

NATION

Legal bodies have hands full acting against thieving attorneys

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MORE than 100 attorneys from across South Africa have been suspended and struck off the roll this year.

The Law Society of South Africa and the Legal Practice Council confirmed that the reason for their removal was mainly over misconduct that included

misappropriation of funds and the defrauding of clients.

Independent Media's Investigations Unit learnt that in the past two years there had not only been a major increase of theft by attorneys involving clients' Road Accident Fund (RAF) payouts, but also in other sectors such as property sales, which resulted in attorneys pocketing millions fraudulently.

Most of the attorneys suspended and struck off the roll between November 2018 and October this year were from KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, followed by the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Free State and Limpopo.

Western Cape's Brian Albertus Bauman and Eastern Cape's Mzwandile Bobotyana are among the latest attorneys to have been nabbed for dishonesty and were immediately struck off the roll.

Last month, 53-year-old Bauman was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for defrauding his clients of RAF claims.

It is believed that he defrauded his clients of R14.8 million to fund his gambling addiction.

Bobotyana was also struck off the roll in October after he was alleged to have defrauded a businessman of R2.1m in an illicit house sale.

Bobotyana, who has been charged with fraud and criminality, is yet to plead to the charges as proceedings on his matter are pending.

While some clients were grateful to retrieve their stolen money, in full or at least half, others were less lucky.

SECOND WAVE

We need to act urgently, says Ramaphosa

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These are December 16, 25, 26 and 31 and January 1, 2 and 3.

The beaches and public parks of the Northern Cape and the Western Cape – with the exception of the Garden Route – will remain open to the public over the festive season from 9am to 6pm.

"The cumulative number of confirmed coronavirus cases in South Africa now stands at 866 127. These figures are a cause for great concern. There can no longer be any doubt – the country has entered a second wave of coronavirus infections.

"Given the rate at which new cases have grown over the last two weeks, there is every possibility that if we do not act urgently and if we do not act together, the second wave will be more severe than the first wave.

"The daily average of new cases nationally over the last 7 days is 74% higher than the previous 7 days.

"In this time, the number of new cases has increased from a daily average of around 3800 to just over 6600 a day.

"The daily average of Covid-19 deaths has increased by nearly 50% over the same period from just over 100 deaths a day to just over 150 deaths.

"The four provinces that are leading the second wave are Eastern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

"For the first time in this pandemic, most of the new infections are among young people, particularly those in the age group of 15 to 19," Ramaphosa said.

More than 38 000 health workers in the public sector have tested positive for coronavirus, and 391 have died.

"The next few weeks are going to be a great test of our determination and restraint. This period will require each of us to do things differently to previous years because this year is unlike any other we have lived through before," Ramaphosa said.

South Africa has in the meantime concluded all the necessary processes to ensure its participation in the World Health Organization's Covid-19 Global Vaccine Access Facility, Ramaphosa said.

This facility – known as Covax – pools resources and shares vaccine development risk to ensure equitable access to vaccines. It is expected that South Africa will receive initial vaccines to cover 10% of the population early next year.

"We are also part of the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team that is looking at alternative financing mechanisms to secure additional vaccines for Africa beyond Covax."

MADDOX PRIZE

'SA incredibly proud of Karim'

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"The Maddox Prize serves an important purpose in recognising those who stand up for sound science and evidence. It is our pleasure to work with Sense about Science to recognise the roles that Anthony Fauci and Salim Abdool Karim have played in this pandemic and also that of the Aids crisis in the 1980s," Skipper said.

In a congratulatory letter to Karim, South African Medical Association chairperson Dr Angelique Coetzee said the unique award bestowed on him spoke volumes about his professionalism and dedication during an extremely difficult period.

"Apart from your co-winner Dr Fauci, I cannot think of a more worthy recipient of this incredible honour, and I believe the awarding of this prize again emphasises the value you have added to our country during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As South Africans we are incredibly proud of you and the work you are still doing," Coetzee said.

RESEARCH

Women at far greater risk of Covid-19, says StatsSA report

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WOMEN have the highest rates of Covid-19 infection across all age groups compared to their male counterparts.

This is according to Statistics SA's demographic impact report, released yesterday, which aimed to establish how the virus has impacted the demography of the country, the geo-spatial characteristics related to the vulnerability of contracting Sars-CoV-2 in South Africa and mortality, fertility and migration.

In the report Statistician-General Risenga Maluleke said the Covid-19 pandemic had without doubt been the biggest disrupter to people's lives since World War II.

"The most critical descriptor in understanding this situation is the breakdown by age and sex, which lies at the heart of the study of demography, since this will indicate to us who was most vulnerable and most affected and where. Such a breakdown would as an example allow us to establish the impact of the pandemic on life expectancy," Maluleke said.

