WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

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PROCCEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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The House met at 15:00.

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

HOUSE RULES

(Announcement

The SPEAKER: Those of you who may have stood up may now be seated. We can now start. Hon members, before we proceed, I would like to remind you that the virtual plenary is deemed to be in the precinct of Parliament and constitute a meeting of the National Assembly. In addition to the Rules of Virtual Sittings, the Rules of the National Assembly, including the Rules of Debate, apply.

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Members enjoy the same powers and privileges that apply in the sitting of the National Assembly. Members should equally note that anything said in the virtual platform is deemed to have been said to the House and may be ruled upon. All members who have logged in shall be considered to be present and are requested to mute their microphones and only unmute when recognised to speak.

This is because the mics are very sensitive and will pick up noise which might disturb the attention of other members. When recognised to speak, please unmute your microphone and where connectivity permits, connect your video. Members may make use of the icons on the bar at the bottom of their screens, which is an option that allows a member to put up his or her hand to raise points of orders.

The secretary will assist in alerting the Speaker to members requesting to speak. Lastly, when using the virtual system, members are urged to refrain or desist from unnecessary points of order or interjections. Hon members will recall that during questions to Ministers in the governance cluster, question number 668 to the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation stood over in terms of rule 144(1). This question would be taken today in terms of Rule 138(5).

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Consequently, an additional 30 minutes would be added to today's question time for this purpose as provided for in terms of Rule 138(5)(B). I thank you. The question to the Minister in the Economic cluster 4, are the ones that we'll be dealing with today and it is the only item on the agenda. 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.

The members who will pose supplementary questions will be recognised by presiding officers in allocating opportunities for supplementary questions. The principle of fairness, among others, has been applied. When all the supplementary questions have been answered by the executive, we will proceed to the next question on the Question Paper.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL REPLY

CLUSTER 4

ECONOMICS

Question 739:

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Hon Speaker and hon members, the National Treasury lacks statutory authority to impose unilateral restrictions on companies. Such decisions fall

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within the exclusive competence of the accounting officers and accounting authorities of the respective organs of the state. National Treasury does not initiate restrictions, but instead, facilitates the administrative process of recording restrictions on the database of restricted suppliers.

The restriction process must be initiated by the relevant organs of state. In the absence of a formal request from an organ of state, National Treasury cannot independently restrict a supplier. Even in circumstances where the Special Investigating Unit, SIU, has issued an investigation report, the relevant organ of state remains responsible for independently complying with and completing the prescribed restriction process in accordance with the applicable legislative framework.

It should be noted that National Treasury has made a follow up and communicated with the affected organs of state after receiving the referrals from the President and SIU for ESKOM, Umgeni Water and Transnet. National Treasury can confirm that subsequent to the communication sent to ESKOM, Transnet and Umgeni, none of these entities have concluded the restrictions. National Treasury also does not have the reasons

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why ESKOM, Umgeni and Transnet failed to conclude the restrictions.

The Public Finance Management Act Supply Chain Management, PFMA SCM, Instruction Note, outlines the process of restriction. The governing provisions dictate that upon identifying the requisite grounds and necessity for restriction, the organ of state must grant the company a period of 14 days to submit a representation regarding why it should not be restricted. Following due consideration of this representation, should the organ of state maintain its intention to proceed with the restriction, it is required to consult and notify the National Treasury accordingly.

The National Treasury must then furnish its views to the organ of state within 14 days. Upon evaluation of the National Treasury's view and making a final determination, the organ of state must submit all relevant recommendations to the National Treasury within seven days of the decision, enabling the supplier to be loaded into the database of restricted suppliers. Thank you, Speaker.

Mrs W R ALEXANDER: Minister, thank you for your answer. Obviously, the process sounds very complicated. The Presidency

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has referred these 500 companies to the National Treasury over nine months ago for consideration of blacklisting. So, either these companies are fiscal risk to South Africa today, and they should be suspended immediately pending an investigation.

With this fiscal risk, and I understand that this could come from the entity or from the Presidency, but somebody needs to take responsibility. Either the referrals from the Presidency have been baseless, and in which case, South Africans are tired of watching money disappear to contractors that are defrauding the state but continue to win tenders while this investigation is going through.

We have evidence of over 500 corrupt companies that have been sent to the National Treasury to be dealt with, and nine months later, a mere 18 of them have been dealt with. So, Minister, with this convoluted process, how do we safeguard the South African taxpayers' money and ensure that people that defraud the state don't get to do business with us? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: As I have indicated in my submission, it is the responsibility of the relevant organs of state, which are ESKOM, Umgeni and Transnet, that must take the necessary steps. In this regard, I think it is the requirement

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of all nine ministries of this organ of state, to answer that question. Thank you.

Setswana:

Rre D D D VAN ROOYEN: Sebui, ke a leboga.

English:

Minister, as the MKP, we are reliably informed by our business constituents that in some government departments and entities, big and mainly white-owned companies, work with corrupt officials to victimise emerging black-owned companies by fabricating reasons for their blacklisting, so as to destroy them as their competitors, literally abusing the blacklisting legislation regime.

The question is, can the Minister shed some light on this serious allegation by giving us the breakdown per racial group of all blacklisted companies by National Treasury? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Unfortunately, hon Speaker, that question requires me to go back to the office and do the breakdown. I do not have that information just now. Secondly, there is no company that has come to us and said it has been

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blacklisted because of corrupt activities, so I cannot answer that question.

Mr A D BEESLEY: Greetings, Speaker and Minister, I hope you are not driving. Minister, the blacklisting regime can be declared as a total farce at the moment, and I understand it is not National Treasury's responsibility, but is it not now time for National Treasury to bring out the big stick? By saying that, I am saying that holding back funding to departments, entities, municipalities in which the accounting officers or accounting authority officers has been derelict in their duties, because clearly, they have.

Secondly, has National Treasury considered laying criminal charges against accounting officers or accounting authority officers, eg. in breach of section 173 of the Municipal Finance Management Act, MFMA, No.56 of 2003? Because, Minister, it can't carry on like this; it really and truly can't. It's a complete farce, and the crooks are continuing to get away with it. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Hon Minister, I will then take a point of order after the Minister has risen. I am not sure between hon Manyi

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and hon Van Rooyen, whether it's different points of order, or one of you will take it. Hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: I will evaluate in the light of the submission by the member, what legal options are open to National Treasury in the event of these failures by these three institutions. That's the only answer I can give at the moment.

Mr D D D VAN ROOYEN: It's not necessarily a point of order. I just wanted to find out because I think the Minister's response is incomplete. Can he indicate when we can expect this breakdown, because it's very important for us to give feedback to our business constituency.

The SPEAKER: Minister, can you give clarity?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: I don't know, I mean, I am facing the dilemma, hon Speaker. I was asked a different question, and hon Van Rooyen is proposing a new question, that I must submit, now, a racial breakdown, which was not part of this question. I'll await your guidance.

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The SPEAKER: Well, hon Minister, I think in responding to his question, you said you do not have that information with you right now, given the supplementary that was asked, which I guess hon Van Rooyen might have assumed that you are willing to give it at a later date, which I guess it's why he may be asking whether you do have the timeline that you can give?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: In the light of that, hon Speaker, I can make a commitment that I could provide that by next week, Friday.

Xitsonga:

Tat S M GANA: Mutshamaxitulu, ...

English:

Minister, I just want to check from your side and your assessment, how much of the problems that departments and municipalities that you also had to withhold part of their funding, would you say, as the Minister, that it had to do with the supply chain, tenders or contract management that then leads to nondelivered or noncompletion of the projects and services that the contractors are asked to deliver for the benefit of the South Africans?

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Xitsonga:

Ndza khensa, Mutshamaxitulu.

English:

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: The focus of section 2 and 6 of section 2, withholding, did not focus on the suppliers of the municipalities; it focused on several other variables, one of which was their failure to pay relevant organs of the state such as ESKOM and water boards. It did not refer to the failure of the different institutions to pay them.

The SPEAKER: Hon members, once again, may I remind you that the supplementary question must stem from the question, not allowing us to bring in new issues that the Minister might not have been prepared for. I will now give hon Alexandra to come back with her last supplementary question.

Mrs W R ALEXANDER: Minister, how does the National Treasury reconcile its constitutional and statutory duties under section 6 of the Public Finance Management Act, PFMA, to enforce compliance with the position that you stated earlier that restricting suppliers is solely the responsibility of the individual organs of states and not with National Treasury? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF FINANCE: The same PFMA places the responsibility of financial management of a specific vote to the accounting officer of that specific department. In the first line, therefore, overseeing financial misconduct in a vote is that of an accounting officer, whose responsibility is to manage and to be in charge of the financial management of the relevant vote or department. National Treasury becomes a seconder. In other words, I follow up on the misconduct by the institutions, not by their suppliers. Thank you.

Question 719:

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Yes, the National Treasury introduced clearly defined guidelines outlining the requirements to support the targeted municipalities in implementing corrective measures. The guidelines provide practical steps that are strengthening compliance with the Municipal Financial Management Act and the related regulatory framework in ensuring that historically unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure matters are appropriately resolved, consequently, the reduction of such expenditure category.

Also, the same guidelines apply to compliance with the Municipal Financial Management Act, MFMA, section 65 of the payment of creditors, especially those identified for the

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enforcement of section 216(2) of the Constitution. To ensure good corporate governance, all municipalities must implement the Municipal Financial Management Act and related regulatory framework, consequently avoiding wastage of scarce resources and inefficiencies.

Should the Auditor-General of South Africa identify unwanted spending classified as unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure during the audit process, the municipality must take appropriate steps to address it in accordance with the well-established corrective measures prescribed by the regulatory framework.

As part of corrective measures, the regulatory framework provides guidance on how to address Unauthorised, Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful Expenditure, UIFWE. Consequently, the requirements relating to the reduction of unauthorised, irregular, fruitless, wasteful expenditure balances.

The submission of legally compliant section 32(4) reports, Municipal Public Accounts Committee's reports and council resolution and the completion of consequence management processes are aimed at ensuring that municipalities fulfil their statutory obligation to investigate unauthorised,

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irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure to determine liabilities and consequently implement appropriate corrective action in concluding outstanding matters.

Similarly, the requirement encourages municipalities to settle creditors within 30 days and to meet all tax, levy, duty, pension, medical aid, audit fees and other statutory obligations where due in reflecting existing Municipal Financial Management Act obligation and promote sound financial management, effective cash flow management, accountability and financial sustainability, while safeguarding the interest of the employees, service providers and other stakeholders.

Accordingly, these requirements are compliance and governance measures designed to strengthen accountability, improve financial management practices and ensure municipalities fulfil their existing legal obligations under the law.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Your time is up. You will add others when you respond to further questions. The first supplementary question will be asked by the hon S C Sekoati.

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Mr S C SEKOATI: Minister, which regulatory or legislative measures have the Minister identified to enhance accountability of conditional grants to ensure adherence to their intended objectives as other municipalities are reported to be utilising conditional and indigent grants and other allocations for objectives such as compensation of employees?

Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Yes, I think the member is raising critical issues that in certain circumstances municipalities are using the conditional grants incorrectly. We have been following that. We're putting more regulatory framework to achieve working with what we call the transferring departments.

Mind you, in certain circumstances, we are not the ones who transfer, it's the relevant departments that make things. We're tightening the regulatory framework to achieve those objectives of making sure that conditional grants are used for what they're intended for.

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There's also a review which will highlight, as we table the Medium-Term Budget Policy on the 21st, a review of some of these grants in order to avoid those abuses moving forward.

Thank you.

Mr K H WAKELIN: Hon Minister, given that every rand counts, what measures has the National Treasury put in place to ensure that municipalities must identify savings from inefficient, wasteful or underperforming expenditure through ... [Inaudible.] ... and that these savings must improve financial sustainability and service delivery?

Thank you, Minister.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: We are developing a plan to achieve the objective set up by the member, but the member will also recall that we are in the midst of an election process, which makes it difficult to implement some of these measures.

We are working with the municipalities and institutions in this regard, not necessarily with the political leadership, to lay the ground where each municipality is going to provide us with what the cost drivers are and how we are going to manage

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those cost drivers moving forward so that municipalities can work within their existing budget. That process is in motion. Once new leadership has been appointed in the new municipalities, we will ramp up the process.

Rev K R J MESHOE: Speaker, and good afternoon to you and to all members.

The SPEAKER: You can go ahead, Rev Meshoe.

Rev K R J MESHOE: Yes – again ... my ... give me a minute, please.

The SPEAKER: Can I ask the hon Nkwankwa to take his supplementary so long then we will come back to the hon Meshoe? Hon Nqabayomzi Nkwankwa? Hon Meshoe, can you take your supplementary now?

Rev K R J MESHOE: Chairperson, I have a challenge again.

The SPEAKER: Okay, you might miss the spot now. Otherwise, it will delay us.

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Mr S N SWART: Speaker, may I come in on behalf of the Rev Meshoe? It' is Swart, here.

The SPEAKER: I hope you will ask the same supplementary he was going to ask. You can take the slot.

Rev K R J MESHOE: Speaker, I got it right.

We believe - sorry, Speaker. We believe fiscal enforcement must never punish the poor for the failures of officials. Treasury has to set measurable performance indicators for municipalities to regain access to withheld funds.

Having said that, my question is, has Treasury introduced ring-fenced or conditional support mechanisms to guarantee that restored funds are used strictly for service delivery priorities rather than lost to irregular expenditure and if not, why not?

Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Rev Meshoe. I thought you were busy engaging the voter hence, you were not able to take your question. Minister, you may respond.

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The MINISTER OF FINANCE: The hon member must take note of the fact that the budget we are dealing with is already a budget which has been passed by the relevant municipality. It would therefore be difficult to ring-fence a budget that has been agreed to by the council.

We are not ring-fencing, but we are putting terms and conditions which will ensure that the municipality does not get into a similar situation again. I must make the point that section 2 ... [Inaudible.] ... that we are happy to implement withholding of funds, but members will recall the only instrument available in terms of the Constitution is section 216(2) which refers to withholding funds.

