

Premier Ace Magashule: Free State 2015 State of the Province Address

24 Feb 2015

Honourable Acting Speaker of the Free State Legislature

Honourable Judge President and esteemed members of the Judiciary

His Excellency the South African High Commissioner in Lesotho, Reverend Majeke

Leaders of the African National Congress and the Alliance

The Veterans and Stalwarts of our struggle

Honourable Members of the Executive Council and Legislature

Honourable Members of the National Assembly and the NCOP

The leadership of SALGA and the leadership of our municipalities

The Head of the SANDF in the Free State, Brigadier General Moyo

The Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS, Lieutenant-General T.S. Mpembe

Morena e Moholo wa Bakoena le Morena e Moholo wa Batlokoa

The Chairperson of the Free State House of Traditional Leaders, Morena Ledika Moloji

The Commissioner of the Public Service Commission in the Free State, Dr H Boshoff

The families of the late former Speaker of the Legislature, cde Sisi Mabe and the late former MEC Health, cde Fezi Ngumbentombi

My special guests today, children who are vulnerable, homeless and live on our streets,

Viewers and listeners

Comrades, compatriots and friends,

Dumelang, goeie môre, molweni, sanibonani, agee, good morning,

I would like to thank the Acting Speaker for creating the opportunity for us to address the people of the Free State this morning.

As the President of the Republic of South Africa, his Excellency President J.G. Zuma, has indicated; “The year 2015 marks 60 years of a historic moment in our history, when South Africans from all walks of life adopted the Freedom Charter, in 1955, in Kliptown, Soweto.

Selemo sa lekwalo la Tokologo;

Die Jaar van die Vryheidsmanifes.

They declared amongst other things, that South Africa Belongs to All Who Live in It, Black and White, and that

no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people. This year 2015 has also been declared a year of Unity in Action to Advance Economic Freedom.

Honourable Acting Speaker, history has produced a significant number of remarkable leaders with little or no formal education. We take the example of Abraham Lincoln who is generally regarded as one of the three greatest Presidents in the history of the United State of America. He completed less than a year of formal education, and relied on educating himself. He abolished slavery, strengthened the federal government, and modernized the economy of the USA through banks, rail, roads and tariffs.

We also have the example of President Lula da Silva who only started learning to read when he was ten years old, and quit school after the second grade in order to work to help his family. He started working at the age of 12 as a shoe-shiner and street vendor. He was a founding member of the Workers' Party of Brazil and is regarded as one of the most popular and influential politicians of the world. Under his leadership, the Brazilian economy became the eighth largest economy in the world.

Closer to home, we have the example of General Christiaan de Wet who also received little formal education. He is regarded as one of the greatest Boer Generals during the two Anglo-Boer Wars and defended the independence of the Transvaal as a Boer Republic in the First Anglo-Boer War. He was a Minister of Agriculture in the Oranje Colony and was part of the Afrikaner Delegation to the all-white National Convention that drafted the Constitution for the Union of South Africa. General Koos de la Rey also received little formal education but is equally regarded as one of the bravest Boer commanders during the Anglo-Boer war as he led the Afrikaner army to battles that gave the Afrikaners pride. He served in the Transvaal Parliament.

Walter Sisulu was equally one of the greatest leaders groomed by and led the Congress Movement. He left school at grade 6. He mentored Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo in politics, even though they were both University graduates. Today, we take pride in the democratic achievements in this country because of his leadership.

The point, honorable Speaker, is that people should be judged by the leadership they provide to society and how it changes their lives for the better. It is within that understanding that the achievements of South Africa during the term of office of President Jacob Zuma should be judged.

The dream of a non-racial, non-sexist, united and democratic South Africa was realized in April 1994 with the ushering in of a democratic dispensation where everybody participated in electing a government of their choice. We can only realize one united country if we continue to fight all forms of racial discrimination and related intolerances in our society.

We call on all the people of South Africa, in particular our Free State Province, to heed the call of President Zuma by inculcating a new national identity through promoting national symbols such as the national flag, national anthem, the Preamble of the Constitution and practicing of the African Union anthem in schools and churches.

To bolster social cohesion and patriotism, we shall install national flags in schools throughout the Province. Posters to promote knowledge and understanding of our national symbols and the national orders will also be distributed to schools. From January 2015, schools have been requested to recite the preamble of the Constitution and sing the National Anthem at assemblies.

In recognizing the contribution and freedom our fore-bearers bequeathed to us, we have decided to rename the following government buildings:

The Lebohang Building will forthwith be known as the OR Tambo House and the CR Swart building – that we have for some time referred to as simply the provincial government building – will be known as the Fidel Castro building.

Acting Speaker, allow me to share with the House, the work that the Free State ANC government has done and continues to do whilst also outlining the challenges on this journey in realizing the aspirations of the Freedom Charter.

Re a Hlasela MaFreistata. Ha re hlaseleng!

“The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!”

