

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO
PROVINCE HONOURABLE CHUPU MATHABATHA TO THE SIXTH LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL
LEGISLATURE AT THE LEBOWAKGOMO LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER.

25 February 2021

Honourable Speaker;

Deputy Speaker of the Legislature;

Honourable Members of the Legislature;

Members of the Executive Council;

The President of SALGA, your Executive Mayors and Mayors;

The leadership of the ruling party, the African National Congress;

Leaders of opposition parties;

Chairperson of Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders;

Our esteemed Majesties, Kings and Royal Highnesses;

Former MPs and MPLs;

Director General and Heads of Departments;

Stalwarts and veterans of our struggle;

Provincial Commissioner of Police;

Heads of our Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten institutions;

Leadership of religious community;

Leadership of organised business and labour;

Youth, women and community leaders;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen:

Last year I stood in this august Chamber, to outline the bold plans which we had designed for our beautiful Province. These plans were about propelling Limpopo to the heights of socio-economic prosperity.

We sought to overcome the inherited yet deep-seated legacy of unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

Our plans were also about building on the impressive achievements we have registered since the dawn of democracy in 1994.

This year's address is taking place amid a devastating and deadly global coronavirus pandemic. Covid-19 has severely impacted our plans.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced schools to close, businesses to shut their doors, borders and other ports of entry to be sealed off, and millions of people to be placed under lockdown, restricting movements and social interactions, all in the interest of protecting life.

Covid-19 presented a crisis unequalled in recent history and memory.

We thank the visionary and judicious leadership of President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa for saving our country from the worst. The balance between saving lives, the economy and livelihoods was always going to be a difficult task .

Many people and institutions such as the World Health Organisation have hailed our country's leadership against this deadly pandemic.

Indeed, we are people with an indomitable spirit. We are the children of great warrior men and women who have never retreated from battle. We will not surrender or retreat from the battle against coronavirus, we are unconquerable, and we will emerge victorious in this battle.

Our unity against this virus is our greatest strength. It is because of our demonstrated unity and solidarity that we were able to undermine what would have been an uncontrollable spread of this virus.

In this regard, I wish to thank political parties in our Province, religious leaders, traditional leaders, leaders of academic institutions, leadership of the trade union movement, civil society and all the people of Limpopo for their spirit of solidarity and partnership in the fight against this virus.

Together we have made monumental sacrifices, which, in turn, have helped to reduce the burden on our healthcare facilities and saved more lives. This is the spirit that should carry us throughout 2021 and beyond.

I accordingly wish to express our government's deepest gratitude to all healthcare workers, our frontline troopers in the battle against Covid-19, for their bravery, resilience, and unmatched spirit of sacrifice. This nation owes you an enormous debt of gratitude.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to all the workers who delivered essential services and production during the period of strict lockdown. These include police officers, emergency personnel, farm workers, grocery store workers, cleaners, and many others.

We can never thank you enough for being there for our country, our province and its people during the most desperate time of need. You are our heroes; you indeed have a special place in history.

Madam Speaker;

To move Limpopo forward to a destination of equality, prosperity and a better life for all, we have aligned our work for the year ahead with the four national priorities outlined by President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa in the State of the Nation Address.

These priorities are:

- Defeating the coronavirus pandemic;
- Accelerating our economic recovery;
- Implementing economic reforms to create sustainable jobs and drive inclusive growth; and.
- Fighting corruption and strengthening the state.

Madam Speaker and honourable Members;

Regarding the task to defeat the coronavirus, there is evidence that we are beginning to win the war against this killer enemy.

In January, the highest number of recorded daily infections exceeded two thousand. In the last few weeks, we saw a sharp decline. Our daily cases are now between 90 and hundred. This is a significant milestone.

However, we are the first to emphasise that there are still many more battles to win before we can win the war. Part of these battles is the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine.

An overwhelming number of our healthcare workers are ready, willing, and excited to take part in the Phase One of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout.

Our healthcare machinery is equally ready for the vaccine rollout in line with the national plan.

We have also been at work to empower the people of Limpopo with correct information about Covid-19 vaccination. This is important to counter the conspiracies and misinformation perpetuated mainly in the social media space about the vaccines.

As part of our Phase One rollout:

- We will use all our hospitals, excluding specialised hospitals, as vaccination sites.
- We will use all hospitals as vaccination training centres for all the clinics in the catchment areas.
- Each district has established mobile vaccination teams attached to the hospitals.
- Districts are working to ensure that all vaccination mobile teams are well-equipped to conduct Phase One vaccination

We have the capacity to conduct and complete Phase One of the vaccination process within two to three weeks. We are working on increasing this capacity to reduce the Phase One rollout period.

