

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE
PREMIER OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE HONOURABLE CHUPU
MATHABATHA TO THE FIFTH LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL
LEGISLATURE AT THE JACK BOTES HALL.**

22 February 2019

Honourable Speaker;

Deputy Speaker of the Legislature;

Honourable members of the legislature;

Members of the Executive Council;

Judge MG Phathudi and esteemed members of the judiciary;

Executive Mayors and Mayors of our municipalities;

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;

Provincial Commissioner of Police;

Heads of our Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten institutions;

Veterans and stalwarts of the liberation struggle;

Leadership of religious community;

His Grace, the Right Reverend, Dr. Bishop BE Lekganyane;

Leadership of organised business and labour;

Youth, women, community leaders;

Director General and Heads of Departments;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Comrades, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning, Goeie more, Thobela, Avuxeni, Lotshani, Ndaa,

Once again, it is my singular honour to be afforded this opportunity to speak to the people of our province through this platform of the State of the Province Address.

As per tradition, we use this opportunity to report progress on the commitments we have made at the beginning of the year under review. We also report on the challenges we have encountered on this journey towards a better life for all. Most importantly, this is also an opportunity for us to outline the plans for the year ahead.

Because 2019 marks the conclusion of our current term of office, we will dedicate the better part of our Address, reporting on the work we have done in the last five years.

When we assumed office in 2014, we entered into a partnership and a clear-cut social contract with the people of our Province to move Limpopo forward. In this regard, we undertook to build on the progress we had made since 1994.

We specifically committed ourselves:

- To create more jobs, and sustainable livelihoods for inclusive growth;
- To embark on a programme of rural development, land reform and food security;
- To improve the quality of our education and its outcomes;
- To improve the health of our population and expand access to quality public health; and above all,
- To fight crime and corruption.

In the same vein, we committed ourselves to expand access to housing and other basic services such as water, electricity and proper sanitation for our people.

Today I stand before you the people of Limpopo to say thank you very much for a good partnership we have built over the past five years and beyond. Working together and united in action, we have been able to achieve a lot. Limpopo is today a much better place to live in than it was before.

Today the people of Limpopo, as the rest of South Africans, have more reasons to celebrate because their lives have changed for the better. The electricity connection is no longer a preserve of those staying in and around the cities. In many parts of our province, especially the most rural and far-flung villages, our people drive on the tarred roads.

The doors of learning and culture have indeed been opened. Access to education is no longer depended on a socio-economic standing of an individual.

More and more of our people are beginning to participate in the mainstream economy. There is equality before the law, and people are indeed governing.

We never doubted the enormity of the task that lay ahead; and that is why we collectively put a solid foundation for the reconstruction and development of our province.

It is in this context that we agree with the President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, when he says ***the people are the real heroes and the source of our strength. We are fully aware that the capability of any individual is limited, but as long as we unite there is no difficulty we cannot overcome ... there is no limit to serving the people with dedication***

Madam Speaker;

Before I can proceed any further, I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of some of the eminent sons and daughters of this province who have joined us today in the House.

I am pleased to acknowledge the presence of a phenomenal young woman who continues to stretch the boundaries. I am speaking about a lady whose achievements would take us the whole day to enumerate. In 2018 she became the first person living with a **Cerebral Palsy** to summit **Mount Kilimanjaro**, the highest mountain peak in Africa.

She has just come back as a first woman with Cerebral palsy to drive from Cape to Cairo in 40 days. I am pleased to welcome to this House, **Ms Masingita Masunga.**

It is my pleasure once more to welcome yet another hard-working and outstanding son of our province. Our guest is a man who has given meaning to the saying that a pen is mightier than a sword – he has written countless Radio Dramas, written a number of books and he is currently a translator for SABC’s most popular drama, Skeem Saam. Ladies and gentlemen let’s welcome **Dr Lesiba Thitšhere Maphoso**.

I am also honoured to acknowledge a Limpopo born young artist who’s unique and breath-taking paintings have captured the imagination of the world. This young but highly talented artist, has exhibited his work in countries such as France, Italy, America, Netherlands, the UK, Germany, Amsterdam, Scotland just to name a few. Here I am talking of Mr **Nelson Makamo** who unfortunately could not be with us today because of the demands of his schedule.

Lastly, I wish to take this opportunity to welcome to the House a woman who needs no introduction when it comes to football in this country. She was amongst the first women to own a team in the Premier Soccer League. She has won numerous awards for her unmatched contribution in the beautiful game and business leadership.