(Menyako ta thuto setso etla bulelwa bohle)

On Education

The ANC government’s commitments on Education included the following;

- To improve the quality of teaching and learning
- To have regular annual national assessments to track improvements or lack thereof
- To improve Grade R and extend Early Childhood Development
- To improve the provision of infrastructure and learning material
- To expand access to higher education institutions

Our progress on the education front has been significant. This is illustrated by the following facts;

- There are currently 1 thousand 496 registered ECD sites and 97 thousand 283 pre-school children attending ECD programmes at these registered sites.
- There are 4 thousand 835 ECD practitioners and 324 children with disabilities attending ECD programmes at these sites.
- The total number of subsidized Grade R classes increased with 80 to 1 thousand 145. The provincial government is also subsidizing 265 Grade R classes in community-based sites or independent schools. A total number of 49 thousand, 350 learners have access to Grade R.
- The performance of Grade 3 and Grade 6 learners improved in Mathematics and Languages during the 2014 Annual National Assessment (ANA).
- The Free State achieved a pass rate for the 2014 National Senior Certificate examination of 82.8 %. The Thabo Mofutsanyana district remained our best performing district with an 87.6 % pass rate. A significant number of our schools achieved a pass rate of above 80 % and 50 schools obtained a 100 % pass rate.

The ANC Free State government will leave a profound legacy with regard to promoting access for students to institutions of higher learning. There are currently 6 thousand and 9 full-time bursary holders with an additional 500 bursaries allocated this year. A dedicated Call Centre will be established to provide a platform for continuous engagement and support to students.

There are currently 212 medical students studying in Cuba with another 37 students studying Medicine, Civil Engineering and International Trade in Turkey. We are also supporting 277 students in China and 100 students who will soon be leaving to commence with their studies in India.

Given the scope of our investment in pre-graduate studies and higher education, our focus will be on maintaining these students at national and international institutions for the next two years. During this period, we will actively lobby for increased funding for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and encourage our students to make full use of the benefits associated with the NSFAS.

A total number of 312 post-graduate bursaries have been finalised. 42 students will be supported towards their PhD studies, 134 towards their Masters' degree studies and 136 towards their Honors' degrees. The Free State will be establishing a Research and Development Institute.

During the forthcoming year, we will also be focusing on the provision of student accommodation in the Free State. Specific plans in this regard focus on the allocation of the former Bonamelo College to the QwaQwa campus of the University of the Free State as a boarding school.

Career guidance centres will be established in various districts in the province.

Infrastructure projects completed during the current financial year include;

- Three new schools, namely Letlotlo Naledi Primary in Bothaville, Nthutuzelo Primary in Bultfontein and Lister Skosana Primary in Parys
- Three new school hostels have been completed (Phillipolis, Bainsvlei and Ventersburg.) The development of school hostels is a continuation of our commitment to gradually decrease our reliance on learner transport to ensure that learners have access to quality education. This function will shift from the Department of Education to the Department of Police, Roads and Transport during the forthcoming financial year.
- The construction of 2 schools under the ASIDI programme – that is schools to be reconstructed that were built of prefabricated material – have been completed (PT Sanders in Trompsburg and Vredefort Primary in Vredefort).

We will continue to implement infrastructure projects including;

The construction of eight new schools in various districts in the province;

Various projects are underway at 66 schools in the Free State. These projects will add additional classes at 31 schools, 29 administration blocks, 12 new halls, 12 new kitchens and 12 media centers and laboratories.

Construction is in progress at 20 additional schools under the ASIDI programme

Ten (10) schools will be also be upgraded to full service schools in an effort to cater for learners with special needs.

Four school hostels are under development. (Sediti Secondary and Boitumelong Special School – both in Thaba Nchu, Edenville Combined School in Edenville and Sebonakaliso Farm School in Harrismith.)

An additional 50 new Grade R classes will also be constructed.

The 2015 School Governing Bodies (SGB) elections will be held from 6 to 28 March this year. The elections will take place at over 1300 public schools throughout the province. We urge all parents to support the elections by standing as candidates or participating as voters, because without parental and community support, education can never be a societal issue as envisaged by this government. We also urge professionals to volunteer, sacrifice, their time and contribute as elected or co-opted SGB members to assist government to fully implement its educational programmes.

Re a Hlasela MaFreistata. Ha re hlaseleng!

“ALL SHALL HAVE EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS!”

(BOHLE BA TLABA LE DITOKELO TSA BOTHO TSE LEKANANG)

We continue to guarantee our people freedom of association and the right to peaceful protest. We do, however, condemn those who engage in violent protest and infringe on other people's rights. Equally, we will not tolerate the sabotage of infrastructure that directly affects our people's right to water, electricity and a safe and healthy environment. We have illustrated during the past year that we will not hesitate to take action through the South African Police Service.

On Social Cohesion and Nation Building;

Honourable Acting Speaker, in transforming our heritage landscape, the restoration of the Wesleyan Church, the founding venue of the African National Congress, has been completed and will be officially opened this year.

