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METRO MAYORAL RACE BEGINS

Seven candidates, including Nthatisi, appear before the interview panel at Luthuli House


Mangaung Mayor, Gregory Nthatisi


Lawrence Mathae


Thabo Manyoni


Lulama Titi Odili


Gadija Brown


Vusi Sogaqa


Theodorah Mosala

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Cable Theft Crisis Crippling Centlec

Energy utility spends millions on replenishing stolen cables and vandalised electricity infrastructure annually

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Organised criminal syndicates are crippling municipal electricity distributor, Centlec, by stripping away essential electricity infrastructure and plunging communities in Mangaung into darkness. The Mangaung energy utility is locked in a costly cycle of repairing ongoing damage instead of expanding the network.

During a single financial year, the entity spent more than R50-million replacing stolen electrical cables and repairing vandalised infrastructure.

This deepening crisis drains critical municipal revenue, delays infrastructure upgrades, diverts technical teams from planned maintenance, and leaves entire neighbourhoods without power.

The rolling blackouts disrupt businesses, disable traffic lights, stall factories, and compromise local health facilities and water pumping stations.

In August 2024, the utility reported an alarming increase in theft along strategic routes, including the N8 Airport corridor, Hilton, and the N1.

Centlec has on previous occasions warned that replacing stolen cables had become financially crippling while placing motorists and pedestrians at risk due to dark streets.

The crisis has also turned fatal, with a suspected cable thief electrocuted earlier this year while attempting to steal overhead lines in Phase 6, Bloemfontein. Centlec subsequently identified other parts in the city, namely Lourierpark, Phase 6, Uitsig and Fauna, as areas that also experience repeated attacks on electricity infrastructure.

In June this year, a truck loaded with an assortment of stolen copper cables was intercepted on the N1 road near Glen outside Bloemfontein, after the utility's security department received an anonymous tip-off.

In two other separate incidents that also took place last month in Bloemfontein and Botshabelo respectively, two men were arrested for tampering with essential electricity infrastructure and stealing copper cable worth around R35 000 collectively.

These copper theft occurrences take place regularly and are believed to be driven by skyrocketing international copper prices - which have transformed standard electrical cables into highly profitable targets.

While Journal News Network's several attempts to get comment from Centlec regarding the rampant cable theft crisis were deliberately ignored, energy experts from the University of the Free State told this newspaper that cable thieves rarely steal copper for personal use, opting instead to funnel the metal into sophisticated criminal supply chains.

Stolen electricity moves swiftly through recruiters, transporters, illegal scrap dealers, and exporters across various provincial boundaries.

Those physically cutting the electrical cables receive a fraction of the profits, while syndicate leaders and illegal buyers claim the greatest financial rewards.

Centlec and Mangaung's crisis mirrors a national emergency, with government estimates placing the direct annual cost of cable theft between R5 billion and R7 billion.

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Mangaung Mayoral Race Begins

Seven candidates, including Nthatisi, appear before the interview panel at Luthuli House

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

The race to become the next Executive Mayor of Free State's only metro municipality, Mangaung, has officially begun, with seven candidates appearing before an ANC interview panel this week at Luthuli House in Johannesburg.

Among those vying for the influential position is incumbent Mayor Gregory Nthatisi, as the governing party moves to fill one of the country's most politically significant municipal leadership posts amid growing pressure to restore stability, improve service delivery, and rebuild public confidence in the metro.

The interviews form part of the ANC's internal selection process to identify a preferred candidate – with leadership credentials, governance experience, and ability to steer the troubled municipality out of its prolonged political and service delivery challenges – to be recommended for election by the Mangaung Metro Council post November 4 local government elections.

With the contest shaping up as a high-stakes political battle, Nthatisi faces stiff competition from former ANC Free State Deputy Chairperson and former Mangaung Executive Mayor Thabo Manyoni, as well as former Free State Finance MEC Gadija Brown, among other contenders.

The race is being closely watched by ANC structures, councillors, and residents, with the outcome expected to have far-reaching implications for the future of the metro.

According to a source within the ANC's regional structures, Nthatisi, Manyoni, and Brown are widely regarded as the leading contenders and are considered strong candidates not only for the mayoral position but also for the metro's top political leadership.

"If you look at the shortlisted candidates, although the process is still at an early stage, these three comrades have the experience, leadership credentials, and political standing required to lead the municipality," said a party insider.

"The frontrunner is likely to become mayor, while the second and third-ranked candidates could be considered for the positions of deputy mayor and speaker, respectively," the source added.

Other candidates include current ANC Regional Chairperson and Mangaung Speaker Lawrence Mathae, Regional Deputy Chairperson Vusi Soqaga, Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Integrated Development Plan and Performance Theodorah (Theo) Mosala, and Deputy Mayor Lulama Titi Odili who recently made headlines following the arrest of her Nigerian husband, Lyndon Adentuji Odili, commonly known as Eric. He is facing 18 counts of allegedly harbouring, aiding, abetting, assisting or enabling undocumented foreign nationals to remain in South Africa in contravention of the country's immigration laws.

