D D D VAN ROYEN: Thank you, Speaker. President, I hope you still remember that this country does not have a Minister of Police. I hear you referring to tasking the Minister of Police and the National Commissioner. The Minister of Police is in suspension. We are currently having the Acting Minister of Police. I hope you are not referring to Senzo Mnchunu.

In interim report, as you are all aware, deals with criminality and political interference within the criminal justice system.

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South Africans will naturally worry that powerful individuals, like your relative Maumela who you are connected to and those who are also connected to those in authority, may be shielded from scrutiny. Therefore, can you assure this House that none of the decisions to withhold the report or delay its publication is intended to protect the politically connected individuals including those who are familiar or in political proximity to your office? Also, what concrete steps have you taken against the implicated including whether the Minister of Police, Mr Senzo Mnchunu, is subjected to any action arising from the report? [Time expired.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker. Minister Firoz Cachalia is, yes, the Acting Minister of Police. In fact, he is the Minister Without Portfolio with the responsibility of overseeing the work of the police. The Minister is doing his work. When I refer to the Minister I am referring to Minister Firoz Cachalia, or better still known as Professor Firoz Cachalia.

I can give assurance that no one who is either implicated or will be implicated will be shielded. When the commission does

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its recommendations, we will act accordingly on those recommendations.

I have already gone on public, hon member, to describe the relationship between myself and Maumela and I do not wish to get into that. Continuous peddling of that information, which is actually misinformation, is completely incorrect. In the end, we will make sure that when the report is issued, the South African public will be able to see what the commission said and what action we are going to embark upon. So, no one – no big name, small name or whoever and however connected – will be shielded. We can assure you of that. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Xitsonga:

Tat S M GANA: Ndza khensa, Xipikara na Puresidente. Ndzi ta vutisa hi ku yimela muchaviseki Zibi. Xilo xin'wana lexi hi nga xi vona hi leswaku kusukela, hambiloko ku vile na mbulavulo wa General Mkhwanazi, ku na tinyimpi endzeni ka maphorisa. Eka mbulavulo wa n'wina na rixaka mi vurile leswaku ku fanele ku va na nghingiriko wa nkabelo na nxopaxopo [vetting] eka vakulukumba va maphorisa. Hikwalaho, ndzi lava ku twisisa leswaku kusukela loko mi endlile xitiviso lexi eka mbulavulo wa n'wina na rixaka...

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English:

... What work has been done to vet and stop the infighting that is currently paralysing the SA Police Service? Anything coming from the Madlanga Commission is that the police continue to be fighting and not protecting the people of South Africa.

Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa swinene, Xipikara.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Ndza khensa, Xipikara. Swilo sweswo hi swona leswi hi swi langutaka. Hi vurile leswaku ku ta endliwa nkambelo na nxopaxopo wa maphorisa kumbe lava va nga le henhla. Hikwalaho, swi sungurile ku xopaxopa naswona yi sungurile hi matimba swinene. Swi ta endliwa leswaku swi kondza swi fika emakumu leswaku hi kota ku tiva leswaku eka maphorisa lava va tirhaka hi wahi lava va tirhelaka vanhu na lava va tirhelaka vona vinyi.

Nakambe, na leswi swo lwa exikarhi ka maphorisa naswona ha karhi ha swi languta. Khomixini ya Madlanga ya hi pfuna. Sweswi se hi swi tiva kahle leswaku ku na mitlawatlawa exikarhi ka maphorisa. Sweswo swi endla leswaku ntirho wa maphorisa wu nga endliwi hi ndlela leyi hi yi rhandzaka. Hinkwaswo sweswo swi ta lunghisiwa.

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English:

Of course, what the Madlanga Commission has revealed is that there are divisions in the police force, particularly at the higher echelons. And there is a whole problem of capture by the criminal syndicates. As the evidence is unfolding, we will hear from the commission precisely what their final recommendations are. It is upon that that we will be able to take action. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Ms L M NGOBENI: Speaker, I will be taking the question on behalf of the hon Trollip. President, good afternoon. The list of senior police officers, government officials and politicians that you have appointed to serve in your Cabinet who have been implicated in criminal conduct, continues to grow day by day and is being exposed not only through the testimony before the Madlanga Commission, but also through the ad hoc committee here in Parliament. This raises a fundamental question when those mandated to lead the fight against crime are themselves implicated in serious wrongdoing. Who is actually protecting and fighting crime on behalf of the people of South Africa? Also: What assurances will you give the people of South Africa that you will implement the recommendations of the report much more

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than what has been done with the Zondo commission which cost the fiscus billions? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, let it be said that starting with your very last statement, we have been giving reports on the work that is being done to implement the recommendations of the state capture commission which was headed by Justice Zondo. We keep on reporting. At the Presidency level, we keep on giving updates of what is being done. The work that has been done is quite considerable. Of course, people have always wanted to see big names being charged and big names being put in prison. Those are the main areas of focus.

However, Justice Zondo's commission made many other fundamental recommendations. Some of which had to do with how we should reform our laws, how we should amend our laws on issues like procurement and so forth. All that work is underway. Also, is the issue of how we should ensure that we bring down the levels and incidents of corruption. That work is carrying on. I will continue to stand here and give full reports of the work that is being done.

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With regard to giving assurances on the implementation of the Madlanga report, I have said and I say it again, we will implement the recommendations of the Madlanga report as we are implementing the recommendations of the Zondo commission. As regards that, people want to see people being arrested. Processes and legal processes are underway. Those processes in our own country in terms of our Constitution tend to take some time. I would say frustratingly so they take their time and they must be allowed to take their time so that there is proper and full justice. Yes, many people can be implicated. People do tend up and make a whole lot of statements about people.

What I have always said is that we do need the evidence and the people need to be charged so that the criminal justice system, which we all subscribe to, take its course. At times whenever allegations are made, sometimes they are found not to be true. People are then found to have been either blemished without the real substance. Where there is substance, charges must be preferred. People must then be dealt with. If they have to step aside or step down, they will step down. If I have to take action against them, I will also do so. Evidence is important. Following our judicial system, our criminal justice system and

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the tenant of our Constitution is also important. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Mr M G MAHLAULE: Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon President, you noted in your response that it would jeopardise the investigation and the line of questioning of the commission to make an incomplete investigations public. Did you consider the principle of natural justice when you accepted the recommendations of an incomplete investigation?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Speaker. Yes, I did consider the principle of natural justice and had to balance that with what the commission had put out. In balancing that, of course, and also considering the report in its totality, we have been able to use natural justice.

In the end, through the process of our very robust judicial system, whoever either been implicated or been dealt with from a disciplinary point of view or be charged, will be able to have adequate opportunities to answer to those issues that have been put to them. When we have taken action, it is action where there is substantial evidence that we could act on but based on natural justice. Thank you, hon Speaker.

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Question 2:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, an unreliable supply of water to our people places a heavy burden on their lives and the ability of businesses to operate, and thus to grow our economy. That is why in the state of the nation address, Sona, in February I directed the establishment of the National Water Crisis Committee, Water Com, to ensure a coordinated response to the water crisis.

Work is currently underway to finalise the National Water Action Plan and to establish ... to get the committee to start its proceedings, which it will do this coming week. It is expected that it will be completed by the end of March, in terms of the water plan.

The National Water Crisis Committee will focus on three priorities: Firstly, is to address immediate challenges in municipality water and sanitation delivery through a focus on limited number of municipalities.

Secondly, to expedite institutional financial as well as regulatory systemic causes of the water crisis.

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Thirdly, we will attract investment in water infrastructure, increasing both public and private sector investment and involvement. The main causes of the water crisis are at local government level. Maintenance of municipal water and sanitation infrastructure has been neglected in many of our municipalities over decades. There is, therefore, a big deadlock or a huge deadlock for the repair and refurbishment of water services.

In Johannesburg alone, the pipes that deliver water to industry and to the households are old and are in need of repair and the budget to do so runs into hundreds of billions. The situation has been exacerbated by a lack of capacity, also organised crime, widespread theft of water infrastructure, corruption, poor billing and revenue management as well as illegal connections and water leaks.

Solving South Africa's water crisis, therefore, requires what I would call a multifaceted approach, focus on institutional reform, infrastructure maintenance and human capital development at the local level. We need to focus our attention on strengthening the capacity of water services authorities so that they are able to manage this very important resource of life,

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water. They also should be able to reduce demand and maintain official systems effectively.

Where necessary, existing powers that are outlined in our Constitution as well as in the National Water Act and the Water Services Act will be used to intervene in municipalities that are failing to meet their obligations or are failing to implement corrective measures. This will include assistance to those municipalities, working alongside them to execute their responsibility and at times even taking over.

We will also, where municipalities and municipalities' officials fail, be able to take action against them and we will also be focusing on how they are contravening the requirements of the National Water Act, and if there's wrongdoing, they too will be charged. Where necessary, national government will assume responsibilities for water services in those municipalities that fail - as I said - to discharge their responsibilities.

The amendment of the Water Services Act will enable stronger intervention where a water service provider, for instance, fails to adhere to their license conditions.