Social cohesion remains high on our agenda. Since 1997, we have hosted MACUFE to celebrate our diversity. Other festivals that we have supported and will continue to do so include the Cherry Jazz Festival and Vryfees. We will also continue our support of our provincial sporting codes, including Free State Rugby, Free State Cricket, Bloemfontein Celtics, Free State Stars and the Free State Crinums Netball team. We will also be introducing the Free State OR Tambo Marathon this year as a premium event on the annual sporting calendar.

We will continue to commemorate official days of public significance, including Human Rights Day, Freedom Day, Mandela Day, Reconciliation Day and Youth and Women's Days. These initiatives endeavour to deliver cultural value, create a sense of belonging and honour those who shaped our history.

The installation of seats at the Kaizer Sebothelo stadium has been completed. The following infrastructure projects are in progress and will be completed this year:

- Seisa Ramabodu Stadium
- Siphon Mutsi Indoor Sport Centre
- Further upgrades to the Fezile Dabi stadium

Acting Speaker, one of our flagship programmes in the arts and culture sector will be the planning and design of a Heroes Park at the Regional Park in Thaba Nchu. This park will preserve and celebrate the heritage of our forebearers and those who sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. The Park will host statues of the likes of Nelson Mandela, OR Tambo, Bram Fischer, Joe Slovo, Beyers Naude, Dr J.S. Moroka, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, Chris Hani, Samora Machel, Leabua Jonathan, Fidel Castro and others.

The universal language of sports and recreation is another influential avenue through which we have sought to drive social cohesion. Through sport, arts and culture, we will continue to build capacity to unite, inspire and celebrate our diversity.

Hlasela Free State – We are hard at work! Re ya Hlasela!

“THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONGST THOSE WHO WORK IT!”

(NAHA ETLA AROLELWA BOHLE BA SEBETSANG HO YONA)

On Agriculture;

Acting Speaker, we were pleased with the hon. President’s announcement that national government will promote the establishment of agri-parks or cooperatives and clusters in each of the 27 poorest district municipalities to transform rural economies.

- Statistics South Africa recorded that during the 2013-14 season, soya beans were grown primarily in the Free State (42 %) and Mpumalanga (40 %). For the first time on record, the planting in the Free State exceeded that of Mpumalanga. The Province’s agricultural output for the 2013-14 financial year was recorded at R6.2 billion, an increase of R309 million when compared to the R5.9 billion recorded in 2004.
- Approximately 5.6 % of agricultural land has been transferred to black South Africans through the land reform process. The land reform process in our Province thus far include a total number of 13 thousand 354 beneficiaries and a total of 216 thousand 309 hectares that have been transferred. Indeed, we are implementing the Freedom Charter’s call that; “Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended.”
- Last year, we announced that the NARYSEC National Training Centre will be based at the Thaba Nchu College. I am glad to announce that the first 1000 South African NARYSEC students will commence on the 2nd of March 2015 with the development programme at the College.
- In responding to the call made by the hon. President in the State of the Nation Address, the Free State is the most appropriate area for the expansion of the export market in the production of deciduous fruits such as apples. The Thabo Mofutsanyana district has a competitive advantage over the traditional production areas, its apples ripen first and reaches the market earlier. In this regard, we will invest massively in the development of the apple industry in the Free State.
- The successful implementation of Rekgaba ka diratshwana, our food security programme, has received interest from different provinces in the country and SADC attracted international organisation such as Food for Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The programme is contributing positively in eradicating poverty in the Free State whereby 19 505 vegetable gardens have been established benefiting 24 509 households.
- We take pride in the work we have so far done with regards to the Vrede Integrated Dairy project. We have completed the construction of Phase 1 of this project with more than 400 dairy cows in lactation. The

project runs with 810 dairy cattle. Phase 2 of this project, which is the milk processing plant, is now at 90% completion.

- The Eastern and North-Eastern parts of the province were declared a disaster area after the veldfires that destroyed over 93 000 hectares of land. We managed to secure approximately R20 million to assist in redressing the impact of these veldfires.
- We have successfully implemented the Grain Field Chicken abattoir in Reitz together with the broiler houses in Tweeling, with the support of VKB, and we shall continue to develop the Free State as the poultry hub of South Africa.
- The People's Republic of China donated about R45 million to the Free State for the construction of a Demonstration Fish Hatchery Centre. This Centre is in operation. China has sent three (3) professors and one (1) technician for technological cooperation of the South African Agricultural Demonstration Centre project.
- We shall establish a mega Agri-Park in the Xhariep district, comprising of fish, ostrich, sheep and vegetable production, packaging and marketing.

We have indeed, as the Freedom Charter envisaged, provided people on the agricultural land with "...implements, seed, tractors and dams..." through our mechanization packages and will continue to do so.

