

X'sê, make your mark



Acting KZN electoral officer Ntombfuthi Masinga, right, and the IEC's Mawethu Mosery at the provincial results operations centre in Mayville. They are ready to tally the results of the election. | LEON LESTRADE African News Agency (ANA)

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All systems go for the elections, with plans in place to ensure peace and stability in province

THE KwaZulu-Natal security cluster has left nothing to chance to ensure an incident-free provincial and national elections today.

Stringent measures are in place to access the provincial results operations centre based at the Public Works Department in Mayville – visitors go through five guarded gates. At the second gate, vehicles are searched by armed officers using metal/bomb detectors.

The justice, crime prevention and security cluster and the Electoral Commission of SA (IEC) yesterday said it was “all systems go” for the elections.

Cluster chairperson Mxolisi Kaunda said no effort was spared in developing a comprehensive master plan to ensure that peace and stability prevailed.

The plan included ongoing intelligence assessment and categorisation of

voting stations in terms of risk, stabilising operations and physical deployment in problematic areas, assembling of investigative teams, inspection of voting stations, and escorting ballot papers to voting stations.

“We are happy to report that the assessment and classification of all 4 884 voting stations has been done. We can assure all the 5.5 million registered voters in the province that they can exercise their democratic right freely.

“We are now focused on the plan to secure the special votes and the main election day. The plan will also roll over until the announcement of the election results and the post-election celebrations,” Kaunda said.

He said more than 70 000 personnel from various law enforcement agen-

cies were deployed in the province's 44 municipalities and 870 wards. The majority of the personnel, he said, comprised the SAPS and specialised teams. Other units would be on standby.

Hot spot areas such as eThekweni wards 4, 45, 80, 88, 91 and 102, Abaqulusi and eDumbe in the Zululand District, Emnambithi/Ladysmith Municipality, Umzimkhulu and KwaMaphumulo, Mandeni, Ndwedwe and KwaDukuza would receive extra attention.

Last week, a KwaMaphumulo councillor and ANC Youth League leaders in eNtshongweni and the Alfred Duma Municipality were killed.

Kaunda acknowledged that illegal violent public protests in the election period were a disturbing trend.

“We have reclassified some of these

areas as high risk. It means additional resources will be allocated,” he said.

Yesterday there were incidents of protests or ballots not arriving on time in various parts of KZN, including eThekweni, Ulundi, Msunduzi, Umvoti, Abaqulusi, Jozini, and Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and Dr Langalibalele Dube municipalities.

Residents of Siyanda township, north of Durban, protested on Monday night, vowing to disrupt voting if their demands were not met. The residents were again seen yesterday morning gathering near the township's taxi rank.

On Monday night, Dumisani Makhaye Drive, which links KwaMashu to Pinetown, and Newlands East and West, was blocked with burning tyres. Protesters hurled stones at passing vehi-

cles.

Also yesterday, informal settlement dwellers living near the M19 in Reservoir Hills protested, demanding houses.

In Zululand and King Cetshwayo District Municipality, a wildcat strike by Mhlathuze Water staff could disrupt elections. The strike started on Monday and resulted in no water at Meerensee, eNseleni, Vulindlela and Esikhaleni.

The IFP was sceptical about the state of readiness for the elections.

eThekweni caucus leader Mdu Nkosi said: “One cannot say we are ready because there is no stability and there are protests in various municipalities run by the ANC. In eThekweni we can't say we are ready in terms of security. We don't know what the workers will do as there has not been an agreement

between the employer and the employees in their wage impasse.”

The DA said it was as ready as it possibly could be. Caucus leader Nicole Graham said the party would have people monitoring the voting process.

“We are concerned about places where there have been disruptions around the Durban CBD, the City Hall and the rest of the city,” she said.

KZN ANC chairperson Sihle Zikalala said that from their observations there would be a good voter turnout today.

Nationally, more than 22.9 million people are expected to vote at 22 924 voting stations.

President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday called for free, fair and peaceful elections.

“Let us all go and vote for a better tomorrow. Let us vote for a better future, and determine our country's future. All South Africans will have an opportunity to decide their own destiny,” he said.