In June last year, this exceptional woman was elected the first ever female vice-president of the South African Football Association. It is my greatest honour to welcome **Ms Ria Ledwaba** to this august House.

As we congratulate these excelling sons and daughters of Limpopo, we want to also take a moment to send our strongest condemnation to the **International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)**. The IAAF’s inhumane decision to subject our Golden Girl, **Caster Semenya**, to some hormone reduction procedure is nothing but a calculated

attempt to insult Caster's hard work and undermine her God-given talent.

We are in full support of the National Government's decision to fight this senseless decision. Our MEC for Sport Arts and Culture has also been instructed to ensure all necessary support to Caster.

A GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL

Madam Speaker and honourable Members;

The central part of our efforts over the past five years has been the commitment to grow the economy and create the much needed jobs for our people, particularly, for our young people. Evidence proves that we have not betrayed this commitment.

We took a conscious decision to build an economy that would be a major contributor to the national wealth. In this regard, we developed the Limpopo Development Plan as a blue-print to guide our efforts towards a higher trajectory of economic growth and development.

We have acted boldly to attract investments in to the provincial economy. Our guiding mandate has been the need to speed up social development, create employment, promote equitable distribution of resources and, above all, reduce the levels of poverty in our province.

Madam Speaker

During his State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa indicated that last year our economy was confronted by the reality of a technical recession.

The President went further to indicate that, in response to this reality, national government introduced a range of measures to ignite economic activity, restore investor confidence and support employment creation.

The technical recession that the President spoke about also had a negative impact on the growth and development of our provincial economy.

Despite these challenges, our provincial economy remained resilient and was able to create jobs in line with the commitment that we made in 2014.

The Stats South Africa's Labour Force Survey indicates that since 2014, the provincial economy has been able to create no less than **317 000** jobs. Suffice to indicate that these numbers do not include the figures for the 2018 fourth quarter labour force survey.

The latest figures from StatsSA indicate that Limpopo has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Our unemployment rate is currently at 16.5% against the national average of 27.1%.

Honourable Members;

Our experience and the theory of our struggle have taught us that no socio-economic prosperity can be achieved without partnerships and cooperation. It is for this reason that over the past five years we have been working to strengthen and solidify relations with our regional partners and our counterparts in the BRICS community.

To this end, appropriate resources will be allocated to send young people to Universities in China. The idea is to train and equip these

young people with requisite skills to be able to participate fully in the running of our SEZ project.

As you would know, our SEZ is strategically located to accelerate and consolidate economic integration within the SADC region. Our focus is to ensure that sister countries such as Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique also benefit from this massive economic project.

In the same vein, our strategic relations with Cuba continue to pay some handsome dividends. Currently, 328 young people are undergoing training as medical students in Cuba. As we speak, 145 graduates from this programme are deployed across the Province as Doctors.

Madam Speaker;

Mining is the biggest contributor towards the provincial economy at 24.5% to the Provincial Gross Domestic Product. Jobs in this sector, have increased from **71 000** in 2013 to **103 000** in 2017/18. With the new mining projects in the pipeline, these figures are expected to increase by a further 3000.

Mining in Limpopo yields significant quantities of coal, copper, diamonds, gold, iron ore, nickel, platinum group metals, rare earth minerals and tin to South Africa's mineral industry. Limpopo has 147 mining projects that are currently operational and we envisage a further eight new projects in the Capricorn and Sekhukhune Districts.

These projects are expected to attract investments worth **R2.5 billion** and create around **3 000** jobs.

We are also excited about the new investments in the Ivanhoe Mine in Mokopane. The current investment in this mine is at **R4.5 billion**. We

are looking forward to the mine going into full operation by 2024. This mine is expected to create well over **25 000** jobs.

In recent years, we have seen a decline in commodity prices, but since last year we have seen a recovery of the prices of some commodities. We are hopeful that platinum and chrome prices that have lagged in recent years can rise again.

The consensus reached lately in terms of policy direction, particularly around the **Mining Charter**, is another encouraging development. This will obviously go a long way towards renewing investor confidence in the sector.

Honourable Members;

The illegal mining continues to impact negatively on our economy and investor confidence. The government is alert to this activity and always responds speedily with law-enforcement agencies. We are taking decisive steps to ensure that illegal mining practices are halted.

In this regard, a multi-departmental body, National Coordination and Strategic Management Team (NCSMT), was established which comprises of representatives from Department of Mineral Resources (DMR), the HAWKS, South African Police Service, Intelligence Services and the Department of Home Affairs.

