

Mpumalanga Mirror

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MARCH 2021

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K-WORD AND RACIAL ATTACK LEAVE MAN WITH INJURIES

JABULANE KHUMALO

WHITE RIVER - March marks the commemoration of Human Rights Month after the Sharpeville Massacre 61 years ago.

While the commemoration may be significant in the country's history, Michael Mbuyane relives his ordeal when he was assaulted by a group of white men at a pub adjacent to a franchise eatery in White River.

"I was with some guy and we bought food and played slot machines. While I was playing, I realised there were a lot of white people. I went to play another slot machine that nobody was using. A white man came to me and asked me why am I playing more than one machine?"

"I decided to move and go back to the slot machine I first played. He then came back to ask me why was I thinking that I'm being smart? I responded by asking with regards to what? He said I was playing with two machines instead of one. I further explained to him that I was no longer using the other one. He's response in Afrikaans was that I needed to look around because he's not for people like myself, using the K-word," explains Mbuyane.

While asking what did he did wrong, others laughed at what was transpiring. The owner, who was identified as Shaun, told Mbuyane that he is not welcome at the pub and needed to leave after playing. "I told him to give me the money I put in the machine so that I can immediately leave," he says.

Then the group of people allegedly pushed him outside, took his vehicle keys, wallet and began to assault him.

"When I got to the car, fortunately the rear doors were not locked. I found a wheel spanner, just when I turned around, the men were behind me, attacked while calling me using the K-word. I was lying down on the ground helplessly when they went back inside the pub.

"When I regained strength to get up, I tried to call the police, but it was unsuccessful. Fortunately, I spotted them while they were patrolling the area. I stopped them and explained what happened and I proceeded with them to the pub to speak to the owner.

They came back to me and told me that I should go to the police station and open a case. My reply was that since you're here, why not open a case now? The suspects were right in front of them and they were at the very scene where the assault happened."

The police insisted that he goes to the police station, but Mbuyane had to call home for someone to bring the spare keys. They said they will wait for him to come back from the police station to get his keys and wallet and that after getting his belongings he would then open a case.

"Just when I was about to leave, the police who were at the scene, arrived with dockets to open a case. I told them that I need to go back to the pub so that I can get my keys and wallet. They also said that they will have to open two cases because I assaulted one of them with a spanner which was a lie. I told them that it was fine they can proceed with whatever they wanted to do, but I needed to go fetch my belongings. I also wanted to go and consult a doctor and that I needed the J88 form for the doctor to fill in for my injuries then I can open the case. I came back the following day and opened the case," adds Mbuyane.

However, he pointed out that he was not pleased with how the police handled the case and that they can do better. A media enquiry was sent to the police spokesperson, Brig Leonard Hlathisaid: "The case is at an advanced stage. Statements were taken from all parties concerned.

"Once the investigations are complete, it will be referred to the National Prosecuting Authority before it goes to court."

Economic Freedom Fighters said that brutality and oppression of black people should be exposed and that it was in defiance of Human Rights Mont which is against all forms of discrimination and repression.

The African National Congress said it frowns against the emboldened racism monster, which continues to reverse the gains the country has made since 1994. "We must confront and defeat racism wherever it raises its ugly head."

On the other end, the Democratic Alliance spoke on Human Rights violation by the government's failing vaccine rollout plan to get to the people.



Michael Mbuyane.

SASSA Grant Payment in April 2021



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06 April 2021

This includes any grants linked to these accounts



DISABILITY GRANTS will be paid from
07 April 2021

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08
April
2021

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FAMILY OF SLAIN TEBOGO MABUNDA SEEKS JUSTICE

YOLISWA HLATSHWAYO

MBOMBELA- The family of a woman who was shot dead by her husband, feel unsafe following the case's postponement to October.

Tebogo Mabunda, who was a chief quantity surveyor at the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, was shot multiple times by Ulrich Mabunda outside their home on May 14, 2020.

According to police reports, Mabunda's husband turned the gun on himself and was hospitalized before he appeared in the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court.

Her family's concerns include the safety of the deceased's children who witnessed the shooting incident.

Speaking to Mabunda's mother, Lynette Sibuyi who has not been coping since she was buried, said she had lost hope in the law.

The distraught Sibuyi feels her daughter's case is not considered a priority, but what



Tebogo Mabunda.

hurts her the most is that the person who murdered her is roaming free.

"We were informed that the case will be transferred to the High Court, but we did not expect him to be granted bail after he killed my child so ruthlessly right in front of her kids. It's a difficult time for all of us and I need some kind of closure."

She recalled moments when the children asked her about the shooting, which she said breaks her heart as it shows that they think about what took place on the day.

"It's sad that they ask me how I manage to be strong after losing their mother. One day one of them asked me what I would do if someone shot me. One can imagine what goes through their minds," said a teary

Sibuyi.

She said although a jail term won't bring back her child, it would give her peace knowing that the children will be safe living without fear.

National Prosecuting Authority spokesperson, Monica Nyuswa confirmed that the case has been transferred to the High Court for trial.

"He is expected to appear from October 4 to 15," said Nyuswa.

ANC's provincial conference will eventually sit in May

BONGANI HLATSHWAYO

MBOMBELA – The African National Congress's provincial will eventually be held on 14-16 May 2021 after being pronounced and postponed on numerous occasions since 2018.

This brings about an opportunity for the province to elect a new and entirely leadership after there's been a grappling of power to fill the void left by the departure of Deputy President, David Mabuza, who was then the provincial chairperson and Violet Siwela, the deputy chairperson who is currently in the National Executive Council (NEC).

According to provincial spokesperson, Sasekani Manzini, "Timelines to the conference were also revised and adopted by the PEC that, the Provincial Conference will take place from the 14-16 May 2021. The decision to extend the membership cut-off date to 5 March 2021 immediately, nullifies all the BGMs convened before the revised cut-off date.

"However, successful BBGMs are not affected by the revised membership cut-off date. Branches that have conducted BBGMs and only discovered later that the scan did not recognise the quorum of the meeting, the PEC should convert the elected BEC into the BTTs. The PEC

also resolved to deal with all violent incidents and disruptions during the previous BBGMs and BGMs before commencing with all other programmes," she said.

This transpired after the Provincial Executive Council (PEC) held its ordinary meeting on 15 March 2021 virtually to discuss various organisational issues.

The meeting also discussed the upcoming by-elections which will be contested on the 21st April and 19th May 2021. The contestation will start at Ward 11 Lekwasubregion on the 21st April 2021 and then proceed with Ward 21 Bushbuckridge, Ward 33 eMalahleni and Ward 22 Steve Tshwetesubregions on the 19th May 2021.

"The PEC encourages all structures of the ANC and the Alliance to conduct themselves as genuine revolutionaries who are beyond reproach as they undergo processes to elect ward councillors in the affected wards and intensify our program of engaging communities in these wards.

"The meeting also discussed the decision of the National Command Council following their assessment made of infections and decided to return the country back to Alert level 1 and open up the economy and allow economic, political and social activities to take place under strict adjusted regulations of 100 people indoors and 250 people outdoors. This decision immediately allows for political gatherings to take place and the PEC resolved to urgently resuscitate preparations towards convening the 13th Provincial Conference.

"The ANC affirmed the PEC resolution on the implementation of the National Dispute Resolution Committee on all Branches affected by the realignment process. The meeting also resolved to align branches that were affected by the demarcation process starting from the 19th March 2021. We hope this process will be seamless and done in a manner which respects the constitutional prescripts of the ANC.

"The ANC was pleased with the progress on the preparations towards the National General Council (NGC), and confirmed receipt of regional training programmes for the rolling out of NGC Discussion papers in preparation for the NGC.

"The ANC, therefore, calls on all its structures, in particular, branches to convene meetings to discuss NGC Papers and submit their inputs for consolidation. These meetings must be convened in compliance with COVID-19 Alert Level 1 regulations," she concluded.

All eyes will be focussed on who will emerge as the eventual leaders of the province. Will it be the much pouted Focus purportedly led by Mandla Ndlovu, Muzi Chirwa, Lindiwe Ntshahintshali or will it be Ngci, purportedly led by Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, but lately jumped onto the focus wagon with an alleged deal to keep her as female premier, while Mandla Ndlovu holds on to being the provincial chairperson.

Be that as it may, factionalism has been condemned in the ANC, but surely, at the end of the day, the factions need to find commonality in unity and never divide the communities they are meant to serve.

Time will tell eventually in May.

Mpumalanga Mirror

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY OMBUD PROMOTES GOOD GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE DEFENCE FORCE



Lieutenant General (Ret)
Vusumuzi R. Masondo

The Office of the Military Ombud is mandated by the Military Ombud Act 4, of 2012, in section 4 (1) (d) to investigate complaints lodged in writing by current or former members of the SANDF concerning their conditions of service.

We are also mandated to promote the fundamental rights of soldiers.

The Office investigates complaints by members of the public concerning the official conduct of a soldier on duty. As such, members of the public have 90 days to lodge a complaint with the Office, from the date the incident occurred.

We are committed to serve independently and impartially. We do not represent the complainant, the Department of Defence and Military Veterans or any other government authority.

Our investigations are conducted in a fair and objective manner to ensure an accountable and transparent governance.

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OVERALL FRIDAY OPERATION RESTORES POLICE DIGNITY

BONGANI HLATSHWAYO

ERMELO - It's a Friday 19 March when I joined "crime buster" MEC Vusi Shongwe on a crime blitz to eradicate crime completely throughout the province - in order to restore police's dignity in society.

The enigmatic Shongwe, had roped in the South African Police Services (SAPS), TIU, TRT and Traffic department on an operation to cleanse this small town infested with serious crime involving gangsterism, murder, rape, theft and many other minor crimes that's rendered this part of the province an uninhabitable, to say the least.

Shongwe indicated to the police that he will fight their battle until it's endorsed by the provincial government. "As we're embarking on this operation, I want to assure you that police officers are entitled to overtime pay as now we'll be embarking on this operation from 18.00 until 02.00.

It's good that your leaders are here, too and management staff from my department are also here, too.

"We'll also have to shuffle around your respective units the TIU and TRT to be a unified force and receive additional training in that respect. We've got a mammoth task ahead of us with the rampant crime that exists in all areas throughout the province.