Honourable Members;

We aim to vaccinate around forty-four thousand five hundred healthcare and related services workers during the first phase. This includes workers from non-governmental organisations that provide healthcare related services.

Last week we had a successful launch of the Phase One of our Covid-19 vaccine rollout campaign. All indications are that our rollout of the first phase is a resounding success.

So far we have vaccinated over four thousand healthcare workers.

Madam Speaker;

Phase Two of the rollout will focus on high-risk groups. This includes persons in congregate settings, such as people in correctional facilities, people 60 years and older, and persons with co-morbidities.

The second phase will also focus on other essential workers, such as the Teachers, Police, Security Officers, Food and Retail Workers, workers in Funeral Parlours, employees of Banks and Mineworkers.

Phase Three of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout will target almost everyone not covered in the first two phases.

Madam Speaker;

As I have said earlier, the coronavirus pandemic has severely impacted our economy. This was mainly on account of the lockdown measures and other restrictions which were necessarily adopted to bring the spread of the deadly virus under control. The adverse impact continues and is likely to remain with us for much longer.

As Statistics South Africa correctly concluded, the personal, social and economic impact of Covid-19 is unlike anything experienced globally in the past 75 years.

Therefore, Madam Speaker; the focus of this address is on measures to alleviate the devastating Covid-19 impact on our economy.

We will focus on the programmes to reposition Limpopo on a trajectory of inclusive socio-economic recovery, development, and growth.

Through partnerships, focussed attention and hard work, our economy will rise from the ashes of the devastation caused by the coronavirus. We will rebuild our economy. We will rebuild the destroyed livelihoods. Above all, we will forge ahead to a destination of a better life for all.

Madam Speaker;

We remain committed to the idea of using the muscles of state procurement to transform and diversify our economy, to allow more and meaningful participation of the historically disadvantaged people.

During the year under review, we ensured that at least 19 %of state procurement benefitted women-owned businesses.

About 12 %of state procurement benefitted enterprises owned by young people. Our target is to increase this number to at least 20 %in the next Financial Year.

We will also improve the participation of people living with disabilities in the provision of goods and services to our government.

Honourable Members;

Regarding our commitment to drive industrialisation, we are revitalising our Industrial Parks. Through a R40 million investment by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, we are refurbishing factories at the Nkowankowa Industrial Park. These factories are now 95% complete.

This intervention has benefitted local Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises. This initiative has helped to create around 174 direct jobs.

The Nkowankowa Industrial Park is currently at 88% occupancy rate. To date the Nkowankowa Industrial Park is host to no less than 823 direct jobs.

The refurbishment of the Seshego Industrial Park has helped to benefit no less than 75 Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises. The Seshego Industrial Park is currently at 85% occupancy rate. The initiative has created approximately one thousand three hundred jobs.

The Thohoyandou Industrial Park is at 91% occupancy rate. The project has created over three hundred jobs and we are hopeful that with increased capacity and more investment, more jobs will be created.

Honourable Members;

The implementation of the Great North Transport Turnaround Strategy is in full swing. Just recently, the Great North Transport has acquired a fleet of new 75 buses which have since been distributed across the five districts. We are in the process of acquiring additional 150 buses through a rental arrangement to supplement our existing fleet.

There can be no doubt that the additional fleet of buses will go a long way in ensuring that our people have access to affordable and reliable public transport service.

Madam Speaker;

In an effort to position digital economy as a driver of growth and a creator of employment, we have made significant progress with the rollout of the Limpopo Broadband Network project. We have already established the Data Centre, Network Operating Control Centre and the Contact Centre.

We have connected a total of 52 sites to the network infrastructure, using both fibre and satellite technologies. These sites include Wi-Fi spots which enable our communities, particularly young people to enjoy access to reliable connectivity.

We encourage the youth particularly to use the connectivity provided productively. This can help those who are looking for employment, learning, research and other educational activities. The digital technological revolution also provides opportunities for young people to create employment and self-employment through their own initiatives.

There are already a number of young people in this province who are using the opportunity of the internet to empower themselves and others.

Ms Mahlako Kgamedi uses her Facebook block and YouTube account for progressive social commentary. This young lady from Sekhukhune District enjoys the following of over 60 thousand of her social media accounts. She has already secured several corporate endorsements for her online popularity.

Another one is a young man Ntebatse Segodiso is a young man from Bolobedu in Mopani District who had developed a ride-hailing application. His app is called Pick-Up. The app is designed to allow users to request a ride through their mobile devices. This has allowed several young people to earn an income as Pick-Up drivers.

