SA social working group offers to help in Zim

R140m Metrorail station to be built near 2010 stadium
Medical Centre opens new wing to improve services
Local businesses donate food hampers to soldiers abroad

SA social working group offers to help in Zim

By Bathandwa Mbola

Pretoria – Religious groups and the Council on Higher Education have made themselves available to help address the humanitarian crisis which has unfolded in Zimbabwe.

Members of South Africa’s Social Sector Presidential Working Group met with President Kgalema Motlanthe on Tuesday at the Union Buildings.

Bishop Ivan Abrahams said the group had already been approached by the Department of Land Affairs and Agriculture to find out if they could assist in distributing seeds and fertilizer for people to farm, while the Council on Higher Education said several steps had been taken to offer moral support to colleagues in Zimbabwe’s academic sector.

Zimbabwe’s political parties, who signed a power-sharing deal almost two months ago, have failed to assign key Cabinet ministries as yet.

Nearly half the population is expected to need emergency food aid as soon as January, while the economy has been shattered by the world’s highest rate of inflation, last estimated at 231 million percent in July.

A cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe has killed almost 366 and sent hundreds streaming into South Africa to seek treatment as hospitals are unable to cope with the numbers. According to the United Nations, 1 600 new cases have been reported.

“There are strong indications that the systems in Zimbabwe have ground to a halt. There is practically no schooling,” said Duma Malaza, who represented the council, adding that a meeting with Zimbabwe’s Higher Education Council would be held soon to assess the extent to which help could be rendered from within South Africa.

The Social Sector Presidential Working Group, he said, was concerned about the plight of Zimbabwean students who were having problems paying their fees and meeting their schooling commitments.
At the briefing, Presidential spokesperson, Thabo Masebe said it had been agreed that assistance would be rendered, but only once a government of national unity was formed.

South Africa has taken a tougher line on the spiralling crisis, freezing R300 million in farm aid until a unity government is installed in that country.

The funds, which were aimed at rescuing Zimbabwe’s collapsed agricultural sector, were budgeted and announced by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel in his Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement last month.

The blocking of the life-line means that Zimbabwe’s ailing agricultural sector will lack crucial agricultural investments, as the country has already reached its planting season.

The funds were to be used for farm inputs such as fuel, which is scarce in Zimbabwe, equipment and fertiliser, among other things.

“We are ready to go and help but once the conditions exist for us to go in there and work,” said Mr Masebe.

South African President Kgalema Motlanthe on Monday warned that unless a political deal is reached in Zimbabwe soon, the situation will “get worse and will implode or collapse altogether”. – BuaNews

**R140m Metrorail station to be built near 2010 stadium**

By Siboniso Ntuli

**Durban** – Metrorail KwaZulu-Natal has set aside an amount of R140 million to build a new train station next to the Moses Mabhida Stadium.

Acting Manager Business Development Danny Hattingh announced this on Tuesday during a briefing on Metrorail’s preparations towards the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Mr Hattingh said the new train station would be called the Moses Mabhida Station and it would be built next to the stadium in order to make the stadium easily accessible for soccer fans.

According to Metrorail there is also a shopping mall planned to be built near the new railway station.

“We expect the train station to be ready by September 2009 and it will also serve as a safe and convenient crossing point for pedestrians wishing to reach the stadium from Umgeni and Walter Gilbert roads,” said Mr Hattingh.

Mr Hattingh said they would also increase the number of South African Polices Services Railway Police from 350 to 700 by 2010.

Metrorail Regional Manager in KwaZulu-Natal Dumi Dube said it was part of the National Transport Strategy to ensure the safe and comfortable conveyance of fans.

He said in an effort to avoid congestion around the stadium, park and ride facilities will be available at several stations. Sports fans would be able to park their cars at stations and catch a ride to the stadium.
“The major improvements to existing stations and the construction of ultra modern station near the stadium will be a legacy we want to put in place for our commuters beyond 2010,” said Mr Dube, adding that 20 refurbished 10M5 trains will also be ready for use by passengers by 2010.

The first phase of an integrated communications system, costing R25 million, will be installed at five stations, Berea Road, Rossburgh, Reunion, Umlazi and Duffs Road and will include passenger communication equipment, electric notice boards and emergency panic buttons.