"I'm glad I'm back in the hot seat to fight crime head-on. Ermelo was my starting point and when I proceed, I expect the Ermelo cluster to continue with those Overall Friday operations here, so do I expect the same from all respective town clusters throughout the province to adopt Overall Friday Operation as one of the main tactics of fighting crime in the province," explained Shongwe.

The operation began at the Ermelo Dam where public drinking is always rife. It was noted that police had earlier around 16.00 warned the people that there would be a raid around 18.00, but they stubbornly stayed on. There was an arrest for illegal possession of firearm found in the boot of a new vehicle with no number plates, but bearing a license disk. Drunken driving tickets were also issued to some drivers who were stubborn and confrontational towards the officers.

Next the operation took us to raiding taverns in and around the taxi rank where it was discovered that they didn't conform to the Covid-19 regulations of social distancing, as they were overcrowded with no ventilation in most of them, especially the taxi rank ones, Extension 33, Wesselton and those affluent ones like Nesto found in town.

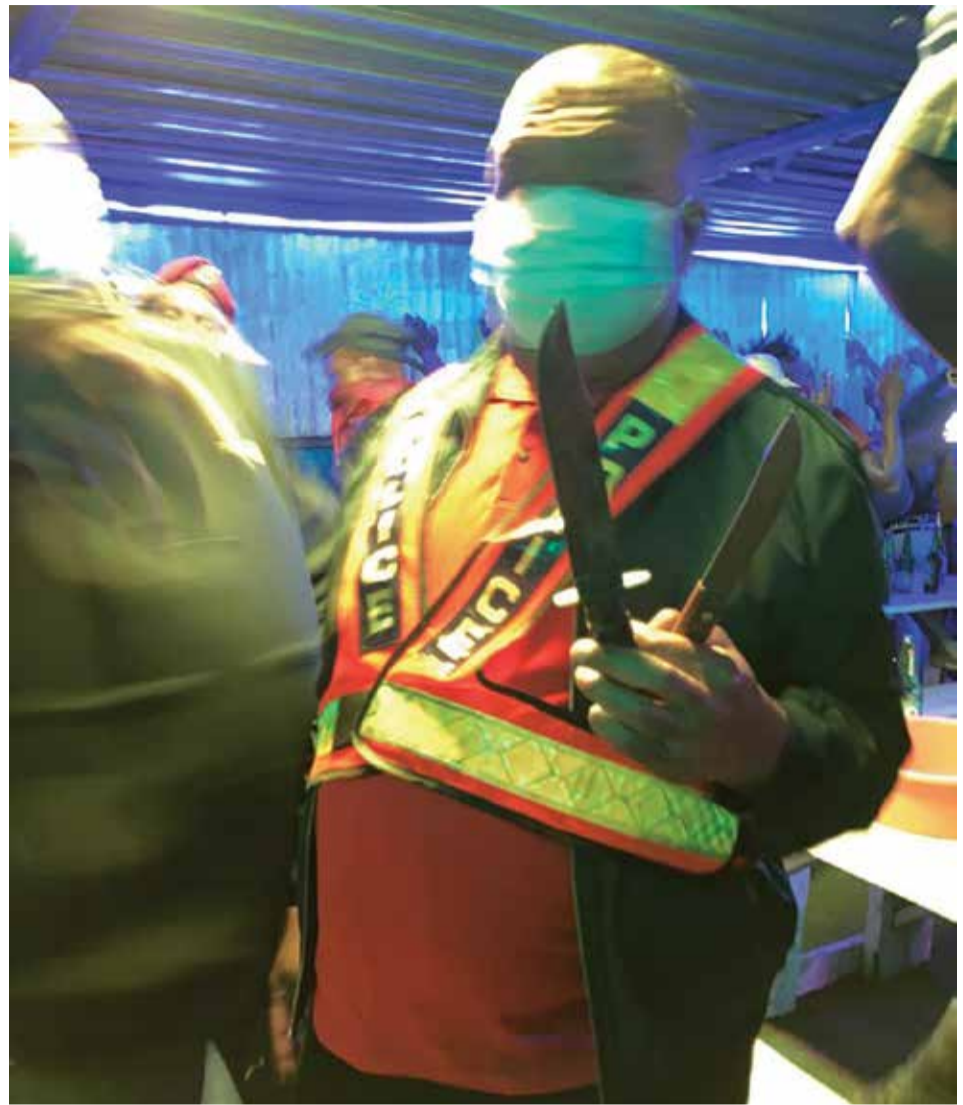
22.00 we took a little break to eat and take a breather and completed our full round until our last call up to a gangster related incident, whereby, a victim was being attacked by other gang members at the Ermelo Hospital where we rushed to quell the situation.

"I'm glad we had such a successful operation," Shongwe reiterated to the police officers during a.....at around 01.40.

"My earnest request to your leadership is to keep the momentum going continuously every week. That way, we'll conquer the criminals, reduce the crime statistics in the province and make our people's lives joyful once whereby they can walk around in a crime free environment.

"This is my conviction that I will fight crime head-on and rebuild my department in all respects and restore the dignity of our police in society," he concluded.

Around 02.00 I lay my head on my hotel pillow and called it a day.



MEC Vusi Shongwe brandishing knives confiscated from tavern patrons.



A female brandishing a toy gun she was found in possession of.



Hands in the air as the police search the patrons.



MPUMALANGA
ECONOMIC REGULATOR

Hi, I'm Nontokozo Ngwenya Miss Mpumalanga 2020, the ambassador for the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator.

I'm excited to journey with the MER in raising awareness and curbing irresponsible gambling, liquor consumption and trade in our communities.

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Responsible drinking means you never have to feel sorry for what has happened while you were drinking. If you have an alcohol addiction and you are looking for help, contact SANCA on 011 892 3829.

I wish you all a happy Easter weekend.

Remember to wear your mask whenever in public, covering your nose and mouth. Help keep others safe around you!

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“TAKE HARSH ACTION AGAINST CENTRE MANAGER” - MEC THANDI SHONGWE

MBOMBELA - MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Thandi Shongwe has called upon the management of Boulders Shopping Centre in Johannesburg to take harsh action against their manager for the ill-treatment of a Ndebele activist at the shopping centre.

Shongwe has condemned

the inhumane treatment of Ndebele cultural activist, Thando Mahlangu at Boulders Shopping Centre in Johannesburg earlier in the week.

Mahlangu was treated badly and in an inhumane manner for wearing traditional attire at the shopping centre to an extent that he was asked to leave its

premises.

“What happened to Thando Mahlangu is totally unacceptable and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. As a Department, which is responsible for matters of culture and heritage, we were disgusted by the video footage on social media in which Mahlangu’s rights were violated. 27 years into democracy and during Human Rights Month, we expect South Africans to respect and tolerate one another,” says Shongwe.

She added that the incident has highlighted the need to intensify efforts to promote cultural tolerance in society and to educate the public about the Bill of Rights, which protects various cultures.

“I want to emphasize that people have a right to practice their own culture and observe their heritage without fear and victimization. We must all work together to promote and achieve social cohesion and national unity. This process begins when we practice cultural tolerance with one another.

“The Department calls upon the Centre Management to take harsh actions against the manager who violated Mahlangu’s rights as no one has a right to undermine and look down on other people’s culture,” she concluded.



Thandi Shongwe.



Meeting between DARDLEA, UMP and ARC

Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs MEC Mr Mandla Msibi led a delegation of Senior managers during a visit to the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) today, which was aimed at strengthening relations between the two institutions. MEC Msibi says agriculture is key to sustainable development and food security, and it is therefore important to elevate the level of research and innovation, including collaborating in all programmes with the UMP, so that farmers, especially women and the youth, benefit from the collaboration.

MEC Msibi and UMP Vice Chancellor Professor Thoko Mayekiso agreed that the existing MOU should be taken to the

next level of practicality, to also benefit students with their practicals in restituted farms, innovation & research, including environment initiatives.

Later in the day MEC Msibi and his delegation visited the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) in Mbombela, to emphasize the importance of collaboration with the Department in helping farmers with research in ensuring pest-free zones, and animal health.

At the ARC, MEC also had an opportunity to append his signature in one very old attendance register meant for VIP visiting the 95-year-old institution. It is reported that Queen Elizabeth also attached her signature during her visit to the ARC in yesteryears.

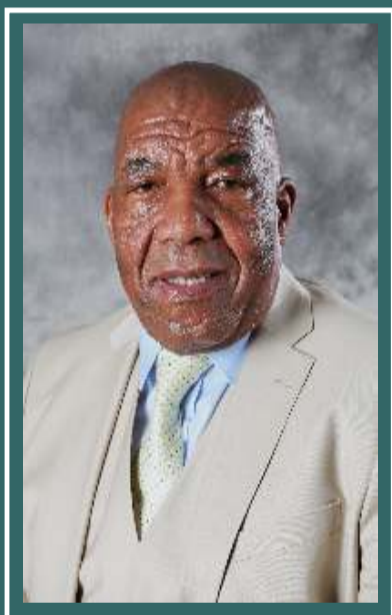
SEKWANELE BOPHA!

It is that time of the year again where many people will travel for holiday purposes. We are therefore calling on everyone who will be travelling during these Easter Holidays and beyond to play their role in road safety by among others adhering to road traffic regulations and exercising caution when using the road.

- Motorists are urged to check the roadworthiness of their vehicles before undertaking trips,
- Rest every 200 kilometres or 2 hours when driving long distances,
- Not to use cell phones while driving, Do not drink and drive, Do not speed excessively,
- Do not overload vehicles, Pedestrians must wear visible clothes at night and
- Always cross the road at designated pedestrian crossings.

Remember to observe all COVID-19 Health Protocol and Regulations.

- Keep social distancing
- Wash your hands, sanitize on regular basis, wear your mask and avoid crowded places.



MEC
Vusi Shongwe





Speaker of the legislature, Makhosazana Masilela and her Deputy speaker, JJ Skhosana.

FEMALES RULE THE ROOST AT THE LEGISLATURE

BONGANI HLATSHWAYO

MBOMBELA - The African National Congress has successfully bestowed its female candidates with the position of being the Mpumalanga Legislature speakers three times in a row.

It was ThandiShongwe who was followed by BusisiweShiba and on 2 March, 2021, MakhosazanaMasilela was elected unopposed. The Deputy Speaker, Cde James Skhosana was also elected unopposed, too.

