## ANC CAMPAIGN IN FULL GEAR

- Mantashe and Ramaphosa expected to join campaign
- Party says in frank engagements with communities



Campaign in gear... ANC provincial spokesperson Thabo Meeko says the party is reporting back to communities as part of the campaign

By: Martin Makoni

he ANC in the Free State says it has stepped up its campaign to ensure the party engages with all communities across the province ahead of the national and provincial elections set for May 8.

Provincial spokesperson Thabo Meeko told The Weekly in a telephone interview last night that several senior party officials, including party chairperson Gwede Mantashe and President Cyril Ramaphosa were expected in the province to boost the campaign and meet with the people.

He said Mantashe is expected in the province today and will make his first stop Odendaalsrus in Lejweleputswa District before proceeding to Thaba Nchu in Mangaung Metro tomorrow.

"Our election campaign programme is now in full swing," said Meeko.

"We are reporting back to the people on the promises we made in our 2014 manifesto. We are talking about our successes, particularly in the area of education as well as the challenges we have faced along the way. We made a conscious decision as a party to prioritise education and we have made significant achievements over the past five years.

"Education is an enabler and if we want to be successful in the skills revolution, we must prioritise education and that's exactly what we have done," he added.

Meeko noted the ANC was also happy with its achievements in the areas of human settlements, township roads and other services.

Thaba Nchu in Mangaung Metro tomorrow. He however acknowledged that the government
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had faced a host of challenges including the delivery of water in some areas and that some municipalities were struggling to pay their bills to service providers due to low revenue bases. Unemployment also remained a major challenge across most communities in the province.

"We are making contact with the voters and we are having frank engagements about the situation on the ground. Even though we are pushing the narrative that we have done well, we are also acknowledging our shortcomings. We are listening to the communities so that we can improve where we didn't do well so that we can do better in future," Meeko explained.

He said the party was not engaging with communities simply because elections were around the corner, but they were simply reinforcing the work done over the years.

The ANC had already met with a cross section of people including students, the working class, the elderly and many other groups in order to drive home the party's message of development.

"I must say the people are appreciating the milestones we have achieved particularly in education. The reception from the people is warm, but some are not happy with their councillors they say are not proactive in addressing community issues. We are not going to allow that because councillors are there to serve the people.

"On the issue of unemployment, we all know that it is a huge challenge but government is working hard to improve the situation. It's been engaging with the private sector to ensure there are more employment opportunities in our communities. Government has also been creating short-term employment opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme but that's not enough. We need long term employment, hence the government is working closely with business," said the provincial spokesperson.

Ramaphosa was also expected in the province in the coming weeks as part of the programme of party officials during the campaign period.

The president will embark on a door-to-door campaign when he comes and will also be a guest of honour at a gala dinner to be hosted by the province.

"We want his presence as party leader to help promote the ANC in the province. He must engage with the communities and hear the grievances of the people on the ground. Our campaign is going right across the province," said Meeko, but he could not confirm the actual date the president is expected in the province.