On Rural Development

Honourable Acting Speaker, the township revitalization programme as well as poverty alleviation and infrastructure development projects illustrate how we have put into practice our commitment to ensure the development of rural areas. Allow me to remind hon. Members of some of our achievements in Jacobsdal (the Free State focus site for the War on Poverty) and in the agri-villages of Diyatalawa (the pilot site for the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme), Makgolokoeng and Wilhelmina.

Our township revitalization programme have reached and fundamentally transformed at least 37 towns in the Free State. (Cornelia, Paul Roux, Jagersfontein, Arlington, Bethlehem, Bethulie, Boshof, Bothaville, Botshabelo, Clarens, Cornelia, Dealesville, Edenville, Fauresmith, Gariiep Dam, Heilbron, Hennenman, Jagersfontein, Kroonstad, Luckhoff, Mangaung, Odendalsrus, Oranjeville, Parys, Petrusburg, Petrus Steyn, Phillipolis, QwaQwa, Senekal, Steynsrus, Thaba Nchu, Vanstadensrus, Viljoenskroon, Villiers, Welkom, Wesselsbron and Zastron.) To date, 577 job opportunities have been created as a result.

In the forthcoming year, the township revitalization programme will reach the communities of Tweespruit, Excelsior, Clocolan, Marquard, Soutpan, Tshiamo and various other towns in the Xhariep district. There will also be additional work undertaken in the areas of Winburg, Makgolokweng, Rietpan, Bethulie and Cornelia.

Hlasela Free State – We are hard at work! Ons is hard aan die werk!

“THERE SHALL BE HOUSING, SECURITY AND COMFORT”

(HO TLABA LE MATLO, POLOKEHO LE BOIKETLO)

On Health;

The ANC government committed to;

- Improve human resources for health

- Re-engineer primary healthcare
- Improve health facility planning and infrastructure development and maintenance
- Reduce healthcare costs
- Continue to improve prevention and management of HIV & AIDS and TB
- Reduce maternal, infant and child mortality
- Start the implementation of the NHI to ensure universal health coverage

Despite the challenges faced by our Health Department, we continued to make significant progress in achieving these commitments. This can be illustrated by the following;

- Immunisation coverage under 1 year improved from 86.8 % in 2013/24 to 91.2 % in 2014/15
- Coverage for the Rota virus exceeded the 95 % target and the Pneumococcal vaccine reached 91.5 %.
- Pneumonia incidents decreased from 89 per 1000 of the under 5 population in 2012/13 to 84.7 in 2013/14.
- The TB new client success rate improved from 79.7 % to 83.3 % and the TB cure rate from 73 % to 77.1 %. All MDR TB confirmed patients have been initiated on treatment.
- HCT is implemented in all health facilities, public places and gathering. A total number of 109 thousand and 47 people have been tested for HIV so far this year.
- Nevirapine uptake amongst babies born to HIV positive mothers is at 100 % and the Prevention of Mother to Child transmission of HIV improved from 1.8 % in 2013/14 to 0.09 % in the first quarter of 2014/15.
- A total number of 1 170 appointments were made in the Department of Health during the current financial year. This includes 8 Specialists, 42 Medical Officers (doctors), 44 Community Service Medical Officers, 47 Professional Nurses, 66 Nursing Assistants and 82 Staff Nurses.
- 50 clinics will be enrolled on the Ideal Clinic programme

During the forthcoming year, we will continue our focus to ensuring that the people of the Free State have access to quality health care services. Some of the initiatives to be implemented this year include;

- The roll-out of a massive TB and HIV and AIDS campaign. Our efforts will deal with factors that make individuals, particularly women, vulnerable to infection. We will also address socio-economic deprivation that aggravates HIV/AIDS infections.
- A pilot project focusing on the management of medical waste that will be focused on protecting our environment will be implemented.
- The accelerated implementation of a pro-active maintenance programme focusing on health infrastructure will be undertaken.

The Senorita Nthlabathi Hospital in Ladybrandt will be brought into operation during September 2015 whilst additional bulk infrastructure work at the Albert Nzula District Hospital in Trompsburg will be undertaken.

