



Mpumalanga, Sverdlovsk to implement the foreign, economic and humanitarian relations agreement

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government and the Government of Sverdlovsk Region (Russian Federation) have signed the implementation plan for the agreement on international and foreign economic relations in trade, economic, scientific, technical cultural and humanitarian areas.

The Russian delegation led by the Minister of International and Foreign Affairs, Hon Vasiliy Kozlov was hosted by the MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, Mr. Vusi Shongwe, who represented the Mpumalanga Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane.

MEC Shongwe said the two countries shared a common goal and believes that they will cooperate in terms of implementing their plans. He also indicated that the visit by the delegation is a continuation of previous agreements that were signed by the Deputy President Mr David Mabuza Premier when he was a

Premier of the Province.

“In our Province there is nothing that we do not produce, we are experts in machinery, Information and technology, pharmaceutical and chemical, labour resources, construction, we take the second place with gas and oil in the federation, we are also the best in manufacturing solutions for maternity, and even now we are ready to face the challenge of the Corona virus pandemic,” he said.

“We have 60 universities and 200 000 students studying in our region, the future lies within our children, whatever we do now, we do it for our children. I can also continue to say that we are also rich in areas of social, cultural activities and tourism. We will also be soon arranging a conference devoted to issues of women and people with disabilities, we would like to also collaborate in those areas,” he added.

” Now we have a good understanding of your region

from a far distance just by the presentation you have delivered unto us. There are a number of similarities between these two provinces and we are prepared for any form of collaboration between the two provinces.,” MEC Shongwe commented.

“Our priority in our Provincial government is education, health, economic development, arts and culture. We also boast with our world-class parks and reserves, astonishing botanical gardens, rivers and lakes in the province. The Kruger National Park is a jewel in South Africa’s tourism crown, this also includes Potholes, God’s Window, and Maputo Corridor that is bordering the Mpumalanga Province, Swaziland and Maputo,” he added.

“We will send a delegation of technocrats from the Mpumalanga government to visit Russia’s Sverdlovsk region in July 2020 to continue with engagements pertaining to implementations,” MEC Shongwe concluded.



First Fortune 40 Group graduates

Agriculture MEC Vusi Shongwe says a new approach will be followed when recruiting and considering new beneficiaries of the Fortune 40 Young Farmer Incubation Programme. He was speaking during the graduation of 150 young incubates who received AGRI-SETA accredited certificates in Mbombela on Friday, January 31st after they were part of the programme since it was launched in September 2015. Over the years, they completed

their theoretical and practical training. A process to recruit new F40 beneficiaries has already started in earnest in the month of February, to form part of the programme for the next 3 years. "This time the recruitment will be a different one, and we must be strict and prioritize people who already show some level of passion for agriculture, not those interested in stipends", said Shongwe. He called on the group to go out and play a part in creating employment for others.

The Fortune 40 programme is aimed at encouraging previously disadvantaged youth into the field of agriculture, to make them sustainable farmers in poultry, aqua-culture, vegetable production, livestock farming and tractor mechanic. The graduating group has been applauded for their patience and perseverance while the programme was being implemented, which had its own challenges as it was started from scratch.



26 new vets deployed in all state vet offices

The Department has officially welcomed a group of 26 fresh Veterinarians who were part of the 2019 class at University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute. The Vets, who converged for a two-day induction on January 2nd and 3rd before hitting the ground running, hail from various provinces but they chose Mpumalanga for their 2020 year-long Compulsory Community Service (CCS) programme, coordinated by the national Department of Agriculture, Forestry

and Fisheries. Acting head of Department Mr Lucky Monareng officially welcomed the animal doctors, saying they join the Department at a time when their services are desperately needed due to outbreaks of diseases. This, at a time when measures to curb the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease are still in place. Mr Monareng called on the new Vets to feel free and be innovative, because they "are bringing with fresh ideas because they are familiar with all the latest technologies being

used and applied when dealing with animal health issues", he said.

The CCS Programme aims at promoting accessibility of veterinary services particularly in under-served and resource-poor areas. The Vets will render community service, closely monitoring any possible outbreak of diseases of economic importance, including attending to pets. They have since been placed in all State Vet offices all over the municipalities, with an aim to boost the scarce-skills field of veterinary services.



