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# PREMIER'S IMBIZO TO GIVE CHANGE AND HOPE TO PEOPLE

**Lwazi-Raul Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane**

The residents of Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality raised socio-economic and service delivery concerns during an Imbizo led by Mpumalanga Premier, Mandla Ndlovu, alongside various MECs (Members of the Executive Council) from various departments, and Executive Mayors, at the Nokaneng Sports Ground on Friday 20 March 2026.

The Imbizo formed part of a three-day EXCO Outreach Programme in the municipality to serve as a platform for the Mpumalanga Provincial Government to engage with the public on service delivery matters.

The socio-economic and service delivery issues raised by residents during the imbizo included a call to afford people with disabilities a fair chance to access job and empowerment opportunities, deteriorating roads infrastructure, water and electricity supply challenges, amongst others.

The Premier revealed that the massive hybrid rice project and Agro-processing initiatives featured in the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), signed recently between Mpumalanga Provincial Government and the University of Mpumalanga, is one of the measures to tackle unemployment, as it is expected to create 388 000 job opportunities across the province.

He encouraged the community members to use the Imbizo as an opportunity to pose questions to the MECs who were present to respond.

In his address to the community, Premier Ndlovu said; "In the past, the community used to gather and listen to what government has in store for them, but now is your opportunity to tell us how to work towards meeting your requirements.

The Royal leadership has informed us that only 30% of the people in this area have access to water, and 98% has access to electricity".

The Premier said he knows the budgets allocated for each department and assured the community members that the MECs

will work towards ensuring that the money is channeled towards improving the lives of the people. He said the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality is a vibrant area that needs attention, with a population of 324 000 and 74 000 households.

He said he's aware that more than 50% of the people live in poverty as a result of limited job opportunities.

He mentioned the introduction of Mpumalanga International Farmers Market, expected to be officially opened by the end of May this year, which will offer business opportunities to about 150 000 farmers.

*Continued on page 2*

# Employment for disabled to be prioritised

*Continued from page 1*

Premier Ndlovu said the Executive Mayor of Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality, Nomosa Mtsweni, has outlined the challenges faced by the local residents and a resolution was reached in a meeting with all the MECs to work in unison in ensuring that the provincial government meets the needs of the people.

“We took a decision as government in Mpumalanga that one of our priorities will be to create jobs and prioritise people with disabilities, women and the youth.

We intend to attain 3% employment for people with disabilities, 50% for women and 30% for the youth.

“We are encouraging our children to go to school. The graph is a bit high in terms of unemployed youth graduate at 26%.

We also acknowledge that our universities are producing graduates that are not absorbed by our industries.

We have to retrain our youth graduates here in Mpumalanga.

We’ll continue to work with the private sector and create jobs,” said Premier Ndlovu.

He also said the provincial government has set aside a budget to fix infrastructure that was severely damaged during the January floods.

He emphasised that the province is also putting measures in place to ensure that such disasters are avoided in the future.

MECs and Executive Mayors announced massive intervention measures such as water projects to address water challenges, and agricultural support to alleviate the high poverty rate in the municipality.

However, Ndlovu stated that several residents benefited from government support.

The Premier handed over new wheelchairs to the disabled, sport gears and school shoes to learners, as well as title deeds for land ownership.

The Imbizo was also attended by representatives from national government departments, traditional leadership, organised labor, civil organisations, Ward councilors, youth formations, to mention but a few.



Premier Mandla Ndlovu delivering the keynote address.

## Deputy Speaker of Mpumalanga Legislature joins fight against drugs

**Kopano Dibakwane**

The community of Phola Township in Emalahleni joined the Deputy Speaker of Mpumalanga Legislature, Sam Masango, and other relevant stakeholders during the War against Drug Abuse campaign held on 14 March 2026.

The campaign was reportedly part of the Legislature’s nation-building and social cohesion programme, aimed at

raising awareness about the negative impact of substance abuse on young people and communities.