On Human Settlements

- Acting Speaker, we are proud to announce that the Masimong 4 Estate Community residential units in Welkom have been completed. All in all, 461 affordable rental housing units have been developed.
- Out of the 448 affordable rental units under construction in Merriespruit, Virginia, 350 rental units have been completed. All these units will be finished by March 2015.
- Through the Brandwag Social Housing project, 614 affordable rental housing units out of the 1 051 planned units have been completed and allocated.
- The Hillside View Social Housing project will, once completed in June 2017, deliver 950 affordable rental housing units. Phase 1 of the project with 400 rental units is now underway.
- Zamdela hostel 4 in Sasolburg is under construction. Phase 1 of the project with 98 rental units is finished and the extension of this Phase, which will entail construction of 30 additional units, has started. In total, 144 RDP units are under construction for the relocation of Zamdela hostel 4 residents. Once relocated, the old hostel will be demolished and Phase 2 of this project will begin. Feasibility studies will be conducted for the remaining President Steyn and Harmony 3 hostels.
- In Caleb Motshabi in the Mangaung Metro area, 7 554 mixed housing units will be built.
- Construction of 6 432 BNG housing units is also planned. To date, 3 875 units have been built.
- Planning and surveying for township establishment for 6 700 sites to upgrade informal settlements in Nyakallong, Dichokoleteng (Thabong), Matlharantlheng, Bronville, Mamahabane, Phomolong and K10 (Odendalsrus) has begun. The installation of basic services is almost completed at Thandanani informal settlement.
- Water and sewer networks will be installed in Phahameng, Bultfontein, Wesselsbron, Refengkgotso-Themba Khubeka, Excelsior and Caleb Motshabi as part of the turnkey development. The number of sites to be serviced in these projects is 11 511.
- A total of 20% of our investments in human settlement projects have been allocated to women and youth. It is envisaged that the province will increase the percentage to attain the set 60% national target.
- The provincial government's quest to acquire strategically located land as part of its human settlement approach will continue. Processes are underway to acquire three (3) Sasolburg properties with over 250 hectares of land. This land will be used to construct about 1 900 mixed residential units. What is striking is that these properties are located on prime land, which could link the towns of Sasolburg and Vanderbijlpark.
- In Mangaung Metro, we will acquire 49 properties in Estoire, comprising of nearly 192 hectares of land, for the purpose of constructing 3 500 mixed residential units. These properties are ideally and strategically located along the N8 Development Corridor.

Acting Speaker, I wish to indicate that the Free State provincial government and the Department of Water and Sanitation will be embarking on a major new project, namely the construction of a water pipe line from the Xhariep Dam that will secure and strengthen the water supply to various towns in the Naledi local municipality, other towns in the Xhariep District and the Mangaung Metro. We will also be cooperating on various other initiatives, including the Adopt-a-River project, the clean-up of dams and reservoirs as well as attending to water and sanitation challenges throughout the Province.

The Free State has been affected by low rainfall and severe drought which has a negative bearing on the water resources in the province. We are continuously assessing the situation together with the Department of Water and Sanitation and will be taking appropriate action to mitigate against drought implications and consequences.

The current cycle of the bucket eradication programme in the Free State Province commenced in November 2013. To date, 14 thousand 436 buckets have been eradicated, and of these 6 thousand 347 are flushing and have been handed over to the beneficiaries. About 8 thousand and 89 buckets have been connected. The programme has resulted in the creation of 1 thousand 963 employment opportunities in various municipalities in the Free State.

Various Regional Bulk Water Schemes and sanitation projects are being implemented in all districts in the Free State with the support and assistance from the Department of Water and Sanitation. [Refer to Annexure A for details on Regional Bulk Water Schemes]

On Social Development;

- The construction of two Day Care Centres for persons with disabilities has been completed and was handed over to the management committees in Ficksburg and Frankfort respectively. This will contribute to our initiatives to improve the care, protection and stimulation of persons with disabilities that will be upscaled during the forthcoming year.
- A state-of-the-art Victim Empowerment and Rehabilitation centre, will be opened this year.
- Public awareness campaigns were conducted in 40 wards of the province by the South African Social Services Agency, the Department of Social Development and other stakeholders to educate beneficiaries on how to manage their social grant. Spot checks and searches were conducted at various pay points and hot spot areas to root out exploitation of pension and grant beneficiaries.
- While it is a fact that life in South Africa and in the Free State in particular is better since the advent of the democratic dispensation, many of our communities are still subjected to abject poverty and unemployment. Consequently, some of our young people end up in the streets to fend for themselves. In trying to deal with some of these challenges, the Free State Provincial Government is committing to take 105 young people off the streets as well as 28 females who ply their trade in the streets. These young people will be enrolled at educational institutions by the end of this week.

Hlasela Free State – Die skouer is aan die wiel! Siyaquba!

“ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW”

(BONKE ABANTU BAYO LINGANA PHAMBI KO MTHETHO)

On Crime and Corruption

The ANC government made the following commitments;

- Prohibit public servants from doing business with the state to limit and ultimately eliminate conflict of interests
- Improve management control and operations systems to prevent corruption
- Ensure that all people of South Africa are and feel safe
- Intensify the fight against the abuse of women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities

Acting Speaker, the ANC government has given practical effect to these commitments. I wish to remind honorable Members that I had already announced in the 2013 State of the Province Address that; “The Free State provincial government supports the initiative of the Minister of Public Service to ban civil servants from conducting business with the state...” and we subsequently implemented a provincial directive in this regard.

The President signed the Public Administration Management Act (Act 11 of 2014) into law during December 2014. The Act gives effect to our stated intent that employees – both in the Public Service and those performing similar functions in municipalities – may not conduct business with the state and further provides for the disclosure of financial interests of all employees of government.