Jonas Lekganyane is the brains behind the much-loved Adventures of Noko Mashaba animated series. Mr Lekganyane grew up in the dusty villages of Mankweng in the Capricorn District. This youngster has turned his hobby into a serious business and he is now collaborating some of Africa's biggest brands.

These and many other young people are using the power of the internet progressively, for personal development and for employment creation.

Madam Speaker;

Young people in Limpopo are trailblazers who set standards at the highest level and dominate international stages. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate a young woman who is perfect personification of the phrase 'Beauty and Brains'.

I talk of our very own Miss South Africa, Shudufhadzo Musida. As a province we support her campaign around mental health awareness and empowering especially children and women. We are confident that she is the incoming Miss World 2021.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic that has worsened the challenges of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and the associated difficulty of many families to support themselves, we have adopted the Limpopo Socio-Economic Recovery Plan.

We have set aside an amount of R3.5 billion to augment the available resources to drive our response. A large sum of this allocation will go to the social cluster, which include health, education and social development. This is in line with the caring and social content of our response. Human development and the wellbeing of our people are essential.

From the R3.5 billion, we have allocated R500 million to support enterprise development, farmer support and road infrastructure.

As part of this Covid-19 relief programme, we are providing relief through our existing financing facility to the value of R10 million to Co-operatives, Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises.

Madam Speaker;

The Tourism sector in our province has been growing and flourishing since 2015. The tourism sector in Limpopo held poll position countrywide in domestic travels with approximately 22.2 million arrivals.

For the period under review, Limpopo held a comfortable position number two with regard to international travels. The impact of Covid-19 on our provincial economy was particularly devastating in the tourism sector.

Accordingly, we are implementing a Provincial Tourism Recovery Plan, focussing on:

- Protecting the provincial share of the tourism market;
- Protecting the tourism infrastructure; and
- Implementing a revised Provincial Marketing Plan to rigorously promote Limpopo as a preferred tourist destination.

We have secured assistance to 294 tourism establishment from the National Tourism Relief Fund, to the tune of R14.7 million. We supplemented this amount with R10 million to cater for those not covered by the National Tourism Relief Fund.

We are currently re-commercialising a number of Limpopo Nature Reserves, through a Private Public Partnership Model. We are confident that this initiative will uplift communities around the identified provincial parks. The first candidates for this initiative are Masebe, Rust de Winter and Lekgalameetse Nature Reserves. We will add more candidates in the next Financial Year.

Honourable Members;

As part of the program to revitalise rural and township economies, we have designed the Township & Rural Entrepreneurship Programme (TREP) in collaboration with Small Enterprise Development Agency and Department of Small Business Development. Numerous enterprises will be assisted with compliance, business development services, access to markets and structured finance.

Support schemes qualifying enterprises include:

- Spaza-shops support programme;

- Clothing, leather and textile support programme;
- Small-scale bakeries and confectioneries support programme;
- Autobody repairs and mechanics support programme;
- Fruit and vegetables support programme;

Madam Speaker;

The planning phase of the Northern site of the Musina-Makhado Special Zone has been completed. We have allocated R200 million to support the implementation phase. This allocation will contribute to electricity, short-term water supply, and basic security infrastructure.

Regarding the Southern site, we are awaiting a decision on the approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment. This will pave the way for full implementation, including:

- The Smart City Project;
- Agro-Processing Project;
- Timber Beneficiation Project;
- A Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises Incubation Centre
- The construction of the Musina Dam

We are confident that the full implementation Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone will go a long way to contribute to industrialisation, employment creation and improvement in the quality of life of our people.

Madam Speaker;

We are repositioning the agricultural sector to take a leading position in our economic recovery for growth and development.

Last year I announced our government's plans to establish Farmer Production Support Units as part of our Agri-Parks. These Units provides a cluster of services for primary production, post-harvest handling, storage as well as coordination of transportation logistics.

Today I am able to report that the Farmer Production Support Unit in Vleischboom has been completed, we are currently preparing for its operationalisation.

The Masala Farmer Production Support Unit in Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality is currently at 70% completion;

The Mapela Farmer Production Support Unit in Mogalakwena has had to be moved to Witpoort because of issues relating to land ownership;

The Construction of Tshiombo Farmer Production Support Unit in Vhembe will commence soon.

