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Closed-circuit selfie

Old Hog and fellow scribes got an invite to the unveiling of a CCTV camera deep in Diepsloot on Friday – a new strategy in premier Panyaza Lesufi's crime-fighting initiative. Lesufi was accompanied by two members of his executive – community safety MEC Faith Mazibuko and Cogta MEC Mzi Khumalo – who took time off from what they are paid to do to witness the historic event. Let's hope the CCTV camera captured the moment because no self-respecting scribe would fall for such a lame PR stunt.

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Flights of fancy

At a meeting of the National Assembly programme committee this week, senior MPs traded verbal blows, "debating" an excursion to the UK. Why? To study how the House of Commons holds its prime minister to account, as they did with Boris. The EFF's Natasha Ntlangwini drew the wrath of speaker Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula when she demanded the free ride to London be canned. She said the trip was a waste of money and there were other ways to study Boris's former house, for instance, desktop research. But parliament's political head would not have it. "On this one, I'm not backing down," the speaker shouted back. "If a party feels uncomfortable with the trip and feels it's a waste of money, the party may withdraw its member from the trip." Next day, the speaker jetted off to the Seychelles for an exco meeting of the parliamentary forum of the Southern African Development Community that does Lord knows what. Clearly MPs are making up for travel lost to the lockdown.

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A questionable account

This week the EFF issued a press statement announcing that parliament had finally agreed to establish a committee to hold the president to account. The party claimed this as its victory, saying it had been "a leading voice in calling for broader accountability by the Presidency on the work that it does ...". In reality, parliament only established a committee to oversee the planning, monitoring & evaluation department. Had the Reds bothered to do some research they would have known it's the department led by minister Maropene Ramokgopa that will be answerable to this committee, and it's nothing new as it has been accounting to the public service & administration portfolio committee since the fifth parliament.

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Patriarchal pest control

And then there's Bernice Swarts, the deputy minister for the free spending state landlord aka the department of public works. During a parliamentary debate on the department's spending plans on Tuesday, Swarts called on cash-strapped South Africans to show sympathy for their pampered ministers. It was all in defence of the stunningly wasteful spending of R400,000 on pest control at one minister's pad, and R1.4m on kitchen renovations at another minister's digs. "We call upon all South Africans to join the department and play their part in restoring our value of ubuntu and ending patriarchy and sexism, and to create a South Africa that does not leave the vulnerable behind. South Africa works because of public works. God bless Africa. God bless South Africa. I thank you."

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