Flipside of Covid gloom emerges by TANNA FARRER

\* Twelve tough months of Covid have left a legacy that could cast a shadow on health systems and public behaviour which will deliv- er life-saving benefits for years.

\* Professor Samual Al- door, Chief of Health Policy and Care and a member of the ministerial advisory committee for Covid-19, said the country was now better organised and created the right environment for vaccination roll-out and interventions.

\* "This will allow SA to go to scale with in- vergation of both public and private sectors and, in particular, to work across all nine provinces," Samne said the Sunday Times.

\* More coordinated approach was a les- son for dealing with other cross-border and interprovincial issues such as HIV, TB and "even gender-based violence", Samne said.

\* Also, national co-operation of scarce re- sources such as oxygen showed the benefit of "parallel hospitals being able to treat more severe situations while awaiting trans- fers". As a result, smaller hospitals would be able to scale up their high care capacity in general, Samne said, adding that "this won't be forever. We need resources for future emergencies and reducing, for exam- ple, maternal and child mortality.

\* There also been a boost in operation of training in emergency medical services and "remarkable" health system interventions such as the large scale production of masks and the national ventilator project.

\* Making practices such as social distancing and mask wearing acceptable would reap benefits down the line, and "we have seen a lot of impact on influenza as a secondary effect, with almost no outbreak in the last year", partly thanks to travel restric- tions, Samne said.

\* The head of the MAC, professor Salim Ab- door, Karim, said the pandemic had gal- vanised the teaching of public health which had made an "amazing" contribution to research on the disease. "South Africa has had only a few briefing sesions for the public," Karim said, and Covid had propelled innovation like that at 13th international conference on the state of food and knives, making interventions during a crisis.

\* Professor Marc Mendelson, head of infec- tious diseases at Groote Schuur Hospital, said the epidemic had "shown us just how quickly interventions can be developed". Speaking during a webinar hosted by the nonprofit Global Antibiotic Research & De- velopment Partnership, Mendelson said the virus had also shown the enormous benefits of specialists across disciplines working together.  "At Groote Schuur, at the height of the pandemic, we had over 500 doctors from all the different specialisations working on Covid-19 admission wards. "The first step was to fight against antibiotic resistance, a battle in which "so few were invested or working together."

\* Another step forward is in vaccine tech- nology for other diseases, and the first candi- date in SA to test was fully against malaria biologics on mRNA technology developed because of the pandemic. When vaccines and other biologics are in a- serted disease agent, mRNA vaccines intro- duce new RNA "instructions" that cells use to produce viral proteins that help the hosts then able to produce the proteins on their own and an immune response is developed.