With regard to the progress on irrigation schemes, I am able to report that;

We will be planting over 122 hectares of cotton in the Mogalatjane Irrigation Scheme. This will provide about 50 people in the area with employment opportunities;

We have completed infrastructure designs for the Tswelopele Irrigation Scheme. This project will be implemented in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in this coming Financial Year;

Progress in Elandskraal, Setlaboswana, Kolokotela and Phetwane irrigation schemes is being frustrated by conflict and dispute amongst interested parties in those communities. We are working on resolving these disputes so that the work will commence soon.

Madam Speaker;

The agricultural sector has been the most resilient and as such saw positive growth during these difficult times of Covid-19 and lockdowns. Our exports have been doing particularly well throughout the period. We appreciate the current good rains and we hope that they will help facilitate even more growth for the sector.

We have since allocated an amount of R57.5 million to fund Farmer Support Relief Programme. We believe that this package will help support our farmers and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on agricultural production. This will also contribute towards food security in the province. Our projections are that this funding will bring relief to over 1000 farmers in the province.

Over and above, no less than 2 500 farmers in the province will benefit from a R1.2 billion relief support initiated by National Department of Agriculture, Land reform and Rural Development.

The support is in the form of production inputs to enable them to continue with production, covering areas such as livestock feed and medication, seeds, seedlings, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and soil correction.

In line with our Provincial Industrialisation Strategy, we are prioritising the revitalisation of agriculture and agro-processing value chain as catalytic projects. This will contribute to job creation, foreign exchange earnings and more importantly, food security.

Starting in the next Financial Year, we intend to increase agricultural production, linked to agro-processing.

We will commence with the infrastructure revitalisation at Zebediela Citrus Estate. This project is expected to create at least 350 jobs.

In the same vein, we will finalise the operational model and infrastructure planning for Limburg Citrus in the Waterberg District. This project will establish 500 citrus orchards and a pack house. Through this initiative we will create approximately 300 jobs.

Furthermore, the two thousand two hundred hectares establishment of Macadamia Orchards at Tshivhase, Mphaphuli and Tshakuma will create around 1 500 jobs.

We also aim to create 1 100 jobs in the 800 hectares Avocado Orchards establishment in Afrupro, Makgoba and Morebeng in the Mopani and Capricorn.

Working together with our farmers, we will develop value chains in respect of grain and cotton in Sekhukhune, vegetables in Mopani, red meat in Waterberg, and potatoes in Capricorn.

As part of the effort to increase skills and knowledge base in the agriculture, we will, in collaboration with AgriSeta, colleges and universities, implement a comprehensive capacity building programme to 1 000 farmers across the province.

Additionally, we will assist Black smallholder farmers with mentorship as part of Black Producers Commercialisation Programme.

We will also be placing 120 young unemployed agriculture graduates in commercial farms to equip them with practical experience.

Honourable Members;

Limpopo is largely a rural province with vast arable lands. It is in this context that we welcome the initiative led by the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Honourable Thoko Didiza, to allocate state land on a lease basis. This land allocation will go a long way towards transforming and expanding productive capacity of the sector.

In Limpopo, approximately 122 thousand hectares of state land is earmarked for this process. We are confident that young people, women and people living with disabilities will be among the beneficiaries.

On our part as the provincial government, we commit to provide the beneficiaries with the support and guidance they will need to succeed.

Madam Speaker;

The relationship between infrastructure development and economic transformation cannot be over emphasised. Infrastructure is a magnetic force that attracts investment.

For us to breathe life into our struggling economy, we need a focussed investment in infrastructure. Ending the legacy of unequal development is our priority. Our goal is to upgrade rural areas through equitable distribution of development and investment to bring them on par with developed areas.

Madam Speaker;

The Constitution enjoins the state to support the institution of traditional leadership. It is against this background that we continue to develop infrastructure to support traditional leaders to carry out their functions in an enabling environment.

Therefore, I am delighted to report on the progress we have made in building offices for traditional authorities. This includes:

- The construction of offices for the Masia Traditional Council, which is at 90 per cent completion.
- We have completed the construction of Mphaphuli Traditional Council Office.
- The contract for the MogashoaDitlhakaneng Offices had to be terminated at 40% progress— CoGHSTA is currently in the process of appointing a replacement contractor.
- Work at the DitlouMachidi Traditional Council is at 45% progress and planned for completion in the next Financial Year.
- Due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, we could not proceed with construction work for the Matsepe Traditional Council Offices, however, I can confirm that construction work will commence in the next Financial Year.