"There is plenty of further research that the population and health sector can involve itself in to unravel this complex phenomenon. One of the unanswered questions for example remains why Africa was hit as leniently as it has been thus far. Is it a matter of measurement coupled with less developed CRVS systems? Or is there a health advantage that Africa has used in terms of preparedness, early lockdowns or experience from previous health crises. This is the beginning of a conversation to try to answer these questions and to lay the foundation to explore various others," she said.

ROBBEN ISLAND

Swimming the high seas for children in need of love

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ALTHOUGH it was no easy feat, completing his 50th and 51st Robben Island crossings in aid of charity made it all worthwhile for English Channel swimmer Howard Warrington.

His milestone double crossing came days after 30-year-old Alwyn Uys made history last Friday by becoming the first paraplegic swimmer to successfully cross from Robben Island to Bloubergstrand.

Warrington, who also celebrated his 56th birthday on the same day, completed the double crossing when he swam to and from Robben Island yesterday to raise funds for the Herberg Children's Home in Robertson.

The home's spokesperson Petro Uren said they were very grateful to have been chosen as the beneficiaries of Warrington's swim. "Everybody has been affected greatly by the Covid-19 pandemic and in our case it meant that we couldn't host our usual fundraisers to bring in funds to the home. We have 122 children at the home.

"Warrington has a long-standing friendship with the children's home. I was lucky enough to go out on the boat to witness him doing the swim and it was amazing to see the amount of work and effort that goes into this," said Uren.

Warrington started his double swim at Bloubergstrand. "Life has

The report indicated increasing rates of infection among men and women in the age groups 15-19 and 45-49, however more female confirmed cumulative Covid-19 cases were recorded at 57.8% compared with 41.3% male cases.

The sex ratios show that male cases dominate in children aged 0-4, while there were more female cases for the adult and older population.

"The female population between the age group 10-19 and 40-49 are likely to be admitted in hospitals," the report read.

The situational analysis among women aged 15-49 suggests that they are more vulnerable to the pandemic due to risk behaviours, particularly alcohol consumption and smoking cigarettes that lead to non-communicable diseases, the report stated.

"The first four main underlying natural causes of death among females were diabetes mellitus, hypertensive diseases, cerebrovascular diseases and other forms of heart disease. These diseases are linked to Covid-19 infections and deaths," the report reads.

The pattern of fertility in South Africa indicates that age-specific fertility rates increase in women aged 20-24 to those at 30-34 and begin to decline among women aged 35-39.

"Literature suggests that the higher rate of Covid-19 infections among the female population in these age groups is expected to result in demographic outcomes such as a fertility postponement or a change in pregnancy plans.

"Studies have suggested that the adjustment of fertility will depend on socio-economic conditions such as loss of jobs, income shocks resulting from the pandemic, future rates of infection and the level of demographic transition," the report said.



Covid-19 ministerial advisory committee chair Professor Salim Abdool Karim and US infectious disease expert Dr Anthony Fauci have been jointly awarded the John Maddox Prize 2020 for standing up for science during the coronavirus pandemic. | RAJESH JANTILAL

NATION

Reconciliation Day reminds us of our core humanity, says Ramaphosa

STAFF REPORTER

FOR every negative story of racism that makes the news, there are countless positive stories of racial integration, communities living in harmony and social cohesion that do not generate headlines.

So said President Cyril Ramaphosa as the nation today commemorates the Day of Reconciliation.

In apartheid South Africa, December 16 was known as the Day of the Vow, as the Voortrekkers, in preparation for the Battle of Blood River in 1838 against the Zulus, took a Vow before God that they would build a church, and they and their descendants would observe the day as a day of thanksgiving should they be granted victory.

The second historical event that took place on December 16 was in 1961, when ANC military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed.

"Many stories can be found on the same #ImStaying thread. They are simple, everyday stories of South Africans living and working alongside each other, being friends, and helping each other," Ramaphosa said.

"We know that divisions of race and class remain very real in South Africa, but these stories do show that race relations in our country are not as toxic as we are often led to believe.

"Last year's National Reconciliation Barometer, published by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, noted that the optimism of respondents regarding racial unity was the highest since the inception of the study.

"It also found that the majority of respondents believed race relations have improved since 1994."

Ramaphosa said he was recently sent a photo that featured on the popular #ImStaying Facebook thread. Two women are seated side by side at a bus stop somewhere in Cape Town.

One is white, elderly and frail, and rests her head on the shoulder of the younger black woman.

"This simple image of these two women sitting with their hands locked tightly, resonated deeply with me as we approached Reconciliation Day.

"It brought to mind the powerful words of Steve Bantu Biko that captured our aspirations for a new country: 'In time we shall be in a position to bestow on South Africa the greatest possible gift – a more human face'."

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