



transport

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MEDIA LIAISON AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

MEDIA STATEMENT

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MEC MCHUNU ANNOUNCES THAT GOVERNMENT WILL ASSIST WITH BURIALS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND WOMEN WHO DIED COMING FROM UMKHOSI WOMHLANGA (REED DANCE)

Eshowe-KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Willie Mchunu, has announced that government will provide full support to families with burials of children and women who died in a tragic bus accident near eShowe yesterday afternoon.

The deceased were returning from the Annual Umhlanga Reed Dance ceremony hosted by His Majesty King Zwelithini at his eNyokeni Palace in Nongoma when the driver lost control of the bus causing it to overturn on the R66 near eShowe.

MEC Mchunu led a government delegation that met with the families of the deceased today in Eshowe. MEC Mchunu expressed his deepest condolences on behalf of the provincial government, and sympathy with His Majesty, as well as the acting Premier and MEC of Education, Senzo Mchunu, for the loss.

Preliminary investigations reveal that the bus had been speeding when the driver lost control. It has also been found that traffic officials had earlier stopped the bus in Nongoma and found that the initial bus driver had been driving under the influence. The driver was arrested and detained in Nongoma, and subsequently replaced with another driver who was behind the wheel when the accident occurred.

The replacement bus driver is still at hospital and not dead as initially reported. The death toll still stands at nine, including seven girls and two women who had been acting as their guardians.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of yet more innocent lives in an accident that could have been avoided by strictly adhering to road traffic rules. These kinds of accidents shouldn't happen if people driving understood that they are responsible for the lives of their passengers," said Mchunu.

Mchunu said he was unhappy at the spate of accidents especially in the last three months which show a dramatic increase in road fatalities.

"In the months of July and August the number of road fatalities grew sharply, recording 339 people losing their lives on our roads," he said. "Already, on the second of September, we are talking about one of the most tragic and devastating of accidents recorded, and one has to ask, 'how many people would have lost their lives come December'," he said.

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"It pains me that innocent people and children are being killed due to reckless driving and other avoidable causes. I urge all road users and appeal to their consciences to take road safety seriously. On behalf of the government, i would like to send my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased," said Mchunu.

Mchunu said the department will conduct a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident.

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