



Publication: Witness - Main
Title: RAMAPHOSA UNVEILS GOVT`S JOB CREATION PLANS
Publish date: 01 Feb 2024
Page: 1

Reach: 6180
AVE:R 23664.96
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RAMAPHOSA UNVEILS GOVT'S JOB CREATION PLANS

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With unemployment becoming a major social issue in the country, President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday unveiled government's plans to create more job opportunities in coming months.

Speaking during the handover of a bridge to the Embo community in the Mkhambathini Municipality, Ramaphosa said the government would be using its existing Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to tackle unemployment.

"We have agreed with the Public Works Minister that we will focus more on the EPWP.

"We believe that the EPWP can play an important role in the government's job creation efforts," he said.

Introduced in 2004 as one of the key pillars for the government's anti-poverty strategy, the EPWP has so far created thousands of job opportunities across the country.

While the government has the capacity to create jobs for the poor, Ramaphosa said the private sector remained the main job creator.

As part of the government's role of creating conducive conditions for businesses, Ramaphosa cited the preferential trade as part of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) launched in Durban yesterday.

The AFCFTA was part of the government's efforts to boost trade between



President Cyril Ramaphosa (centre), KwaZulu-Natal Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube (left) and Public Works Minister Sihle Zikalala (right) handed over a bridge to the Embo community in KZN's Mkhambathini Municipality yesterday. **PHOTO: GCIS**

countries within the continent.

"What this programme does is to create a market for local businesses. This will result in local businesses being able to export their products to other countries within the African continent. It makes it possible for local businesses to produce more and employ more people in the process," Ramaphosa said.

The bridge in Embo, Ramaphosa said, was part of the government's massive bridge construction programme meant to enable communities to travel from one point to the other easily, while also creating employment for local residents.

Unveiled by Ramaphosa during last year's State of the Nation Address (Sona) the bridge construction initiative — referred to as the Welisizwe rural bridge programme — will see the government build 92 bridges, with 22

of the projects being in KwaZulu-Natal.

"Today, I can confirm that out of the 22 bridges meant for KZN, 11 have already been completed," Ramaphosa said.

Overseen by the SA National Defence Force (SADF) engineering unit, the project utilises local labour.

Public Works Minister Sizwe Zikalala, who accompanied Ramaphosa to Embo for the bridge handover, said the structure will save lives.

"In the past, people used to drown while trying to cross the river. Children were not able to attend school during the rainy season. As government, we have put an end to all those tragedies.

"Today, people from this community are able to visit their friends and relatives on the other side of the river without putting their lives at risk," he said.

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