Meanwhile, speaking to Journal News on Thursday, incumbent Executive Mayor Nthatisi expressed confidence that he will retain the mayoral office following the November local government elections.

He said he believes he has earned the trust of Mangaung residents through his hands-on leadership and direct engagement with communities.

"All I can tell you is that I've built a sound relationship with people across the metro. I enjoy serving them, and I believe they have come to know me because I have made myself accessible and exposed myself to the challenges they face. Otherwise, they wouldn't have known me," he said.

Nthatisi was appointed Executive Mayor of Mangaung in 2023, following a resignation of the former mayor Mxolisi Siyonzana who had a fallout with the regional structure.

A veteran anti-apartheid activist and former Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) combatant, he has had a long political career spanning the liberation struggle. In 2020, he served as Secretary-General of the MK Council.

Cable Theft Crisis Crippling Centlec

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gest the wider economic impact exceeds R45 billion each year due to emergency repairs, production losses, and transport disruptions.

Between 2018 and 2022, nearly 11 000 incidents of copper theft were recorded across Eskom, Transnet, and Prasa infrastructure. Eskom estimates that cable theft and vandalism cost the utility billions annually, with an additional R2 billion spent replacing damaged infrastructure.

For municipal entities like Centlec, these compounding financial consequences ultimately filter down to residents, with proposals such as a R50 tariff have emerged as part of broader efforts to strengthen the utility's financial sustainability. Residents effectively pay twice for the crime, experiencing prolonged power outages alongside increasing financial pressure on electricity tariffs and municipal budgets.

Law enforcement authorities now treat copper theft as a form of organised crime rather than ordinary property vandalism.

National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) data shows prosecutions involving copper theft and critical infrastructure attacks more than doubled from 409 to 959 cases. Of the 210 cable theft cases finalised in court, 193 resulted in convictions, reflecting a conviction rate of nearly 92%.

Prosecutors describe these cases as technically complex, requiring engineering expertise, forensic analysis and telecommunications records to link suspects to networks.

Dismantling the syndicates financing the thefts and disrupting the illegal scrap metal markets remains the greater operational challenge.

Contact US

No 09 Henri Van Rooijen Street
New East End
Bloemfontein
9301

Tel:
051 430 0129
Email:
info@journalnews.co.za
Advertising:
sales@journalnews.co.za
Website:
www.journalnews.co.za

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Letters to the Editor
Postal Address:
No 09 Henri Van Rooijen Street
New East End
Bloemfontein
9301

Editor-in-Chief
Refilwe Mochoari
E-mail: editor@journalnews.co.za
Cell: 083 943 9879

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Mokua Launches R331 Million Road Project To Unlock Economic Growth In Dwarsberg

By Refilwe Mochoari

The MEC for Public Works and Roads in North West, Sempe Mokua, yesterday officially turned the sod and introduced the contractor for the upgrading of the R33 million, 17km Dwarsberg–Mankaipaya road in Moses Kotane Local Municipality.

This event marked the beginning of a major infrastructure investment aimed at improving mobility, stimulating economic activity, and creating jobs.

Spokesperson for the department Bayanda Zenzile said the multi-year project will see the upgrading of Roads D506, Z559 and Z539 from Dwarsberg to Mankaipaya over an 18-month construction period, with work anticipated to commence in August 2026.

She says the project also includes the construction of bridges, approximately 7km of regravelling, segmented paving block surfacing, drainage improvements, and other road safety infrastructure.

Implemented by TIG Construction (Pty) Ltd, the project forms Phase 1A of the broader corridor development programme and is expected to significantly improve access between communities while strengthening one of the province's strategic transport routes.

Zenzile says the project will also deliver tangible socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities. "A minimum of 30% of the contract value has been earmarked for local SMMEs and subcontracting opportunities, while 120 work opportunities will be created for locals during construction.

"The programme further provides technical and generic skills training, including practical workplace experience for Civil Engineering students," said Zenzile. During the sod turning, Mokua said the project demonstrates the government's commitment to ensuring that infrastructure investment translates into meaningful opportunities for communities.

"Road infrastructure is more than asphalt and bridges.

"It is an investment in people, economic growth and dignity. Through this project, we are connecting communities to opportunities, creating sustainable employment and empowering local businesses to participate meaningfully in the provincial economy", expressed Mokua.

The MEC further called on the community to safeguard the project and work with the contractor to ensure its successful completion within the scheduled timeframe.

CRIME REPORTS

Former Justice Department employee sentenced to eight years

Former Department of Justice and Constitutional Development employee, Nthabiseng Adeline Motaung, was sentenced to eight years' direct imprisonment by the Bethlehem Commercial Crimes Court on Friday. This comes after she failed to comply with the conditions of her suspended sentence.

