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The killing and victimisation of people with albinism must stop

The killing of people with albinism in the Mpumalanga Province is on the rise and most of these attacks are fuelled by a rising demand of some business people who want to flourish and also the use of rituals by some traditional healers.

It is alleged believed that the hair and bones, genitals and thumbs of people with albinism are said to possess distinct powers and wealth or success. They are often dried and put into a package to be carried, to be secreted in businesses, homes or clothing, or scattered in the rivers and the sea.

Activists have reported an increase in fear among people with albinism because it is believed that the demand for body parts is on the increase.

With the seriousness of human rights abuses against people with albinism occurring in the province, Mpumalanga Premier, Ms. Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane vowed during the Provincial Women's month celebration that she will stand against the killing of people with albinism.

She called upon the trafficking of body parts from people with albinism to stop and that communities be effectively educated about albinism to demystify this genetic condition.

"As the government of Mpumalanga we condemn the senseless killing of people living with albinism. We promise to work hard with all stakeholders, including the law enforcement agencies, traditional leaders and traditional healers to bring this bad behaviour of improper people at bay," Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said.

Recently, a man with a degree in teaching who admitted to abducting and killing a teenager and a toddler living with albinism was handed two life sentences at Steve Tshwete High court, Mpumalanga.

According to him, he believed that the offence he committed would flourish his business and change his life for better.

Thubane and his accomplices broke into the Shabane household in Hlalanikahle, Mpumalanga, in January 2018.

The group kidnapped Gabisile Shabane, 13, and her 15-month-old cousin Nkosikhona Ngwenya. Both children were killed and Gabisile's body was later found with body parts missing.

Prosecutor Ntsika Mpolweni revealed that an axe was used to break the windows to gain entry into the house. He said that Thubane, in his plea, claimed he had forgotten some details of the robbery, but recalled some.

"He admitted that when they finally found the children, he knew his dream of having a flourishing business was about to be realised," she said. Judge Segopotshe Mphahlele said the children had suffered a gruesome death at the hands of unscrupulous men who were blinded by greed and the love of money.

"The people living with albinism face discrimination and stigma. They face a more severe form of violence. The attacks have several root causes, including ignorance, longstanding stigma and the most disgusting is the harmful practices emanating from manifestations in some beliefs in witchcraft," Judge Mphahlele ruled.

On counts of house breaking and kidnapping, Thubane was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on each. On the double murder charges, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for each and three years for possession of a firearm.

Judge Mphahlele said the behaviour of the accused showed lack of remorse.

"The behaviour of the accused indicates his lack of repentance. Genuine remorse must be distinguished from self-pity" Judge Mphahlele said.

The other three co-accused have pleaded not guilty and are expected to return to court on May 25, 2020. In handing down the judgement, Judge Mphahlele said:

"The accused and the others took a decision to travel to Witbank to the house where they could find a person living with albinism. An accomplice provided them with the layout of the house. They further knew that the people who were living in that house were the most vulnerable. It was an old lady, her daughter and some children," she said.

Addressing supporters, political parties and members of the civil society outside court, MEC for Social Development, Ms. Thandi Shongwe, accompanied by the MEC for Culture Sports and Recreation Ms. Lindiwe Ntshalintshali said people with albinism have a right to live and are equally protected by the constitution of South Africa.

Premier Refilwe-Mtshweni said that she welcomes the two life sentences handed by the Steve Tshwete High Court to Themba Thubane.

"We are happy that this sentence has been handed down during women's month and I hope that the remaining suspects on the same matter will also be given such hefty sentences. We hope that this will also serve as a deterrent to other people to stop believing in such myths and stop killing women and children with albinism," she said.

"We promise to work hard with all stakeholders, including the law enforcement agencies, traditional leaders and traditional healers to bring this bad behaviour of improper people at bay," Mtshweni concluded.



Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane speaks on gender inequalities and gender based violence

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government celebrated Women's Month at the Driekoppies Stadium, Nkomazi. The event was attended by scores of women from around the area.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane who gave the key note address at the event, was dressed up in Swazi cultural attire, accompanied by the members of the Executive Committee and local women and young girls who were also dressed up in their Swazi cultural attire. The keynote address by Premier Mtshweni – Tsipane focused more on gender based violence, which she said has become a national pandemic that needed attention.

