

Phumulo Masualle, Eastern Cape Premier and It. Genl. Liziwe Ntshinga, EC Police Commissioner, before Masualle's State of the Province Address in Bhisho last Friday. Cape Premier, Phumulo Masualle, delivered his last State of the Province address SOPA at the provincial legislature in Bhisho on Friday. He admitted that the delivery of health service in the province has not been without challenges. "One of our biggest concerns remains medico legal claims, estimated to be R23 billion." Masualle added that there is not just bad news. Notwithstanding perennial challenges of a constrained global and domestic economy, two Industrial Development Zones IDZs and the Eastern Cape Development Corporation ECDC combined have attracted investments well above R30 billion, thus creating more than 29 000 jobs during this term. The Expanded Public Works Program EPWP also created more than 430 000 temporary workers. According to Masualle, more than 50 000 houses have been built during his term as premier. More than R850 million has been spent on access roads and bridges, in partnership with SANRAL, for increased access to schools, health institutions, tourism entities and agricultural facilities. "As we speak, over 3 500km of gravelled roads in the province were re gravelled, while over 75 000km of gravel roads were bladed. In 2014, a total of 69.1% of the people had access to basic sanitation. "This figure now stands at 80%. More than 1.4 million people have basic electricity an improvement of 7.6% in the past five years," according to Masualle. A total of 300 nurses were also placed in positions every year, thanks to an agreement with the University of Fort Hare. With respect to HIV Aids programmes, the province has further improved its capacity to provide ARV programmes to patients. Since 2015, up to 1.5 million patients were tested for HIV Aids. "Similarly, TB testing has also improved. "There has been a marked decrease of TB prevalence from 976 incidents 1 000 in 2014, to 506 incidents 1 000 in 2018," Masualle said. He also boasted about the matric pass rate of 70.6%. Earlier this year, Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, said the Eastern Cape was the province that showed the biggest improvement in its matric results. This, according to Masualle, is because of the implementation of the education system transformation plan, "which has begun to yield positive results". He spoke about corruption in just one paragraph of his speech. "In our quest to rid our province of fraud and corruption, we have intensified the Provincial Anti-Corruption Drive, which saw the institutionalisation of ethics officers in all departments. Nqaba Bhanga, the DA EC premier candidate, said Masualle's address "lacked any heart and soul and failed to project any vision for the future. "He did his best to sugar coat the ANC government's failings under his leadership but had to dig deep to find mediocre successes," Bhanga said. Masualle delivers last SOPA.