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In addition, we are also implementing the Metro Trading Services Reform Programme. Now, this is a performance-based incentive that is worth R54 billion over six years to overhaul electricity, water and waste services in South Africa's eight metropolitan municipalities.

The programme itself is introducing an incentive-based grant system that rewards metros for improving financial management and achieving specific service delivery targets.

Now, this programme aims to reverse long-term service decline in municipalities. It will also improve financial sustainability and unlock additional investment as has been done to great effect by the National Electricity Crisis Committee.

We see the National Water Crisis Committee being able to bring together various role players across the state as well as outside government to undertake a clear set of focused and impactful interventions that will make a real as well as a lasting difference to people's lives.

Now, we are going to be proceeding to implement this plan, and like we succeeded with electricity I have no doubt whatsoever

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that we will be able to achieve great success by harnessing all the resources of the various stakeholders to enable us to change the course of our water supply, reticulation and distribution in our country. Thank you, hon Speaker. [Applause.]

Mr S J MOORE: Mr President, your Minister of Water and Sanitation revealed yesterday, and you've just confirmed, that the National Water Crisis Committee has not yet met, despite the announcement a month ago.

Mr President, a month is a long time in a crisis. This is while people are currently suffering.

You mentioned the city of Johannesburg, my hometown. Due to Johannesburg's sweeping financial arrangement that takes infrastructure funds away from Joburg Water, it has emerged that contractors are owed hundreds of millions as projects across the city stall.

You also lead the ... with the Presidential Johannesburg Working Group, which was launched over a year ago. So, there's plenty of interventions in this space but taps are still dry.

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Will you, Mr President, rebuke Johannesburg's sweeping policy that takes away infrastructure funding and call for the ringfencing of water infrastructure spending? Thank you.

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, there have been various meetings that deal with the challenge that we face of water, in preparation for the very first meeting of the National Water Crisis Committee. Now, preparations have been made, the clear plan has been put together and it will be presented at the meeting this Wednesday, where I will be present, the Deputy President will be present, as he's been leading the other process as well, which has done extremely well, in terms of defining what the real problem is.

We will, from those meetings that have been held, consolidate the views that will be coming from all key stakeholders and we will then be able to take this matter forward.

I'm meeting with the Minister of Finance later this afternoon to discuss precisely the financial issues that need to be upscaled.

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The Minister of Finance did decry, as he presented his budget, the fact that a number of municipalities get revenue for water and then they divert it to their other costs centres without actually ensuring that the money that is brought in as a revenue from water is actually used to promote or improve the infrastructure of our water resources. And it is for this reason that participation at government level, including the various Ministers, will be participating in this committee, so that our intervention is more impactful.

So, much as the committee has not met, as the Minister said, it meets on Wednesday, but it will be now bringing together all the preparatory work that has been happening and clear proposals and recommendations. Johannesburg Presidential Working Group is also going to meet.

I had a meeting last week with the eThekweni Presidential Working Group, who were reporting to me the great progress that they have made since the working group was established. I await a similar type of engagement with Johannesburg to deal with all the challenges, and as we established this working group for eThekweni, water was a major challenge as well. It is now being addressed more effectively with the participation of a number of

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entities, private sector, public sector at all levels, national, local as well as provincial. The same thing should then happen with Johannesburg.

We are all equally concerned about the slow pace that is being made in Johannesburg. We are going to seek to arrest that so that we catapult the work that is being done in Johannesburg to a higher level and we will be focusing on this to ensure that Johannesburg is turned around in all its ramifications with regard to water as well as the challenges they have in electricity as well as general municipal services. So, we will be attending to all that. Thank you, hon Speaker. [Applause.]

Ms N V MENTE-NKUNA: President, accountability should be promoted, especially by you. We can't start by introducing new strategies of crisis committees without consequences. The crisis of water is as a result of your incompetent deployees of the ANC and thugarism. We have heard nothing about what happened to those officials as well as political heads.

And you should also start by apologising to the people of Giyani, whom have not been having water for the past 15 years. Today, we hear that their budget has moved from R248 million to

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R6 billion, without accounting as to what has happened. For the past 15 years no one is held accountable for water losses and for us not having water in this country.

President, we should not move forward without knowing exactly what are the terms reference of this crisis committee, because your government has been doing what is called privatisation of entities. We have seen privatisation of Eskom and recently we have seen the privatisation of Home Affairs under your government.

Is our water safe? Are you not going to give our water resource to the private sector? Thank you. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, let me start off with the challenges that our people in Giyani have been facing. The project that we focus our attention on in Giyani is between 90 and 92% complete, and it involves about 335km of bulk water pipelines that have been put in place.

I forever remember how, when I went in the area, I found that the bulk water pipelines were lying beside the road. Those pipelines have now been installed and they span a distance of

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325km from the Nandoni Dam and into the villages in Giyani. A number of villages now have water. It's 90% complete.

You're absolutely right when you say there are still challenges. There are still challenges ... [Interjections.]

Mr G E KOBANE: Hon Speaker, point of order. Can me and the President go and check Giyani? [Interjections.] He is totally wrong. You are misleading him ... [Interjections.] ...

Xitsonga:

... ma va onhela, ma va hembela ...

English:

... it's not the truth ... [Interjections.]

The SPEAKER: Hon member, can you please switch off your mic. That is not a point of order ... [Interjections.] ... That is not a point of order. If you have a substantive motion you know, in terms of your rules, that you must table it. So, you mustn't raise what is not a point of order. Thank you very much.

Hon President!

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AN HON MEMBER: ... [Inaudible.]

The SPEAKER: Who is rising on a point of order?

Mr President, you can continue with the answer. There's nobody.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Penny Penny [Laughter.]

[Applause.] ...

Xitsonga:

... .. ndza swi tiva leswaku ma yi tiva ndhawu liya.

Hambiswiritano, a ndzi na ntiyiso wa leswaku xana mi nga va mi huma kona. Loko mi nga humi kona, ndzi nga famba na n'wina hi ya vona leswaku ku endleka yini. [Va phokotela.] Ntirho lowu ndzi vulavulaka ha wona loko wu nga endliwi, hi ta tiyisisa leswaku lava va nga wu endleki ntirho wa vona va ta hlongoriwa.

English:

Hon Speaker, what I was saying is that, yes, I have been there myself and I've seen how in the past the pipes that were from Nandoni to Giyani had not been installed. And I've spoken to some of the engineers, young men who are very capable, who were doing the work and making a great deal of progress. And so, I am

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certain that the Giyani challenge is being attended to and is also being completed.

Now, 23 of the 24 villages have reticulated and household connections. Now, obviously, it's all very well to say they have connections, but if the water is not flowing then that is a problem.

So, that is the progress that has been made after many years of corruption, many years of that project having lied fallow, we have now moved on and the bulk water system is in place. And in the end, the pipes are also being reticulated to now those villages. And there's a phase 2A, 15 villages that are also going to be connected. So, the remaining work is being done. And of course, because it's a major project it will be done to proper completion.

With regard to ensuring that we move on with implementing what we have said about water and also ensuring accountability, yes, there will be accountability for those who fail to implement or to do the work that they are meant to do. There will be accountability because, for instance, in Johannesburg and indeed in many other places, we do want people to live up to what has

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been agreed to and what they have also committed. So, we will ensure that there is accountability. Thank you, hon Speaker.
[Applause.]

Mr S L DITHEBE: President, you are renowned for your orientation towards systems and institutions with regard to matters of governance and the aftermath of the Nugent Commission and the phoenix-esque rise of SA Revenue Service, Sars. Best testimony to that.

With regard to eThekweni we have begun to see the results.

[Interjections.] Similarly, Mr President, is it your intention that similar results will be achieved with regard to Johannesburg?

But most importantly, the rising debt of the water boards, which poses a serious risk to water reliability, not only in municipalities that owe huge debts to water boards but across the country.

Will the President intervene to ensure that that situation is stabilised? Thank you, hon President. [Applause.]

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An HON MEMBER: They won't make you Minister.

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members! Can we please ...

[Interjections.] ... order! Order!

Mr President!

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I hear a lot of noise when you referred to ... [Interjections.]

Mr V PAMBO: Madam Speaker, on a point of order!

The SPEAKER: Hon members, can I ask once again, if you want to raise a point of order, raise your hand, don't open the mic.

[Interjections.] No. I see ... hon Pambo, what's your point of order?

Mr V PAMBO: Madam Speaker, I'm just saying that, can we keep the decorum? It's not time for auditions, please. [Laughter.]

[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order ... Interjections.]

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Mr V PAMBO: The Cabinet is made, it's done. There's no need for auditions ...

The SPEAKER: Hon member, that's not a point of order. I think those of you who might know, who is going for auditions, you can finish that debate outside. Order!

Hon President!

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Madam Speaker, I can say that I'm not doing any audition, I'm answering questions. [Laughter.]

I heard a bit of noise when you referred to eThekwini.

Seemingly, there are people who almost deny the progress that is being made ... [Interjections.] ... and I'd like to invite those who are doubtful to come with me to eThekwini ...

[Interjections.] ... no, come with me to interact with ...

[Interjections.]

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members! You can accept or decline the invitation ... [Interjections.] ... the invitation is made.

