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Title: State mulls expropriation of land for power transmission
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● Energy & electricity minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa has hinted that the government could expropriate land to put up transmission lines as it seeks to keep up with increased energy generation.

Provinces are fast running out of space to connect more generation capacity to the national electricity grid.

According to a presentation from Ramokgopa's department, made at the Sustainable Infrastructure Development Symposium of South Africa 2025 in Cape Town this week, almost all available grid capacity has been absorbed in the Free State and North West. Available space and capacity have been exhausted for some time in the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Northern Cape, where sunshine is abundant.

South Africa needs 14,000km of new lines and associated infrastructure to be constructed over the next 10 years, at a cost of R440bn, to keep up with new generation.

Ramokgopa told the symposium the government would pursue seven packages along corridors chosen to unlock about 3,200MW of new generation capacity in line with bid window 7 of the integrated resource plan (IRP).

"These must be made state tender projects. So, we don't have to blend private sector investors to go and look for the right of way. We are going to do expropriation, by the way, in some instances, because [some of this involves] privately owned land," Ramokgopa said

"We will do the alignment there. The best, most efficient alignment is in private land... and for purposes of public benefit. Once we have gone through the process, if it comes to expropriation, we will do that. The law permits that, and [public works & infrastructure] minister [Dean] Macpherson will sign it."

Nil compensation

The controversial legislation has come under fire from various quarters. The DA has gone to court to challenge provisions that allow for up to nil compensation when land is expropriated for public good.

US President Donald Trump raised the issue of land expropriation sharply at a meeting with President Cyril Ramaphosa a week ago.



The provinces are fast running out of space for transmission lines. Picture: Supplied

Ramokgopa said the government accepted there was a bigger global conversation between economies around the world regarding the "energy trilemma", which seeks to deal with energy access, security of supply, as well as transitioning to lower fossil fuel use.

"Each and every transition takes into account the domestic nuances of sovereign countries. We have accepted that the issues of energy security are important to the conversation and the ability of sovereign nation states to meet their current and future demand."

Energy transmission was a natural monopoly

Minister of electricity
Kgosientsho
Ramokgopa.



for the South African government, but it would concession it. "We designed a bespoke financing instrument to support the R440bn ticket that is required to invest in the transmission infrastructure, modernisation, and expansion. We need about 14,000km of new lines, 2,300kVa capacity of transformer infrastructure.

"That's the kind of ticket that can't be carried by the sovereign balance sheet, for obvious reasons."

Macpherson said while South Africa faced deep structural constraints in energy, logistics, fiscal pressure, and skills, the government of national unity had reached "a moment where alignment has never been stronger" with a reform-minded administration.

Ramaphosa told the symposium infrastructure spending will become the

fastest-growing line item in South Africa's budget spending, set to exceed R1-trillion over three years.

"To demonstrate our clear intent on having a better focus on infrastructure build, last month Infrastructure South Africa released the second edition of the Construction Book 2024/25, which lists around 250 construction projects, with an estimated value of more than R238bn."

The Construction Book, which details the priority projects championed by the Infrastructure SA platform, outlines public investment in roads, energy, water, logistics and other infrastructure.

The projects that have been selected for 2025 for preparation include Boegoebaai Port and Rail, the 300MW gas-to-power Alpha Project, the Coega Special Economic Zone 100MW solar farm, the Limpopo Energy User Association's regional energy infrastructure storage and distribution programme, the Gauteng Urban Upgrade Programme, and the South African Water Reuse Programme.