JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Robben Island Museum Council and EPPA joins South Africa in Mourning Lieutenant-General (Dr) Vejay Ramlakan

IMMEDIATE RELEASE 01 September 2020

The Council, Executive Management, the Ex-Political Prisoners and staff of Robben Island Museum (RIM) and the Ex-Political Prisoners Association (EPPA) join the country in mourning Lieutenant-General Vejay Ramlakan who served South Africa exquisitely and selflessly in many roles: anti-apartheid activist from high school, medical doctor, Surgeon-General and Inspector-General of the of South African National Defence Force and Department of Defence and Military Veterans.

Ramlakan also had the privilege of serving as Nelson Mandela’s personal physician for a period of seven years. He was incarcerated on Robben Island between 1987 and 1991 and released after the unbanning of political organisations in the country. His prison number was: 23/87.

“Life histories and memories of significance from Ex- Political Prisoners (EPP’s) are an integral part of Robben Island Museum’s mandate to preserve and promote RIM’s multi-layered history. The mandate has led to the documentation of their individual stories and memories before they pass away. Lieutenant-General Ramalakan’s passing is yet another painful reminder of the need to accelerate this memorialisation and documentation project,” expresses RIM Council Chairperson, Advocate Michael Masutha.

As from March 2015, Robben Island Museum (RIM) has implemented its Strategic Research Agenda (SRA), within emphasis on the multiple and multi-layered values that define the Island as a cultural landscape. “An area that has been prioritised is the documentation of the life histories of Former Political Prisoners that were incarcerated on Robben Island in the Maximum Security Prison to ensure that EPP narratives and stories are never forgotten and become a fountain of knowledge for our youth and posterity. Future generations will be able to access these untold stories and learn about the history of South Africa and Robben Island through this documented biographies,” added Masutha.

“We remember him fondly for his singular dedication as a comrade in the struggle against apartheid and his willingness to unstintingly sacrifice for his country and his readiness to help fellow South Africans in any way he could, without expecting anything in return. His steadfast commitment to better
the lot of hundreds of political prisoners who have been sadly forgotten by the beneficiaries of our democracy, has been the glue that keeps EPPA focused on ensuring that our Robben Island national heritage is restored to a place of pride and an affirmation of the selflessness that thousands gave up their youth for,” said Chairperson of the EPPA, Mr Stan Motimele.

An astounding leader within the EPPA, he will be remembered for his impeccable dedication and contribution in serving South Africa since his youth.

“Comrade Vejay was a quiet, serious and compassionate human being whose strength of character was immediately evident. The EPPA commits to completing and advancing his illustrious and revolutionary work, especially the Robben Island Leadership Institute, among many others,” concludes Motimele.

Robben Island Museum and EPPA extend their heartfelt condolences to Comrade Vejay’s family, friends, fellow comrades and all who knew and worked with him.

In keeping with transparency and collective approach as strategic stakeholders, the Council of Robben Island Museum continues to engage the EPPA on governance related matters, including, but not limited to the current investigation as agreed to in a number of meetings to strengthen existing co-operation between the two parties in taking forward the exciting advances to further enhance the work and image of Robben Island as a museum and world heritage site.

###

Media contact:

All media enquiries for this specific matter may be forwarded to:

**Robben Island Museum Council Chairperson**
Advocate Michael Masutha
Email: mikenasutha24@gmail.com
Mobile: 082 496 8837

**Ex-Political Prisoners Association Chairperson**
Mr Stan Motimele
Email: mmotimele@icloud.com
Mobile: 082 782 6949

**Editors notes:**

**Ex-Political Prisoner Advisory Committee (EPPAC)**

Robben Island Museum consciously acknowledges the existence of the Ex-Political Prisoners incarcerated at Robben Island from inception. When RIM was established as a museum, there was a
conscious decision to establish reference groups that were working with RIM management on various aspects of the Island.

In the same understanding, Robben Island Museum in its governance structure, established an Ex-Political Prisoners Advisory Committee (EPPAC) in 2017, as a sub-committee of RIM council. The purpose of this advisory committee is to offer guidance on research, interpretation, presentation and conservation of the Island; and to further structure dialogue between RIM and RIM EPPs on broader issues affecting both parties. Therefore, RIM EPPs have an opportunity to address issues of concern through this platform.

Ex-Political Prisoners Association

The EPPA was establishment in 1995 to serve the interest of ALL ex-political prisoners and not just the ex-prisoners who served on Robben Island. EPPA, founded by Nelson Mandela, assist ex-political prisoners to be re-integrated into society and provide healthcare for the ex-political prisoners. For more information, please visit: http://eppa.org.za/