

Deputy Minister visits rural university

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is on hyper-speed to eradicate shortages of student residences around the country.

More than R109 million has been invested by DHET to build student residences with 634 brand new beds at the University of Venda (Univen). The Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) invested another R300 million for further 1,800 beds.

These residences will include single and double rooms, and will also cater for disabled students.

Recently the lack of accommodation became a point of contention for students and university management at many institutions of higher learning across the country.

At institutions such as the University of Cape Town (UCT), Vaal University of Technology (VUT) and University of Johannesburg (UJ), female students, when walking from a library or study group at night, were the target of violent crimes, on and off campus residences.

The visit by the Department's Deputy Minister, Mr Mduduzi Manana, to Thohoyadou in Limpopo, aimed to interact with the students, collect information about their concerns and other challenges as well as the general state of teaching and learning.

"Ideally, we want all students to be accommodated which is why we want to partner with the private sector," said the Deputy Minister.

He encouraged the Student Representative Council (SRC) leaders to take ownership of the university's assets and asked them to strongly condemn damage of property during campus protests.

The Deputy Minister was taken on a tour to visit student residences, a campus health clinic, the new residences' construction site, the School of Agriculture, the sports and recreation centre and the student disability unit.

The university's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Mbatia, says students will be housed in new residences before the end of 2016 academic year.