In this connection we call on the legislature to expedite the process of the review of the Limpopo Provincial Governance and Traditional Leadership Framework Act. This should enable us, working together with the institution of traditional leadership to resolve all the issues that may be outstanding, especially the issue of the duration of acting

In an effort to deepen democracy and ensure sound working relationship with the institution of traditional leaders, especially on the issue of land, we also implore on the legislature to finalise the development of the provincial version of SPLUMA legislation.

Honourable Members

Regarding the improvement of our road infrastructure, we wish to commend SANRAL for the completion of the much-awaited Polokwane N1 RING-ROAD. There is no doubt that will stimulate economic activity aimed at reducing the cost of doing business, the travelling time for workers, and further reduce traffic congestion in the city of Polokwane.

We are also delighted with the progress taking place at the R-81 between Munnik and Ga-Sekgopo. The 10 Kilometre stretch improvements will go a long way in easing traffic congestions and reducing the number of road accidents in that area.

After the delays imposed by Covid-19 restrictions, I am able to report that road construction is now underway in the following areas:

- 13 km from Tshikanoshi to Malebitsa
- 29.3km from Thomo to Hlomela

- Louis Trichardt to Albasini to Tshakhuma in Vhembe District
- Steelpoort, Riba to Kokwaneng to Ga-Mapodile; Ga- Mapodile to Burgersfort in Sekhukhune district

In addition, we will be embarking on a program to rehabilitate some of the major roads across different districts in the province. These roads include:

- The D1589 from Ga-Kgobokanang to Ga-Makgato and De-Vrede in the Capricorn District;
- The D2537 road in Penge and D5 140 in Praktiseer in the Sekhukhune district;
- The D11 road from Ga-Mamaila Kolobetona connecting the R-81 in the Mopani District;
- The D3200 in Mohlabaaneng Lebaka connecting R-81 in the Mopani District, and;
- The D3480 road from Giyani to Phalaborwa in the Mopani District.

Road Agency Limpopo will also be maintaining several roads throughout the province including the flood damaged roads across the province.

Madam Speaker;

The delivery of healthcare infrastructure is well underway. Please allow me to report the following progress:

- The construction of the Out-Patient Department, (OPD), at MaphuthaMalatjie Hospital is at 80%;
- Work has started for the renovation of the 36-bed female surgical ward at Letaba hospital. This work is expected to be completed in the next Financial Year;
- We will be completing the upgrading of Laundries at Tshilidzini and Letaba hospitals during the next Financial Year.
- Pre-construction work has already commenced for the construction of Bosele and Lebowakgomo Emergency Medical Services stations.

Madam Speaker;

Delivery of Water to our people remains high on the agenda of this government.

It is in this context that through Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant we are implementing Currently, major infrastructure projects across the province.

In this regard, I will be having a meeting with the Minister of Water and Sanitation so that we resolve blockages on some of the following projects:

- The Giyani Water Services;
- MametjaSekororo Bulk Water Supply;
- KutamaSinthumule Bulk Water Augmentation;
- Mogalakwena Bulk Water Scheme;
- Moutse Bulk Water Scheme;
- Mooihoek/Tubatse Bulk Water Scheme;
- Polokwane Bulk Water Supply; and
- Bambanani pipeline.

Currently, Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority is exploring funding options with the DBSA to facilitate implementation of Phase 2B of the Olifants River Water Resources Development Project. This project consists of a 70 kilometre pipeline from Flag Boshielo Dam to Pruisen near Mokopane. Upon completion, this project will augment water supply for the surrounding mines and provide additional water for domestic users.

We are at the design phase of the Olifants River Water Resources Development Project. This project comprises a pipeline of raw water from Steelpoort pump station to Ga-Mathipa Reservoir, a balancing dam, pump station; and steel pipeline from Ga-Mathipa pump station to the existing Mooihoek Water Treatment Works.

We are continuing with the construction of the 49 kilometre bulk water pipeline to Giyani and Malamulele area. This project will benefit 55 villages in Giyani and 13 villages in Malamulele.

Another water infrastructure project underway is the extension conveyance system from Valdesia to Mowkop. This project will benefit 38 villages in Sinthumule Kutama area.

The Mametja Sekororo Bulk Water Supply of raw water pipeline, Water Treatment Works, reservoirs, connecting pipes, and service tanks is under construction. This project will benefit four villages in the area.

The upgrading of Groblersdal Water Treatment Works is ongoing. This project includes the construction of bulk pipelines, reservoirs and pump stations to supply 40 villages in Ephraim Mogale and Elias Motswaledi local municipalities.

Also under construction are the bulk pipelines, pump stations and reservoirs to supply water to 40 villages in the Nebo plateau.

