

# Mpumalanga builds seven new schools

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government will commence with the construction of seven new schools in five fast-growing towns.



Image source: Getty Images

Delivering her State of the Province Address on Tuesday, Mpumalanga Premier Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane said two schools will be built in Mbombela, one in Secunda, Ermelo, Lydenburg and eMalahleni, respectively.

“The province has prioritised the alleviation of overcrowding in urban areas. We have conducted a needs assessment for additional classrooms in fast-growing towns and all other urban areas,” the Premier said.

The province also plans to build a school for deaf children, which will be housed within the City of Mbombela Municipality. The project is at the design stage.

In addition, the province is working towards completely eradicating all pit latrines in schools and eradicate unsafe structures.

“Working with our private sector partners, we are making concerted efforts to increase skills development and

competencies to prepare learners for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

“The process of developing a curriculum to introduce digital skills teaching, learning, coding and robotics is in its final stages,” Mtsweni said.

The coding and robotics curriculum will develop learners’ ability to solve problems, think critically, work collaboratively and creatively, function in a digital and information-driven world, apply digital and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and transfer these skills to solve everyday problems.

This will be piloted across 100 schools in the province in the 2021 academic year.

Sasol has also sponsored teachers to be trained as master teachers for robotics and coding in the province.

Through the Sasol Foundation, Sasol has created access to high quality, low-cost multimedia enriched textbooks for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) for use by learners and teachers.

“One of the biggest developmental challenges facing Mpumalanga in particular and South Africa in general is the high number of children who do not learn to read for meaning in the early years of schooling.

“In an effort to ensure that our 10-year-olds read for meaning, we will expand the early grade reading intervention strategy to 300 more schools in collaboration with academics at various universities and international donor organisations,” the Premier said.

These are available free of charge online. To date, a total of 180 volumes of books have been completed and published online.

## **Skills development**

As part of the province’s drive to address the shortage of rare skills, 281 learners were sent to study in Russia.

The Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA) has also partnered with the province and funded 81 new students, who are studying overseas.

“Our bursary scheme has assisted more than 3,334 learners, who are studying in various fields like medicine, veterinary science, information technology, aviation, education (maths and science) and engineering.

“The artisan development programme, in partnership with Hydra Arc, was set up to deal with and address the issue of artisan development in the province, as envisaged by the National Development Plan,” said Mtsweni-Tsipane.

This has thus far produced 2 950 artisans, ranging from welding and pipe fabricators, boiler making, safety and quality officers.

“The programme has contributed immensely by changing the lives of young people who would otherwise have faced a very bleak future,” Mtsweni said.

In response to the call made by President Ramaphosa, on the need for short-term courses, the province will, in partnership with its private sector partners, intensify and increase the number of existing programmes to 25,000 young people trained in various skills during the next financial year.

## **Health system**

A few years ago, the province began investing in infrastructure and some of those projects are now nearing completion.

“The new Middleburg district hospital will soon be completed. We are also at an advanced stage with the upgrading of Bethal District Hospital and the upgrading of Mmsethake District Hospital is continuing in earnest,” the Premier said.

The construction of Mapulaneng Regional Hospital and Kanyamazane CHC has already started.

“We will continue with refurbishment of the oncology chemotherapy ward and refurbishment of nursing accommodation at the Rob Ferreira Tertiary hospital. The Department of Health will also complete the construction of Pankop CHC.

“We are also purchasing 67 new ambulances to improve turnaround time and equipping all those that were purchased recently with the necessary life-saving equipment,” Mtsweni said.

## **Transforming the economy**

In a move to industrialise the province, the Mpumalanga Industrial Development Plan, aimed at promoting the development and establishment of Industrial Technology Parks, will be implemented.

This plan prioritises areas with a primary focus on agriculture and forestry, mining and metals, and petro-chemicals.

The province has committed to supporting township and rural economies, as well as small businesses.

“In this regard, our priority projects remain the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market and its associated Agri-Hubs, as well as the Nkomazi SEZ [Special Economic Zone].

“It is imperative, now more than ever, for us to ensure that our catalytic projects such as the Nkomazi SEZ and the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market are strategically positioned, not only to stimulate economic activity but also to create sustainable work opportunities for our people,” the Premier said.

The province will further tap into the Green Economy, which will bring myriad new opportunities, where waste streams are turned into input streams for new economic activity, leading ultimately to a zero waste industrial ecosystem.

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