

LOWVELDER - FRIDAY 04 MAY 2007

# Thousands more through border

■ Henry Lazenby  
and André Bakkes

NELSPRUIT - The Lebombo/Ressano Garcia Border Post recorded a mammoth 130% increase in the number of passengers crossing the border in April, compared with the figure for April 2005.

According to the Mpumalanga Corridor Logistics Initiative (MCLI), 381 560 passengers crossed at the border compared with 2005, when only 165 957 passengers crossed, an increase of 97 209 passengers. CEO of the MCLI, Ms Brenda Horne, says that the increase in traffic is directly related to the abolition of entry visas for both countries' residents for visits not exceeding 30 days. "We can clearly see that this factor has contributed to streamlining the customs process and it goes to prove that the Maputo Corridor project is a resounding success," Horne says.

She adds that the removal of visas to has decreased the cost of travelling between the countries and that this promotes the ideal of regional integration.

Mozambique has certainly come a long way since the end of the civil war that destroyed most of the country's infrastructure. Now the road to Maputo is just as good as the N4 on the South African side and access to more remote locations is becoming a reality. "Where there is movement of people, there is economic activity and this can clearly be seen in the increase in the number of retail outlets along the route," Horne comments.

She adds that the South African government has contributed R200 million to develop the Lebombo Border Post into a

one-stop facility under the leadership of the Border Control Operational Coordinating Committee.

No serious delays were reported over the long weekend, as extra staff were drafted to cope with a possible tsunami of returning holidaymakers, but the expected rush did not occur. The MCLI is in close cooperation with all role players to ensure that if the figure of traffic of last December were to repeat itself, when more than 130 000 passengers crossed in just one day, the border post would be ready.

Meanwhile, even though Mpumalanga's roads were jam-packed this long weekend there were only two fatalities on the N4.

Spokesman for Trac, Mr Hannes van Wyk, said thousands of motorists took to the road

last weekend and only two reported accidents were fatal.

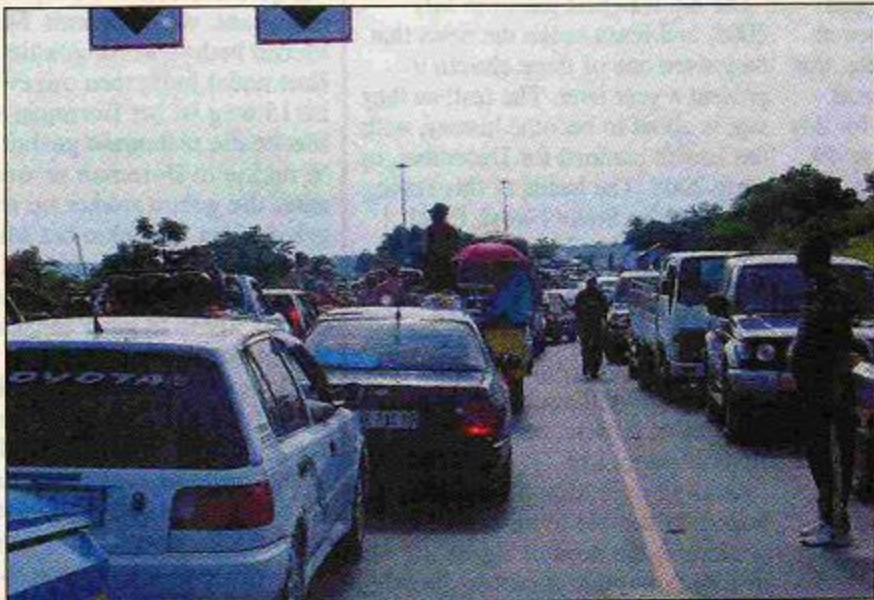
Vehicles were queued up for kilometres at the Middelburg Plaza and according to Van Wyk they had to open all the booms twice on Thursday and once on Tuesday in order to relieve the congestion.

One fatality resulted from a head-on collision near the Blomme Plaza at Machadodorp on Thursday and the other at the end of the long weekend, just west of Witbank.

"On Tuesday there was traffic build-up where the Nelspruit, Dullstroom and Carolina roads converge. We will be widening that section of the road within the next two years."

Van Wyk compared the recent fatality

figures to those of the Easter weekend during which only three people died on the road, "It is great to know that more members of the public seem to be obeying the rules these days. These figures are impressive."



Due to previous lessons learnt the hard way, there were no major delays at the Lebombo Border Post last weekend.