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SPEECH

MINISTER MACPHERSON UNVEILS NEW KZN FORENSIC LAB FOR SAPS, SAYS DEPARTMENT IS PLAYING ITS ROLE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME

(Note to editors: The following address was delivered by the Minister of Public Works & Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, at the handover ceremony of the new KwaZulu-Natal Forensic Science Laboratory in Mayville, Durban, to the South African Police Service on 17 April 2026. He was joined by the Premier of the KwaZulu-Natal Province, Thamsanqa Ntuli; Deputy Minister of Police, Cassel Mathale; Deputy Minister of Police, Dr Shela Polly Boshielo; and KwaZulu-Natal SAPS Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi.)

- Public Works & Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson has handed over the KwaZulu-Natal Forensic Science Laboratory to the South African Police Service to strengthen the fight against crime.
- The Minister said the facility will improve forensic analysis, support stronger investigations, and help secure more convictions, ensuring perpetrators of serious crimes are held accountable.
- He said that through the handover of this facility, the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure is playing its role in the fight against crime by delivering infrastructure that enables law enforcement to act.

Thank you for joining us here today for the official handover of the KwaZulu-Natal Forensic Science Laboratory in Mayville.

Today is a big day for the people of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the South African Police Service, and the fight against crime.

It is a day where we reiterate that the rule of law and the protection of the criminal justice system remain our number one priority.

It also shows what happens when the state does its job properly, when departments work together with purpose, and when infrastructure is delivered not for its own sake, but to help solve one of the greatest crises facing our country, that being crime and criminality.

Crime is the number one enemy of South Africa's future.

It keeps us locked up in our homes in self-imposed prisons, and even that is not enough to keep the criminals out.

It stalks women and children for the very fact that they are women and children.

It extorts businesses, shop owners, and construction sites, ruining people's livelihoods.

It threatens our farmers and rural communities with extreme violence, which jeopardises our food security.

This is the daily reality for millions of people because criminals have no fear that they will be caught.

A country cannot thrive when its people live in fear.

A country cannot grow when criminals act with impunity.

And a country cannot build a better future when the rule of law does not make those who operate without fear think twice.

That is why defeating crime cannot be the responsibility of the South African Police Service alone.

It requires every part of government to play its role.

It requires police officers on the ground.

It requires prosecutors in the courts.

It requires intelligence and coordination.

And it also requires the right infrastructure.

That is where the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure comes in.

As the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure, we are committed to playing our part in the fight against crime by delivering the infrastructure that enables law enforcement to act effectively, professionally, and with the tools required to bring criminals to justice.

This forensic science laboratory is a clear example of that commitment in action.

The facility we hand over today will support the forensic and investigative work of the South African Police Service in KwaZulu-Natal.

It brings together specialised forensic services into a single, secure, fit-for-purpose environment, strengthening the state's ability to process evidence, support investigations, and improve the integrity of the criminal justice system.

This has been a personal passion project for me.

Because when forensic services are weak, delayed, fragmented, or compromised, justice suffers.

Cases are delayed.

Investigations are weakened.

Victims continue to live in fear while criminals live without it.

But when forensic services are strong, accurate, secure, and efficient, the opposite happens.

Evidence is processed properly.

Investigations are strengthened.

Cases move faster.

Convictions become more likely.

And innocent people are also protected from wrongful prosecution.

That is the power of forensic science in a constitutional democracy.

It serves the people of this country and restores the rule of law.

It helps ensure that criminals are held accountable.

The need for this new facility was clear.

The forensic units that served this province were previously spread across multiple leased buildings in Amanzimtoti and Durban.

Those facilities were unsuitable for the specialised work that had to be done there.

Some were located in flood-prone areas, which damaged critical evidence and negatively affected service delivery.

Others lacked proper security infrastructure, had limited parking, ongoing maintenance problems, and unsafe conditions for specialised work.

