

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SIHLE ZIKALALA
DURING THE HANDOVER OF THE CHATSWORTH MAGISTRATE COURT, CHATSWORTH, 19
APRIL 2024**

Programme Directors: Ms TC Mametja and Mr Nkosana Kubheka;

Deputy Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr John Jeffery;

Deputy Minister of Sports, Arts, and Culture, Ms Nocawe Mafu;

Acting Deputy Judge President KwaZulu-Natal Division of the High Court, Justice J Henriques;

MPs, MPLs, and Councillors;

Senior Government Officials;

The Community of Chatsworth and eThekweni Metro;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Chatsworth Magistrate Court is an important pillar in building a society founded on the constitutionalism, the rule of law, dignity, and access to justice.

The roll out of judicial infrastructure like courts is fundamental in dispensing justice and efficient administration of cases.

This court is at the centre of a community that came as a result of forced removals and the deplorable Group Areas Act in the fifties.

Today this landmark court stands as a beacon of hope and a monument to justice. It is the concrete realisation of the ideal of a South Africa that is united, non-racial, non-sexist, equal and prosperous.

The official handover of the court is befitting to the memory of the freedom delegates drawn from the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Congress, and the South African Congress of Democrats who adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955 and declared, "***The courts shall be representative of all the people***" in the clause, "**All Shall Be Equal Before the Law!**"

It is befitting to the memory of our icon, Nelson Mandela, who cast his vote in this province for the first time on 27 April 1994 and proclaimed "**Let there be justice for all!**" in his inaugural address as Founding President on 10 May 1994.

We have no doubt that comrades, friends, and the family of late uMkhonto we Sizwe combatant, Lenny Naidu, a passionate and brave son of Chatsworth, will find consolation that this court will be a cornerstone for our hard won freedom and democracy.

Cde Lenny Naidu would have turned 60 this April but his life was cut short at the age of 24 when he was brutally assassinated with other MK combatants like Makhosi Nyoka, Lindiwe Mthembu, and

Nontsikelelo Cotoza in what came to be known as the Golela 9 near Piet Retief by Eugene de Kock's hit squads in June 1988.

The Chatsworth Magistrate Court and many others that the Department of Justice and the Department of Public Works are constructing and refurbishing throughout the country are a fitting tribute to freedom stalwarts who were laid their lives for justice like lawyers Griffiths Mxenge and Victoria Mxenge who lived in nearby uMlazi Township.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the provision of adequate judicial infrastructure is crucial, if not a pre-requisite, for the reduction of unresolved and backlog cases in our courts.

Our government remains committed to investing more resources to provide court infrastructure to support the cause of effective and efficient justice delivery.

We are determined to reach many previously neglected communities to ensure that those seeking justice do not have to travel long distances for their cases to be heard.

We are also determined to ensure that magistrates, judges, and other judicial officers work in environments that are safe, healthy, conducive. The construction projects should fit the respectability of the profession and indeed our people whose dignity was assaulted over three centuries.

Individuals working within our courts are in the main competent and upstanding individuals, and as a government, we owe it to them to improve their working environment. Witnesses must also find courts to be safe, clean, and welcoming environments.

In this regard, we wish to pay tribute to all stakeholders that worked together to develop and complete this project.

Since the awarding of the contract in June 2016, we have witnessed the construction of new court facilities and upgrading of existing facilities to better serve this community of Chatsworth.

At the time, the existing building comprised of four courts with holding cells and administration offices.

Built at nearly R203-million, the new project has been designed with three additional courts, five additional holding cells, and administrative offices.

This Magistrate Court now has 7 courts with 10 holding cells and additional administration facilities which enables improved service to the community.

The project also involved the construction of a new secure offender drop off zone with direct access into the holding cells.

The new design provides easy access for People Living With Disabilities throughout the building via wheelchair ramps and lifts.

The threat of climate change and associated disasters demand that infrastructure projects are climate resilient and help society reduce the carbon footprint by utilising eco-friendly solutions and building materials.

In this regard, the green building design provides sufficient natural light from windows and skylights into the building.

The building is fitted with a backup diesel generator, Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) and solar panels to supplement the municipal supply and assist during power interruptions.

Water for construction was from a borehole installed on the site. Due to the high volume and good water quality, a decision was taken to incorporate the borehole water as a primary supply and Municipal supply as back up. A treatment facility was provided within the building to ensure the water quality is safe for consumption.

The refurbishment and expansion of the Magistrate Court has provided these features:

- Stretcher elevator and small passenger elevator also suitable for wheel chairs;
- Fire/smoke detection and public address, voice evacuation systems;
- Security systems and electric fencing;
- CCTV surveillance and monitoring facilities;
- Access control door units;
- Intruder alarms;
- Walk through metal detectors and baggage x-ray system;
- Turn styles, vehicular boom and security access control equipment;
- Building management system.

Ladies and Gentlemen, construction delays were experienced because during construction, the court work did not come to a halt. The contractor had to factor court proceeding while undertaking construction. The Contractor had restricted working hours due to noise.

Delays were also experienced due to various lobby groups stopping construction and demanding employment on the project.

Lessons from such projects are being utilised by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to improve community facilitation and to better manage community expectations when there are infrastructure projects.

This infrastructure project in the historic Chatsworth, the home Lenny Naidu, created much needed job opportunities and training opportunities by incorporating the EPWP programme.

No less than 120 EPWP participants were incorporated into it. Training and mentoring was provided by the Principal Contractor and sub-contractors.

A total of 27 local sub-contractors were employed on the project which provided employment as follows:

- 33 Main Contractor staff.
- 192 sub-contractors staff (from 27 Subcontractors).
- 187 people from within the Chatsworth community.
- Several of the EPWP employees were offered full time employment by the Principal Contractor after their training for the remaining duration of the project.
- Total Beneficiaries estimated at 532 personnel.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the first democratic elections on 27 April 1994 was a turning point in the history of South Africa.

It demonstrated our shared commitment to nation building, freedom, justice, and improving access services to all.

Side by side, we ended centuries of colonial and apartheid rule and established a new South Africa founded on constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

We call upon all stakeholder to work together to preserve this bedrock of our justice system and anchor of our democracy.

We must ensure that there is a proper maintenance plan in place to prevent dilapidation. Refurbishment needs should be speedily attended to.

The ANC-led government invested more than R2 trillion in infrastructure projects over the past 15 years to build more schools, police stations, courts, clinics, roads, hospitals, harbours and railways.

A greater focus must be on preventative maintenance and improved facilities management to keep these people's assets in good condition.

Working with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, we will continue to invest in court infrastructure to help reduce case backlogs and delays.

We will also invest in infrastructure that supports the efficiencies of technology to make court process more efficient and accessible to all.

It is in our hands to strengthen the criminal justice system by developing modern judicial infrastructure and ensuring that no one is left behind in accessing justice and protecting their rights.

I thank you!