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MEDIA STATEMENT

Cheap labour and exploitation of foreign nationals exposed in DDM collaboration in iLembe

The exploitation of foreign nationals for cheap labour in farms and shops in Ndwedwe in KwaZulu-Natal has been exposed during a multidisciplinary blitz conducted this morning.

The inspection led by Public Works and Infrastructure Deputy Minister Sihle Zikalala, as the District Development Model (DDM) Champion of the iLembe District in KwaZulu-Natal, Labour and Employment Deputy Minister Jomo Sibiya and the Home Affairs Deputy Minister Njabulo Nzuza found that hundreds of employees, most of whom are illegal foreign nationals working without work permits, are forced to work long hours without getting paid minimum wages and in environments that do not meet health and safety standards.

Deputy Minister Zikalala, after receiving several concerns during his DDM interactions in iLembe District, called on his counterparts in the Labour and Employment and Home Affairs Departments to investigate the concerns, which led to the early morning high impact multidisciplinary blitz in the early hours of this morning.

The three Deputy Ministers were joined by Indwedwe local municipality Mayor Sam Mfeka, including SAPS and Home Affairs officials who processed and checked for the legal status of the employees and arrested and fined those who were found wanting.

On arrival, the three Deputy Ministers, witnessed the illegal foreign Nationals scattering across the sugar-cane fields in the farms, jumping over fences in Bhamshela, trying to evade arrest.

Zikalala said the blitz discovered that many of the farm workers are foreign nationals who are in the country illegally and are without work permits. He has stressed that government does not have problems with foreigners in the country, provided they are in the country legally and have the proper documents that allow them to work.

Labour and Employment Deputy Minister Jomo Sibiya, said the main aim of the inspection was to check the level of compliance by the business owners which include the basic conditions of employment act, minimal wage act, immigration act and many other laws. Sibiya has also threatened the closure of some shops because of not meeting the occupational health and safety standards.

Ndwedwe Mayor Samuel Mfeka said the Municipality is happy that the departments have allocated officials that will be able to assist them with regulating immigration and labour laws at the different farms in the area.

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