Festive Season road deaths reduced by over 20% in Mpumalanga

The increased cooperation among the stakeholders and law enforcement visibility are some of the reasons why Mpumalanga Province recorded reductions in fatalities, fatal crashes and serious injuries for the period 1 December 2019 to 15 January 2020. This is according to the MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Ms. Gabisile Shabalala who was speaking after the tabling of the Festive Season Arrive Alive Report by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Fikile Mbalula in Pretoria recently. Mpumalanga was also named the second best performing authority in reducing in reducing road traffic fatalities for the period under review. During the period, 144 people were killed in the province as compared to 187 road deaths that were recorded last year and this represents a reduction of 23%. There was a further reduction of 12, 23% in fatal crashes because for the period under review, 122 fatal crashes took place as compared to last year's 139. A further decrease of 36, 51% was made with regard to serious injuries because only 487 people were affected while last year it was about 767 people who were seriously injured as a result of road crashes. The only increase was in slight injuries which went up from 961 to 1005 and this represents an upward trend of 4,38%. Of the total number of people who have perished

due to these crashes, 51 of them were drivers while 47 passengers and 46 pedestrians did not survive. A reduction of 36, 99 % was made with regard to pedestrians' deaths as compared to last year's 73 pedestrian fatalities. The statistics have further revealed that 66 fatalities occurred in Nkangala District followed by Gert Sibande District 35 and Ehlanzeni District with 43 respectively. The N4 toll road has seen 23 people losing their loves as compared to last year's 27 road deaths. It is followed by various municipal roads which collectively recorded 10 fatalities. R573 (Moloto) and R38 roads have seen crashes claiming five lives each. Other problematic routes include R555, R536, R38, R546, R40, R38, N17, N2 and R23. Most of the fatalities were as a result of pedestrians being hit by moving vehicles and this accounted for 46 fatal injuries. 22 lives were also claimed as a consequence of head on collisions. Vehicles overturning and side swipes collisions each led to 21 deaths. MEC Shabalala said although there are reductions in fatalities and fatal crashes, the number of people who die on the road is still too high. She added that one road death is one too many. The MEC mentioned that the increased law enforcement visibility has also contributed towards improving the situation. She thanked the law enforcement officers who worked

very hard during the holiday season saying they need to continue with the same vigour even beyond the holiday season. She also praised all stakeholders, including the media, for their participation in government's road safety initiatives. "You must continue to show no mercy to any errant driver behaviour so that more lives are saved on the road. We also appreciate the motorists who behaved well because was it not for them the situation could have been worse. We want every person to be become active agents of road safety by not only using the road safely but by also reporting any bad driver behaviour," Shabalala added. On the other hand, the MEC believes that with harsher punishing of traffic offenders, a huge impact will be made in government's road safety efforts. She has therefore called on law enforcers at all levels to ensure that they spur no effort in bringing to book any person found to be using the road in a reckless manner. Meanwhile the MEC also indicated that the department will continue priority routes saying that monitoring will be strengthened in such routes particularly during busy weekends and holiday seasons. MEC Shabalala has further sent her heartfelt condolences to all the families who have lost their loved during the Festive Season and she has also wished those who may still be in various hospitals across the province a speedy recovery.



Men should be at the forefront of the war against gender based violence

Men should be at the forefront of the war against gender based violence by among others instilling good values in their children especially boys. Boys should be taught by their fathers to respect girls, their mothers and all women. This is according to Mpumalanga MEC for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, Ms. Gabisile Shabalala. MEC Shabalala was speaking during the provincial launch of 16 Days of Activism for no violence against women and children campaign at Mandela Village in KwaMhlanga in November last year. “Men should instil good values in their own children such that these boys grow up respecting every person, young and old including all women they come across even when they have grown up,” Shabalala said. She went on to state that parents must refrain from quarrelling in front of their children because the minors become negatively affected and they will also not respect other people especially women. “The habit of belittling one another in front of children is also

emotional and psychological abuse,” the MEC said. “Psychological abuse is even worse because it cannot be seen yet the scars are long lasting and victims become affected in many negative ways sometimes without them even realizing.” Therefore, adults should resolve their differences in an amicable manner and also seek professional help where necessary,” Shabalala added. The MEC told community members that government was doing all in its might to eradicate the scourge. However, she insisted that communities should work with the police in the fight against the scourge because it is the responsibility of everyone and not government alone to bring an end to gender based violence. She said all crime suspects must be reported to the police so that perpetrators are brought to book. Shabalala has further implored community members not to withdraw abuse cases because that makes the cycle not to end as penetrators go unpunished. The MEC also mentioned that more programmes

that are geared towards empowering young people should be implemented as young people often become victims or perpetrators of abuse in many relationships that have gone wrong. She has thus called on community leaders including traditional leadership to have specific programmes that will assist the youth. She has also called for more empowerment of women with economic and job opportunities so that they do not become vulnerable to abuse. Last year’s campaign is commemorated under the theme: “Enough is Enough – 365 Days to end Gender-Based violence and Femicide (GBVF).” The 16 Days Campaign is a United Nations campaign which takes place. The launch was supported by various government departments and state entities, Thembisile Hani Local Municipality, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations such as Women Against Abuse and Men Against Abuse and traditional leadership in the area.