According to her, the 2018 report by the Centre for the Study of violence and reconciliation titled "violence against women in South Africa, a nation in crisis" stated that on average, 40% of women in South Africa have experienced physical and or sexual violence at some point in their lives.

Premier Mtshweni- Tsipane said that these statistics point to the reality that gender based violence threatens a woman's very survival.

"For those who survive, gender based violence leaves a tangible negative impact on their health, safety and freedom. If we are to address this scourge head on, we must accept the fact that gender based violence is more than an attack on an individual.

It is an attack on families and communities as they are inevitably affected in some capacity.

Furthermore, gender based violence must be seen as an attack on the rule of law. In essence, gender based violence is a nihilistic attack on dignity, liberty and humanity," she said.

In an effort to address this scourge, she said that the Provincial Government has begun the process of rolling out awareness campaigns across the Province with the aim of inculcating positive gender relations because a significant amount of instances of gender based violence are attributable to ingrained patriarchy.

"Furthermore, our law enforcement agencies are

being constantly trained to ensure that victims of gender based violence are treated with the necessary emotional intelligence and compassion in an effort to ensure that victims lay charges against the perpetrators.

We will no longer tolerate police officers who turn away victims of gender based violence and encourage them to "solve the problem at home"," she said.

She continued to mention that another challenge facing women is the battle for gender parity and the empowerment of women in the workplace.

"Whilst we acknowledge the positive progress in this regard by the ANC led government, we stand firm and state that more can be done," she said.

"For any subset of the community to achieve a modicum of sustainable growth, the advancement of women must be the cornerstone of all developmental policies and their subsequent implementation," she added.

In commitment to advancing gender parity, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the Provincial Government shall advance the empowerment of women during the term of office of the 6th democratically elected Administration.

In order to give effect to this commitment, she said that government shall strengthen and expand the social enterprise development. She said that the model will include more SMMEs and co-operatives owned by women.

In addition to that, she said that the Youth Development Fund which shall be housed in the Department of Economic Development shall assist women owned enterprises and provide them with start-up capital as well as bridging finance in order to ensure that their enterprise are sustainable beyond a 3 year period.

Furthermore, in recognition of the fact that education is a key arsenal in the battle against the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that she will, in the near future be establishing the Premier's bursary

scheme that will prioritise women scholars and youth under the age of 30.

"It is envisaged that through this initiative, the graduates shall collaborate with the Provincial Government to develop strategies aimed at improving the overall quality of life for the people of Mpumalanga," she said.

During the buildup events to the Provincial Women's Day, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane met with the older persons at Boschfontein community hall and led a march promoting and encouraging active ageing and a healthy lifestyle. She encouraged them to go back to farming and to transfer the skills to their grandchildren, this, she said, will be another measure of fighting and relieving themselves from poverty.

She also encouraged them to screen for cancer, to undergo eye testing and for blood pressure.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane also visited the Ndlemane Primary School and handed over school uniforms, toiletry and school bags. She also visited three resource deprived families and handed over groceries and promised to build them houses. Together with the MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Mr. Pat Ngomane, Premier Mtshweni Tsipane also honoured Women in Tourism and Agriculture at Milan Lodge.

"U spoke to business women and gave them an opportunity to express themselves. They asked us to come and help them with gardening in Nkomazi. We will assist you with tractors and seeds to ensure that you succeed with your projects.

The time for you to be self-reliant has come. We are building the International Fresh Produce Market so that you can take everything you have farmed and sell it and make good profit," she said.

She said that government also went to Russia to showcase women talent.

"To show that you are doing great work, they were interested and requested more of this work. We commit ourselves that we want to enhance the lives of women and emancipate them," said Premier Mthweni-Tsipane.



Mpumalanga celebrates the year of indigenous languages

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government held the Provincial Heritage Day Celebration at the Acornhoek Sports Ground. The event attracted scores of spectators and participants from the Bushbuckridge local Municipality. During the celebration, the province's diversity in dance, music and literature books was showcased.

September is Heritage Month in South Africa, the 24th day of the month known as National Heritage Day.