Million of rands have already been spent on renovating ticket offices and public toilets, building new paraplegic toilets, painting all buildings, fencing, resurfacing platforms, installing new station signage and upgrading station lights and public address systems, according to Metrorail.

Stations which have received a facelift are Thembalihle, Greenwood Park, Briadene, Dalbridge, Congella, Montclair, Lindokuhle and Umlazi. Refurbishment is in progress at Brea, Umngeni, Redhil, Umbilo, Merebank and Malvern. - BuaNews

Medical Centre opens new wing to improve services

By Gabi Khumalo

Johannesburg – Due to an increasing number of HIV and AIDS patients, a new wing has been opened at the Zuzimpilo Medical Centre, which offers high quality care at a one-stop clinic as part of its expansion plans.

The new wing, which was officially opened on Tuesday, has more consultation rooms and offers consultations by appointment, phlebotomy and a pharmacy on site that focuses on the treatment of HIV and AIDS.

Speaking at the event, Health Minister Barbara Hogan called all sectors in society including the church, business and other formations to assist in heightening government’s prevention campaign, stressing the importance of not loosing sight of the important need to increase the prevention campaign against HIV and AIDS.

“We have to strengthen our call to young people not to engage in sex before they are ready, just as important, we have to appeal to adults in our society to practice safe sex.

“For me, these are just some of the simple, yet important steps that we need to take if we are to see a real reversal in the spread of new infections,” the minister said.

Zuzimpilo Centre’s Project Director, Dr Motato Leshika said: “The centre aims to support and assist the public health system by providing access to subsidised care, we have started 1 200 patients on ARVs, 1 400 are on our wellness programme.”

The centre is an initiative of the Perinatal HIV Research Unit funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a response to the increasing numbers of HIV and AIDS patients who pose a major challenge to the roll out of treatment especially via the public health sector.

Since its opening in November 2006, the centre has attracted 2 600 HIV and AIDS patients that are paying towards a new model of partly subsidised healthcare.
The concept is to provide subsidised care, targeted at people who are either able to afford to make an out of pocket payment for their own HIV care sector, tested and receive treatment.

The sector provides high quality care at a one-stop clinic where the consultations, blood taking and pharmacy are all available at the same site.

While the total cost of providing Anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment including drugs, lab test and consultations is about R1000 to R1 200 to private doctors, the centre charges R250 per month for ARVs, the US Government covers the rest.

US Consul General, Andrew Passen said he was proud of the results that Zuzimpilo is achieving, the model that is being offered and proud to be a partner.

“It is not just the amount of money that makes US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief effective, it is the focus on partnership and on results,” Mr Passen said. – BuaNews

Local businesses donate food hampers to soldiers abroad

By Edwin Tshivhidzo, tel: (012) 314-2454

Pretoria – Local businesses and companies proved it was indeed a season of giving and sharing when they dug into their pockets to fund food hampers for South African National Defence Force (SANDF) soldiers who are deployed outside the country and their families.

Chairperson of the Goodwill Parcel Project Busisiwe Ngwenya, who is also the spouse of the SANDF Chief General Godfrey Ngwenya, said the parcels were a symbol that the troops and their families were appreciated.

“The aim of the project is to illustrate, especially over the festive season, to all deployed soldiers, members on duty, patients in hospitals and families of deployed members that the leadership of the SANDF and the South African business community do really care for them,” said Ms Nqwenya.

Receiving the parcels, Chief of Joint Operations, General Themba Matanzima, said the important work done by the troops was recognised and the kind gesture by the business community would help to lift their morale.

The Goodwill Parcel project was started in 2001, when the Warrant Officers of the SANDF and the Joint Operations Division decided to send goodwill parcels to all members deployed operationally during the festive season.

Since no funds were available, they requested each Warrant Officer in the SANDF to donate R1 towards the cause.

The first goodwill food parcels were sent to deployed soldiers in 2001 during the festive season.

The project has since grown and includes sponsorships and donations from the business community. In 2007, a hamper pack for families and members on duty and in hospitals was introduced. - BuaNews