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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

The Council met at 14:00.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayers or meditation.

The Deputy Chairperson announced that the hybrid sitting constituted a sitting of the National Council of Provinces.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Deputy president, hon members, before we commence with the session today, I would just like to extend the apologies of the Chairperson of the NCOP, who is attending a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, CPA, Executive Committee meeting in Namibia.

House Chair Radebe is also attending to a family emergency.

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And then there are some members of the NCOP from Mpumalanga as well as Limpopo that might be joining us on the virtual platform as they are attending their provinces' state of the province addresses, Sopas.

And then also I would like to inform the hon members and the hon Deputy President that this is a very important day for one of the very important persons in the House, and that is the Chief Whip who is celebrating his birthday today. And on behalf of everybody, we wish you a very happy birthday, good health, peace and prosperity, hon Chief Whip. Thank you.

Hon delegates, I would like to remind delegates that the rules, in particular sub-rules 21, 22 and 23 of Rule 103 would apply.

Hon delegates, in accordance with Council Rule 2291, there will be no motions, there will be no notices of motion or motions without notice.

Hon delegates, before I proceed to questions, I would like to take this opportunity to officially welcome the Deputy President to the NCOP.

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Hon Deputy President, it's always very, very appropriate to have you in the House answering questions and we appreciate the fact that you make the time to honour this engagement.

I also welcome all the permanent delegates, Members of Executive Council, MECs, and special delegates in the House, and those that will be joining us on the virtual platform.

QUESTIONS TO THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Question 1:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, let me thank hon Mmoiemang for raising this important matter concerning the decline of the rail transport system in our country, and also join this House in wishing him a happy birthday and many more happy years and productive years.

Hon Deputy Chairperson, we are currently implementing rapid response interventions to address service delivery challenges to troubleshoot disruptions identified in the service delivery hotspots.

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We have prioritised stronger intergovernmental coordination, improved planning and more effective execution across the spheres of government to restore the performance of critical economic infrastructure, including rail.

In this regard, we continuously engage the relevant Ministers, including Public Works and Infrastructure, Transport, Water and Sanitation, and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, CoGTA, to reinforce the upgrading and safeguarding of strategic infrastructure that underpins economic activity and job creation.

Government has already committed resources towards restoring rail and logistics capability. The Minister of Finance announced an allocation of R21,9 billion to the Budget Facility for Infrastructure, targeted at major infrastructure projects including Transnet's coal and iron ore corridor upgrades aimed at restoring rail capacity on these corridors.

Government is also capacitating Passenger Rail Agency of SA, Prasa, to implement its Corridor Recovery Programme and modernise rail service infrastructure. By the end of 2025 Prasa

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had commissioned 35 of the 40 passenger corridors and achieved an audited annual figure of 77 million passenger journeys.

On long-distance passenger rail services, Prasa's Long-Distance Passenger Division plans to reintroduce mainline passenger services in the 2026-27 financial year, subject to funding availability and locomotive readiness. This will include Johannesburg-Durban, Johannesburg-Queenstown-East London, Johannesburg-Cape Town and Johannesburg-Musina, Cape Town-Queenstown.

Prasa is further rolling out thousands of kilometres of fibre optic as part of its new signalling system through private sector partnership to strengthen safety and real-time communication across the rail network.

Hon members, the Transnet Rail Infrastructure Manager, in collaboration with the Department of Transport and our strategic partners, is prioritising the productive utilisation of rail infrastructure and associated assets that have been underutilised, vandalised or inactive for prolonged periods. This work includes the revival of critical rail services that

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support agriculture, mining, manufacturing hubs and rural trading towns that rely heavily on rail connectivity.

Furthermore, through Operation Vulindlela, government is fast-tracking structural reforms aimed at modernising our rail and logistics infrastructure. This includes opening the rail network to third-party operators to enhance efficiency and competition, as well as accelerating the rehabilitation of passenger rail services to improve mobility, safety and economic participation of our citizens.

Finally, the President announced Infrastructure Investment Programme of R500 billion over the next three years, of which R120 billion is ringfenced for transport infrastructure including flight, rail rehabilitation, port efficiency upgrades and road network maintenance. I thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

Mr K M MMOIEMANG: Deputy Chair, greetings to yourselves, the Deputy President and also esteemed members of this House ...

Setswana:

... le baagi ba naga ya rona ka kakaretso.

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English:

Secondly, also my heartfelt gratitude to the warmly birthday wishes from yourself and the Deputy President and my colleagues.

Deputy Chair, allow me to express my gratitude to the Deputy President for the comprehensive reply, which demonstrates the government's decision to fully restore the rail transport system and maximising its benefit to provincial and local economies.

My supplementary question is: How far is the process of accelerating the concessioning of railway infrastructure and lines, given the fact that the Deputy President made reference to it, so that we are able to understand how do we ensure that the underutilised rail lines are maximised for local economic activities such as tourism and also the local industries such as agriculture? Thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Mmoiemang, you'll recall that there is a policy that was adopted in 2022 which is called National Rail Policy. So, what is happening now is that most of the work has now moved to the implementation phase. So, what is happening at the moment is that there's a lot of completion of design and operational rollout in all the

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corridors, because we appreciate the fact that this infrastructure has been declining for a while now, so, that's what transport is focusing on.

What transport has also done now is to bring in the private sector in the main to ensure that those, particularly who are involved in freight can put infrastructure for freight logistics because many of these are mining companies and so on, who are using this infrastructure.

So, at the moment, about 11 of these companies, who are major freight companies, have now been enlisted and work is continuing just to finalise the contracts and they will start then doing work on these corridors.

So, that's what is going to happen, that we will now have more capacity that is brought to bear by the involvement of the private sector. And therefore, it will then deal with this decline that we have been seeing over the years that you are raising.

I'm confident that with the plans that government has put in place, additional resources, plus private sector involvement,

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that we will be able to begin to correct this situation and make sure that the rail infrastructure, once again, begins to be at its best, to be able to contribute to our work of growing the economy and creating jobs in the country. Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chairperson.

Ms H S BOSHOFF: Hon Deputy Chair, it is frankly insulting that at every single opportunity the President and the Deputy President are asked about passenger rail, specifically long-distance passenger rail and the progress on the front, it is insulting because in the state of the nation address, Sona, 2019 the President stated, we should imagine a country where bullet trains pass through Johannesburg as they travel from here to Musina and they stop in Buffalo City on their way from eThekweni back here.

Then, hon Deputy Chair, in his Sona 2026, the President again stated, we continue with preparations for the introduction of high-speed rail, covering routes such as Johannesburg to Musina and eThekweni to Johannesburg. Same old story.

Passenger rail, Deputy President, should be the backbone of commuting our people. But seven years later, we are continuing

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with these preparations, as the President says, and you have highlighted it again today.

My question, Deputy President: Why would the plans that you have now outlined change the lived reality of so many who cannot make use of long-distance passenger rail, seven years after being promised this to the people of South Africa? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Boshoff, as I said earlier in my response that in its 2026-27 financial year, Prasa is going to be focusing on these corridors: the Johannesburg to Durban, Johannesburg-Queenstown-East London, all this is passenger rail. Johannesburg-Cape Town, Johannesburg-Messina, Cape Town-Queenstown, because we know these are the corridors where many of our people are using the trains.

So, this work, as I said, has started, it has been funded and as we speak now, plans are being finalised to ensure that this work is rolled out.

You can keep us accountable for that and keep checking the progress, but work is starting now to ensure that we do provide our people with this much-needed road system, because they are

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using the trains, and therefore, we need to make sure that this is going to be done.

