

# Address skills, labour reforms, corruption - says opposition

Opposition members have welcomed President Jacob Zuma's announcement in his State of the Nation Address that government would spend more on infrastructure development, but urged the President to focus more on developing skills, implementing labour reforms and tackling corruption to ensure that the country overcomes unemployment and poverty.



(Image: GCIS)

In a debate in the National Assembly on Zuma's State of the Nation Address delivered last Thursday, Cope leader Mosiuoa Lekota said South Africa needed to focus more on developing and training its people if it wanted to do away with unemployment and poverty.

"Unless we address it we won't be able to address the economy and help our people find their way out of the backwardness and squalor that face them," he said.

Infrastructure development would only be effective as a short-stop solution, but would not address the unemployability of South Africans, he said.

## What's happened to the R5bn?

Lekota wanted to know what had happened to the R5bn youth-wage subsidy that the Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan had mooted in last year's Budget Speech.

In an impassioned plea, he said with the R5bn the country could train youth for the future.

Earlier in the National Assembly, the ANC's chief whip Mathole Motshekga said the development and refurbishment of cultural icons and heritage sites such as memorial sites could help support small businesses, create jobs and back an

African cultural renaissance.

Lekota agreed that something needed to be done about setting up cultural heritage sites, but questioned the timing of these developments particularly in a time when South Africa had a large budget deficit.

IFP leader Mangosutho Buthelezi welcomed the creation of a Durban-Johannesburg trade corridor outlined as one of five regions by Zuma in his State of the Nation Address last year.

However, he said KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Transport had ceased all road projects while the City of eThekweni (Durban) had run up R1.2bn through bad spending.

Buthelezi said Eskom's build programme should not have been funded by tariff increases, but rather through foreign-direct investment and added that Zuma also made no mention of how to assist small businesses and the declining mining and agricultural sector.

Buthelezi said increasing levels of corruption in South Africa meant the country was on the verge of joining dysfunctional states.

## **SA becoming more corrupt**

He singled out Transparency International's 2011 report which revealed South Africa was becoming more corrupt and a briefing last year to the justice portfolio committee by former head of the Special Investigating Unit Willie Hofmeyer who revealed that R25bn to R30bn or 20% of all state procurement is lost to corruption every year.

Leader of the opposition Lindiwe Mazibuko detailed several initiatives to tackle education and the economy that her party would implement if it were in government.

She said South Africa's economy remained uncompetitive, particularly in key sectors such as mining, manufacturing and farming through labour regulation.

To boost the economy, the DA would introduce voluntary exemptions on labour regulations for certain sectors, a youth-wage subsidy and a one-stop business registration office for those looking to set up businesses.

## **Current BEE model is flawed**

Mazibuko said the current Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) model had only succeeded in creating a small elite who had access to finance over and over.

Her party wanted to incentivise share ownership across the economy to allow workers to partake more in BEE initiatives, she said.

The DA would not choose to focus on particular sectors as the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) does but rather help new businesses to start up by creating targeted incentives and venture capital funds.

In education, the party would give schools the "maximum resources" for the first three grade years in schools and carry out assessments on pupils in Grades 3, 6 and 9.

It was also necessary to limit the ability of teachers to strike and only allow them to go on strike after consulting with the government, she said.

Minister on Planning in the Presidency Trevor Manuel said it was clear that there was little disagreement on the content of President Jacob Zuma's speech, but urged the President, who was in attendance, to heed remarks made by opposition

members.

Manuel said the National Planning Commission was currently getting comments from South Africans on the National Development Plan, which was released in November last year and added that a final version is expected to come before the President in June or July.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>