Mr President, you can continue!

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An HON MEMBER: Date and time, Mr President, date and time.

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members! I have asked the President to respond.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: You can come with me so that we can go and meet business people, trade unionists, traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, officials in local government, officials including the Premier at provincial level and Ministers who are also engaged in the work that we're doing in eThekweni.

I say so because I think you need to hear their testimony. You need to hear how the private sector is now saying, eThekweni is now a destination for investment. [Applause.] Not only local investors but international investors. [Interjections.]

Water is being addressed and is beginning to flow, the roads are being repaired, the highways and the bridges are being repaired, and in fact, the surroundings of eThekweni could possibly be the biggest infrastructure involvement that we have in the country at the moment. So, much is happening there.

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Yes, I have always had this approach that we should fix, we should have proper systems, because the systems will then enable us to embark on processes that will deliver what our people want, but that must be coupled with having good people. So, for me it's systems, people and processes. Once you have those three, you are then able to move forward.

In the main, what we've been seeking to do is to recalibrate our systems, and in eThekweni we've done that to a large extent.

You referred to Sars and indeed to many other institutions as well, but more directly to Johannesburg. Johannesburg also needs a recalibration of its systems so that it is able to embark on all those processes that will serve our people better. And in the end, we need the people who are dedicated, who are there to serve the people and not to serve themselves. So, if we can get those three in order everything will then fall in place.

So, that is exactly what we are seeking to do in Johannesburg, and I have no doubt that we will achieve that because if the system works, the process leads to execution. And if the people are not fit for purpose then they should be removed so that people who are fit for purpose must then work within the system

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and embark on those processes that lead to good delivery for our people. Thank you, hon Speaker. [Applause.]

Setswana:

Ngk M A MAIMANE: Madume, Moporesitente.

English:

At the height of loadshedding we took your government to court and won. And at the height of this water crisis we will do the same.

Mr President, you've got now over ten people who are working on this water crisis. Let me list them for you: You've got a task team, you've got a Presidential Working Group, you've got the Minister of Water, you've got the Deputy President leading a process, you go to Gauteng, the Premier of Gauteng is also involved, you've got the water board, you've got the chief executive officer, CEO, of the water board, you've got the Minister of Finance as you've spoken today, you've also got the Mayor of Johannesburg, the Member of Executive Council, MEC, for Water and Infrastructure in Johannesburg.

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So, Mr President, it's now over ten people. My question is a simple one: If the people of Johannesburg do not have water by the end of the year, who exactly are you going to fire? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, I missed the last part of the question. Who exactly am I going to do what to? [Interjections.]

Dr M A MAIMANE: Mr President, if the people of Johannesburg do not have water at the end of the year, who exactly are you going to fire, if there's no water?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Well, simple answer to that, hon Maimane. As I said, we're putting the system in place and recalibrating it and the process and then appoint and have the right people. If those people who are there are not going to be able to execute the processes that the National Water Crisis Committee comes up with, and of course, they will have to move out of the way and they will be moved out of the way because what comes first are the interests of the people of South Africa and Johannesburg.

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So, the National Water Crisis Committee is going to be overseeing all that and making sure that the job gets done. And if it is not done, then obviously, heads must fall. Those who don't do their work will be moved out of their places. Thank you. [Applause.]

Mr S J MOORE: Mr President, your Water Crisis Committee has not met, you did not commit to ringfencing nor decry Johannesburg's sweeping policy taking critical funding away from Johannesburg water. There are no criminal charges against corrupt municipal officials in the pipeline. The Deputy President's Water Task Team has failed.

You speak only of things to come, plans, proposals accountability. A month is a long time in a crisis, Mr President, and many have been without secure water for years.

With millions of South Africans suffering, are your Sona commitments not another failed promise? Thank you. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, you know, when we set up National Electricity Crisis Committee, NECCOM, there were people who spoke just like you, who dismissed it, who fobbed it

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off and said it's going to amount to nothing. So, I'm accustomed to that.

People often want us to resolve problems and crises without approaching them in a systematic way. They always want us to rush in like a bull and knock everything out of place. What we tend to do, and this is precisely what I'm trying to explain here, we want to look at how we solve the system and enable the system to be able to stand on its own, to have credibility and efficacy, so that, that system is then able to stand the test of time and be able to enhance processes that need to be embarked upon, whereafter the people that we then bring in are then able to act according to the system, are able to execute the processes.

So, with regard to Johannesburg, now, obviously you would want me as President to act as a police person, policeman, investigate, find wrong, charge the people, take them to court, prosecute them and then judge them. I've said many a times here, I do not work that way and the Constitution of your country does not allow me to do that. So, we work according to the processes that are clearly laid out in our Constitution.

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Now, yes you can bemoan the fact that the meeting has not taken place. I have taken trouble, hon member, to say meetings have been taking place to prepare for the head meeting that is going to take place on Wednesday.

The Deputy President has been working on the water issue diligently and together with all others he is going to bring together, together we're going to bring together all the initiatives and efforts that have been put in place to make sure that this is not a bad promise. It's going to be as good a promise as we promised with electricity reform that is now underway where we got rid of loadshedding. So, it will happen. Stand by and watch, and watch this space. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Hon members, I just want to advise you that we're not doing well on time. You know that this process of Questions to the President is allocated three hours. So, I'm just asking us to make sure that we do not have spurious points of order that tend to delay us.

We now move to the third question.

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Question 3:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, it is not only a weighty but quite a mouthful type of question. In September 2023, the National Planning Commission released its 10-year review of the National Development Plan. In that review the National Planning Commission, NPC found that the targets relating to the elimination of poverty, reduction of inequality and unemployment will not be met by 2030.

This was made public and we should all know that we are indeed off target just like many countries around the world when it comes to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. It was reported at the United Nations that many countries are off target. In fact the whole world seems to be off target.

While progress has been made on other National Development Plan, NDP targets, such as access to education, health, water, electricity and social assistance, South Africa remains highly unequal, marked by wealth disparities that span generations. The review by the National Planning Commission found several reasons for the lack of progress.

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Some of these factors that were highlighted by the NPC were external. The effects of the global financial crisis of 2008 continued to be felt in the South African economy for several years. As much as we did not feel them immediately, but the aftermath was felt.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused severe economic contraction in our economy. In fact the biggest contraction our economy has ever suffered was suffered during COVID-19, where within a very short space of time we lost 2 million jobs. Some of those jobs have not been regained, those that were lost during COVID-19.

The years following the adoption of the NDP were the years of state capture in which billions of rand were siphoned out of the state's critical institutions when they were repurposed to serve the corrupt and those who were there to plunder. The state-owned companies on which our economy depends, such as Eskom and Transnet were stripped of funds, skills and capable leadership. The economy was also held back by nearly 15 years of insecure electricity supply and the declining performance of our ports, harbours and railways.

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There have been broader challenges around the declining capacity of the state, particularly at local government level, a decline in fixed investment and poor co-ordination across the state. The investment in infrastructure just tapered down. The Medium-Term Development Plan has been developed to address these many challenges, but more importantly to put the country back on track to realise the objectives that were outlined in the NDP.

The Medium-Term Development Plan aims to drive inclusive growth and job creation through structural reforms that we have embarked upon, which are already showing a great deal of benefit as well as massive investment in energy which we are already doing, pouring billions into our energy infrastructure, the logistics and water infrastructure which we are attending to.

It is focused on encouraging investment and creating employment in various sectors of our economy like mining, tourism, the green economy while also providing small and medium enterprises' greater opportunities and funding as well. The Medium-Term Development Plan, MTDP has prioritised the reduction of poverty as well as the high cost of living that beset South African families. We've also sought to expand the social protection

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programmes and improve health care, better foundational education and focus on skills development.

To ensure the success of such efforts, the Medium-Term Development Plan focuses on building a capable state. A state that is ethical and developmental in outlook. This includes professionalising the public service, strengthening law enforcement, improving local government delivery and rooting out corruption.

On a visit to Brazil just a few days ago, one of the things that we learned on how they professionalise their public service is to require that people who want to join the public service should write exams which if they pass will then make them more eligible to get into the public service.

It is a matter that I would like us to consider when we have to professionalise the service with a view of enhancing the capability of the state. The Medium-Term Development Plan contains a results framework which quantifies the outcomes, the strategic interventions and which also provides us with indicators and targets to be achieved over the five-year term

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that we have embarked upon. The targets will inform the development of the work that we are doing.

They are also reflected in the annual performance plans of departments and Ministers have signed agreements with me, and we focus on how their departments are going to implement the Medium-Term Development Plan. With all this, I am sure that we will be able, as we implement the MTDP and the work that has been already underway, to steadily rebuild our economy and restore the capability of the state, so that we can accelerate the progress that we already see happening towards the achievement of the national development goals.

We are making progress. We have in large measure arrested the decline that was happening broadly in the economy as well as in government institutions. I do believe that much as it is still a very early stage, that we are beginning a process of an upward trajectory. We need to keep at it. I have often said that we need all stakeholders, all hands-on deck, including the doubters, including those in the opposition parties. All of us as a nation must put our hands together and move South Africa forward towards achieving the goals of the NDP. Thank you, hon Speaker. [Applause.]