To date, 63 people have been arrested for participating in illegal mining activity and we are hard at work to ensure more arrests in the near future.

Madam Speaker;

Our flagship project has been the introduction of the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

Thus far, our specific milestones in this regard include the designation and licensing of the Musina-Makhado SEZ by the national cabinet. As the Provincial Government we have just appointed the board for the SEZ Company.

To date, the Musina-Makhado SEZ project has managed to attract a total investment commitment of around **R150 billion** to the province. This will indeed go a long way in creating much-needed jobs and other economic opportunities, especially for the youth.

According to existing plans and program, several plants will be constructed under these SEZ projects creating over **21 000** jobs.

We are also expecting that the Environmental Impact Assessment study on this project will be completed by the end of August this year so that real work could commence.

There can be no doubt that the economy of Limpopo will never be the same again, once this project is fully operational.

Honourable Members;

We have made progress on our commitment to support our **Small, Medium and Macro Enterprises (SMMEs) and Cooperatives.**

Since 2014, over 1200 cooperatives were provided with financial support of over R51 million. A similar financial support of over R193 million was provided to SMMEs.

Working together with the **Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)**, we have established a construction incubation Centre at Steelpoort in Sekhukhune to train and capacitate emerging contractors.

Through the same kind of partnership, we have established a jewellery incubation centre in Polokwane to train emerging young jewellery makers.

As the President has indicated during his State of the Nation Address, we have revitalised both the Seshego and the Nkowankowa Industrial Parks. This will add the necessary impetus in revitalising the local economy.

Madam Speaker

In August last year, I joined the Polokwane Anglo-Platinum Smelter during the sod-turning ceremony for the construction of the Sulphur Dioxide Abatement project. This project is expected to be completed by the end of 2020. Of particular note, is the fact that this plant will improve air quality by reducing carbon emissions by 96%.

The capital value of this project at the Polokwane smelter is R1,57 Billion and has created no less than 500 construction jobs. It will also give contract work to between 12 and 14 local companies and award full-time jobs to 30 people.

Madam speaker

On the 25th of August last year, we hosted the President for the launch of the National Biodiversity Economy Programme in Vhembe district Municipality. At full potential the South African Biodiversity Economy will

achieve an average annualised GDP growth rate of 10% per annum in line with the National Development Plan, Vision 2030.

We have therefore assigned the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism to develop mechanisms to respond to the call by the President during his launch. The President has challenged us to take advantage of the unique and rich heritage of our natural resources.

It is in this context that the department of economic development will have to expedite the implementation of the Wildlife Transformation Policy to ensure greater inclusivity and transformation of this industry.

Honourable members

The other job driver in the province is the tourism sector. The good news is that our domestic tourism sector has also been doing well over a sustained period of time.

According to the latest available figures from StatsSA, Limpopo has since 2014 received over **27.5 million** domestic travellers. During the same period, our province was able to attract **7.8 million** international tourists. We intend to build on these figures as we position our tourism sector to become a major job creator in the province.

Honourable Members;

The phenomenon of the 4th Industrial Revolution is an unavoidable reality. As you would know, the 4th Industrial Revolution is driven by the integration of digitisation, robotics, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, green solution and high data capabilities.

In this regard, we have committed the provincial administration to ensure that there is a necessary movement towards a knowledge-based

economy. We have since launched the Limpopo Connexion as our leading agency in order to implement a superfast broadband network for the entire province.

In addition, the Limpopo Connexion will assist in training and equipping our young people with the requisite skills for the 4th Industrial Revolution.

In this regard, I have assigned the Director General of the Provincial Administration to develop a **comprehensive provincial strategy** on the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Madam Speaker;

The road infrastructure development is high on the agenda of this government. In an effort to improve and expand our road network, we are continuing to build more roads in our province.

Since 2014, we have spent no less than **R2.6 billion** in upgrading **260 kilometres** of road network from gravel to tar. A further total of over **380 lane kilometres** was rehabilitated.

During the same period we have built a total of 14 new bridges.

Madam Speaker

In the previous State of the Province Address, we undertook to complete Bermuda roads in the province. **R2.1 Billion** was set aside to complete 14 of these identified Bermuda roads.