Motaung who was an Administration Clerk responsible for Third Party Funds at the Bethlehem Magistrates' Court, is reported to have defrauded the department of about R135 thousand between May 2018 and February 2019 by unlawfully transferring funds into her and her co-accused's personal bank accounts. According to the reports following an investigation by the Hawks' Serious Corruption Investigation Unit in Bloemfontein, she was arrested and appeared before the Bethlehem Commercial Crimes Court on 27 October 2023, where she pleaded guilty to 40 counts of fraud and nine counts of money laundering.

She received an eight-year prison sentence wholly suspended for five years on condition that she repays the stolen money in monthly instalments of R4 000 and complies with other conditions imposed by the court. After failing to honour the repayment condition, the court found her guilty of contempt of court and ordered that the suspended sentence be enforced, resulting in eight years direct imprisonment.

A woman was arrested after the fatal stabbing of another woman

A 40-year-old suspect was arrested in the early hours of Monday after the fatal stabbing of a 36-year-old woman in an alleged love triangle dispute at Ikopeleng Village, near Ramatlabama in North West province.

According to police, they responded to a complaint in Ramatlabama, and upon arrival at the scene, they found the body of a naked woman with multiple stab wounds, lying outside the yard of a house. A 43-year-old man was also found with stab wounds to his upper body and was transported to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.

Preliminary investigations indicate that, during the early hours of the morning, the husband allegedly arrived home with another woman while his two children were present. The children reportedly contacted their mother, who was staying nearby.

It is alleged that, upon arriving home, the suspect found her husband with the other woman in their bedroom. She allegedly armed herself with a knife and stabbed both of them. The deceased reportedly managed to flee the house but collapsed outside the yard, where she succumbed to her injuries.

The 40-year-old suspect was arrested and is expected to appear before the Mmabatho Magistrates' Court on Friday, 10 July 2026, on charges of murder and attempted murder. The Acting District Commissioner of the Ngaka Modiri Molema District, Brigadier (Adv) Bigboy Dube, has condemned this act and has also urged members of the public to resolve disputes through peaceful and lawful means rather than resorting to violence.

Eastern Cape man was sentenced to life imprisonment for a mass shooting

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in the Eastern Cape welcomed the sentence by the High Court of South Africa, Eastern Cape Division, Gqeberha, for Mzwandile Mahambehlala following his conviction on multiple charges arising from a mass shooting at a birthday celebration in KwaZakhele on 29 January 2023.

It is reported that on 26 June 2026, Mahambehlala was convicted on eight counts of murder, one count of attempted murder, one count of unlawful possession of a firearm, and one count of unlawful possession of ammunition.

The matter relates to a shooting incident in which eight people were killed, and three others sustained gunshot wounds while attending a birthday celebration. The State proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Mahambehlala acted in concert with others in furtherance of a common purpose.

In its judgment, the court found that the motive for the attack was rooted in greed associated with the lucrative security tender industry and the extortion of businesses.

As a result, the court sentenced Mahambehlala to life imprisonment on each of the eight murder counts and ordered that all sentences run concurrently, resulting in an effective sentence of life imprisonment. He was also declared unfit to possess a firearm in terms of the Firearms Control Act.

A man was beaten to death over a beer in Jagersfontein

Three suspects aged 20, 23, and 31 were arrested and charged with attempted murder and are expected to appear in the Jagersfontein Magistrate's Court soon.

This comes after police were called to a scene of attempted murder at Sun Street in Itumeleng location, Jagersfontein, on Sunday following an attack on a 39-year-old victim, Teboho Mohanoe, over a beer on his way from the tavern.

It is reported that on the day of the incident, the victim, who stays at Harrington Street in Jagersfontein, argued with the first suspect over a beer. When the victim left, the first suspect went to call two other males. The group chased and attacked the victim.

The police say they started by throwing stones at him, and one of them injured the victim on the head with a stone. They then engaged in a fist fight with the victim, and one suspect hit the victim with a beer bottle on his face, and the other suspect stabbed the victim with a knife multiple times on his body, side of the chest, and back.

The victim was found lying on the ground by Emergency Medical Services, unconscious, and was immediately transferred to the hospital in Bloemfontein.

However, the victim managed to report that he knows one of the suspects by name and does not know the other assailants' names. The police reported that the suspects are not related to the victim in any manner and that the incident started as a squabble between two strangers who were at the same location and argued over a beer.

Ngwathe Wins NCOP Praise for Turnaround

By Bernell Simons

Ngwathe Local Municipality's turnaround efforts have received a significant vote of confidence from the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), with an oversight delegation praising progress in restoring governance, improving service delivery and stabilising the municipality after years of administrative and operational challenges.

A delegation of the Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Public Administration, led by Chairperson Mxolisi Kaunda, visited the municipality this week to assess whether meaningful progress has been made since the Free State Provincial Government intervened under Section 139(1)(c) of the Constitution.

The intervention followed a Bloemfontein High Court ruling, later upheld by the Constitutional Court, which found that Ngwathe had failed to fulfil its constitutional, legal and administrative obligations to residents.