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Dr M J BURKE: Madam Speaker, one would have to be completely...
[Interjections.]

The SPEAKER: My apologies, Dr Burke. I'm sorry. The first supplementary question is to the Chief Whip of the MK Party. Sorry about that. [Applause.]

The CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION (Mrs S M N Mokoena-Zondi):
President, the NDP was adopted as South Africa's long-term blueprint to drive economic growth as well as reduce unemployment, and to build a capable developmental state by 2030. Despite what you say today, the reality facing South Africans tells a very different story. Economic growth has slowed dramatically, unemployment has risen, and the capacity of the state to implement policies continues to weaken. This then suggests that the problem may not lie with the plan itself, but rather with the leadership and implementation by the executive tasked with delivering these targets.

My question, therefore, is: Do you accept that the widening gap between the NDP targets and the current economic reality reflects a failure of your leadership within your administration? And what consequences, including yourself as the

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Head of State and head of the executive, should follow when those entrusted in implementing the plan failed to deliver time and time again? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: As I said, the National Planning Commission did say that we are off target, and I accept that. I even gave you a global outlook of how various countries and governments have also been at work trying to live up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Plans.

In an ideal world, we should have moved much further, and we should have been looking at a situation where the NDP targets are within reach. They are not within reach. I've outlined to you the various factors that have brought us where we are. These are factors which, if one looks at them objectively, will find that they have a number of owners, entities, people, leaders who were supposed to do what needed to be done, not to take South Africa back.

Of course, some of the factors are external. They are not those that we made or shaped for ourselves. But in the end, we need to collectively accept that we are off target. We now need to make sure that we correct course. What we are doing is to correct

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course. If we were not correcting course, if we were not going back to the course of executing those targets, I would say, yes, we should accept that we have dismally failed.

What we are involved in is to correct course and to bring us back in line as a country, as many other countries in the world are doing, to bring everything back, to enable all key stakeholders to work together so that we can achieve the objectives of the NDP. As I said, there are quite a number of areas where we've made great success, and I enumerated them.

However, I must say on the key ones, particularly the triple challenge, unemployment, poverty, and inequality, much as there's been movement forward, it has not been sufficient to satisfy the needs of our people. But what I would say is hopeful is that work is being done. We are continuing to build a capable state.

We are continuing to address the issue of unemployment, unemployment which has to be addressed by all parties, by the public sector, by the private sector. We are increasing infrastructure build in our country, and we are attracting investments so that more and more people can be employed.

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We're doing everything to ensure that the needs of our people at the social level are also addressed when it comes to health, when it comes to education, and when it comes just to their basic livelihood of making things like electricity and water available. So, a combination of what we are doing should tell us, that we are moving forward rather than static at a particular place. Thank you, hon Speaker.

Dr M J BURKE: Madam Speaker, I'm tempted to say my last question was left as incomplete as the largest party's execution of the NDP. In fact, one would have to be completely divorced from data and reality to believe that the decade-old goals for 2023 are still attainable. It might even stand now for not darn possible.

If we promise not to blue-tick you, is it not now time, Mr President, to abandon the unexecuted NDP and, together with your largest coalition partner, drive a new economic deal?

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, I don't know how having had this Parliament adopting the NDP, we just abandon it. I mean, you can abandon the name, but the substance of the NDP

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is about the life of the people of South Africa. It is about improving their lives, ensuring that there is economic growth.

How do we abandon the concept of economic growth? It is embedded in the NDP. How do we abandon the objective of creating jobs? It is in the NDP. How do we abandon improving education and skills that is set out in the NDP?

So, I do think that what the hon member is saying is in the end, not implementable. What needs to be implemented is to bring us back on course. I have referred to the global framework, the Sustainable Development Goals.

The fact that many countries in the world, including your big economies, have not been able to live up to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations, they have never concluded that we should abandon them. They have actually said we must reinvigorate ourselves to ensure that we achieve the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals. If you like, much of what is set out in the Sustainable Development Goals is what we have also embraced in our National Development Plan.

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So, I don't see how we abandon something that, from an objective point of view, is good. If we did, what would we aim for? Maybe the member will care, maybe he can't do it now, to sit down with me and outline to me those things that we should abandon in the NDP, and what plan he has. I'm forever willing to listen to good advice.

So, if the member has good advice, I'll be willing to sit down with that member. They must come with their plan and the NDP and say, abandon the NDP, take my plan. I will listen, but I don't promise to adopt. [Applause.]

Mr N M HADEBE: Hon President, you may have partly touched on the following, but given the widening gap between the NDP's objectives and current socioeconomic indicators, has the hon President considered initiating a formal review of the implementation framework of the NDP to ensure that it remains a credible and actionable blueprint for inclusive growth, job creation, and state capacity? What role will Parliament and departments play to rethink the strategy and restore confidence in the Republic's long-term development trajectory? I thank you Madam Speaker.

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Speaker, yes, there is a monthly review of the National Development Plan. In fact, many departments, as well as what you could call analysts, argue that a regular monitoring process is essential for a long-term plan like the NDP, that we need to track exactly how we are going ahead to implement the NDP. Who should do that? The Presidency should do it, the National Planning Commission should do it, and they do it. The various Cabinet clusters should also do it, and at the lower level, provinces and municipalities. So, I want to accept that as a very good suggestion and say yes, so that we just don't do it at one level only, it should be done at all levels.

Various departments, various entities should be able to examine the extent to which they are implementing monthly the implementation of the NDP. But more particularly, of the Medium-Term Development Plan against the broader canvas of the National Development Plan. We should on an ongoing basis be able to look at the economic indicators that Statistics SA does for us, and we also do look at it from a trade and industry point of view, exactly what sectors need more attention and more support.

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Of course, with the Department of Basic Education, we need to look at education as well as the Department of Higher Education. They do look at what is happening in our schools, and to funnel it all towards the NDP monitoring is a good idea, which obviously we will act on.

But more broadly, I want to give the hon member assurance that yes, we do track the implementation of the NDP. Otherwise, if we didn't do that, it would be a dead instrument and a dead plan. So, thank you very much for bringing that up to enable us to jack up, if you like, to use a colloquial term, the review system of the National Development Plan. Thank you so much.

Mr N L S KWANKWA: President, perhaps ...

IsiXhosa:

... into yokuqala kufuneka ukhe upapashe eza ...

English:

... performance appraisals or agreements of these Ministers ...

IsiXhosa:

... ukuze sikwazi ukubhaqa la mavila avuka sekuvuthiwe...

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English:

... causing targets not to be achieved. While there has been some progress through Operation Vulindlela in addressing structural bottlenecks in areas such as energy spectrum and logistics, South Africa continues to face persistently high unemployment and poverty despite multiple development strategies. The new growth path, President, which many people have forgotten about, also sought to drive export-led growth and labour-absorbing development strategies, but never gained traction.

Countries like Vietnam, South Korea successfully combined the structural reforms you see in Operation Vulindlela, as well as regulatory efficiency and export-led industrial policies to achieve strong growth creation and to fight unemployment. Given this ...

The SPEAKER: Hon member, your time is up.

IsiXhosa:

Mnu N L S KWANKWA: Hayi, siza kubuza.

English:

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Given this, what structural reforms are we going to undertake
President ...

The SPEAKER: Order, hon member. Your time is up.

Mr N L S KWANKWA: ... to make sure that the Medium-Term
Development Strategy is achieved?

The SPEAKER: Mr President.

Mr N L S KWANKWA: Otherwise, the preamble ...

IsiXhosa:

... kaloku ihamba yodwa.

English:

The SPEAKER: Order! Hon members, I want to remind you once
again, let's not have long preambles to the question, because
you do not have enough time for your question. Hon President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, I mean, obviously, our
economy has faced enormous challenges of low growth. That is
why, over time, we came up with a number of strategies.

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Strategies which if you look at, and you look at the National Development Plan, you all see that all they have sought to do is to embolden the National Development Plan.

The National Development Plan is our marquee, our lodestar plan that all our efforts, including the current Medium-Term Development Plan, is pivoted on. We are seeking to achieve what we set out in the NDP as we are seeking to achieve what the world set out in the Sustainable Development Goals. Along the way, we have faced headwinds where for instance, our economy was not growing at an appreciable level. For years, our economy's growth was lacklustre.

There are quite a number of reasons for that, and I've alluded to some of them. Of course, another reason is that the huge concentration of our economy is another reason that one can cite. But the low participation of the medium-small enterprises that face enormous problems like lack of finance, lack of the skills and market access is another. So, we are addressing all that. As we address that we know that we will be able to generate growth.

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If Operation Vulindlela has shown us that when we focus on a particular problem, we do make progress. Similarly, that's the progress that we are making. You spoke about the growth plan that we once adopted. It is still part of what we are seeking to do. As we open new markets for exports to be able to export goods to other countries, we are basing it on that.

Right now, in the visit to Brazil, President Lula da Silva and I bemoaned the fact that we are exporting very little that we make between the two of the countries. The trade imbalance is quite good. I mean, it's quite huge. They have a surplus and we have a deficit, but the trading has been very flat over many years.