It is now my pleasure to report that a lot of progress has since been made, and many of these roads have reached various stages of construction. The roads that have since been completed include:

- Moletji to R521 in the Capricorn District

- Ga-Maleka to Gaphasha-Mampuru-Tukakgomo in the Sekhukhune District and
- Matsakali to Altein to Kruger National Park in the Mopani District

The roads that are still under construction include:

- Senwabarwana to Endermark in the Capricorn District
- Jane Furse to Mphanama in the Sekhukhune District and
- Makuya to Masisi in the Vhembe District

These roads will be completed in 2019/20 financial year, whilst the rest on the other Bermuda roads that are under construction will be completed in the 2020/21 financial year.

Notwithstanding this progress, a lot more still needs to be done to expand our provincial road network. The MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure will elaborate in more detail during her Budget Vote next month.

Honourable Members;

A safe and reliable public transport system is also a significant catalyst for socio-economic development. It is for this reason that over and above the government owned Great North Transport buses, we are currently managing 26 private bus subsidy contracts. For the year under review, the provincial government has spent over **R737 million** on bus subsidy services.

The bus subsidies to private bus operators play a vital role in the socio-economic life of our province. Through these subsidies, we are able to get millions of our people to work, on time, everyday of the week and in a cost effective manner.

As part of our efforts to ensure safety on our roads, earlier this month we have graduated over 200 young people as Traffic Police. The graduation of these young people follows an intensive year of study and training at the Limpopo Traffic College in Manenu.

Madam Speaker;

In order to maximise the economic benefits from the agricultural sector and fight poverty, government has indentified five Agricultural Development Zones (ADZs) across the province. These Zones are meant to support the socio-economic priorities of the province.

Our programme to support smallholder farmers in order to improve productivity was also intensified during this period.

As part of this programme, over 99 000 smallholder producers were supported with agricultural advice with regard to aspects of maximising production. Almost 54 000 smallholder producers received support in the form of irrigation infrastructure, livestock infrastructure and various production inputs. Over 1000 farmers are being trained annually in order to enhance their knowledge and skills relating to advanced production practices.

We have also given life to our commitment to revitalise our small-scale irrigation schemes.

Since 2014, we have managed to revitalise smallholder irrigation schemes in Phetwane, Hereford, Elandskraal, Mapela, Matsika, Priska, Nwanedi and Mbhahela.

Madam Speaker;

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members

Limpopo has made significant inroads when it comes to the delivery of basic services to our people. Without any shadow of doubt, we are able to say that the lives of the people of our province have improved remarkably.

The proportion of households with electricity connection is continuously on the increase. In 1996, only about 32% of households in Limpopo enjoyed access to electricity connection. According to StatsSA, by 2011, Limpopo had increased the number of households with electricity connection to a whopping 87.3%.

The latest StatsSA Community Household Survey shows that Limpopo is currently at 94.1% electricity connection. We have actually exceeded our own LDP target of 90% by 2020.

We are finally making a dent on the inherited yet stubborn backlog of sanitation delivery in the province. In 2001, just 27% of the population enjoyed access to decent sanitation facilities; by 2011 the number had increased to 38%. During the 2016 General Household Survey, the number of people with access to proper sanitation had risen to 57%. In this respect, we have also exceeded our LDP target of 50% by 2020.

The province has also done a lot when it comes to providing our people with decent shelter. According to StatsSA, Limpopo has the highest proportion of households living in formal dwellings. As a matter of fact, 88, 9% people in this province stay in proper and formal houses.

We are also delighted that our government-owned housing financing institution, RISIMA, is playing a major role in this regard. Many people

who could not get funding approval from commercial banks have been assisted through this institution.

At the moment, Risima is providing housing loans to the maximum of R1.5 million. Since 2014, Risima has assisted 1 037 beneficiaries with loans to build houses in both rural and urban areas of our province. This is a significant intervention in the lives of those commonly referred to as the **Missing-Middle**.

On the other hand, the past five years the Provincial Government has registered a total of **9 262** title deeds. This means that the beneficiaries do not only have houses but valued assets they can call their own.

We have also made significant progress in taking care of the housing needs of our military veterans. Working together with Department of Military Veterans (DMV) and the South African Military Veterans Associations (SAMVA), we have appointed contractors to build houses for our Military Veterans.

Since 2014, the Provincial Government has provided over **43 000** housing units. This means that, we have managed to provide a decent shelter to over **200 000** people in the province.

Madam Speaker;

The provisioning of adequate and reliable water services is crucial to the socio-economic needs of our province.

It is in this context that we have targeted to provide 90% of our people with clean and potable water by the year 2020. At the moment only 74, 7% of our households are enjoying access to clean drinking water.