According to the Provincial Legislature, the event was organised by bikers, Industrial Robbers MCC as part of its 12th anniversary.

The highlights of the campaign included a motorcade, visits to rehabilitation centres, and engagement with government departments to strengthen operations.

“The Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature thanked the bikers, the CPFs (Community Policing Forums), and community members for working together to combat crime and

substance abuse.

He encouraged continued collaboration between communities and government in addressing social challenges as the Legislature continues to play an oversight role in the work of government also in the fight against substance abuse,” said the Provincial Legislature.

The initiative reportedly also focused on ensuring that individuals recovering from addiction are reintegrated into their communities and equipped with practical skills to rebuild their lives.

Representing the traditional leadership, Ndabezitha Siphso Sombali

Mahlangu, under the chieftaincy of Nzuzza in Phola, also urged young people to refrain from drug abuse, warning that substance abuse continues to destabilise families and communities.

The Emalahleni Local Municipality supported the anti-drug campaign, with officials indicating that structures such as awareness programmes, community policing initiatives and support services for residents affected by substance abuse are in place to fight the scourge.

The Pholamdoko Rehabilitation Centre in Phola, as well as Ogie and Kakaramba Centres in Emalahleni received food packages from the Deputy Speaker.

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Health officials and stakeholders who attended the LCVA workshop.

# Life Course Vaccination hosted by MP Health

**Kopano Dibakwane**

A provincial readiness assessment workshop on the LCVA(Life Course Vaccination Approach) was convened by the Mpumalanga Department of Health on 18 March 2026 at the Protea Hotel Mbombela in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality, attended by health officials and stakeholders.

Participants reportedly engaged in discussions to identify province-specific priorities, strengthen integration with existing health services, and outline roles and immediate next steps for implementation.

According to the Department of Health, the LCVA aligns with the Global Immunisation Agenda 2030 and South Africa’s National Immunisation Strategy, which aim to strengthen immunisation

across all stages of life.

“ The session provided a refresher on the LCVA(Life Course Vaccination Approach) and the AVP(Adult Vaccination Programme), while also initiating the provincial readiness assessment process.

The outcomes of the workshop will reportedly assist the province in identifying strengths, gaps and key implementation priorities to ensure that vaccination programmes respond

effectively to the province’s disease burden and health system realities.

“The Life Course Vaccination Approach seeks to ensure that individuals are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases throughout their lifetime, thereby strengthening health system preparedness, reducing avoidable illness and hospitalisation, and supporting healthy ageing,” said the Department of Health.

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Right: MEC Moeketsi standing alongside Dr Thabang Marakalla.



Middle: MEC Moeketsi donating animal feeds to Kaylevi Layer Project.

# DARDLEA MEC empowers local agriculture

**Lwazi Raul-Shongwe**

The MEC for Mpumalanga DARDLEA (Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs), Khethiwe Moeketsi, has extended a hand of support to agriculture projects in the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality.

The MEC visited projects including Kaylevi Layer Project in Phake Village, as well as Raks Milling Primary Co-operative at Seabe in Moremela, as part of the 3-Mpumalanga EXCO Outreach Programme and Premier's Imbizo that took place in the Local Municipality of Dr JS Moroka.

The visit by MEC Moeketsi was reportedly aimed at assessing progress at the DARDLEA-supported projects that already contribute to food security, job

creation and economic growth in the Municipality.

Kaylevi Layer Project received a donation of over 120 50kg bags of animal feeds.

According to DARDLEA, the Kaylevi Layer Project is the brainchild of two brothers, Kay and Levi Mpshe, and it produces thousands of eggs daily, with markets secured at retail stores including USave, Kit Kat Supermarkets and surrounding Spaza shops.

"Their support from the Department includes Layers they applied for, through Masibuyele Esibayeni Programme, including Extension and Advisory Services, which helps them expand their production.

The beneficiaries would like to see themselves having a storage facility, grading machine, and automated house,

including creating more jobs, said DARDLEA.

