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STREAMLINING PLANNED: REVIEW OF DESIGN AND FUNCTION OF SYSTEMS ON THE CARDS

➔ **Aims to see use of grants on repairs and maintenance.**

Lunga Simelane

With South Africa's municipalities deteriorating, marred by corruption and organised crime, the ANC, through local government, plans to improve grants to municipalities to stabilise these institutions.

Speaking at a briefing in Boksburg during the ANC national executive committee meeting yesterday, Deputy Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Parks Tau said the ANC government had been addressing the need to revise the local government "white paper and the system".

"We need to review the way in which we have designed our local government systems and the way it functions," he said.

Tau said local government representatives had cited the implication of changes in service delivery models on the functioning of local government and its finances.

According to Tau, the committee supported initiatives for improved expenditure of municipalities' grants. He said some municipalities were not spending



LIGHT THE WAY

People walk past lanterns ahead of the Lunar New Year in Qingdao, in China's eastern Shandong province, yesterday. Picture: AFP

their grants. Some of this money was returned to National Treasury, or reallocated to municipalities that did spend their grants.

"The people deserving of that infrastructure are deprived of those services. A number of interventions have been initiated by government.

"Among others, the department of water and sanitation is utilising a section of the Water Services Act to reassign how

budgets are allocated in those areas where there is underexpenditure of grants," he said.

Regarding service delivery, he said the ANC government agreed to urgently reorganise budgets and grants in municipalities to focus on repairs and maintenances.

"The bulk of the grants go towards investing in new infrastructure, but the grant framework does allow for repairs and maintenance," Tau said.

"It is important that this reorganisation happens so we are able to focus on repairs and maintenance – and the process has already started."

Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Sihle Zikalala accused other parties co-governing municipalities of causing instability.

Zikalala said governance had been worsening in municipalities co-governed by the Democratic

Alliance and other parties.

"There is nothing better the opposition has done in [specific] areas but there is a need for the national and provincial governments to intensify work to ensure that services are improved."

Meanwhile, party president Cyril Ramaphosa, in closing remarks, said the lekgotla had concluded on a very positive note.

The ANC's NEC meeting comes less than a month before the party begins rolling out its election manifesto.

It was followed by the party's national lekgotla, which aimed to outline its plan of action for the coming year.

Ramaphosa said the focus of the party's combined work over the past few days indicated a common understanding of the tasks of the moment.

"We have made significant progress in addressing severe challenges and initiated far-reaching policies to address the triple legacy of our past, which is poverty, inequality and unemployment.

"These challenges did not start yesterday, nor did they start 30 years ago. They have been with this country for hundreds of years."

Ramaphosa added that the ANC was aware of forces working to undermine the party's vision of the Freedom Charter and reverse the gains of the freedom won in 1994. "It is important to understand the strategies and the tactics of our opponents so we are better able to defeat them."

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