This was subsequent to vacancies created due to the resignation of former Speaker BusisiweShiba and Deputy Speaker VusiMkhatshwa, hence the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature convened a Sitting to elect the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker in terms of Section 111 (1) of the Constitution.

Judge President MF Legodi as designated by the Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa, MogoengMogoeng in terms of section 111(2) of the Constitution presided over the election of the speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature.

In her maiden acceptance speech, Masilela said: "We commit to hit the ground running and take the work of the legislature even to greater heights. As of our own, we undertook to be loyal to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and serve our people with honour, dignity and honesty.

"In this instance, we commit to ensure that the Legislature achieves its mandate of being a theatre of oversight. As the legislative arm of the State, we commit to act with greater determination to ensure an accountable and responsive and caring government that shall realise its manifesto realities to create jobs and rid it of poverty and grow South Africa.

"As we also have a social responsibility to defeat the coronavirus pandemic, we must save lives and defeat it. The end is in sight in the light of the development of vaccinations. Some of our immediate tasks is to strengthen and restore confidence in our democratic institutions in the eyes of our people.

"As we march towards the 2021 local government elections, this shall require some urgency and commitment in the fight to dismantling the legacy of apartheid and eradicate unemployment, poverty and inequalities.

"In line with the Freedom Charter: "The people shall govern," we commit this Legislature to be an activist parliament, and a reliable tool to meet the interests and aspirations of our people. We shall act to energise our programmes and activities so that promises made to our people, remain centre stage.

"I, therefore, look forward to constructive and productive engagements and co-operation amongst all Members of the Legislature from all political parties. As presiding officers, we promise to execute our constitutional responsibilities without fear or favour.

"In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to thank the ANC for the confidence shown in me to serve our people as Speaker. I further thank Honourable Members for electing me in this position. I trust that together we shall respond to what history has bestowed unto us," she concluded.

SpeakerMakhosazanaMasilela is not new to the work of the Legislature, she served on various structures. She was the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlement, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and she was also the Deputy Chief Whip of the majority party (ANC) in the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature.

Tried and tested new mayor for Steve Tshwete municipality

BONGANI HLATSHWAYO

MIDDELBURG – A New executive mayor has taken over the reigns at Steve Tshwete Local Municipality after the untimely death of late executive mayor, Cllr BagudiTsietsiTolo – the new man on the block, has promised to sweep cleaner as they are headed towards the forthcoming local government elections between August and November this year.

Cllr Diphala Joseph Motsepe, the new executive mayor, is the tried and tested cadre of the liberation movement, the ANC, and a negotiator of note who rose to the Municipal environment in 2011 after his community requested him to stand in as a Councillor.

In his inaugural address, he said: "It's quite exciting to be given such a mammoth task, but it's not easy to fill in the shoes of the previous executive council of this municipality.

"I've been nominated by the movement of the people, the African National Congress to steer the ship, not to drown it into the sea, but direct it towards the right direction.

"We should pride ourselves as a municipality that take over the ship that has an 80 percent success rate in terms of service delivery. The people have given us one mandate, and that is to deliver services to them. I want to commit that all outstanding promises that have been made this financial year, will definitely be delivered by my executive and administration this year.

"95 percent of the current financial

year's budget will be spent accordingly. I want to take back this municipality back to its glorious days of being counted among the best in the country. Currently, we're not yet at that point.

"What we're saying right now, is that we're going to give work to responsible officials who will not give out instructions remotely out there, but they will personally be involved with all structures to ensure it's done perfectly and delivered unto the people.

"Together, we will do the oversight work and we will also fight corruption within our ranks. We will also allow criticism, but not unnecessary criticism even from opposition parties.

"We should respect the voters out there as we approach the local government elections. What we promise to do for our communities must always be abided to at all costs. We should also be open to advices that will take this municipality forward.

"The country has under attack from the coronavirus pandemic which has been devastating. We've been through the first and second wave already. As we approach the third wave, which is likely, we are armed with physical knowledge of how to deal with the pandemic.

"I request all citizens of our municipality to always remember the basic principles: that we have to wear our face masks in public always; that we have to keep our social distance at least 1.5 metres apart always; that we wash our hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least

20 seconds," he stated.

He brings a wealth of experience in that the very year in 2011, he was appointed member of the Mayoral Committee and again in 2016 after the Local Government Elections. Besides his experience and vast political history, his credentials include negotiating with the then Highveld Regional Municipality (Nkangala District Municipality) for the reconnection of electricity and water in Mhluzi after the Municipality had discontinued their services, leaving the township in darkness and waterless for days.

In the early 1980s, Cllr Motsepe formed part of a group that started Civic Movements, which they served alongside other progressive structures such as the UDF, since the ANC was still in exile.

"We ran those Civic organisations with the mandate that we were serving the community, whilst at the same time, we were pushing the political agenda. In the early 1990s, our Civic Movement received and gained momentum.

"I remember we had a number of activities that prevented the community from doing certain things such as stay-downs and revolting against the proposed 99-year property leases," recalls Motsepe.

Motsepe says they inculcated the culture of paying for services back in the 1990s and the black communities excelled in this regard.

He was born in Mhluzi's Maseko Street in 1954. Motsepe started his educational at Thushanang Primary School. After completing his primary education, he



Steve Tshwete Local municipality's executive mayor, Cllr Diphale Joseph Motsepe.

went on to work for a number of private companies where he became politically conscious. In 2020 he attended private studies with the OR Tambo Business School, he obtained the following modules: History of South Africa and the ANC Module 1, Building the ANC Organisation Module 2, Government Module 3, Economic Development Module 4.

"In 1975 I attempted to go to exile, but due to the influence of my parent, I decided against it. I remember my father saying to me that if we all go to exile, who will stay behind. Therefore, I took it upon myself to stay and fought against the oppression head-on. I soon found myself in the middle of the 1976 uprisings," recalls Motsepe as he shared his political history.

THE CLOCK IS TICKING TO END TB AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MBOMBELA - The Deputy President David Mabuza addressed the World TB Day commemoration at Ehlanzeni District Municipality on March 24.

Under the theme, The Clock is Ticking, he was joined by the premier, Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, Health minister Dr Zweli Mkhize and Deputy Chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council, Steve Letsike.

The Deputy President said the commemoration was no like other in the recent past. He admitted in his address that the national lockdown and restrictions of movement contributed to the disruption of access to health services and the reduction in the number of TB detections as patient contact and tracing became difficult during lockdown periods.

"Today, we are reminded, as citizens of the world, that we have to act with a sense of urgency in pursuit of TB targets advocated in the Sustainable Development Goals, the World Health Organisation End TB Strategy, and the 2018 Political Declaration of the UN Meeting on TB. While challenges of Covid-19 will persist in the foreseeable future, we are encouraged by progress made in the fight against TB, we need to consolidate and build on these achievements to enhance equitable access to quality and timely diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care," he said.

A call was made to South Africans to rally behind the national efforts to end TB and scale up the national response through urgently finding, initiating and retaining TB patients in treatment and care.

"We should also work hard to regain



those who have fallen by the wayside. Each and every one of us has a role to play in the fight to end TB."

A TB HealthCheck mobile application that will allow individuals to screen for TB risk and symptoms in order to reduce transmissions was recently launched. The mobile application is designed to make self-screening easy and efficient, while also identifying individuals who need to get tested. It refers those who require a test to public health facilities for a free TB test. The system is integrated into HealthCheck, which is the Department of Health's Covid-19 digital self-assessment tool.



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[DISABILITY GRANTS

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is a Disability Grant?	In terms of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, a Disability Grant (DG) is a grant given to citizens who are unable to work as a result of their disability or medical condition (physical or mental). A DG is not an unemployment grant that is, it cannot be awarded on social grounds for citizens who are unable to find employment.
What is a Care Dependency Grant?	In terms of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, a Care Dependency Grant (CDG) is a grant given to a parent, primary care-giver or foster parent in respect of a care dependent child. The child that should be below the age of 18 who requires and receives permanent care due to his or her physical or mental disability.
Who qualifies for a Disability Grant?	The applicant must be a South African citizen/permanent resident or refugee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be a resident in South Africa; • Must be 18 to 59 years of age; • Must submit a Medical / Assessment report confirming disability; • Must undergo a Medical Assessment at a designated institution and apply within 3 months of such an Assessment; • Applicant and spouse must meet the requirements of the Means Test; • Must not be maintained or cared for at a State Institution; • Must not be in receipt of another social grant in respect of himself or herself; • Must submit a 13 digit barcoded identity document or the smart ID card
A Disability Grant may be awarded either as a permanent grant, which may or may not be subject to a Medical Review after a certain period of time or for a temporary period not less than 6 months.	
What does this mean?	This means that permanent DGs are awarded for conditions which impact on the applicant's ability to work for a period longer than 12 months. Where the disability or medical condition is likely to improve with treatment or other interventions, the grant may be awarded for a temporary period of between 6 and 12 months. After this time, the grant lapses, in accordance with the conditions set in the Social Assistance Act, 2004. If on lapsing of the grant, the citizen is still unable to be employed as a result of the disability or medical condition, he/she needs to re-apply for the DG. This re-application requires a new Medical Assessment, which will confirm whether the condition does warrant a grant.

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Health worker taking the vaccine.



MEC for Health, Sasekani Manzini greeting the new normal.

PROVINCE IS IN PREPARATION FOR FIGHTING THE THIRD WAVE

In preparation to fight against a possible third wave of Covid-19 surge. The Mpumalanga Department of Health MEC, Sasekani Manzini officially launched the vaccination site at Shongwe Hospital in Nkomazi Local Municipality. The site will administer vaccination for Health workers in hospitals, clinics and Community Health Centres around Nkomazi Municipality to speed up the process of safeguarding the lives of frontline health workers.

On 19 February, the province received 3640 COVID-19 Vaccines and an official launch for Phase 1 was done at Rob Ferreira Hospital by the Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane.

Phase 1 is an early access vaccination programme for healthcare workers. Since then, the programme has been expanded to an additional four sites which gives a total of 6 vaccination sites in the province (Rob Ferreira, Witbank, Mapulaneng, Ermelo, Nelspruit Mediclinic and Life Cosmos hospitals). As of 07 March, the province received a total of 8184 COVID-19 vaccines from National Department of Health.

So far, a total of 7127 health care workers have been vaccinated in the province and the programme is still ongoing. A total of 14 healthcare workers reported to have experienced mild adverse event following immunisation. All healthcare workers who reported to have experienced adverse events were managed on site and followed up and they are currently well.

