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PRIORITY 2: EDUCATION, SKILLS AND HEALTH.

Minister of Health visits the Eastern Cape

By Tabita Ngqunge & Sinxolo Gqala: GCIS, Eastern Cape



Minister Mkhize, MEC Gomba, Premier Mabuyane and Correctional Services Provincial Commissioner Phikolomzi Mbambo during a media briefing in East London.

Health Minister Zweli Mkhize embarked on a two-day oversight visit to the Eastern Cape from 21 to 22 April 2020, to check on the progress and status of the province's response programme to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minister's first stop was at the Department of Health Provincial Call Centre in East London where he briefed the media. He was accompanied by the Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane, the province's Health MEC Sindiswa Gomba, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC Xolile Nqatha and Buffalo City Metro Executive Mayor Xola Pakati.



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Welcoming the Minister, Premier Mabuyane expressed concern about the rapid rise of positive COVID-19 cases in the province. He attributed the rise to the movement of people between provinces and attendance of funerals. The Premier said government, working with stakeholders in the province, has embarked on several programmes and campaigns to create awareness on COVID-19 and ensure adherence to the lockdown regulations to control the spread of the virus.



Prince Xhanti Sigcawu of Nqadu Great Place pledging traditional leadership support in the fight against COVID-19.



Minister Mkhize being briefed on the state of operations in dealing with COVID-19 in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

MEC Gomba presented the outlook of the province's COVID-19 cases and hotspots. She revealed that Buffalo City and Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipalities were the hotspots, citing the Correctional Centre in East London as one contributor to the rise in numbers of positive cases. She said her department is working tirelessly to ensure that the pandemic is managed and does not spread rapidly.

The Minister also visited a building that has been identified for admission of coronavirus patients at the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital to assess the state of its readiness. During the walkabout at the hospital, Premier Mabuyane mentioned that there were plans to build a field hospital and that progress has been made.

The Minister also visited Nqadu Great Place where he met traditional leaders under the Kingdom of AmaXhosa and engaged them on government's response measures to the coronavirus pandemic. The Minister announced that a 10-member team of health consultants and epidemiologists will be deployed in the province to reinforce the provincial compliment of experts. He said the experts will bring strategies and tactics that will see the Eastern Cape flattening the COVID-19 curve. On the second day, the Minister visited the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

PRIORITY 2: EDUCATION, SKILLS AND HEALTH.

COVID-19 awareness campaign in Mpumalanga

By Vuyisile Cindi, GCIS: Mpumalanga



Mayor Chirwa sanitizing commuters at Nhlazatshe Taxi Rank.



COVID-19 awareness campaign at Nhlazatshe Taxi Rank.

On 4 April 2020, The Gert Sibande District Executive Mayor Muzi Chirwa visited Nhlazatshe Taxi Rank where he donated hand sanitizers, facemasks and gloves to local taxi associations. Environmental health practitioners conducted deep cleaning, sanitized taxis and distributed pamphlets on the prevention of COVID-19. Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality Executive Mayor Dan Nkosi and members of the local COVID-19 Command Council were also part of the campaign. Mayor Nkosi committed to work with taxi operators and all stakeholders to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Mayor Chirwa said that while there were still challenges in terms of compliance, he was impressed with efforts being put in place by most taxi operators. “We are aware of how some of these regulations have negatively affected the taxi sector, but we want to assure all of you that all these will benefit both the sector and community at large in the long run. We again call on all to practise proper hand hygiene by washing hands with soap regularly, use sanitizers and always practise social distancing,” he said.

The Gert Sibande District Municipality leaders and essential services teams continue to run awareness campaigns, ensuring compliance to all regulations relating to COVID-19 and fighting the spread of the virus. The District Municipal Health and Environmental Services Unit officials visit prisons, health facilities, centres housing the homeless and taxi ranks where they provide deep cleaning services and sanitize the facilities.

PRIORITY 2: EDUCATION, SKILLS AND HEALTH.

Social relief for distressed communities

By Masego Mollo, GCIS: Northern Cape



Residents receiving food parcels.



Premier Saul and MEC Manopole at a screening and testing centre.

On 16 April 2020, the burden of many underprivileged communities was relieved when the Northern Cape Provincial Government distributed food parcels across the province. Members of the Executive Council and Premier Zamani Saul visited the communities in an effort to raise awareness about screening and testing for COVID-19. They also handed over water tanks and food parcels to the most vulnerable.

Food parcels were handed over to residents in Hanover, Phillipstown and Petrusville in the Pixley Ka Seme District. Over 400 food parcels were distributed in the province as part of government's social relief programme since the inception of the lockdown period.

The Premier also joined Health MEC Mase Manopole during the monitoring of screening and testing centres in Hanover. They distributed sanitizers to residents who came out to screen and test for the virus. The officials said they will use mobile laboratories provided by the government to test more people. Government has also urged various stakeholders to help the disadvantaged during the lockdown period.