

SA on track to improving healthcare

President Jacob Zuma says the funds allocated to healthcare in the national budget show government's commitment to improving the quality of health services provided to all South Africans.

Speaking on Saturday at the Bongi Ngema-Zuma Foundation sponsors' dinner to promote the fight against diabetes, Zuma said one of government's foremost goals was to build a healthy nation and increase life expectancy.

"Investing R133.6bn, nearly 15% of the total budget, on health this year illustrates the significance we are placing on this national imperative.

"... Our consolidated budget for health and social protection accounts for R268bn in the new financial year 2013/ 14... Over the next three years, close to R430bn will be invested in health," said Zuma.

The President said government aimed to halve TB deaths by 2015, increase testing for the disease and increase the number of citizens receiving treatment for TB as well as HIV and Aids.

According to Medical Research Council studies released last year, life expectancy rose from an average baseline of 56 years in 2009 to 60 years in 2011. Reports also noted significant decreases in infant mortality.

Zuma said work was being done at the African Union level to advance the agenda of prioritising women and child health through the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA).

Zuma said while gains had been made in the fight against HIV and Aids, more focus had to be put on slowing down the pace of silent killers such as diabetes and hypertension.

"That is why we have begun to intensify the focus on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and its associated diseases... Diabetes is also within the broad category of lifestyle diseases, including obesity, which is [increasing alarmingly] in this country," he said.

According to the International Diabetes Federation, nearly 370 million people in the world live with diabetes. Of these, an estimated six million are in South Africa.

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