



Inside the new High Court building in Mbombela are President Cyril Ramaphosa (right), Justice and Correctional Services minister Ronald Lamola (left) and Judge President Frans Legodi, Behind them is Mpumalanga Premier Rifilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane.

High Court opens in Nelspruit

Staff Reporter

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa officially opened the Mpumalanga division of the High Court in Nelspruit last week.

Accompanied by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Ronald Lamola and Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille, Ramaphosa said the official opening of the court was the fulfilment of the government's promise to ensure access to justice for all.

The President said while the launch marked a milestone, more needed to be done to broaden access to law.

"Among these are the costs of obtaining legal representation, linguistic accessibility as well as accessibility for people with disabilities. Also, lengthy delays and case postponements, backlogs in the court roll and people having to travel long physical distances to reach courtrooms, as has been the case here in Mpumalanga, must be addressed," he said.

The Mpumalanga High Court came into operation on 1 May this year.

Situated on Samuel Machel Road, between the R40 and KaapscheHoop Road in Mbombela, the court will serve

the people of Manyeleti, Bushbuckridge, Mbombela and Kromdraai in the Chief Albert Luthuli Municipality. They will no longer have to incur huge travel costs for legal assistance in Pretoria.

The court seals the last phase of the programme that ensures that a High Court is established in each of the nine provinces in South Africa.

Also in attendance was the National Prosecuting Authority's National Director of Public Prosecution, Advocate Shamila Batohi, Acting Deputy Chief Justice, Sisi Khampepe and Mpumalanga Division of the High Court, Judge President Frans Legodi.

In addition to improving access to justice, Ramaphosa said the court must etch its mark on the jurisprudence of the country.

"This court must be seen as an agent of transformation and it must set a high bar for jurisprudence. It must make its mark throughout the country," he said.

Lamola backed the President, adding that the newly launched state-of-the-art court, which was built to the tune of more than R1 billion, must reflect the demographics of the country and effectively play a role in grooming black

commercial lawyers and boost access for female litigants.

"We must see black professionals doing commercial law. For us as government, it's very important that we groom a new generation of legal professionals.

"We have heard the cry of women practitioners across the country. They are complaining that their struggles are very difficult," Lamola said.

With courts as the vanguards of communities' needs and concerns, Khampepe lauded the opening of the court as assurance that the notion of access to justice for all is taking shape.

"The establishment and opening of this court is a reflection of our steadfast commitment to the Constitution and its values. It is the manifestation of the constitutional promise. It is the symbol of access to justice," said Khampepe.

Legodi, who will head the Mpumalanga Division of the High Court, assured the public that the rule of law will be ensured without fear or favour.

"To the people of Mpumalanga, let me assure you that we will implement the law without, fear, favour or prejudice. In other words, we will not be captured," Legodi said.