



**SPEECH (NOTES) BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR. BHEKI CELE AT THE
SIKHWEBEZI RIVER BRIDGE OPENING FRIDAY, 08 JUNE 2007.**

- **All protocol observed.**
- Our government regards the provision of access as a fundamental component of economic reconstruction and development.
- To this end, the provincial Department of Transport is on a mission to build pedestrian bridges all over the province. It is on that score that we have come here today to officially open Isikhwebezi River pedestrian bridge.
- This is but one of our Pedestrian Bridge Projects for the Empangeni Region. It provides all year access to the scholars and clinics for the communities who for years have had to cross the river using low level drift on D1730.
- The Isikhwebezi River bridge is 75 metres long, and was constructed over a period of four months at the tune of R2.9 million. This project created employment opportunities for the local communities.

- When we come to open these pedestrian bridges, we are fully aware that we are also saving lives particularly of our young people whose lives are often in danger as a result of flooded rivers and are forced not to attend school during the summer months.
- We do not wish to see what a national television showed in the summer of 2004 - the plight of school learners from Nomzimane High School having to cross an overflowing Mfolozi river to get to school every day.
- The development of access roads and pedestrian bridges and the promotion of labour intensive construction methods are important focus areas that enable our government to provide the much needed infrastructure in remote rural communities, and ensure that jobs are created where they are needed the most.
- This focus is consistent with the Presidential call for infrastructure delivery through the Expanded Public Works Programme, and calls for the provision of rural transport infrastructure and services in order to ensure access and mobility in rural areas.
- It also focuses on the provision of integrated rural transport systems that unlocks local economic development, link communities with social and economic services, and ensure that the quality of life for rural communities is improved.
- Today, it gives me great pleasure to officially open Isikhwebezi River Bridge. Indeed, this project is yet another indication of our government's resolve to strengthen our commitment to bring hope to those communities most in need, so that they too can have just cause to celebrate a better life for all.

- There can be no doubting the fact that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is well advanced towards achieving its objective of creating an equitable and sustainable transport systems in KZN.

I thank you.