As I said earlier, the President indicated that R500 billion will be used over the next three years for this work, so, there is no money problem, it is a question of implementation, and it has started. Thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

Mr V GERICKE: Deputy President, the collapse of the rail system has forced over a million of daily commuters to rely on more expensive and less safe alternative modes of transportation.

Given that areas close to railway stations have suffered business closures, job losses and severe economic decline due to the collapse of the long-distance passenger and freight rail service: What is the exact date which you will restore the Shosholoza Meyl and other services so that black-owned businesses can once again put bread on the table?

And secondly, can you tell us exactly how many times you have sat down these incompetent Ministers to force them to treat this as a national emergency? Thank you very much.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Gericke, the plans that have been submitted to us by the current Minister of Transport, Minister Barbara Creecy, are very sound and we are convinced with the President that we are on the right path now to fix this challenge.

You are quite right that when the trains are not working properly, the stations are not in order and not upgraded, it does affect nearby areas. So, that's true.

So, as we begin with this rollout of fixing our passenger rail corridors, all the corridors, the work around this station will also be taking off because people will start, once again, to invest in these areas, whether they are selling goods and other services, we will see that returning.

So, that's why I was emphasising earlier that as you sort out these corridors and reinvesting in your rail system, particularly passenger rail in this regard, you are also contributing to growth and the creation of jobs because of the economic activity that happens around train stations, a lot of economic activity around stations.

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So, we are quite happy that this work has now started in earnest and the President has indicated to all the Ministers that they are going to be subjected to periodic reviews, as we are doing at the moment with the President. We are meeting all the Ministers, checking how far they are with the plans that have been approved, if there are problems, why is there such problems and what are their plans to fix those problems?

So, we are monitoring the work, and we're going to make sure that indeed, these are not just plans on paper but are plans that are going to be implemented so that our commuter rail system can become the best of the best. Thank you, Hon Deputy Chair.

Mr B J FARMER: Deputy President, considering the strategic role of rail in economic growth, job creation and reducing logistical costs: How does government intend to leverage partnerships with the private sector to accelerate the recovery and modernisation of South Africa's rail network? Thank you, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Farmer, thank you very much for that question. I had already said earlier that we have taken that decision to bring in the private sector. At the

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moment 11 of these companies are being enlisted, and because many of them are in that sector that requires freight logistics, because it's mining companies that are exporting chrome and other products, so, they are already on board.

We will finalise this first tranche of 11, and of course, I'm sure we're going to see more coming forward to be able to get involved. And that will obviously ensure that those efforts supplement what government is already doing.

With the R500 billion that we have put out as government over the next three years to support rail infrastructure, these companies will also be bringing on board a lot of needed infrastructure to make sure that we attend to this important work.

Whether you talk passenger rail or freight, I think rail is very key for the movement of goods and services and also passengers in our country. And I'm happy that this work has now started in earnest. Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair.

Question 2:

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, let me thank hon Ryder for this burning question on corruption in the SA Police Service. As the chair of the JCPS Cluster Cabinet Committee, I wish to emphasise that the JCPS Cluster remains central to ensuring a coordinated whole-of-government response to crime, violence and corruption within the criminal justice system.

Prior to the Madlanga Commission, measures to detect and prevent corruption within the SA Police Service included, amongst others, the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Task Team, the rollout of integrated technology-driven case management system, particularly to reduce interference and vulnerabilities, and also strengthening forensic and investigative capabilities across the security environment.

The JCPS Cluster continues to intensify controls and accountability through the SA Police Service's ethic management strategy, fraud and corruption prevention strategy, overseen by internal government structures, including the ethics committee, risk management committee, and the audit committee. To strengthen the detection of wrongdoing, the SA Police Service enhance whistleblower protection through the SA Police Service

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National Instruction 18 of 2019's integrity management, enabling safe reporting through platforms such as a national anti-corruption hotline, internal ethic lines and oversight bodies, including Ipid, Public Protector and Auditor General.

Operational reforms have also been undertaken to reduce opportunities for corruption, including improvement to crime scene management. enhancement of investigative capacity and the establishment of specialised units, such as the Anti-Gang Unit and the Economic Infrastructure Task Team. Technological tools, including CCTV in high-risk areas and the integrated person management system are key components of the integrated justice system.

The SA Police Service, continues to strengthen internal detection mechanisms through vetting and screening of prioritised categories of personnel, including senior management, service members, crime intelligence, supply chain management and the hawks, and those deployed to ultra-sensitive posts.

These measures are supported by lifestyle reviews and financial disclosure analysis, including reactive lifestyle audits where

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allegations are received. Where serious allegations of fraud and corruption arise, forensic audits and criminal investigations follow, and those found guilty are prosecuted.

Based on the interim findings of the Madlanga Commission indicating prima facie wrongdoing, the President already directed the Acting Minister of Police and the SA Police Service National Commissioner to establish a special task team to investigate criminality involving senior SA Police Service members and other implicated officials. The JCPS Cluster will continue to ensure a co-ordinated action across all arms of the state so that we can uphold the rule of law and protect our communities. I thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

Mr D R RYDER: Deputy Chairperson, Deputy President, you have just listed a whole lot of measures that you implemented, which indicates that possibly you knew the extent of the corruption in the SA Police Service, but you didn't bring South Africans into your confidence by telling us about how bad it was, or alternatively, the criminal justice system has collapsed under your watch in spite of all of these measures being put in place. Which one is it?

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Ryder, as I say that I want to make sure that people must not think that before the Madlanga Commission nothing was being done. I think it is important to indicate that a lot of measures were put in place, but obviously it means we need more tightening. I think what is coming out of the Madlanga Commission is that indication which says, yes, you have all these measures, but they are still loopholes.

That is why we are awaiting this recommendation from the Madlanga Commission. However, with their initial report, which indicated, as I said, prima facie evidence on wrongdoing, the President has already acted to instruct the Acting Minister and the national commissioner to start the process of investigating whoever is alleged to be involved in wrongdoing and prosecute them.

However, obviously, we need more than just that. We need to be preventative. I am hoping that the recommendations from the Madlanga Commission will help us in that regard to identify the loopholes that we need to close. This is so that we must not wait until people have committed crimes, and then we act. The

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system must be such that it prevents this from happening, so that there is no opportunity for criminality in the system.

We are really awaiting these recommendations, and we will implement them as soon as the commission is done, to ensure that this should not happen again. This is where there is criminality in the securities cluster, which is supposed to be protecting communities. So, yes, I have mentioned a lot of measures that have been taken, but we need more tightening. Thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

Setswana:

Moh O D MEDUPI: Ke a leboga, motl Motlatsamodulasetilo. Madume, Motlatsamoporesitente.

English:

Hon Deputy President, you will agree with me that the revelations of Madlanga Commission have tarnished the reputation of the SA Police Service. It is evident that restoring the SA Police Service dignity will require decisive measures to address all allegations of corruption and to foster a new culture of ethical leadership and accountability.

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My question, Deputy President, is whether the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster Cabinet Committee, which is mandated to establish high-level anti-corruption policies and security strategies, has developed a plan to monitor the progress of the Anti-Corruption Task Team, the frontline implementation arm of the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster Cabinet Committee, in collaborating with all government agencies, to expedite the investigation into senior police officials implicated at national, provincial and local levels in corruption, as outlined in the Madlanga Commission Interim Report?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chairperson. Hon Medupi, as I indicated earlier, a number of structures have already been established. However, what we are doing is that we are strengthening through the JCPS, the work of National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structures, Natjoints. You may be aware that we do have what we call Provincial Joint Operational and Intelligence Structures, Provjoints, so that it is at the provincial level.

