



A 9m bronze statue of Nelson Mandela was unveiled as part of the Day of Reconciliation celebrations at the Union Buildings. The day also marked the commemoration of the centenary of the Union Buildings.

Capital effort all round by city authorities and staffers 9m statue unveiled of father of nation

KENNEDY MUGOLU
 News Editor

VALUABLE lessons were learnt as the City of Tshwane stretched its resources to give Nelson Mandela a send-off (to the father of the nation) which culminated with the unveiling of his statue at the Union Buildings yesterday.

An estimated 100 000 people, including VVIPs and VJs and the public, viewed Mandela's body during the three days he lay in state at the Union Buildings last week.

The city also hosted an official memorial service at Lucas "Mama" Morija Stadium in Athloneville.

There were no major incidents during one of the greatest ceremonial events in the history of the capital and South Africa.

Tshwane Metro Police spokesman Senior Superintendent Isaac Mahabane said officers had to cancel their leave plans and return to work at the drop of a hat after Mandela's death was announced on December 5. There were other officers on standby as metro police filled various roles, including forming the mourning guard of honour.

Mahabane thanked the people for their patience. They had all complied and never complained.

However, City of Tshwane municipal spokesman, Blessing Maseko said, it was premature to calculate the exact cost as many of the state funeral expenses were still being accounted for.

He said Tshwane mayor Kgantso Ramogaga had urged all departments to work together to ensure funds were spent prudently to give the great statesman the send-off he deserved.

Maseko said the success of the week of mourning could largely be attributed to the discipline of those who descended on the capital city, coupled with the dedication of all public officials to ensure everything ran smoothly.

The infrastructure in the CBD was already under pressure due to the construction of the bus rapid transit network, but the work had to be suspended temporarily and the roads transformed into a memorial route through which Mandela's remains were transported from a Military Hospital to the Union Buildings on each of the three days.

While days of Mandela's death, parts of Ntsefiso Street, which is a major route for A to Yans, and Madiba and Thabo Delamane streets, which were undergoing work as part of the Project Reclaim, were turned into street parking spaces.

Maseko said work on these streets would resume "in due course", but this is unlikely to happen before the new year.

He added that although the local authorities were satisfied with how the week went, they had learnt valuable lessons.

He said from a planning point of view, the municipality activated a multidisciplinary team to ensure that it was ready and capable of hosting activities related to Mandela's funeral, but it was the belief of the Ramogaga administration that the management of the

park-and-ride facilities could have been better. Orinda became restless at Ploemela Valley Circle, the Tshwane Events Centre and LC de Villiers Sports Centre after the park-and-ride sites were closed and the government said it could no longer guarantee that everyone in the queue would be given access to the Union Buildings.

But Maseko said: "Unlike with the soccer World Cup in 2010, the city could not estimate the number of people expected as there was no ticketing or pre-booking for the events that preceded the funeral."

He said that a few lessons have been learnt from hosting activities of such magnitude, the principal being the need to communicate with citizens better.

He said traffic congestion which backed up into Centurion from Wednesday to Friday could have been avoided. This was caused by road closures. On Friday, delays occurred when thousands of people attempted to get to the park-and-ride sites in buses.

LAU VAN ZUYDAM

THE WORLD'S tallest statue of Nelson Mandela now stands at the Union Buildings - embracing the nation with outstretched arms and a smiling face.

President Jacob Zuma yesterday unveiled the 9m bronze statue, less than 24 hours after Mandela's funeral in Qunu in the Eastern Cape.

"We laid Tata to rest in Qunu yesterday (Sunday)."

"Today he rises majestically at the post of government, as a symbol of peace, reconciliation, unity and progress," Zuma said to a packed marquee tent on the lawn after the unveiling.

Many high-profile dignitaries including former president Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President Kgama Moragatho, Mandela's grandson Mandisa Mandela, Tshwane mayor Kgantso Ramogaga and the Reverend Jesse Jackson attended the unveiling while thousands of people gathered at the Union Buildings to celebrate Reconciliation Day.

The statue was erected over the weekend.

It was covered in a black silk

cloth with only its feet protruding. Just before 11am, Zuma unveiled the statue of Tata Madiba on the south lawn with cheers erupting from the crowds.

The statue closely resembles Mandela.

It depicts him walking, with outstretched arms, smiling at the nation.

It reminds one of the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

"The stretching up of his hands and the footwork denote that South Africa is now a democratic country," Zuma said.

"Madiba's advancing to the nation to say 'let us come together, let us unite' with both hands embracing the entire nation," the president added.

"There should now be no more tears. We must celebrate Madiba and take forward his legacy."

"He should live in our hearts and inspire us to do something good every single day to honour his memory," Zuma said.

After the unveiling, jets flew over the Union Buildings and a 21 gun salute sounded while people took photographs of the statue.

Continued on Page 2

HERTZOG SCULPTURE MOVED TO MAKE WAY

A figure of former prime minister James Barry Hertzog was moved to a new spot and replaced with the giant Nelson Mandela statue at the Union Buildings.

The removal of Hertzog's statue was done after thorough consultation, President Jacob Zuma said. In the spirit of reconciliation, General Gert Coetzee, guardian of Hertzog, was personally invited by Zuma to understand that Hertzog's statue had to be moved to make space for that of Mandela.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- The statue is 9m metres tall and is the largest of Mandela in the world to date.
- It weighs 45 tons and was assembled from 147 different pieces.
- The statue was assembled at four different locations around the country.
- The project cost R8 million and took eight months to complete.
- Local artists Andile Prinsloo and Shivan Jansen van Vuren sculpted the statue.
- Dal Benich company, Kokstad, was in charge of the project.

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