Kaunda said the committee welcomed reports that progress had been made in addressing several longstanding challenges, including improvements to water and sanitation services, uninterrupted electricity supply, and the maintenance of critical infrastructure such as roads and sewer networks.

"The committee noted with appreciation that both the Provincial Administrator, Dr Solly Motingoe, and the former Executive Mayor, Victoria de Beer-Mthombeni, presented a consistent account of the progress achieved since the intervention was implemented. They emphasised, however, that the current trajectory must be sustained to ensure lasting improvements in service delivery for the residents of Ngwathe," said Kaunda. In a move that effectively brought an end to Ngwathe's current political administration, Free State Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) MEC Saki Mokoena recently dissolved the Municipal Council in compliance with a court order.

"The intervention is aimed at addressing identified challenges, strengthening service delivery, consolidating progress made and correcting systemic weaknesses. A team of five administrators will be appointed to support service delivery and ensure the successful implementation of the recovery plan," Mokoena said.

However, Mokoena's absence during the oversight visit drew criticism from Kaunda, who expressed disappointment that the MEC did not personally brief the committee on the intervention and plans to fully implement the court order. "The committees remain of the view that the MEC should have personally appeared before them to account politically for the implementation of the intervention," he said.

The case against the municipal council was brought by AfriForum, with the support of the Save Ngwathe community group, in May 2024.

The oversight visit comes days after National Treasury confirmed it would temporarily withhold the municipality's July 2026 equitable share allocation because of continued non-compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).

Referring to the court ruling, Kaunda urged both the municipality and the provincial government to prioritise cooperation over litigation in their efforts to improve service delivery.

"The lessons from the Ngwathe litigation debacle are clear: litigation diverts scarce resources away from service delivery towards lengthy and costly legal processes that ultimately do not improve the lives of residents. While litigation remains a legitimate mechanism for resolving disputes, it should be regarded as a measure of last resort," Kaunda said.

Rockman Launches Rural Agriculture Rescue Strategy

By JN Reporter

The Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs (DARDEA), Elsabe Rockman, has unveiled an ambitious strategy to strengthen food security, combat Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) and transform emerging farmers into commercial producers during a high-level engagement with local farmers and traditional leaders in Namahadi.

The strategic meeting, held at the Bakoena Royal Council, focused on tackling immediate agricultural challenges while laying the foundation for sustainable rural economic growth.

A key priority was the province's aggressive response to the Foot-and-Mouth Disease outbreak. The Department has already administered more than one million vaccinations towards its target of three million, with four vaccination rounds completed in QwaQwa and three in Harrismith.

MEC Rockman called for stronger collaboration between government, farmers and traditional leaders to contain the disease while expanding farmer support through initiatives such as veld fire-fighting and rescue training.

Traditional leadership, led by Morena e Moholo Moremoholo Motebang Mopeli, raised concerns over historical land constraints that have left many communities farming on fragmented pieces of land, limiting agricultural productivity and economic growth.

To stimulate rural development and reduce dependence on social grants, traditional leaders requested government support for communal tractors, seeds, farming equipment, communal kraals, cattle handling facilities, additional livestock pounds and fencing around agricultural villages to combat escalating stock theft.

They also appealed to Executive Mayor Tumelo Thebe to lease farms to traditional councils to establish community farming cooperatives.Responding to these requests, MEC Rockman committed to developing a joint implementation roadmap with local and district municipalities to ensure measurable and sustainable outcomes.

"The Department will establish a dedicated workstream—with terms of reference formulated to guide cooperation and coordination—and this process will be led by DARDEA's legal team," she said.

The partnership will include testing approximately 100 hectares of arable land to determine crop suitability while expanding skills development programmes for local farmers.

Rockman further urged farmers to diversify beyond livestock production by investing in poultry, piggery and climate-suited crop farming, while positioning local producers to access commercial markets through major retailers including Pick n Pay, Spar and Shoprite.

As part of its long-term environmental and food security strategy, the Department also announced plans to plant one million trees over the next five years and intensify efforts to attract young people into agriculture, positioning the sector as a driver of jobs, entrepreneurship and economic growth in the Free State.

Project OWETHU Brings Lifesaving Healthcare to Xhariep's Doorstep

By Bernell Simons

For many residents of Jacobsdal, Tuesday marked more than the arrival of military personnel—it marked the arrival of healthcare they could finally access without travelling hundreds of kilometres.

Elderly residents, mothers with young children and farm workers queued outside Ikanyegeng Combined School as the South African Military Health Service officially launched Project OWETHU 2026, a two-week humanitarian outreach bringing free medical care, specialist treatment and government services directly to underserved communities across the Xhariep District.

From consultations and chronic disease screenings to dental care, eye examinations and mental health support, the initiative is turning healthcare into a doorstep service for thousands who have long faced distance and cost as barriers to treatment.

