

## TENDER ROLL-OUT CHANGES

## Security threat no deterrent

Thami Magubane

**T**HE KwaZulu-Natal Agriculture MEC Themba Mthembu says he will not allow the department to be threatened by criminals who believe they are entitled to tenders from the department.

He was speaking after armed gunman tried to force their way into the home of the acting HOD Jerry Mfusi this past weekend.

They opened fire at the security guards working at the house and seriously wounded one guard.

Mfusi took over the position this year after the HOD Simphiwe Mkhize was put on precautionary transfer to the Premier's office.

Mthembu told the Mercury this week the threats to Mfusi started shortly after he was appointed to the position.

"These people are demand-

ing tenders by force. There are many things that are very wrong with this department. Many people have been 'eating' so the changes that we have made are making us unpopular," said Mthembu.

"We will continue to work with the police until such time as those people are caught because we will never allow for a situation where we are dictated to by criminals," he said.

Department spokesperson Khaye Nkwanyana accused the police of failing to take the threats against Mfusi seriously.

He said they would be engaging with the provincial police commissioner and Community Safety and Liaison MEC Mxolisi Kaunda because they were concerned about rogue elements within the SAPS.

"Last month, the HOD opened a case with the Hilton police station in Pietermaritz-



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burg. It is saddening that even today no move from the police has been made in investigating such a case but instead Mfusi is receiving more threatening calls and SMSes. One of the issues we have is that these people seem to know every move the HOD makes.

"When he opened a case with the police, these people called him to tell him they knew he had opened a case and even quoted the contents of his statement. That raises the fear he might be killed."

Nkwanyana said the HOD, on the instruction of MEC Mthembu, had cancelled a number of "long standing contracts".

"There were some big contracts that were renewed without ever going out to tender; people have been 'benefiting'. They have come to believe they are entitled and when we cancelled those contracts, we ruffled some feathers.

"For instance, there are contracts for supplying seeds, there is no need for such contracts to be given to the same people, there should be an open competitive bidding process," he said.

Nkwanyana said the department expected more from the police.

"In a province where senseless killings of leaders and senior officials has become rife, it is deeply concerning that there is virtually no sense of urgency from law enforcement agencies who are entrusted with a

key responsibility."

The IFP provincial spokesperson on Agriculture Nhlanhla Msimango said Mthembu and Kaunda should take steps to urgently improve security for the acting head.

"Mr Mfusi deserves to be protected because he is in charge of a department with a R2.197 billion budget and the Department of Agriculture is where many people expect to get tenders," he said.

SAPS spokesperson in the Midlands Mthokozisi Ngobese said they were taking the threats against the HOD very seriously.

He said the claim that his statement had been leaked was a serious allegation.

"I would advise him to report the matter and could even escalate it further to senior police management including Ipid and the Provincial Commissioner."