MEC Khethiwe Moeketsi also visited the Raks Milling Primary Co-operative, managed by Dr. Thabang Marakalla. The MEC said she was satisfied with the positive impact observed on the project. According to DARDLEA Raks Milling Primary Co-operative is one of the flagship projects that shape the agricultural landscapes.

"The project was supported by the DARDLEA through CASP (Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme) in 2019/20, in a multi-year arrangement. It supplies 6 boarding schools and hospitals through the GNP (Government Nutrition Program).

The project has created 106 permanent and seasonal job opportunities," said DARDLEA.

Additional activities by the MEC included a donation of food garden starter packs to 9 Nine beneficiaries from different households in Nokaneng.

She also visited Mmamogaswa Primary School where she donated a water tank and established a food garden.

Furthermore, she hosted over 100 farmers at the Nokaneng Community Hall for a stakeholder's engagement in which issues including stock theft, were some of the challenges raised by the farming community in the area.

"MEC Moeketsi announced that five farmers from the Municipality will be supported through the CASP in the new financial year that begins next month," said DARDLEA.

# Secondary school celebrates 50 years in existence

**Kopano Dibakwane**

The Department of Education in Mpumalanga has begun the construction of a state-of-the-art school facility at Mokebe Secondary School in the Dr JS

Moroka Local Municipality.

The construction project reportedly commenced in November 2025 and it is expected to be completed ahead of the 2027 academic.

According to the Department of Education, the school is one of the high-

performing institutions in the area, and it is credited for shaping minds, nurturing dreams, for a remarkable period of 50 years.

"For five decades, this school has carried the hopes of the community, proving that through resilience, discipline,

and unity, the doors of opportunity can indeed be opened for all. This is an investment in the future of our children and a clear statement that their dreams matter," said the Department of Education.

The MEC for Education, Lindi Masina, visited the school to assess the progress made on the construction.

"The MEC expressed her deep appreciation for the school's outstanding performance and steady progress. She commended the educators, learners, parents, and the broader community for working together to build a culture of excellence," said the Department of Education.

In addition, the Department said It is the result of dedication, vision, and a shared belief that education remains the most powerful weapon to change the course of our lives.

"As Mokebe Secondary School marks its golden jubilee, it proves to be a rising force for the future, a symbol of what is possible when a community dares to believe, and a government continues to act," said the Department of Education.

The construction is viewed as aligning with the 50 years celebrations and the school will continue building generations of leaders under a well-deserved facelift.



Right: MEC Masina during her visit to Mokebe Secondary School doing sod turning.

# Smart Agriculture initiative bears fruit

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

A total of 147 Smart Agricultural Boxes were handed over to the Nelspruit Correctional Services following a collaboration between the Departments of Correctional Services, DPSA (Department of Public Service and Administration) and Mpumalanga DARDLEA (Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs).

The ceremony was led by DPSA Minister, Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi, alongside Correctional Services Minister, Pieter Groenewald, as well as DARDLEA Chief Director, Dr Maanda Dagada, and senior government officials from all three Departments.

DARDLEA said the handover was part of the CPSI-led programme that aimed at promoting sustainable vegetable production and strengthen food security within correctional facilities.

The two Ministers also visited an exhibition that offered a closer look at how the Correctional facility has become largely self-sufficient in producing its own vegetables using the Smart Agriculture Boxes.

“Minister Buthelezi appreciated the DARDLEA for its Smart Agriculture Box innovation and support to Correctional Services. Inmates



Left: Minister Groenewald and Minister Buthelezi presenting the Smart Agricultural Boxes

also showcased their produce, proudly demonstrating how their efforts contribute to food security, while equipping them with valuable agricultural skills,” said DARDLEA.



Right: DARDLEA's Dr Dagada along Ministers Buthelezi and Groenewald.

## MEC calls on business sector to comply with environmental laws



Mpumalanga MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs Ms. Khethiwe Moeketsi says business, particularly the mining sector, must ensure full compliance with environmental laws, adding that compliance is a moral duty and not optional.