We expressed our gratitude in the way the health care workers around the province have positively welcomed the vaccination program and we indicated that it means health care workers understand the need of having at least 67% of our population being vaccinated in order for us to be able to interrupt the spread of the virus and to build population immunity. We went on to encourage all members of the communities to also welcome the programme as it will soon be rolled out to communities in planned phases.

As of March 7, Mpumalanga Province reported 71 907 positive COVID-19 cases. Overall, a decrease in COVID-19 cases have been observed since the peak of the

second wave in epidemiological week two, eight and nine. There was 13% decrease. A daily average of 119 cases were recorded for epidemiological week nine. The highest reported number of new cases in week nine occurred on 06 March 2021, with 191 cases being reported.

Over 69 600 patients have recovered from COVID-19 in the province with 1 007 active cases still to recover. Regrettably, 1 278 COVID-19 deaths have been reported in the province. Ehlanzeni District accounts for the majority of confirmed COVID-19 cases, with the District contributing 42% to all of the confirmed cases. Ehlanzeni has 469 active cases. Sub-districts with the highest number of active cases were, City of Mbombela, Govan Mbeki and Steve Tshwete.

In the month of February, there was a decrease of 17.3% on new COVID-19 cases were recorded. All three districts recorded a decrease in cases. Currently the province is on a downward trajectory on new COVID-19 recorded cases.

In March, Mpumalanga province recorded 1 278 COVID-19 related deaths. The majority of deaths were recorded in Gert Sibande followed by Nkangala. Sub-districts that recorded the highest number of deaths were, Emalahleni, City of Mbombela, Bushbuckridge and Steve Tshwete. Males accounted for the majority of deaths between the ages of 50-59.

Most patients who died had comorbidities recorded. Hypertension was frequently reported followed by diabetes. Individuals at high risk of severe COVID-19 disease and mortality, such as those with underlying co-morbidities and the elderly, were encouraged to remain vigilant and practice prevention methods at all times.

Screening and testing are still key in identifying positive cases and ensuring that we interrupt the spread of the virus among communities. Health Care workers are key in the fight against the spread and management of COVID-19; hence their health status is of vital importance to the Department. We voiced out concerns on the number of Health Care Workers who are being infected by COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the MEC made an



Health worker being prepared for vaccination.

unannounced oversight visit to Rob Ferreira Hospital. This is after the Democratic Alliance released a statement alleging that there was no toilet maintenance in the maternity ward, there was dirty linen, pillows, sheets and overcrowding. MEC Manzini addressed the allegations. "I have have done a walk about at the hospital and even spoke to some of the patients in the maternity

ward and none of them expressed any dissatisfaction about the service rendered by the maternity ward. It is quiet wrong for the DA to mislead our people, giving them a wrong impression about the hospital. As a Department we are fully committed in giving our people a decent service hence the live of each and every patient is very important to us including that of pregnant women and their babies."



Steve Tshwete
Local Municipality

STEVE TSHWETE IS LIVING

Water may be a scarce commodity in many local municipalities across the country, but the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality has ensured that its residents have access to clean water through its roll-out of its 2020/21 financial year projects. This was proven during a three-day campaign in commemoration of National Water Week under the theme; "Valuing Water" from 15 to 22 March that the Executive Mayor, Cllr Diphala Joseph Mot-sepe embarked on. Municipal Manager his entourage, infrastructure MMC, Johannes Mashiyane and the MMC, Johannes Mashiyane technical team were all out to showcase service delivery excellence as a direct positive response to communities'.



Executive Mayor, Cllr Diphala Joseph Motsepe.

MIDDELBURG AND MHLUZI VISITS

Various water and sanitation projects were visited and inspected by the Executive Mayor and his delegation, in accompaniment of local residents in the different places that they visited.

The first stop was at the Boskrans Waste Water Treatment Plant and the Graspan Reservoir where old sewer pipes were replaced as it caused a stench that was hovering in nearby areas.

This was due to the dysfunctional aerators that were constantly breaking and

needed repairing regularly.

The municipality replaced 12 of them, which, in turn, resolved the stench issue that bothered the community. There was also refurbishment of six water pumps and Secondary Sedimentation Tanks that were replaced to minimize the overflow.

The purpose was also to address old infrastructure and the low water pressure in Mhluzi Extension five, six, seven and Middelburg Extension 23. This is where the replacement of asbestos water pipes with PVC pipes and the construction of an elevated water tank are almost complete.



One of the workers at his workshop at the industrial sites the municipality allocated for businesses.



New pipes installed at the Boskrans Water Treatment Plant.



Operating system of the plant.



New aerators installed and the stench is no longer there.

WHAT WAS THE PEOPLE'S REACTION TO THE INSPECTION TOUR?

Residents, Prince Maseko and Thulani Mahlangu of Ward 23 said: "The stench was unpleasant. All people in the community were puzzled about the developments and the foul air we breathed. However, we knew it was related to the sewer because of the type of smell it emitted.

"There was nothing we could do. We had to cook under those circumstances. The difficult part was the fact that the stench was practically everywhere, from the township to town. We had to bear with it until the municipality resolved the issue. The stench is finally gone and things got back to normal. I'm glad that the matter was addressed urgently for everyone's sake," said Maseko. Meanwhile, Mahlangu pointed out that residents should always come first and that the municipality should always strive to be efficient in delivering services.



Pictured is an old aerator that was removed that caused the stench residents were complaining of.



Workers on construction of a 15 mega litre reservoir at the Graspan water project.

UP TO PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS!

HENDRINA AND KWAZAMOKUHLE VISITS

The second inspection was at Bosmaanslaagte Farm in Hendrina where a borehole and a communal tap were installed after years of the area not having water. Ward committee member, Johannes Magagula said they're pleased with the municipality's efforts in providing clean water, flushing toilets and a functioning borehole that provides sufficient water supply to the community.

The inspection proceeded to the Hendrina Optimum Coal Water Reclamation Plant and Kwazamokuhle Reservoir led by Assistant Director for Rural Water, Swelihle Mbatha. He said the project was worth R11 million for a new 2.9m pipeline that runs from the plant to the Kwazamokuhle reservoir. This includes a 355mm bulk line meant to increase the capacity due to population growth. This plant will also supply the new extension nine and 11 sites. The municipality continues to fight against Covid-19 by ensuring efficient water is provided to communities.

PEOPLE'S VIEWS

Ward Committee member, Johannes Magagula said: "We're not short of water even in the rainy season. Before this intervention by the municipality, the water tanker couldn't come due to muddy road. It's different now, we're able to access water from the borehole. During the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the municipality made sure we receive enough water 24-hours."



Elevated reservoir at the Optimum Coal Water Reclamation Plant.



Ward Committee Member, Johannes Magagula at the Bosmanslaagte Farm.



Refurbished pipes inside the plant at Optimum Coal Water Reclamation Plant.



Community member, Liah Malunga fills up her container from a tap installed by the municipality.



Mayor stands poses with community members close to the newly built elevated reservoir at Somaphepha Village.

RURAL AREAS AND AGRI-VILLAGE VISITS

The Executive Mayor concluded his visit at Somaphepha Village where he inspected the newly constructed elevated water tank. It was explained that the project's completion delayed due to the lockdown last year, however, the mayor assured the community that water scarcity in the area is now an issue of the past. He also promised to host a mayoral outreach at the village soon.

PEOPLE'S VIEWS

Resident, Elizabeth Msiza said: "This is a relief for all of us because we would get water far from our homes. We no longer walk long distances and that makes us happy. We are satisfied with the work the municipality's work."



Mayor addressing the community members.



Newly constructed elevated reservoir.



The old water tank supplied the community with water.



Small reservoir at the Sikhululwe Village.

OVER VIEW BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR

"This week marked the National Water Week which is commemorated annually. In 1993, the United Nations designated 22 March as World Water Day with the focus on the importance of fresh water, to also raise awareness of the country's most limited resources.

"The UN's sustainable development goal number six, declared the provision of water and sanitation, as well as hand sanitation as a universal priority and must be realised by 2030. This year's theme reinforces centrality in the entente value chain.

"In 2017, Cape Town nearly became the first African City to run out of water. During the month of December 2019, residents of Mhluzi were without water for almost five days after water outages. The Graspan Reservoir had aged infrastructure which caused water outages.

"This incident showed us how vulnerable our people are to unplanned water shortages. We, therefore, use the water week to raise awareness on the use, management, conservation and protection of our water resources.

"We continue shaping the new developmental agenda through our programme and water infrastructure projects. Water management and allocation must not be a separate goal, but as an essential vehicle for developmental of health.

PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTION TO COVID-19

MMC Johannes Matshiane has emphasised on the public-private sector partnership.

This follows various mines that donated Personal Protective Equipment and Jojo tanks to communities in the fight against Covid-19. He said access to water is a basic right and its protected in section 27 of the constitution.

"Everyone has a right to clean water. It is a human right and monitored annually by the South African Human Rights Council," he said.

Mafube and Goedekop Coal Mines, Anglo American mine and its foundation made a collaborative contribution to the communities within the municipality. With the government's goal to grow South Africa together, the state cannot execute the community response plan alone.

Through the forged partnerships the municipality has made, this was a good course for communities to continue washing their hands to minimise the spread of Covid-19. Part of the donations was a water tanker to ensure that the all communities had enough water to to fight the pandemic.



MMC Johannes Matshiane.

ANC'S EXTRAORDINARY ELECTION PLAN TO LURE

**BONGANI HLATSHWAYO AND
JABULANEKHUMALO**

This is an exclusive interview with the ANC's provincial election head, MandlaMsibi who was recently appointed as the MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA), whose sole responsibility is to turn the tables around and create a people-driven organisation, its members, including the man on the ground to fully adhere to the founding principles of the African National Congress to liberate and rule this country on open-ended democratic principles - that's the task bestowed on the team led by MandlaMsibi.

PIENAAR - One could tell by the number of people that were milling around the yard of MandlaMsibi in the heart of his home-town township-village, whatever you refer Pienaar to, it's his home and stronghold, a melting pot for change in the manner in which things are done and converting to the 'new normal' of executing justice unto the people by delivery services as promised and conforming to the mandate of the organization.