We did not wait for Parliament to pass the necessary legislation but actually took our own initiative to strengthen our fight against corruption in the public service. This is illustrated by our review of the provincial supplier database and the processes that are currently underway to deal with identified instances that require further consideration. In addition, the provincial government has assisted municipalities to identify and remove public servants who appear on municipal indigent registers.

We continue to participate in the International Anti-Fraud Week together with the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), the Public Service Commission and our private sector partners.

The finalization of the Provincial Crime Prevention Strategy has resulted in remarkable multi-agency security cooperation in the Free State. Several crime prevention initiatives targeting at fighting substance abuse, gangsterism, illegal mining and copper theft, cross border crime and rural safety have proved successful. The Neighbourhood Security Patrols Programme has been finalized and is being implemented in identified station precincts.

The success of our crime prevention strategy is evident from the 2014 Crime Statistics of the Free State that recorded a decrease in the categories of Murder (decreased by 7,5 %), Attempted murder (decreased by 3,8 %), Assault Grievous Bodily Harm (decreased by 5,6 %), Common Assault (decreased by 3,3 %) and Total Sexual Offences (decreased by 5,6 %). These successes will be increased through the establishment of the Fusion Centre and the installation of a closed-circuit television system that will effectively monitor priority areas.

In pursuit of our commitment to ensure visible trafficking, 225 hundred Traffic Wardens will commence their duties on the 15th of March 2015.

We have implemented various diversion and intervention programmes relating to children in conflict with the law and paid specific attention to the training of probation officers and facilitators to implement these programmes.

Hlasela Free State – We are hard at work!

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH! And THERE SHALL BE WORK AND SECURITY!

(BATHO BOHLE BATLA AROLELANA MORUO WA NAHA KA HO LEKANA, MME HO TLABA LE MESEBETSI LE TSHIRELETSO)

On the Economy and Jobs

Acting Speaker, the Hon. Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Ebrahim Patel, correctly stated that; “As we celebrate 60 years of the Freedom Charter, infrastructure development is key to realizing its goals.

Infrastructure is fundamental to radical economic transformation, to change the patterns of ownership and control in the economy and to empower workers, community members and the rural poor.”

Minister Patel further indicated that; “Whilst the number of jobs during 2014 in the North West grew by 80 thousand, and Limpopo by 67 thousand, and Gauteng by 58 thousand and the Free State by 26 thousand, regrettably in the Western Cape 65 thousand jobs were lost. I say regrettably, because the people of the Western Cape deserve better.”

Allow me to briefly outline some of what we have achieved in the area of economic development and job creation;

- Through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the provincial government has created 51 020 job opportunities as at the 31st of January 2015. A total of 55% of the job opportunities were created for youth, 63% for woman and 0.6% for people persons living with disabilities.
- The local government-based Community Works Programme has created 17 thousand 572 job opportunities in the 14 municipalities where the programme is currently being implemented at the end of January 2015. It is envisaged that this programme will be expanded to create 1 million job opportunities by 2019.
- A submission to the National Department of Environmental Affairs to proclaim Ingula as a Protected Area has been made. This will form part of the string of protected areas in the province and will contribute 10 000 hectares of land under conservation in our province. A total of 160 EPWP workers were employed to combat alien vegetation, restore erosion areas, and do maintenance work in provincial resorts. We will increase these numbers as a Province.
- The extension of the Manganese packaging facility at Transwerk in Bloemfontein has created opportunities for SMME truck-owners in partnership with Women in Transport and Logistics. Hundred (100) direct and 50 indirect jobs were created.
- The Gauteng-Free State-KZN Corridor will serve as a logistics hub for the country. For the province, this Maluti-a-Phofung Special Economic Zone comprise of the Harrismith Gateway and Tshiame Industrial Development area. The establishment of a container roll-out in Qwa-Qwa to enable commodity storage has commenced. The provincial government has reconfirmed that it will not support the proposed by-pass at Harrismith that has been under consideration.
- Deliberations around the N8 Rail Link as part of the broader N8 Corridor Development Project is back on track and a plan will be ready for the project by the end of this financial year. In addition, there is also a relay of the Warden to Harrismith rail by Transnet Freight Rail covering a distance of 52 kilometres.
- A successful SMMEs and Cooperatives Indaba was held in Bloemfontein with 1 350 delegates. We have provided financial and other support to Small-, Medium- and Micro Enterprises as this sector forms the foundation of our future economic development. Other initiatives include support to 44 SMMEs in export facilitation and access to international markets. We will

also continue to invest in our Micro Enterprise Support Programme. A specific focus area of our SMME support programme will be the development and strengthening of rural and township economies.

Acting Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that we utilize the purchasing power of government in a much more strategic and efficient manner. Our procurement strategy will increasingly focus on procuring through transversal contracts to increase maximum value and efficiencies. In addition, provision for procurement through cooperatives and youth- and women-owned enterprises will be escalated through increased application of the relevant provisions of the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act, 2000. Thirty percent of procurement will be allocated to rural and township enterprises and cooperatives. This is in line with the 2014 Elections Manifesto of the ANC and the State of the Nation Address.