We felt that we should reinvigorate it and get proper agreements signed so that the traders can begin to trade, and we agreed that as traders or merchants follow the flag. We must make sure that we install both flags figuratively, Brazilian and South African, in our two respective countries, so that traders can then follow those flags, particularly through agreements that we will arrive at. We signed two agreements. There are many more that we need to sign to boost trade between our two countries, and we'll be doing so with many other countries to come. Thank you, hon Speaker.

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The CHIEF WHIP OF THE OPPOSITION (Mrs S M N Mokoena-Zondi):

President, we hear you about Brazil and agreements, but if the country is truly getting back on its course, as you claim, can you point us to just three NDP targets that your administration is currently on track in achieving, particularly when it comes to economic growth as well as unemployment? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Well, for starters, on economic growth and when we look at progress, we need to look at progress in totality. Yes, it's always tempting to look at the economy, but we also need to look at the livelihoods of people, because in the end, we must have an impact on the livelihoods of people.

We are now spending about 61% of our expenditure on making sure that our people at a social level can live a lot better than they did in the past. So 61% of a budget of R2,2 trillion is phenomenal. Let's start there. Having done so, we have decided that we're going to spend R1 trillion in the medium-term, just on infrastructure, because we continue to say that infrastructure is the flywheel that moves the economy forward.

As we do that, we are focusing on those network industries that drive the economy, like our roads, our railways, our logistics,

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the ports and the harbours. We're focusing on that, on electricity as well as water. Now, all those are enablers that will enable our country to move forward. As we go around on our visits, we meet a number of people, both local and offshore, who are quite excited about the progress that we're making and want to come and invest.

We're going to have an investment conference at the end of this month where we're hoping that we will reach our target of R2 trillion over the medium-term. So, we are doing a great deal after years of being stagnant and moving backwards. We're moving forward and there's a lot that is being done. Of course, what we also need to focus on is reducing the cost of living of our people. As we do all these reforms, there's more capacity and more leeway to even bring the inflation down, making the cost of food and other commodities that our people need to come down.

What should follow then, is interest rates should also taper down so that investors and businesspeople can borrow money cheaply and invest and therefore creating more jobs. So, things are underway. We are not stuck in one place. Thank you, hon Speaker.

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Question 4:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker and hon members, whilst significant progress has really been made since 1994 in affirming and recognising the role of traditional and Khoisan leaders in our democratic system, more work remains to ensure that traditional leaders and Khoisan leaders are fully integrated into our governance system and are seen as partners in development and governance. What is good is that our traditional leaders have themselves started and decided that they want to focus on development so that the areas in which they rule should no longer be dormitories where they provide work to the urban areas. They want those areas to become economic hubs of one sort of economic activity or another.

Through the District Development Model, DDM, we have, traditional and Khoisan leaders are recognised as core governance partners through this DDM process. The recognition of the role played by traditional and Khoisan leaders in the District Development Model represents a step towards more inclusive and effective governance in our country, fostering what I can call partnerships that enhance community engagement as well as development outcomes.

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In addition, a comprehensive legal framework exists to give effect to the participation of traditional leaders in municipal governance. Where traditional leaders participate in local governance, we find that great progress can be made. The Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act makes provision for traditional councils to support municipalities in identifying community needs. Under the Act, local houses of traditional and Khoisan leaders may participate in municipal programmes – and in some areas they do – strengthening accountability at local government level.

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act requires municipalities to consult traditional leaders on development issues, including in the development of the integrated development plan. The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act provides for recognised senior traditional leaders and Khoisan leaders to participate in municipal councils as ex officio and advisory members, and, where this is done, it works very well. This includes the authority to participate in council meetings, to address the council on matters affecting traditional or Khoisan communities, and to participate in policy, bylaws, and service delivery discussions.

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This is how the partnership between traditional leaders and local government councillors becomes really useful. Whilst the framework is robust, implementation across municipalities remains uneven. To address this, the Medium-Term Development Plan now includes a very specific indicator for the participation of traditional leaders in planning, implementing, and monitoring government programmes. This is a great advance forward. The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs has commenced capacity-building in district and metropolitan municipalities to strengthen compliance with the provisions that are relevant to our laws. These interventions are improving institutional capacity and reinforcing the integration of traditional leaders into governance and service delivery.

The review of the White Paper on Local Government that is currently under way proposes much more structured co-operation between municipalities and traditional leaders so that the problem-solving effect can be achieved. The government remains firmly committed to ensuring that the institution of traditional leaders is recognised, is empowered, is strengthened, and is integrated into our governance system. Their wisdom, their legitimacy, and their proximity to communities are indispensable

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to building a capable state and improving service delivery for our people more broadly. The role of traditional leaders is being enhanced, and we have made tremendous progress since 1994 to give effect to ensuring that we have a government of the people, by the people. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

[Applause.]

Dr Z L MKHIZE: Deputy Speaker, I thank the President for the response. There are rising concerns among traditional leaders regarding their roles, powers, and responsibilities, as well as among Khoisan communities in relation to their traditional leadership structures. In light of the response by the President, and considering the current preparations for the tabling of the National Traditional Khoi-San Leadership Bill, would the President consider encouraging the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs to fast-track consultations to address the issues raised of formalising the current roles, powers, and responsibilities of traditional leaders and the structures of Khoisan community leadership as partners in service delivery? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Deputy Speaker, absolutely, yes. The Minister is quite committed not only to enhancing the role

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of traditional and Khoisan leaders but also to ensuring that they participate in issues of service delivery.

As I said in my head reply, traditional leaders are not only leaders of our people when it comes to culture and when it comes to tradition; they are also leaders of our people when it comes to their wellbeing and when it comes to service delivery. They should participate because they are closest to our people.

Therefore, due consideration needs to be given to their views, to their participation, as well as to their wisdom.

Therefore, what you are proposing, hon Mkhize, is precisely what the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs will be doing. He is already oriented in that way anyway, and he will be focusing his attention on ensuring that we live up to what we say. I personally believe that the participation of traditional leaders in enhancing governance at the local level is absolutely essential. We cannot strengthen and enhance government at local level without the role of our traditional leaders. They do need to be given the respect, the role, the recognition, as well as the active participation in those councils.

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Where these processes are weak, we need to strengthen them to make sure that, indeed, the role that traditional leaders should have is actually in place. Thank you once again for raising the issue. Thank you, Deputy Speaker. [Applause.]

Ms C LABUSCHAGNE: Deputy Speaker, through you to the President: Traditional leaders participate in municipal councils in terms of our governance framework. Thank you for the broad outlay you gave of how they can contribute and how they should add value to the functioning and accountability of these councils. In your view, should they also play a role in encouraging residents occupying land under traditional authority to contribute to municipal sustainability by paying the required rates and taxes that fund service delivery? Thank you. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Deputy Speaker, of course, all of us who are required to pay our rates and taxes must do so. It is essential that all of us should do so. I know that there are temptations in certain parts of our country for certain of our residents to try and escape the payment of rates and taxes. Indeed, traditional leaders should be called upon to encourage our citizens to pay rates and taxes because the services delivered to our people need to be paid for.

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Where, for instance, there is poverty, and where there are indigent residents, we have at national government level provided a facility and an intervention to support indigent households, those who cannot pay. It is quite a substantial budget. We want our local government structures to make sure that they have a proper register of indigent families so that when the money has to be accounted for, it is accounted for properly and that when the grant is given by national government, it actually goes to the assistance of our people and not just to the payment of salaries of those who are employed.

So, the answer to your question is yes – very much so. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr Z E MTHETHWA: Deputy Speaker, through you to the President:

This day marks five years since the death of the great Zulu king, who celebrated 50 years of his jubilee on the throne.

Posthumously, he would have asked you this question. Given that the constitutional framework established after 1994 entrenched section 25 protection for existing property relations arising from colonial dispossession, whilst institutions such as the Ingonyama Trust administer millions of hectares of land under the custodianship of Amakhosi, why has government vested

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decisive authority over land use, development, and service delivery in municipalities rather than empowering traditional leaders to make binding decisions over land under their jurisdiction? Will your government now introduce reforms to restore meaningful and decisive decision-making powers?

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I failed to pick up the question.

[Interjections.]

Mr Z E MTHETHWA: The question is that the Constitution does not give Amakhosi the powers to make decisions in their jurisdiction. Instead, that power is given to local municipalities, but these two institutions are recognised by the Constitution. Will you change the Constitution to allow Amakhosi to also make decisions at municipal level?

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Deputy Speaker, to the hon member: The constitutional provision is a matter that you, as Members of Parliament, should deal with. However, we are currently involved in a fairly intense – not intense but a very substantial – process of discussions with our traditional leaders and their various organisations on how we should deal

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with communal land, the land that resides where they rule. That is a discussion that is under way.

I should say it is organisations such as the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa and others that have raised this issue prominently, and we are dealing with it and will find clear solutions in time. The discussions are ongoing. We will be ensuring that we reach a conclusion.