We are exploring - I think it was the hon Alexander who was asking the question on whether we are looking at different, oh it was Mr Beesley - which may include laying criminal charges. We are exploring all of those options so that we do not penalise the residents.

Thank you.

Mr S C SEKOATI: Hon Minister, the unfunded budgets have proven to be a major impediment to effective planning and resource

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prioritisation. What measures are the Minister implementing to ensure that we end the prevalence of unfunded budgets adopted by councils?

I thank you, hon Speaker.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Most of the unfunded budgets arise out of the budgeting process. For instance, a particular municipality may say, I'm going to collect 95% of my bulk, for example electricity, from the residents. And based on that, do we make a budget equivalent to that proposed collection.

What then happens when they collect less than that, the budget is higher, the expenditures than the projected budget.
You find that this unfunded budget - during the year, not be on the tabling of the budget. What we are doing now is that we have what we call a benchmark exercise.

What the benchmark exercise does is to evaluate before tabling the proposed budget of the municipalities, the assumptions made, whether the revenue projections are correct or not, and whether the expenditure proposals are in line with the correct ... [Inaudible.]. We are correcting that through the benchmark exercise.

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I thank you.

Question 766:

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Hon Deputy Speaker, it is important to clarify that, although this National Empowerment Fund project is agricultural, the Department of Agriculture does not oversee the work of the National Empowerment Fund or the efficacy of its agricultural project application processes. The National Empowerment Fund falls under the oversight of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, DTIC. Therefore, the Department of Agriculture cannot speak to the challenges presented by the National Empowerment Fund's application requirements or to this particular co-operative's challenges.

Notwithstanding that, and in line with our mandate, the Department of Agriculture is willing to engage the DTIC as well as the National Empowerment Fund and co-operatives such as Abalimi Bezifuno, to make sure that we visit Steve Tshete Local Municipality in Mpumalanga to assess its current obligations and the challenges it presents. So, based on the outcomes of these engagements, the national Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the provincial Department of Agriculture, would be in a position to explore and identify

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appropriate support, and we will certainly go there as soon as we are ready.

Regarding the second part of the question, yes, we do have a grant programme. The Department of Agriculture, through the provincial departments, administers the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, CASP, which provides grant funding aimed at supporting agricultural development initiatives. Also, agricultural co-operatives that meet the prescribed eligibility requirements may apply for CASP funding to access assistance for infrastructure, production inputs, equipment, training, capacity-building, and other approved agricultural support interventions.

Other grant programmes also include the Ilima Letsema programme, which is an initiative that provides agricultural grants and support to help vulnerable communities to increase food production and reduce poverty. Finally, the Blended Finance Scheme combines public development funds or government grants with private commercial loans to derisk investments and fund emerging farmers. Thank you.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: Hon Deputy Speaker, greetings, Minister. Now, the question is whether, given the challenges faced by Abalimi

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Bezifuno co-operative, and the department's role as a main stakeholder, the department has signed relevant agreements with co-operatives. If so, when, and what commitments were made and if not, why not? Furthermore, the question is whether the department will provide the list of non-operational or failed agriculture co-operatives, indicating the reason for their failures and measures taken to rejuvenate them. Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Deputy Speaker, to the first part of the question, the agreements, as I have said in this regard, have been made between the co-operatives as well as the National Empowerment Fund. So, the department is not part of the agreement. In the past, there was an agreement between the former Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Land Reform and the National Empowerment Fund. But that agreement came to an end before 2024, when the new Department of Agriculture was formed. So, there are no agreements between the Department of Agriculture and those co-operatives.

Regarding failed co-operatives, I cannot give a list of failed co-operatives offhand. And we must also ask ourselves the question: When is something deemed to have failed? In agriculture, it takes years to build up an entity and build up

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success. So, it is very difficult to determine what has failed or what has not.

What is very important, though, is that where co-operatives are struggling, the Department of Agriculture as well as the provincial departments of agriculture must provide support. We must provide advice and be there for those farmers to ensure that, if they are struggling, they can get through those struggles. And in the end - and that is what we want – we must turn smallholder, communal and small farmers into commercial farmers. And that is the task of the Department of Agriculture. So, there is no list of failed entities. We have the responsibility of ensuring they become successful. Thank you.

Ms S W DAVIDS: Deputy Speaker, hon Minister and everyone on the platform, access to land for black small and medium-scale farming needs to be accompanied by practical assistance to enable productive crop or livestock farming. What particular assistance is the department rendering to the sector in terms of grants or funding, and what further assistance is the department rendering to the emerging farmer sector, including infrastructure development? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Deputy Speaker, firstly, when it comes to access to land, people who farm on rented government land must be put into a position where they can own that land. My department, in collaboration with the African Farmers Association of South Africa, Afasa, as well as the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, is busy with a project where we are identifying at least 100 farmers per province who are currently renting their farms from government to make sure that they get the transfer of the deeds of those properties into their names.

Once you own your property, you are willing to put capital into that property. And I think that is going to be a huge step in helping these upcoming farmers. With regard to the grants, I have touched on that before, where I said that the Department of Agriculture, through the provincial departments, administers the CASP or the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme, and this programme provides grant funding aimed at supporting agricultural development initiatives.

As I said, the other grant is the Ilima Letsema programme. This programme is an initiative that provides agricultural grants and support to increase food production and reduce poverty, and it is being given to vulnerable communities. What

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I have also touched on is that when people apply for the Blended Finance Scheme, a portion of that finance is given by the government through a grant.

So, there are various projects that government is busy with. But I think it is very important that the transfer of title deeds into the names of those farmers takes place. This is a pilot project. We will definitely increase it. And I want to thank the Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development for his co-operation in this regard. Thank you.

Mr K B MADLALA: Deputy Speaker, hon Minister, does your department engage with the National Empowerment Fund, NEF, regarding alternative forms of accepting proof of land rights, securing of tenure or lease arrangement that could enable communal farmers to meet the NEF requirement without compromising the fund’s risk management obligations? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Deputy Speaker, as I said before, there are no current agreements between the Department of Agriculture and the National Empowerment Fund. There are none. However, that does not take away the fact that the Department

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of Agriculture will have to put pressure on them to assist people in the agricultural sector.

This project is agricultural, but we have no say about it. We would like to keep on advising those farmers. And again, I am coming back to it, as part of this supplementary question, the land tenure and property ownership have again been brought up. One of my big aims is to make sure that people own the land that they are renting from government. In that regard, I think that will be a collective effort that everybody must support. Thank you.

Dr W J BOSHOFF: Deputy Speaker, and I would also prefer to keep my camera off due to constrained connectivity. I want to ask the hon Minister: Does the Department of Agriculture have any empirical comparison between the effectiveness of grants, on the one hand, without any expectation of counter-performance, and loans, whether one is more successful than the other, or what the merits are for the one against the other in assisting emerging farmers with the background that, you know, ...

Afrikaans:

... erfgeld is swerfgeld.

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English:

Money you get without any expectation of counter-performance can disappear. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Deputy Speaker. I am not aware of empirical comparisons. What is very important, though, is that we must distinguish between the two types of farmers that we are talking about here. A farmer taking part in the Blended Finance Scheme is, in a sense, in a position to obtain finance either from the land bank or from some commercial banks.

So, a farmer like that, as the hon Boshoff has suggested, is in a better position. They are closer to being a commercial farmer. Some of them are commercial farmers. So, they are definitely successful in what they do, based on the fact that they have a farm.

When it comes to grants, we must never underestimate the role these grants play in uplifting farming communities that do not have funding. If you do not own your land, it is very difficult to obtain finance. A lot of these people are farming on a small scale, though, and some on a bit larger scale on communal land or on government land. It is important for us to elevate them, so that they can be in a position where they can

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farm better in other portions. So, although there is no empirical evidence, we need to make sure that we assist these farmers so that they can become successful.

Dr L W MAHLATSI: Deputy Speaker, Minister, what infrastructure and production support requirements have been identified in the Steve Tshete area, including irrigation, water, electricity, roads, storage, mechanisation, market access and agriculture extension services? Are these requirements contributing to the inability of emerging farmers to commercialise their operations? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Deputy Speaker, I will get back to the hon member in a written reply about the specifics provided about what is happening in Steve Tshete. What is generally provided, though, are services by the provincial Department of Agriculture in Mpumalanga to farmers in all the areas, including the Steve Tshete area, the extension officers' programmess that are in place - although we need to increase the number of extension officers - as well as the state veterinary services there.

We also do work in all areas with regard to the availability of water, as well as borehole production, etc. So, I will get

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back to the hon member about the specifics of Steve Tshete, as well as what the provincial departments are doing there. Thank you.

Question 720:

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker, and thanks to hon Hassan for the question. So, just on the expectations is that following the public consultation, the department will consider all the substantive comments and make the necessary changes to the revised electricity pricing policy. The policy will then follow the required government approval processes before finalisation, and that will culminate in a Cabinet approved electricity pricing policy.

On the second part of the question, implementation will be faced in line with the final policy and applicable legislation and the National Energy Regulator of South Africa, Nersa, mandate.

Affordability and the protection of poor and indigent households will remain key considerations through the free basic electricity. The free basic alternative energy, lifeline tariffs and other appropriate support measures such as

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advancing clean cooking fuels will be part of the total package of consideration to support poor households. Thanks, Deputy Speaker.

Ms F HASSAN: Thank you very much, hon Minister. This matter on the electricity pricing issue is something that has really garnered a lot of interest and a lot of interest in the past as well.

So, I really do appreciate the fact that, Minister, you have taken the time to actually take us through some of those responses.

Just by way of supplementary now, how will the department ensure that the allocated budget is utilised for poor and indigent households whilst attempting to increase the level of the Free Basic Electricity, FBE? Will the department also be working with the SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, and municipalities to help develop an impact on that register and ensure full impact and spend? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Oh, yes, indeed. I think one of the major shortcomings of the current dispensation of rolling out the FBE is that it goes through

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municipalities and, as we all know, that the municipalities are facing significant headwinds on the revenue side and their spending pressures are such that the revenue they are collecting is not able to match their spending pressures. So, when they receive the allocation that is meant for free basic electricity, they redirect it to support or meet their spending pressures.

So, one of the things that we are proposing an engagement that we will be having with National Treasury and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs is how the money flows towards the end consumers, the ones that are designated as indigent. We know that the National Treasury provides a budget of about R21 billion per annum to support poor households. So, our view is that there has to be an efficient use of that allocation.

So, we don't have a money problem. We have a problem of efficient allocation of the FBE. So, as part of the totality of the review of the electricity pricing policy, we will look at the mechanism on how that money flows to poor households. Thanks, Deputy Speaker.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The second supplementary question will be asked by hon Nchabeleng. Hon Nchabeleng.

Mr S W MKHIZE: I will take the question, Deputy Speaker, if Nchabeleng is not online.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please, proceed.

Mr S W MKHIZE: Okay. Can the Minister indicate a specific time frame for the completion and publication of the final pricing review and when the Parliament can expect to receive the findings?

Secondly, how will the department ensure that the outcomes of the review do not result in a disproportionate tariff increases for low-income households already facing cost-of-living pressures?

Thirdly, has the department conducted an assessment of the likely impact of the proposed pricing framework on the indigent consumers, pensioners, and social grant beneficiaries? If so, what were the findings?

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Lastly, what consultation mechanism will be used to engage municipalities, given their local critical role in electricity distribution and tariff setting?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon members, before the Minister replies, perhaps just a reminder that when we ask questions, we should only ask one question and not four, as in this instance, and also keep the follow-up questions related to the original question, not requiring brand new information that the Minister might not be aware of. But I will hand over to the Minister, and Minister, please proceed with the questions that you can reply to.

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Thank you very much for the questions. The electricity pricing policy is out for public comment. We are expecting that the consolidation of those comments will be end of October, and as mentioned, we will take it through the necessary government approval processes.

So, we are confident that by January of next year latest, it will be in place. Of course, it is in the nature of the pricing policy that we don’t overburden a particular section of consumers.

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We are going to ensure that everyone carries their proportionate load. Of course, we create a special dispensation to support the poor and vulnerable households, but we accept that electricity is expensive for all, including the middle class and income earners and industries. So, the pricing policy seeks to address all of those categories of consumers.

Lastly, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that in the course of all of this, we are engaging municipalities through the SA Local Government Association, Salga. So, we are not leaving other relevant departments behind. It's a consolidated, all-of-government approach in addressing this question. Thank you.

Mr K J MILEHAM: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Minister, I'm very glad you said that because the draft electricity pricing policy repeatedly talks about affordability and protecting vulnerable consumers, but tariff reform is increasingly moving towards separating energy charges from fixed network capacity and service charges. The difficulty is clear. A household can reduce its electricity consumption by installing solar or simply using less electricity because it can't afford more, but it cannot avoid a fixed monthly charge.

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So, my question is this, how do you reconcile increasing fixed charges with your promise to protect low-income consumers? Will you commit that no indigent household will end up paying a larger, unaffordable monthly charge simply for remaining connected to the grid? Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker, and thanks to hon Mileham. Your observations are correct. So, what we are increasingly seeing rather, in the sector is that when municipalities, and of course you include Eskom in that basket, begins to lose customers, what municipalities tend to do is to recover the lost revenue from those customers as a result of the interventions that customers are making behind the meter, rolling out solar and battery solution to support their own load. We find that the municipalities tend to recover that lost revenue through an unreasonable increase in their fixed charges.

So, we are making that point in the electricity pricing policy that there cannot be such charges, or if you like, costs that are not justified. That’s why we are calling for a transparent manner in which these costs are revealed to the consumer.

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We will be empowering Nersa to be in a position to police, if you like, to oversee the fact that there is no abuse of this pricing policy. So, you are absolutely correct, it is our intention to protect the consumer. Like I said, all categories, because the focus mainly is on the poor household because of the disproportionate impact of electricity pricing. But I must say that the middle class, and in fact also high earners are also under significant strain.

So, we intend to protect everyone rather, but of course, the poor will receive specific attention. Thanks, Deputy Speaker.