Matsulu paves the way to address unemployment

The community of Matsulu will now enjoy the benefits of service delivery through the construction of the new road. The D2978 road connects Matsulu A and Matsulu B at Ehlanzeni district in the City of Mbombela. This is one of the projects that showcases progress made in the delivery of transport infrastructure in the province. The Department invested at least R24 million towards the construction of this road. The scope of the road include amongst others, the

rehabilitation of the road layer works, surfacing, storm water control including new culverts, subsoil drainage, v-drains, kerbs, walkways, road signs and road markings. The project will be implemented using labour intensive methods in a bid to maximise job opportunities. According to the Project Manager, Mr Bheki Shabangu, the construction of the 2.14 km stretch road has already started with at least 32 local people employed on the project and it also provided local SMMEs an opportunity to participate. The much

anticipated project started in September 2019 and is expected to be completed in April 2020. One of the workers on the project is the 29 year old, Mr Mduduzi Mathebula from Matsulu. He started working on the project in September 2019 as a labourer. He said that he is now able to take care of his family since he started working on the project. "It feels good to have a job and earn a salary every month and my life is changed now," he explained.



Sikhulile circuit brings new hope for Msogwaba community

The Provincial Government has a vision to roll out service delivery to ensure that all citizens in the province get closer or in touch with government. In the previous years; government offices were centralised in one place; making it difficult for other areas to access services from various offices. It is all in the past now since the Department has built various offices in the province to bring closer service delivery to the people.

As an implementing agent, the Department has now completed the construction of Sikhulile Circuit Office at Msogwaba in Ehlanzeni District. The Department has done an exceptional job in delivering the state-of-the-art structure. This has been done to ensure that communities' access information and get assisted easily thus expanding service delivery. It will also help to improve educational access and help schools in the local circuit to achieve excellence in learning and

teaching. This state-of-the-art circuit office is equipped with 10 offices, 6 administration rooms, 4 store rooms, 6 toilets, boardroom and kitchen. The project commenced in November 2018 and was completed in December 2019. The structure was built at a tune of approximately R9 million. In an effort to combat unemployment, the project created more than 45 work opportunities for local people and SMMEs through sub-contracting.



Government takes a stance in prioritising education

Gone are the days where learners used to be crammed in one classroom because there was not enough space available. The Government has made an apex priority in education. Through the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport as a custodian of Public Infrastructure the province today boost high standard of Education Infrastructure. The Department has since constructed number of schools that includes the construction of Klipspringer Primary School in the City of Mbombela which is

underway. The school which is over 40 years old, has old structures and accommodates about 781 learners. Hence the construction of the school will address challenges such as overcrowding due to the influx of children from neighbouring communities, including Matsulu, Kamagugu and Kanyamazane coming to urban schools. According to the Project Manager, Ms Pinky Makhongele, the Department is working tirelessly to ensure that the project is delivered on time. The scope of work includes the demolition of

existing structures, alterations, construction of 6 classrooms, 2 grade R centres and 10 toilets. The project commenced in July 2019 and is projected to be completed in September 2020. The implementation of the project will be done at a cost of approximately R9 million. The project has already contributed significantly towards the local economy. In the process, the project created more than 40 jobs opportunities for local people and SMMEs through sub-contracting.

Glimpse of hope as Msholoji gets a new school

Msholoji, a new settlement near White River in Mbombela, is to get a new school as a construction of a new primary school got under way in 2019/20 financial year. This settlement has shown rapid growth/ expansion since its inception, thus necessitating investment in social infrastructure such as schools, health facilities and other social amenities. The construction of Boschrand primary school was scheduled to begin in August 2019 but got delayed due to stakeholders' engagements. The new school will be constructed at a cost of R51.7 Million and like many such projects, it is expected to create much needed job opportunities for the local people, provide training and help stimulate economic activity through subcontracting to local business people. The projected is scheduled to be completed by November 2020.