The Natjoints is a structure that involve all the security clusters. So, we have the police, intelligence, correctional

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services, and the SA National Defence Force. So, it is really a multidisciplinary structure. These multidisciplinary task teams are the ones that are working in collaboration to address this challenge.

The Anti-Corruption Task Team, of course, is being strengthened as well. You may be aware that they have also been able to recover some funds. More than R11 billion has been recovered through the work of the Anti-Corruption Task Team.

So, I am confident that the measures that we have outlined, including that those that we will bring on board once the Madlanga Commission is done, are going to assist us to ensure that we tighten up the system and make sure that we close all the leakages that may have been there.

Many of those structures are going to be strengthened, including the Investigative Directorate Against Corruption, Idac. It is one of the structures that we must strengthen going forward, to be able to deal decisively with this challenge. I thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

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Mr V GERICKE: Deputy Chairperson, Comrade Deputy President, the EFF is very much concerned about the selective application or implementation of the recommendations because people that are implicated in the report have already been exempted by the President. We are talking here about your Mr Mchunu and so on. They are exempted, yet implicated! That is a very much big concern to us. However, you stand here as the chairperson of JCPS cluster, and yet under your very nose, Deputy President, the SA Police Service has turned into a criminal enterprise.

What actions, if any, did you take to interrogate why high-profile dockets were being moved to Pretoria; and why did we have to wait for retired judges' reports - that is a big concern - to fire people? We have already been exposed as enemies of the people. Thank you very much, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, hon Gericke, as far as I am concerned, the President has not exonerated anyone - not that I know of. So, let us leave it at that for now. What the President is doing - even with Minister Mchunu - he said is that he is placed on leave. However, that does not mean exoneration. The President is awaiting the report of the commission to be able to act.

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So, I think let us wait for that moment, for the President to get a full report. Secondly, you are saying that there has been all this corruption happening in our watch. Let me also say that, yes, what is coming out of the Madlanga Commission is something that should make all of us worry about our security cluster, particularly the SA Police Service.

However, we must also accept, as South Africans, that there are many good men and women in the SA Police Service. The SA Police Service is an organisation of more than 100 000 people. It is true that within that organisation, there are these elements. Sometimes they say that a few rotten potatoes can rot whole bag of potatoes, but because we are now zooming in on these individuals, we will protect the entire system.

So, let us not make it as if the whole of the SA Police Service is rotten and so on. There are good men and women out there who want to do their work, and we must protect them by getting rid of the bad elements. This is a process we have started which is going to lead to that, to ensure that we get rid of these bad elements, to protect people who are there to do their work to serve communities and serve them well. That is exactly what we are going to do. Thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

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The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you, Deputy President. We are now going to the member who is on the virtual platform, the hon Van den Berg, who has the last follow-up question. Hon Van den Berg!

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Deputy Chairperson, Deputy President, given all these commissions ... [Interjections.]

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Hon Van den Berg, can you please put on your video so that we can see you?

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Oh, my goodness! I have put it on. It is on, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: No, we can't see you!

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Oh, my goodness! Let me switch it off and on again. Anything now, perhaps?

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Nope; still not on!

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Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Oh, my goodness. It is unlocked on my side. I absolutely don't know how to get it going. It is even displaying on my side. [Laughter.]

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: All right. Okay. Go ahead with your question!

Mr H J VAN DEN BERG: Thank you. Deputy President, given all these commissions, we need more information on the way forward. How will the Deputy President see that integrity and trust from the community is restored to the broader policing cluster? We are asking for more measurable timelines, if you can share that with the House, please.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you, hon Van den Berg. Hon Deputy President, were you able to get the full question? This is because the sound went quite low.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Let me answer what I thought I heard. I think he was saying: How will we restore trust to communities given these revelations that are now coming out of, amongst others, obviously, the Malanga Commission?

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The important thing that I can indicate is that trust will be restored when this action, not talking. So, once the President gets the reports, he will start acting: To ensure that we clean up the system; we make sure that the system is tight full proof; and make sure that perpetrators of wrongdoing are dealt with. I think once people see that the SA Police Service is an institution that has once again brought back integrity, the trust will be restored.

So, my answer, really, is that let us act and show our people that we are correcting this problem. They must see visible action. As we act, we must be transparent. There must be reporting and communication so that people should know that the government is acting and dealing with the problem. So, we are going to clean up the system. That is what we are going to do. Thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

Question 3

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, I would like to thank hon Mananiso for highlighting the important issue of illegal mining and its impact on our communities, including violent incidents in places like Gugulethu and Sporong informal settlements in Randfontein. The government is deeply

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concerned about the threat posed by illegal mining, which fuels violence, undermines the rule of law, endangers lives and erodes the integrity of our economy. Illegal mining has evolved into a complex phenomenon, often associated with transnational syndicates, illicit financial flows, undocumented migration and the proliferation of illegal firearms. As a result, government is intensifying intelligence driven operations, under initiatives such as Operation Vala Umgodi [Close the Pits.]

This includes the deployment of specialised units, disruption of supply chains, arrests of perpetrators and syndicate leaders, and seizure of equipment and contraband incorporation with the National Prosecuting Authority, NPA, to secure conviction. The Justice, Crime Prevention and Security, JCPS, cluster, continuously assess operational gaps and strengthen interdependent departmental co-ordination. The SA Police Service, SAPS respond through a structured escalation model from station level to district, provincial and national intervention, co-ordinated, as I mentioned earlier, National Joint Operational and Intelligent Structure, NATJoints, and Provincial Joint Operational and Intelligent Structure PROVJoints. The NATJoints illegal mining plant is activated where national co-ordination is required and reports into the JCPS cluster.

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This intervention calls for co-ordinated action between the South African police, the Hawks, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, Home Affairs and other such agencies. We are also addressing the threat posed by the infiltration of illegal and counterfeit goods, which continue to undermine South African jobs and industrial competitiveness. Through the 12-dimensional National Illicit Economy Disruption Programme, the government has secured funding to commence implementation of this programme, which will include targeted enforcement in high-risk sectors that are experiencing major revenue losses and entrenched syndicate activity, notably illegal mining, the fuel smuggling and pot-linked illicit trade.

In conclusion, the government has affirmed its commitment to combat escalating gang violence and illegal mining associated with organised crime by announcing the deployment of the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, to support the SAPS. This deployment enhances the work of NATJoints, which is coordinating and strengthen continuous monitoring efforts to prevent any resurgence of criminal activity. The President's directive underscores government's determination to confront these urgent challenges, and we appreciate his decisive leadership in this regard. The government remains resolute in restoring order,

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safeguarding communities and ensuring that those who profit from criminality face the full might of the law. We are going to take decisive action in dealing with criminality. I thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

Ms J S MANANISO: Deputy President, as a beneficiary of the deployment of SANDF, one would want to extend the appreciation from people of West Rand about the decisive action that the President could have taken in terms of deploying SANDF. Today, as I stand here, I can confirm that the people of Sporong are in a conducive environment. Deputy President, what progress are the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security, JCPS, committee, in collaboration with the Department of Mineral Resources and Petroleum Resources making in ensuring that 518 abundant and ownerless mine shaft identified in Gauteng requires closure, and as well in terms of additionally, has any action been taken against any mining company that has failed to rehabilitate an abundant shaft? If so, what is it that has been done and what is it that we can take trace on as government is working to ensure that everybody is brought to book and take accountability on what they must do? Thank you.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Mananiso, I thought you will start by saying ...

Setswana:

... le rona re batho.

