



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU - NATAL - ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU - NATALI
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
UMNYANGO WEZOKUTHUTHA

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 08/06/09

**MEC CELE PROMISES TO LIFT THE SUSPENSION OF TAXI OPERATIONS IN
NONGOMA PROVIDED PERPETRATORS ARE NAMED AND ARRESTED.**

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Bheki Cele visited the community of Nongoma today (08/06/09) at the packed Nongoma Multi-Purpose Centre with all stakeholders and Members of the Nongoma Taxi Association also present. MEC Cele promised to lift the suspension of taxi operations provided the names of all the perpetrators of the current violence that led to deaths are brought forward and arrests are made. Accompanying the MEC was Deputy Provincial Commissioner of Police, Mr. Fani Masemola.

In his address MEC Cele indicated that in 2007 the area was stricken by acts of taxi-related violence and interventions by his department led to conflicting members signing a peace agreement. Part of the undertakings that were made then was that there would be no more bloodshed and all criminal elements will be rooted out, particularly those who are paid to commit murders (Izinkabi) and it was agreed that should there be any bloodshed due to taxi violence, government would suspend operations. MEC Cele indicated that since 2007 to date almost twenty (20) people have lost their lives due to the ongoing disputes amongst the members of the Nongoma Taxi Association.

He further highlighted his dissatisfaction of these ongoing conflicts as they put the lives of passengers and other citizens at risk. He also referred to an instance whereby interventions to bring peace and stability in the area were made by King Goodwill Zwelithini and conflicting members signed a peace agreement.

Media Liaison & Public Relations Directorate

Street Address: 172 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201 Republic of South Africa
Postal Address: Private Bag X9043, Pietermaritzburg, 3200 Republic of South Africa
Tel: (27) (33) 355 8624 Fax: (27) (33) 355 8632
Internet: <http://www.kzntransport.gov.za>

Upon arrival at Nongoma, MEC Cele was saddened by the plight of women carrying babies in the cold weather walking to the Nongoma city centre. MEC Cele indicated that during the elections 32 illegal fire arms were confiscated in the area and a number of arrests made to that effect. He indicated concern about the state of safety in the area and promised to put plans into place that will deal with criminal elements in the area.

The MEC indicated that the only condition for him to lift the suspension would be for the perpetrators of the current violence in the taxi operations to be brought forward. He said subsequent to the submission of names of the perpetrators he will urge members of the Nongoma Taxi Association to discuss their internal issues around the table like civil people and not with guns. During proceedings one member of the community named four people as known perpetrators of the bloodshed in the area. MEC Cele did not take this allegation lightly as investigations by the police will be done and arrests will be expected to that effect.

"We cannot continue counting dead bodies as if we counting bread and eggs. Our mandate is to maintain law and order and those who do not adhere to the laws of this Country will be dealt with decisively. We realize that there is a need to have taxi operations running in the area however we need to ensure that the public is transported by a safe, reliable, affordable and accessible means of transport. Operations can resume in six hours, six days, six weeks or even six years and it depends on how soon these outstanding matters are addressed and resolved. We are going to be firm on this matter and the safety of our people will not be compromised," said Cele.

ENDS

Media Contact: Nonkululeko Mbatha (083 645 6252)

Media Liaison & Public Relations Directorate

Street Address: 172 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201 Republic of South Africa
Postal Address: Private Bag X9043, Pietermaritzburg, 3200 Republic of South Africa
Tel: (27) (33) 355 8624 Fax: (27) (33) 355 8632
Internet: <http://www.kzntransport.gov.za>