She was speaking at the Nkangala Environmental and Waste Circular Economy Business Breakfast this morning, in Emalahleni.

The gathering was attended by stakeholders from both business and mining sectors, circular economy SMMEs, organised agriculture, Waste Management NPOs and Recyclers.

It aimed at bringing together industry leaders and decision makers, to create partnerships that support a sustainable economy.

MEC Moeketsi said mining, agriculture and tourism are the main sectors sustaining and contributing to the growth of the province's economy, and she called on them to continue investing in strategies aimed at countering the impact and effects of Climate Change and partner with government to grow the economy through creating job opportunities.

She said business must leverage on the opportunities brought by Climate Change, Pollution and Waste, by creating job opportunities, partner with government in growing small business and giving back to communities.

“Thousands of waste material end up in our landfill sites, unnecessarily. 80% of household waste, for example, can be translated into thousands of sustainable jobs and

small businesses, through waste management and recycling, and support Buy-back Centres, while protecting the environment”, said Moeketsi.

Several leaders in business and mining sectors spoke of their strategies and programmes already in place in dealing with issues

around the effects and impact of Climate Change, adding that climate resilience needs everyone's contribution.

MEC Moeketsi also joined delegates who boarded a bus to Columbus Steel near Middleburg for a tour of the plant, and first-hand experience of how they manage their waste.





Team DEDT marketing Mpumalanga's hidden gems.

# Pre-Easter Tourism Campaign activated

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

Mpumalanga's Pre-Easter Tourism Activation Campaign was in full swing from 19 to 22 March 2026, with the team from DEDT (Department of Economic Development and Tourism), led by the Director of Tourism, Doctor Mdluli, promoting the province's hidden gems in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

The campaign kicked off in Kwazulu-Natal whereby areas including Empangeni Mall, Kwa-Max in Umlazi, and Gateway Mall were targeted, followed by the Gauteng leg in areas including Rosebank Mall, Ghandi Square, and Vilakazi Street in Soweto, and Sandton City.

The team was showcasing Mpumalanga's diverse tourism offerings, including its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and exciting travel packages.

The team engaged with potential visitors and extended an invitation to engage discover the unique experiences that make Mpumalanga a must-visit destination this Easter holiday season.

The campaign affirmed that Mpumalanga is ready to welcome holiday makers during the Easter holidays, to embrace the unknown, and live the adventure.



DEDT Director of Tourism, Doctor Mdluli spreading the word.



# Triland partnership strengthens regional tourism ties

Lwazi Raul-Shongwe

The MTPA (Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency), and Mozambique INATUR (Instituto Nacional do Turismo), received a majestic welcome by the ETA (Eswatini Tourism Authority) to the Nkonyeni Lodge & Golf Estate in the Kingdom of Eswatini as part of a 3-day Triland Excursion which took place in The Kingdom Of Eswatini.

Tour operators and members of the media, from Mpumalanga and Mozambique, attended the excursion, which is an ongoing initiative that occurs annually interchangeably between the Triland partners.

The Triland Agreement is viewed as a game-changer for tourism in Southern Africa. This initiative, formed by the Kingdom of Eswatini, Mpumalanga Province in South Africa, and the Republic of Mozambique, aims to promote joint tourism and market the regions as a single destination to international and regional visitors.

The partnership combines the best of each region: Mpumalanga's safaris, Eswatini's rich culture, and Mozambique's stunning coastline.

This collaborative concept was initially launched in 2009 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revitalised in 2024, it's now targeting travellers seeking diverse experiences. The Triland partnership fosters regional cooperation, providing a comprehensive tourist experience and boosting economic growth.

ETA CEO (Chief Executive Officer), Vusi Dlamini, said Eswatini welcomed over 1 million international visitors in 2025, marking 7.5% year-on-year growth. He said January 2026 saw an 8% increase in arrivals, with regional African markets up 9.5%. The Eswatini Tourism Authority attributes this, and the Triland partnership, to the kingdom's success, highlighting the promotion of seamless travel and economic growth.