Mr M N PAULSEN: Good afternoon, and thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much for your responses so far, Minister.

Minister, at the moment, there are over 10 million poor households in this country. These households depend on a very limited amount of free basic electricity, I think its 50 units. The newly electricity pricing policy makes no mention of how this will be sustained or even increased to ensure that these households are able to have basic or access to dignified electricity supply.

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There is no alignment between this new pricing policy and the free basic electricity policy. The pricing policy, and you have mentioned it again now, leaves much of the decision on free basic electricity to the National Treasury. You have also mentioned that electricity is even expensive for the middle-income groups.

You have on many occasions mentioned that the amount of free basic electricity needs to be substantially increased. So, what are your reasons for not including this provision in the new policy or even aligning the new policy with free basic electricity policy to ensure that poor citizens access to electricity is sustained? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Thank you very much, hon Paulsen, for that question. No, you are on the map. So, there are two sets of conversations which are coupled. So, the first one is that the electricity pricing policy makes the assertion that there has to be an increase with regards to the free basic electricity component. As we make the observation, we are providing 50 kilowatt hours of free basic free electricity per month. This has been in place for close to about 23 years or so. We know that the consumption profile has changed. So, what the policy says is that there has to be a

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substantial increase, and it doesn't state what that number is.

In the free basic electricity policy, we will then revise that number. As I have said publicly, we are confident that with the current fiscal support, we can be able to afford anything between 200 kilowatt hours to 300 kilowatt hours of free basic electricity. So, we don't need any additional allocation from Treasury. What needs to be resolved is how the money flows to the end consumer. In the free basic electricity policy, we will then make those adjustments in relation to the quantum and how that money flows to the end consumer. So that's how we are going to get the alignment. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Ms F HASSAN: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker and to the Minister for clarifying and also making sure that the poorest of the poor are not left behind. Minister, many municipalities use electricity for cash flow and for income and I think we understand that, but we have seen instances of municipalities such as the City of Cape Town adding heavy markups on top of Eskom's tariff and it is poor households who feel it the most. Will the pricing review set limits on municipal markups and will the department act where municipalities are charging

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indigent households above what the framework allows? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Thanks, hon Hassan. So, the application for increases from municipalities is determined through an arrangement called the Cost of Supply Studies, which they then submit to Nersa for Nersa's approval.

So, we are familiar with what is happening across the country, how some of the municipalities design those Cost of Supply Studies. So, what we are seeking to do is to empower Nersa to be a bit more robust in its evaluation of the Cost of Supply Studies, and that this Cost of Supply Studies now should be in line with the electricity pricing policy once it's approved. Those protections of consumers will be found in the electricity pricing policy.

Like I said, it advocates for transparency, talks about an efficient supplier of electricity and it also refuses to accept, if you like, arbitrary such charges that cannot be justified. So it is that policy that they will help Nersa to do an evaluation of Cost of Supply Studies as submitted by respective municipalities and seek to enforce the provisions

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of the adopted Annual Performance Plan, APP once it comes into place, hon Hassan. Thanks, Deputy Speaker.

Question 738:

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Hon Deputy Speaker, I think there is several reasons. The first one is, municipalities are not fully capacitated to design and implement a free basic... an Indigent Policy rather, to ensure that they update that Indigent Policy and to ensure that there are significant flows that are meant to reach the designated indigent households. So, first is a capacity issue.

The second one, is how the money flows. Like I said, it is through the grant dispensation. So, National Treasury allocates to individual municipalities. Once it lands in the coffers of the respective municipalities, because of their spending pressure or contraction of their revenue, they then reallocate that money to meet their own spending pressures, paying salaries, paying service providers and it does not get to reach the end consumer. So, how are we advocating for a change? We engage with National Treasury and determine the flow of this money to the rightful recipients. So, it is about having a credible and robust indigent register and we know that there are a number of significant large databases in the

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country. Some of them resides with Sassa, SA Social Security, Agency, and with SA Revenue Service, Sars. We think that there can be a triangulation of those databases, so that we are able to real time update and ensure that the rightful recipients do receive this money.

Lastly, technology rolling out the smart meters and ensuring that we free load the Free Basic Electricity, FBE, at the beginning of each month. Those are some of the interventions, Deputy Speaker.

Mr K J MILEHAM: Minister, your own department has acknowledged that around one in five intended Free Basic Electricity beneficiaries actually receive the full 50 kilowatt hours. So, that means that the failure is no longer anecdotal. It is a systemic failure in a programme specifically designed to protect the poorest households. The money is provided through the local government equitable share. Municipalities are supposed to identify the indigent households and deliver the benefit and yet millions of qualifying South Africans are plainly falling through the cracks. So, my question is this. Will you support a system in which the FBE allocation follows the qualifying household directly rather than depending on whether a municipality has an accurate indigent register, a

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functioning administration and the willingness or the capacity to pass that benefit on?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Hon Mileham, we are together there. I have indicated previously that we need to remedy what you correctly characterise as a structural failure. But we still need to have an indigent register in place. We are of the opinion that ourselves working with Eskom and of course municipalities, we should be able to design that indigent register that is credible and robust. Like I said, there is a set of databases in the country that can help us to enhance the credibility of that indigent register, including databases that are sitting with Sassa and the Sars. You are absolutely correct.

Once we have that data indigent register in place, which is nationwide, we can ensure that the money flows directly to the designated households as opposed to going through the channel of municipalities. In that sense, we can get the efficiencies right. We can ensure that the right beneficiaries are receiving this support and they are receiving it on time. In this way, the intended purpose of this policy will be fully realised there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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Ms Z KHANYASE: Deputy Speaker, greetings to you and to the Minister Ramokgopa. Will your department ensure that municipalities keep a register of poor and indigent households to ensure that FBE is efficiently distributed as the current method is that poor consumers must buy some electricity before they can access the free basic electricity units?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Yes, we are intending to design a national register of indigent and invariably in many parts of the country we work with municipalities. Like I said, I think the principal owners of these databases, Sassa, Sars, amongst others, will be very key to ensure that we get the right people who are qualifying to be in those indigent registers, even those that are likely going to graduate out of the indigent register. I think Sars and Sassa will be of great help. So, we intend to build that platform, like I said, it should be robust, credible and transparent.

In this manner, I think we will be able to achieve the desired intentions of the Free Basic Electricity policy, because at this current rate, the money just get lost in the system. There is significant leakage and it undermines the efficacy of this programme. So yes, we want to design a national register of indigent, Deputy Speaker.

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Mr S W MKHIZE: Can the Minister provide a provincial breakdown of Free Basic Electricity coverage, indicating where the largest gaps in delivery currently exist? What accountability measures are in place for the municipalities that receive funding for FBE but fail to provide the full allocation to qualifying households? To what extent is the low uptake of FBE attributed to administrative shortcomings outdated indigent registers or capacity constraints within municipalities? Has the department undertaken any audit to determine where the funds earmarked for FBE are being utilised for their intended purpose?

Lastly, what steps are being taken to ensure that indigent registers are regularly updated so that all qualifying households are identified and enrolled?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Yes, again, the question suffers from the earlier comments of the Deputy Speaker, but I will try and make the following point. We do not have a provincial breakdown. Remember, we are not the custodians of the indigent register. The indigent register sits with the individual municipalities. What is the performance of this allocation of FBE?

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Remember, I made the point that the flow of money comes through the National Treasury determent dispensation of grant allocation. So, the people who are responsible for the allocation of this grant is National Treasury and therefore it is National Treasury that bears the responsibility of examining the performance of that fund from what its objectives are. But as a department, of course, we are invested in the success of this programme and that is why we are advocating for a rethink of this Indigent Policy on how the money flows, on how you compile an indigent register and on how you are going to measure the performance of this allocation against the intended objectives of the FBE policy.

So, it is only after we recraft and rethink this dispensation that we will be able to answer all the questions that the hon member has been raising. But for now, we do not have any credible response because we lack the ability to answer that question because of the absence of a national register of indigent and how the money flows, Deputy Speaker.

Mrs N L HLAZO-WEBSTER: Minister, you have quite clearly articulated how the nationwide indigent register is needed before you have Free Basic Electricity and being able to flow directly to qualifying households. In many communities that we

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are in, for many communities that we engage, people who cannot afford to buy electricity first actually never access their free units. That becomes part of the critical issue. This is how you end up with some people resorting to illegal connections and everything and every consequence that comes with that.

So, what is the department's timeline to establish the register? It seems a lot is held within this register and is going to rely on this register, particularly with being able to directly access the benefit for households that are indigent? What can the department do in the interim so that qualifying households are not actually left without electricity when they do not have money to actually trigger that benefit?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Hon Hlazo-Webster, your observations are spot on and it is also a systemic problem. So, you must purchase electricity before you can earn your Free Basic Electricity allocation. We think that is a fatal flaw because the basic assumption we are making is that poor households, by definition, are finding very difficult to even purchase one or two units. That is why we are talking

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about front loading at the beginning of each month because technology allows us to do exactly that.

How are we going to introduce this national indigent register? I think there ought to be transitional mechanisms. It will be a height of folly to promise members here that it can be done in six or even 12 months. We will work very hard but what we can do for starters is that Eskom in the areas where it provides electricity, we should start there because we already have access to those households. Remember in the current dispensation, even in areas where Eskom provides electricity direct to the consumer, the money still flows through the municipality. So, we will design those transitional arrangements and then come to the next cluster of consumers who will be sitting with municipalities. We will have to determine which municipalities will come first so that we are able to sequence. So, I do not have the answer now. I can come back to members in relation to transitional mechanism to put in place this proposal that we are making, Deputy Speaker.

Mr K J MILEHAM: Deputy Speaker, Minister, I appreciate your answers. They have answered a lot of the questions I had as follow-ups. However, there is one that still remains. Municipalities regard electricity as a cash cow and in many

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instances, even though the FBE is funded through equitable share, we have already identified that money does not flow to the beneficiary. Have you had any discussions with SA Local Government Association, Salga, or with the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs or any municipal structures about what happens when you take away the equitable share or some of the Equitable Share and reallocate it to FBE where it is supposed to go?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Yes, hon Mileham, you are absolutely correct. I did make the point that we have already started our conversations with the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. But this must be the overriding consideration as you make the point also in your question. The R21 billion allocation that goes to municipalities in the form of a grant is meant for Free Basic Electricity. It was never meant to subsidise municipal functions to support municipal spending pressures. It is meant to support the consumers that they meet the qualification of being indigent. So, I really do not see in theory any problem why when we design a solution that is intended to achieve the very basic objective of that policy. What is that objective? To support poor households. If we can illustrate that this is the most efficient mechanism of supporting poor households, I

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do not think that there should be any disagreements there but of course, we will continue to engage. The sooner we put this into place, the better.

As you made the point in your primary question that one in five households that are meant to receive this support are not receiving this support because of leakage. So, we must improve its performance and we have a solution on how to improve that performance. I do not think that anyone in the system should be aggrieved when in fact those that are meant to receive support are receiving support and undermine the kind of misdirection and leakage that is happening. It is not meant for that and I do not think that there should be any disagreements. But to your question, yes, we have started engaging, hon Mileham. Thanks, Deputy Speaker.

Question 798:

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Hon Deputy Speaker, let me make the point that as things stand at the level of growth, mind you, our projection must be based on current growth levels and the environment, those projections suggest that in 2026 your growth levels are likely to be 1,6% growing to 2% by 2028.

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The question then that arises: Are those levels sufficient enough to soak unemployment in the economy? The answer is no. What would be the appropriate level? The appropriate level would probably be anything above 3% to be able to make an impact on unemployment. However, fiscal policy alone is but one instrument amongst others. On its own, it can't be able to achieve the growth levels that are required. Nevertheless, let me say, what instruments have been deployed from the fiscal policy side. Remind members that in the budget we tabled in February, we made provision for R1 trillion over the next three years which was supposed to be invested in infrastructure.

However, that in itself on its own is not likely to generate jobs unless it is delivered efficiently. That's one other intervention. On the private employment programme, we're deploying about R13 billion per annum. If you take that over the Medium-Term Framework, MTF, it's about R40 billion. Again, in terms of tax incentives, the government is delivering about almost R19 billion to incentivise business to do that. In addition to that, this year we've made substantial improvement in supporting small and medium enterprises.

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Those are all fiscal measures on their own if they were to be effective but complemented by other interventions in other sectors. Let me just give you an example. If you look at Rwanda's growth, which is growing at about 9,4% over the past two quarters, 39% of that growth is from the agricultural sector. So, what will be required is a number of interventions, not only fiscal instruments in isolation from other interventions. Thank you.

Mr D D D VAN ROOYEN: Thank you hon Minister, indeed, we as the MK Party, we are clear that we can't just employ a fiscal instrument to deal with this elephant in the room. In fact, we want to solicit your take on two issues that have been confirmed by various studies, that South Africa is failing in the main to address the job creation problem. Entirely, this is due to two main reasons. The state planning and policy processes that are not guided by official statistics. Hence, even the National Development Plan is a complete flop.

Secondly, sectors like financial services, mining and manufacturing experience high levels of illicit financial flows, denying us an opportunity to create jobs. Quite interestingly, Minister, these sectors are all dominated by

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white capital. Your opinion on this particular observation will be highly appreciated. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Look, I've not seen the study referred to by the hon member. Nevertheless, let me say, one of the issues he raises is the contribution of illicit trades. For now, I will not refer to illicit financial flows. However, illicit trade is making a huge impact on the economy. The study done recently by some of these people, including the Consumer Association, reflects that even the revenue side alone, we're losing about R68 billion per annum.

That we understand. That's why we are now putting all our resources and working with Sars and other departments to deal with illicit trade in order to deal with that issue. Thank you.

Mr N M HADEBE: Hon Minister, the national growth figures can conceal very different realities across provinces and municipalities. What mechanisms does the Treasury have to determine whether its fiscal interventions are creating jobs in communities with the highest levels of unemployment rather than concentrating economic opportunities in already developed economic centres? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Last, that function rests with my colleague, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, who will incentivise people for diversification across the economy. My intervention is in terms of section 214 of the Constitution. In terms of the equitable distribution of the national raised revenue.