English:

... Deputy Chair, that is what they say in the West Rand, that ...

Setswana:

... le rona re batho.

English:

They mean, do not forget us. Indeed, we are not going to forget you. Let me just indicate that as we act against illegal mining, focusing on areas like the West Rand that hon Mananiso was talking about, work is already happening, hon member. The statistics I received from the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources is that in Gauteng alone, they are dealing with about more than 518 of such openings. Nationally, it is more than 6 000. But the work has started because now, they have been identified. To act, you must know what you are dealing

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with. So, at least, now, we have that data of where this is happening, and they are, therefore, able then to plan interventions on how the pits are going to be closed, and therefore, those who are involved in illegal mining operations are going to be dealt with.

The JCPS is going to continue to monitor this work, and in this regard, we will work closely with the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources to be able to ensure that they act when illegality is happening. Of course, the police and the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, are now part of this work through the NATJoints. So, we are going to act, and not only in Gauteng, as I say, whilst in Gauteng is more than 500, the whole country is more than 6 000. So, you can see how big the problem is.

But I want to assure you that the work has now started, and we are going to make sure that, very soon, you will be seeing boots on the ground in those areas. They are planning and now there are operations, and they will be descending in those areas to make sure that we get rid of the problem of illegal mining.

Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair.

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Ms N S DU PLESSIS: Deputy President, illegal mining has escalated for years, increasing social ills and reaching a pinnacle in 2022 in the West Rand, with the horrendous gang rapes that happened in that year. The suspects were arrested, but there have not been any convictions. This is three years ago. Now, the SANDF is being deployed again to deal with the same crisis that should have been dealt with in 2022. What effective and impactful actions has the Justice Crime Prevention and Security, JCPS, committee, achieved in the past three years in tackling illegal mining and the related social ills, as well as ensuring convictions of those criminals? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Duplessis, indeed, one of the weaknesses in our country has been a criminal justice system that is not co-ordinated, and I am sure many hon members know that people always complain, the police would arrest the criminal, and before you know it, the criminal gets bail and is back in the community. So, our emphasis is that the criminal justice system must be integrated to show results, be properly co-ordinated so that one arm doesn't do this and the other one does something else. So, I am confident that the co-ordinated approach that we are embarking on is going to give us results.

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From the JCPS, we ensure that NATJoints have structures at the provincial level and going down, so that the security cluster must work as a team, including ensuring that the judiciary and the court system is with us, because it is important that some of these people must not just easily get bails. Like you are saying that, since 2022, we don't see prosecution or convictions. We want to close that gap to make sure that the system works. So, if you ask me, how will we succeed? Proper co-ordination, tighter co-ordination and integrated criminal justice system will give us the results. Thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

Ms M K MONTWEDI: Ntate Mashatile, you must agree that you are part of government that is reactive, that has failed to proactively deal with acts of criminality, and you reply to wrongdoing through expensive commissions. In your reply, you said you are intensifying intelligence-led systems. Now, I want to find out, Deputy President, can you specifically explain why, despite numerous early warnings from residents of Gugulethu and Sporong informal settlement through late 2025 and early 2026, intelligent-led interventions only gained momentum after hundreds of families were forcibly displayed by armed syndicates in January, and why have you not tabled a full forensic

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assessment on the collapse of early warning intelligence systems in Gauteng mining belt? Thank you, Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon member, we have intensified what we call intelligence-led approach to policing, because we have realised the weakness that police must not be reactive. We need to rely on intelligence because it will help us to be proactive to ensure that we deal with these challenges. That is what the JCPS is preoccupied with now. So, we will correct that weakness of the past where policing was taking a reactive approach. Now, it is always going to be intelligence driven, and I am sure you will agree with me, or let me say, I agree with you as well that there is nothing that beats intelligence driven approach because you are not shooting in the dark. You know what you are dealing with; you know where the problem is, and you can act timeously.

That is what I'm emphasising today, and that that is the approach we are taking. So, we are not just going to send out all these forces out there, including the army, just in the dark. They are going to go exactly where the problem is and deal with it. So, that is the approach we are taking, and I think this is the approach that will bring quick results and make sure

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that we don't deal with a problem two years later, but particularly to close the weaknesses and the gaps, because that is where the problem is, where you find that, by the time the security forces come, problems have already happened. People have been pushed out of their houses, and so on. We don't want that to happen. We need to act before it happens, and the intelligence-led approach is going to assist us in this regard. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Mr M M PETER: Evening, hon Deputy President. Considering the allegations of corruption within the security sector, currently being examined by the Madlanga Commission and other ad hoc investigative processes, don't you believe, that the delayed response by members of the SA Police Service, SAPS, to illegal mining activities in the Gugulethu and Sporong informal settlements may have been influenced by bribery or other corrupt relationships between illegal miners and police officials? If so, what measures are being implemented to detect, prevent, and discipline corruption within the police when responding to organised criminal activities, such as illegal mining?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Peter, it could be several elements that create this problem. I would not dismiss

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it that bribery might be involved, because now you are dealing with resources. When people are involved in illegal mining, you can imagine what they extract there. So, it is possible. What we need to do is to ensure that our co-ordinated approach goes deeper to look at what the problem is. Those who are doing legal mining, obviously, they are motivated by the fact that they get these resources. But the problem is that they also have the market for it, because they don't eat gold, they sell it.

The question is, who do they sell it to? I am sure that they don't sell it in informal settlements. So, you can imagine the problem, who is buying these resources? Therefore, we need to go deeper into that question to be able, beyond the guy who's digging, where does this product go? You might find that there are big guys who are involved, and who are making resources available to these people, therefore, they are thriving. These other ones are just digging, they take out, but they have a market. So, government investigation must be very tight, comprehensive, leave no stone unturned and make sure that we reach the problem where it is and deal with it.

Of course, we accept that the delays have not been helpful. That is why, as I was answering earlier, that the intelligent-driven

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approach must do away with this reactive approach and the delay. Let's act quicker, but let's touch everybody. It doesn't help to touch only the guy who is digging, and you don't touch the one who is buying. We must close that market so that our resources must be sold properly and the resources must benefit this country. Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair.

Question 4:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, let me thank hon Makesini for raising this important matter. Government is aware that certain municipalities, including the Ditsobotla and Emfuleni Local Municipalities continue to experience serious service delivery challenges, notwithstanding the section 139 Provincial intervention in local government. These challenges are rooted in governance instability, financial mismanagement, weak institutional capacity but also persistent backlogs. We acknowledge that section 139 Provincial intervention in local government has not always yielded sustainable improvements. We accept that. Concerns about politicisation and misuse are noted, and steps have been taken to strengthen oversight, professionalise municipal administration, and ensure clearer recovery and exit strategies.

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The absence of clean audits in municipalities under section 139 Provincial intervention in local government reflects deep systemic weaknesses requiring long-term institutional reform. In the case of municipalities such as Ditsobotla and Emfuleni Local Municipalities, support has included multidisciplinary teams assisting with financial recovery plans and strengthening technical capacity with the support from Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent, Misa, and National Treasury. Hon Chairperson, section 139 Provincial intervention in local government remains a constitutional safeguard triggered when a municipality cannot fulfil its obligations. Uneven outcomes often reflect structural constraints, political instability, debt overhangs, skills deficits, and weak controls rather than a defect in the constitutional mechanism itself.

Through the review of the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 on Local Government of 1998, government will introduce measures to strengthen the local government system, including potential reforms to the funding model, enhanced technical capacity, and consideration of restructuring section 139 Provincial intervention in local government to improve sustainability of outcomes. As part of the District Development Model, DDM, implementation, government continues to work with

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the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and other sector departments on targeted action plans for distressed municipalities.

