

Sona key points

Several significant calls and announcements were made during Thursday's State of the Nation address.

These are the ones that stood out:

► "Evidence of criminal activity that emerges must be evaluated by the criminal justice system. Where there is a basis to prosecute, prosecutions must follow swiftly and stolen public funds must be recovered urgently.

"To this end, we've agreed with the new national director of public prosecutions (NDPP) that there is an urgent need to establish, in the office of the NDPP, an investigating directorate dealing with serious corruption and associated offences;

► "Eskom is in crisis and the risks it poses to South Africa are great. It could severely damage our economic, social development ambitions.

"The consequences may be painful, but they will be even more devastating if we delay. To bring credibility to the turnaround ... we shall immediately embark on a process of establishing three separate entities – generation, transmission, and distribution – under Eskom Holdings;

► "We will give effect to our commitment to build human settlements in well-located areas that bring together economic opportunities and all the services and amenities that people need.

"The Housing Development Agency will construct an additional 500 000 housing units in the next five years, and an amount of R30 billion will be provided to municipalities and provinces to enable them to fulfil their respective mandates;"

► "In a few months' time, South Africans will go to the polls for the sixth time in our democracy to vote for national and provincial governments. I've engaged with the Independent Electoral Commission and also with the premiers of all provinces and intend to proclaim May 8, 2019 as the date of the election;

► "Above everything else, we must get our economy working again. I call upon every South African to make this cause your own. Because when we succeed – and of this we are certain – it is the entire nation that'll benefit; and

► "We conducted an audit last year and found that nearly 4 000 schools still have inappropriate sanitation facilities. We have launched the SAFE Initiative in August last year, through which we mobilised all available resources to replace all unsafe toilets in public schools." – ANA



COOL SWING

President Cyril Ramaphosa joins business leaders and others at the annual Presidential Golf Challenge at the Atlantic Beach Golf Estate in Melkbosstrand in the Western Cape yesterday. Picture: GCIS

'New Scorpions won't have legs'

INVALID: CYRIL 'CAN'T BE ENTRUSTED' WITH SUCH POWER

► **President is trying to do the right thing, the wrong way, says Accountability Now.**

Sipho Mabena

President Cyril Ramaphosa's proposed crime and corruption-busting directorate could be declared invalid by the Constitutional Court and because it does not come anywhere close to what the effective but disbanded Scorpions were.

During his State of the Nation address on Thursday, Ramaphosa said the unit, to be headed by National Prosecuting Author-

ity's advocate Shamila Batohi will exclusively deal with investigating and prosecuting serious corruption.

The unit has been likened to the Scorpions, which the ANC disbanded in October 2008. But Accountability Now director advocate Paul Hoffman said the euphoria was misplaced.

"You cannot get it right if your anticorruption unit is controlled by a member of the executive [Ramaphosa]," said Hoffman. "He is trying to do the right thing in a wrong way. The directorate is liable to be struck down as invalid by the Constitutional Court."

He said the Scorpions, which was replaced by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, or the Hawks, can only be disbanded by a majority vote in parliament, whereas Ramaphosa's

unit was accountable to him only.

In 2011, the Constitutional Court ruled that the legislation, which replaced the Scorpions with the Hawks was "constitutionally invalid" and that the reason was that the Hawks were "vulnerable to political interference".

Hoffman said the Scorpions were "a specialised, trained, and truly independent, resourced, and had a secure tenure of office".

He said for Ramaphosa to succeed in fighting and prosecuting grand-scale corruption, he would have to announce that parliament will amend the constitution to allow for the formation of a Section 9 institution, similar to the public protector and auditor-general, dedicated to fighting and combating organised crime and corruption.

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Plot to assassinate Malema – EFF

The Economic Freedom Fighters has cited news of a plot to assassinate leader Julius Malema during the State of the Nation (Sona) address as the reason its MPs acted with "the necessary self-defence" during a scuffle outside parliament during which a plain-clothed police officer was slapped.

The EFF said the assassination threat involved "elite members of the police" who were working with right-wing groups to kill Malema in a bid to prevent the expropriation of land without compensation debate from advancing.

"We are told that the Parliamentary Security Service, aka 'white shirts', have been infiltrated by these groups and targeted

the occasion of the Sona to execute the assassination," it said.

"The hope was that the EFF caucus would be kicked out of the House, using the parliamentary security [white shirts].

"The evil acts would then be carried out during this moment of chaos."

The EFF said when it was blocked from passing through a particular part of parliament after Thursday night's Sona, it thought it was the moment the threat would be executed.

"The event of a white security man in black and white, being

pushed and [slapped] in the face, followed him violently pulling the [commander-in-chief] Malema from passing through the corridor doors of the National Assembly."

The EFF added that it was illegal for security personnel to obstruct MPs to move about to do their work, citing the Powers, Privileges, and Immunities of Members of Parliament Act.

Earlier yesterday, parliament condemned the incident which was captured on a cellphone video which was distributed and went viral. – ANA

The white shirts have been infiltrated.

Children to benefit

Chisom Jennifer Okoye

Although praise continues to pour in from early childhood development (ECD) communities after President Cyril Ramaphosa said all children would be subjected to two years of compulsory ECD before Grade 1, they say it may take a while to be implemented properly.

During his State of the Nation (Sona) address on Thursday, Ramaphosa announced that priority would be given to providing a compulsory two-year early ECD programme, with the intention of increasing literacy levels among primary school pupils.

The president said "with over 700 000 children accessing early childhood education in the last financial year, we have established a firm foundation for a comprehensive ECD programme that is an integral part of the education system.

"This year, we will migrate responsibility for ECD centres from social development to basic education, and proceed with the process towards two years of compulsory ECD for all children before they enter Grade 1."

Sharing in the excitement of the news, Early Care Foundation director Deirdre Caulwell said her organisation was pleased about the encouraging announcement, but that there was still a considerable amount of work to be done before it could be properly implemented.

Cotlands chief executive Dr Monica Stach echoed Caulwell's sentiments and said "Cotlands fully supports this initiative. [However,] we think it will take at least three years for this process to start.

"It is critical to plan this move in stages that are manageable, as opposed to do it all at once.

"Also, they should involve stakeholders such as lead ECD organisations and associations such as Cotlands and NECDA to think through the process alongside them.

"In short, thorough planning and communication of the process to both the officials involved and civil society partners is critical. As a country, we should rally around this and where possible support this transition phase."

Equal Education's senior researcher Rene McFarlane said: "Equal Education has repeatedly emphasised the importance of early learning and foundation phase education in determining learners' trajectory through the education system.

It is absolutely crucial that good foundations are laid in the early years of learning.

It is critical to plan this move in stages that are manageable, as opposed to do it all at once.

Dr Monica Stach
Cotlands chief executive