In that regard, it takes into account the rural component. It takes into account the economic activity. It takes into account the health indicators, education indicators, which takes into account particularly the diversity of our economy.

In so far as the industrial diversification, that is a matter which my colleague the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Minister Tau, is seized with. Thank you.

Ms M P KOBE: Hon Minister, as it stands, in quarter two of 2026, our youth unemployment rate reached five million young South Africans. Now, I just want to know, in light of this with your call, Minister, in the 2026 Public Economics Conference, where you called for a data-driven, evidence-based approach to this crisis.

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Has your department conducted an empirical cost-benefit assessment of the long-term efficacy of the employment tax incentive in driving net new private sector jobs or large scale youth intervention such as the Presidential Youth Employment intervention? If not, why not? Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: There has been studies done by the University of Cape Town, looking at the efficacy of these in support incentives through a division of the University of Cape Town called the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, SALDRU. The SALDRU's study suggests that there's been a good performance by both programmes. To that extent, that's data-driven. It has been achieved. However, that alone is insufficient.

That's why we are now working with the Presidency in what we call, the reform of the active labour market policies in the country, whose intention is to say how do we broaden the scope of intervention in youth employment, including improving the quality of the skills of young people. That programme will be announced at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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Ms N A GCALEKA-MAZIBUKO: Hon Minister, the President launched the third phase of the government and business relationship, which plans to achieve a minimum economic growth rate of 3% and aims to help create one million jobs by 2030.

How will Operation Vul'indlela measures contribute to economic growth and job creation? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: As you may be aware, that Operation Vul'indlela is an institution created both by the Presidency and the National Treasury. Its primary function is structural reforms in the economy, whose main activity is to achieve structural reform, whose intention is to make our economy efficient and be able to create more jobs.

Currently, we are working on, for instance, on focus ... Minister Ramokgopa has moved on the achievement in the electricity sector. We are at the moment focusing on the logistics sector. A number of initiatives, including the investment in that sector, in some of the corridors, some of which those numbers will be announced on 21 October as we deal with the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement.

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There are interventions to help the various reforms under Operation Vul'indlela to achieve that objective and, therefore, incentivise both the private sector to invest more in our economy and achieve the intended target of about 3% growth in the economy. Thank you

Mr D D D VAN ROOYEN: Thank you once more, Deputy Speaker. If you don't know of the financial inflow problem that is engulfing our country and the continent, I will refer you to the most recent study that was conducted by the team that was led by the former President of this country, President Thabo Mbeki. Anyway, that's not the subject for the question. Truth be told, Minister, this country's unemployment problem, like other social ills engulfing our beloved motherland is caused by weak and indecisive political leadership.

I asked you about illicit financial flows. Just because of your pro-white capital attitude, you opted to focus on illicit trading, failing to acknowledge that we are equally losing trillions of rands as a result of white capital control financial schemes. I can tell you now, Deputy Speaker, our only solution as South Africans, is the removal of pro-white capital and spineless political leaders currently leading our country. Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF FINANCE: No, that is an ideological barrage. It was not a question. So, I don’t want to give it credit by trying to respond to it. Thank you.

Question 721:

The MINISTER OF MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Hon Deputy Speaker, the performance of the petroleum sector in the last six months during the devastating instability caused by the war in the Middle East has demonstrated the resilience of the sector and its ability to diversify sources of supply. That is the first one. So, they didn't only depend on the Middle East. And the decline in refining capacity has, however, made the country vulnerable to geopolitical events and strategic stocks held by the Strategic Fuel Fund is 6,9 million barrels. Given the current 200 000 barrels per day crude processing capacity, this is equal to 30 days of crude oil cover.

What should not be lost, though, is that South Africa also has a coal-to-fuel facility in Sasol, which is in Secunda, and that process helps in supplementing the feedstock for fuel. We have published the draft Strategic Stock Policy for public comment, and the policy seems to improve strategic stock positioning by keeping both crude oil and processed products.

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It is also proposed that all companies keep an amount of strategic stock as well. That is where we are on this matter.

Mr M G MAHLAULE: Thank you very much, hon Minister, for that response. Considering that the draft Strategic Petroleum Stock Policy leaves the financing of the 60-day state reserve to mechanisms still to be developed by the National Treasury as well as the SA National Petroleum Company, SANPC, how much will the reserves cost? And in your discussion with the Treasury, when will the 60-day state reserves financing be settled? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Deputy Speaker, we have released the Strategic Petroleum Stock Policy for public comment. Therefore, it would be premature of me to determine quantities and costs at this point in time. Let us allow that policy to evolve and allow that issue to be developed by the National Treasury and the SANPC together. And further down the line, when that policy has been finalised for public comment, we'll bring the response to the House. Thank you.

Mr J R B LORIMER: Thanks, Deputy Speaker. Minister, is it envisaged then that every single fuel wholesaler will have to

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hold on to a strategic stock? And I'm assuming it's only fuel wholesalers and not retailers. Is that how you see it working?

The MINISTER OF MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Deputy Speaker, the reason that we don't talk of wholesalers and petrol stations is that they will not have that capacity. We talk of the petroleum companies; we talk of your BP, we talk of your Astron, we talk of all those companies, not the wholesalers. Wholesalers are traders. Those are petroleum companies.

Mr M MANYI: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Greetings, Mqwathi. [Mantashe clan name]

The MINISTER OF MINERAL AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Greetings.

Mr M MANYI: Yes, the Strategic Fuel Fund’s assets have been transferred to SANPC, that's common cause, the same entity that's taking over the Petroleum Oil and Gas Corporation of South Africa, PetroSA, which is currently fighting a liquidation application. Can you assure this House that the strategic crude stock and the Saldanha storage are legally ring-fenced from PetroSA's creditors, and under which instrument, if that is the case? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Deputy Speaker, I want to remind hon Manyi that this thing of transferring assets from these three entities to SANPC has been managed in a very careful way. That is why we use the list and assign method. And we'll notice that everything that is posing a threat to SANPC has been ring-fenced and is left as a legacy asset and, therefore, run by a legacy board.

That legacy board has to turn those things around before they go to SANPC. So SANPC has nothing to do with storage in Saldanha. It will not have anything to do with that. We will have to turn PetroSA around to be in good shape before it goes to SANPC. So, we don't transfer a liability to SANPC, because if we do that, we'll sink SANPC before it starts moving. Thank you.

Mr M N PAULSEN: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good afternoon once again. Good afternoon, Minister. Minister, considering the continued interruption to fuel production and exports in the Gulf States due to Donald Trump's cruel acts of terrorism in the Middle East, and the impact that these acts of terrorism have on our country's ability to guarantee a sustainable supply of fuel for our commercial and domestic needs. Are you able to give guarantees to the South African

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public that there will be no shortage of fuel? And what steps are you taking to ensure that the escalating prices of fuel are managed to shield poor citizens from high fuel prices? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Deputy Speaker, the reason that we transferred many of the suppliers, particularly of crude oil, away from the Gulf State was to secure that guarantee. And that's why, if you look into our division, as low as it appears, our refining capacity at Sasol guarantees a cover of 40% of what we need as a country; 60% is imported.

But what we have done is to diversify sources of supply and to minimise our dependence on the Middle East. But I must also make the point that the question of the disruption in the Middle East and the Strait of Hormuz, by the way, does have a direct impact on our supply and the cost of petroleum. But up to now, there is no threat of a shortage of supply. The biggest threat is the pricing. Hence, the Minister of Finance may talk about that issue later in the day or in the process. At this point in time, there is no threat of shortage of supply. The supply is secured. Thank you.

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Mr M G MAHLAULE: Minister, I hear what you are saying: that it will be premature to comment on the draft policy which is published for comment. But surely, you should have an idea that the proposed 60-day state reserve, which is 70%, will be held in the form of crude oil. That is the proposal. And our declining refining capacity. Are you able to assure citizens that there won't be disruptions due to the refining capacity in South Africa when it comes to petroleum and diesel in the end? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES: Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for the question, hon Mahlaule. One of the things that people must appreciate is the fact that overdependence on the private sector is a threat in itself, particularly on public goods like fuel. That is why, if you talk of the decline of the refining capacity, in the main, it can be attributed to the dysfunction and disruption of two refineries, the SA Petroleum Refineries, Sapref, and Engen. All of those were private-sector engines.

That is why we're doing everything we can, and we're hoping that at some point the fiscal will be helping us to get Sapref under state control so that the state contributes to its refining capacity. And we're also enthusiastic about improving

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the refining capacity in Mossel Bay. If we get those running, the actual capacity to refine will be much higher than is required at this point.

So, the fact that we propose that 70% be crude oil is also informed by the desire to continue improving on what we already have and begin to move to imported processed petroleum products as a matter of status. That is why we limit it to 30% for a start. I would imagine that in the future it will be increased.

Question 767:

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Hon Deputy Speaker, the answer to the question is no. I have not made any submission to the President, and the President has not asked me for any submission. At the moment our focus is to transform the PIC, including its unlisted assets, to the very PIC of the past that was used to fund empowerment, infrastructure, and small and medium enterprises.

We've appointed a board which I think is equal to the task. So, we have no intention of making any changes in this regard. So, subsection B of the question falls away, which means what

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is the way forward? We have not crafted such a way forward with the President. Thank you.

Mr N S MATIASE: Deputy Speaker, it will seem that state-led investment is not a problem, whether listed or unlisted. The problem is political and institutional capacity. Instead of leveraging PIC assets to reindustrialise South Africa and deal with the debts of state-owned enterprises without privatisation through Operation Vulindlela, the focus has been elsewhere, and the Minister will admit.

We have read the resignation letter of Deputy Minister David Masondo, and it is not clear why he resigned. Did you have any problems with him as the Chair of the Board? Was he interfering with the management of the PIC, and were there allegations of corruption against him? Is it still not clear, Minister, whether there are answers to these questions?

Your answers to these questions will give clarity to South African citizens when you give candid answers to these questions. Thanks Deputy Speaker.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: We normally fight with hon Matiase when he asks me some questions because he thinks I’m not

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responding to the question. Let me explain the following. That a number of assumptions he is making, for instance, that the PIC or the GEPF is not going to help the state-owned institutions, is incorrect.

It's too early to make that proposition. At the moment the restructuring of both Transnet and Eskom may require support from those institutions. I cannot make an outright statement in this regard, and therefore it is premature to make such a statement.

However, I must make the point that I cannot at this stage discuss all the PIC related issues. As you are aware, Deputy Minister Masondo, before leaving, asked the President to appoint the SIU to investigate a number of these things. The President has responded to Deputy Minister Masondo's request and has appointed SIU, and all those matters are under the investigation.

But in so far as utilising this institution, it must also be taken into account that these are pension funds of the public sector employees. Whatever investment we make, it must be able to provide a return to the pension fund. In that regard, we have been careful in making sure that happens. Whether we

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support the state-owned institutions as we think, we might be in the circumstances. That will take into account as it might be used to roll out infrastructure. That will also take into account the long-term benefits of the pension funds. I thank you.

Dr M J MASWANGANYI: Deputy Speaker, Minister and hon members of the House, the non-listed investment portfolio of the PIC is a critical portfolio to support the SMEs' economic transformation and to tackle the high levels of economic concentration.

What are the measures that the Minister is taking to support or to increase the support for SMEs to have access to finance or credit and ensure a financial sector allocation from the PIC to support this imperative? Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: I agree with hon Maswanganyi about the strategic focus of the PIC, and I agree that the matters he went to canvas are matters that are on the agenda. I've given the new board space and time to reflect on those issues. Tomorrow at half past nine, I'll be meeting both the Chair and the CEO of the PIC to take those discussions further, so that on the 21st of October, when we create the narrative about

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small and medium enterprises, we can draw from a whole range of sources that are likely to support that initiative.

I know, I'll say that again, even the World Bank is also ... providing support. Again, we'll explain that. That support will be working together with the PIC to give effect to the support for small and medium enterprises. I agree with hon Maswanganyi that strategic focus should not be lost. Thank you.

Mr S G MWALI: Deputy Speaker and to Minister, your own forensic report by PwC on the 18th of May 2026 proves that the unlisted portfolio cannot be fixed. You lent 330 million of workers' pension money to Acapulco in 2013. They defaulted. You owe them nothing. BDO said their shares were worth 330 million against a debt of 629 million.

But your officials terminated BDO and brought in Crowe by the defaulter, who double-counted their assets by one billion, and you paid them 432 million. So how many more Acapulcos must happen before you concede that the unlisted portfolio is a vehicle for looting and present a proposal to the President to close it? Thank you so much.

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The MINISTER OF FINANCE: I don’t want to comment on Acapulco at the moment. As I have indicated, D M Masondo, as the chair of the PIC at the time, approached the President to appoint the SIU to do the investigation. That matter is critical in that investigation. I can’t comment on it at the moment.

But let me comment on the broad point the hon member is making, that there have been losses in some of the PIC investments. But what the member is not doing is to counterpose those losses with the benefits broadly and say, on average, has the PIC performed badly? The answer is no. Again, the beautiful economic research has done that analysis and came to the conclusion that, on average, the PIC has made a real return of about 7%, including the unlisted side of the situation. So, in the investment space, whether private or public, there are risks and rewards. When people make an investment, they are taking a risk, in which case they may get a better reward or a loss.

That happens. Even in the listed space, the ... [Inaudible.] ... was a listed company. It had higher regard, quality directors and so on, in the listed space. So, we lost money in it. So, we lose money on both sides, the listed and unlisted.

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We can’t give up investment like all other investment asset managers. They face a similar situation. I thank you.

Mr K H WAKELIN: Hon Deputy Speaker, and good afternoon again, hon Minister, every rand counts. Given the ongoing investigation into losses arising from the PIC unlisted investment, what is the hon Minister doing to ensure that these investigations are prioritised and concluded without any undue delay? Also, what findings or outcomes have emerged to date? And what action will be taken against any former chairperson, board members or officials held responsible? Thank you, hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: The unfortunate thing, the hon member is putting the cart before the horse. He wants us to take action in the absence of the recommendation from an investigation. What I would plead with hon members is to allow the investigation to take its course.