We also monitor targeted municipal interventions through our campaign of clean cities, towns and villages. Together with SA Local government Association, Salga, DDM champions in all the corridors in the country that involve Ministers, we are engaging with communities and setting clear timelines for improvement. Government has taken a decision that local government must be our priority to get things right in our communities. So, we are making sure that we are focusing on fixing local government, dealing with all the challenges that I have indicated and we have started seeing some improvements in some of the areas that we are dealing with. We will continue to report to this House the progress we are making. Thank you very much, Deputy Chairperson.

Ms M MAKESINI: Hon Deputy Chairperson, greetings to the Deputy President. Deputy President, thank you for the comprehensive response. My issue now ... I just want to check because you mentioned that you have multiple disciplinary teams you have established in these two municipalities. Can you be specific on

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what are these multiple disciplinary teams except the intervention administrators, because I know in Ditsobotla Local Municipality we have administrators. I know Emfuleni Local Municipalities we also have administrators. Which national departments are there and what are they doing, including the time frames? For example, the problem of these two municipalities, including in Ngodwana, Mbombela Local Municipality, has been persistent.

So ...

IsiXhosa:

... ukuba ungasixelelela ncakasana ukuba benza ntoni ...

English:

... because in Ditsobotla Local Municipality they had had administrators for almost eight years.

IsiXhosa:

Ngoobani abanye abaphaya?

English:

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Is there any national department or National Treasury or any other team except the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent, Misa? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chair, as I said earlier, we, ourselves, have realised that we should not only rely on section 139 Provincial intervention in local government, which in the main, is when we bring administrators to come in. We have noticed that in some of the areas we have not gotten the kind of results that we need. So, what we are doing now through the DDM approach, is bringing various other government departments so that it is not just National Treasury because with section 139 Provincial intervention in local government, it is mainly National Treasury that comes in, brings an administrator there who tries to work with the municipalities. Sometimes people at that level feel that it is a takeover and they do not co-operate that well.

So, with the DDM approach, we bring in various other departments and we focus on service delivery in the main. Whilst you are improving administration, we want to make sure that service delivery is continuing. I had an opportunity, myself, to visit Ditsobotla Local Municipality and I found that the interventions

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there, were beginning to show some results, but you could say that they needed more support from national government because the mayor kept saying, "look, when I was working the city" ... and I said, "why don't you cut the grass?" He said they do not have the equipment because they could not afford buying them. So, that is where you realise that unless you bring national departments, some of your interventions are not going to be helpful.

So, that is what we are doing now to say, let us use the whole of government approach. You will see when we talk about the improvement in municipalities that it is where government has used the whole of government approach. There are great improvements in a number of these municipalities where there are problems and we need to go back to those areas, for instance, when I came back from the West Rand, having visited Ditsobotla Local Municipality and other places.

Already in January, I sent the team to go back to that area to do a follow-up and they have just given me a report on what next needs to be done. So, we need to be there because you cannot just go in and leave. Even with this section 139 Provincial intervention in local government, if you have an administrator,

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you need a proper exit strategy that is not going to lead to a collapse once you leave. You need to make sure that it is sustainable. So, we are looking at those different approaches to be able to deal with the problem. Thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

IsiXhosa:

Adv Nkosi M NONKONYANA: Ingqanga neentsiba zayo. Ndiphakama ndisithi, iinkosi zam zonke mazithambe, isicaka sizolile.

English:

Hon Deputy President, as the cadres of the ANC, we thank you for your honest and candid response. We believe that establishing coherence and impact in service delivery across South Africa's 44 district municipalities, as well as eight metropolitan municipalities, require looking beyond the number of interventions a municipality has implemented. It is about developing a multifaceted approach that focuses on the professionalisation of the local government, capacity building amongst councillors, financial management and creation of robust government systems that foster viable municipality we all want.

Deputy President, we are making progress in improving intergovernmental co-ordination to improve the capacity of our

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local government and all spheres of government to work in synergy to deliver quality basic services to communities. Are we? If so, has the government identified any ongoing challenges that lead to the same municipalities being placed under section 139 Provincial intervention in local government, despite numerous attempts to intervene in the worst-performing areas with literally notable progress?

IsiXhosa:

Ndiyabulela, Sekela Sihlalo. Enkosi kakhulu ngokunditefisa.

English:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, I have already indicated some of the issues that bring these challenges in our municipalities. Nkosi Nonkonyana, I have spoken about financial management, issues of weak administrations but we also need to add more. There is also some instance of political instability that is brought about by tensions within the leadership of the municipalities. So, it is not just the issues of financial challenges but also political instability. So, when we intervene, we also deal with that challenge, where sometimes you have a mayor that is not really supported by the team.

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Somebody was telling me a story this morning that somewhere a mayor just woke up and fired the city manager without even following a process. So, you have challenges like those that shows problem in leadership. That does lead to instability and dysfunctionality that we need to deal with. In some instances, you also have a higher staff turnover. We have realised that when you look at who works in municipalities, particularly your secondary cities, it is a bit problematic because the people that you need there do not want to work there. At least in the metropolitan municipalities, you do get serious people who can work in the City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality, City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and the big cities but as you go down, highly qualified people do not want to work there. So already you have a challenge there that you have to deal with.

We have, of course, introduced, through the DDM, this one plan approach where national government and provincial governments do work with municipalities to assist in ensuring quality service delivery. We hope that will assist, but we are going to have to look at the skills deficit in municipalities. How do we close that gap to ensure that your municipal managers are the right people who have the requisite skills? As I said, some of them do

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not want to work in Ditsobotla Local Municipality or Matjhabeng Local Municipality. They want to work in the metropolitan municipalities. Maybe we need to look at incentives and something needs to be done to get the skills down there to help our municipalities. Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair.

Mr J H P BRITZ: Deputy President, Emfuleni Local Municipality now has had three polled section 139 Provincial intervention in local government. Premier Lesufi said last month that they ran out of ideas of what to do at Emfuleni Local Municipality. He admitted defeat. We have repeatedly asked, especially you, to get the national government to intervene directly as envisioned in section 139(7). This House, across the political spectrum, has repeatedly asked for the subordinate legislation envisioned in section 139(8) to be enacted. We have seen no results.

Minister Hlabisa, this week, spent consulting and is no closer to White Paper on Local Government of 1998, yet municipalities are failing. Emfuleni Local Municipality cannot even pass its own budget. Why have you not used existing constitutional powers to step in and fix this?

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, it is true that Emfuleni Local Municipality has been a challenge for many years when it comes to issues of service delivery, water, et cetera. I had an opportunity also to visit Emfuleni Local Municipality to look at how we intervene. At the time there was serious water problem and we resolved that. But it is quite clear that they are not out of the woods. So, I agree that we need to ensure a very concerted intervention from national government.

I have not seen that statement by premier Lesufi that they have run out of ideas. They should not.

An HON MEMBER: He is misleading the House. [Interjections.]

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: I beg your pardon. Is he misleading the House? No, I am just saying that I have not come across it that they have run out of ideas. Perhaps the challenge quite clearly needs national government to move in decisively. Of course, we cannot wait for the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 process because problems are happening now. So, we need to go out there. As part of our responsibilities in the Presidency, we will go out there. Fortunately, somebody was

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raising the issue of Emfuleni Local Municipality on Monday that there are still challenges out there. So, I am happy that it is also raised here.