That is not good enough for a province like KwaZulu-Natal.

And it is not good enough for a country that must be serious about fighting crime.

Evidence cannot be left vulnerable to flooding.

Specialised forensic units cannot operate in facilities that do not meet their needs.

And the men and women doing this critical work cannot be expected to deliver justice from spaces that undermine their mission.

So, action had to be taken.

Following a request from SAPS for alternative accommodation, the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure moved to procure a readily available facility through an open tender process in order to minimise delays and provide an improved operational environment.

This was not without its challenges and differences.

That is why the Director-General and I personally oversaw this project because it was too important to be left to officials who had not delivered solutions up to that point.

We spent many hours in calls, on-site meetings, and in tough negotiations to get this done.

And we did it with the help of the private sector, understanding that in many instances, we can rely on their infrastructure to solve our problems.

The new facility in Mayville was secured as an interim solution while work continues towards a permanent state-owned forensic laboratory in Pinetown.

That is an important point.

What we are handing over today is not the end of the journey.

It is a critical step in the journey.

It is an immediate and practical intervention to improve forensic capacity now, while government continues work towards a permanent, long-term state-owned solution for this province.

Plans for that permanent Pinetown facility are already underway, with concept design work having commenced and the project being positioned as a Build, Operate and Transfer pilot.

So today, we do two things at once.

We solve an urgent operational problem in the present.

And we continue building toward a more sustainable solution for the future.

That is what responsible government should do.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This facility will house key specialised units, including the Biology Unit, the Chemistry Unit, and the Questioned Documents Unit.

These units play an essential role in the criminal justice process.

The Biology Unit undertakes the analysis of biological evidence such as body fluids, tissue, and hair, including DNA analysis for human identification.

The Chemistry Unit conducts forensic drug analysis and examines chemical substances.

The Questioned Documents Unit examines documents for forgery, handwriting, alterations, and authenticity.

These are not abstract functions.

These are real capabilities that help solve real crimes.

They help build cases.

They help verify facts.

They help connect perpetrators to scenes and acts of violence.

And they help ensure that justice is grounded in evidence to guarantee convictions.

That is especially important when it comes to serious crimes such as murder, sexual offences, and gender-based violence.

In far too many of these cases, the pain suffered by victims and families is compounded by delays, uncertainty, and failures in the system.

A capable forensic service cannot erase that pain, but it can help ensure that investigations are stronger, that prosecutions are better supported, and that perpetrators face the consequences of their actions.

That is why this facility matters.

It matters to the police officers building cases.

It matters to the prosecutors preparing for court.

It matters to the victims waiting for justice.

And it matters to every South African who demands to live in a safer country.

This is how the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure plays its part.

We may not wear the uniform of the police.

But we can deliver the infrastructure that strengthens the hand of the police.

We may not wear prosecutors' robes.

But we can help ensure that the physical environment from which justice is supported is worthy of the task.

And we may not conduct forensic analysis ourselves.

But we can make sure that those who do have the kind of secure and fit-for-purpose facility they need to do that work well.

That is why I have said before that when I took office, I wanted to turn the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure into the economic delivery unit of South Africa.

That vision is often understood only in terms of investment, growth, construction, and jobs.

And of course, it does mean all of those things.

But it also means something broader.

It means ensuring that the infrastructure delivered by the state serves the strategic needs of the country.

Infrastructure is not neutral.

It is a powerful weapon in the fight against crime.

It can restore the rule of law and ensure that our communities sleep more safely at night.

That our women and children are protected.

That our farmers and rural communities can enjoy the vastness of their land without fear of attack.

That our business sector thrives and provides new jobs to those waiting for a better tomorrow.

This handover reflects my clear commitment to ensuring that Public Works ramps up our effort to give the Police the infrastructure they need to restore the rule of law.

Because crime is the number one enemy of South Africa.

And defeating it requires all of us to play our part.

Today, this is ours.

I thank you.

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