Secondly, for the Minister not to interfere. The moment the Minister interferes and pushes people to speed up this and to speed up that. You will be interfering with the investigation. Allow the SIU to perform its functions according to its own

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rules and pace, depending on the complexity of the investigation. Thank you.

Mr N S MATIASE: Once more, Deputy Speaker and Minister, the PIC is a 2,6 trillion-rich portfolio, Africa's largest asset manager, which requires fiscal, political, institutional and ethical efficacy and discipline, which is lacking with the current PIC and how PIC is configured.

The EFF in the past has called for the creation of the Sovereign Wealth Fund. Don't you think that, Minister, time has come that government consider the creation of the Sovereign Wealth Fund to ... [Inaudible.] ... the work of the portfolio such as PIC, which is more than 100 years of existence? Thanks, Deputy Speaker.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: If you look at the PIC as it stands, there are elements of Sovereign Wealth Fund. Maybe what we needed to do is to discuss what the modalities of such are, what will distinguish it between the PIC and an institution normally called a Sovereign Wealth Fund, because an institution such as the Sovereign Wealth Fund is when the government uses its surpluses to create a fund which will become a saver in difficult circumstances – rainy seasons. So,

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I think part of what should be a conversation is how do we create what we call a Sovereign Wealth Fund? No one has got a principal objective to it.

In most countries, it has been created out of resource-rich countries. They create out of surplus arising out of those resources. Only two countries, to my knowledge, have created it out of the fiscal in South Korea and to some extent, Australia.

So, let’s have a conversation about what nature of the Sovereign Wealth Fund we’re talking about in this South African context, given the fact that we've got huge surpluses sitting, savings in the economy. Thank you.

Question 776:

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: Deputy Speaker, the Department of Agriculture’s approach against El Niño is centred on disaster risk reduction through the implementation of preventative as well as mitigation and preparedness measures aimed at strengthening the resilience of the agricultural sector, which obviously includes small-scale and emerging farmers, as a whole.

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Now, as part of this risk mitigation strategy and in assisting small-scale and emerging farmers, the department promotes the adoption of climate-resilient and indigenous crop cultivars that are better adapted to local environmental conditions.

Small-scale and emerging farmers as well as commercial farmers are all encouraged to utilise cultivars that are listed on the national variety list. This will help reduce production losses, and it will help improve resistance to pests, diseases, and climate variability. The department also assists small-scale farmers with advice on the advancement of sustainable agricultural practices, including conservation agriculture, efficient water-use technologies, and improved soil-management practices to enhance long-term agricultural productivity.

For the livestock sector, all farmers — small-scale farmers as well as commercial farmers — are continuously advised on managing stocking rates in accordance with the carrying capacity of available grazing resources and feed availability, and this might come under attack with El Niño. This includes reducing herd numbers where necessary and, particularly, older or unproductive animals that can be taken out of herds to minimise pressure on natural resources during drought periods.

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The department also assists small-scale and emerging farmers with regular state veterinary inspections, disease surveillance programmes, and timely vaccination campaigns.

Despite the implementation of prevention and mitigation measures, the impacts of severe natural occurrences may exceed the coping capacity of affected communities. In instances like this, the department works within the provisions of section 23 of the Disaster Management Act relating to the classification of disasters. Should this looming drought that will be brought about by El Niño be declared as a disaster, mechanisms for post-disaster response, recovery, and rehabilitation are activated to support affected farmers and agricultural communities. We are also continuously working on early warning systems to warn the public of heat days that might be excessive heat days to also help them in this regard. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Ms B E MACHI: Deputy Speaker, through you to the hon Minister: How has your department leveraged the National Disaster Management Centre to ensure a proactive and co-ordinated response to any climate-related disaster in the future? Thank you.

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The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: House Chairperson, this is a continuous process where interdepartmental discussions take place. This is discussed in Cabinet. This is discussed within the various ministries, as well as within the National Disaster Management Centre.

If and when this disaster becomes a real disaster or this forecast of a disaster becomes a disaster, those conversations will take place. As this has been elevated to a national level, we are already in discussion with each other interdepartmentally to see how we can assist to be proactive. An example of being proactive is not to wait until this problem becomes a big problem on a municipal level and only then institute water restrictions but to do that where it is needed proactively so that we do not run into a place where agricultural water availability will be reduced due to this.

Those interactions are taking place, and we will continue to proactively do that. Thank you very much, House Chairperson.

Ms N A NDALANE: House Chairperson, through you to the hon Minister: Effective drought preparedness requires assistance to reach vulnerable farmers before crops and livestock are lost. What funded implementation plan with clear provincial

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delivery deadlines will your department put in place to ensure that smallholder and emerging farmers receive practical support to prepare for the El Niño risk raised in the original question? Thank you, House Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: House Chairperson, I wish to thank the hon Ndalane for the question. Hon Ndalane, we are already busy with the work you have just described.

The Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the provincial departments, is already doing work with farmers to educate them and to help them be prepared for this. We give them information on what they can plant, on weather patterns that we can see, on being prepared for fires that might be there due to the prolonged effect of this El Niño effect. We are already working in this regard, and we will continue to do so with early warnings, with giving advice on the number of heads of cattle that can graze on certain pieces of land, and by giving them indications on what types of crops to plant.

We have also got much more drought-resilient crops that have been made available through advancement of seeds in the past. So, those types of advice are continuously being given by the department, as well as the various provincial departments, to

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farmers, both small-scale and commercial. They are all in the same boat, and we are assisting all of them. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Afrikaans:

Mnr H C C KRÜGER: Huisvoorsitter, aan die Minister: Met die oog op langtermyn-voedselsekerheid wat beskou die Minister as die nodige en toepaslike stappe wat die landbousektor behoort toe te pas om meer veerkragtig teen die impak van klimaatsverandering te word?

Die MINISTER VAN LANDBOU: Huisvoorsitter, ek bedank die agb Krüger vir die vraag wat hy gevra het. Die huidige klimaatsverandering wat ons sien, vereis dat ons dinge anders moet doen in die toekoms met betrekking tot ons landbou. Ons moet kyk na aanpasbaarheidsmaatreëls wat ons kan instel.

English:

We have to look at the effects of climate change that cannot be mitigated.

Afrikaans:

Dan moet ons ook kyk na dit wat ons kan doen om dit vir ons boere makliker te maak.

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English:

Hon Chairperson, due to the fact that this is something that might touch on a lot of farmers, let me explain this in English. Practising conservation agricultural methods such as building soil health, reducing unnecessary expansion of production, and making use of organic farming methods is something that we will definitely have to look into for the long term.

The promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices for crop production or water management and livestock and rangeland management is very important. In the long term, we have to improve water management. Water should be used efficiently through water harvesting, coupled with drip irrigation techniques that are now available.

It is also very important that livestock farmers avoid overstocking, and they should do that also in times there is enough grazing so that they have grazing available when drought periods are there. Farmers should also practise rotational grazing and provide additional feed and reliable water where applicable. Then, farmers should also monitor pests and regularly follow these early warning systems and information the department is providing.

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In the long term, farmers should implement crop diversity measures that can help with conserving soil moisture and follow appropriate planting windows. Obviously, we must utilise modern technology such as drought-tolerant cultivars.

Afrikaans:

So, agb Krüger, daar is ’n verskeidenheid van dinge wat ons in landbou as ’n gewoonte moet begin doen om te kan aanpas by hierdie veranderde weersomstandighede. Daar is soveel dinge wat in plek gekom oor die laaste klomp jare met betrekking tot tegnologie en innovasie wat dit vir ons boere makliker maak. Ons boere is al deur El Niños. Hulle weet hoe om dit te hanteer. Ons as regering sal hulle bystaan om ook deur hierdie moeilike tyd te kan kom. Baie dankie.

English:

Dr T K S LETLAPE: House Chair, I will take the question on behalf of the hon Trollip. Minister, my question is this: What is the department doing about educating farmers about the process of getting assistance in case we have a disaster? We appreciate the fact that they are being educated on how to prepare for the disaster, but, if nature comes and they fall on hard times, are they being educated about how they can

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access assistance and relief from the department? Thank you, Chair.

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: House Chairperson, I thank the hon Letlape for the question. To the hon Letlape, yes, we definitely are. The main thing at this moment is that we must prepare farmers to handle this so that the effects of this El Niño period will be less on those farmers and so that, when we come to a point where this might become a disaster — and we don't know if it's going to be, but if it's going to be so severe that it becomes a disaster — they will definitely be guided in the process of seeing how help can be provided to them.

The department, together with provincial departments, are already working on feed banks in the various provinces to see that we've enough stock available. It will also be made available to those farmers in the instance the need therefor arises. It is a matter of not only doing the one but doing both. It's educating and helping farmers to prepare better for what we are about to face and also to make sure that, should it become a disaster, that those people, those farmers that are in need, will also be guided through the process that they

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might need to obtain help, which hopefully will be readily available. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Ms B E MACHI: Hon House Chairperson, through you to the hon Minister: Early warnings are only useful if they reach farmers in time and are followed by action. What specific trigger mechanisms has the department established so that when rainfall, dam levels, or crop conditions reach critical thresholds, support such as feed, seeds, water, veterinary services, or financial relief is automatically deployed to affected small-scale farmers? Who will be held accountable if that intervention does not reach them in time?

The MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: House Chairperson, I thank the hon Machi for the question. Hon Machi, our responsibility is to make sure that the help we can provide reaches people before the disaster is there, as I've explained in my previous supplementary answer.

The communication on these early warning systems is very important, and that is what we are doing. Social media is helping us a lot, but we have to face the reality that there are a lot of communities, especially under our small-scale and

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emerging farmers, who are in areas of the country where there is no proper cellphone reception or data reception.

So, we have to communicate that via various other measures. We are doing that through the provincial departments, through extension offices, and through provincial or state veterinarians. The most important thing here is to not wait for the disaster to be there but to act proactively on this and make sure that we are much more prepared for this disaster or looming disaster than we were in the past. So, communication is very important.

I agree with you that it is a challenge, but it is a challenge that we are collectively taking on, and social media is definitely helping us a lot. Not only on that, when there are auctions or farmers' days, we communicate this. We get this message out through various arms of the Department of Agriculture, together with the provincial departments of agriculture. I would urge everybody to help us in this process of getting this message out and assisting people with regard to this. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Question 722:

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The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: House Chairperson, I must point out that the matters raised here form part of an ongoing criminal investigation which is currently being conducted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. The release of information relating to the investigation at this stage, prior to a final decision being taken regarding the continued prosecution of Sasol Secunda, would be premature and could, I am advised, potentially prejudice the investigation and any subsequent criminal proceedings.

It is important to emphasise that the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, DFFE is required to act in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Act of 1977 and all applicable legal requirements governing criminal investigations and proceedings. Accordingly, the DFFE must respect and uphold the integrity of the criminal investigation and the prosecutorial process, including compliance with the relevant legal requirements and procedures regulating the disclosure or the release of information relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation.

In relation to the regulation and protection of water resources, the mandate falls primarily within the Department

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of Water and Sanitation. The DFFE may where requested, provide support to the Department of Water and Sanitation, particularly through specialised investigative capacity.

When it comes to the at hand, environmental management inspectors from the DFFE were assigned to assist with the investigation of the allegations concerning pollution emanating from Sasol Secunda and its impact on the Vaal River system. Thank you, House Chair.

Ms N MAKASI: House Chair, thank you to the hon Minister for the response that he's given. The follow-up question is, what ongoing monitoring and enforcement measures are in place at Sasol's Benfield operations and the Klipspruit River? What action will follow if further contamination is detected?

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Hon member, thank you for the question. Aside from the ongoing criminal investigation, as I noted in my main reply, the regulation and protection of water resources falls primarily within the mandate of the Department of Water and Sanitation. Of course, as I mentioned, our department's environmental management inspectors will assist where required.

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I am sure the hon member recalls the very detailed presentation by the Department of Water and Sanitation to the Portfolio Committee, where they set out their approach, where they were very clear that monitoring of discharges and impacts remain a priority action for the department. But they also said that Sasol plants would be monitored against the authorisations and of course, the directors for corrective action and rehabilitation activities.

I would suggest to the member that she consider putting a written question to the responsible Minister, which of course is the Minister of Water and Sanitation, so that she can provide the full details and provide a comprehensive reply on the matters which have been raised in respect of Sasol's Benfield operations and the alleged pollution of the Klipspruit River. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Dr L MANAGA: House Chairperson ...

Tshivenda:

... ndi khou livhuwa. Ro vha thetshelesa zwavhudi Minisita musi vha tshi khou fhindula mbudziso ye ya vhudzisiwa nga Vho Makasi.

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English:

Minister, given that contemporaneous river samples were not actually secured at the time of the alleged discharge, what independent evidence can the department rely upon to conclusively determine the extent and source of the alleged contamination? Will the department commission an independent investigation to address any gaps in the evidence?

I also heard you talking about the compliance notices. Minister, is there an enforcement action that has been taken against Sasol, including compliance directives, administrative penalties, or criminal referrals? As South Africans, the Constitution guarantees us the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or to our wellbeing. Let’s comply, Minister. I so move.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: House Chairperson, I thank the hon member for the question. Again, I must reiterate that this is an ongoing criminal investigation. When it comes to the evidence in relation to that investigation, again, I must point out to the member that it would be premature to release that information because it may prejudice the investigation and of course, the criminal procedures.

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When it comes to the whole issue of compliance notices, I can say that the DFFE has acted in relation to this matter for quite some time. In fact, well before the issue was raised by the whistle-blower in 2019. I'm aware that there were joint compliance investigations, for example, in 2008, 2010, 2015 and in 2019. As a result of those joint compliance inspections, administrative enforcement measures were taken, compliance notices were issued and Sasol was given an opportunity to take a remedial action.