Road infrastructure construction is the mainstay of economic development. It is a catalyst for job creation. 94 contractors have been appointed on the Contractor Development Programme of the Department of Police, Roads and Transport.

Our highways, railways and access roads link people, cities, towns, and rural areas. For us, this is about interconnectedness to ourselves and the world at large. Some of the critical work to be undertaken in the forthcoming year includes;

- The construction of the R74 – that is the Harrismith – Oliviershoek-pass road. This is a critical road that impacts on the tourism sector, both in the Free State and KwaZulu- Natal.
- The resealing of the Koppies – Sasolburg road will mitigate against the increase in road accidents that have been occurring on that specific road

Other infrastructure projects that will be implemented during the forthcoming financial year include;

- The Vrede, Thaba Nchu, QwaQwa and Botshabelo Transport Routes will be implemented within the EPWP guidelines;
- Ongoing construction of Social Development Offices in Kroonstad and commencement of construction with the Rouxville Clinic;
- Upgrade and additions to the OR Tambo and Fidel Castro buildings, the Hamilton Regional Office, Medfontein, the Lengau Testing Centre and Public Works' Offices in Thaba Nchu and the Revolving Restaurant at the Fidel Castro building and
- Community halls in Botshabelo as well as Mbeki and Lusaka sections in QwaQwa.
- Construction will be done through labour intensive methods by government.

The programme to assist 900 youth to obtain their drivers' licences commenced yesterday, the 23rd of February 2015.

Hlasela Free State – Ha re hlaseleng!

“THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN” / DIE MENSE SAL REGEER

On Local Government;

Hon. Acting Speaker, the ANC remains committed to ensuring that we achieve the following objectives in local government;

- Implementing free basic services for indigent households and to support municipalities where they lack capacity
- Guide municipalities to ensure compliance with legislative requirements in respect of municipal revenue, financial management and sustainability
- Ensure infrastructure grants are utilized optimally and used for their intended purpose
- Implement the Back to Basics strategy
- Connect and interact with communities, reporting back regularly and ensuring public participation
- Ensure that local government is responsive, accountable, effective and efficient
- Provide support to poor municipalities so they are able to implement infrastructure capital and maintenance plans

The Back to Basics Strategy in the Free State was launched in October 2014. The implementation of this strategy will ensure that we get the basics right, breathe new life into our municipalities and improve service delivery. The Back to Basics strategy focuses on five pillars, namely:

- Putting people and their concerns first;
- Creating conditions for decent living;
- Demonstrating good governance;
- Ensuring sound financial management and
- Building and maintaining sound institutional and administrative capabilities

We have aligned our Municipal Support Programme with the Back to Basics Strategy. Allow me, hon. Speaker, to congratulate the Setsoto, Tokologo and Metsimaholo and Naledi Local Municipalities and the Mangaung Metropolitan municipality as well as Centlec who have all improved their audit outcomes in the past municipal financial year. We will continue to support all district and local municipalities to strengthen their governance, financial and institutional management as this will directly improve our people's interaction and engagement with the local government sector.

Together with our municipalities, provincial government launched the Enviromobi platform to enhance service delivery and a public education drive is underway to enable communities to understand and use this platform.

Our commitment to ensuring that we improve the financial management of the provincial government has also been illustrated by our recent provincial audit outcomes. The Provincial Treasury obtained a clean audit for the fifth consecutive year. The Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation for the second consecutive year while the Free State Legislature also reverted back to a clean audit. The Departments of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs; Public Works and Infrastructure; Free State Tourism Authority and the Free State Development Corporation improved their audit outcomes.

Provincial Treasury and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) have developed a programme that will be assisting municipalities to improve their tax compliance and build capacity. This programme was piloted in the Nketoana and Mohokare local municipalities and in the forthcoming year, will be extended to all municipalities in the Free State. This will assist us in phasing out the use of consultants by municipalities to deal with tax related matters.

We have also established a partnership with NERSA to assist all municipalities with applications for electricity tariff increases. The Free State is the only province in the country to have achieved a 100 % submission rate in respect of tariff applications to NERSA. This initiative is not only aimed at enhancing municipal revenue, but also intends to ensure that appropriate tariffs are charged by municipalities.

We continue to engage with the Departments of Cooperative Governance, Public Enterprises, National Treasury and Eskom to find a sustainable and viable solution to the arrear debt of some municipalities. I must, however, emphasize that this arrear debt is not undisputed debt. A significant portion of the debt arises from penalties because municipalities exceed their allocated load management volumes (lmv's). These allocations have, however, not been revised in many years. In the Maluti-a-Phofung municipality, the expansion of access to electricity during the period 2001 to 2011, increased by 32 % and in the Dihlabeng Local Municipality by 17.8 %. It is therefore unrealistic to expect municipalities to incur financial penalties for exceeding their volume allocations whilst this may be a direct consequence of government's campaign to increase access to electricity, specifically in previously disadvantaged and rural areas.

