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**MINISTRY OF POLICE**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**36/1/4/1/201700328**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2827**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 33-2017)**

**2827. Mr D America (DA) to ask the Minister of Police:**

(1) What is the backlog in the (a) processing and (b) analysis of samples at the forensic science laboratories of the SA Police Service in each province (i) in the (aa) 2014-15, (bb) 2015-16 and (cc) 2016-17 financial years and (ii) since 1 April 2017;

(2) what (a) are the challenges experienced by his department to eliminate the backlog and (b) what steps has his department taken to address the challenges experienced?

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**REPLY:**

(1)(a)(b)(i)(aa)(bb)(cc)(ii)

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| --- |
| **SAPS** **FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORIES** |
| **ENTRIES** |
| **(i) (aa)** | **(i) (bb)** | **(i) (cc)** | **(ii)** |
| **2014/2015** | **2015/2016** | **2016/2017** | **1 April 2017 to 30 August 2017** |
| Gauteng | 2 147 | 13 578 | 6 997 | 6 365 |
| Western Cape | 774 | 1 824 | 1 352 | 4 681 |
| Eastern Cape | 0 | 0 | 0 | 408 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 383 | 2 915 | 1500 | 1 012 |
| Forensic Science Laboratory | 3 304 | 18 317 | 9 849 | 12 466 |

The current backlog, which is 4.8% of on-hand case entries (exhibits) on-hand, is still below the 10% target, as reflected in the South African Police Service Annual Performance Plan 2017/2018.

(2)(a) The most pressing challenge experienced by the Division: Forensic Services, is that resources to support the implementation of the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act, are not commensurate with the increased number of crime scenes and buccal samples that the South African Police Service (SAPS) is required to respond to.

The Biology Section, within the Forensic Science Division, is responsible for the analysis of these samples and the Forensic Database Management Section, is responsible for the loading of the forensic DNA profiles, onto the DNA database, as well as performing the comparative searches, to provide forensic DNA links.

The total number of additional examiners required in these two specific sections, to analyse the increased number of DNA samples and to conduct comparative searches on the DNA database, have not yet been appointed. There is also an insufficient number of administration personnel to receive, register and handle the increased number of submissions to the various SAPS forensic laboratories.

. The Biology Section is also experiencing challenges with the procurement process of specialised DNA equipment, which will provide preventative and corrective maintenance.

The current DNA system, the STRlab system, that is maintained by the State Information Technology Agency (SITA), is unstable and unsupporting of the optimal work load in finalising the case entries within the time frames.

 The Chemistry Section is experiencing a significant increase in the submission of cases, particularly less serious cases. The KwaZulu-Natal Forensic Laboratory experiences challenges with flooding of the premises, which disrupts precise procedures, leading to backlogs.

The budget of the Division: Forensic Services, is not commensurate to the significant increase in exhibit material submitted for forensic analysis. In particular, inadequate funds are available for recurring costs, such as forensic consumables and buccal sample collection kits. The reduction in the allocated budget for the Division: Forensic Services, is expected to have a negative impact on service delivery, as well as the SAPS’s ability to reduce the backlog and to improve turnaround times.

(2)(b) The acting Divisional Commissioner: Forensic Services has requested an additional posts for 76 support staff and 58 posts for forensic analysts, on 29 May 2017, to address the implementation of the DNA Act by the Biology Section and the Forensic Database Management Section.

Currently, interns are employed to assist with the increased volume of exhibits and flexi-hour shifts have been implemented, where required.

The chemistry case load is distributed to other regions, which have the capacity to handle additional cases and an additional laboratory, in the Western Cape, is now functional and also analysing exhibits. Although the capacity at the Western Cape Forensic Laboratory increased, it remains inadequate to address the increasing work load. A pilot project, using new technology with flexi-hour shifts, has also been implemented at the Western Cape Forensic Laboratory, to improve the processing of the less serious cases.