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Multi-billion rand boost for PMB

Premier confirms that new government precinct will go ahead

CLIVENDOU

The provincial government is steaming ahead with plans to build a multi-billion-rand government precinct in Pietermaritzburg said KwaZulu-Natal Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube during the State of the Province Address at Pietermaritzburg's Oval Cricket Ground yesterday.

First mooted in the early 2000s, the precinct will consist of offices for the thousands of government and legislature employees currently working from various government rented offices within Pietermaritzburg.

Confirmation that the project is going ahead is a major boost to business confidence in Pietermaritzburg, particularly over concerns that a possible IFP-led government, after May's national general elections, would focus attention on its key Zululand constituency and possibly relocate staff from Pietermaritzburg to Ulundi, which was the previous provincial capital between 1994 and 2004.

Dube-Ncube said the provincial government has already put aside funds for the project.

"The Department of Public Works has completed the detailed designs for the three key features of the precinct being the Provincial Legislature, the Archives and Government Departments and Office of the Premier.

"I'm pleased to report that the Provincial Treasury has allocated funding during the adjustment estimates to assist in the appointment of the transactional advisors. As indicated, this is a multi-year project, but given the work undertaken in the past few years, we believe we can



SAPS members parading for KZN Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube on the second day of the Sopa yesterday. **PHOTOS: NQUBEKO MBHELE/GALLO IMAGES**

shorten the typical time taken for a PPP (public private partnership) process by at least 40% as the majority of the groundwork has been undertaken," she said.

The precinct will create additional office space for the provincial government employees, some of whom are without offices due to the size of some of the buildings which they were currently housed in.

Dube-Ncube announced developments around the planned precinct as part of her provincial cabinet five-year report card, which formed part of her Sopa.

The KZN provincial cabinet — which came into office shortly after the 2019 general elections, will end its term on election day on May 29.

Dube-Ncube listed a number of achievements recorded since the

provincial cabinet assumed office in 2019.

On the economic front, Ncube-Ncube said the provincial government has been able to keep the KZN economy intact despite challenges.

"Having almost been brought to its knees by the floods, the civil unrest, and global economic challenges, today our economy is back on its feet, gradually addressing the damage which is estimated to be in the region of R33 billion," she said.

The 2021 civil unrest, coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic, saw the provincial economy shedding thousands of jobs.

However, Dube-Ncube told MPLs that the provincial government's economic recovery programme has begun to yield positive results on

the job creation front.

"While we are encouraged by the fact that employment has increased in the last two quarters, we remain concerned that unemployment in our province at 33% remains high, even though it remains below the national unemployment rate," she said.

While government alone has been able to create thousands of jobs, Dube-Ncube said, the private sector created an additional 339 000 jobs within the five-year period.

Dube-Ncube's Sopa focused largely on the government's achievement since coming into power in KZN in the early 2000s.

"The province has stabilised HIV and AIDS rates with the successful roll-out of ARVs which placed 95% or 1.65 million HIV positive people

on treatment," she said.

On education, Dube-Ncube said the provincial matric pass rate was below 50% when the ANC took over the KZN government. "While the matric results of the 2004 academic year showed a 71% pass rate, it is encouraging and fulfilling that the 2023 National Senior Certificate academic year results recorded an 86% pass rate, in an environment with greater education access than in the baseline year," she said.

Dube-Ncube raised the ire of the IFP when she reflected on the violence that engulfed the province in the 1980s and 1990s, stating that far more ANC members than IFP members were killed.

See page 2 for the IFP's reaction and all the red carpet glamour.
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Former KZN premiers Dr. Zweli Mkhize (left) and Sbusiso Ndebele.



Francois Rodgers (right), DA KZN leader arrives for the KwaZulu-Natal State of the Province Address at the Oval Cricket Stadium in Pietermaritzburg yesterday. **PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES**



Councillor Sakhile Mngadi (left) and uMngeni Municipality Mayor Christopher Pappas arrive for the Sopa in Pietermaritzburg yesterday. **PHOTO: NQUBEKO MBHELE**

EPWP Green Jobs Launch

Mr Siboniso Duma
Minister of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs

The Leader of Government Business and MEC for the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs