

Heavy rains delay unveiling

By **SIKHO NTSJOBANE**
Mthatha Bureau

HEAVY rain caused engineers to call off a high-profile infrastructure unveiling ceremony on the Wild Coast yesterday.

Eastern Cape premier Phumulo Masualle and public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu were forced to postpone the unveiling of two multimillion-rand projects in Port St Johns (PSJ) and Lusikisiki due to the severe weather.

Public works provincial spokesman Mphumzi Zuzile said an event tent was set up as early as Wednesday and certified to be safe by the department's engineers.

"The engineers didn't want to take a risk," he said after the engineers advised they cancelled the function.

The two leaders were billed to unveil three new bridges in PSJ which cost around R99-million to build.

Later they would make their way to Lusikisiki to officially launch the R39-million Lusikisiki Urban Renewal Programme.

But when the weather

closed in, it was decided Masualle and Marawu would address the communities in Lusikisiki.

However, they were forced to apologise to the people who had braved the downpour to attend the bridge openings.

The premier said they had been advised that going ahead could pose a safety risk. They had not yet decided when the event would go ahead.

The Thombo to Phamba to Isilimela bridges form part of the Wild Coast Meander route upgrades from Kei Mouth to Thombo near PSJ.

The bridges are also part of R233-million road surfacing project which will see the tarring of a 28km gravel stretch from Tombo to Phamba.

Zuzile said the route also served the Isilimela Hospital.

About 224 people were employed during the construction of the three bridges while around R30-million went to local businesses.

Zuzile said at least R6-million of the R33-million urban renewal project would be earned by SMMEs. — *sikhon@dispatch.co.za*