

Political analysts expecting more 'realistic targets' in Mchunu's Sopa

CLIVE NDOU

WITH Premier Willies Mchunu scheduled to deliver the State of the Province Address (Sopa) on Wednesday, political analysts are expecting the provincial government to set more realistic goals than in the past.

Western Cape University political analyst, Bheki Mngomezulu, said President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address (Sona), where he

avoided making unrealistic promises, was likely to set the tone that will underline Mchunu's Sopa.

"What is becoming clear is that the ANC is realising that most of its targets around job creation and economic growth as contained in the party's resolutions were not achievable under the current economic climate.

"It is highly unlikely that the Sopa will depart from the tone set by Ramaphosa — I think it will be a frank and

realistic speech telling the province's citizens that which is achievable under the circumstances," he said.

Unlocking the KZN ocean economy, developing the province's agricultural sector and government support to the province's industrial hubs, are some of the themes set to feature strongly in the Sopa.

The Sopa takes place against the backdrop of a skyrocketing unemployment rate in the province, with about 38% of young people being unemployed.

In his speech last year, Mchunu said the government would be launching a job creation programme (Sukuma) that would create 10 000 jobs.

But Mngomezulu said the economic climate in the region

had since deteriorated. "Any targets will have to be realistic," he added.

According to the provincial cabinet lekgotla discussion document outlining the provincial government's priorities, radical economic transformation stance was likely to be expressed in the Sopa. Mchunu, who chaired last week's two-day cabinet lekgotla, whose outputs feeds into the Sopa, said it was critical for the provincial government to deal with "the historical exclusion of the majority of citizens from sharing the country's wealth and accessing opportunities".

The creation of black industrialists, commercial farmers and tourism operators, are some of the initiatives being spearheaded by the provincial government as part of its radical economic transformation policy.

On the other hand, the expanded public works programme, and the provincial government's other job creation programmes — which according to the provincial government in 2017 created more than 40 000 jobs, mostly at entry level — are some of the programmes that will be highlighted in the Sopa.

On the social side, measures dealing with the province's violent crimes, low matric pass rate, poor service delivery and HIV/Aids, will also be outlined.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Alliance KZN premier candidate, Zwakele Mncwango, will launch the party's alternative Sopa in Imbali today.

"We will set out the DA's plan of action for KZN, focusing on critical areas including kick-starting the provincial economy and providing a safer province for our people," Mncwango said.