I don't have all the particulars in relation to those matters, and I would welcome the hon member putting a written question and I would then provide a comprehensive... [Interjections.] Thank you.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Hon Machi, can you please mute? Sorry for that disturbance, you can conclude. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: House Chairperson. I've completed my reply. Thank you.

Mr W D PEACH: Hon Minister, not to belabour the point, in light of the protected nature of this investigation and the recent raid on Sasol's offices, along with the dramatic

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walkout during the portfolio committee oversight meeting, can I understand whether your department acknowledges that investigators did not obtain contemporaneous river samples at the alleged discharge point because of the relevant valve already being repaired in 2022?

Minister, what corrective actions has been implemented to hold officials accountable for this failure of environmental enforcement as well as the breaches of whistle-blower protection by the department, as well as what independent evidence does the department now have that can establish beyond witness testimony and historical monitoring data on hazardous chemicals that have been discharged into the Klipspruit River? Thank you, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Hon member, thank you for that question. I don't agree and I don't think there was a failure. In fact, the DFFE has engaged in a very complex and thorough investigation. And if I recall correctly, which involved analysing more than nine gigabytes of technical documentary evidence along with witness interviews and indeed other evidence. And so the DFFE, I think has conducted a comprehensive investigation, which as I've said, is ongoing.

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Again, when it comes to the evidence, again, I must emphasise that I cannot share that information precisely because I'm advised that it may prejudice an ongoing investigation and of course, criminal proceedings. When it comes to the question of the whistle-blower, I do think it is important to point out that the DFFE supported the whistle-blower and the whistle-blower, as the hon member, I'm sure recalls, was eventually admitted to a witness protection programme.

But that's not the end of it. I'm sure the hon member is also aware that the allegations related to the alleged victimisation of the whistle-blower in fact forms part of the investigations, and the criminal proceedings which are part of the ongoing investigation into the conduct of Sasol Secunda. Thank you.

Mr A T THEMBA: Minister, this whistle-blower was forced to resign in 2020 after raising this matter. As your department, what concrete measures have you put in place to protect the whistle-blower to ... [Inaudible] ... independent third-party monitoring at Benfield instead of self-monitoring and to prevent industrial population from compromising Vaal water security. Why did it take the National Prosecuting Authority,

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NPA raids and Parliament to make your department act? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Hon member, thank you for putting the question. On the whistle-blower, I wish to reiterate that the department did attempt to support the whistle-blower on several occasions and eventually the whistle-blower was admitted to a protection programme. Of course, the department has not left the matter there. The department has included the alleged victimisation of the whistle-blower in the investigation and in the criminal proceedings.

I am not sure if I heard the hon member correctly, but I do also want to deal with the matter of the raid on Sasol Secunda's premises during the portfolio committee meeting on the same subject. At that time, a senior official in the department responded to questions from the committee and assured the committee that the raid was coincidental and it was not planned.

Perhaps finally, I do want to point out to the hon member that the department took action in relation to Sasol Secunda well before the issue was raised by the whistle-blower, having

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conducted joint inspections of Sasol Secunda in 2008, 2010, 2015 and indeed in 2019. Compliance notices were issued, and of course, Sasol was required to take a remedial action. Thank you.

Ms N MAKASI: Hon Minister, when the inspectors on the ground and the criminal investigation is done, as you are reporting, can you then be able to provide the relevant sampling, the laboratory results and the expert assessments on the matter in full so that I am able then to implement your suggestion of then escalating the matter to the relevant Minister of Water and Sanitation? Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Hon member, thank you for the question. Again, I would emphasise that at this stage, I cannot release information in relation to sampling data, laboratory tests, and of course, expert assessments and the scientific base on which the case is built, precisely because sharing that information would potentially prejudice the investigation and any subsequent criminal proceedings.

But of course, should this matter be re-enrolled before the courts, that information I’m sure would be discovered through

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court proceedings and could be shared with the hon member during the proceedings. I will certainly engage with my department on that matter. Thank you, House Chair.

Question 760:

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: Thank you, hon Maimane for the question. The department has continued to use the National Minimum Wage Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Employment Equity Act to address low pay and unjustifiable remuneration differentials.

It is important to highlight that fair pay and pay equity form an integral component of the constitutional right to equality, human dignity and fair labour practices. Section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees equality before the law and protection against any form of unfair discrimination. Additionally, section 10 and 23 protect the rights to dignity and fair labour practices.

To give effect to the Equality Clause, the Employment Equity Act 1998 was enacted to promote equity within the national labour market to address the disparities in employment, occupation and income. In order to address the unjustifiable employment and pay disparities, every employer, irrespective

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of size, is required by section 5 of the Employment Equity Act to take steps to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy practice. Furthermore, to address pay and benefits disparities experienced by most of the people. That is black people, women and persons with disabilities who were previously disadvantaged by apartheid and discriminatory laws and practices.

Section 6(4) and section 6(5) of the Employment Equity Act were introduced in the Employment Equity Amendment Act 2013 to provide for specific provisions on the right to equal pay for work of equal value. In fact, section 6(4) of the Employment Equity Act is very clear. That is:

> A difference in terms and conditions of employment, including pay between employees of the same employer performing the same or substantially the same work or work of equal value that is directly or indirectly based on anyone or more of the grounds listed in section 6(1) of the Employment Equity Act is unfair discrimination.

These prohibited grounds include race, gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, marital status, sexual orientation,

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religion, family responsibility, pregnancy and so forth. Section 6(5) of the Employment Equity Act further provides that the Minister, after consultation with the commission, may prescribe the criteria and the methodology for assessing work of equal value contemplated in section 6(4).

To support the implementation of section 6(4)(5) of the Employment Equity Act guidelines and implementation measures were subsequently introduced to the Employment Equity Regulations 2014, which were later replaced by General Administrative Regulations 2025, published on 15 April 2025. Regulations two to seven of the General Administrative Regulations 2025 deal with matters relating to equal pay for work of equal value, assessment criteria and the meaning of work of equal value, the methodology for assessing work of equal value, and factors justifying differentiation in terms and conditions of employment including pay.

So I want to say, all this equal pay legislative framework plays a significant role in guiding employers, employees, trade unions, labour inspectors, bargaining councils, the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration and the Labour Court in dealing with remuneration, fairness and equal pay disputes. Thank you very much, hon House Chair.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Thank you very much, hon Minister. The first supplementary question will be asked by Dr Maimane.

Mrs N L HLAZO-WEBSTER: Thank you very much, House Chair. I will be taking the supplementary question. I want to recognise the response of the Minister and to say that in your response, Minister, you are very clear on what legislation is and what the legislation is that currently exists and yet in the same response you are also clear and concede to the fact that the inequalities still persist. We still have realities of the pay inequalities that exist on the basis of gender and of race.

Now, as Bosa, we've introduced a Bill, the Fair Pay Bill in Parliament, and which amongst some of the interventions that it brings is that it requires greater pay transparency, it ensures that employers disclose what the pay is for each role and then corrects unjustifiable pay gaps.

So the question to you is that will you and your department support the Bill so that workers can now know whether they're being paid fairly and have a remedy, and you are able to enforce when they are not because it seems the biggest issue

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is remedy and being able to enforce where these laws are not being kept?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Thank you, hon Webster. Please, let's note that next time when the initial member that has asked the question is unable to make the first supplementary, we submit the name through the table so that it is noted accordingly. But we will give over to you Minister, to respond.

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: Thank you so much to the member. I think the question is a bit a deviation from the primary question because the primary question was focusing on what has been done, including during my tenure, to ensure that the matters are addressed.

Now the hon member, respectfully so, is coming with a question that talks to a Bill that is still to be introduced by her party, which I think is outside of what I came to respond to. So I want to respectfully say all what we have for now helping us to address the issues that are raised and also to come with the regulations that are making it mandatory for the companies to report. Hence, every February of the year, we shall be making public the report on the assessment that has been

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conducted by the commission on compliance with the laws that we are currently having as a country. Thank you, hon House Chair.

Mr M BAGRAIM: Thank you Minister and thank you for dealing with this. I want to know, has the department completed a feasibility study that assesses since the minimum wage has been increased how has it contributed to either an increased employment of people in businesses or has contributed to unemployment? Since the minimum wage was introduced, unemployment has gone from bad to worse. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: Hon Bagraim, thank you so much for that question. Our understanding is the fact that up to so far workers are paying close to 60% towards transport for them to access their workplaces. So the monies that they are paid — the majority of them, more than 50% — are spent on transportation. It is for that reason that it is important that we don't allow any industry, any sector of the country, to pay workers peanuts.

We strongly feel that there is no relationship between the implementation of the Minimum Wage Act and the issues of unemployment. I think the hon Minister for Finance articulated

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so well earlier on that there is an issue with the structural challenges and the performance of the economy that is related to the high level of unemployment. So as far as I am concerned there is no scientific evidence available that suggests that us looking at the sectors that have been paying peanuts to workers is linked to the issue of unemployment. Thank you, hon House Chair.

Mr L D SELEPE: Hon Minister, can the department provide a breakdown of the employers that have been monitored for the compliance with the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, including the number found to be non-compliant? The enforcement action taken against them and whether those employers subsequently corrected the identified gap? Thank you, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: House Chair, we can do that with pleasure because the commission is hard at work in looking at what is currently happening, more so that now they have since introduced these administrative regulations that I was talking about. We are able to give an account. We started during either this financial year or the last financial year reported in 2026. We can report exactly what the member is asking.

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We are also able to provide the outcomes of the enforcement we continue to undertake daily as it relates to the current Acts providing for equal pay and ensuring there is no discrimination and disparity for those doing the same work. So we can be able then to submit that in writing if the Chairperson allows because I don't have the figures currently as I am standing here. Thank you so much, hon House Chair.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Thank you, hon Minister. Hon Manyi, I see your hand.

Mr M MANYI: House Chair, I want to really welcome the positive approach by the Minister. If she can just finish the sentence and give an indication of by when.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Ms Z Majozi): Okay, thank you very much hon Manyi. I am sure the Minister will be able to respond to that when I give her an opportunity on the next question which will be asked by hon Mokwele. Hon Minister, please, as you have said that you will provide a written response, please you will put a time frame of by when they must expect the written response from you. I will give the fourth supplementary question to hon Mokwele.

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Ms T J MOKWELE: Minister, given that section 6(4) of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the Code of Good Practice on Equal Pay/Remuneration for Work of Equal Value has failed to close the racial and gender wage gap where black workers on average earn about 75% less than white counterparts and women earn 23% less than male in for work of equal value.

Has your department taken upon itself to evaluate the percentage given? If not, what is it that the department is currently doing, especially on punitive measures against the employers that persist on practicing inequality in terms of race and gender? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: House Chair, the Code of Good Practice on Equal Pay/Remuneration for Work of Equal Value provides practical guidance relating to evaluating jobs, identifying discriminatory remuneration policies and practices as I said earlier on, and the process for evaluating jobs for purposes of equal pay, remuneration for work of equal value.

To augment these measures and to address the perpetual income pay inequalities, the Income Differential Data Collection Tool, which is EEA4 form used by employers to submit annual income differential statements as required by section 27 of

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the Employment Equity Act. It has also been reviewed and amended to align with the amendments to the Companies Act. These amendments require employers to report on the pay, on the remuneration gap between the highest paid and the lowest paid employees in their organizations.

The amended EEA4 form was published as part of the Employment Equity General Administrative Regulations 2025 and utilized by employers to report in the 2025 Employment Equity Act reporting cycle. This was for the first time in the implementation of the Employment Equity Act and its regulation. The analysis process of the income differential data is under consideration by the department.

On the issue of the time frame, I request that I be allowed 14 days before I submit. By the end of the 14 days, I would have submitted the information as requested by hon Selepe.

Mrs N L HLAZO WEBSTER: Minister, the original question which you asked that I stick to had asked what legislative measures you're promoting in order to improve fairness and transparency and accountability and remuneration. Now, as it stands from your own reports in 2025, only 9% of the employers that were

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reviewed were found to be compliant with employment equity legislation.

I do again want to say that I hope that you will support the Fair Pay Bill because it gives, allows and enables the department to be able to enforce this legislation. I also want to ask what the department is doing now to make sure that those non-compliant employers, that's like over 90%, correct the unjustifiable pay disparities. If you can let us know what the actual measures are that the department is putting in place and is enforcing.

The MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR: House Chair, firstly, I want to agree with the hon member that the issue of enforcement is a challenge. It is for that reason that we welcome the pronouncement by the President on the expansion of the inspectors. This is because majority of times employers get away with murder because we are overspread with the plus 2 400 inspectors. It takes time to go back to the over 2 million companies that are expected to enforce compliance with the labour laws of the country. The issue is enforcement; hence we will then be reaching out to many the moment we start to add the numbers that have been given by the President. So

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the matter of coming up with new laws, to me, does not necessarily guarantee that there shall be compliant.

What is important is escalation of inspection and enforcement, which we are looking at doing as we are busy recruiting more, starting from the inspector in terms that we pronounced earlier on. So I agree with the member that we need to ensure that enforcement is ... [Inaudible.] Thank you so much, hon House Chair.

Question 746:
The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Thank you, House, Chairperson, and thank you to the hon member for putting the question. The January 2026 flood was widespread damage throughout the Kruger National Park, as many hon members know. Infrastructure, including roads, bridges, tourism facilities, staff accommodation, water infrastructure, management roads, and fencing, of course, were affected. The scale of the damage was calculated, as the hon member points out, at about a billion rand, which is more than the SA National Parks can cover in the short term.

The SANParks, of course ... an insurance claim of R50 million for loss of revenue and R150 million for insured built

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structures. But of course, management roads and gravel roads are not insured. Fifty million rand has been received from the insurers for loss of revenue.

The Kruger Recovery Fund was also established shortly after the floods to support the recovery effort, and the fund has sound governance and oversight structures to ensure that the funds are made responsibly, transparency, and of course, in line with applicable requirements.