Each year in early spring, people across the nation get together to eat and drink in order to celebrate what makes all South Africans unique.

This year's theme was "Celebrating South Africa's literacy classics in the year of indigenous languages".

The importance of heritage in developing countries like South Africa cannot be over-emphasized. This is due to its economic, historical, tourist, educational and research significance.

Heritages refer to the riches of extinct and extant societies which are of historic, educational, recreational, and economic importance, preserved and handed over from one generation to another. They are significant endowments emanating from man and nature.

On the other hand, society consist of inter-related parts which work for the integration and stability of the whole system. All cultural traits are useful parts of the society they occur, the customary patterns of behaviour, belief, attitudes.

Also, social structures and social institutions exist in societies to meet or perform psychological and biological needs for the people. It provides cohesion in the social order by promoting a sense of belonging and collective consciousness in terms of unity, oneness and fostering peaceful co-existence.

In the Mpumalanga Province, MEC for Agriculture, Mr. Vusi Shongwe delivered a key note address on behalf of the Mpumalanga Premier Ms. Refilwe Mtshweni- Tsipane. He said that the Mpumalanga Province is blessed with the regal glory

of Amandebele to its west, the effervescent grace of AmaSwati to its east, the indomitable sophistication of the Tsongas and Mapulane to its North East.

"A year in which it is imperative for us to preserve our indigenous languages and ensure that we establish a link between language, development, peace and reconciliation," he said.

"Indeed, through unity in diversity, we prove true the adage that "today's unity is a triumph over yesterday's division and conflict."

He stated that the exponential increase in cases of gender-based violence in the last few weeks remained a blight on government's commitment to protecting women and children. He mentioned that the incidences indicated a true and depraved deviation from moral consciousness.

"The measures announced by His Excellency the President of the Republic, Cyril Ramaphosa, as well as the reallocation of R1.1billion towards initiatives to strengthen initiatives that protect women and children are indeed a welcome aid in the fight against gender-based violence," he said.

"We shall ensure that the Provincial Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison provides the maximum level of protection and empathy to all who report instances of gender-based violence in our police stations," he added.

Furthermore, he added that the Department of Social Development shall ensure that more social workers are trained with the requisite emotional intelligence to support victims of gender-based violence.

Another great scourge that he addressed which afflicted the nation was the violent incidents of xenophobia across the nation.

MEC Shongwe condemned the acts and commended the citizens of the Mpumalanga province for not engaging in any form of violence and xenophobic attacks.

"We must always remember the support received by the liberation movement across the African continent during our fight with the crime against humanity that was apartheid.

"As we reflect on these social ills, we must find

within our diversity, dominant values and ethos that binds communities together and ensures social cohesion," he continued.

In an effort to preserve indigenous languages, MEC Shongwe said that the Mpumalanga Provincial Government shall establish the Mpumalanga Provincial Language Unit within the Department of Culture, Sports and Recreation.

He said that this unit shall amongst others, ensure that there is an increase in the usage of African indigenous languages in schools and all public institutions across the Province.

"We recognize the strategic importance of libraries as centers to preserve our recorded and codified heritage. We shall construct a further 15 libraries to supplement the existing 116 across the Province.

Furthermore, he stated that the Mpumalanga Provincial Government shall continue to maintain the infrastructure at key sites of heritage such as the Pilgrim's rest as well as the various cultural villages across the Province.

In recognition of Mpumalanga as a tourism destination, he said that the tourism strategy of the Province must encompass the incorporation of heritage sites, including the timeless Pilgrim's Rest town, the rich and artistic cultural villages of KwaNdebele as well as the Makhonjwa mountains, which have been recently identified as a global heritage site.

MEC Shongwe requested everyone in and across the Province to introspect and ask themselves whether they are doing their part in preserving their rich heritage.

"Ask yourselves if your conduct will allow your descendants to inherit the richness of your heritage in light of the cosmopolitan approach to everyday life. May we all celebrate, with relentless pride, the regal nature of our cultures, customs and traditions. May we afford the same level of respect to other cultures and traditions.

I urge the people of Mpumalanga to continue to define unity in purpose and to give practical meaning to the term rainbow nation," he concluded.