Hon Deputy Chair, one of the things, that we need to do is for the NCOP to strengthen oversight in these municipalities. I think it is going to be very important that you do not just leave it to government. I think it will be important for the NCOP to send a team out to Emfuleni Local Municipality and see why there are continuous problems there because the Constitution allows the NCOP to be the one that should be at the forefront of intervening in these municipalities.

I take your point that let us fix Emfuleni Local Municipality. You cannot have a problem that goes year after year. We know that they are not a very rich municipality but they are also not a poorer municipality. It might be that we need to tighten up leadership, both the political and administrative leadership of Emfuleni Local Municipality, but we will get there. Thank you, hon Deputy Chair.

Ms T BREEDT: Hon Deputy President, another White Paper on Local Government of 1998 is not going to solve the problem with

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Section 139 Provincial intervention in local government. I do not think the NCOP even needs another oversight to tell you what the problem is with regards to these municipalities under Section 139 Provincial intervention in local government and that is simple and clear. There is no political will and they do not want to do it. But getting back to your initial answer on the initial question with specific reference to Ditsobotla Local Municipality, you said that there will be consequence management from this multidisciplinary team and you mentioned Misa and National Treasury specifically, but you also said that there will be financial recovery in terms of the monies there. So, Deputy President, I want to know from you, since this intervention, and as we have said today, this is not the first time they are under Section 139 Provincial intervention in local government, who has been held accountable? Has there been consequence management? Have officials been charged or been arrested and how much funds have been recovered, in specifically Ditsobotla Local Municipality and Emfuleni Local Municipality, the municipalities that were mentioned? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chair, yes, we have emphasized consequent management. If my memory serves me well, in the Ditsobotla Local Municipality, there was a change

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of leadership, politically. I recall that because my party was involved in the leadership and I recall that we did suggest changes there. Obviously, we need to take it further with the new leadership to look at the administration as well.

Yes, the issue of financial recovery is a matter that mainly is handled by National Treasury and they have introduced various methods to deal with it because municipalities do not pay easily. So, what does National Treasury do? Sometimes they look at grants that need to go to a municipality and they withhold the grants. But they have to balance the situation because sometimes as you do that, you then hurt communities because those resources are required to serve communities. There are various ways in which, if I may use the word punish, National Treasury will punish a municipality that is involved in financial mismanagement and not doing its work by withholding grants.

Like I said, it is a very thin balancing act because these resources are required for service delivery. But it is happening. I do not have information now. I can check it later about how many people have been prosecuted, et cetera. I will need to get that information. I know that National Treasury is

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very focused on that and at every end of the financial year where funds have not been used, they are rolled back to National Treasury. So, many of the funds that go to municipalities are ring-fenced so that they cannot be moved from service delivery to paying salaries, which has been one of the problems that you find in municipalities.

So, National Treasury ensures that grants are ring-fenced and that once the money flows and can only be used for what it is intended for. But we will check for you in terms of if there are any cases of people who have been charged or who have been found guilty in whatever. As national government, we support the notion that there must be action where there is wrongdoing. Where there is weak administration, we must strengthen it, including moving people out and bringing other people who can do the work. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Question 5:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair, let me thank hon Mhlongo for this question. Hon Deputy Chair, a significant number of municipalities are assessed as financially distressed or dysfunctional, as

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reflected mainly in audit outcomes, but also in service delivery performance and financial indicators.

According to the 2026 review by the National Treasury, 162 municipalities were identified as financially distressed in the 2023-24 financial year. This is driven by poor cash flow management, inadequate revenue collection, and also rising debt. Also exacerbated by almost 113 unfunded budgets and a total revenue shortfall of about R35,9 billion.

While challenges remain significant, improvement in audit outcomes has been recorded in a number of these municipalities and clean audits have been achieved by some of the municipalities, including Midvaal and Umngeni.

Hon Chairperson, consequence management, which is an issue that was raised earlier, is also central to accountability. Cogta is now implementing disciplinary measures. Criminal investigations, when necessary, and conditional allocations, or as I said earlier, with National Treasury or Cogta withholding grants. In collaboration with the SIU, the government has established the Local Government Anti-Corruption Forum to strengthen co-

ordination against corruption at provincial and municipal levels.

Hon Deputy Chair, the government has also initiated enforcement measures relating to water and sanitation failures, including criminal charges against some municipalities and steps to pursue accountability of municipal managers, in particular in respect of statutory breaches.

Finally, these actions demonstrate government's commitment to stabilising local government and ensuring that public funds are safeguarded and properly applied to service delivery to benefit our people. I thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

Ms L P MHLONGO: Thank you so much, Chair, and greetings to you, Deputy President, and ...

IsiZulu:

... ngiyabonga ukuthi usiphendule ...

English:

... other follow-up questions were covered from the previous set of questions. However, I'd like to know what the government

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says on the issues of uMkhanyakude district municipalities? Communities in the area such as Jozini, uMhlabuyalingana, still rely on water tankers years after large national water infrastructure budgets were allocated, despite repeated government assurance that bulk water projects will resolve the crisis. Can the Deputy President please explain why communities are still dependent on temporary tanker systems, despite billions spent on water infrastructure, and who has been held accountable for the failure to deliver sustainable water supply? Thank you, Chair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair. Thank you very much, hon Mhlongo, out of the 257 municipalities, there's been a lot of work happening. Those who were flagged about 162, a lot of work has been happening now and there's now work happening with the remaining 33 municipalities. I'm going to check whether uMkhanyakude is part of this 33. There's a report that we can share with you to look at that area uMhlabuyalingana. So, I don't have specific report on that municipalities except that all those that are dysfunctional have been flagged and work is happening. At the moment, 33 of them, that's where work is not yet completed. UMkhanyakude might

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probably be one of the 33, but we will check that for you and supply you with that information.

As national government, we do want to intervene in all these municipalities, particularly those that are in rural areas because that's where you often find problems. In the rural areas where people feel that they are forgotten. I'm sure areas like uMkhanyakude are very far from the urban areas. Therefore, it's easy that they may be neglected. I'm happy that you've raised the ... and we're going to especially investigate it.

I will, like last time, send the team out there. Last time I was in the NCOP, you'll remember, Deputy Chair. I did commit to send the team to some of the areas where there are problems and they did go, and they've given me reports. So, we will need to do that to send them out to go and see what is happening in uMkhanyakude.

Of course, we'll work with the province. We won't bypass them. We'll do it through the DDM approach, but we will make sure that we get out there and not only to uMkhanyakude. I will prioritise many of these rural municipalities because they tend to be forgotten. Thank you, Deputy Chairperson.

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Ms S MASUMPA: Thank you, Deputy Chairperson, greetings to the Deputy President. Thank you, Deputy President, for your comprehensive reply. As this is my first time on this podium, I want to thank my party for deploying me here and assure the people of the Western Cape. And I will continue in the footsteps of the late hon Bains to represent the voice of the voiceless to the fullest. May her soul rest in peace.

As we know that the Western Cape has privileged and underprivileged people. Now, Deputy Chairperson, my question is: Has the government developed any mechanism to monitor compliance of municipalities within the municipal resolution of minimum competence levels 2007 Gazette 29967, which was enacted under the Municipal Finance Management Act to establish a mandatory minimum standard of financial and supply chain management officials to improve accountability and professionalism in the municipal financial management? Thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP: Thank you very much, hon Masumpa. That was your maiden speech and maiden question in the House. Thank you very much for that.

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The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you very much, hon Masumpa, for that question. Yes, indeed, as I said earlier that when I replied that one of the critical challenges in municipalities has been the issue of strengthening financial management. So, the issue of municipal regulation of minimum competency levels, which was adopted since 2007, is what we are ensuring that is implemented, because it's part of the MFMA that should be done, particularly by your officials that are responsible for supply chain management. They need to have these skills to be able to do this work of financial management properly.