The recovery programme in the Kruger National Park adopts a build back better approach, of course, focusing not just on restoring damaged infrastructure, but most importantly on improving its resilience, its safety, and of course, its long-term sustainability, taking climate change into consideration.

The recovery programme aligns with SANParks's broader climate change adoption planning, vulnerable culverts, low crossing water systems, sanitation and wastewater infrastructure and electrical and other essential services need to be upgraded rather than simply reinstated. Of course, the full recovery will take time to complete and will require substantial additional funding to be invested.

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Projects, of course, that have been completed include the Letaba High-Level Bridge, phase one of the Letaba Rest Camp restoration, and of course, the reconstruction of culverts on the H4-1 route, restoring safe access via Skukuza to Lower Sabie.

The department has also, and I think this is important to point out, on behalf of SANParks, submitted a fully proposal to the community fund to the value of $20 million. And of course, the programme focuses on the resilient ... [Inaudible.] ... infrastructure, and ecosystem restoration, community livelihood recovery, governance, and of course, climate resistance preparedness, and risk planning. And we also successfully raise that additional finance from the Green Climate Fund. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Mr A D DE BLOCQ VAN SCHELTINGA: House Chairperson, let me take the opportunity to thank Minister Maynier and erstwhile Minister Aucamp, and the SANParks's leadership for the excellent response after the disastrous January floods in the Kruger National Park.

Of course, the Minister is aware that this is not the only national park that was affected by flooding this year and I

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wondered if the Minister could update the House on the rebuilding efforts that have taken place at Bontebok National Park which was similarly affected by flooding this year. Thank you.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Thank you, hon House Chairperson, and thank you to the member. I think the member is absolutely correct to point out that flood damage was not confined to the Kruger National Park. And it's precisely for that reason that I fairly recently visited the Bontebok National Park, which suffered severe flood damage earlier this year. The flood resulted in severe damage to some of the park chalets, to its picnic sites, and it was the near complete destruction of the main access road to the accommodation area.

The SANParks estimates the damage to have reached about R12,3 million. And I have to say, hon members, when I visited the Bontebok National Park, I was impressed with the speed at which particularly the main access road had been repaired and it was certainly very impressive, especially because the road had been significantly reinforced to protect against this kind of damage in the future.

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Of course, the Bontebok National Park are now working on removing large amounts of flood debris and of course on upgrading and repairing chalets and hiking trails. But most importantly, the Bontebok National Park is open, and I think that that is huge credit to SANParks. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Mr A T THEMBA: Minister, January 2026 was not a frank accident. The SANparks confirms R950 million damage, 80 million tourism lost, 500 guests evacuated, and Letaba High-Level Bridge, built for one in 100 years flood, was overtopped again. This is the third time, Minister, after the year 2000 and the year 2023, but you say build back.

My question is simple. Will you take this House to confidence and put your head on the block that your build back new standards will save H4-1 Skukuza Lower Sabie, where culvert L27, L34, and L35 were built at R37,5 million and 196 million ... of bridges that Letaba Camp which went into roof level, will not be built in the same flood plan to wash away after three years? Thank you, Minister.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Thank you, House Chairperson, and thank you to the member for

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putting the question. I can only say that and reiterate the point that I made in my opening remarks. I think the member is absolutely right. The January 2026 floods were a once in 100, Some people believe almost a once in a 500-year event, which of course were devastating. And it's precisely for that reason, that our approach is not just to build back, as the hon member said, but to build back better, to make sure that infrastructure to which he referred, like the Letaba High-Level Bridge, like the culverts on the H4-1 route, are built back in a way that they are more resilient and capable of surviving future severe weather events of the nature that took place earlier this year. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Ms J Q KHUMALO: House Chairperson, my question to the Minister is, how is SANParks addressing the budget deficit between the estimated billion rand needed for repairs and the funding currently allocated by the National Treasury? Thank you, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Thank you, House Chairperson, and thank you to the hon member. I think it's an excellent question. Of course, we are working around the clock to mobilise the necessary resources for the recovery in the Kruger National Park, and a variety of funding

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sources are being utilised or are being explored to address the scale of the damage and close the gap to which the hon member referred.

This, of course, includes insurance funding, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, but it also refers to SANParks's Capital Expenditure, CAPEX, funding, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, DFFE, flood relief funding, and then contributions, for example, from our Oregon Natural Resources Institute, ONRI, rangers and other sources. We have also requested funding through two provincial disaster relief funds, as well as, of course, international funding, which of course refers to the $20 million bid to the Green Climate Fund.

And we hope that by mobilising resources, looking at different funding sources, including alternative funding sources, we will close the gap and raise sufficient funds in order to finance a full recovery in the Kruger National Park. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Dr L MANAGA: Mr Minister, considering the scale of the damage caused by January 2026 floods that is estimated at R1 billion, what is the current verified cost of reconstruction and

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rehabilitation? And how much, Minister, has already been spent and what amount remains unfunded? You spoke of the building back, building back, building back. And given that climate related extreme weather events are becoming an increasing threat to public infrastructure, what specific changes to engineering standards, road networks, bridges, drainage system and other infrastructure are implemented to ensure that rebuilt infrastructure in the parks are capable of withstanding future floods? Thank you so much, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Thank you, House Chair, and thank you to the hon member for the question. I have, in my opening remarks and indeed in some of my replies to questions, been very clear that we as a department are working with SANParks to mobilise the billion rand required to finance the recovery. I don't have the particulars about the final amount raised or how much has been spent, but I would suggest to the hon member that she put a written question and I would be happy to share the information with her and provide her with a comprehensive response.

In relation to the building standards, again, I'm not familiar with the building standards required, but I have set out the general approach, which of course is to build back better, not

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to focus simply on restoring damaged infrastructure, but to build that infrastructure back better so that it is more resilient and capable of withstanding future severe weather events. Thank you, House Chairperson.

Mr A D DE BLOCQ VAN SCHELTINGA: House Chairperson, it's de Blocq van Scheltinga, just for your benefit, it's a very difficult surname, but I don't blame you one bit. Letaba Rest Camp happens to be one of my personal favourites and as hon Themba said in his question, it was very dismaying to see that the flood levels reached to the roofs of some of those houses. And obviously, there's a lot of work that's gone into the recovery at Letaba specifically. But then I was dismayed in the last couple of months to read about a fire that broke out in Letaba. It seems that camp cannot get a break.

Could the Minister please tell us the details about that fire, the extent of the damage and what has been done to recover after that fire? Thank you so much, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND ENVIRONMENT: Thank you, hon House Chair, and thank you to the hon member. I must say I'm delighted to meet a hon member with a surname even more difficult than my own. But on the whole question of the

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fire at the Letaba Rest Camp. It is true that there was a fire, if I recall, during the course of last week. Thankfully, hon members, that fire occurred at two chalets which were still under renovation rather than, of course, recently renovated chalets. I can assure the hon member that camp operations were not affected. Tourist facilities such as the reception, the shopping facilities, and indeed the magnificent museum at Letaba Rest Camp remain open.

Of course, at this stage, the cause of the fire is still under investigation. And of course, I would be happy to update the hon member on the results of that investigation. But for now, we are, together with SANParks, working around the clock to ensure that Letaba Rest Camp is open before the 15th of December 2026. Thank you.

Question 723:

The MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Hon House Chairperson, in response: The issue of the dispute that exists between SA Social Security Agency, Sassa, and the Post Bank with regards to Master Services Agreement is currently before the Constitutional Court. The intervention that we had initiated was through the Interministerial Committee, IMC, which consist of myself as the Minister of Communications and

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Digital Technologies, the Minister of Social Development and the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation who chairs that IMC. We had convened earlier this year in April in an attempt to avoid the finalisation of this matter to the courts but rather through the existing government channels.

However, in between doing that process the Constitutional Court met in May to give directives about this matter and resolved that the status quo should proceed meaning that the Master Services Agreement is still in effect and further appointed a facilitator to meet between the two parties and facilitate an outcome through the provisions of the IMC. The IMC met again on 18 August this year together with the entities and also joined this time around by the Minister of Finance. Part of the recommendations that we made because the President was cited in the papers was to make a proposal that the Master Services Agreement be in place until the end of this year and until the Constitutional Court makes a pronouncement when it meets later this year that the status quo be in place.

So, that is on the first part of the question. The second part of the question: The decision about the establishment of the Post Bank into being converted as a bank lies with Prudential

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Authority of SA Reserve Bank. Once it is completely satisfied that all the compliance issues particularly with regards to the variation notice which should be issued by the Post Bank had been finalised it would then be in a position to pronounce on that decision. I am not in a position to give any commitment about that date because that decision and the determination lies entirely with the Prudential Authority. Thanks, hon House Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): The first supplementary question will be asked by the hon Sangoni.

Mr S I SUBRATHIE: Hon House Chairperson, this is the hon Subrathi. I will be taking the question on behalf of the hon Sangoni who is not available.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): You may proceed, hon member.

Mr S I SUBRATHIE: Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Hon Minister, thank you for your response. Maybe a very simple question to you is: As a representative and as a shareholder, what efforts would you have done to stop the initial Master

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Services Agreement ending on 30 September 2025? For it would have been the first date and maybe linked to that is: Why we could have allowed two state entities to end up in court instead of the matter resolved between government itself? Thank you so much, hon House Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Hon House Chairperson and to the hon member, as I indicated in the initial reply that there was an attempt through the IMC to avoid this matter perpetuating through the court process, however, it had already been there even before this IMC was reconstituted. Part of those efforts was to avoid these undesirable and healthy instance where in you have state entities whether they are in different departments or not is never a desirable development when state entities take each other to court. However, as law-abiding citizens and as our constitutional democracy makes provision for the courts in instances where matters of constitutionality and conflict exist, we referred to that process. It is to that effect as the IMC met on 18 August with respect of the directive that was issued by the Constitutional Court that we finalise the outstanding issues of disputes through that channel. We sit with the situation where in both parties being Post Bank and Sassa hold fundamentally strong views about Master Services

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Agreement. And as undesirable as it is, it is now in the hands of the Constitutional Court to then make that final determination. Thank you, Hon House Chairperson.

Mrs H DENNER: Hon House Chairperson, with your permission I would turn off my camera due to burn work problems.

Hon Minister, as of May 2026, Post Bank officially withdrew its over the counter services from SA Post Offices ranches redirecting its customers to private retail partners and Standard Bank infrastructure. At the same time without a full commercial licence from the Prudential Authority, Post Bank remains legally restricted from offering lending facilities or issuing credit which is the primary revenue driver for any sustainable bank.

So, given that Post Bank is now paying transection fees to private competitors to utilise the infrastructure while simultaneously barred from generating the interest income through lending: How can Post Bank be on a path of sustainability and specifically: What is the exact interim business model to prevent Post Bank from operating at a structural loss and when will a fully costed financial plan to be presented to Parliament to prove that it is not simply a

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multibillion rand fiscal drain on the National Treasury? Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, I want to remind you that the follow up question only consists of one question and not a number of sub questions.

The hon Minister can decide which one he wants to take. The hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Hon House Chairperson, without nitpicking because it is an important question I will try to the best of my ability to deal with those different parts of the questions.

However, in terms of when will Post Bank be able to present a fully costed plan the hon member is welcomed to table the request through the portfolio committee. We will gladly come with management and board leadership of the Post Bank.

There is an important observation that is worth highlighting here that the migration of customers from Post Bank to private banks is the matter of choice made by individual accountholders in pursuit of either convenience or better fees

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and costs. That is part of the free market economy that we are part of and part again of the democracy that we are in where in individuals have a choice in desire which institution they bank with, which institution will give them great value.

The important thing with the compliance processes is that the Prudential Authority is very clear in terms of the outstanding matters that must and ought to be addressed before a finalisation of licence can be granted. Until such time that it has not made a determination that it is satisfied the status quo will hold. The management of Post Bank is obviously seized with the matter with our support. However, it is very important to distinguish between processes that are external of the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies and those that are within the jurisdiction of the Prudential Authority. Thank you very much, hon House Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): The third supplementary question will be asked by the hon Tambo.

Is the hon Tambo on the platform?

If not, I will proceed to the fourth supplementary question that will be asked by the hon Bodlani.

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Ms T K BODLANI: Hon House Chairperson and hon Minister, the termination of the master Service Agreement resulted from a unilateral decision former ANC Minister of Social Development. This led to the President's intervention. Rightly the former Minister was fired. This another ANC mess that you have been left to clean up.

What is your commitment to respecting the court process as the matter unfolds in the Constitutional Court without being deemed to be interfering? Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, before the hon Minister reply. I see two hands from the EFF I will come back to you after the reply of the Minister. The hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Hon House Chairperson, as the law-abiding member of the executive I will respect the outcome of the Apex Court of this country. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Dr L MANAGA: Hon House Chairperson, I raised my hand to ask the question on behalf of the hon S Tambo.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Please proceed hon member.

Dr L MANAGA: Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Hon Minister, beyond the Constitutional Court litigation between Sassa and the Post Bank, the central issue here is the political commitment towards empowering the Post Bank to ensure that it becomes the prime state bank able to provide services to the poor who include Sassa beneficiaries.

What steps if any, have you taken to ensure that the Post Bank acquires commercial banking licence and is able to operate as a fully functional bank? I so move.

The MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Hon House Chairperson and to the hon member the decision about the granting of the licence for the Post Bank to operate is not a political decision it is the decision that the Prudential Authority on the basis of compliance with its requirements and stipulations will be able to make.

So, you are asking the right question but the right authority to make a decision on that lies with the Prudential Authority

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regardless of political commitment or the lack there off. The ultimate decisionmaker in this case is Prudential Authority. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Mr S I SUBRATHIE: Hon House Chairperson and to the hon Minister, thank you for the responses. Maybe to the last question just based on that can you please explain to us what has Post Bank done to actually meet the card key management and the Prudential Authority standards conditions that stands at its way of obtaining a banking licence? Maybe by which date do you expect to submit a Post Bank capitalisation business case to government for consideration? Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

The MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Hon House Chairperson, part of the requirements that the Post Bank needed to satisfy was obviously the issue of the conversion from the gold card to the black card in order to address some of the long-standing safety issues which the Post Bank has raised. And obviously the conversions are still taking place currently with members or beneficiaries migrating between those cards.

