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BUDGET

Parliament allocates R6 million for State of the Nation Address

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PARLIAMENT has budgeted R6 million for the hosting of today's State of the Nation Address (SONA) that was scheduled to be delivered by President Cyril Ramaphosa this evening in the Cape Town City Hall.

The ceremony will be followed by debate-and-reply sessions over two days next week.

Ramaphosa's spokesperson, Vincent Magwenya, said the SONA would give an opportunity to reflect on how the country has come as a nation and recommit to working together to build the country envisioned at the start of our democracy.

"In the address, the president will outline the tasks of the Government of National Unity in implementing the three strategic priorities of medium-term development plan, namely driving inclusive growth and job creation; reducing poverty and tackling high cost of living; and building a capable, ethical and developmental state," he said.

Magwenya also said Ramaphosa was looking forward to a constructive, substantive, and enriching debate that will follow his Address next week.

Secretary to Parliament, Xolile George, said Parliament made R6m budget provision for SONA.

"As you know the delivery is at the City Hall and thereafter, the debate and the replies will be in the dome, so we are fairly confident that the provision we have made will be able to cover adequately the consideration of the costs," George said.

National Assembly Speaker Thoko Didiza said Ramaphosa's Address will be the only item on the agenda.



THE 2025 State of the Nation Address will take place at the Cape Town City Hall on Thursday. | AYANDA NDAMANE Independent Newspapers

"We are guided by the joint rules that are there to regulate how proceedings are supposed to be dealt with and those are standing, and we will continue with those," said Didiza.

National Council of Province chairperson Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane said disruptions will be taken care of by the rules.

"We are confident the proceedings will run very smoothly because it is clear to us all as members what is the business

of the day and how we must conduct ourselves. If you act outside, the rules empower the presiding officers to take appropriate action," Mtsweni-Tsipane said.

Didiza also said nearly 2 000 guests are expected to attend SONA.

Former presidents Thabo Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe, and Jacob Zuma will be in attendance as well as other former parliamentary presiding officers.

Didiza said the SONA proceedings

will retain a full ceremonial format, including a 21-gun salute, an aircraft fly-past, and a ceremonial guard, among other things.

The Junior Guard of Honour, comprising 100 learners from four Western Cape schools, will also feature in this year's SONA with Inako Mateza, from the Eastern Cape, rendering the praise singing in IsiXhosa.

"We do note there has been request by some parties that, maybe

the Defence needs to reconsider how those ceremonial proceedings, particularly by the Defence Force, take into consideration the situation of our befallen soldiers in the DRC.

"That is a matter we have forwarded as Parliament to the Defence to reflect on as this is their responsibility," she said.

Responding to questions, Didiza said dinner will be provided for guest with food and beverages will be served after SONA.

Last week, parties raised concerns about MPs getting drunk with the donated alcohol at SONA.

"We have given an assurance to members that SONA for both people who are in the hall in the City Hall and those that are outside, SONA will continue with no serving of drinks and food until the end of SONA and adjourned.

"People will eat and take drinks, and they will depart," she said.

Mtsweni-Tsipane confirmed that the dome will be used during the SONA debate and reply next week.

She said the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure was still busy working on the dome.

"It is our expectation that by next week, it should be ready for us to undertake the business of Parliament," she said.