Now, obviously, you compare traditional leaders and local government. When local government ... and local government is in charge of the land that is owned by the government as a whole. Land is owned by local government on behalf of government at a local level. Land is owned by provincial government on behalf of the government and by national government on behalf of the government. They are then able and empowered to deal with, say, the ownership of land and transfer for the benefit of the people as a whole. Whatever transaction they arrive at goes into the people's pot, as it were. It goes into the local government revenue savings.

Therefore, we need to look at how we deal then with the issue of communal land. How do we deal with it? In some instances, I

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should say, there are traditional leaders that have tended to say: This is my land. I will sell it to you. It is sad that some of the money finally does not go into the traditional pot. It goes into another.

So, those are issues that we need to discuss, and we are actively discussing those issues with our traditional leaders because they are matters that need to be talked about. They are matters that need to be discussed so that, as we build the nation, we are able to do it to the benefit of all.

So, hon Deputy Speaker, this matter is being addressed, is being attended to. Thank you. [Applause.]

Mr S H M VAN WYK: House Deputy Speaker, to the President: I just want to thank you yet again for deploying the army in Johannesburg, especially in Eldorado Park and surrounding areas. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Whilst significant progress has been made regarding Khoi and San leadership, especially since 2019, and with further developments in the new Seventh Parliament in 2024, a lot of challenges also still persist in the recognition process under the Commission on

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Khoi-San Matters. What measures can be put in place to expedite this process, allocate increased funding to the commission, and also deploy more support staff to the commission in order for them to execute their mandate?

Afrikaans:

Dis nou al baie lank, my Grootman. Baie dankie. [It has been a long time, Chief. Thank you very much.]

English:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Deputy Speaker and hon member, you will have heard me say that the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs is involved in quite an intensive process of increasing the capacity of our traditional leaders and those that work with them. This is aimed at enhancing the capacity of the state and strengthening the capacity of the state. Those initiatives manifest themselves in the holding of workshops, in the holding of mini-conferences, and all that are aimed at achieving precisely the objective you have articulated. We are aware there is a need to increase the capacity of many who work with our traditional leaders.

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You will be pleased to know that even our younger traditional leaders do themselves participate in some of these initiatives because they see themselves gaining a great deal. In the end, it will make the whole process of traditional leadership much more effective, and it will also modernise it in more ways than one. So, we will be carrying on with that, and I am glad you raised it. The Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs has heard that very well as well. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Dr Z L MKHIZE: Deputy Speaker, I wish to thank the President for his responses. The processing of the National Traditional Khoi-San Leadership Bill will be significantly impacted upon by the dynamics around the issues of powers and, in particular, leadership structures within Khoisan communities. Would the President consider issuing a statement to reassure traditional leaders and the Khoi and San communities of his approach in resolving these matters? Thank you, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Deputy Speaker, the answer is yes. We will work on that, hon Dr Mkhize, together with the Minister, to give that assurance. Where there is doubt and where there is uncertainty, we need, as government, to respond, and we will do

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so. The Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs is here, and we will put together a statement that will go out to our traditional leaders. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Question 5:

Hon members, the National Health Insurance, NHI, is South Africa's way of implementing universal health coverage as decided upon by the World Health Organization, WHO, and adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly, UNGA.

It is important to put this across so that those who are opposed to the NHI should know that what we are seeking to do is not just a pipe dream. For our country, it emanates from what the Freedom Charter said, but more importantly now in governance, we have embraced and taken to heart what the WHO and the UN have decided. Since the assent to the National Health Insurance Act, the Department of Health has been busy with a range of preparatory work initiatives. This includes procedures for the registration of people who are going to use the NHI, the accreditation framework and contracting arrangements for health care establishments and providers.

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We are also rolling out the digital systems that are required to trace a patient between different doctors or health centres, and to provide service providers with knowledge or line of sight, as well as to ensure that this happens whether one is in the public sector or the private sector. The digital systems include a Health Patient Registration System, HPRS, that is directly linked to the Department of Home Affairs' National Population Register, as well as an Electronic Medical Record, EMR, that will roll out across more than 3 500 public health care facilities over the next 15 months.

Practical interventions to improve the quality and accessibility of health care include significant investments in infrastructure, including rebuilding of old hospitals and building some new hospitals, health centres and clinics. This is taking place alongside measures that we are taking to improve hospital governance.

The national and provincial Departments of Health are also focusing on employment of doctors, other health professionals and community health workers. The Minister of Finance stood here during the Medium-Term Policy Statement, MTPS, and said, we are

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going to employ doctors. And we are in the process of doing precisely that.

As the government, we have agreed not to proclaim any sections of the NHI Act until the Constitutional Court has handed down its judgment in legal challenge due to be heard at the beginning of May 2026. The challenge that will be heard by the Constitutional Court relates to the issue of the public participation, which other litigants have taken us to court on that led to the adoption of the NHI by Parliament.

We made this undertaking to ensure that other legal challenges to the NHI Act, which includes whether the President should have signed the NHI or not, which have been brought on a number of other grounds, are managed in an orderly manner that does not cause prejudice to any party. This undertaking, which has been made an Order of Court, will not affect the timetable for the implementation of the NHI, nor will it stop the work currently underway. Work has been going on, up to and including improving our infrastructure. Hon member may want to remember that I said I visited George Mukari Hospital, and I found really horrible conditions there. And indeed, there are many horrible conditions in many of our hospitals. Now, the work of either building new

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facilities and revamping those facilities to make them fully ready for the implementation of the NHI are ongoing. And there are a number of initiatives that have to be put in place.

The NHI aims to establish a single national fund that will allow for the equitable purchasing of health services from public and private health care centres. This will enable the whole population to access all the potential health resources in the country. The changes brought about by the NHI are complex and far-reaching, and therefore need to be implemented on a phased basis. That is precisely what we are doing now.

As provided for in the transitional provisions of the Act, these measures need to be undertaken gradually and in a phased manner, using a progressive as well as a programmatic approach based on the availability of our financial resources.

Now, in the end, we are determined to ensure that every South African has equal access to quality health care regardless of their ability to pay. This is a commitment that we are not prepared to move away from. I thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

[Applause.]

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Mr J S MALEMA: Hon Deputy Speaker ...

Tshivenda:

Ndi masiari, Muphresidennde. Vho t̄wa hani?

MUPHRESIDENNDE WA RIPHABUḶIKI: Ro t̄wa zwavhuḑi. Ri nga vhudzisa vhone mushavhi?

Vho J S MALEMA: Hu khou tou fhisa hafha.

MUPHRESIDENNDE WA RIPHABUḶIKI: N̄ne ndi tshi vhona mushavhi ndi pfha ndo takala nga maanḑa.

Vho J S MALEMA: Ndi hayani. Ndaa.

MUPHRESIDENNDE WA RIPHABUḶIKI: Ndaa.

English:

Mr J S MALEMA: President, with all those complications of the NHI, the EFF once put a Bill here in 2018, that let us open clinics for 24 hours. Unfortunately, the ANC rejected that. Our people cannot wait for postponement of the implementation of the NHI because they are sick now. They are not going to be sick in

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2030. So, we must be seen to be doing something now. Our people want clinics and health facilities that are in good condition, not a bread per house ... [Interjections.] [Applause.] ... People, instead of implementing what is going to change the lives of our people, they are buying them with bread and not implementing what is going to change their lives. Now that President, you have been exposed to this, and especially George Mukhari, Tshilidzini and many other facilities across the country, are you going to support a proposal of the EFF that says, let the clinics be opened 24 hours ... [Applause.] ... let the clinics be serviced, renovated and improved while we are still working on this long term? You just said it yourself that it is in phases, it is complex, and it is difficult. Worse, it has been taken to court. They cannot take us to court for upgrading our own facilities ... [Applause.] ... Some are already there. So, let us work on them now and make sure we improve the conditions and stop giving people bread in exchange for vote ... [Applause.] ... but give them what will change their lives for better. Thanks very much. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Malema, you will be pleased to know, maybe for the very first time, that I agree with you. [Applause.]

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Sesotho:

Ke dumellana le wena.

English:

Now, I think it is ideal, and what you are articulating is what I have come across as I go around the country, particularly in the deep rural areas. People say, we would like the clinics to remain open on a 24-hour basis, because when our people are sick, where do they run to? [Applause.] They must go to big cities and all that. I agree with that. Now, the issue is that there must be personnel in those clinics. You must have nurses, and ideally, you must have a doctor on standby. Now, yes, we can agree that ideally, we want those clinics to be open. And I do not think, hon Malema, it even needs a law. It should not even need legislation. It should just require regulations from Department of Health and how those regulations should be implemented, because when you have a clinic open, you cannot have an empty building open. You must have those people or professionals who must serve. Now, this is where our challenge from a fiscal point of view is. We have not - and the Minister of Finance dealt with the matter here in October - been able to employ enough doctors. And wherever we go, we often meet young people who have said, you have invested a lot of money in me, in

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training me for seven years and thereafter two years, but I do not get a job. And that is a fiscal challenge and problem, which we are in the process of resolving. So, those clinics ideally should be open with nurses there and a doctor on call. So, that is supported, and it is a process that will be implemented as we move on, as available resources become easily available for us to be able to pay them. There are quite a few young people who say, I have wanted to be a nurse for a long time, but I see that there are no jobs that are open. So, we therefore need to train those nurses, make them available, and have them in those clinics. So, I agree with you, and without saying it is conditional, I would say that it is something that - as you have raised it prominently as well - I would like us to attend to. And so, because this is such a positive Parliament, positive National Assembly, it is something that we will pass on to the Minister so that we can look at it closely.

