



Media Statement

12 April 2018

Protests are a blow to the economy - MEC Ngomane

Mpumalanga Community Safety, Security and Liaison MEC Pat Ngomane has today warned that if violent protests continue, many people will be victims of crime while others will lose their jobs in particular in the tourism industry.

MEC Ngomane mentioned that government is concerned about the increasing criminal activities and victimization of tourists who are travelling to and from the Kruger National Park (KNP) by protesters.

“These protests are a huge blow to our economy as they paint a negative image to our tourists who bring money into our province. Some tourists get robbed and others get delayed to reach destinations because of the road blockages, and this will result to the KNP not having visitors anymore,” he said.

He added that the fact that the community of Mahushu was near the KNP, some young people from the area go to the park with the purpose of poaching.

“The community should have a role in this matter by talking to young people not to poach rhinos and also report those who are doing it. Traditional Leaders should also have a role to play, in particular talking to communities to stay away from doing crime. We all have a role to play to make people feel safe,” the MEC said.

He added that the Kruger National Park should embark on a Corporate Social Responsibility Programme that will empower the youth in the surrounding areas. In that way, he said this will deter them from committing crime.

Ngomane was speaking during a stakeholders' meeting held to resolve problems that led to the recent protests within the Masoyi area near Hazyview. The meeting took place in Dayizenza and involved the local leadership of Masoyi, SAPS, officials from Kruger National Park, Community Police Forum, CDW's, City of Mbombela councilors and Traditional Leaders.

The protests that continued for a number of days stopped all activities in the area including the shutdown of businesses. The community was complaining about water shortages however; criminal activities dominated the protest action.

During the meeting, Kruger National Park Protection Services Manager Mr Victor Nxumalo complained that the road blockages make the KNP lose revenue as visitors cannot access the park and workers are marked absent resulting to their salaries being affected. He also mentioned that at the Phabeni

Gate during peak hours while tourists are queuing, there are people who come and rob them at gun point.

Meanwhile, the MEC said the reason why there were so many protests was because some councilors did not do their job. The MEC said they must serve the people and stop relying on police to do their job. He said that councilors are causing problems for themselves for not interacting with community members then later jump to call the police when problems emanate.

“The role of a police officer is to fight and prevent crime, but they end up spending a lot of time trying to stop protests that could be avoided. Councilors should prioritize people's needs, and this will avoid a situation where by police resources are used in protests instead of fighting crime,” he said.

Mr Happy Mbuyane who is a Member of Parliament said that councilors and Community Development Workers should inform people about development in their area including the time when water is available or not. He said that challenges in the community should be identified and communicated to the people before they revolt.

“The Intelligence Cluster should be proactive and advice when problems are coming; this will assist government to intervene timeously to avert problems,” he said.

On issues of public safety, MMC for Public Safety in the City of Mbombela Local Municipality, Mr Majaheni Nyalunga said that people are losing hope in policing as some cases are not properly investigated.

“Witnesses are now afraid to testify because they believe that they are not protected. Let us talk to them and assure them that they will be safe as others fear that they will be victimized,” he said.

Nyalunga also made a plea to Traditional Leaders not to allocate stands to unknown or undocumented people because they become untraceable when they commit crime.

Ends.

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