That's where we are focusing to ensure that the officials who are responsible for financial management within municipalities, including chief financial officers and so on, are the responsible people in the administration. So that is being done. Of course, there are minimum requirements that are set to ensure that they have the right skills to be able to do this work. We are obviously driving this work through National Treasury to ensure that this is adhered to. But most definitely, this is what we are doing.

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We also look at the audit outcomes, what the Auditor-General is saying about these municipalities. You find that in most cases, we do need to strengthen financial management and that's what we are doing. Thank you very much, hon.

Mr M BILLY: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and good afternoon, Deputy President. Deputy President, could it be that you have been set up for failure? I ask this question, Deputy President, because in the President's recent state of the nation address, which you and I had attended in the past few weeks, the DDM was not mentioned, not once in the nearly two-hour speech of the President. Perhaps, this is an indication, Deputy President, that the President also does not view this model as central to government's programme. So, if that is the case, Deputy President, if the President himself is no longer prioritising the DDM, why do you continue to push these centralised, cartel-driven projects that weaken accountability, exclude communities, and entrench elite control instead of empowering local communities and local economies? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair. Hon Billy, the President believes very strongly in the DDM approach, and he mentions it all the time. Somebody was

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whispering on my left, and you? ... okay. Me, I'm appointed by the President to make sure it works. So, if he didn't believe it, I'm sure he would have called and said, you're wasting your time there. He has not done so.

In fact, every time we meet, we talk about it to say where we should improve. Remember, the DDM is not centralising. It's co-ordination. So, when we go to these areas, we don't take over. It's just that in the Western Cape, they didn't believe in it. [Interjections.] No, no, it's fact. The DA doesn't believe in it. So, they want to find fault. Centralise the system. No, it's not centralised. It's co-ordination, the whole-of-government approach, pull plans together, pull resources together, and make sure that you implement as a whole-of-government.

Now, the DDM approach does not take over. But what we do, we'll say, you'll see when I come to the Western Cape. I'll be saying to them, okay, we're going to do something in Khayelitsha. Come with me, bring your resources. I don't take over at all. It's just that the DA was scared of nothing. We don't take over. What we do, we co-ordinate. We prioritise together. We bring resources together. We implement together. We monitor together. That's what the DDM is all about.

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I can tell you, in all these other provinces, they are so happy. It's working. No, it works, really. It works. So, you see, next time the President speaks, listen carefully. He will say something about it. It does work. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Ms M SIWISA: Thank you, Deputy Chair, greetings, Deputy President. Before I start my question, we are going to make a follow-up about those rural municipalities and those that are far from the urban. And we'll hold you accountable at some point, because it's a serious problem about municipalities that are very far from the urban or in the rural.

Given Deputy President's oversight of the District Development Model and the persistent collapse of local governance, can you explain why, despite the reduction of dysfunctional municipalities, there still exist so many dysfunctional municipalities across all provinces? For example, Impendle, the municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, has been faced with dysfunctionality for years, despite the intervention that was recently done by the MEC of Cogta in the province.

In light of this, what urgent intervention have you taken to revive and assist municipalities such as Impendle? And secondly,

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how do you justify, ... can I be protected, Deputy Chair?

Because when people speak, I don't speak. How do you justify the continued billion-rent expenditure when there are still so many municipalities which remain classified as distressed? Thank you very much.

IsiXhosa:

Nilinde. [Wait.].

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chair, I agree that, as the hon member is saying, we do need to focus on rural municipalities. That's what we're going to do. We will also look at Impendle. When I asked for a report on municipalities, I couldn't pick up Impendle as one of the ones that have a challenge, or one of those that we're still doing work on. Because, as I said earlier, if you take the 257 municipalities, those that were flagged out were 162, and work is still happening in 33, and it might well be that. For some reason, that report was not included. Because when I looked at what work was happening in KZN, the report was zero.

But it may be that that report has not come through. If you're saying that there are still a number of municipalities in KZN,

particularly in rural areas, like we spoke earlier about kwaMhlabuyalingana. We will look at Impendle and see what the challenges are there. We don't want a situation where there's perpetual dysfunction, as you are saying. That we are intervening, but in Impendle there is no sign of recovery. So, it means it's one of the municipalities that we must then follow up on, as we look at these rural areas and see what the challenges are.

I know particularly that in the rural areas people also do have challenges there. When you talk about the problem of water, you find it in those areas. So, people have challenges there and we're not going to forget them. So, I assure you that we will also send a team out there to Mpendle to make sure that it's not left behind. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

Question 6:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson, let me thank hon Mabebo for raising this issue of water that has now become a crisis in many of our communities. The sustainable supply of water remains a national priority. The Water Task Team has assessed the impact of abundant or incomplete water infrastructure projects and confirmed that delays have reduced

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water availability, weakened the system reliability, compromised water security, and affected environmental compliance in many respects.

In order to address these challenges, long outstanding grant-funded projects have now been identified and prioritized for accelerated completion. Government has also taken steps to reprioritize funding to ensure delayed projects that are finalized and water systems to be stabilized. In Gauteng, for instance, where severe interruptions have been experienced over the last two months, the President delegated the Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Water and Sanitation and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs to undertake oversight engagement with the leaders of the province and those municipalities.

There are a number of steps that they have already taken. One was approval of increased abstraction from the integrated Vaal River system in order to assist Rand Water in restoring reservoir levels, because there were a number of reservoirs that were quite low because of lack of supply from the Vaal River system. Secondly, co-ordination of demand, reduction measures, and enforcement of restrictions. In some municipalities there

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have been restrictions on how water should be used. That, of course, is the competency of the municipality, but the Ministers had to make sure that they attend to that. The third one was acceleration of leak reduction and infrastructure repairs, supported by programmes aimed at improving ringfencing of water revenues and long-term sustainability.

There is a challenge in many municipalities of water leaks, and it leads to the loss of the revenue water because of leaks that happened, because infrastructure is either not repaired or there's old infrastructure that has not been changed. The Department of Water and Sanitation has further advised those municipalities in Gauteng to strengthen water restrictions, reduce losses through leaks, repair pressure reduction, and invest in additional storage and pumping capacity.

On the 20 February, I visited, together with Premier Lesufi, Mayor Dada Morero, the Carlswald Reservoir construction site, and the Grand Central Water Tower in Midrand. This 20 million litres reservoir is set for completion in July next year to support long-term supply stability. In addition, the private sector is also constructing a 10 million litres reservoir in the same area, which will assist to increase water supply.

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Government is implementing practical measures also in other provinces, including the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, focusing on accelerating bulk water projects, reducing non-revenue water, as I said earlier, but also ensuring emergency supply interventions and strengthened intergovernmental co-ordination.

Finally, President Cyril Ramaphosa has announced the establishment of a National Water Crisis Committee, chaired by himself to address severe shortages, infrastructure failures, and municipal performance challenges across the country. I will soon be visiting the other provinces, including Limpopo, where communities are experiencing severe water shortages, in order to attend to those challenges. I thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

Mr B S MABEBO: Deputy President, South Africa's water network face increasing sabotage by criminal syndicate known as water mafias. They are destroying infrastructure and exploiting tanker contracts, profiting from people's desperation. Additionally, floods have had complex paradoxical or contradictory effect on the water crisis facing our people as they worsen water scarcity by damaging water infrastructure and contaminating existing water sources.

