

ADDRESS BY HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF ILEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, COUNCILOR WELCOME MDABE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF IZWI LABANTU NEWSPAPER, 9TH DECEMBER 2010, KWADUKUZA

Programme Director,

Mayor of KwaDukuza Municipality;

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure for me to address you this evening. We are meeting here at a critical time in the history of our new born democracy.

On 10th December 2010, our country will be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of democratic local government system in South Africa.

This is a pivotal sphere of government that is closer to the people, whose work directly affects the people on the ground.

In May next year, we will be going for the third democratic local government election, as we enter into this new era in South Africa, some will be celebrating their victories and others will be raising questions about their future and strategies and tactics that they would deploy during the elections.

But more importantly, they will be asking the question: do we have a role and future in these exciting times in South Africa or we have just become irrelevant to the needs of the people?

These questions might sound too remote to some of you tonight but in five years time, you might need to sit down and ask yourself a question whether you have been able to play any meaningful role in the transformation of society, using the most important tool, the media.

My honest guess is that iZwi Labantu Newspaper will be able to discharge its responsibility provided that it adheres to the rules of engagement!

As we celebrate the decade of the new local government democratic dispensation, we need to look back at the role that has been played by the media both electronic and print in deepening democracy in our beloved country.

I do not want to talk about the discussion document that our movement released for public debate with regards to Media Appeal Tribunal but the point has to be made that self regulation with regards to print media has not work for all stakeholders, a new model is required.

We make this point precisely because, as a movement, we have been at the forefront of defending media freedom and it was our movement, the ANC that place the matter of media freedom on the table during the negotiations at Kempton Park in the early 90's.

In an interview with SABC, Tawana Kube, 16 April 2004, the Wits University's head of media studies, has warned the media against allowing themselves to become the opposition's voice.

He argued that the media should neither by default nor design seek to take the opposition's place. Sometimes by default or even sometimes by desire, the media becomes the opposition voice.

He further says, the media cannot possibly compare political development in South Africa to western democracies such as in Britain and the US, they have had years of democracy.

The role of the media is critical in so far as ensuring that the hard gains of the struggle are not abused.

However, the media as Tawana Kube has argued has to play a role that does not make the citizens to believe that it is pursuing a counter-revolutionary agenda.

The freedom of the press is not a luxury; it is an organic necessity for the proper functioning of the democratic system.

The press has also an important role to play in terms of deepening intellectual discourse in our society.

This than pose a great challenge to the press as to how they report's on various issues confronting our society.

It is my sincere hope that iZwi Labantu Newspaper will not form part of the press that people do not consider reading anymore because of the lack of intellectual rigor and analysis.

One of the most exciting milestone of this paper is that it will bring a balance in terms of language because it tell the story in IsiZulu, a language of the majority of the people in iLembe District.

I sincerely hope that this will also contribute towards the development of local language-IsiZulu.

I thank you for attention