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Cyril meets the people

FACE-TO-FACE: RAMAPHOSA VISITS LIMPOPO FOR PRESIDENTIAL IMBIZO

➔ **Promises to deal promptly with concerns raised by the residents.**

Alex Japho Matlala

President Cyril Ramaphosa spent the better part of his presidential imbizo in Burgersfort, Limpopo, yesterday, smiling from ear to ear after he was showered with praises by excited residents.

This after speakers at Motodi Stadium praised the president for having hard-working and committed mayors.

Speaker after speaker praised the host, mayor Eddy Maila, as the best in the province in terms of service delivery. This sparked a reaction from many of the nearly 8 000 residents present, with some arguing the speeches had been rehearsed.

"This is not an imbizo. It's is more like a *Tom and Jerry* [cartoon]. It is not possible that all these people can share the same view," said one angry resident, only identifying himself as Uncle Joe.

"The writing is on the wall; they were all rehearsed to praise the local mayor in front of the president."

Some praised Maila for spending all his Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) before the end of May deadline. They asked Ramaphosa to recognise his work.

Others asked Ramaphosa to provide the municipality with more money to build schools, better roads and clinics.

Selaelo Nchabeleng of River Cross village said water provision was a serious problem in the region. "Sekhukhune is the home of three big dams, De Hoop, Loskop and Flag Boshielo.

"These dams are always full but



ALL EARS. President Cyril Ramaphosa interacts with Sekhukhune mayor Maleke Mokganyetsi during the presidential imbizo in Burgersfort, Limpopo, yesterday. Picture: Supplied

the same water is sent through huge pipes to Lebowakgomo, Jane Furse, Marble Hall, Groblersdal or Polokwane, while those living near the dams continue to drink from the same source as donkeys, goats and cattle."

Programme director Nkakareng Rakgoale, who is Limpopo MEC for public works, had to ask the agitated crowd to no longer speak about the water crisis as the matter was repeated by all the speakers.

Other villagers asked Ramaphosa to legalise zama zamas. "Please Mr President, legalise illegal mining, create jobs for youth, provide us with clean running water and, in turn, we will make sure the ANC wins the elections next year," said Lebong resident Steven Maake.

"We will also make sure you are re-elected for a third term in 2026 as ANC president."

Local chief Mathabile Maila asked the president to work hard to bring load shedding to an end.

Maila, who is blind, asked the president to build a school for the blind and an office in his village.

He, however warned politicians not use the imbizo "as their lobbying pad" for the 2024 general election. "I appeal to all leaders to put the interest of those who elected them into office above their own."

In response, Ramaphosa, who was raised from his seat with loud cheers and revolutionary slogans, said the District Development Model (DDM) is an integrated planning model for cooperative governance, which seeks to ensure an integrated, district-based, service delivery approach to fast-track service delivery.

He said the presidential imbizo was created as a platform for

face-to-face engagements between citizens and senior government leaders which holds the administration to account and allows government to consult.

Ramaphosa said he had heard and accepted all the challenges faced by communities, including those of Maila, and his plea for a prompt action against load shedding. He promised problems will be attended to promptly.

He said South Africa was a water-scarce country. "Government has set aside billions of rands to address the chronic water shortages in Sekhukhune and elsewhere in the country. We are, however, saddened by poor planning and lack of capacity in municipal infrastructure development," he said.

"We are further saddened by the escalating theft of money meant to improve the lives of our people by those who are supposed to keep it. We are also not happy with municipalities that return money to National Treasury at the end of the financial year for failing to spend it." - news@citizen.co.za

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