



15 mins with...



Dr Bevan Goqwana

Former Eastern Cape Health MEC Dr Bevan Goqwana, who is currently Parliamentary Health Committee chairperson, speaks out about challenges in both the provincial and national departments.

Q: HEALTH Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi was in the Eastern Cape recently to announce an overhaul of the entire health system in the country. The minister said a Bill was to be placed before Parliament. Can you comment?

A: The Bill has not been presented before Parliament yet. When it has been presented we are going to have discussions. I personally think we definitely need to set and improve standards in both private and public healthcare.

We need to set the same standards for both private and public healthcare for the National Health Insurance to work. We don't want to have a situation where some hospitals are better than others.

Q: The Eastern Cape Health Department is locked in a battle with Nestlé after three Catholic priests were arrested for allegedly selling State-bought baby formula. What are your thoughts on the matter?

A: For now the committee is in recess as parties are busy campaigning but I support anything to do with corruption fighting, especially if it involves something intended for the poor but is being misused.

We want a corruption-free government. But, at the same time we need to be cautious not to make unfounded allegations. We must be very clear about this and ensure an investigation has been done and completed. Maybe some of the churches are linked to non-governmental organisations.

Q: You visited the East London Hospital Complex



recently after 29 babies died at Cecilia Makiwane Hospital (CMH) in January. What were your observations?

A: We were shocked to hear about these baby deaths again and what was worse was that it was not the first time for it to happen at the same facility.

Even though I've not tabled a report before Parliament, I can say that we wanted to check the causes of the deaths. We spoke to doctors and we have found that some of these deaths could have been avoided. There were short-

ages of necessities and overcrowding was a problem.

It became clear that some of the things that were recommended by the late Health Minister Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang were not implemented. Even worse, the current investigation was not focused on the problem, but was a witch-hunt for the whistle-blower.

If you're doing something right, why would you worry when some-

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thing is reported to the media and look for the person who told the media about it? The media should be commended for their role.

Q: What do you think about Vuyo Mosana's removal as the chief executive officer (CEO) of the East London Hospital Complex – combination of CMH and Frere Hospital?

A: We are happy that Mosana has finally been removed after a string of baby deaths under his leadership. Maybe this has nothing to do with his qualifications.

Maybe his qualifications are good but his leadership was going to be assessed by outcomes in this latest case of baby deaths. Maybe he was not responsible for the deaths, but he was the person who had to answer.

Q: What do you think about Dr Cobus Kotze's appointment as acting CEO?

A: He is a medical doctor and one hopes that he will be able to handle situations. We are hoping he will not be sabotaged by the province or his staff.

Q: What do you think about the planned move to de-complex the East London Hospital Complex into two separate hospitals?

A: Now, you are putting me in a corner because I was driving the amalgamation of the two hospitals to cut down on duplication of services and finances because Frere Hospital is just 11km from CMH.

To combine both hospitals was also to boost CMH, which is predominantly for blacks, but not lower the standard of Frere at the same time. I was fired just when I was busy with the complex policy and I think people who took over didn't understand that policy. I do

not think de-complexing is right but it is a decision for the department to make.

Q: What do you think can be done to improve health-care in the Eastern Cape and address major challenges faced by the department?

A: During my tenure as the MEC, the department had its first unqualified audit since 1994. We were better than the Education Department but now we are the same. The problems in the Eastern Cape are at a political level.

Sometimes people are put there to fight certain individuals. We need to tackle this as the ANC. The Eastern Cape is one of the poor provinces and only the ANC is capable of addressing these problems by concentrating on The Freedom Charter and the people will feel our presence.

Q: What do you think about MEC Sicelo Gqobana's leadership style?

A: I cannot comment on that because I was the MEC myself, but what I can say is that we are going to make sure we monitor the Eastern Cape more closely. — Msindisi Fengu