This is obviously a clear indication that a lot more still needs to be done to ensure that we reach the set target. We have recently convened the Provincial Water Summit to deal with issues that require urgent attention and action.

A case in point is the challenges we have experienced with regard to the most-spoken about Giyani Water Project.

Nevertheless, we are pleased that the issue of the Giyani Water Project is receiving the attention of the President. We are equally encouraged by the measures that have since been put in place to rescue the project and to ensure that the people of Giyani and surrounding areas do enjoy access to water.

Madam Speaker;

Municipalities remain at the heart of the efforts to take services to our communities. It is for this reason that we have been working hard to capacitate our municipalities to function properly.

Since the 2016 Local Government elections, there has been serious governance and capacity challenges in the municipalities of Thabazimbi, Fetakgomo-Tubatse and Modimolle-Mookgophong. These challenges have had a negative impact on these municipalities discharging their constitutional mandate of taking services to the people.

As part of the measures to support Modimolle-Mookgophong Local Municipality, the Provincial Government placed the municipality under administration in terms of section 139 (1) (b) of the Constitution. As a consequence of this decision, we have since appointed a support team for the Municipality. A similar intervention has since been extended to Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality.

It is hoped that these measures will help to turn their finances around, restore good corporate governance, and most importantly, improve delivery of services to the people.

Honourable Members;

One of the issues that the people of Limpopo raised sharply as they were making their inputs to this speech through various platforms, including social media, is the VBS saga.

This simply shows how pained our people are about this matter.

The decision by 12 of our municipalities in the province to invest monies with the VBS Mutual Bank was clearly in contravention of the law. To this effect, municipalities were sensitised by the National Treasury about the illegality of investing public money with a mutual bank.

As a consequence, I directed the Provincial Treasury to commission a Forensic Investigation into these unlawful deposits with the VBS Mutual Bank. The report has since been released and made public.

The report upheld the understanding that these investments with VBS were indeed unlawful. The Report further recommended that action must be taken against all parties who were involved in authorising such investments.

As we speak, the affected municipalities have accordingly taken action. Some of these people have already lost their jobs whilst some are still undergoing disciplinary processes.

I would also like to commend the ruling party for the decisive action taken to relieve all the mayors who were fingered in the VBS report from their duties.

On our part, as government, we have since referred the report to law enforcement agencies for necessary action. We have also referred the Report to the affected local councils for further action.

I can assure you that no stone will be left unturned in making sure that all those involved are brought to book.

Madam Speaker;

The ability by our municipalities to spend allocated resources is directly linked to the urgency of taking services to the people. If municipalities do not spend allocated resources, services will not be rendered to those who need them most.

I have said in many instances and in many platforms that such a failure is not acceptable. In most cases, inability to spend allocated resources is directly linked to lack of capacity, which is, having wrong people in strategic positions. But equally important, is the lack of proper and timeous planning.

Over the years, our concern has been about the municipalities' inability to spend the allocated Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG).

However, I can confidently say the situation has since improved for the better. We are beginning to see improvements in MIG spending patterns.

In the Financial Year **2014/15** the total MIG expenditure was at 73%. By the end of **2017/18** Municipal Financial Year, MIG expenditure had risen to 95%.

Perhaps I should take this opportunity to congratulate the municipalities which are doing well on the MIG spending. By December 2018, top spending municipalities were:

- ✓ Mopani District Municipality at 50,35%
- ✓ Capricorn District Municipality at 51,13%
- ✓ Ba-Phalaborwa Local Municipality at 54,52%
- ✓ Blouberg Local Municipality at 58,03%
- ✓ Makhuduthamakga Local Municipality at 58,49%
- ✓ Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality at 60,79%
- ✓ Molemole Local Municipality at 67,49%
- ✓ Collins Chabane at 71,64%
- ✓ Thabazimbi Local Municipality at 78,91%
- ✓ Maruleng Local Municipality at 79,39%, and
- ✓ Greater Letaba Local Municipality at 95.31%

Honourable Members;

The relocation of the Service Points offices for the people of Sekhukhune District from Lebowakgomo to Jane Furse is long overdue. In this regard, I have directed the MECs for CoGHSTA and Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure to coordinate the relocation process.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

The ANC government has declared education as one of its apex priorities. It is our firm belief that education remains a vital key to unlocking opportunities for the future. Educating and training young minds is an investment into the future of our province and our country.

It is for this reason that the ANC government has taken practical measures to increase access to education, particularly basic education.

