

Pandemic has created a massive opportunity for corrupt officials and politicians to loot

By Haniff Hoosen MP – DA Shadow Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Hon Chairperson

I wish to start by extending on behalf of the Democratic Alliance (DA), our condolences and best wishes to the thousands of families who have in one way or another, been directly affected by the spread of Covid-19 in our country.

We meet at an unprecedented time in our history. Never before has the entire world been shut down, and affected all of us in such a devastating manner.

And whilst this is a time to reflect on how the pandemic has affected each and every one of us, it is also a time to reflect on how we, as the leaders of our nation, responded to the pandemic.

Given that Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma is the political head ultimately responsible for the management of the Covid-19 pandemic through the Disaster Management Act, it is the appropriate time and opportunity to reflect on and analyse the work of her department, on this occasion.

Allow me firstly chairperson to extend our appreciation to the chairperson of the CoGTA portfolio as well as other members from across all political parties.

Since the lockdown began, this portfolio has actively played its part in conducting effective oversight of many municipalities from across the country who appeared before us, to account for their interventions to curb the growth of the virus.

It was during these occasions that this portfolio committee became exposed to the real state of our municipalities and how effective our governments have been, in their work to protect the most vulnerable in our society. I think it would be fair to say that our collective experiences thus far have been very concerning.

Whilst there are some pockets of excellence in some areas, the large majority of interventions have largely been a dismal failure. Let me share with you why I make such a strong statement.

Chairperson, whilst governments across the world, have been doing everything humanly possible to protect its citizens from Covid-19, our government have been designing regulations that border on madness.

Instead of fighting the spread of the virus and protecting our citizens,

Instead of fighting the high rate of corruption and looting,

Our Minister, Dlamini Zuma has been fighting against ZOL AND ALCOHOL.

And while she was focussing on ZOL AND ALCOHOL, here is a brief snapshot of what is really going on in our country.

- After more than 100 days of lockdown, thousands of poor residents still don't have access to water to wash their hands.
- Dozens of schools still don't have decent toilets for children.
- Crooked Politicians and officials are colluding with businesses for their personal benefit.
- Quarantine facilities in the Eastern Cape, owned by the family of the MEC for transport, were contracted to the department so that they can benefit from the crisis there. And Minister Dlamini-Zuma is focused on ZOL AND ALCOHOL.
- The Speaker in the **OR Tambo District Municipality Speaker** received invoices amounting to R 4.8 million, from a questionable training company, to teach a few thousand people about the virus, when this information is being provided free of charge on TV, radio and social media. And when the Municipal Manager refused to pay, he was suspended. And where was Minister Dlamini-Zuma.....ZOL AND ALCOHOL.
- The **KZN Department of Social Development** has spent almost R22 million on blankets. Each blanket cost them R460.
- The **Naledi Local Municipality** in North West paid R1 265 for a dust which usually costs less than R20.
- Thermometers that are usually about R200 were sold to the Department of education in KZN for R2500 each. They couldn't be used because they had no batteries. And where was Minister Dlamini-Zuma.....ZOL AND ALCOHOL.

Chairperson, these are only a few examples that I can speak of in the little time allocated to me. There are dozens more examples of the looting that will emerge in time. The corrupt politicians and officials in government departments are making every effort to ensure that this disaster does not go to waste. They are milking the state for every penny and not a single person has been thrown in prison for this, because our Minister is busy fighting ZOL AND ALCOHOL.

It is why chairperson, we are calling on the Minister Dlamini-Zuma, to refocus her efforts and take immediate steps to stem the flow of corrupt activities in municipalities before there is nothing left to steal.

The Minister and her department must focus their energies in fighting Covid-19, and not the citizens of our country.

Thank you.