Our task is simple: To seek answers to the following questions: "What is the ANC's election plan that will be executed in order to place itself in a comfortable position to be able to lure back the dwindling numbers at polling stations as reflected in the past local, provincial and national elections?"

The ever ready MandlaMsibi was at hand to spontaneously respond thus: "As you know that we've been selected by the ANC to lead the elections in the province, but we are led nationally under FikileMbalula, we are also part of that election team.

"We are going to present budget and everything for the upcoming by-elections for the aborted by-elections in Bushbuckridge and are due to be held on 23 March. We'll be presenting our state of readiness and the budget, generally, the national elections office of the ANC has adopted an elections strategy, it's simple, it's people-driven.

"Type of structures include the Provincial Election Team (PET) which includes all your alliance structures. I'm appointed to manage and run the elections provincially. We've got Regional Election Teams (RETs) from national, they also include the alliance because in their RET. You go down to local municipalities where you find Local Election Teams (LETs) where you find 17 of them representing all the local municipalities.

"We've got three RETs which represent the three District Municipalities of Ehlanzeni, GertSibande and Nkangala, while the 17 LETs represent the 17 local municipalities. Regional secretaries of the ANC are the regional co-ordinators, then we are tasked to appoint comrades who are diligent to work within these structures.

"For example, Jester Sidell is the RET co-ordinator for Mbombela, she's the boss. In elections, we don't debate, we discuss and issue instructions. In branches, we've got Branch Executive Committees (BECs) of the ANC which are incorporated into election work. There's BECs which are only ANC structures and BETs include alliance structures. It's the same format nationally, provincially and locally, too.

"Because of Covid-19, we had difficulties because gatherings were prohibited, so for a very long time we've not been meeting physically, but conducting virtual meetings. We developed a programme co-ordinated by NomvulaMokonyane and we co-ordinated with all our structures. Our structures are reporting to what we call ANC Cloud, we've got a system where we report all activities.



"During Covid-19, branches of the ANC were reporting challenges through this system, that's why we know that in the stimulus fund where people were receiving the relief fund of R350, I will know a problem in Siyabuswa Post Office. For an example, here at Pienaar Post Office, there were people soliciting bribes to push them to the front of the queue. We dealt with those issues.

"How did we interface with government as the elections structures? The PET has what we call a service sub-committee where all MECS and executive mayors are brought together to consolidate their work. Of late, we've got the District Co-ordinating Model, where a mayor of a district is the chair. We are able to consolidate issues because everyone is represented in all those committees.

"We are able to resolve problems of DCMs simultaneously. An executive mayor who is a chair of a LET and co-ordinator, too. Obviously when there are problems or challenges, we are able to resolve them amicably. He or she will submit reports to the RET, where we are able to intervene.

"So the experience that we've had since 1994 is the decline in voter turn-out, especially in local government elections, a matter which has been a concern to the National Executive Committee (NEC) as well as the Provincial Executive Committee (PEC). We've checked ourselves to find out what is the problem. Why are our people not coming to election stations/ "The first thing we discovered is that after winning the elections, we no longer go back to our people just to say thank you. Siyabonga so and so, we don't do that. We have also realised that our deployees are not servicing our people because the structure that is on the coal-face of elections is municipalities, so there arose a question in our structures: what kind of councillor must we elect to lead our people?"

"Before we used to elect MandlaMsibi as a councillor through a raise of hands in a meeting, but now, through participatory democracy, we are growing in the ANC as we now elect a minimum of four, to check the balance through also gender parity. The branch must also appoint a screening committee. Who sits in a screening committee? It's people who've got a stature in society like your preacher your businessman and others. Their duty is to screen the candidates. If the candidate has a criminal record, they can't pass the screening test. If those candidates haven't presented their plans on how they would effect change, then those people don't qualify.

"First of all, do they understand local governance and its role? Clearly, with such

interventions, this time around, it has proven us to be far much better than the previous times. After the screening committee has completed their work, they take the candidates to the community makes a decision.

"Just recently in the by-elections, the turn-out has improved drastically because the candidates that were selected were paraded in front of the community and the community accepted them, hence they are the people's choice.

"Added to that, we also go to the voters' roll to check if the candidates are members of that community because previous experience has revealed that people are ferried from other areas to represent that community. Our thinking now is that we are now better positioned as the ANC to tackle some matters, head on.

DEPLOYEES

"In terms of monitoring our deployees in government and municipalities, if we think a particular deployee is not acting in the best interest of the ANC and renegeing on our mandate, like the councillors, mayors, municipal managers, CFOs, MECs and so on, we approach the ANC Deployment Committee. When it also comes to employing incumbents to positions, we thoroughly check, like for a CFO, you don't qualify with a B.Com degree, we need an Accounting degree to qualify.

"We've also intervened in interviews whereby, the panel decides on appointing number three instead of number one. The principle in interviews is your performance,

then you must be rewarded for it forthrightly, irrespective of which party they come from.

"The policy of deployment must be accompanied by academic qualifications. We took a decision that we don't need deployees who will be office bound. For a CFO to satisfy themselves to pay on the work done, they must take their cars and go and inspect and not rely on documents presented. A municipal manager must also ensure they attract investment to their municipalities, but they, too, must make sure they know and understand the terrain they operating in.

"There are employees who think they are accountable to a certain person in an institution, no, they are accountable to the council, therefore, you must have councillors who know the legislation, supply chain policies and any other policies required by the law. Same applies to the provincial government. You can't have an HOD who is a celebrity, if I may put it like that.

"You can't have an HOD whose role is only to approve or to disapprove. An HOD of a department, if he or she is an HOD for social development and public works is the implementation agency, after they finalize their annual performance plans, they should go on site visits to check, if according to plan, there's supposed to have been development. They must be able to go on oversight visits together to determine if there's been any work done.

"Here in Pienaar, for an example we've got youth centres here. For the past five years they haven't been completed. When you go to the HOD for social development, he or she tells



BACK VOTERS IN FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS

you they are not the implementing agent. The Auditor General will audit the department of social development, so there is a need to up our game in administration.

“What does it mean? It means we have to employ people who love people with all their hearts. By doing so, we will be doing ourselves a favour to satisfy the people.

LOCAL BENEFICIARIES ON PROJECTS

“Another burning issue is community beneficiation process when there are projects within their jurisdiction. We are saying that when a tender goes up, there must be an infusion of the local community beneficiation. It must state categorically clearly that 30 percent of that tender, which must be calculated by the project manager, will be for the community.

“This is done so that there is standardisation of participation. If it is standard, everybody will know, which is where councillors come in. It entails that the community participates in providing the supplies in such projects, including labour. We interpret that as participatory democracy.

“We recently conducted an assessment of our depoyees and I must state that we are not impressed, but there’s a room for improvement. As I’ve said, the issue of councillors not calling community meetings is not because of Covid-19, but it’s an old issue, they were not doing it. We need to frank ourselves. If you are a member of the ANC, you must be a revolutionary, you must have a conscience.

ROLE OF A COUNCILLOR

“If you’ve been a councillor and you’ve not been helpful and not working with or for the community, you must understand that the role of a councillor is not only service delivery, it is to lead the entire society. People will report all sorts of problems to you, you have to provide a solution to that. You can’t say the problem is service delivery.

“For example I found an 18-year-old kid here at my place who sought assistance with registration at tertiary as she’s passed with flying colours. I’ve paid the R5 000 registration required, but further needs tuition and other fees to study. Looking at the situation, I called the relevant MEC Majuba to arrange that with his administration because he kid will suffer.

“I’m saying, the kind of a councillor we require, must be an all-rounder. It must be a person like myself at the age of 29 when I was elected as a councillor, I intervened in adults’ bedroom matters because they had been reported to me as a councillor. If they have problems with RDPs and clinics, you can’t refer them to those departments, but you have to personally take up the matters and resolve them.

“A councillor must become a president of that particular ward and South Africa has many wards, Mpumalanga has 400 wards, which means we have 400 ward presidents who everyday must wake up and think: what can I do for my people today?

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND NKOSI CITY DEVELOPMENT

“To me Covid-19 is the Third World War, but we are fighting with an invisible enemy. Now the president clearly outlined economic recovery plans during the State of the Nation Address. It needs now for a ward councillor, who must be innovative to see how we tap into that. How do you begin to create projects and programmes that will be sustainable for our people?

“I came up as a councillor in Mbombela with Nkosi City, we’re starting in three weeks. We’ve budgeted R10 million. When I was shifted to agriculture I was happy because my project, Nkosi City is an agri-city project. The ancestors of the ANC, Tambo and Luthuli must have spoken to the premier to shift me to agriculture when she recently reshuffled the cabinet.

“Fortunately, when I spoke to the Acting HOD in agriculture and other related



departments are ready. The project has been budgeted for R70 million for the medium term, and we’ve budgeted R10 million for training. Why have we done that? The problem with the construction of big malls is that big conglomerates come here and employ people for eight months and go back.

“The difference with Nkosi City, which I started as a councillor in Mbombela, is once you train co-operatives in groups of five-five in agro-processing, manufacturing of bricks, manufacturing of window frames, manufacturing of steel doors and so on. It’s kicking off in early May through LG-SETA, NHRBC SETA and Agri-SETA. We don’t want to go out on tenders.

“Why are we training co-operatives, you may ask, we want our people to play a meaningful role into the construction value chain and agro-processing value chain. You have to train them into two things again, into manufacturing and financial management. It has been proven that youth don’t follow agriculture because it’s not fashionable.

“I asked the Acting HOD of agriculture to show me where the market of the people of Malalane who plough and produce sugar cane. The people who plough and harvest sugarcane are not the beneficiaries of their end-product, there’s someone behind it.

“As government we have to make sure that they market. We are going to open the markets and make sure the people deliver directly and get paid directly for their produce. There’s the South African Macadamia Association.

“When you restitute a farm to a family and plough macadamia then harvest, you don’t have the storage, that storage is constructed by a white family and when you bring the harvest, they store it there. They then take it to the market in China and other places. I said we must not do that.

“I told the HOD that we must get these farmers processing material so that when they harvest, they directly import so that the money comes back straight to them. We must also deal with the issue of the land. You see the issue of the land is a very sensitive one.

“The Freedom Charter says the land shall be shared among those who work on it. Who works there, is it the farmers? No it’s the farmer workers and other labourers. As leadership, I’m not working the land, I’m here.