Our School Nutrition Programme, Scholar Transport and the No-Fee School policies remain amongst the best interventions by this ANC government. There is no doubt that these policy imperatives are adding value in ensuring that children arrive at school on time, and are able to concentrate in the classroom.

To date, the School Nutrition Programme in Limpopo feeds thousands of learners in over 3 795 public schools, whilst the Scholar Transport Programme is currently benefiting learners in almost 380 schools. This is indeed a significant milestone.

In this current financial year, the number of learners benefitting from the No-Fee School Policy is a little above **1 600 000**.

As a province, we have exceeded our own target for enrolling children with Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers. Between 2014 and this year, we have managed to enroll over **231 000** children in various ECD centers across the province. This has indeed made a required impact in laying the educational foundation for our children.

It is in this context that we welcome the recent pronouncement by President Cyril Ramaphosa to mainstream the Early Childhood Development programme.

Madam Speaker;

When it comes to education outcomes, much interest and focus is on the Grade 12 examination results.

The highest pass percentage received by Limpopo in the past five years was 72, 9% in 2014. Since then our numbers have been fluctuating. Our sharpest decline was recorded in 2016 at 62.5%. We have since managed to arrest the decline and our results are beginning to improve.

In 2018, alone our Matric results have improved by 3.8%. This is a marked improvement from 65.6% in 2017 to 69.4% in 2018.

The most remarkable aspect about our Matric results is the quality and not only the quantity.

In 2018, Limpopo with 76 730 Matric candidates who sat for examinations came third after Gauteng at 94 870 and KZN at 116 152. Actually, we had more learners sitting for examination in Limpopo than almost 4 other provinces combined.

In terms of the actual number of learners who have passed their Grade 12, Limpopo came at position three in the country, after KZN and Gauteng. After KZN with 88 485 and Gauteng with 83 406, Limpopo produced 53 254 learners who passed their Grade 12.

In the same vein, Limpopo is amongst the top 5 provinces in terms of bachelor passes produced. We produced 18 000 bachelor passes in 2018.

It is also worth mentioning that, at 3.8%, Limpopo is the third most improved province after the Eastern Cape at 5.6% and Mpumalanga at 4.2%.

I also need to indicate that Limpopo contributed the 4th largest number of African children who have passed Mathematics, Science and Technology.

Even more pleasing, is the fact that more and more of our progressed learners are doing well in their Matric. In 2017 only about 47% of progressed learners managed to pass their Matric. In 2018 this number rose to 56%.

The other notable point is that for the first time in many years, all our Districts have managed to perform beyond the 60% mark in terms of Grade 12 learner performance.

Honourable Members, I thought I needed to put this issue of Matric results into a correct perspective.

Nevertheless, this does not negate the fact that a lot of work still needs to be done to achieve our target of 80% Matric pass rate.

ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE

Madam Speaker, and Honourable Members;

The commitment of our government to providing quality, accessible and affordable public healthcare services remains unmatched.

It is in this context that our government has invested significantly in expanding access to healthcare facilities, providing access to top quality medication and providing rehabilitative services to the sick.

I am happy to announce that the long-awaited construction of the **Limpopo Academic Hospital** is finally becoming a reality. The Minister of Finance has allocated **R3.9 billion** towards the planning and construction of the hospital during the next MTEF Period, starting in the next financial year.

This initiative will help create an important platform for research and training of medical students and other health professionals. It will also

help provide clinical services at the highest level, such as heart and kidney transplant.

Madam Speaker;

When we took over in 2014, the life expectancy was at an average of 55 years. Today, thanks to our multi-faceted interventions, life expectancy has risen to 70 years for both males and females. This progress is evidence of the improvements in the quality and accessibility of our healthcare services and facilities.

People living with HIV/AIDS are now living longer and productively because of our policy interventions. As we speak, Limpopo has over 350 000 patients on the ARV Programme.

We are also winning the battle against the mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. In the previous year, the rate of infection was at 0.96% - this number has now reduced to 0.77%.

TB remains a top killer opportunistic disease amongst the HIV infected population. It is for this reason that we have accepted that a battle against TB is also a battle against HIV and AIDS.

We have drastically reduced the TB cure rate with approximately 12% improvement. This has been achieved through a combination of measures which include, the utilisation of TB tracer teams, intensive case finding campaigns, intensified counselling and support and compliance to treatment.

Honourable Members;

Over the past years, government has invested heavily to build new and modern healthcare infrastructure. We have also invested resources in revitalising existing infrastructure.

