



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

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 16 June 2009

UPLIFTMENT OF TAXI OPERATIONS IN KWA-NONGOMA AREA

After having taken emergency measures (on the 4th of June through the Government Gazette) to normalize taxi operations in Kwa-Nongoma, the MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison Mr. Bheki Cele has come to a decision to lift the suspension of taxi operations in Nongoma effective from 12h00 midnight (16/06/09). This follows the spate of taxi killings, conflict and instability in this area which recently left three people dead, as well as a number of other past recent taxi violence that has taken approximately 20 lives since 2007 and left others with serious injuries.

Whilst it was always acknowledged that emergency measures will affect public transportation in this area especially our commuter's, consideration of public safety, restoration of peace and stability and the maintenance of law and order indicated the necessity of closing all routes operated by this association (Nongoma Taxi Association) until such time that public safety will be guaranteed and the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are apprehended.

It is important to mention that four suspects have been arrested in connection with the killings of two African males on the afternoon of the 27th of May 2009 who were shot whilst traveling with a kombi from Nongoma Village to Othinsangu area that was delivering passengers. Investigators are working around the clock to apprehend the perpetrator(s) involved in the killing of a member of the association who was shot and killed on the morning of the 24th of May 2009 at Ophondweni area (Dabhazi) and other investigations are still ongoing in relation to other taxi related incidents in this area taking into consideration the investigation complexities involving taxi related crimes.

Interventions have been made by the Department to the associations to cease acts of violence and resolve its internal dispute in a civilized manner. An undertaking has been made by the members of the association during their meetings and the Department on the 14th of June 2009 as part of the processes of achieving peace in that area. Within the association, the association has agreed to " ensure that there is peace within itself as well as that there shall be no further killings and taxi violence as a result of any dispute involving itself and in the event that this is not adhered to the Department must close its taxi operations for and indefinitely period.

A strong stern warning has been sent to the association that whilst a peace undertaking is welcomed as taken by itself through its general membership, government will not tolerate any non-adherence to this undertaking taking into consideration that this is not a first-time peace declaration. Government will do everything within its powers and its resources to: safe guard the interest of our public transport commuters, ensure peace and stability and the maintenance of law and order in this area, deal accordingly with perpetrators of taxi violence incidents and even to consider the **INDEFINITE** closure of taxi operations of this association if it fails to adhere to this peace declaration. This warning is also translated to all taxi associations operating in our province,

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whilst the Department respects the fact that public transport operators must make money and maximize profit, this maximization of profit must be done in accordance with the laws of the land, must not endanger the safety of our public transport commuters and any other road users. We further took note of the suffering by learners who were affected by this closure and realized the need to uplift the suspension.

"After having assessed the situation in this area coupled with the recent arrest of four suspects and other imminent arrests, relatively peace and stability and the assurance of total adherence to the peace declaration by the association, I hereby suspend the closure of all routes operated by this association on condition that this association will not involve itself in acts of taxi wars, intimidations, violence which will undermine and threaten public safety and peace and stability in this area and it shall observe and respect the laws of this country. The notice in terms of *Section 114 of KZN Public Transport Act, 2005 (ACT NO.3 OF 2005) No. 110* published on the 4th of June 2009 declaring the area of Nongoma as a "transport crisis area" will remain in force up until further notice," said Cele.

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