



LABOUR APPOINTS NATIONAL CHIEF INSPECTOR

Extracted from Skills Portal on-line newsletter dated 20 February 2009

A National Chief Inspector has been appointed in the Department of Labour to beef up labour law enforcement in all business sectors and workplaces.

The National Chief Inspector will be responsible for coordinating and professionalizing labour law inspectorate to ensure an increase in inspection visibility.

The Minister of Labour Membathisi Mdladlana announced the appointment during a domestic worker's Imbizo in Stellenbosch in the Western Cape on Sunday.

Minister Mdladlana said there was a general feeling across the labour market that law enforcement was in dire need of tightening up to curb the rampant workplace injustices.

"We have since responded by appointing, for the first time, a national chief inspector. We have to demonstrate strong intolerance of each and every employer that refuses to obey the law," he said.

Minister Mdladlana stressed, however, that no amount of law enforcement would be enough without the workers organising themselves through trade unions, particularly in the domestic sector.

"If employees themselves do not understand their workplace rights and obligations, then law enforcement would always be hard to accomplish" the minister said.

"Unregistered domestic workers must be added to the national database," said Mdladlana. "There are currently more than 600 000 domestic workers in South Africa. We need to know how many people are working and how many employers are contributing to the Unemployment Insurance Fund," said Mdladlana.

The one-day Imbizo was preceded by a process whereby hundreds of domestic employees in the area made use of government facilities at their disposal to register for various services, including the Unemployment Insurance Fund and inclusion in the national job-seekers database.

In a wide-ranging interaction with the minister and his top management team, workers and some employers posed a variety of questions aimed at helping them understand the law and their responsibilities even better.

Minister Mdladlana said he was pleased with improved labour relations in the domestic sector where more than 700 000 domestic employers and some 663 000 workers have been registered with the department thus far.