In the previous Financial Year alone, we have completed clinics that include; Schoongezicht clinic, Mothiba clinic, Pienaarsrivier clinic, Makapsvlei clinic and Sterspruit clinic. A Clinic in Sekgagapheng is expected to be completed in this Financial Year.

Honourable Members;

As part of the programme to enhance the capacity of our emergency medical services, we have over the past five years managed to purchase 250 new modern ambulances to supplement the existing fleet.

During our 2014 State of the Province Address we announced that the first group of Medical students would enrol at the University of Limpopo in 2015. Since that announcement, a lot of progress has been made in this regard; and I am pleased to announce that the first ever group of students from this school will graduate as doctors in 2021.

Ka nnete tema e a bonagala - tlokego ya dingaka ka Limpopo e dikelelwa ke letšatši.

Madam speaker and Honourable Members;

Youth development is at the centre of the work we do as this ANC government. It is in this context that we have adopted the first-ever comprehensive **Youth Development Strategy**.

The Strategy focuses on areas such as, youth participation in the economy and job market, youth education and skills development, youth health, nation-building and social cohesion.

I have since directed the MEC for Treasury to allocate the necessary resources for the implementation of Strategy.

Madam Speaker;

This government is a listening government.

Following the call from young people, particularly from the ANC Youth League and COSAS, we have begun distributing sanitary towels to the needy school girls. In this Financial Year we managed to distribute almost 10 000 sanitary towels to no less than 3 000 needy school girls.

In the coming Financial Year, we have set aside R21 million for the school sanitary towels project. It is our firm belief, that this will go a long way in restoring the dignity of a girl child.

Honourable members, since we made a commitment to build the much-awaited State of the Art Provincial Theatre. We are happy to announce that we have finally managed to put aside **R15 million** to kick-start the initial phases of this project.

We have also put in place a high-level project team to work on resolving the challenges that have been impeding the commencement of this project.

As part of government efforts to rehabilitate our youth from the devastating clutches of alcohol and substance abuse, the Seshego Treatment Centre was officially opened in August 2018. Patients at this facility are assisted and supported by a dedicated team of nurses and social workers.

Honourable Members;

Our older persons and people living with disabilities continue to enjoy the care and support they so much need and deserve from our caring government.

Since 2014, we have extended our community-based care and support to over 20 000 senior citizens. We have also conducted empowerment training and workshops for almost 5 000 people living with disabilities in this province.

Madam Speaker;

Traditional leaders are and continue to be critical role players in the reconstruction and development of our country. It is in this context, that over the past years we worked closely with the institution of traditional leadership.

We are currently providing support to a total of 2 111 headmen/women, 185 traditional councils, 02 Kingships and 01 Queenship as enjoined by chapter 12 our Constitution.

Since 2015 we have also purchased 175 vehicles to be utilized by Senior Traditional Leaders in the Province.

In the past 5 years, we managed to build eleven offices for traditional councils in the Province. In the next Financial Year, we have set aside an amount of **R70 million** to build additional seven offices for traditional councils.

Working together with the National Government, we are engaging traditional leadership to resolve issues relating to outstanding tools of trade.

We are once more thankful to the Kgatla Commission which was appointed in 2012 to deal with issues relating to disputes and claims of traditional leadership. The Commission has completed its work and we are implementing the recommendations.

The outstanding issues from the Commission will be addressed by the Office of the Premier, working together with the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders.

Through a cordial relationship between government and traditional leaders, Limpopo continues to be shining model in the administration of the initiation schools.

We have since adopted the Limpopo Initiation Schools Act of 2017 to regulate this ancient and sacred traditional practice of the African people. Our work in this regard has inspired the National Government which is now in the process of developing a national legislation to regulate the management of traditional initiation.

BUILDING A CAPABLE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members;

Over the past 5 years, we have worked hard to restore the credibility of our government, through fighting corruption, minimising wastage of public resources and promoting efficiency and good governance.

We have taken decisive steps against those who were involved in wastage and maladministration.

We have also restored the credibility of our public tender system.

Most of you would remember that when we took over in 2014, corporate governance in Limpopo had virtually collapsed. The province was bankrupt with no money for service delivery.

At that time, almost all Provincial Departments were under administration in terms of Section 100 of the Constitution.

Audit opinion of various Departments was discouragingly negative.

At that time, the province had R1.7 billion in overdraft and R2.7 billion of unauthorized expenditure.

Today, we can confidently say that Limpopo is back on a sound financial footing. We are no longer in the red. We are delivering services to the people.

