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Mpumalanga cautions against 'killing coal' under pressure to go green

Government says 10 Mpumalanga power stations face closure

By **Tshwarelo eseng Mogakane**

The Mpumalanga provincial government has cautioned global leaders against making hasty or miscalculated moves in South Africa's shift to a low-carbon economy, warning that coal-reliant communities must not be undermined in the name of climate action.

Speaking this week at the G20 Sustainable Energy Transition session in Cape Town, public works, roads and transport and infrastructure MEC Thulasizwe Thomo placed Mpumalanga at the centre of the national energy conversation.

He based his remarks on Mpumalanga's role as the heart of South Africa's coal operations and the host of the majority of Eskom's power stations.

"Mpumalanga is richly endowed with coal reserves, producing more than 80% of South Africa's coal. Mining and energy have been contributing over 20% to the provincial GDP and provides employment to more than 7% of the workforce in Mpumalanga. Eleven of Eskom's 13 coal-fired power stations are located in Mpumalanga, generating about 70% of the country's electricity," he said.

Thomo said they had a case study of what the hurried decommissioning of coal-fired power stations could do to communities.

"Mpumalanga's experience with the closure of the Komati Power Station provides crucial insights into the socio-economic challenges that arise when coal-dependent infrastructure shuts down," he said. "The closure resulted in significant job losses, decreased household incomes, and adverse impacts on local businesses and community wellbeing. The 2020 repurposing effort at Komati highlighted the urgent need for just transition strategies that protect workers and communities from the shock of sudden unemployment."

His concerns are based on facts surrounding South Africa's compliance with global pressure to go green.

Addressing the Gert Sibande District Council Chamber in Ermelo last December, electricity and energy minister Dr Kgosisentso Ramokgopa and Eskom CEO Dan Marokane revealed that 10 power stations in Mpumalanga will be decommissioned by 2030. The power stations are located in the Gert Sibande and Nkangala districts, with the Komati Power Station having been the first to close in 2022 due to the imminent end of its operating life.

The power stations set to be decommissioned in the next five years include Camden, Grootvlei, Hendrina, Arnot, Kriel, Tutuka, Duvha, Matla and Kendal. Thomo explained that the province supports the country's commitment under the Paris Agreement, but warned that the move towards renewables must be equitable and inclusive.

"The Nationally Determined Contribution must be seen as much more than a compliance exercise - it should be the



Mpumalanga public works, roads, transport and infrastructure MEC Thulasizwe Thomo says a hurried decommissioning of coal-fired power stations could have adverse effects on communities. / Facebook

blueprint for a new inclusive economic paradigm," he told delegates.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has consistently warned that the just energy transition (JET) must not sacrifice workers' livelihoods or deepen inequality. It has called for worker consultation, job protection, reskilling, and social safeguards.

In response, Mpumalanga has adopted the Green Economy as a "Strategic Growth Sector", aligned with South Africa's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

Reskilling should be a critical cornerstone of South Africa's just energy transition

Thomo said the province is committed to "a just transition that ensures fairness, equity, and participation - protecting workers and communities while opening up new economic opportunities through innovation and green job creation."

To absorb such shocks, the province has proposed the Green Economy Special Economic Zone in Emalahleni, which aims to "foster green investments and create new job opportunities to support displaced workers".

Thomo also outlined Mpumalanga's investment in innovation and climate science, noting the launch of South Africa's first pilot Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) research site in Leandra.


He argued that CCUS technology could "bridge the gap between current energy systems and renewable alternatives", enabling coal infrastructure and workers to be part of the future economy.

To minimise job losses further, Thomo stressed the need for reskilling. "Reskilling should be a critical cornerstone of South Africa's just energy transition,"

he said. "Training initiatives should be closely aligned with the skills required in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, green technologies, sustainable agriculture, and ecotourism."

He said partnerships between government, the private sector, and educational

institutions were key, adding that "dedicated funding, such as allocations from the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan, must be directed towards establishing skills hubs and training centres, particularly in high-impact areas, especially within Mpumalanga".



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INVITATION TO BID

YOU ARE HEREBY INVITED TO BID FOR REQUIREMENTS OF THE EMFULENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY AS OUTLINED BELOW:

Bid Number	Bid Description	Compulsory Briefing Session Date & Time	Bid Document	Closing Date	Contact Person
6/1/1/2025/72	Appointment of a Panel of Service Providers to Source Funding and Implement Infrastructure Projects on a Turnkey basis for Emfuleni Local Municipality for a period of 36 Months.	Municipal Office, Cnr Klaise Havenga Street & Frickie Meyer Boulevard Vanderbijlpark on 09 June 2025 at 10:00am	R1000.00 (Non-refundable)	02 July 2025 at 10:00am	Ms. Pontsho Komani KomaniP@emfuleni.gov.za 083 961 1760 Mr. Thabiso Masikela ThabisoMA@emfuleni.gov.za 082 304 7370

Bidders are required to comply with the minimum requirements as stipulated in the tender document.

Collection of bid documents: Bid documents may be purchased during office hours between 08h15 to 15h15 on Monday to Friday excluding public holidays at Emfuleni Local Municipality Offices, Vanderbijlpark, Cnr Klaise Havenga Street & Frickie Meyer Boulevard, Ground floor.

Availability of bid documents: Bid documents will be available from 06 June 2025 at 10:00am, until the closing date at a cost of R1000.00 which is non-refundable (payable in cash or bank guaranteed cheque) before collection of the bid document.

Returning of bid: Sealed marked bids must be placed in the Bid Box (first floor) at the Municipal Offices, Vanderbijlpark, Cnr Klaise Havenga Street & Frickie Meyer Boulevard, not later than 10h00 on the closing date where after it will be opened in public.

Evaluation and adjudication of bid: bids will be evaluated and adjudicated in terms of Emfuleni Local Municipality Supply Chain Management Policy and Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act No 5 of 2000. The 80/20 and 90/10 in preferential procurement points system as outlined in the bid document will apply.

Mr. A. Ntuli Pr Tech Eng, MSAICE - MUNICIPAL MANAGER