



SPEECH NOTES BY KZN MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR. BHEKI CELE AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF MPEMBENI BRIDGE ON THURSDAY 02 APRIL 2009.

Protocol observed

- Our gathering here today for the opening of the bridge once again bears testimony to our government's commitment to change people's lives for the better.
- We have come many times to the Zululand District, particularly Ulundi Municipality, to invest in infrastructure that unlocks local economic development, links communities with social and economic services.
- It is not surprising that our people who were previously disadvantaged are now on record giving testimony that indeed, we do follow-up on our commitments. We ensure that the quality of life for rural communities is improved.
- The bridge we are opening today is part of R1,5 billion that the Department of Transport has invested in Zululand to deal with the road infrastructure challenges.

- We have injected cash in projects that include, among others, D1820, D487, P700, P432, P235/ P49/ P52, P234, Umbhudula Road Qwasha River Road Bridge, Mpembeni, Sikhwebezi Pedestrian Bridge, Thombothi River Bridge, Obivane River Bridge, Wela River Bridge, KwaBhanya Vehicle Bridge, Intethe River Bridge and Nsonyane Bridge.
- The construction of a bridge and link road over the Mpembeni River for the communities of Babanango has had a major impact with opportunities for local labour and potential agricultural development. The construction work has seen an investment of more than R4.8 million in this area.
- We always say that during construction the cost must remain an economic benefit to the local communities where contractors source all materials from the area and employ all artisans and labour from the nearby communities. There must be no political preferences in this regard.
- The bridge also serves as a link between Babanango and Ulundi. Zululand is one of the areas in the province where people still travel kilometers on foot to the nearest clinic, hospital, school, pension payout. Therefore, we say as government we cannot allow a situation where teachers and learners have to undress everyday to cross rivers to school.
- But it is important to emphasise that as a democratically elected government we have an obligation to serve our people irrespective of which political party they belong to.

- As a society, we are facing challenges such as crime, AIDS, poverty, unemployment etc. These challenges can only be addressed under certain circumstances which include peace, democracy and development. These are preconditions of a better life for all. People must guard against being used by politicians for their political gain.
- Apart from the R1,5 billion investment under Operation Kushunquthuli, this District now has 3 575 Zibambele contractors. There are 211 savings clubs and they have saved R1 433 980 to date.
- In conclusion, on Tuesday we launched our Easter Road Safety Campaign for 2009 where we outlined how we, as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport has planned to ensure your safety on our roads during the coming weeks.
- During this Easter, enforcement and patrols will be conducted in the province focusing on the following critical offences:
 - Pedestrian Safety
 - Drunk and driving
 - Public Passenger Transport and LDVs (Bakkies)
 - Unsafe overtaking
 - Vehicle without number plates
- These are just some of the specific initiatives that we will be involved in during this period to ensure safety on our roads but there is also an extensive enforcement and safety plan in the form of roadblocks that we have provided to the media and brought to public attention. So, don't say you were not warned.

I thank you