

Reed Dance: 177 buses across the province have been inspected - only 146 passed and 31 failed as they were found to be unroadworthy

Media and Public Statement by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements, Siboniso Duma

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Durban Central Bus Depot: We wish to inform members of the fourth estate and the public at large that we are determined to save lives and ensure the safety of maidens travelling to the Reed Dance.

As you all know, we started Heritage Month with an historic meeting with His Majesty, King MisuZulu KaZwelithini held on September 5 in his Palace in Phongolo.

Amongst other issues that we discussed was the safety of maidens attending the Reed Dance.

The King singled out their safety as a top priority and we are complying.

Over the past 40 years, the Reed Dance has evolved to become not only a national event but an international event attracting high profile guests and tourists from different parts of the country and the globe.

The 2024 edition of the Reed Dance has already generated a huge interest with hotels fully booked in Zululand District Municipality.

More than 45 000 people are expected to attend, and accommodation is running out in other municipalities such as Umkhanyakude and King Cetshwayo.

High traffic volumes are being recorded on these municipality's main routes as guests are making their way to be part of this important event in our international calendar.

●Inspection of Buses and Taxis.

At this stage, I would like to turn my focus to the safety of maidens.

The safety of maidens is our priority and we are acting firmly in line with a mandate from His Majesty.

As guided by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) applicable Standards - SANS 10047 on the Testing of vehicles for Roadworthiness, we have deployed highly experienced and qualified examiners of motor vehicle across all district municipalities.

Their job is to rigorously conduct inspections of roadworthiness of 152 buses and 377 taxis hired by the Department of Art, Sport and Culture to transport maidens and matrons.

We wish to announce that at this stage we have inspected 177 buses across the province.

Only 146 passed and 31 failed.

In the Durban Central Depot, 67 buses have been inspected, and 3 failed the test.

They were found to be un-roadworthy.

We wish to commend our highly motivated team from the Department for their vigilance and professionalism.

This exercise has ensured that we save innocent lives and that the 31 buses are removed from our roads.

Clearly, these buses were just moving coffins on our roads and the worst could have happened.

Owners of the 31 buses have been informed to replace them with roadworthy buses, which are still going to be subjected to another inspection.

●35 Taxis inspected thus far

The team has thus far inspected 35 taxis and all of them have passed the inspection.

We wish to commend taxi operators for adhering to the rules of the road.

The inspection is continuing throughout the province and we remain firm on our resolve to ensure the safety of maidens.

We are focusing in inspecting buses/mini-bus taxis at depots prior to transporting maidens and people attending the Reed Dance.

●Announcement on interventions to minimize congestion caused by Trucks

At this stage, we wish to announce that a dedicated team from Road Traffic Inspectorate is working flat out with municipalities and key stakeholders.

Critically, we are working with the South African Freight Association to prevent truck congestion on major routes leading up to Enyokeni Royal Palace.

In particular, we are encouraging trucking companies to avoid using the following 6 major routes:-

- R66 Nongoma to Ulundi;
- R618 Nongoma to Hlabisa;
- R618 Nongoma to Vryheid;
- R66 Nongoma to Pongola;
- N2 Mpumalanga Province to or from Pongola/ Swaziland border/ Mkuze/ Mtubatuba;
- R66 – Gingindlovu to Ulundi (19);
- P234

We have resolved to ensure that trucks do not move around routes leading to Enyokeni during the Reed Dance.

We have undertaken to ensure visibility of the law enforcement agencies who will do AD-HOC stop and checks of buses and taxis.

In addition, we will:

1. Maintain high profile presence on all major routes;
2. Ensure effective traffic policing and compliance of rules of the road;
3. Ensure free flow of traffic at all times

In line with the call from His Majesty, we will also deploy as follows:

1. Pongola Satellite Station will be deployed on the N2 and Roads leading to Nongoma;
2. Ulundi RTI will be assisting from the R66 Ulundi 19 intersection to the R66 KwaCeza turnoff;
3. Ulundi Local Traffic will assist from Ulundi 19 through the CBD and leading to the Enyokeni turnoff;
4. Vryheid RTI will be assisting at the P34 Blood River crossing and the Vryheid Junction, P47 Lakeside intersection and P46 Hlobane road R618 to KwaNongoma and Mahhashini intersection;
5. Nongoma RTI will assist R66, Enyokeni turnoff and R618 Emahhashini Turnoff
6. Nongoma Local Traffic will assist on the R66, ENyokeni turnoff and R618 Emahhashini Turnoff and leading to the venue.

Motorists are advised to please be patient and alert while travelling on the route and follow all traffic signs.

Over the 40 years, we have collectively welcomed millions of visitors and tourists to the Reed Dance from other provinces, neighbouring countries and from overseas.

Importantly, this year's Reed Dance Festival holds a very special place in our hearts as it coincides with the celebrations of our 30 years of our freedom and democracy.

We are investing in transport infrastructure in order to reduce the travel time to eNyokeni.

Finally, we salute His Majesty for being a symbol of unity and a custodian of our culture and heritage.

Ends

Issued by the MEC for Transport and Human Settlements

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