Another water infrastructure project under construction is the upgrading of Nkambako Water Treatment Works. This includes associated pipelines and pump stations, and the construction of a new pipeline to Babanana. The scheme will ensure water supply to villages such as Nwamitwa, Mawa, Mookgo, and Hlohlokwe within Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality.

Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, and Vhembe district municipalities, and other Water Service Authority municipalities are implementing access to water projects.

These projects are yet another affirmation of the ANC-led government's commitment to ensure that our people have access to clean drinking water.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

Investing in the education of our children is investing in the future of our province and our country. Education plays a significant role in the growth and development of society. It is for this reason that we will continue directing more resources to expand access to education and improve our education outcomes.

Using Grade 12 results as a yardstick, we are able to say that we have begun to earn dividends on our investment in education. Over the last three years we have achieved a sustained improvement in the quality of our Grade 12 results.

In terms of quantitative improvement, our results increased from 62.5% in 2016 to 65.6% in 2017. In 2018 we increased to 69.4%. The class of 2019 raised the bar to 73.2%.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted our quantitative improvement. For a vastly rural province such as Limpopo the impact was always going to be disproportionate.

It is within this context that we should welcome the 68.2% performance from the Grade 12 class of 2020.

Our message to the learners who did not make it, we appreciate your challenges. This is not the end of the road. There are alternatives. To you we say, together let us try again.

We wish to thank all the learners, educators, parents and guardians, school governing bodies for trying their best under difficult circumstances imposed by global Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst there has been a visible drop in overall pass rate, as compared to the performance of the class of 2019, the quality of our result continue to improve.

I am able to report that the quality of our results has improved from 26.8% bachelor passes in 2019 to 29.1% bachelor passes in 2020.

Limpopo has also registered a performance increase in seven of the ten gateway subjects. Our performance on technology subjects on aggregate is above 90%. This is indeed something to be proud of.

These results are also reflective of the hard work and commitment of our teachers across the province.

In this regard, I want to take this opportunity to commend and salute Ms Livhalani Bridget Sinyosi, a principal of Dzata Secondary School, in Vhembe for bagging African Union Continental Teachers award for the academic year 2020.

We salute Ms Sinyosi and many other teachers who continue to labour beyond the ordinary call of duty.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 has upset the progressive gains we have made in providing accessible quality education for all. It is an open secret that school closures imposed by the pandemic worsened the previously existing inequalities in education.

Distance learning, facilitated by access to connectivity, mobile communication data, technological gadgets and digital applications, took the centre stage in learning and teaching. This was a great disadvantage to learners, more so black children from under-developed areas, working class and poor families.

This is one reason why ending the legacy of unequal development and the digital divide is a key developmental priority for our province.

We are preparing to rollout E-learning across the province. Our MEC for Education, Honourable Polly Boshielo will give further details.

During the next two financial years, we will provide additional 40 schools with adequate water infrastructure. We will provide 100 additional schools with proper sanitation facilities. We will build 250 more classrooms. We will build 45 new classrooms for Grade R. Additionally; we will build 17 brand new schools across the province.

Madam Speaker;

We will continue with our measures to expand access to education and to improve the learning and teaching outcomes. In this regard, we will continue to expand the network of our no-fee schools in order to ensure that no child is left out of the schooling system simply because of his or her family background.

As a measure of promoting access to schooling, the government will continue to expand on the network of our Scholar Transport programme.

Our School Nutrition Programme remains one strategic intervention to support effective learning in poorer communities. We have been able to supply our eligible learners with food parcels during the period of lockdown. We were able to provide learners with their meals on the very first day of school reopening in this academic year.

Madam Speaker;

Employment Stimulus Relief Fund for Early Childhood Development will go a long way to ensure that our ECD centres continue with their operations. This will be done through a direct payment of an amount of approximately to R4 500 per qualifying staff.

Honourable Members;

A literate nation is a strong foundation to support democracy and societal development. Empowering our children with literacy skills is essential for their development and allows them to become informed and well-rounded citizens. It is for this reason that we continue to invest and building new libraries and equipping existing ones to become reliable centres of knowledge and information.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the construction of libraries at Runnymede, Seleteng, Mavalani and Mulamula is progressing well. Progress at Mulamula library is at 40%, Mavalani library is at 63%, Runnymede library is at 80% and Seleteng library is at 59%.

We are planning to build new libraries in Tshaulu, Makhuduthamaga, Botshabelo and Vleifontein.