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What progress is the Water Task Team making in collaboration with all relevant departments to ensure the development of climate resilient water infrastructure in our communities and the implementation of mechanisms that leverage nature-based solutions such as wetland restoration and invasive plant removal to enhance water security and catchment yield?

Setswana:

Ke ikokobeditse Motlatsa Tautona.

English:

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chairperson,
...

Setswana:

Ke a leboga morena Mabebo.

English:

What we are doing currently as national government is to ensure that we tighten policy reforms to deal particularly with that problem because we know that in order to build resilient water infrastructure, we must ensure that the system is working very well. So this is a work that Operation Vulindela is doing

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working with the Department of Water and Sanitation. We are ensuring that these reforms attend to these challenges.

We have seen that in some instances in many municipalities where there is a challenge of water, as you say, there are these water tanker mafias that creeps in because they profit for that. In fact, the President indicated recently that where there are challenges of water, government itself must have its own water tankers. We have agreed that as government, we must buy these trucks so that it is government that intervenes where there are challenges, because there will always be challenges. For instance, if you have, let me take an example, if Rand Water is maintaining some of their pipes, they do switch off for a period, it could be two, three days. When that happens, government must then supply people through water tankers and don't bring these private people because we've seen the exploitation of communities.

In some instances, I remember when I was, a year or two ago in the North West with the President, we got a report that some of these water tanker mafias do sabotage infrastructure so that they can be called to come and supply. So we must close that market so that people must not think there is a big market there

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to supply water and even sabotage infrastructure. The National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency will be dealing with tightening all these reforms to ensure that we stabilize this sector. Thank you very much, Deputy Chair.

Mr F J BADENHORST: Deputy President, water is life. The saying is very simple for a reason. The President has tasked you to be the Chair of the Water Task Team to ensure that persistent water challenges are addressed. Now, in his state of the nation address last month, the President indicated that a National Water Crisis Committee is going to be set up, and he himself will be the Chair of that committee. Now the question begs, Deputy President. Has the President lost all faith in you to do your duties, your signed powers and functions as Deputy President? In other words, has the President placed a vote of no confidence in the Deputy President to solve our water issues? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: [Laughter.] Hon Badenhorst, no, that's not the case. Remember that the National Crisis Committee on Water would not be the first one. Most of these National Crisis Committees are headed by the President. Once there's a crisis committee, it means the resources must

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also be provided. The reason the President did that is because if you look at areas like Gauteng where we have been as a Water Task Team, we have looked at the challenges, but the challenges were escalating. So he thought that to have a crisis committee that will bring in Treasury and all these relevant departments will assist to deal with the problem. I will still be part of it because the Water Task Team will continue with its monitoring role and going to provinces, but we need this structure that the President will assist to bring resources to bear in provinces and municipalities where there's a big crisis. It's an intervention that once things work in those areas, we will continue to monitor progress and ensure that there are interventions. We work very well with the President. We are co-ordinating. When he came up with this idea we were sitting together. So he has my support. [Laughter.] Thank you.

Ms A MATSHOBENI: Greetings to Deputy President. Before I chip into my question, we cannot run away, Deputy President, that water losses are caused by aging infrastructure. No one is responsible for that, even those who dealt with water and sanitation. So it needs a full attention - issue of aging infrastructure. Also, Deputy President, it is concerning to note how the water crisis is worsening across all provinces, not only

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because of drought, but because of failure to complete critical infrastructure, as you mentioned before that identification of grants.

Can you please provide a detailed report on the steps which you have taken to resolve the persistent failure of the Gqeberha and Nelson Mandela Bay supply chain in particular? And what time frames have you put in place for the Water Task Team to complete its full assessment of the negative impact of delayed projects on the current water crisis? I thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Matshobeni, I can't agree more with you that aging infrastructure is one of the culprits that leads to water losses in most of our municipalities. We have identified that and there may be a number of reasons why, amongst others, municipalities like raising the issue of funding. That they don't have enough money, etc. In some instances, lack of long-term planning. I was happy when I was in Gauteng because in Carlswald, where they took me to where they are building a new reservoir, they said to me that once it starts operating - the 20 million litres and the 10 million litres by the private sector - that will give them guarantee supply for the next 20 years. So you can see that

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there is long term planning, and we need to see more of that where municipalities plan for a number of years ahead when they deal with infrastructure.

Failure to complete projects is one of the things that we have identified. I did say in my response that one of the things we are intervening on now is to ensure that those projects are completed because most of them are funded. We are going to make sure that they are completed and ensure that all critical infrastructure that is out there is brought to completion.

You mentioned problems in Gqeberha and Nelson Mandela Bay. I don't have information on those two right now about what exactly the problem is. When I was in the Eastern Cape recently, the problems were in Qunu where we have now intervened. And there may be one other place as well. We will check this one to see what the problem is there because in some of the areas, people use boreholes for water, which is fine, particularly in rural areas where it's difficult to get critical infrastructure. We do support the use of boreholes. But we will check those as well and see exactly what the problem is there. Once again, I think it's probably one of the rural areas in Gqeberha that maybe affected and Nelson Mandela Bay. But as I said earlier in my

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reply that rural areas are going to be our priority when we deal with infrastructure, including water infrastructure. I thank you, Deputy Chair.

Ms L P MHLONGO: Deputy President, thank you for your responses. But I would like to know, given the prolonged delays, escalating cost and findings of irregular procurement in the Giyani Bulk Water Project, what specific interventions has the Deputy President implemented to ensure full project completion within a revised time frame, consequence management for officials and contractors implicated in the mismanagement and sustainable water supply for all affected villages? Thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC: Hon Deputy Chair, I did visit Limpopo in 2024. One of the areas I went to was Giyani and looked at the projects around Mopani. There is a dam there called Nandoni in that area which supplies water to most of the villages. One of the things that we found was the challenge of reticulation, which you do get in many areas where the dams are full, but water is not reaching communities. So we are intervening in Limpopo. We are going to go back there. I know that there was a big project implemented in Limpopo around those areas. I think it was not even the last administration. It's

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probably a few years back, which was not completed. That matter is being attended to.

What we decided to do in the new administration is to intervene where they stopped because there was a lot of work done to get water to the areas, but the project did not complete reticulation. It was just a bulk water supply, which was okay, but then the water ends there, stuck in the dam, it doesn't reach the areas. That's what we are unlocking in Limpopo, but because of the vastness of the province, you are not going to rely on getting bulk supply water to many of the villages. You need to also improvise with ensuring that you can get underwater through boreholes. We are encouraging that and we're going to help communities as government to utilize that method because of the problem of vastness. I am sure many members will know that when you get to rural areas, you have a house here and another house is five kilometres away and so on. So it becomes very costly for municipalities to put in pipes to get water to each and every home. Sometimes they centralise it so that everybody goes and get water on one place and so on. But we are there in Limpopo, and we are going to make sure that we don't leave them behind. I thank you, hon Deputy Chairperson.

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The DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCOP (Mr P Govender): Thank you very much, hon Deputy President. I can now release you from the podium. You may take your seat. Thank you very much for engaging with those questions that were put to you.

Hon delegates, I would like to thank the Deputy President, all MECs, all permanent and special delegates for availing themselves for the sitting. Before I conclude for the day, hon delegates, I would like to urge you all to sign the condolence book that is in the Queen's Hall if you have not done so already. The condolence book is for the first Chairperson of the NCOP who passed on recently, hon Lekota. The Deputy President also signed the condolence book earlier today. I want to thank you all once again. Hon delegates, that concludes the business of the day. The House is now adjourned.

Debate concluded.

The Council arose at 16:09.