Sepedi:

Ga bjale o tšweletše, le tšhišinyo ya gago e amogetšwe. O ka hwetša le setifikheithi! [Legoswi.]

English:

Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

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Tshivenda:

Vho A F MUTHAMBI: Ndi masiari, Muphresidennde.

MUPHRESIDENNDE WA RIPHABUḼIKI: Ndi masiari avhuḽi.

English:

Ms A F MUTHAMBI: You have rightfully noted that the NHI is South Africa's vehicle for universal health coverage, ensuring that our people no longer suffer the catastrophic health care expenditure that normally sinks our families because of the huge costs. You also highlighted that a significant majority of specialists in our hospitals are only currently serving a fraction of the people, especially in the private sector. Given these stark disparities, Mr President, could you further profile for the nation and this House the transformative benefits the NHI Fund will bring to bridge this gap to an extent that a sick child in a rural, underserved village at Hamudimeli can also have access to good quality health care? [Time expired.]

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, I would say

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Tshivenda:

Zwo tou tea u vha nga u ralo. Nwana ane a lwala e vhuponi ha mahayani u fanela u kona u ya sibadela a ṭolwe nga madokotela o funzeaho - nga vhagudeleli uri vha kone u mu lafha. Hezwo zwithu ...

English:

... as you are saying, hon member, is only available, say, in the cities and private hospitals and all that. We want the NHI's accessibility for health care to be widespread. Now, those who are opposed to the NHI are not alive to this reality, that there needs to be health equality in South Africa. We cannot have most of our population being relegated to their back to bad health care. We want all South Africans to have access to the best health care that the country can give. Now, the other element to this. The government pays a lot of money training our doctors and our specialists. Having trained them, it is a real abomination that they only become available to a small elite minority when they have been trained by the public sector and are not available to give good quality health care and top-class health care to most of our people. That is why NHI must be implemented. Our people must be able to walk into any health facility and require that they should be treated, yes, at no

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cost to themselves, because that is what we have committed to our people, and the Freedom Charter taught us that, and that is where we are going, whether it is opposed or not, we will get to that objective of having health care available to our people.

Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr K W D P LE ROUX: Mr President, given the High Court order to suspend the implementation of National Health Insurance, and in the light of recent arrests of three of the Department of Health's most senior officials for alleged corruption, fraud and theft, we need concrete interventions to safeguard the NHI Fund from the rampant corruption that has already plagued the public health sector. While we welcome the suspension of the director-general, the chief financial officer and the deputy director-general, South Africans want accountability, not just suspensions. Will the President urgently refer the governance and financial controls of the Department of Health, particularly those that will be in future linked to the NHI Fund, to the Special Investigating Unit, SIU, for a full investigation? Thank you. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, we have acted against those who are implicated, and we would like that they should not just

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be suspended. Allegations have been made against them, and they have been arrested and charged. So, we have suspended them. We now need to go through a process, as required by our laws and regulations, to process those allegations through disciplinary processes so that there is fairness and equity, and thereafter a clear decision will be taken. So, I have suspended the director-general, and the other officials have been dealt with by the Minister. So, in the end, we do want to ensure that there is accountability by all officials and all people who will be dealing with the various aspects of implementation of the national health care. This is precisely what we are exemplifying. We are saying accountability must be the order of the day. If you are found to have done wrong, you must be put aside, be suspended, and must even be dismissed. What we are now saying is that if you are required to do a certain piece of work and you do not do it, you do not deserve to be there. So, we will remove you, we will suspend you, and we will deal with you. That is an approach that we are not going to turn back on, and we are proceeding in that direction. And of course, as you deal with major processes like the NHI, there will be challenges that we will come across. Now, if the system is well-structured and the processes need to be executed, and if the people who are supposed to do so are not good, you get rid of them and you put

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people who will work according to the system and make sure that they implement processes that should be implemented. That is how we are going to approach the work that needs to be done in the National Health Insurance. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

[Applause.]

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Hon President, I ask this on behalf of my colleague, hon Van Staden. Mr President, it is a fact that South Africa's public health facilities are in a poor state, some more than others. The concern is due to the institutions that have been earmarked as National Health Insurance pilot sites. One such example is the Tshilidzini Regional Hospital in Thohoyandou, which was designated as an NHI pilot project. At one stage, however, this hospital was investigated by the South African Human Rights Commission, SAHRC, for alleged human rights violations. The investigation is reportedly still ongoing, despite the hospital having been announced as an NHI pilot site. Can the President inform this House what criteria is used to designate the hospital as an NHI pilot project, particularly in a case where the hospital, at the time of announcement, due to significant operational challenges ... [Time expired.]

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Those sites that have been set aside for NHI, if you like, practice run, are centres ... and there have been several of them. Several of them have been very successful, and regrettably, there was the one that you spoke about where the Human Rights Commission found several challenges. What we can say is that there has been a lot of good that has come out of the implementation, I would call it the practice run, because the key objective of the NHI is to reduce inequality and to ensure that there is universal access. Now, those that we have run a practice on have shown the efficacy of the national health system that will be introduced as we will introduce it gradually. And they have also shown the efficacy of strengthening the primary health care process and ensuring that in the end, we build the systems. Those that we have put forward as test run clinics or health centres have been working on ensuring that the information process is well introduced. I went to one some few years ago deep in the townships of our country, I found that it works extremely well. And it interfaces with our people. Those who must come and get chronic medicine, they come on the day they are supposed to come through an appointment. There is no more queuing for medication, that I saw at George Mukari Hospital. And that, for me, showed what the future looked like regarding the implementation of the NHI. So, the NHI, in

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the end, must never be a white elephant. It must be a system that will benefit our people. And those weaknesses that were identified in some of those tests run clinics or health centres, it is something that was good in that we identified weaknesses which we now need to strengthen. So, it has been a good process. We are ready. We are truly ready for the NHI rollout. Thank you very much, hon Deputy Speaker. [Applause.]

Mr J S MALEMA: President ...

Sepedi:

... taba ya gore nna le lena re kwana la mathomo, batho ba mo Afrika Borwa ba tla makala ka gore go na le tše dintši tše re kwanego ka tšona. Gape le tša go fihla gona moo le emego, re kwane ka tšona. Ge le ka re ke la mathomo re kwana ba tla re boradipolotiki ba thomile, ga ba na nnete. Ga go na ...

English:

... fiscal problem. The Auditor-General of South Africa says R406 billion is being spent on corruption and irregular spending. If you redirect that money, you give us the best health facilities. There is no shortage of human capital.

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Sepedi:

Bana ba gaborena ba tletše diterata, dingaka di gwanta di apere dipurapura ba re ga ba na mešomo. Ge re re re na le bothata bja mašheleng a go ba lefa e ba ka mokgwa wo mongwe ka gobane tšhelete e gona.

English:

We need to stop corruption and redirect this money and invest in our proper public health system. So, one of the things we have put forward is the Bill ... [Time expired.] ... on insourcing to deal with this problem ... [Applause.] ... I hope the President will support us to pass a Bill on insourcing of all government workers who are temporary workers. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you, hon Malema. I spoke about the problem of outsourcing. And when I heard you speak about it, I said, oh, Malema is agreeing with me now.

[Applause.] [Laughter.] The problem of outsourcing, which I think many of us, even in this Parliament, have realized is a major problem that we need to reverse and to arrest. We have tended to outsource so many functions, functions that should belong in the hospitals and in the department. I have even asked Minister of Health ...

Sepedi:

... ka re: Nke o mpotše ...

English:

... if we have to buy tablets, panado, why do we need to go to someone else?

Sepedi:

Gore a ye go re rekela panado.

English:

... when we know who makes panado.

Sepedi:

Bokaone re ye go yena.

English:

That firm or entity must provide us with panado. And if we have to do a tender or a procurement process, we can do it directly. The Minister answered and said, this is complex and all that. I would like to say that we need to outsource what government cannot do itself. Many functions we can do ourselves cheaply and cost effectively. That is precisely what we now need to do. I

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have said, I have declared war on outsourcing. Let us insource as much as we possibly can in government. [Applause.] The benefit of that is that it increases the capacity of government, and it enables people to want to come and work in government, particularly young people. We train them to be experts, and then we leave them outside of government. We must train them to be experts to come and work in government and do the work that needs to be done in government. This is now a growing phenomenon around the world. Many governments are realising that insourcing is far better. There is a book written by Prof Mariana Mazzucato, who reports that the US and the UK outsourced their functions during COVID and they lost a lot of money. If they had insourced, like much of what we did here, they would not have. What we did do incorrectly, to be critical of myself and us, is that we outsourced the acquisition of the personal protective equipment, PPEs. We outsourced that and it resulted in major challenges of corruption in our country. We insourced the vaccines. That we handled very well because only government acquired vaccines and distributed them as it did through the various hospitals and clinics. So, there is a great argument to be made for insourcing. Sometimes we find that we insource even the work that should be done in the garden.