As part of our effort to preserve our history and heritage, we have begun working on the upgrading of the Schoemansdal Museum.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

We are continuing to invest in the state-of-the-art technology to improve the performance of our public healthcare system. In line with our commitment to move our public healthcare system to the new age, we have equipped all our regional and tertiary hospitals with cutting-edge radiology equipment such as fully-fitted Computed Tomography Scan (CT Scan).

This will allow our facilities to gather high-quality images and data which will improve the quality of our clinical decisions. The equipment enables our radiologists to read and interpret scans remotely. This will certainly increase productivity and optimise asset utilisation.

We will also be procuring additional mammography equipment to improve our arsenal capacity in the fight against breast cancer. This equipment will assist in ensuring early detection of breast cancer.

Madam speaker;

Last year we committed to build a trauma centre in Mokopane Hospital and a Child Centre of Excellence in Voortrekker Hospital. I am able to report that work is already under way with regard to these projects.

Upon completion, the Trauma Centre will provide specialised care for patients suffering from major traumatic injuries such as car accidents or gunshot wounds.

The Child Centre will be complemented by an upgraded paediatric ward which will create 15 additional critical care beds at Voortrekker Hospital.

We will also continue to equip our Emergency Medical Services to continue providing effective and reliable service to the people of Limpopo.

In this regard, we will be procuring new additional ambulances, additional Planned Patient Transport and response vehicles.

Madam speaker and Honourable members

Local government is an engine that powers the delivery of basic services to our communities. Our communities rely on this important sphere of governance for delivery of water, housing, electricity, sanitation, and other basic services.

This important sphere of governance was the hardest hit by the effects of coronavirus. Even during the most stringent lockdown levels, the pulse of our municipalities kept pumping.

During this period, our municipalities were still required to provide essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity and waste removal. Most of our municipalities which already had strained cash flow had to endure a significant negative impact on their revenues as a result of Covid-19.

This is because during strict lockdown, a number of municipalities had to adopt considerate measures to assist struggling household. Part of these measures included;

- Temporary suspension of credit control and debt collection policies
- Temporary suspension of interest on arrears
- Writing some of the debts off, and
- Temporary suspension of rates collection

Madam Speaker;

We continue to honour the commitment to restore the dignity of our people by providing them with safer, well-located and decent housing. This will go a long way in improving the quality of life for our people, particularly the poor.

In this coming Financial Year, we will deliver five thousand houses across all the districts in the province. This will be further supplemented by 148 rental units for those who qualify to participate in the housing rental market.

Through the construction of houses and servicing of sites, we aim to create no less than three thousand additional jobs in the sector. This will provide the much-needed shelter for over 20 thousand residents of our province.

As part of the programme to guarantee security of housing ownership, in the coming Financial Year, we will present over three thousand housing beneficiaries with Title Deeds.

Through Risima Housing Finance, we are finalising the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Polokwane Local Municipality for the development of gap market housing in Polokwane Ext 72 and 79 project.

This project is expected to assist the municipality in reducing its housing backlog, whilst at the same time providing decent housing for middle income earners.

Through this project we aim to construct around 1 000 affordable housing units at an estimated cost of R750 million.

Similar engagements are at an advanced stage with the Ba-Phalaborwa Local Municipality for the construction of around one thousand two hundred housing units at Extension 7 and 9 of Phalaborwa.

Again, we have through Risima signed an Memorandum of Understanding with Anglo American Platinum mine for Mokopane mine to facilitate a partnership in the development of housing and integrated sustainable human settlements. The project will be delivered in Extension 14 in Mokopane. This partnership will create 314 housing units to the value of R 280 million, and it is expected to contribute to job creation in the province.

Various municipalities are being provided with support in different areas to ensure that they are strengthened to provide service to communities.

We have also begun to see signs of improvements in terms of administration, following the placement of Mogalakwena Local Municipality under section 139 (b) Administration by the Provincial Executive Council . We wish the new Mayor and the entire leadership all of the best in their assignment. We commit to continue supporting the municipality to improve service delivery.

Honourable Members;

This year is the year of local government elections. Our people across the country and in our province will be refreshing the mandate of public representatives in this important sphere of government.

We encourage the people of Limpopo to participate in the forthcoming local government elections and choose their councillors.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

The question of road safety is paramount on the agenda of our provincial government. We are indeed committed to ensuring that our roads are both safer and accessible for all road users. More specifically, we are committed to reducing the number of accidents and fatalities on our roads.

The Limpopo Traffic College continues to deliver on the mandate to train and produce ethical and skilled Traffic Officers for the province.

We have recently completed phase two of the upgrading of Limpopo Traffic College. This upgrading included the construction of 40 beds dormitories for traffic learners.

