

"We're in a battle for the soul of our country"

President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered his sixth state of the nation address (SONA) this evening for the first time from the historic Cape Town City Hall following the burning down of the National Assembly in December last year.

 By [Katja Hamilton](#) 10 Feb 2022



Source: Daily Maverick

Ramaphosa was looking to inspire the country with words of hope and deliver promises of progress after a year in which it was ravaged by corruption, unemployment, 100,000 Covid deaths, and lack of transparency around the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture report.

As a country we were looking for answers on The National Prosecuting Authority prosecutions, security, the South African Police Service and the future of effective prosecutions, and looking for solutions and increased budget allocations to address the country's high unemployment rate and inequality. We were wanting clarity around the Covid-19 pandemic, nationwide lockdown, and whether mandatory workplace vaccinations will be enforced.

We were looking for answers and Ramaphosa left no stone unturned when it came to delivering news on how he would grow small and medium businesses in South Africa, bolster SARS as an institution and increase employment opportunities for the youth of our country.

Heads did not roll

However, his delivery fell flat on delivering news related to how the criminal network related to SA's State Capture would be brought to book, when the National State of Disaster would be lifted and where we stand with regards to mandatory workplace vaccinations. He also skirted over the issue of the National Health Insurance.

The key take-aways from President Ramaphosa's speech:

- * He is extending the R350 Social Relief of Distress Grant for another year.
- * He is looking to grow South Africa's export market particularly exporting fresh fruit and produce to China.

The citrus market looks set to grow in this regard.

- * He is supporting the Agriculture sector by industrialising the Hemp and Cannabis market and looking to export its byproducts.

- * Government has reached 250 000 small scale farmers beyond the 100 000 reached last year.

- * He is looking to develop infrastructure in the Eastern Cape and KZN with the aim of building bridges, upgrading roads and improving the delivery and quality of water. The Mzimvubu Water Project and Welisiz Bridge Project were cited.

- * He aims to improve security surveillance with regards to PRASA, and the freight rail industry with the intent of better delivering fresh produce and improving SA's port-rail services and our export market.

- * He aims to move the country from an analogue to digital television network, and to improve telecommunications with a national broadband roll-out

Improving the conditions for businesses to flourish

- * He has plans in place to make up for SA's 4000MW electricity shortfall

- * He is looking at strengthening and professionalising the public service through a professional National School of Government.

- * He is intensifying the fight against Gender Based Violence, and has implemented a strategy plan to promote the empowerment of women by signing three Bills into place.

- * 12,000 new police personnel have been appointed to ensure SAPS increases its capacity.

- * Discussions are underway with judiciary for special court roles for State Capture cases.

- * The National Prosecuting Authority will carry out further investigation and will bring the criminal network involved with State Capture swiftly to justice.

- * The National State of Disaster will be lifted only once it can be assured the pandemic has been managed and contained within the parameters of the National Health Act's laws

South Africans look to remain deep in poverty

"We face steep and daunting challenges; we're engaged in a battle for the soul of this country. We will succeed and emerge victorious in all the challenges we face. We will never be defeated because the spirit of resilience is deeply embedded in our DNA as South Africans," Ramaphosa said.

Ramaphosa did not announce a clear direction on a basic income plan to this mix, which is set to be unsurprising to the likes of EFF Deputy President, Floyd Shivambu. He earlier today said as he was about to enter the Cape Town City Hall to attend SONA that it cannot be left to the Executives alone to implement the basic income plan. "A Basic Income Act should be instituted and it should be more than a mere R350 month. South Africans are in deep poverty and unemployment is high," he said.

There were no EFF disruptions this year.

Last year, not a single EFF MP attended SONA in person.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Construction Editor at Bizcommunity.
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