Agriculture is key for SA's economy – says Deputy President



The 2019 Mpumalanga Show has come and gone... what an exciting, enthusiastic, broader and better Show it was, with lots of activities and entertainment. It attracted scores of people, including those from neighbouring Swaziland and Mozambique; and it surely inspired potential investors, who opened up to new ideas and business opportunities.

The 3rd annual Mpumalanga Show - held from Thursday 29th August to Sunday 01st of September 2019 at Mbombela Stadium - was also attended by Deputy President David Mabuza on the Saturday, who said he was very impressed with the show that's aimed at showcasing the best the Province can offer in Agriculture, Forestry, Wildlife, Tourism and related sectors.

Mabuza graced the occasion and addressed the revelers at the Show, indicating that Mpumalanga contributes eminently to the country's GDP mainly through the agriculture sector. "As we embark on the land reform programme, which has gained traction with the resolution of Parliament to amend Section 25 of the Constitution, we will also in tandem ensure economic growth and continued support to farmers. Our agriculture continues to be a pivotal part of our economy. Our forestry gives us timber that supports other sectors like mining, rail and road construction, housing construction, furniture manufacturing, paper and pulp, ecotourism and many other opportunities of agricultural nature," cited Mabuza.

The Show was officially opened by Agriculture MEC Vusi Shongwe, who represented Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane. He was accompanied by MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Pat Ngomane. Among others, the event offered a variety of festivities, including demonstrations by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), traditional dancers, exhibitors from different sectors, including entertainment by Afrikaans, jazz, gospel offered by national artists like Rebecca Malope, Khaya Mthethwa and Lira.

Khulile wins national award

Middleburg-based piggery farmer Khulile Mahlalela is the 2019 winner of the Ministerial Special Awards for Young Female Entrepreneur, as announced by Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Thoko Didida during the national DAFF Female Entrepreneur Awards held in Cape Town on 29th August 2019. The 20th DAFF FEA awards celebrated the strides made by women in agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors during Women's Month, hosted in partnership with Total South Africa.

This year's theme, "Celebrating two decades of women's victory in agriculture, forestry and fisheries" attests to the department's ongoing commitment in paying tribute to the efforts and contribution by women, young females and women with disabilities for the roles they play towards ensuring food security, poverty alleviation, job creation and economic growth in the sector.

The DAFF FEA programme was initiated in 1999 by the former Department of Agriculture under the name "Female Farmer of the Year Competition". However, as DAFF's mandate was expanded to include Forestry and Fisheries in 2009, the programme was renamed DAFF Female Entrepreneur Awards in 2010.

During her key note address at the awards ceremony, Minister Thoko Didiza said, "Today, we celebrate those who have worked very hard and are the beneficiaries of these awards. Through their hard work and achievements, we encourage other women to also rise up to the challenge."

Winners in other categories announced as follows:

The Best Female Worker: Katrina Nxangani from the Free State;

Best Subsistence Producer: Tholakele Sibuya from KwaZulu-Natal;

Top Entrepreneur: Smallholder - Happiness Makgamatho from the Limpopo;

Top Entrepreneur: Processing - Daphne Neethling from the Western Cape;

Top Entrepreneur: Commercial - Mmathoko Mabula from the Limpopo;

Top Entrepreneur: Export Markets - Berene Damons from the Western Cape.

The Minister's special awards for the female entrepreneur with disability in the sector went to Matebogo Mouwane from Gauteng.

The overall winner based on the highest scoring points went to Mmathoko Mabula from the Limpopo.

MEC Vusi Shongwe and some of his managers were in Cape Town to witness Khulile ascending the stage, to claim her prize. Earlier in the month, Khulile had become an Overall Winner in the provincial leg of the DAFF FEA competition.





Turning the tide on transport infrastructure delivery

Just a day before Freedom Day, Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane and MEC Gillion Mashego led a delegation of dignitaries to Mkhondo Local Municipality, accompanied by the Traditional Leadership and the Executive Mayors of Mkhondo Local and Gert Sibande District municipalities, Cllrs Vusi Motha and Muzi Chirwa respectively to conduct a sod turning ceremony for the rehabilitation of Klipwal road.