Dlamini said the Triland initiative dismantles barriers, creating opportunities for tour operators and enhancing regional visibility. Eswatini Air and joint marketing efforts are said to be already yielding results.



“This strategic alliance between Eswatini, Mpumalanga and Mozambique, is more than just a geographical convenience. We have created a regional circuit that is world-class and incomparable. Our collaboration on cross-border initiatives ensures that we don't just compete for a share of the travelers' time, but we expand the entire path.

“As the Eswatini Tourism Authority, we continue to form strategic partnerships that will promote destination Eswatini to the domestic and regional markets, and the Triland certainly serves as the evidence to that,” said Dlamini.

Dlamini acknowledged the media for disseminating, educating, and empowering the masses with knowledge on the tourism products offered by the Triland partners.

MTPA Acting Executive Manager for Tourism, Musa Mahlangu, expressed gratitude to Eswatini Tourism Authority for hosting tour operators and members of the media, as well as organising a successful excursion.

Mahlangu praised Eswatini's warmth and potential, and emphasised Mpumalanga's support for Triland.

He said Mpumalanga looks forward to exploring Eswatini's offerings and disseminating information.

“This excursion is an incredible journey filled with unforgettable sights and wonderful discoveries for our delegation. Personally, I can attest to the beauty of this country, and the warmth of its people.

In the recent past I had the opportunity to be part of tourist guides and tour operators that came in for training by the

Hospitality and Tourism Association of Eswatini, to explore and learn about the Kingdom of Eswatini.

“We look forward to this familiarisation tour with excitement, ready to explore Eswatini offerings, take pictures, disseminate information, and ultimately take advantage of the available tourism business opportunities. That will be our mandate as Mpumalanga,” said

Richard Baulene, Director-General of Mozambique's INATUR, equally thanked the ETA for hosting a successful excursion, highlighting regional cooperation, impacting on tourism. He said Mozambique seeks to enhance Triland's pace with structured action, addressing border procedures and travel experience.

Baulene emphasised Triland's strategic importance in promoting regional tourism and investment. He said INATUR commits to strengthening the partnership, with the belief that the Triland initiative can model SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) tourism integration.

“We are all pleased to observe that a growing number of travel agencies are developing and marketing integrated tourism packages involving the three countries. Tourism has a very particular characteristic, and it grows when nations cooperate.

“We have also reported groups of tourists visiting Mozambique from Mpumalanga and the Kingdom of Eswatini, which demonstrates that our cooperation is already moving to the right direction.

For Mozambique, this initiative is strategic. It enables us to promote regional tourism destination, strengthen partnerships between operators, and increase new opportunities for investment as well as economic development,” said Baulene.

The Eswatini Tourism Authority's Head of Marketing, Chunky Mdluli-Dlamini, said Eswatini has more to offer tourists either than culture, such as the Nkonyeni Golf Estate and Lodge which is a well-maintained golf course, Malolotja which offers various activities including kayaking, ziplining with ten slides and a suspension bridge.

Mdluli-Dlamini said a Triland golf tournament is on the list of activities to be considered during future excursions.

She also said the accommodation establishments in Eswatini are very affordable and cater for people with different preferences and budgets.

The weather and food in Eswatini are also regarded by Mdluli-Dlamini as the best.

“We are hoping to host a joint golf tournament in the future between Mozambique, Eswatini and Mpumalanga. We want to promote all the packages, where we'll see people coming for different reasons.

They can come for golf, adventure, outdoor activities, and for relaxation,” said Mdluli-Dlamini.

The guests were treated to a networking dinner featuring mouthwatering dishes, as well as outdoor activities, displaying Eswatini's capability to accommodate tourists from all walks of life.

