

Tinned fish, R750k watch, cash – just some of the gifts MPs got in 2019

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The latest edition of parliament's register of members' interests has shed light on the sort of gifts the current cohort of MPs enjoyed in the first of their five-year term, which began in 2019.

The MPs from across the political divide were pampered with gifts such as canned fish, fruit baskets, bouquets of flowers, free soccer tickets, livestock, overseas jaunts and cash donations from generous friends and church congregants.

Among the lucky ones was ANC MP Giovanni April, who was awarded a R5m tender by the department of public works over a period of three years. Police minister Bheki Cele received a Patek Philippe luxury watch worth over R750,000 from the King of Saudi Arabia, while another ANC MP, Mikateko Mahlaule, declared gifts such as hospitality accommodation worth R5,000 which was sponsored by a "friend", Sammy Mashita.

Mahlaule's declarations say that, in one of several instances, Mashita deposited R20,000 into Mahlaule's bank account for one of his suppliers to be paid.

"I have not been sponsored since I assumed office but ordinarily would be sponsored by the ANCYL, as I was a member of the national executive committee, and at times by Mr Sammy Mashita for various reasons including attending his events, as he is in the events industry," says Mahlaule in his declaration form.

Mashita, alongside his wife Pheladi Mphahlele, are the owners of Crocia Events, which was flagged for investigation for allegedly inflating prices while hosting government funerals.

The funerals of struggle icon Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and two other ANC struggle stalwarts cost taxpayers R76m, a price which the department of public works labelled a giant rip-off.

Parliament's joint committee on ethics and members' interests published the register on Tuesday. Among other revelations, the register shows how nearly all MPs acquired properties and shares in various sectors.

Finance minister Pravin Gordhan is among the biggest

shareholders, as he declared a total of over 40,000 shares in companies including Nedbank, Naspers, Investec, Shoprite, Bidvest and British American Tobacco.

Cooperative governance minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma declared a long list of gifts she had received from a "family friend" — saying that most of the gifts had been less than R1,500.

Her gifts included flowers, pyjamas, a wall mat, horns, clay pots, earrings, tea and a dinner set.

Meanwhile, EFF MP Theminkosi Apleni declared three monetary donations. He received R30,000 and R8,000 separately from "USA COC" and R25,000 from an Eastern Cape church.

EFF leader Julius Malema declared a short list of gifts ranging from books and flowers to free Soweto derby tickets. His most expensive gift was a cellphone — a S8 Galaxy — worth R11,000, which was sponsored by Telkom.

DA MP Glynnis Breytenbach declared she had received over R2m from the FW de Klerk Foundation, which footed a legal bill. She also declared a return business class ticket worth about R55,000 and paid for by "Mr N Kirsh". A weeklong holiday, the value of which was not stated, was also declared.

DA leader John Steenhuisen declared Jonny Walker Black Label whisky estimated at R2,500 from the Taiwan Consulate, a beaded rhino from the US Consulate, and cigars and coffee from the Cuban Foreign Service.

Finance minister Tito Mboweni declared Rwandan art crafts — with the purpose of promoting Rwanda Arts — and a box of Swiss luxury chocolate. He also declared Glen Fiddich single malt Scotch whisky, aged 18 years. Mboweni estimated each of the items to be worth under R1,500.

ANC MP Boy Mamabolo said he received R40,000 from a friend as a gift for his son's birthday and a car sponsorship from another friend. Among those who received livestock were Dlamini-Zuma, Zweli Mkhize and Thabang Makwetla, who received a beast from "childhood friend" Stanley Mathabatha. — *TimesLive*



ON TIME: Police minister Bheki Cele declared that he had received a Patek Philippe luxury watch worth over R750,000 from the King of Saudi Arabia. Picture: FREDDY MAVUNDA