In an effort to stabilise the Provincial Administration, we have filled all vacant positions of HODs and related strategic positions.

The intervention of the Provincial Government in the Department of Education through section 18 of the PFMA has also yielded positive results. This intervention has led to the improvement in the areas of governance and financial management. For the first time in three years, the Department of Education was pulled out of the disclaimer audit opinion.

I can confidently say that our public service is now operating in a manner consistent and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our people.

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Madam Speaker;

Over the past years government, working together with social partners and the SAPS has worked tirelessly to reclaim Limpopo's position as the safest province in the country. Our work includes strengthening community safety and policing structures to rid our communities of all forms of crime, drugs, gangsterism and violence against women and children.

The province currently has 116 functional Community Policing Forums; most of these Forums are linked with our police stations. Working together with our municipalities, we have been able to establish Local Community Safety Forums in our entire local and district municipalities.

These structures have proved to be very effective in supplementing the work of the police to fight crime and arrest criminals.

Madam Speaker;

Some of the recent killings that we have observed in the Province are a serious cause for concern. This includes what appears to be a targeted killing of SAMWU leaders in the Vhembe region.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms these barbaric and heinous acts of cowardice.

We are confident that working together with the team deployed by the Minister of Police, we will soon see the arrest and successful prosecution of the perpetrators.

The other tendency we must equally discourage is people masquerading as local business to intimidate lawfully appointed contractors and disrupt projects purely for personal gain. No single individual is entitled to be sub-contracted against specific conditions of the existing contract. What is even more worrisome is when such people go as far as mobilising

community members to disrupt the good work of government. This must come to an end.

Madam Speaker;

I am also inspired by the upward trajectory of art, culture, sport and recreation in our Province. The fact that last year the competition for the **SABC's Summer Song of the Year** was mainly amongst Limpopo artists should be a source of pride for all of us.

In the past five years, we were able to resuscitate and unearth talent through platforms such as **I Can Sing** and the **Literary Competition**. Similarly, through the **Limpopo Sports Awards** and our support to initiatives such as the **Limpopo Music Awards**, the **FAME** and **Limpopo Gospel Awards**, we continue to promote and encourage excellence amongst our local artists.

I am also confident that all our three teams in the PSL, **Black Leopards**, **Baroka** and **Polokwane City** will continue to do well in the top flight league.

In this regard, I wish to call on the entire business community in Limpopo to invest in these teams to sustain their stay in the league.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate **Baroka ba meetse a pula** for winning the 2018 edition of the Telkom Knockout. You have indeed made us proud. We know that this is just the beginning; more trophies are heading to Limpopo.

CONCLUSION:

As I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to call on the people of Limpopo, particularly our young people, to participate in the coming National General Elections.

The duty to grow South Africa is in our hands. Let us go out on the 08th of May to renew the mandate of our public representatives.

As the term of this 5th administration ends, I wish to assure the people of Limpopo that the work that we have started will continue. We are confident that the incoming government will prioritise issues relating to the growth and development of our economy, particularly our SEZ project. This will be done in order to seize the job opportunities that come with this project.

I am also confident that the incoming government will continue with the infrastructure delivery programme, particularly as it relates to sanitation, roads and water infrastructure.

Lastly, I want to thank the ruling party, the African National Congress, for entrusting us with the noble mandate to lead the provincial government and take services to the people of our beloved province. Let me also express immense gratitude to my comrades in the Alliance and colleagues in other political parties. Above all, I thank you the people of Limpopo for granting me this rare and unique opportunity to be your Premier. I am proud that history was not allowed to take turn without your participation.

I am also grateful for the support and cooperation I received from my family – my wife and children in particular, my team of MECs, the Director General of the provincial administration, the HODs, all the trade unions in the public sector and, most importantly, all the employees of our Provincial Government.

Words of thanks are equally due for the unwavering support I received from the religious community and our traditional leaders. Without all of you, nothing would have been achieved.

Indeed we have done our best, always guided by a silence yet loud whisper which said to us, 'do not disappoint those who have deployed you – do not squander the trust of the people of Limpopo – be true to what you have been deployed to do, nothing more, nothing less'.

Indeed, we believe that we have tried our best to be true to what we said we would do for the people of Limpopo five years ago.

We are convinced that those with eyes are able to see the changes which have been made over the past five years.

Much has been done; much more is still going to be done.

As the Holy Bible says in the book of Titus 1:15 says; ***to the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.***

PULA!