

Municipalities gearing up for Govan Mbeki Awards

TNA REPORTER

MUNICIPALITIES across the country are vying to be selected as winners of the outstanding developmental projects that have had a positive impact on the lives of poor people especially those needing decent homes.

The contest is part of the annual Govan Mbeki Awards which showcases best practices in the human settlements sector. Some of the provinces have already voted for their best projects and the remaining ones will award best municipal projects throughout this month.

Winners from the different categories will then compete in the national Govan Mbeki Awards ceremony at Gallagher Estate in Johannesburg in June. Gauteng, KZN and Eastern Cape have completed their provincial awards. Limpopo and North West provinces held their nomination events on Tuesday while Mpumalanga's event is expected to take place today.

There is a category for students, in the engineering and building sectors who have designed innovative human settlements projects. Categories also accommodate rural and urban set-ups as well as small and bigger municipalities. The ability of the councils to best manage projects, beneficiary lists and financial administration are also taken into account.

During the KZN awards ceremony on Friday, students from the Mangosuthu University of Technology



WINNERS: Msizi Shange, Fikile Thabethe and Ayanda Zulu took home the best rural and priority project award. PICTURE: ELOHANGI NINAM



came out tops while a community-based housing project Siyamthanda was chosen by housing MEC Ravi Pillay as an exemplary project that

encourages people to take the initiatives in building sustainable human settlements.

Challenges such as the shortages of land and illegal invasions of land, including land earmarked for housing projects were highlighted as some of major hindrances to development.

Most municipalities have raised concerns that the problems may increase as South Africa edges closer to next year's general elections.

Pillay and his Gauteng counterpart Ntombi Melkgwe have vowed to take tough steps against illegal invasions

or selling of state land.

The Department of Human Settlements has a policy to work with community based organisations and the private sector to address the housing challenges including clearing the housing backlogs in the urban centres and homelessness in cities such as Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Most municipalities are currently working to find ways of ensuring a transparent system in terms of provision of housing especially when it comes to waiting lists for beneficiaries.