The outreach continues across Xhariep until 17 July, visiting Steurmekaar Farms Police Station (10–11 July), Diamanthoogte Combined School in Koffiefontein (13–14 July) and Ipetleng Secondary School in Petrusburg (15–17 July). Services are available daily from 10:00 on a walk-in, first-come, first-served basis. Residents are encouraged to bring identification documents, clinic cards, antenatal records and current medication where available, although treatment remains free regardless of documentation. Children must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Unlike many government launches defined by speeches and ceremonial formalities, Project OWETHU immediately shifted into action.

Within minutes of the official proceedings, consultation rooms were filled as military doctors, nurses, dentists, psychologists, social workers and other healthcare professionals began attending to patients.

A partnership between the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS), the Free State Department of Health and several government departments, the programme combines specialist healthcare with social support services under one roof.

"This project is aimed at improving the lives of our community by augmenting government health and social services with the added multidisciplinary capacity of the Military Health Service to aid one community at a time," said Lieutenant Colonel Thabiso Kheu, Head of Social Work at the Area Military Health Unit Free State.

Rather than replacing provincial healthcare services, the military is reinforcing them by bringing additional expertise, personnel and resources directly to communities where transport costs and long travel distances often prevent residents from accessing essential care.

For many rural families, a specialist appointment can mean losing a day's wages and travelling for hours. Project OWETHU is changing that reality by taking healthcare to the people instead of expecting people to travel to healthcare.

Throughout the launch, hundreds of residents received medical consultations, chronic disease screenings, oral healthcare, eye care, mental health support, health education and social work services. Partner government departments also assisted with referrals and access to various public services, enabling families to address multiple needs in a single visit.

The initiative reflects government's growing emphasis on integrated service delivery by bringing healthcare, social development and community support together through a mobile service model.

The approach aligns with Cabinet's Integrated Social Facilitation Framework, which promotes stronger collaboration between government departments to improve access to essential services.

Project OWETHU has already demonstrated its impact in previous deployments. Earlier this year, military medical teams in Limpopo performed 89 successful cataract surgeries during a single outreach campaign, restoring sight to patients who had waited months, and in some cases years, for specialist treatment.

Healthcare workers moved efficiently between consultation rooms while volunteers assisted elderly residents between service points and parents waited patiently with children carrying Road-to-Health cards.

Since its inception, Project OWETHU has grown into one of government's largest integrated rural healthcare initiatives, bringing specialist medical services and preventative healthcare to thousands of South Africans living in underserved communities.

"Its greatest impact may not be measured only by the number of patients seen.

"It is measured in journeys that no longer have to be made, wages that do not have to be sacrificed for transport, illnesses detected before they become life-threatening and communities reminded that government services can reach them instead of expecting them to travel in search of help," said Free State Department of Health spokesperson Mondli Mvambi.

In rural communities where service delivery is often measured by promises yet to be fulfilled, Project OWETHU is delivering something immediate and tangible—doctors instead of delays, treatment instead of bureaucracy, and a powerful reminder that government can sometimes arrive not with speeches, but with stethoscopes, medicine and a commitment to serve.

North West Upskills Vets to Fight Livestock Diseases

By Bernell Simons

The North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is strengthening its fight against livestock diseases by equipping frontline veterinary officials with specialist skills to detect and contain bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis—two infectious diseases that threaten animal health, farmers' livelihoods and public safety.

Animal Health Technicians from veterinary offices across the province are currently completing a specialised two-week accredited Bovine Brucellosis and Tuberculosis (BR/TB) training programme at North-West University. Running from 29 June to 10 July, the course forms part of the province's Brucellosis Reduction Plan, which aims to improve disease surveillance, strengthen outbreak response and protect both the agricultural sector and public health.

Brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis are zoonotic diseases, meaning they can spread from infected animals to humans through direct contact or the consumption of contaminated animal products. In cattle, the diseases can cause abortions, infertility, reduced milk production and significant financial losses for livestock producers.

The programme combines classroom learning with practical fieldwork and is a statutory requirement for Animal Health Technicians authorised to conduct official brucellosis and tuberculosis diagnostic testing in cattle herds. Provincial authorities say increasing the number of accredited officials will enhance early disease detection, improve control measures and ensure compliance with national veterinary regulations.

North West MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Madoda Sambatha said investing in veterinary professionals is critical to safeguarding the province's livestock industry and strengthening food security.

