

ADDRESS BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE RTI AWARDS CEREMONY AT THE DURBAN EXHIBITION CENTRE: TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2015.

Programme director;
Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee;
Representatives of the RTMC, JCPS and ITLEC;
All our stakeholders;
Senior officials of the Department led by HOD Sibusiso Gumbi;
Officers of the Road Traffic Inspectorate;
Distinguished guests;
Members of the media;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We are convening here today to celebrate and give honour to the work, dedication and selflessness demonstrated by our traffic police officers from different Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) stations in the execution of their duties.

This awards ceremony acknowledges a wide range of excellence in performance in several key areas. It is an initiative I have always longed for since I joined this Department.

As the MEC also responsible for Community Safety and Liaison, I have since been part of the annual SAPS Service Excellence awards ceremonies, where we honour the work, dedication and selflessness demonstrated by our SAPS members from different police stations in the execution of their duties

I have also, by virtue of this ministry, been invited to grace the annual Correctional Service Excellence awards ceremonies, where again we pay tribute to our officers at Correctional Services - the officers who look after those who have been declared by the courts of law as inappropriate to live amongst the general population because of their behaviour and who require correctional supervision.

Every time I address these ceremonies, I reiterate to participants that these awards are not just a nice to do or nice to have. They give us a unique opportunity to accord the brave men and women in law enforcement the necessary recognition and praise they truly deserve.

It is against this background that I saw our RTI deserving of the same treatment, considering their mandate of ensuring that the province of KwaZulu-Natal is safe from crimes and violations of laws on the road.

It is true that our RTI is recognised as one of the best provincial traffic authorities. Hence it is important that we honour our officers past and present who have worked hard to ensure that our provincial roads are safer. They deserve a tribute of this nature that we are doing today.

The history of the RTI dates back from 77 years ago when the institution was founded in 1938. Like any other enforcement agency that existed pre-1994, RTI was once distrusted by the majority of our people. Like all enforcement agencies of the past it was used to serve political masters who wanted to use all resources at their disposal to oppress African people.

However, over the past two decades, it has consciously worked to build up the confidence of the community it serves. As I have already indicated, our RTI has

gained a reputation as one of the most prestigious law enforcement agencies in the country.

We are particularly proud of the calibre of staff that RTI has attracted. These are the foot-soldiers in our crusade for safer roads.

As the Department, we have therefore developed the KwaZulu-Natal Traffic Police Fraternity Awards Framework in order to identify and reward service excellence on an annual basis.

The purpose of this fraternity incentive framework is to promote, support, and acknowledge high standards of service delivery by individuals, stations and regions in road traffic management in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The Department's main objective is to enhance the overall quality of road traffic service provision and, in particular, to ensure safety, security, order, discipline and mobility on the roads.

Further objectives for this initiative include:

- Enhancing and recognising the performance of provincial traffic officers in KwaZulu-Natal;
- Motivating individuals and/or teams to enhance service delivery in road traffic management and administration;
- Encouraging the retention of staff by awarding individuals/teams within various categories; and
- Promoting the regeneration of high morals, standards and values in the traffic safety management fraternity.

The Awards Framework is intended to have twelve categories. But I have been informed by the organising team that as a start, they were able to get nominations for only nine categories. This should be understood because it is for the first time that we stage this award ceremony but as of next year we hope the interest will be very high in all categories.

The team has also committed to reinforcing their communication awareness plan on the nomination process so that next year we will have all twelve categories and as many nominations as possible in each category.

We must work towards ensuring that all our stations take part, either on a station or individual officer level.

The nine categories that were received are:

- Bravery award
- Going the extra mile
- Most Innovative Idea
- Most outstanding Achievement
- Traffic Officer of the Year
- Best Dressed Officer
- Long Service Awards (25 years)
- Service Excellence/ Most Outstanding Station
- Service Delivery/ Most Outstanding Region

Our HOD appointed the Evaluation and Adjudication Panel which went through all the nominations received from the different categories of awards.

The panel consisted of:

- Senior General Manager: Corporate Services - Ms Vicky Cunliffe;
- Chief Financial Officer - Mr Wyne Evans;
- Senior General Manager: Operations - Mr Simphiwe Nkosi;
- General Manager: Public Transport - Adv Simo Chamane;
- General Manager: Strategic Planning - Ms Glen Xaba; and
- General Manager: Communications - Mr Nathi Sukazi

The responsibility of the panel was to duly consider, evaluate, adjudicate and make recommendations for all the nominations received for each category.

I take this opportunity to thank the team that worked hard to put together the working document for our RTI Awards. I know that in-fact we could have had these awards as early as 2012, but a lot of fine-tuning had to be done first.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we all know, South Africa is in a state of mourning with the untimely death of Public Service and Administration Minister Collins Chabane and his bodyguards Sgt Lesiba Sekele and Sgt Lawrence Lentsoane in a road accident.

I know that as a country, road accidents have in the past deprived us of many public figures and role models. These include a recent incident where we lost Top Billing presenter Simba Mhere who died in a car accident while on his way to OR Tambo International Airport.

But everyone here will agree that this time around we lost one of the country's most likeable politicians. Indeed, Chabane is believed to be the first high-profile political casualty of the escalating number of fatalities on our roads after former Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Molefe Sefularo and former Gauteng MEC for Economic Development, Nkosingiphile Phendule. We must all stand up and say enough is enough on our roads. We must all stand and say one death is one too many.

Maybe it is high time we ask ourselves, if we should not tighten further the regulations governing the use of blue lights devices and impose conditions on vehicles transporting VIP's?. We raising this because here in the province we have met with VIP protectors to caution them on the danger of driving at excessive speed and in the process endanger their own lives of and the lives of the principals that they transport and those of other road users. We must all today ponder about possible mechanisms to end road carnage starting right from the top from us as leaders.

The death of our beloved Minister in such a horrific road crash has put the issue of road safety on the national agenda. We must use this period to continue pressing for punitive measures against those who drive recklessly and continue to undermine traffic laws.

On that score ladies and gentlemen, as the province of KwaZulu-Natal we are using today's gathering to also officially launch our Easter Road Safety plan, which of course is part of our broader road safety programme that we undertake throughout the year.

As part of our plan, all traffic officers will be deployed over this period. Night patrols have been identified to take place along the major corridors to detect deviant driver behaviour and risk-taking.

All traffic officers must be on road during this period, no vehicles should be seen in shopping malls, at movies and no police should be seen busy on social media on their cell phone while of duty.

We must build a new work ethos in our RTI officers. Officers who are prepared to go beyond the call of duty, like those who will be awarded for their good work tonight.

The Department's Special Operations team will target long distance coaches and mini bus taxis to ensure the safety of passengers. We will also continue with our Inter- provincial operations with neighbouring provinces.

Our partnership with the church community will, once again, see us visiting various church services around the province.

Over and above speaking to congregants and encouraging them to be ambassadors of road safety during this time, we are opening a platform where the church community can engage with us on ideas, possible solutions and methods of curbing road carnage.

As I conclude, I want to underline that as the province we fully support the National Department in its proposal for the amendment of the National Road Traffic Act to declare that driving a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs having a narcotic effect to be prohibited.

Reports reveal that drunk driving is a major contributor to road accidents, and on weekends, 65 percent of fatal crashes are attributed to alcohol abuse.

Lastly, overcoming the historic aggression of South Africans that manifests itself on our roads is no easy task but can indeed be accomplished as we work together. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is fully committed to playing its part.

With these words, I wish to once again congratulate all our awards recipients today. To all of you who have attended this ceremony, I thank you and wish you a safe journey home.

Be safe during the Easter Holidays and beyond! Take care!

I thank you.