

Ramaphosa outlines 4 key priorities

President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2021 State of the Nation Address (Sona) laid out the top four priorities for the future of the country, namely defeating Covid-19, accelerating the economy, implementing economic reforms to drive growth and jobs, and fighting corruption.



President Cyril Ramaphosa

"This is no ordinary year, and this is no ordinary State of the Nation Address. I will therefore focus this evening on the foremost, overriding priorities of 2021," he said.

“ President Ramaposa: This evening, we stand here not to make promises but to report on progress in the implementation of the recovery plan and the priority actions we must now take to restore growth and create jobs. [#SONA2021](#)— Parliament of RSA (@ParliamentofRSA) [February 11, 2021](#) ”

Defeating Covid-19

He said fundamental to the nation's recovery is an unrelenting and comprehensive response to overcome the coronavirus "This means intensifying our prevention efforts and strengthening our health system. It also means that we must undertake a massive vaccination programme to save lives and dramatically reduce infections across the population," he said.

“ President Ramaphosa: The first phase of our vaccination programme, which is targeted at health and other frontline workers, will now use the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which has been shown to be effective against the 501Y.V2 variant. [#SONA2021](#)— Parliament of RSA (@ParliamentofRSA) [February 11, 2021](#) ”

He added that Pfizer had committed to 20-million doses, the first batch of which will be delivered by the end of the first quarter of the year. "We are continuing our engagements with all the vaccine manufacturers to ensure that we secure sufficient quantities of vaccines that are suitable to our conditions. The health and safety of our people remains our paramount concern."

2. Accelerating the economy

“ President Ramaphosa: Our plans had to be adapted in response to a global emergency. Budgets had to be reprioritised and many programmes had to be deferred. Over the past year, SA has experienced a sharp decline in growth and a significant increase in unemployment.[#SONA2021](#)— Parliament of RSA (@ParliamentofRSA) [February 11, 2021](#) ”

Ramaphosa said that there were 1.7-million fewer people employed in the third quarter of 2020 than there were in the first quarter, before the pandemic struck. "Our unemployment rate now stands at a staggering 30.8%."

To help ease the burden, Ramaphosa said the special Covid-19 grant of R350 has been extended by a further three months. "This has proven to be an effective and efficient short-term measure to reduce the immediate impact on the livelihoods of poor South Africans."

In addition, the Unemployment Insurance Fund's Covid-19 the Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (Ters) benefit has been extended to 15 March 2021 - for those sectors that have not been able to operate. To date, more than R57bn in wage support has been paid to over 4.5-million workers through the scheme. But there has been major problems with Ters, due to technical issues as well as fraudulent payments.

3. Implementing economic reforms

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"We have now developed an infrastructure investment project pipeline worth R340bn in network industries such as energy, water, transport and telecommunications. Construction has started and progress is being made on a number of projects," Ramaphosa said.

This includes a draft masterplan for the Lanseria smart city – which will become home to between 350,000 to 500,000 people, several water infrastructure projects, rehabilitation of the country's major highways, student housing projects, and rolling out broadband to schools and other government facilities.

4. Corruption

Ramaphosa also addressed the scourge of corruption.

“ *President Ramaphosa: Corruption is one of the greatest impediments to the country's growth and development. The revelations from the Zondo Commission of Inquiry lay bare the extent of state capture and related corruption.*
[#SONA2021](#)— *Parliament of RSA (@ParliamentofRSA)* [February 11, 2021](#) ”

He said the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy had begun, which lays the basis for a comprehensive and integrated society-wide response to corruption. "We will shortly be appointing the members of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, which is a multi-sectoral body that will oversee the initial implementation of the strategy and the establishment of an independent statutory anti-corruption body that reports to Parliament."

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) recently announced that 6,140 government officials face criminal liability after investigations found that they had dipped into the Ters to the tune of R41m.

The office of the auditor-general has previously found that among those who benefited from the scheme were people beyond the legal age of employment, or were deceased, working in government, receiving social grants or students funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

To this effect, the government has opened 75 criminal cases that are currently under investigation.

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