A fully packed marquee defined the high spirit of excitement exhibited by community members who came in numbers to witness the sod turning

ceremony of the long awaited rehabilitation of D2486 road from N2 to Klipwal in Mkhondo Local Municipality.

The approximately R88 million project is expected to create over 100 work opportunities for the locals. In the absence of any anticipated delays, the project is planned for a period of 13 months. The scope of work includes construction of base and asphalt surfaces, removal and replacement of existing culvert pipes, installation of concrete kerbs, road markings and installation of road signage.

Local residents could not hide their excitement over

the project which will not only improve access to social amenities but comes with a handful work and business opportunities. The local ward councilor and resident of Klipwal village, Cllr Manana welcomed government's intervention.

"This project will provide better and safe mobility for our rural community who depends on transport infrastructure to access services and community facilities. And mostly critical, to address the poverty challenge as it aims to appoint local people, we could not be happier to witness such an act of service delivery," said Cllr Manana.



Mpumalanga officially launches oncology services at Rob Ferreira hospital

Tuesday the 27th of August 2019 marked a historic day for the Mpumalanga Department of Health when MEC for the Department, Sasekani Manzini officially launched Oncology services at Rob Ferreira Hospital. The purpose for launching the services is to provide safe cancer care within the province and improve quality of care.

The Mpumalanga Department of Health identified a need for an oncology treatment center offering chemotherapy services within Rob Ferreira hospital which is one of the two tertiary hospitals in the province. The launch marked the beginning of a new era for the majority of cancer patients who used to travel long distance to Steve Biko Academic hospital in Gauteng which is more than 300km away. When giving her keynote address MEC Manzini said "With the launch of oncology services, we have partnered with Wits University and we hope

to transform the future of patients in Mpumalanga. Working together with a dedicated teams of oncologists and other key partners like Bristol-Myers Squibb, CANSA and Right to Care, we will drive the change that the community needs in terms of cancer care through continual learning, creative thinking and collective desire to positively impact the lives of every person touched by cancer"

MEC further said "It is of utmost importance for the province to start establishing sub-specialty services in the province in order to: minimise the province's dependency on Gauteng province as this further retards the province's ability to carry its mandate to provide comprehensive services to the people of Mpumalanga. Currently patients who need oncology services are referred to various hospitals outside the province at great expense and inconvenience to the patient and families. Our plan is to provide more of this service to other

hospitals. A fully equipped Oncology Unit will be incorporated in the Business Case for the New Tertiary Hospital in Witbank, which will be able to provide a full package of oncology services including in-house radiation therapy for the province" said MEC Manzini.

Dr Nokwanda Zuma, an Oncologist at Rob Ferreira hospital explained how the Oncology services are offered at the hospital. "The Day Ward is temporarily utilized for the Oncology patients pending the renovations of the Old Rehab Centre that will become the Oncology Ward with a capacity of 12 beds for inpatients.

Mpho Shisane(not her real name) expressed excitement in receiving the services at Rob Ferreira. "I am very happy that I am one of the first patients to receive the service. I am a bit nervous because I have never underwent Chemotherapy but I believe everything is going to go well".



Healthy lifestyle lowers serious illness and early mortality

The MEC for Health Ms Sasekani Manzini launched Healthy Lifestyle campaign under the broader theme “CHECKA IMPILO”. The launch took place at The City of Mbombela Municipality, Kanyamazane Stadium on 25 July 2019. The Department of Health’s mandate is to promote healthy life style for all the people living in Mpumalanga hence the launch is intending to raise awareness on healthy lifestyle to influence behaviour change and improve their health in order to live healthier and longer.

The MEC Manzini and Head:Health Dr Savera Mohangi were joined by more 300 Gogo’s in Aerobics and football games. This is part of the call made by the MEC Sasekani Manzini during her Policy and Budget Speech 2019/2020 to create and launch a healthy lifestyle awareness campaign to encourage regular physical activity for healthy bodies and increase the average of male and female life expectancy at birth to 70.