We will facilitate the implementation of MIG projects amounting to R724 million in the 2015/2016 municipal financial year. These projects will focus on water, sanitation, roads, storm water and pedestrian bridges as well as sport, recreation and multipurpose facilities. Additional projects to be undertaken will focus on solid waste disposal, cemeteries, high mast lights, taxi ranks and other services such as firefighting, fencing and street trading. We have also declared each Friday as a focused day on which cleaning campaigns will take place in all local municipalities.

The local government sector, specifically in rural municipalities, continues to face challenges to recruit and retain suitably qualified officials. I am pleased to announce that the Free State Province has secured an allocation of 1500 plumbers from a programme initiated by the Department of Water and Sanitation that will be focused on fixing leaks. In addition, unemployed graduates with

relevant skills in areas such as financial accounting and engineering, will be deployed to municipalities to address critical skills challenges. This will also strengthen our commitment to advance youth empowerment.

We will be facilitating a Provincial ICT Summit, in partnership by the private sector, to conduct an evaluation and assessment of the state of information and communication technologies in the Free State. A comprehensive review of the provincial IT strategy will be the outcome of this Summit.

Hlasela Free State – We are hard at work!

“THERE SHALL BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP”

(HO TLABA LE KGOTSO LE SETSWALLE / DAAR SAL VREDE EN VRIENDSKAP WEES)

The Free State provincial government has renewed and initiated various international partnership agreements with BRICS countries as well as Turkey and Cuba.

It was particularly humbling for us to travel to the China province of Guangzhou to accept the Award for this province as the best co-operating province with which China has relations. This award has inspired us further to continue promoting education as an instrument of social, political and economic transformation of this province and through it, South Africa. Our co-operation with China will, amongst others, result in an investment by the Chinese in the establishment of medical equipment manufacturing companies.

The results that we achieve through our international agreements with institutions of higher learning in various countries have been well documented.

We have recently returned from a very successful official visit to Cuba. The main purpose of my visit was, inter alia, to strengthen already existing relations with the Cuba province of Matanzas, open opportunities for establishment of direct municipality-municipality co-operation; look at trade and investment opportunities in line with the intended lifting of the United States blockade on Cuba. Most importantly, my visit was anchored in the support visit to our more than 200 medical students in Cuba.

During this visit, we were able to agree with the Cuban Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Public Health on recruitment of engineers to provide support to our Programmes of building houses for our people as well as the recruitment of medical doctors. As a result;

- 40 Cuban engineers will be arriving in South Africa in March this year and some will be deployed to those municipalities with capacity challenges.
- 40 medical doctors; 5 Obstetricians; 10 Paediatricians; 10 Gynaecologists; 5 Dentists, family physicians and 100 nurses will be joining us in the Free State and work in hospitals such as the Albert Nzula and Senorita Ntlabathi hospitals and various small towns in the municipalities of Phumelela, Ngwathe, Maluti-a-Phofung, Tokologo, Nala, Naledi, Mafube, Moqhaka, Nketoana and Masilonyana.

The Free State province will be hosting China Week from 13 to 19 April 2015. To this end, we have extended invitations to ten provinces (10); thirteen cities (13) and eight (8) Universities as well as Investors and Chinese Tourists to come to our province. This includes the Chinese towns that have existing co-operation with the counterpart towns in the province.

We will also host the Global Investors Trade Bridge in September this year. Approximately 30 countries are expected to participate in the Trade Bridge. We shall use this occasion to show-case the contribution our international partners have made and are continuing to make in the development of this province; to attract much needed investment into this province, and to strengthen the people-to-people relations.

Hlasela Free State – Ha re hlaseleng!

CONCLUSION

Honourable Acting Speaker, in the year 2015- 2016 Statistics South Africa - who collects information on demographics, life circumstances and service delivery - will again conduct a large scale household survey, namely the Community Survey, in its ongoing quest to ensure that policy and decision-making is based on the most relevant and most recent data available. All citizens are asked to support the work of the enumerators and to provide the most accurate and truthful information. The work of Stats SA is critical as it is the fact-finder of the nation.

The ANC Government is committed to work relentlessly to ensure that our current generation is able to realise economic freedom in their lifetime. We will continue to implement radical socio-economic transformation through infrastructure projects, skills development, agriculture and agro-processing as well as strengthening our SMMEs and Cooperatives.

Allow me to thank the African National Congress, Members of the Executive Council and Legislature, the Director General, Heads of Departments and our public servants for the commitment to ensure that we move Free State and South Africa forward.

“Let all people who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY!”

Ke a leboha, dankie, ndiyabulela, ngiyabonga, Ke a leboga, thank you.

Province:

Free State

Issued by:

Free State Office of the Premier