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Sepedi:

Mme yo a kolomakang o thwalwa ke batho ba bangwe. Ga a hwetše
...

English:

... benefits, and after three months ...

Sepedi:

... o a rakiwa.

English:

She gets out of a job and yet she is working for a government institution. We do need to give respect to our people by giving them decent jobs. Outsourcing does not result in decent jobs. Therefore, insourcing is the best way to go. [Applause.] Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr J S MALEMA: President, I have a membership form for you.

[Laughter.] [Applause.]

Question 6:

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, the South African National Defence Force, SANDF, is being deployed as a

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force multiplier to the South African Police Service, SAPS, to address a whole number of challenges we face; gangsterism in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng, and illicit mining in Gauteng and the in the North West province.

The SANDF deployment is necessary to complement the efforts of the SAPS in tackling these crimes and bringing stability to our communities.

The army will be deployed in support of the police, operating under police command, with clear rules of engagement and for specific time-limited objectives. The army may, for example, be called on by the police to provide protection in high-risk areas or operations, or to support cordon-and-search operations and roadblocks against armed criminals.

Soldiers may also be used to secure critical infrastructure so that they can free the police to focus on investigations. Some have suggested that by deploying the army it means the police have failed. That is not the case; we are getting the police and the army to work together to handle the challenges that our people are facing.

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The deployment of the army will take place alongside other measures, such as strengthening anti-gang units and illegal mining task teams. The police will also be working with the National Prosecuting Authority on multidisciplinary task teams to target the leadership, the finances, and arms of those who are getting involved in these criminal acts and networks.

Through this support we aim to achieve a significant reduction in serious and violent crime across targeted areas of deployment with the neutralisation of gang violence and illicit mining. That process is being implemented on a gradual basis as the Defence Force deploys in a number of areas. We have already seen how the Defence Force has been well welcomed in various areas where they are. Where they become present there is stability and obviously we want to instil that stability and rid areas of criminality on a permanent basis. We have deployed them for a specific time frame, and we will be able to determine precisely how long we should extend if the extension is necessary, but it is already working and our people are now pleased. In the past, whenever the soldiers were deployed, it would draw a lot of fear in the hearts of our people because soldiers are trained just to shoot and kill. This time around we have developed our Defence Force capability so well. They build

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bridges, they save people who are in danger, they also help with supporting the police. So, we now have a Defence Force much as many people may be critical of them, a Defence Force that is well attuned to serving the people of South Africa, and they are already doing a fantastic job.

During the 2021 unrest, we relied on the Defence Force, and they were able to help a great deal to quell down the instability that was being perpetrated. This time around we are focusing their involvement together with the police in certain high-risk areas, and I am sure they will do well. I thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr N M HADEBE: Madam Deputy Speaker, to the President, thank you for the response. The follow-up question is, in addition to targeting known hotspots in Gauteng and the Western Cape, what measures are being implemented to increase police visibility and presence in other vulnerable communities across the Republic, including specialised patrols, rapid response teams, and co-ordinated operations with provincial law enforcement to prevent the migration or resurgence of illegal mining and gang networks? Thank you.

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, yes, we are hoping that with the success they are going to achieve we will be able to showcase and demonstrate that they are as effective as we had said they would. There may well be other areas. When we made the announcement here, it was the Eastern Cape which had been excluded, which immediately raised their own challenges, and we responded by saying we will include the Eastern Cape.

So, where the need arises and where there are hotspots, we will be able to be ready and willing to approach and inform Parliament, as I have already said, that I'm deploying the Defence Force in these areas and for the time frame and what it will cost. When that happens, we will be able to also approach and inform Parliament what we are seeking to do. We will never deploy the Defence Force without your knowledge and without you being able to hold us accountable for whatever may happen in that regard. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr M S MOELA: Deputy Speaker, to the hon President, allow me to commend you for recognising that the freedom and security of every South African demands a multilayered, multi-force multiplier effect to deal decisively with crime and its underlying socioeconomic causes. Will the hon President assure

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this House that in strengthening state capacity and fighting crime, government will be informed by this whole of society and whole of government approach? Thank you very much, President.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Yes, I am able to give that assurance. Criminality is one of the key priorities that we are focusing on now. Obviously, jobs and reducing the cost of living and fighting criminality is a key area of focus, including increasing the capacity of the state through getting the Defence Force and the police to work together. Crime intelligence and the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, are also involved.

Now, if you look at this entire architecture, it basically means that we are enhancing the functioning of the state. We are enhancing the capability of the state by getting all these entities that ordinarily would not easily work together. So, we are meshing them together, and they are working together, and we are already seeing good results coming out of that. We are therefore able to say, as we strengthen this whole process, we will be able to deal with criminality. We have said that criminals must know that we are coming after them.

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The deployment in itself also frees the hand of the police to do their investigation work. It frees the hand of criminal intelligence to do its work. So, through this, we will be able to show tremendous progress in fighting one of the biggest challenges. Of course, in the course of doing all this, we will also be focusing on technology. I have said very clearly to the security cluster, that technology must be one of those enablers that enables us to make the country safe, communities safe, and areas where our people live safe, and safe for businesses to operate and create jobs. So, a combination of all this is going to enhance our ability to deal with criminality. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. [Applause.]

Ms L SCHICKERLING: Hon Deputy Speaker, to Mr President, good afternoon. How can government claim to be fighting gangsterism with the SANDF while allegations suggests that individuals linked to your CR17 campaign and appointed to a Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa, PRASA, task team have enabled the gang boss to access state contracts, and will you support suspensions of PRASA individuals, a full investigation and the blacklisting of those implicated? Thank you. [Applause.]

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The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: As I have said, one of the key processes that we are involved in is to enhance accountability, to ensure that those who are found to be doing things that militate against the interests of our people should be made to be accountable. If you are doing wrong, you should account, you should subject yourself to processes of the law, and if you are identified in whatever position, you are, you should be brought to book. That is the assurance that I can give. As I said earlier, because the state is so big, and there are many actors in the state, and many of them tend to do things that are wayward or wrong, once we have a system that can identify wrongdoing, that is what we should rely on to make sure that we do deal with those who are deviant. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr M MANYI: Deputy Speaker, to the President, the internal deployment of SANDF signals a failure in policing and intelligence systems. That's the first issue. Simple question, what measurable benchmarks will you be using to determine the stability that you spoke about? What are those measurable benchmarks? Will it be the arrest of the illegal mining kingpins? Will it be the dismantling of syndicates? Will it be the seizure of illicit proceeds? Will it be a successful

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process? What exactly will it be? Lastly, what would be the strategy to ensure that military does not become permanent substitute for civilian policing? Thank you. [Applause.]

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: We will do all of the above that you have said. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you as well. A permanent deployment of the soldiers can never be a temptation because it costs a lot of money. So, they are a temporary intervention to help us to stabilise the situation and to free the hand of the police to act quickly against those who are involved in syndicates and doing all manner of things. That is a temporary measure.

People have criticised and said, what then happens afterwards? Of course, we must rely on our other criminal justice agencies. Our security cluster must come forward, the police, criminal intelligence, and all those who are supposed to deal with the safety of South Africans and resolve those issues. It is only when we see that they need support, and that is why we say they are a force multiplier, but more correctly, they are a force strengthener. They are strengthening the resolve of the police and the criminal intelligence and the NPA, if you like, to do the work that they should do.

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So, I have confidence that after the Defence Force has been deployed, we will be able to stabilise the situation. Of course, they may need to move to another area, because criminals, for instance, tend to be one street ahead of us sometimes, but we want to catch them before they go to that street. We will be able to close all the loopholes and put them where they belong, in jail. Even getting their property back, we will do so. Precisely all those things that you articulated. You should be working for government. Thank you very much, hon Deputy Speaker.

Mr N M HADEBE: Madam Deputy Speaker, to the hon President, recognising the need to disrupt the leadership and organisational structures of these criminal syndicates, does your administration have plans in place to establish specialised multiagency task forces, combining the capabilities of SAPS, the SANDF intelligence agencies, to systematically infiltrate, dismantle and prosecute criminal networks operating across provinces and borders? Thank you.

The PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Speaker, to the hon Hadebe, the answer is yes. I've said very clearly to the police and the Minister of Police that let us focus, let us get specialised teams to focus on particular areas of criminality.

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Be so specialised, because criminals become specialised as they do their terrible deeds, we must be able to catch them even before they do those terrible deeds.

Intelligence must work very intensively, and all the criminal justice entities. During COVID, we set up what we call the Fusion Centre. The Fusion Centre involved all these agencies, including the Financial Intelligence Centre, the NPA, and many others. They have continued to function as a team. We want them to strengthen their resolve so that we focus on gangs, illegal mining, murder and gender-based violence, and all these acts of criminality. That is precisely what we are doing.

We found that when police become specialised in particular task teams, they become real experts because all their focus is on a particular area of criminality and they also get to know the actors very well. So, the answer to your question is an overwhelming yes. We will continue doing so. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon members, that concludes the questions to the hon president. I thank the hon the President.

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The House adjourned at 16:51.

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