



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA'S RESPONSE TO THE STATE OF THE NATION (SONA) ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT MATAMELA CYRIL RAMAPHOSA, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, CAPE TOWN CITY HALL

18 February 2026

His Excellency the President Mr Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa,
Speaker of the Parliament, Honourable Thoko Didiza,
Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane

Please allow me to stand on the already established protocol,

Honourable Chair, today we stand before you with immense pride as we respond to the State of the Nation Address delivered by His Excellency, Mr President, on 12 February 2026.

Limpopo Floods 2026

Mr President, there is no doubt that the depth of your utterings was accompanied by your comfortable posture, assurance of your tone and the sternness of your pronouncements.

As it is custom in our province, especially towards the festive season, we pray for rain, so that it waters the land to give us harvest at the appropriate time.

Unfortunately, when rain clouds gathered, we didn't carry enough shoes on our back to stop its anger as it tore our province into pieces, levelling, in its wake, what was once a village full of life to a mere ground with just two RDP houses remaining standing out. This was after water had subsided to show the kind of quality housing you have often spoke about, strong and adaptive to climate change.

Mr President, you witnessed first-hand the villages that were turned into dams, streets turned into dongas, yet you saw hope in the eyes of communities who came to welcome you as you reached out to them in Tshakhuma, Giyani and Mbaula areas for example.

Indeed, like the father you are, you went back noting that the devastation you witnessed was beyond comprehension, requiring more energy, dedication and immediate action to help those trapped as well as rebuilding peoples' lives.

Mr President, this reminded us of the clarion call you made in April 2022, when disaster struck Kwazulu-Natal (KZN), that we as the country should put a hand in supporting the people of that province. We had just established a search and rescue unit which we sent to assist the people of KZN. We also had churches and our ruling party, the ANC, sending, trucks full of clothes and non-perishable items to for relief. Today that expertise has come in

handy as we were able to avert the worst loss of lives, except the 27 were not able to save, indeed one life lost is too many.

We have as a province re-prioritised our needs and committed R800 million towards rebuilding efforts, alongside the anticipated support from national government.

We recognise that this journey requires more than physical reconstruction; it demands community healing and the restoration of hope.

Limpopo lies in ruins, but we shall build the walls, we shall restore dignity!

As we reflect upon the three key priorities outlined in the Medium-Term Development Plan – inclusive growth, reducing poverty and curbing the high cost of living, and building an ethical, capable and developmental state – we are pleased to affirm our alignment with your bold vision Mr President.

Inclusive Growth and Job Creation

We are witnessing a positive economic outlook in our country. Let us stand resolute in the confidence that progress in South Africa is not temporary. Limpopo is testament that, despite skepticism, real and lasting progress is possible. The latest Income and Expenditure Survey show poverty in Limpopo declining from 66% to 47.6%, a leading reduction nationally. Just yesterday, the 2025 Quarter 4 Labour Force Survey was released and it showed that Limpopo's unemployment rate has further declined to 28.2%, following a significant drop from 35% to 29.8% in Quarter 3 of 2025.

However, with nearly half of our residents still living in poverty and carrying the weight of unemployment, accelerating inclusive growth and job creation remains an urgent priority. *Where there is increased economic activity, there is development, where there is development, jobs are created and communities flourish!*

Limpopo is not merely surviving but growing. Our Gross Domestic Product contribution has risen from 6.9% to 7.8%, representing a noteworthy increase of 0,9% that signals a turning point. This growth demonstrates tangible economic activity transforming the lives of our people. We are shifting towards becoming an urbanised rural region, where development is felt in the most distant villages.

This is not an accident but a result of deliberate planning and action which we would like to see drop to below 20% by 2030.

While we are registering progress, we must also indicate that we are not happy with our pace, the current situation where we have seen many youths from all over the country queuing at the SANDF site Thohoyandou to submit their CVs is a wake-up call to those of us you have honoured with responsibilities to change the status quo. Time is not on our side

We are aware of the challenges that persist, especially in ensuring consistent water supply. In response, we have established operational "war rooms" in the Mopani District, particularly in Giyani, where we are making strides toward reticulating the remaining five out of the 20 villages. Similar structures

have been established in Capricorn, Polokwane and Vhembe to allow daily monitoring of water challenges.

We applaud your insistence, Mr President, on infrastructure investment as the bedrock of economic growth. Initiatives such as the rollout of solar smart technology in rural villages like smart village Madimbo are bridging the digital divide, providing our children with access to modern technology and educational resources.

Last year we shared our positive story on public private partnerships where as we speak while our Steelpoort Bridge in Fetakgomo-Tubatse is awaiting ribbon cutting since its completed. Last week on the side-lines of the Mining Indaba we signed another agreement with mines operating in Limpopo to maintain and improve roads infrastructure where they will contribute 90% towards the construction and maintenance of local roads while we contribute 10% These infrastructure are vital for our communities and economic development. This collaboration echoes our belief that true development is achieved through partnership and unity.

It is for this reason that we applaud your pronouncement that the revitalisation of George Mkhari will be done through public-private partnership. The people of Limpopo can attest to the fact that your commitment to healthcare is equally resolute. Your pronouncement on Limpopo Provincial Academic Hospital - currently at 40% completion – has seen light and it will transform healthcare access for our residents.

When we established the medical school at the University of Limpopo several years ago it was meant to bring a pool of specialist surgeons back to our province as well as training our own children in medical care. Just two weeks ago a mother gave birth to conjoined twins at Mankweng Hospital. Ordinarily, we would have had such a case referred to central and academic hospitals in Gauteng, but because of the expertise we have amassed so far, we are positive that our capable surgeons led by Professor Tshifularo, our paediatric surgeon will successfully operate them and separate them. We are a province of rewriting history and under your guidance and leadership a rural hospital will remind many of us that by the way experts in Medicine are located within our public hospitals. This Mr President is a testament to your leadership and foresight, that your dreams do come true – *miloro yavho i a wedza.*

A Shared Vision for the Future

Mr President, we would like to commend you for your unwavering commitment to the Limpopo-Gauteng high-speed rail project including Ethekwini. Although those who practice voodoo economics dismiss it as an elite venture, let us remind them that there is no economy that can grow and develop unless you invest in infrastructure. Its ripple effect is felt by the very same poor and working class, starting with its construction phase where many jobs will be created. Upon completion, as part of decongestion N1 by moving goods from the road to rail, it also has the potential to revitalise our small towns like Bela-Bela, Modimolle, Mookgophong and Mokopane and restore economic activity will never be overemphasised.

When a bus or a mini taxi is involved on a head-on collision with a truck, majority of our people who are perishing on these roads are the same poor and working class and we would want to see them being protected.

In anyway, Marxist-Leninist political economy literature teaches us that when you invest in the infrastructure, the primary beneficiaries of the ripple effects of that development or investment are the working class, the poor of the poorest.

Decentralising development to villages and rural areas is what make us to continue to chart a course towards a better South Africa, where hope flourishes and every citizen plays a role in our collective progress.

Thank you.