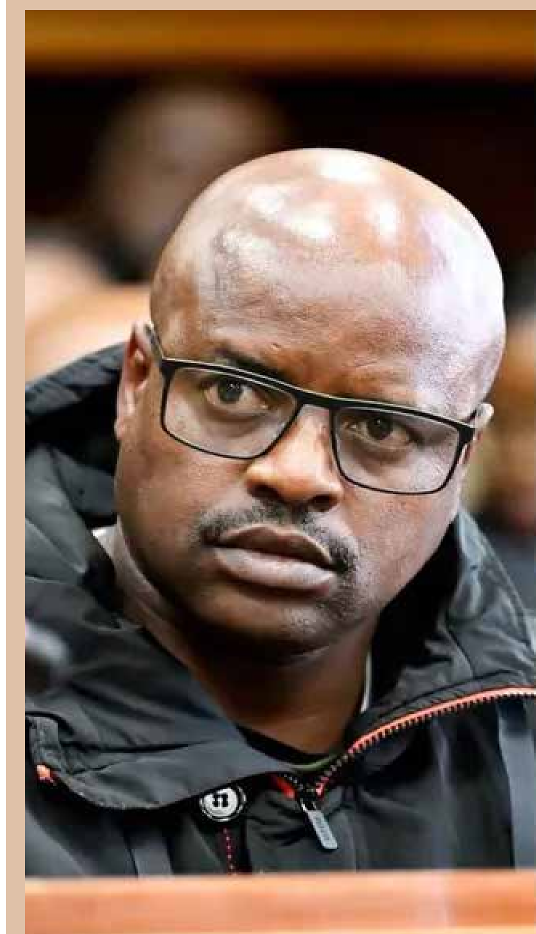
"Investing in the development of our Animal Health Technicians is an investment in the future of animal health, food safety and agricultural growth in our province. Through this training, we are strengthening the capacity of our Veterinary Services to provide farmers with the quality support they need while ensuring effective disease prevention and control," he said.

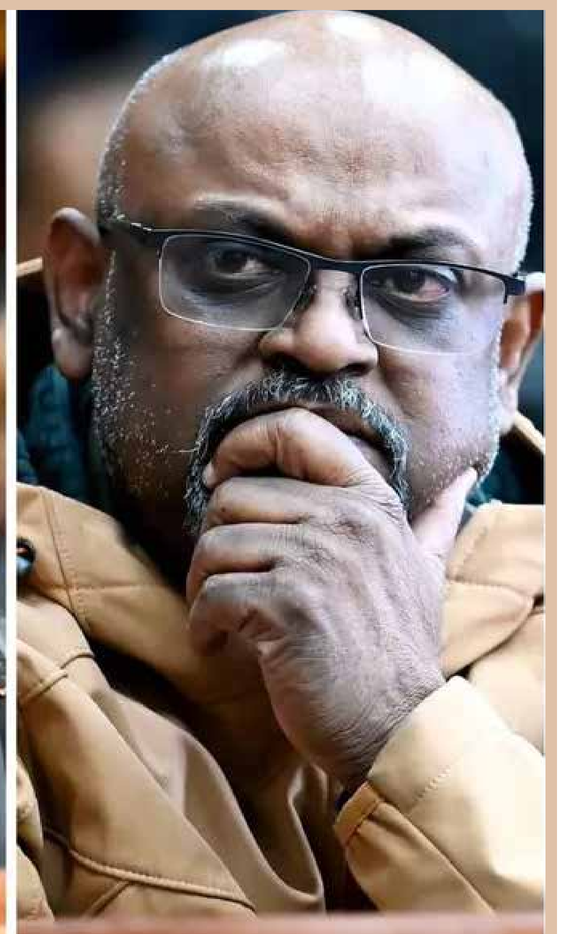
Participants said the training would improve the support they provide to livestock owners in their respective districts.

Gomolemo Malau from the Moses Kotane Veterinary Office said the programme would strengthen the quality of veterinary services offered to farmers, while Keitsile Isaac Mosimane from the Naledi Veterinary Office said he looked forward to applying his new knowledge in communities affected by livestock diseases.

"I am here to learn more about brucellosis and deepen my understanding of the disease. By the end of the programme, I want to be better equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to support and empower the farmers I work with in my area," Mosimane said. Provincial officials believe strengthening the technical capacity of frontline veterinary staff will play a key role in implementing the North West Brucellosis Reduction Plan, improving disease surveillance, protecting public health and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the province's livestock industry.

Julius Mkhwanazi and Kemi Behari granted bail, Mashazi spends night in jail





Suspended EMPD deputy chief, Commissioner Julius Mkhwanazi and suspended Ekurhuleni head of legal, Adv Kemi Behari, have been granted bail R50,000 each. The two are among the four accused who have appeared at the Germiston Magistrate's Court on Thursday. They are facing charges of fraud, corruption and defeating the ends of justice.

Mkhwanazi and Behari were joined by the former Human Resources Head, Linda Gxasheka and former Ekurhuleni City Manager, Imogen Mashazi. Meanwhile, Mashazi and Gxasheka's bail will be heard on Friday. This is to allow prosecutors to complete outstanding address verification

Mashazi's legal team said the Crime Intelligence Technical Response Team was adequately equipped to conduct the address verification overnight. Representing Gxasheka, her lawyer argued that delaying the proceedings for several days would be unfair, noting that she is the mother of a four-year-old child. The magistrate said several factors, including the interests of minor children, had to be considered before deciding on bail.

Mkhwanazi, already out on R30,000 bail in a separate case linked to Ekurhuleni Municipal Manager Kagiso Lerutla, is expected to join the others in the dock. The arrests come amid explosive testimony before the Madlanga Commission, where witnesses alleged Behari failed for years to act on findings against Mkhwanazi, allowing disciplinary proceedings to stall.

In their affidavits, the two have denied allegations against them. The commission also heard allegations that Behari and Gxasheka received irregular salary increases worth about R600,000 in return for allegedly ensuring Mkhwanazi's disciplinary case disappeared. Former municipal employee relations head Xolani Nciza testified that disciplinary action against Mkhwanazi was unexpectedly halted in 2023.

Behari has denied all allegations, maintaining that claims that he accepted a bribe are false and without foundation.

This story was originally posted by IOL

Two Deaths Renew Calls to Shut Down Illegal Initiation Schools

By Bernell Simons

The 2026 winter initiation season in North West has been plunged into tragedy after two young initiates died within days of its commencement, reigniting alarm over the continued operation of illegal initiation schools despite years of legislation, awareness campaigns and enforcement efforts.

While one fatality occurred at a registered initiation school in Bodibe Village, authorities say the second death at an illegal school in Khuma Township has once again exposed the deadly consequences of unregulated initiation practices and intensified calls for communities to help eradicate illegal schools before more lives are lost.

The latest incidents have cast a dark shadow over the province's initiation programme and prompted renewed appeals to parents, traditional leaders and local communities to remain vigilant against unlawful initiation schools that continue to endanger young lives.

North West MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Gaoage Oageng Molapisi, described the deaths as heartbreaking, extending his condolences to the bereaved families while reaffirming that initiation is a respected cultural tradition that must never come at the cost of human life.

"The loss of even one initiate is one too many," Molapisi said, warning that illegal initiation schools remain the greatest threat to the safety and wellbeing of initiates because they operate outside legal, cultural and health regulations.

Authorities acted swiftly following the death in Khuma Township, where the illegal initiation school was immediately shut down.

The Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committee rescued 41 initiates from the facility and transported them to a nearby health centre for medical assessments and treatment. All have since been discharged and reunited with their families.

For years, illegal initiation schools have been identified as one of the leading causes of deaths, dehydration, assaults, infections and permanent injuries during initiation seasons. Many operate without qualified traditional surgeons, medical oversight or compliance with the Customary Initiation Act, exposing initiates to life-threatening conditions.

Despite intensified awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement measures, illegal operators continue to exploit vulnerable families and communities by running unregistered schools that disregard both cultural protocols and the law.

Provincial authorities have strengthened inspections and monitoring across the North West, with government departments, traditional leaders, healthcare professionals and law enforcement agencies working together to ensure registered initiation schools comply with safety standards.

Molapisi urged communities to report any suspected illegal initiation schools immediately, stressing that preventing further deaths requires a united effort from families, traditional structures and local residents.

Meanwhile, the South African Police Service has opened a criminal case for the alleged contravention of the Customary Initiation Act and is investigating both deaths as authorities work to prevent further tragedies during the remainder of the winter initiation season.

Metro Pledges Tough Action on R14bn Financial Crisis

Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality City Manager Sello More. Picture: **MMM/Facebook**

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality has pledged to restore financial discipline and strengthen service delivery as it prepares to implement its 2026/27 Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), with officials revealing that the metro is burdened by more than R14 billion in unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

The commitment emerged during a two-day Strategic Planning Session held at Bainsvlei Lodge, where municipal leaders, government stakeholders and senior officials assessed the city's readiness to implement its development programmes and improve service delivery for residents.

The session formed part of the municipality's broader effort to strengthen planning, improve execution and ensure that projects are effectively implemented.

City Manager Sello More, together with representatives from Vaal Central, National Treasury and the Department of Water and Sanitation, participated in the strategic discussions.

According to municipal spokesperson Themba Vryman, the engagement provided an opportunity for officials to interrogate key challenges facing the municipality and identify practical solutions to improve governance and service delivery.

Addressing delegates on the second day of the session, Chief Financial Officer Zuziwe Thekisho said financial discipline remained one of the municipality's biggest challenges.

"Our reported unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure currently exceeds R14 billion. If we were disciplined enough as an organisation, with officials exercising proper financial delegations and accountability, we would not be having this conversation. Financial discipline remains a serious challenge in Mangaung, and we must find ways to prevent these occurrences from continuing," said Thekisho.

She stressed that the municipality cannot continue reporting unauthorised and wasteful expenditure year after year if it hopes to restore financial stability.

Thekisho also encouraged residents to pay for municipal services, adding that discussions with Centlec regarding electricity-related matters have been ongoing since 2017 as part of efforts to improve revenue collection and financial sustainability.

Officials also debated proposals relating to Section 103 of the Municipal Systems Act, including suggestions that employees who have defaulted on municipal accounts be offered incentives to settle their outstanding debts.

However, Head of Department for Planning, Economic and Rural Development and Human Settlements, Nokuthula Chakane, rejected the proposal, warning that it would reward non-payment.

"We cannot encourage people to default on their municipal accounts and then reward them with incentives before they settle their debt.

"Council has already approved a Credit Control and Debt Collection Policy, and it must be enforced," she said.

