



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM
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Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane meets with the Mpumalanga tourism stakeholders and the community on growing the Industry

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Minister of Tourism Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane completed the first of a series of engagements with tourism stakeholders with a stern commitment to working with the province and the private sector to revitalise Mpumalanga's tourism economy.

Speaking at a breakfast event in Hazyview, Minister Kubayi-Ngubane reminded industry players of the critical role they play in driving tourism growth, and their invaluable contribution in finding solutions to the problems in the province.

"Our engagement today is about finding workable solutions to the challenges that impact the growth of the tourism economy in Mpumalanga."

"President Cyril Ramphosa has set a target for us to attain 21 international million tourist arrivals by 2030, and this can only be achieved if we work together to create conducive and inclusive environments for tourism to thrive," said Minister Kubayi-Ngubane.

The stakeholder engagement was characterised by frank discussions on the state of tourism in the Mpumalanga region. Challenges raised included concerns about the safety and security of tourists; the lack of infrastructure maintenance; the impact of local service delivery protests on tourism; the slow rate of transformation, and the lack of government support for Local Tourism Organisations (LTO) in marketing the provinces tourism offerings.

In response, Minister Kubayi-Ngubane acknowledged the industry's concerns and called upon them to support government's efforts in addressing the provinces challenges, as concerted efforts would ultimately yield sustainable tourism growth.

"As government, we have made inroads in ensuring that we have strategies and programmes that provide a blueprint for sustainable and inclusive tourism economies. However, a lot still needs to be done to ensure that these blueprints yield tangible outcomes and benefits for all," she added.

Echoing the Minister's sentiment on growing local economies, the MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, Pat Ngomane, stated that his office had identified the tourism sector as a priority area that has the potential to create opportunities and benefits for the people of Mpumalanga.

"Tourism is our precious metal as government. Your role as the private sector is to steer the industry towards growth, whilst we ensure that the economic environment is conducive enough to create opportunities and benefits for our people," said MEC Ngomane.

The issue of crime and the safety of tourists featured prominently amongst of the list of challenges that are causing a decline in tourist numbers in the province. The industry made a passionate plea to the Minister to prioritise issues of safety at tourist destinations.

"Incidents of crime have a negative bearing on the safety of our citizens and tourists. It also has the potential to cripple our economy and tourism sector's ability to create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities."

"We are working with the South African Police Services to fine tune our safety strategy and programmes in a bid to curb and address the safety of visitors at all our tourist attractions. We are looking at utilising technologies such as cameras and drones, in addition to the deployment of safety monitors at key tourism attractions," said Minister Kubayi-Ngubane.

The Minister's Mpumalanga visit concluded with an engagement with the community Imbizo at the Manzini Community Hall in Hazyview. Minister Kubayi - Ngubane utilised the platform to interact with the community about the Department's skills and Enterprise Development programmes.

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