“The problem we want to put people through programmes of restitution who are not working the land. We need to go to each and every farm, as I’ve requested the Acting HOD to bring me all the farms which we have to visit.

“We must talk to white farmers and tell them that they need to transform because the

responsibility of agriculture if bring food on the table of every household. So if we are going to take small-scale farmers to big markets, I’m going to be satisfied as we will be transforming in that case. Why don’t we train young women’s co-operatives that will be given the responsibility to produce the products required so that you know you’ve good a supplier and the market is government.

“We know government provides RDP houses and co-operatives have to provide the material. We’re going to start Nkosi City and all will be invited. I’m also worried about the internship and learnership programmes offered by government because they don’t have an exit strategy.

“At Nkosi City we’re going to train co-operatives that will produce bricks that are SABS approved which will be used to construct the very Nkosi City. The project is going source locally and there will be local economic empowerment. If we are going to do that, the people will begin to say the ANC are serious as we shall have addressed the three economic challenges which are poverty, unemployment and inequality.

CORRUPTION

“We cannot fold our arms and pretend as if there’s no corruption. The recent disaster has shown us another picture. We’ve seen new roads and bridges being washed away. Look at Kanyamazane, from Section One, that road has been constructed twice. Look at Gugulethu Centre, the road has been washed away. It tells you about the quality of the job.

“We don’t deal with water drain storage, the water runs across. We also don’t have a maintenance budget. The law requires that you must budget eight percent of a budget for maintenance purposes. We construct a road or bridge and after two days it’s destroyed by such disasters. We have to deal with that. It needs ethical leadership and we have to be hard on each other.

“The responsibility of national and provincial governments is to ensure that local government functions efficiently. That’s our responsibility, it is to support local government, but you cannot close your eyes when you see boreholes that are supposed to be drilled for the communities being in the yards of ward councillors.

“You need to be firm when dealing with such issues as they require an investigation and deal with the perpetrators accordingly. You must deploy MECS, Executive Mayors who will be firm in dealing with such issues. You need speakers who will hold everybody accountable or such a mess.

“You also have to employ the kind of chief whips that understand that a cadre of the ANC in their employ, has a contract with the people to deliver services. I tell you, if we do such, we’ll go the local government elections best prepared to attract big numbers of satisfied people that the ANC is really working.

“The other day we were discussing the issue of economic development and the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator were put in the spotlight why they approve liquor licenses for taverns next to school gates, churches and other social centres.

“These are things that we have to correct as the ANC. We have to ruffle feathers with our friends. As the election team, we are going to keep our government on its toes until the electoral mandate given to them by the ANC is being fulfilled. That’s what we’re going to do and we are ready.

“We are preparing for the by-elections of 23 March, thereafter, we are preparing for the Local Government Elections. Government has to deal with the issue of gatherings to set the ball rolling for campaigns to be held.

“The term of office-bearers end in August and my wish is to hold the elections the very same month,” concluded Msibi.





The Nkangala Economic Development Agency board members.

NEDA BOARD'S MANDATE IS CLEAR

MIDDELBURG- The Nkangala Economic Development Agency was officially launched during a roundtable media event recently.

This follows Nkangala District Municipality's initiative to establish an entity to drive economic development.

According to the municipality, this has achieved high success internationally and to a limited extent in the country too.

The agency is targeted to generate investment from both domestic and foreign investors for the district which will have an impact of growth and economic development as well as an increase in job creation.

Chairperson of the interim board, P Makaba said although it is a mammoth task, the mission and objectives of NEDA will be achieved.

"Covid-19 has rattled socio-economic conditions of our region and districts to the lowest we've ever seen in our national history. This is where NEDA needs to come in as a catalyst economic recovery and inclusive growth without delay.

Restructuring unemployment is a curse that needs skills revolution pertinent to economic sectors required. Harnessing and exploiting our competitive sectors would be a step to creating entrepreneurship, SMMEs, cooperatives and social ownership," Makaba said.

Executive Mayor, Sarah Masilela said a recovery plan is needed to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. She believes NEDA was established at the right time.

"The pandemic affected Nkangala quite bad and empowering communities including the youth and women, the

agency will achieve its objectives.

I have no doubt that NEDA will attract major investment, position the district as a destination of choice for investment, initiate and implement high impact projects that will create jobs and generate inclusive economic growth, ensure that participation of residents will be considered."

THE SIX DIRECTORS WHO WILL SERVE ON THE INTERIM BOARD FOR A YEAR UNTIL 28 FEBRUARY 2022 ALSO INCLUDE:

- MD Xulu
- TS Mohapi
- V Mahlangu
- IE Pilane
- DP Maphumulo.

Bikers family makes a difference

Traffic came to a standstill on 6 March when Chief Albert Luthuli Bikers Family and Friends rode to schools in Elukwatini and surroundings, donating 240 pairs of school shoes, over 300 sanitary pads and 160 reading books.

The charity drive was a collaboration between bikers from Chief Albert Luthuli Municipality and donors including The Tribal Bar & Grill, BookHive, Elukwatini SuperSpar and businesswoman Portia Lukhele.

Donations were made to eight schools namely, Tsatsimfundvo Primary, Timeleni Primary, Elukwatini Primary, Imbali Primary, Bongumkwanazi Primary, Makhosonke Primary, Sibusiso Combined and Takheni Secondary schools.

Manqoba Nxumalo from the Chief Albert Luthuli Bikers Family expressed his gratitude over the support gathered from the event. "The covid 19 pandemic has hit hard on everyone. Some parents lost jobs and this was a perfect way to show and promote the spirit of Ubuntu by assisting the parents and children affected," he said.

Nxumalo thanked the organisers, other sponsors and bikers who graced the event from other parts of the province and Gauteng.



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CHILD SUPPORT GRANT

Mandatory Documents for Child Support Grant Application:

- SA Identity Document
- Child's Birth Certificate – must have ID number
- Proof of Income – salary slip, pension slip or 3 months bank statement
- Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) card or Discharge Certificate from previous employer – only unemployed candidates.

If you're not the child's parent or guardian, submit:

- Written note of permission from the parent or guardian that you should take care of the child.
- Information about how you've tried to get the parents to pay maintenance
- Information that shows that you're the child's primary caregiver

Ways to Apply:
Website: sassa.gov.za | Toll-Free Number: 0800 60 10 11
Local Office from 8am to 4pm





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[DISABILITY GRANTS

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is a Disability Grant?	In terms of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, a Disability Grant (DG) is a grant given to citizens who are unable to work as a result of their disability or medical condition (physical or mental). A DG is not an unemployment grant that is, it cannot be awarded on social grounds for citizens who are unable to find employment.
What is a Care Dependency Grant?	In terms of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, a Care Dependency Grant (CDG) is a grant given to a parent, primary care-giver or foster parent in respect of a care dependent child. The child that should be below the age of 18 who requires and receives permanent care due to his or her physical or mental disability.
Who qualifies for a Disability Grant?	The applicant must be a South African citizen/permanent resident or refugee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be a resident in South Africa; • Must be 18 to 59 years of age; • Must submit a Medical / Assessment report confirming disability; • Must undergo a Medical Assessment at a designated institution and apply within 3 months of such an Assessment; • Applicant and spouse must meet the requirements of the Means Test; • Must not be maintained or cared for at a State Institution; • Must not be in receipt of another social grant in respect of himself or herself; • Must submit a 13 digit barcoded identity document or the smart ID card
A Disability Grant may be awarded either as a permanent grant, which may or may not be subject to a Medical Review after a certain period of time or for a temporary period not less than 6 months.	
What does this mean?	This means that permanent DGs are awarded for conditions which impact on the applicant's ability to work for a period longer than 12 months. Where the disability or medical condition is likely to improve with treatment or other interventions, the grant may be awarded for a temporary period of between 6 and 12 months. After this time, the grant lapses, in accordance with the conditions set in the Social Assistance Act, 2004. If on lapsing of the grant, the citizen is still unable to be employed as a result of the disability or medical condition, he/she needs to re-apply for the DG. This re-application requires a new Medical Assessment, which will confirm whether the condition does warrant a grant.

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ANC CAUCUS AND CHIEF WHIP WELCOMES APPROPRIATION BILL AND BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

LUNGILE DUBE

MBOMBELA - The ANC Caucus in the Mpumalanga Legislature welcomed and appreciated both the Mpumalanga Third Adjustment Appropriation 2020 and the Mpumalanga Appropriation Bill 2021 as tabled by the MEC of Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Vusi P Mkhathshwa.

The ANC Provincial Caucus, led by Fidel Mlombostated thus: We wish to express our profound support of the main appropriation for 2021/22 as tabled by the MEC as it emphatically expresses the ANC historic vision professed in the Freedom Charter when it said: "The wealth of the country shall be shared amongst those who work it".

"For the ANC, a budget is not only the flow of money from the Treasury to Departments, but a budget is a strategic tool we use to fundamentally reshape the development and the social landscape of our people.

"The two pieces of Legislation are aimed at expediting the accomplishment of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery plan whose purpose is to unlock the economic growth and allow for the development with an ultimate objective of repositioning our

economy to a sustainable recovery trajectory.

"The Mpumalanga Appropriation Bill also addresses the government apex priorities for the financial year 2021/22 and has distributed the budget accordingly. The ANC Caucus is considerate of the devastating impact of COVID-19 to the economy of the Province and the country and its negative impact to the Budget available to appropriate to the different departments in the Province.

"However, we appreciate and welcome the budget focus on the key industries such as mining, manufacturing, trade and tourism transport and communication, as well as finance that are aimed to the 2021 economic growth of 3 percent. This is fundamental the economic recovery plan and building blocks for transforming the economy to serve the people.

"The most important thing for the Budget Speech is to be resolute on putting in place systems that will prevent any acts of corruption. Corruption has negative consequences on our economy and society, impacting on the integrity of our institutions, our leaders and undermining the very moral and ethical basis of our young democracy.

"We are proud of the work of

the peoples caring government which has ensured that during the hard lockdown, the Government introduced a package of policy interventions aimed at insulating the mostly hit by the crisis through discretionary policies like tax rebates and the release of social and economic relief measures to mitigate the impact of the lockdowns.

"The ANC Caucus is particularly elated that the Social Cluster is allocated R42 560 billion, which translates to 80 percent of the total Provincial Budget. So correct is the government of the people that the social cluster departments, which are responsible for the daily social lives of the people especially the poor through targeted interventions such as social protection, public education and health care have received the lion's share for the wellbeing of our people.

