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'Govt is addressing food poisoning crisis'

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President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday spoke out on the recent wave of child deaths linked to suspected food poisoning.

Speaking at the government's Presidential Imbizo in Umgababa, south of Durban, Ramaphosa assured parents that authorities are addressing the issue.

"The matter is being handled at the highest level," he stated.

Over ten children have died, and many others across the country have been hospitalised after consuming food, mostly purchased from spaza shops. Ramaphosa revealed that investigations have shown some "unscrupulous" shop owners were storing "dangerous chemicals" at premises from which food was sold.

Government departments, including those in agriculture and policing, are actively investigating the food poisoning cases.

"The minister of health is also focused on this matter," Ramaphosa said. "I have directed that I receive reports as soon as possible."

"It's heartbreaking for a parent to lose a six-year-old child. We extend our condolences to these families," he added.

Ramaphosa's comments on food



President Cyril Ramaphosa during the Presidential Imbizo held in Umgababa, south of Durban yesterday. **PHOTO: GCIS**

poisoning were part of his closing remarks at the Imbizo. Earlier, eThekweni residents attending the event had shared their challenges related to unemployment, poverty, and lack of basic services.

Siphesihle Miya, an unemployed

graduate, highlighted the struggles faced by local youth. "We are sitting at home, and none of the government institutions are assisting us. To make matters worse, crime in our community is extremely high, and we live in constant fear," she said.

Thami Mazibuko, also unemployed, expressed frustration over the government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

"We get employed for only a few months, and then we are back to square one, with no income, food, or dignity," he said.

During the event, tensions arose between members of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) and Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube.

Sadtu members, led by KwaZulu-Natal provincial secretary Nomarashiya Caluza, criticised Gwarube for not addressing the lack of funding for schools.

Gwarube responded by saying that substantial efforts are underway and that the finance minister will outline solutions in the upcoming budget early next year.

Ramaphosa's engagement with eThekweni residents forms part of the Government's District Development Model (DDM) initiative, aimed at boosting service delivery and economic growth across South Africa's 44 municipal districts and eight metros. Launched by the current administration, the DDM was designed to ensure closer co-operation between national, provincial, and municipal governments.