When addressing the participants MEC Manzini said “A healthy lifestyle is a way of living that lowers the risk of being seriously ill or dying

early, and is a valuable resource for reducing the incidence and impact of health, for coping with life stressors and for improving quality of life. Not all diseases are preventable, but a large proportion of deaths, particularly those from coronary heart disease and lung cancer, can be avoided”. She further said Health is not just about the absence of disease, but it is also about physical, mental and social wellbeing. When a healthy lifestyle is adopted and encouraged, a more positive role model is provided for other people in the families.





Education and Health Safety Indaba to tackle violence in schools and health centres

The Mpumalanga Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Health hosted the Mpumalanga Education and Health Indaba on 28 and 29 August 2019.

The objectives of the Indaba were to ensure that Education centres and Health facilities are safe and secured for education professionals and health practitioners as well as learners and patients and those who visit these establishments.

Particular attention and focus for the Indaba were to strengthen and re-inforce the provincial integrated school safety strategy, identify contributory factors to school violence attacks, initiate community activism around school safety, strengthen the implementation of integrated safety plans at local level, mobilize community based structures to support schools and to maximize support for vulnerable learners.

The Indaba held commissions that looked various topics including: The Impact of Violence on Teachers and Health Practitioners,

The role of Policies, Systems and Structures in managing safety in schools and health facilities, Learner and Patient Safety, Safety in Communities and Safety Equipment, Infrastructure and Its Importance on Health, Teaching and Learning.

The relevant stakeholders were invited to the Indaba and these included sister departments such as Social Development and Community Safety Security and Liaison, SAPS, Department of Justice and Correctional Services, The Institute of Security Studies, NGOs and learners' formations, labour unions in the two sectors and labour federations.

The Education and Safety Indaba was held under the theme: Strengthening Safety Networks to Enhance Security in Schools and health Facilities. Delivering his Keynote Address, the MEC for Education, Mr. Bonakele Majuba said:

"We have evidenced the rise of violent acts in our public spaces and the irresponsible publishing and

perpetuating of such acts through social media. Our problem is more than just violence or safety of our facilities, but a social fabric disintegration.

What we see manifesting as violence in our public spaces is a reflection of societal or domestic problems that our children observe or experience on daily basis because violence is rife in our communities.

As a nation we are faced with challenges such as poverty, HIV/Aids, child headed homes, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, gangsterism, racial tensions, violent service delivery protests and we believe these socio-economic challenges has an impact in the behavioural patterns of our people.

We recently witnessed spate of violent incidents in our schools and health facilities across our province."

The Department has over the past year witnessed a spike in incidence of violence including learner stabblings, attacks on both teachers and learners and that is worrisome hence the need to put heads together in search for a solution.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education believes that these behavioral challenges are an indication of cracks in societal fibre and a decline in values. It is on this basis that the involvement of society is sought to come to a lasting solution to these matters.

"We believe it is not a matter that we can just solve by posting security guards, CCTV Cameras and alarm systems in our schools, clinics and hospitals. We are not under playing the need to provide adequate security in our schools, clinics and hospitals.

We further need to find ways to influence positive behaviour, regard of human life, national pride and a sense of ownership and responsibility in our communities.

We must intensify programmes that seek to focus on promotion of social cohesion, fight against domestic violence, support to child headed homes and provision of recreational facilities to communities," said MEC

Majuba.

The Indaba concluded its business on 29 August 2019 with the highlight being the MEC for Health, Ms. Sasekani Manzini making the declaration for the Indaba which stated that both the Departments of Health and Education as well as all stakeholders and other Government Departments that attended will;

- Work collaboratively to implement programmes on social cohesion, promotion of Ubuntu, war on drug and substance abuse.
- Strengthen peer education programmes including the Learner Code of conduct, safety and HIV and AIDS policies.
- Embrace a public service campaigns with sector unions to promote patients, learners, workers' rights and the safety of patients and workers in education and health institutions.
- Monitor security management, integration of systems, provision of adequate working tools,
- Lobby for budget to be made available to support safety and security initiatives including provision adequate security officers,
- Commit to involve all stakeholders including communities reviewing, drafting, implementing and monitoring of all policies concerning safety issues,
- Lobby COGTA to revitalize and ensure the functionality of war rooms,
- Condemn the destruction and torching of public facilities during service delivery protest,
- Lobby Department of Culture, Sport, Art and Recreation to revitalize moral regeneration program.