"The ANC Caucus pledges and vows to defend this budget and to support and encourage the people of Mpumalanga to actively participate in the government programmes of improving their lives and be the locomotives of change towards their destiny. We therefore welcome the total allocated Budget for 2021/22 which stands at R 53 576 427," concluded Mlombo.



ANC Chief Whip, Fidel Mlombo.

PROVINCIAL BUDGET SUMMARY 2021/2022 SPENDING PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22 SOCIAL CLUSTER

The Social Cluster is allocated Forty-Two Billion, Five Hundred and Sixty Million Rand (R 42 560 billion), which translates to 80 per cent of the total Provincial Budget.

The social sector departments provide essential services to the poor through targeted interventions such as social protection, public education and health care; and advance the social cohesion and unity of all our people around the common Constitutional directive of protection of human rights.

EDUCATION

Education has an influence of immense proportions in our efforts to fight the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, particularly in improving the literacy, skills and employability of our people.

To this end, Twenty-Two Billion, Three Hundred and Thirty-Six Million Rand (R22 336 billion) is allocated to the Department of Education to fund, amongst other priorities:

- collaborative efforts within the social cluster to focus on early childhood development;
- Curriculum enrichment programme to ensure that our learners stay in school and are in class on time learning, and
- School Infrastructure to broaden access to education and to improve the learning environment. Included in this amount is a special allocation of Two Hundred and Six Point Nine Million Rand (R 206.9 million) to gradually and entrench e-learning throughout the system.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Social Development is one of the leading Departments in dealing with the social impact of COVID-19 within our communities.

The Department receives (One Billion, Eight Hundred and Forty Million Rand (R1 840 billion) to provide alternative care and support to vulnerable children and the elderly, GBVF victim support, implement social relief of distressed programmes and increase capacity in the form of additional social workers.

HEALTH

The health of society determines the level of productivity and resourcefulness of the citizens to positively contribute to economic growth. To this end, the second-largest component of the Budget, at Sixteen Billion, Two Hundred and Four Million Rand (R16 204 billion) is allocated to the

Department of Health for:

- Coordinating services across the care continuum and reorienting the system towards primary health;
- Enhancing leadership and governance in the health sector to improve the quality of care, and
- Improving the quality of health services in public facilities.

CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION

Six Hundred and Twenty-Two Million Rand (R622 million) is allocated to the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation to:

- Promote cultural diversity and enhance cultural tourism through the support of community-based initiatives
- Coordinate marketing platforms for creative industry products to create jobs, and
- Empower learners and communities with knowledge through the supply of new library material in public libraries.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The Department of Human Settlements receives One Billion, Five Hundred and Fifty-Seven Million Rand (R1 557 billion) to plan, coordinate and facilitate the creation of integrated and sustainable human settlements in our Province.

In addition to this Human Settlements mandate, the Department is funded to provide schools and community boreholes and related infrastructure. Ninety-Five Million Rand (R95 million) is rescheduled from the 2020/21 financial year to that effect. Twenty-Five Million Rand (R25 million) is allocated to continue with the work of bulk infrastructure at the Parliamentary Village.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism is allocated a total budget of One Billion, Three Hundred and Fifty-Four Million Rand (R1 354 billion) to finalize and coordinate the Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery plan implementation by all Stakeholders. This Budget includes Seven Hundred and Sixty-Three million, Ninety-Eight Thousand Rand (R763 098 million) which will be transferred to Provincial Public Entities, namely, Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA), Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) and Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER) to fulfil their economic and developmental mandate.

- Three Hundred and Forty One Million Rand (R341 million) is allocated for the continuing work on the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market (MIFPM)
- Ten Million Rand (R10 million) to collaborate with other stakeholders to unlock the potential of the Green Economy,
- Twenty Million Rand (R20 million) is to tighten economic regulation and improve revenue generation
- Twenty Million Rand (R20 million) is allocated to Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for finalizing the State-Owned Company's Corporate Strategy, the appointment of a Governance structure and daily operational work of the entity.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture plays an important role in the economy, as seen with its performance during the devastating times of COVID-19 and lockdown.

The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs will receive One Billion, Two Hundred and Thirty-Four Million Rand (R1 234 billion) to continue to support emerging farmers and key provincial developmental initiatives in the agricultural sector, e.g. Fortune 40 programmes and ZondaIndlala, amongst others.

PUBLIC WORKS, ROADS AND TRANSPORT

The budgeted allocation to the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport is Four Billion, Nine Hundred and Fifty-Two Million Rand (R4 952 billion). Included in this Budget are funds to deal with the effects of the recent heavy rains brought about by the tropical storm Eloise. The Department is also allocated Sixteen Million Rand (R16 million) to procure specialized vehicles to repair potholes and other road works.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The remaining six (6) per cent of the Budget, which translates to Three Billion, Four Hundred and Seventy-Three Million Rand (R3 473 billion), is shared by the Departments in the Governance and Administration cluster.

CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs is allocated Seven Hundred and Thirty

One Million Rand (R731 million) to better coordinate Local Government and Traditional affairs work.

COMMUNITY SAFETY, SECURITY AND LIAISON

The Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison will be allocated One Billion, Five Hundred Million Rand (R1 500 billion) to implement key deliverables that enable the safety and security of the citizens and road users in the Province. Much is expected from this Department in terms of fighting the scourge of crime which manifests itself in many ways, especially focusing on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide.

PROVINCIAL TREASURY

The Provincial Treasury will receive Four Hundred and Eighty-One Million Rand (R481 million) largely for general oversight of all departments, municipalities and public entities, internal audit, supply chain management, as well as support for transversal financial systems. Working together with National Treasury, COGTA and other financial institutions, more hands-on support has been given to all public sector institutions in the past financial year and we will continue to do so over the 2021 MTEF.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Three Hundred and Eighty Three Million Rand (R383 million) is allocated to the Office of the Premier to provide leadership to the Provincial administration, including monitoring and evaluation of the performance of state institutions. Ninety Million Rand (R90 million) is allocated for the implementation of the Youth Fund, noting that the Office of the Premier has taken much time to do thorough planning in this regard. This is an urgent priority of the Government and should assist with alleviating challenges faced by young people. We call on all sectors to support this program qualitatively and quantitatively.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

Provincial Legislature is allocated Three Hundred and Seventy-Six Million Rand (R376 million) to execute its mandate of law-making, providing oversight on the Executive and deepening democracy. Included in this allocation is Eight Point Five Million Rand (R8.5 million) for voter education in preparation for the municipal election this year.

NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEC DETERMINED TO SWEEP CLEANER AND REVIVE THE ECONOMY

YOLISWA HLATSHWAYO

PART ONE: Face to Face with newly-appointed MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, VusiMkhatshwa revealed that he is determined to make his presence felt as his sole duty centres around uplifting the fledgling economy of the province as a result of the coronavirus pandemic which affected, inclusive of attracting much-needed investment and transforming small and medium enterprises into main economic players, among others.

YOLISWA HLATSHWAYO (YH): What is the specific economic recovery plan for the province that's been adopted to fulfil the urge to turn things around, especially for small, medium enterprises?

VUSI MKHATSHWA (VM): The core elements of the Provincial Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Roadmap, which maps the development of a consolidated Mpumalanga economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, are aligned with our Medium Term Strategic Framework, which is

a reflection of the governing party's manifesto and the commitment to implement the National Development Plan.

Government's MTSF 2019-2024 is the planned implementation of the NDP vision 2030 and the implementation of the electoral mandate of the Sixth Administration. On 15 October last year, President Cyril Ramaphosa presented the national Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) to the joint sitting of Parliament. It focuses on a few policy drivers to achieve the intended outcomes, including massive roll-out of infrastructure; energy security; employment stimulus; industrial revitalisation, localisation and small business promotion for women and youth.

As a province, we are also aligning the Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MEERP), hence we are currently in the process of engaging different stakeholders to obtain their

We will focus on areas where the province has a competitive advantage; a clearly defined and sustainable economic growth path

input, buy-in and support.

We will focus on areas where the Province has a competitive advantage; a clearly defined and sustainable economic growth path. Top of our priorities is economic transformation and mass job creation. We have committed ourselves

to intensifying the roll out of the Mpumalanga Industrial Development Plan, which includes among others: Nkomazi Special

Economic Zone (SEZ) and the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market.

These two catalyst projects have a high potential, not only to place the agricultural sector on a growth trajectory, but also to create massive job opportunities for the people and increase investment into the province. These initiatives will open opportunities for value chain development, agro-processing, trade and export, including the agricultural development of the SADC region.

The Nkomazi SEZ has received a boost following a very ambitious investment proposal by a Mpumalanga-based property development company. We are working together with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, Nkomazi Local Municipality, Ehlanzeni District Municipality and traditional authorities, among others to do the following:

- Finalise all the statutory requirements needed to ensure that the SEZ site is legally compliant;
- Conclude all the planning and design work so that the development of the site can commence in the upcoming financial year and
- Strengthen the investment pipeline.

We shall ensure that the development of small business is prioritised in both projects, especially enterprises owned by young people, women and people with disabilities. As a province, we have been actively engaging private sector partners who wish to work with us, to establish and Agri-processing facility at the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport (KMIA) precinct.

We are beginning to see much progress in the construction of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market, and anticipate that the main market will be finalised by the end of the upcoming financial year.

Other economic growth measures to mitigate against the horrific effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Other important economic measures that have been identified, as part of the drive to create more jobs and fight the scourge of poverty and inequality include but are not limited to:

- Ensuring that all Departments eliminate bottlenecks and pay valid invoices within 30 days;
- Providing Relief funding to SMMEs;
- Implementing the Mpumalanga Tourism Recovery Plan;
- Fast-tracking support to Highveld Steel in order to promote the establishment of the Mining and Metal Industrial Technology Park;
- Fast-tracking the establishment of the

Petro-chemical Industrial Technology Park; and

- Forestry Industrial Technology Park.

SMMEs Support

An important undertaking was the launching and operationalisation of the Youth Development Fund, which saw R50 million being set aside for the implementation of the first phase of this Programme.

Expression of interests from young people of the province were requested, and thousands of them have responded positively. This multi-year programme invites numerous youth-owned SMMEs to submit proposals outlining the growth and funding needs of their businesses. These enterprises are then provided with training and funding to grow the operational footprint.