# Mpumalanga shines at Primary School Athletics Championships

Kopano Dibakwane

Siyamthanda Khumalo has made his mark on South African athletics, claiming the gold medal at the South Africa Primary Schools Athletics Championships, at Green Point Stadium, in Western Cape.

This young athlete from in Msukaligwa Local Municipality, in the Gert Sibande District, dominated the competition, showcasing exceptional skills on the runway and in the sandpit.

The Department of Education has praised Siyamthanda's outstanding performance, which is viewed as an inspiration for a generation to dream bigger, run faster, and jump further.

“His victory confirms the bright future of sport and athletics in our province. The Department salutes this young star for an outstanding performance that inspires a generation to dream bigger, run faster, and jump further.

“The bar has been set, Siyamthanda, Sikuthanda Nyan Nyana! Congratulations



Team Mpumalanga showed courage in the competition.

are in order,” said the Department of Education.

Siyamthanda's fellows athletes from Team Mpumalanga also did not disappoint.

They stepped onto the national stage and made a powerful statement, displaying

sheer grit, determination, rising to the occasion to deliver a remarkable performance.

The Mpumalanga team brought home an impressive medal haul of 1 gold, 13 silver, and 1 bronze, showcasing both talent and resilience across the board.

“This was a display of courage, discipline, and the will to succeed. Well done, Team Mpumalanga!

You have flown the provincial flag high and proven that you are true champions.

You are our shining stars, and the future of athletics is brighter because of you.

Keep pushing, keep striving, your journey to greatness has only just begun,” said the Department of Education.

### Medals won by Team Mpumalanga:

- Nkosenhle Buthelezi (Boys U13) - Silver
- Anpendi Banda (Girls U10) - Silver
- Mpendulo Kumbe (Boys U13) - Silver
- Mbalenhle Mabona (Girls U10) - Silver
- Mathamando Kachelenga (Boys U12) - Silver
- Carli van Niekerk (Girls U12) - Silver
- Muller Potgieter (Boys U13) - Bronze

# SPORT

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## TS GALAXY BURIED ALIVE BY PIRATES AT MBOMBELA

**Lwazi Raul-Shongwe and Kopano Dibakwane**

Known for hosting the biggest events in the country, Mbombela Stadium once again proved that Mpumalanga Province never disappoints.

Soccer lovers in Mpumalanga heeded the call by MEC for DCSR (Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation), Leah Mabuza, to fill up Mbombela stadium for the thrilling BETWAY premier league match between Mpumalanga team TS Galaxy and Soweto giants, Orlando Pirates, on Sunday 22 March 2026.

Pirates were under pressure to win the match to stretch the back-and-forth battle with Mamelodi Sundowns for the league.

The Buccaneers thrashed Galaxy a whopping 6-0. The first goal to open the floodgates was scored from a free kick by Relebohile Mofokeng in the 6th minute following a foul committed by Galaxy's Lentswe Motaung, resulting in an early red card.

The playmaker added his second goal after half-time when Oswin Appollis showed good trickery in the box to create space for Mofokeng, who beat his defender

and fired the ball past the goalkeeper.

Galaxy's Mlungisi Mbuljuna's own goal gave the Pirates their third goal at halftime. Mofokeng and Kamogelo Sebelebele kept the momentum going, scoring the 4th and 5th goals.

Galaxy was visibly downtrodden and anxiously waiting for the referee, Jelly Chavani, to blow the final whistle and save them from an embarrassing outcome, but Pirates were not done.

Mofokeng sealed the deal with the sixth goal, and his hat trick for the day in the 69th minute.

The win by Pirates placed them on top of the Betway Premier league with 51 points, and leading the second place Mamelodi Sundowns with only one point.

Pirates coach, Abdeslam Ouaddou congratulated his team for the remarkable performance, as it puts his team in a comfortable position to clinch the coveted league title. Ouaddou praised the players' solidarity, particularly after a "difficult" match against a strong opponent, noting that the squad's mentality is improving.

He applauded the team's ability to stick to the game plan and their "fighting" spirit until the final whistle.