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Secondly are the actions we have taken are obviously around the establishment of the board as the hon member would know that there is also the board for the controlling company which is a subsidiary of the SA Post Bank. We are in the process of finalising that because those members have to do the fit and proper assessment by the Prudential Authority itself.

In terms of the third follow up question regarding when we will be able to table the recapitalisation plan to the committee? We will obviously communicate the channels of the committee, but we are ready at any given time to come with the board of Post Bank and also the management in order to present that plan in its entirety or provide a status on its development currently. Thank you, hon House Chairperson.

Question 797:
The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: House Chairperson, I came before the House sometime earlier this year to present our programme on how we were going to eliminate load reduction.

I am happy to announce that we are exceeding our own expectations. We have eliminated load reduction in seven of the nine provinces. The total number of households or

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customers that were affected by load reduction was 1 446 771. We have managed to remove a significant number of them. The number of feeders that were affected by load reduction was 576.

I am happy to announce that of the initial 1 446 771 customers affected by load reduction, we have reduced that number and we are now at 247 617 customers.

The two provinces that remain are KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, and we are confident that before the end of March next year we will have totally eliminated load shedding across the length and breadth of the country.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon Minister. I can tell you that it's way after six and at least for the past year or so it's very clear that load shedding ... [Laughter.] ... has been dealt with to a great extent. I will give hon Mbatha an opportunity to ask his supplementary question. Over to you, hon Mbatha.

Mr M S MBATHA: Chair of Chairs, are you able to hear me?

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): You are audible and you can even switch on your camera if you want to because there's no load shedding. [Laughter.]

Mr M S MBATHA: No, no, no, it's going to be dark on my side. There is one. Thank you very much, Minister for the answer. I'm going to be very short with my follow-up or supplementary question.

Even though the number that has been determined by you now is 200 and something, communities and businesses are still grossly affected. What it gives effect to is that load reduction is even affecting small-scale businesses. I think there is no justification in continuing to have it. Minister, I would like to know, by way of completely eliminating it, when will you not actually have any numbers completely eliminated?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Hon Mbatha, you are absolutely correct. I think it's an indictment on a democratic government that we still have load reduction. As you make the point, it disproportionately affects low-income areas, micro, small and medium enterprises and contributes to unemployment.

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We have every intention of eliminating it. As I've said, by March 2027, it will be completely eradicated. However, as is always our practice, we want to exceed even our own expectations. The worst-case scenario is March of 2027 in the two provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

Ms N H MHLONGO: Hon Minister, given that municipalities already owe Eskom billions of rand, what accountability measures will be taken against those that fail to meet firm deadlines? And, will Parliament receive quarterly reports to ensure that households are not punished for municipal mismanagement?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Yes, hon Mhlongo, you are right. We don't want to make our customers collateral damage as a result of incapacity in municipalities ... the inability of municipalities to collect from everyone. So, it is not our intention to penalise, even those who are diligent payers.

So, what we are doing as part of eliminating load reduction is to ensure that we roll out smart meters so that the eradication of load reduction is accompanied by a parallel process of installing smart meters.

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What smart meters do is to ensure that we isolate customers that pay from those that do not pay, so that there is no collateral damage.

To those that are diligent payers, we continue to provide uninterrupted service. To those that do not qualify for free basic electricity, FBE, and choose not to pay, credit control will be initiated. So, in this way we are not going to make diligent payers collateral damage.

However, we are working with the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs to resolve what is essentially a structural problem in municipalities, and hopefully we will find an answer to this vexed question. But, I'm confident that in eliminating load reduction, we will ensure that we reward the diligent payers and go after those who choose not to pay, and still protect the indigent.

Mr E V BAPTIE: Minister, nobody disputes that illegal connections, bypassed meters and overloaded networks have to be dealt with. However, households that pay for electricity cannot be expected to carry the consequence of a distribution network that has not been upgraded or properly managed indefinitely.

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So, where load reduction is being imposed because infrastructure is inadequate, rather than because of an immediate safety emergency, what obligation do you believe Eskom or the relevant municipality has to upgrade that network within a defined period? And, what is the maximum period that a paying customer should reasonably be expected to live without load reduction?

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Chair, part of the financial improvements at Eskom allows them to reinvest that surplus, if you like profit, into the refurbishment, maintenance and replenishment of the infrastructure, transmission and also distribution infrastructure. So, hon Baptie is absolutely correct.

I mean, a big part of the failure and interruption of electricity has to do with ageing distribution and reticulation infrastructure, underinvestment and neglect. So, we are going to make that intervention on the part of Eskom.

On the part of municipalities, one of the conditions we are placing as part of the reform agenda, working with National Treasury and the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, is to ring-fence revenue that is earned

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out of electricity and allocate a part of that revenue for the refurbishment and maintenance of infrastructure before it can be allocated to other spending pressures in municipalities.

On his last question, I've made the point that we are committing that by the end of March next year we will have eliminated load reduction across the length and breadth of the country.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): The fourth supplementary question will be asked by the hon Nkosi. Is the hon Nkosi on the platform?

Mr V A NKOSI: Yes, hon House Chairperson. Am I audible?

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): You are audible and visible. You may proceed.

Mr V A NKOSI: Thank you very much, hon House Chair. Hon Minister, you have eliminated load shedding in seven provinces and only two provinces are outstanding. We appreciate that and we also hope that by March 2027 we will completely eliminate load shedding.

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Hon Minister, please elaborate on how the installation of smart meters and other strategies are aimed at ending load reduction.

The MINISTER OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY: Thanks, hon Nkosi. It's more about load reduction, because load shedding is something of the past.

Smart meters have got multiple uses. The first one is the point I made earlier on. It allows us an opportunity to ensure that not everyone is collateral damage. So, those that are diligent payers will be isolated from those that are delinquents.

Of course, the delinquents I'm talking about are those who can afford to pay but choose not to pay, who prioritise other spending and relegate their payment of municipal services. They will be credit controlled. So, we are able to isolate them.

The second one is that smart meters helps us to manage the load. So, it essentially performs an additional function for the system operator to ensure that we are able to balance demand and supply.

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The third one is that with regard to FBE, it is going to allow us to front load, if you like, the allocation of FBE. They don't have to purchase electricity before they can have their FBE. At the beginning of the month, we are able to front load so that they are able to get the reward of being recipients of FBE.

Lastly, however, it also helps consumers to manage their consumption. They are able to track it in real time. They are able to have a sense of which of their appliances use or consume the most electricity. We leave that decision in the hands of consumers. They are able to make choices on how they spend their electricity.

That is really the real value of smart meters, and hopefully our people will appreciate that.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon Minister. We have completed this question. We will now proceed to a question that stood over from Wednesday, the 19th of March, this year, in terms of Rule 138(5) and supplementary questions. Additional time has been allocated for these questions.

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I now take Question 668, which has been asked by the hon D Bergman to the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

The question is whether she has disclosed gifts given by foreign governments timeously. If not, why not? If so, what are the relevant details? I now recognise the hon Minister.

Question 668:

The MINISTER OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: Thank you very much, hon House Chairperson. Let me also greet the members of the House. Yes, I have disclosed all the gifts received from the conferences and summits that I have attended, which were organised and arranged by foreign governments. I have done that timeously.

I have also done that in accordance with applicable disclosure prescriptions. There is a register that we already have that of course ... if the gifts are more than 1 500 we must take them and report it to the President.

The last question asks what are the relevant details. We do have those details and of course they can be shared with the entities that need to inspect them. Thank you very much.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon members, I've been advised by the Table Staff that there is a possibility that on the previous question the hon Mbatha would like to have a last bite in terms of the Rules. Hon Mbatha, do you still ... [Inaudible.]

Mr M S MBATHA: Thank you. Yes, I still have. Chairperson, I wondered why you had cut me off. I was supposed to end.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): I know you are a great finisher.

Mr M S MBATHA: I'm here, Chairperson. [Laughter.] Knowing that the Minister now has a date, which is great, we now also know that we have what is called an extra availability of electricity.

Can the Minister move the date a little back? It must not be March. We actually have more electricity than was previously thought. On the basis of that, can it be December? Those communities that are suffering with load reduction really require an urgent solution. Can he be that creative? Chair of Chairs, thank you.

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The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): I will be as creative as the Minister can be by asking the Minister of Electricity. Hon Minister of Electricity, you share the same surnames, but I can’t expect the Minister in the Presidency to respond to this. The hon Sputla Ramokgopa.

Is the Minister of Electricity still on the platform? Hon Mbatha, my apologies for this. What I will do is to request the hon Minister of Electricity, because it was an error on my side, that ...

Mr M S MBATHA: I was ready on time.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): I know you were. You are always ready. I know you like that. Since your first days in Parliament, you are always ready. [Laughter.] So, if you can bear with me, I will ensure that you get the reply to your question in writing from the Minister. Can we agree on that?

Mr M S MBATHA: That will be great. Thank you, Chair of Chairs.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you very much. In the meantime, I have proceeded to the question that stood over from the 19th of March, which Minister Ramokgopa, the

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Minister in the Presidency, has responded to. Hon Bergman, are you there?

Mr D BERGMAN: Thank you very much. Minister, can you categorically ...

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Did you get the reply from the hon Minister Maropene Ramokgopa?

Mr D BERGMAN: Yes, I did.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Okay, you may proceed.

Question 668 (cont):
Mr D BERGMAN: Minister, can you categorically state that you did not accept any offer of a vehicle from a foreign embassy or a vehicle manufacturer or factory or anyone connected to such country or industry in 2023-24 and since then? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: House Chair, I can categorically declare that no foreign government has ever offered me any vehicle. Therefore, as a result, I haven’t received any offer, a car from any foreign entity,

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including their businesses - lack of a better word to sort - any institutions that may be connected to any foreign government. Thank you very much.

Mr M MANYI: House Chair, through you to Minister, good evening. Minister, I've heard your original answer to the first question. I will just add more to the ... and I also appreciate that you will submit the information that is required. I just want to give a bit more detail on what else must be part of that information, if you can. When you do submit that information, can you please also include the full list of gifts received from foreign governments since your appointment, including the specific government or embassy, nature and approximate value of each gift and the exact dates each was declared in the relevant register.

I'll be happy to have all of that in two weeks, Minister, just to give you time to collect all this information. Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: Yes, I will do that. I can start working on it by next week Tuesday. I will submit it to Parliament because it's done all the time. Therefore, we just must make sure from 2023, as the hon member

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has already said, to get all that and bring it. We've got, of course, the ones from 2024. However, we'll make sure that since I became a Minister in the previous administration, I will have to make sure that I do submit to Parliament. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Hon Minister, no, thank you. I think we heard the gist of your reply that you will submit, but there seems to have been another person, a member, who was busy interrupting you on the platform while you've been responding to that. However, I think the hon Manyi, you received the gist of the reply. Is that correct? The third supplementary question will be asked by the hon Matiwane. The hon Matiwane!

Mr N S MATIASE: Hon House Chair, I will take this question on behalf of hon Matiwane.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Please proceed.

Mr N S MATIASE: Well, we welcome the Minister's commitment to be transparent about these allegations because these are serious allegations. We hope that she would not try to hide anything, just like the President is trying to hide

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allegations that he faces, that needs public scrutiny about Phala Phala. Minister, is there anything that you may want to hide, like the President is hiding allegations around Phala Phala? Thanks, House Chair.

The MINISTER OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: I would not want to venture into issues about the President. However, from my side, I do not want to hide anything. I want to be transparent and ensure that I comply because this is the oath that I took as the Member of Parliament, MP, and an oath that I took as a Minister. It is being accountable and me coming from a department that deals with accountability, I do believe that I will have to lead by example. Thank you very much.

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon Minister. The fourth supplementary question will be asked by the hon Gana. Is the hon Gana on the platform? Not. I will now revert to the last supplementary question that will be asked by the hon Bergman.

Mr D BERGMAN: Minister, one of your immediate family members has a brand-new Chinese vehicle registered in their name. Now, for security reasons, I will not go into detail. Coincidentally, the date of this registration coincides with

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the allegation of donation of such vehicles. Later that year, you failed to submit your disclosure on time, which is peculiar for a Minister and a person who holds such a high position in your party.

In May 2025, you were on a visit to the Beijing Automotive Industry Holding Co, BAIC, vehicle factory in Gqeberha and you accepted a beautiful gift from the South African chief executive officer, CEO, Yang Yixin, which made for a lovely picture on your Facebook. What was the value of the gift in that box? And why do you keep not filling in these disclosures? Thank you very much.

The MINISTER OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: Luckily, this matter has been raised by - I forgot the committee there - the committee that deals with disclosures at Parliament, and I have responded and given them information. One, I haven't received anything as I've already said. Two, when we went to BAIC in Gqeberha, I am the District Development Model, DDM, champion of Gqeberha, and part of the visits that was planned for me by the municipality itself was to go to Coega. Therefore, I had to go to Coega to visit some of the businesses that are placed there, as I would always do when I go and do any visit.

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That was exactly what I went to do. I'd even forgotten about it until it was raised with me, and I was like, oh yeah, I forgot about that. However, nevertheless, even the visit can still go and be checked because it was a public matter. Photos, it can also be asked from the municipality in terms of what we visited in Coega. I am still the DDM champion of Nelson Mandela Bay, and I continue to do my oversight visit to many other institutions, which I'll continue to do because that is what is expected of me. Any other matter ...
[Interjections.]

The HOUSE CHAIRPERSON (Mr C T Frolick): Thank you, hon Minister. Hon Minister, I want just to remind the hon members that this is a matter that is in front of the Joint Standing Committee of Ethics and Members' Interests, and I would not like you to go further into details that may be under consideration by that committee and that they must still take a decision upon.

Hon members, the time allocated for questions has expired. Outstanding replies received will be printed in Hansard. That concludes the business for the day and the House is adjourned. Thank you.

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The House adjourned at 18:43.

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