Applications calling for more youth-owned businesses to submit their proposals, will be opened soon.

YH: Can you outline the financial priorities during this new financial year in terms of service delivery.

VM: The following Infrastructure Projects are currently in progress and some are nearing completion: Middelburg Hospital; Bethal Hospital; Mmamethake Hospital; Pankop clinic; 382 projects have been completed, including 54 sanitation project for the Department of Education; two clinics in Oakley and Kamdladla; five projects completed, including Thulamahashe Children's Home, Nkangala District Office Phase IIB and three Branch Offices in Kriel, Mashishing and Agincourt; The Thubelihle Library was completed; and as many as eight roads infrastructure improvement projects were completed in Mashishing, Barberton, Matsulu, Numbi, Delmas, Driekoppies and Thulamahashe; the province will also start the process of developing a new tertiary hospital in eMalaheni.

Government has also introduced the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) as part of the public investment in mass employment. Last year Mpumalanga received R645 million to improve access to services and opportunities for people in rural areas. This programme supports, among others: The paving of Municipal township roads and rural roads; Short-term employment in the education sector such as teacher assistants, screeners, general workers; and the employment of social workers.

Going forward, Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) will be responsible for project preparation, packaging, funding pathways and providing strategic oversight over all the gazetted projects that will be funded through the National Infrastructure Fund. These projects will create opportunities for support of local manufacturing and development of township economies.

Channelling support through existing public employment programmes such as EPWP, Sakh'abakhi, Siyatentela and National Youth Service will allow for a more rapid response to the current economic crisis.

The province has created 19 649 jobs through the Expanded Public Works Programme. The main beneficiaries of these opportunities were: 12 254 women, 9 239 young people and 159 people with disabilities.



MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Vusi Mkhathshwa.

MISS MPUMALANGA 2021 GOES VIRTUAL

MBOMBELA – One could deduce that the organizers of Crowning Miss Mpumalanga 2021 are technically growing with the times by holding auditions right up to the main pageant virtually, yet it's the demands of the National Disaster Regulations not to have too many people under one roof.

It affected organizers, Mzimari Productions last year when they had completed all the auditions up to the Top 12 finalists

when the call for the National Lockdown was announced on 26 March last year by President Cyril Ramaphosa that the crowning ceremony was held before a small crowd and avail to others virtually.

According to Mzimari Productions' CEO, GuguNyarenda: "We're going virtual even this year from the auditions of the hundreds of enthusiasts. What can we do? It's the name of the game. We've begun the journey to crowning our 11th queen.

"Dubbed: The search is on for the next Miss Mpumalanga 2021 Online Auditions,

contestants are expected to send a one-minute introductory video clip via Whatsapp to 0817422276. An automated message will be sent to the sender with the entry form. Contestants are expected to follow the instruction on the link.

"Basically, entries opened from 15 March 2021 and will close on 31 March 2021. More information is obtainable from calling our office 013 7523384 or email melanie.andrews@mzimariproductions.co.za.

"We felt we couldn't hold back, especially that the country is now on level 1, whereby, we saw it fit that we could continue with our journey of discovering the next provincial ambassador, who, incidentally, will have added responsibilities of continuing conscientising communities on wearing their face masks, washing their hands regularly for 20 seconds each time and always keeping a safe distance with each other," she explained.

Questioned if the judges will remain behind the scenes and only judge them

based on the videos submitted, she was quick to allay fears thus: "No, no, no we can't really do that. It's just to break the numbers down because even the judges don't have to be exposed to a situation where they can contact the disease.

"They will meet the Top 30 finalists on 8-9 April face to face definitely. Those top 30 will be thoroughly grilled by the judges in order to come up with the Top 12 finalists out of which the Top 5, Top 3 and the queen will be chosen.

"By then, Mzimari Productions and sponsors, the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER), will await the independent decision of the judges of the final winners. That's how it is and how it has been for the past 10, 2021 cannot be any different except for the virtual screenings and the lesser number of people attending the crowning event.

"Everything is on track and we invite many girls to try their luck for an opportunity to represent their province in many respects," she concluded.

Everything is on track and we motivate many girls to try their luck to represent the province



Humble Memory Mamba rises to the occasion

BONGANI HLATSHWAYO

If memory serves him better, New-Kid-On-The-Block, Memory Mamba is a product of rejection before and after he was born by his dear daddy and thereafter his entire family after the death of both his parents, hence the title of his debut solo album, Sekulungile.

Incidentally, too, his name and surname serve as his identity and at the same time, as his stage name, that's Pastor Memory Mamba for you, who has taken the gospel music scene by storm with his unique and balanced sound which is originally his own.

Pundits would dare think that his title song, Sekulungile is a direct copy of the late, Sifiso Ncwane song, Kulungile, yet the composition and sound resemble the circumstances under which it was composed for and the purpose it ought to serve in society.

In an interview conducted at Nuttinghouse where he had organised a listening session with a few privileged individuals who comprised of his immediate family, wife and two daughters, sponsors, fellow worshippers and men and women of the cloth, including media houses, he said:

"This is my solo project that's being launched, which features Memories of Joy Choir and vocalist Phindile Matsebula on some lead vocals in some of the tracks. It is with Memories choir that in 2018 we emerged as the best gospel group in the Mpumalanga Gospel Music Awards.

"It was after the successful trail of the group's performances and finances allowing, that I took it upon myself to go on a solo project, hence we are here today. We've taken great strides with the launch of this album, seeing that normal over the shelf sales are no longer that viable, the album is available on the Memory Mamba Facebook and on Youtube, too as we're moving with the times.

"I ventured into gospel music back in



Pastor Memory Mamba.

Trust In Christ Church in Pienaararoud 1994. I was in the national Trust In Christ Choir until 2000. Under the tutelage of Bishop Vusi Gama, I used to write songs for the choir at a very early stage, too.

"It was in 2016 that I eventually brought to the fore my own choir, Memories of Joy. In 2018 it won as the best gospel group in the provincial gospel music awards here in Mpumalanga. I've been in the industry, behind the scenes since 1996. I started emerging as a gospel artist in early 2000," he explained.

Since 1996, has he collaborated or shared the stage with any prominent gospel artists?

"During festivals, I've shared a stage with locals Donny Ngwenyama, Mgiba, Ernest Nkabinde and Qiniso Mabaso. Nationally, I've shared the stage with Thina Zungu and Dr Rebecca Malope, artists whom I've been able to work with diligently," he pointed out.

Looking at the gospel music, does he view it as growing or stagnant?

"Gospel music is growing, although

others are discouraged by the current conditions of the covid-19. I see growth personally. Lack of shows has led to others quitting, but with me, I'm exploiting the opportunities available to make it happen. Mpumalanga now has its own gospel awards, something unheard of before. It's a sure sign that it's growing.

"Since the advent of the provincial awards, it has been an opportune time and platform for provincial artists to know each other, too. Through the media, we were able to all avail ourselves and get to know each other.

"It's now incumbent upon each artists to exploit opportunities in the music industry to fulfil their objectives. If your priority is about the money to be accrued in the industry, forget about it because that will break your spirit because there's a scarcity of money as we speak.

"There's a scarcity of sponsors for gospel artists, hence many of us use our own money to make things happen and get to be known out there. On a general basis, many have awoken to the fact that you have to work hard in order to be recognised, hence I must say that the industry is growing, although the value of sales has dropped, but the music is definitely growing," said Memory.

What do you want your music to do to the communities?

"Actually as a pastor by profession. Here I'm preaching and with the music I'm opening doors to access doors that are usually closed. With the music I can spread the gospel of the almighty god through it.

"Through all the songs I've written, the gospel truth is easily spread. That's the other reason I founded the group, Memories of Joy, this group is sort of an NPO through which we can source out other means of surviving our livelihoods because through music only, we cannot survive adequately.

"We're using the NPO as a money-spinning entity on the side for the

members to benefit something out of it, at the same time, they will have the interest participating because there's a benefit for them. Added to that, it serves as a provider for underprivileged communities out there," he said emphatically.

What's your Easter message?

"I urge people to continue conducting themselves well during this pandemic that's befallen us. We urge people to abide by the rules of sanitizing, wear face masks always and wash our hands regularly as stipulated. We wish the people all the best during the Easter holidays.

"Those who will be travelling long distances, drive cautiously because road accidents are fatal and hospitals are full. Observe rules and regulations of the road and make sure you arrive safely," he concluded.



Fellow worshippers in a roundabout prayer.



For all your sporting news, news tips and advertising, contact Jabulane Khumalo on 0748194977 or email to: jabulane@mpmirroronline.co.za



XOLANI MGIDI DEFEATS HIS OPPONENT ON TKO

JABULANE KHUMALO

Boxers brought their fist fight game in the ring when they exchanged jabs at the return of the Big Guns on March 20 at Graceland in Secunda.

The tournament was hosted by TLB Boxing and the Department of Culture, Sports and Recreation.

Mhluzi-based boxer, Xolani Mgidi fought to return to his glory days against SiyaMabena who was defeated in a TKO in the fourth round of the Junior Lightweight tournament. He controlled the first two rounds, but lost focus on the third and fourth round when Mabena regained his strength.

“We exchanged punches, but he had more strength over me. in the fourth round, my coach told me that I should keep my distance and that I should use more jabs. That strategy worked for me. In fact, from round one my jabs were quite good and helped me throughout the fight,” said Butterfly.

He also described the fight as

fitting because he has earned his place again in the ratings after five loses.

“I was demoralised because I thought my future was bleak in boxing. I’m grateful to TLB that I got an opportunity to fight and regain my confidence and put me back to my rightful place.

“I look forward to being in the ring regularly. Hopefully my manager gets more fights for me. I want a rematch with Chris Dhlomo.

“He was fighting today for the title. I’m back and I’m better now that I’m in the ratings. He knows I beat him and that he won because of home ground advantage.”

Other winners include Xolani “Nomeva” Ndongeni after he defeated Byron Gwayani in the International Lightweight battle. In the Women’s Bout, SmangeleHadebe left Mellisa Miller powerless after intense blows.

Talent Baloyi also put Sando Jackson on the sword. SkhumbuzoXimba defeated AyandaCekisa in the Junior Featherweight challenge. Arnel Lubisi put up a fight and defeated Sikelela Jama.



Xolani Mgidi.