We have already commenced with the phase three of the upgrade of this college. It is expected that this project will be completed within a period of 18 months.

In order to alleviate congestion and reduce the queuing period at our K53 Stations, we are constructing K53 Test Grounds at Thohoyandou and Seshego. We will also be upgrading the Mampakuil weighbridge.

Madam Speaker;

In line with our commitment to reduce the cost of transport, particularly for the poor and the working class, we will continue with our Passenger Subsidy Programme. This subsidy also helps to sustain jobs in the public transport sector.

For the 2021/2022 financial year, government has set aside approximately R659 million to support the bus industry. This intervention ensures that workers do not spend substantial amounts of their wages on transport to work.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

We continue to breathe life to our commitment to good governance, clean and accountable government. In this regard, last year I announced that I was to sign Service Delivery Agreements with MECs as part of the program to make government open, transparent, accountable and to deliver.

Allow me to announce, that I have since finalised and signed Service Delivery Agreements with all MECs.

The deliverables contained in the agreements include improving service delivery, ensuring good governance, and sound financial management. These agreements will also help us to hold MECs accountable in relation to the work we have mandated them to perform.

Honourable Members;

The worst and perhaps most deplorable crime in recent memory is the alleged PPE corruption. We have seen shameless criminals masquerading as business people and as public servants, motivated by nothing but the desire to loot public resources. To make matters worse, that was at the time when our country was in a desperate need for such resources.

When this scandal broke I immediately invited the SIU to investigate and report back to us on their findings. We are awaiting the finalisation of the investigations. However, we note that the preliminary investigation outcomes both by the SIU and the Auditor General have not found any criminality or wrongdoing with regard to our procurement of the Covid-19 PPE.

The people of Limpopo can be rest assured that we will take appropriate action based on the outcomes of the final investigation.

Honourable Members;

I also invited the SIU to investigate allegations of corruption relating to the R2.4 million Talana Housing Project in Tzaneen. The arrest of a company director in relation to this project is yet another practical example of our commitment to the fight against corruption.

We hope that this case will send a strong message against those involved or complicit in corrupt activities. Today we are sending a stern warning against elements involved in defrauding our government and delivering sub-standard work.

Madam Speaker;

The audit outcomes for provincial departments and entities are continuously improving. This should be credited to the adequate systems we have put in place during the Fifth Administration. Our systems and monitoring mechanisms are proving to be effective and producing desired outcomes.

I can speak with confidence in saying that today we are able to report that the provincial government has regained its feet with regard to the ethos of good governance and sound financial management.

Based on the work we have done, we are confident that for the 2019-2020 Financial Year, at least five provincial entities will receive clean audits. This will indeed be a great milestone for this Administration.

CONCLUSION

The measures we outlined are centred around a vision to industrialise our province, through amongst others manufacturing development, agricultural expansion and agro-processing, mining expansion and minerals beneficiation, and revitalisation of tourism.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is defining industrial transformation, innovation, and broader social development. We have therefore made the Fourth Industrial Revolution a key pillar of our strategy.

We envisage that there are other sectors that will play a key role as well, such as the services sector. Support for Co-operatives, and Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises to thrive is also a central element in transformation and development vision.

Linked to all of this, is the key role of economic and social infrastructure development. In the period lying ahead, we will rigorously drive the public investment programmes we have outlined. We will also mobilise private sector investment into our province.

Through this vision, we hope to create jobs, eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and march forward to shared prosperity.

Madam Speaker;

The past 12 months have been particularly punishing, we have seen our progress reversed, our plans disrupted and our lives disorganised by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of us have not lived through difficulties of this magnitude before. The pain and the hardships were almost unbearable but we have survived.

However, we can now see the dark clouds of despair clearing; we can now see the blue skies of hope and prosperity beginning to emerge.

Indeed, the sun will soon be out, not only to warm our bodies which had frozen in the midst of a ravaging pandemic but also to power with the much needed energy to get back to work.

We need to and we shall get back to work to rebuild our economy, to regain the lost livelihoods and to recover all what has been lost during the last few months.

We will use this energy to build a capable, ethical and developmental state;

We will use this energy to transform our economy and create more jobs;

We will use this energy to expand access and improve the quality of our education, and health outcomes;

We will use this energy to improve on the delivery of reliable and quality basic services such as water, housing, sanitation and electricity;

We will indeed use this energy to move Limpopo forward to a destination of socio-economic prosperity and a better life for all.

Working together, we will build the Limpopo we want.

Ndolivhuwa!

Na khensa!

Kea leboga

I thank you!