For safety to prevail at all educational and health centres, the contribution and involvement of the whole of society is needed. It is for that reason that a call is made to all and sundry to join the call to make education and health centers safe. Government cannot do it alone; this is a societal matter.



Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane pledges to fight corruption in the Province

In order to fight corruption and to promote good governance by fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, and integrity, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane has pledged a serious fight against corruption at the National Anti-Corruption strategy (NACS) workshop that was held at the Ngwenyama lodge. She said that government can no longer sit idly and not address the damaging consequences of corruption in the Republic broadly and specifically in the Province.

Mr Welcome Nkuna, Acting General Manager, IMU, said that the aim of the workshop was to elicit comments on the proposed National Anti-Corruption Strategy, to solicit provincial stakeholders' input on the proposed Strategy Pillars, to seek provincial stakeholders support of the process and content of the NACS and to secure consensus on the approach to preventing and combating corruption.

The workshop was attended by Members of the Executive Committee, Head of Departments, Accounting Officers, Senior Managers, Labour, the Business sector, Non-Governmental Organizations and churches from all spheres and tiers of government across the Province.

At the workshop, the participants broke into 3 commissions, discussed and made submissions to the strategy (NACS) which is informed by the 9 pillars. The issue that the participants musty felt should be added to the draft of the strategy was the matter relating to Ethics, which they mostly felt is a thorny issue.

During her address at the workshop, Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane also stated that the National Department of Economic Development, Trade and Industry quantified corruption as having shred R27 billion from the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

"In essence, corruption limits our ability as

Government to fight the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality because the R27 billion shred by the GDP translates into 76 000 jobs that could have been created to alleviate the high rate of unemployment," she said.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane outlined that the recent enactment of the Public Audit Amendment Act is a step in the right direction in the enforcement of the accountability.

She stated that amongst other remedial action outlined, the Act grants the Auditor General, the requisite authority to refer suspected material irregularities to law enforcement agencies for investigation and subsequent prosecution. She further stated that the Act further obliges the accounting officer who oversaw a material transgression to take reasonable steps to recover the funds or be held personally liable for the reimbursement of funds deemed to have been utilized in an irregular, unauthorized or wasteful manner. Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that the approach that government adopts in fighting the endemic cancer of corruption must be premised on a fundamental review of legislative prescripts that govern the functioning of government in order to ensure that the law does not allow room for the intentional misinterpretation of prescripts to achieve personal financial gain.

She went further to state that the review will be critical as networks of corruption employ complex and sophisticated measures to obscure corrupt deeds and hide the proceeds of crime.

"These networks utilize the fact that law is often vaguely worded and the presence of contradictory regulations in order to hide corrupt conduct. A prime example of this is evident in the trend of the corruptive budgeting cycle," she said.

She added that this results in corruption starting during the planning stage during the preparation of

annual budgets.

"Goods and services are budgeted for, with inflated rates, often without sufficient explanation and these become embedded in annual budgets.

In most instances, the problem is further compounded by the fact that there had been no effective consequence management for the transgressors," she commented.

Another crucial factor that Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane highlighted during her address was that it has been evident in the ongoing Commissions of Inquiries that whistleblowers have been subjected not only to limited professional growth but also to unbearable emotional toil.

"The victimization and isolation of whistleblowers defeats the purposes of the Protected Disclosure Act which is to expose corrupt activity within the public and private sectors," she said.

"We must ensure that every government institution develops a whistleblower policy that is concomitant and relevant to the dynamics of the institution and is centered upon the protection of the employee," she commented.

Premier Mtshweni-Tsipane said that government must ensure that it joins hands with leaders of faith based organizations as well as NGOs in order to drive the moral regeneration of the Mpumalanga Province in order to collectively fight the scourge of corruption.

"Let us determine a strategic framework that shall achieve the dual goal of developing the Mpumalanga Province whilst ensuring that we contribute to the NDP goal of ensuring that South Africa has a zero tolerance for corruption by the year 2030," she said.

Mpumalanga was the last Province to be consulted on the NACS. All the submissions from the provinces will be consolidated into one report, after the finalization of the whole process the report will be forwarded to the Cabinet for the President's approval.