

Land summit for KZN

Premier Willies Mchunu backs King Zwelithini on Ingonyama Trust

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KWAZULU-NATAL Premier Willies Mchunu yesterday weighed in on the debate around the Ingonyama Trust, saying a land summit will be hosted to debate the issue and affirming provincial government's support for the region's traditional leaders.

Delivering the State of the Province Address (Sopa) at the Royal Showgrounds in Pietermaritzburg, Mchunu said the provincial government believed traditional leaders, who control rural land, should not be stripped of their role.

"We will never support any recommendation aimed at undermining the role of our traditional leaders on land issues, including the Ingonyama Trust," he said.

The Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB) is currently embroiled in a dispute with Parliament after a high level panel appointed by the National Legislature recommended that rural land in the province should be transferred to the state so it can be distributed to community members.

Mchunu, who was addressing Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPLs) and guests who included former president Jacob Zuma, said the provincial government was consulting on the findings of the panel, which was led by former head of state Kgalema Motlanthe.

"As a province deeply affected by these findings, we will have to engage the minister of Rural Development and Land Reform on matters related specifically to KwaZulu-Natal and to assist in finding solutions for these issues.

"We are also committed to host a Land Summit in 2018 to engage relevant stakeholders and role-players on matters of land management and land utilisation as it applies to our province," he said.

Mchunu, who delivered his Sopa amid growing concerns around the province's unemployment, high crime levels and a shrinking economy, said that it was not all doom and gloom in the region.

"On the tourism front we have experienced phenomenal growth with King Shaka International Airport's (KSIA) annual passenger throughput having increased by more than one million since the opening of the airport in 2010. Over this period international passenger numbers have increased by 90%. KSIA registered an overall passenger growth of 6,4% in 2017, the highest among all South African airports," he said.

Government programmes that include infrastructure development, the expanded public works and the creation of an investor friendly environment last year created over 100 000 jobs.

"More will have to be done to address



KZN Premier Willies Mchunu greets King Goodwill Zwelithini before the State of the Province Address at the Royal Showgrounds yesterday. **PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT**

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unemployment and in particular youth unemployment which now stands at 38,6%," Mchunu said.

Going forward, Mchunu said, the provincial government was currently bolstering its points of entry ranging from harbours to airports to handle large volumes of cargo and create more jobs.

"We are excited about the Dube Tradeport Cargo Terminal experiencing a record year in 2017 with an annual volume growth of 12 % and December 2017

having been the busiest single month ever. The throughput of this terminal has increased by 138% since it opened in 2010," Mchunu said.

Turning to crime, Mchunu said while the provincial government was happy about last year's 2,9 % decrease in crime in the province, there were still concerns around other categories of crime in the region.

"We are, however, troubled by the fact that murder and drug related crime sta-

tistics increased by over two percent over the same period.

"Some of the provincial government's interventions include the establishment of a Community Complaints and Instability Rapid Response Unit which will be based in the Office of the Premier.

"This unit will be tasked with the responsibility of receiving complaints related to politically related murders, taxi violence, murders in hostels, farm murders, faction fights in traditional com-

munities and public protests, which have exposed citizens of this province to enormous sorrow, grief, loss, displacements and several other crimes," Mchunu said.

On HIV/Aids, Mchunu said KwaZulu-Natal remained the province with the highest HIV infections in the country.

"As a result, the provincial government mobilised R419 million over a three-year period from the Global Fund to implement prevention programmes

to reduce new HIV infections and fight TB among adolescent girls, young women and vulnerable populations and to improve the quality of their lives," he said.

The programmes, Mchunu said, had already provided more than 16 000 young people with life skills-based HIV education, counselling and testing.

"In the year to come we will reach 20 000 young women aged 19 to 24 with a comprehensive risk reduction package of services including empowerment incentives and also deliver a combination prevention package to 141 191 vulnerable people living in informal settlement and farms," Mchunu said.

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Reaction to the speech: page 2