Chakane added that municipal employees with outstanding accounts are expected to make payment arrangements with the finance department, while the municipality also has the legal authority to approach employers to facilitate salary deductions for outstanding municipal debts where necessary.

She further noted that the Municipal Systems Act's Code of Conduct requires municipal employees to remain in good standing regarding their financial obligations to the municipality.

Closing the session, City Manager More urged officials to contribute practical solutions that would improve the performance of their respective directorates while ensuring that all programmes remain aligned with the municipality's available budget.

"After various challenges and misalignments that have affected this institution, we must come together to correct these imbalances and break the cycle that has hindered the municipality's progress. We need to identify practical and effective ways to implement our plans to ensure the municipality functions efficiently," said More.

'It's not optional': Employers warned to register domestic workers for UIF in South Africa

The Department of Employment and Labour has warned that employers who hire a domestic worker for 24 hours or more per month are legally required to register them with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

"If you employ a domestic worker for 24 hours or more a month, you must register them with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). It's not optional, it's a legal obligation," Inspector-General Aggy Moiloa said.

This comes as domestic workers have intensified calls for stronger labour protections, with unions warning that many workers remain excluded from basic rights such as UIF registration, fair wages and proper enforcement of labour laws. IOL previously reported that the average domestic worker in South Africa supports four dependants at home and serves as both the family's sole provider and breadwinner, according to data from SweepSouth's 2023 Report on Domestic Workers Pay and Work Conditions.

The survey, which included more than 5,500 participants, also found that the average domestic worker was 37 years old and relied on domestic work as their only source of income, earning about R2,989 per month. Earlier this year, the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU), supported by Cosatu, also marched to the Department of Employment and Labour in Cape Town, where they handed over a memorandum of demands, calling for urgent government intervention.

At the centre of their demands is a call for Labour Minister Nomakhosazana Meth to urgently engage with domestic workers and ensure they are fully recognised as formal workers, with access to the protections afforded to other sectors.

Domestic workers are also facing an employment crisis. According to SweepSouth's 2025 report, the number of domestic workers in South Africa has declined from about 1.2 million before the Covid-19 pandemic to just over 839,000 in the second quarter of 2025.

This story was originally posted by ***IOL***

Ubuntu Mayor Arrested Over Alleged Pension Fund Failures

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Ubuntu Local Municipality Mayor Cheryl Jantjies has been arrested by the Hawks over allegations that municipal workers' pension contributions were not paid over to the relevant retirement fund, triggering a political storm and renewed calls for accountability at the embattled Northern Cape municipality.

The 41-year-old mayor appeared briefly in the Richmond Magistrate's Court on 3 July after being arrested by the Hawks' Serious Commercial Crime Investigation unit. She faces 28 charges of allegedly contravening Section 13A of the Pension Funds Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).

According to the Hawks, the charges stem from the period between February 2020 and September 2025, during which Municipal Manager Synthia Levona Itumeleng and Chief Financial Officer Randile Jacobs Shuping allegedly failed to pay over deductions made from employees' salaries to third parties, including the Consolidated Retirement Pension Fund.

Investigators allege the unpaid pension contributions accumulated interest over time despite repeated reminders, pushing the municipality's debt above R200,000 before it was reduced to just under R100,000.

The Hawks allege that Jantjies, who served as mayor during the period in question, failed in her oversight responsibility to ensure the municipality met its financial obligations and prevented the default.

She was released on R2,000 bail and the matter was postponed to 20 August 2026. Jantjies is expected to appear alongside her co-accused, Itumeleng and Shuping, who were arrested last month on similar charges.

The arrest has intensified political pressure on the municipality, with the Democratic Alliance (DA) calling on the ANC to remove Jantjies from office pending the outcome of the case.

The DA said the arrest raises serious concerns about governance and accountability, adding that it had previously called for an urgent special council meeting and disciplinary action against the municipal manager and chief financial officer, but no action was taken.

"The people of Ubuntu deserve honest leadership and a municipality they can trust, while municipal employees robbed of their pensions deserve justice and accountability, not only in court, but also by the municipality," the party said.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) also welcomed the arrest, saying it was encouraged that allegations involving withheld pension fund contributions were finally being addressed.

The federation reminded employers that pension fund contributions must legally be paid within seven days after the end of each month, warning that failure to do so places workers' retirement savings at serious risk.

COSATU cited figures from the Financial Sector Conduct Authority showing that by September 2025, more than 15,500 employers had defaulted on pension fund contributions, affecting nearly 600,000 workers, with municipalities among the worst offenders.

The union said unpaid pension contributions and salary-related obligations remain a major challenge across local government and reaffirmed its support for efforts to hold those responsible accountable.

NW Premier Faces Salary Cut Over Municipal Appointment Scandal

North West Premier Lazarus Mokgosi. Picture: **Supplied**

By Nonkululeko Ngubane

North West Premier Lazarus Mokgosi is facing one of the biggest political crises of his career after a provincial legislature committee found that he breached the Legislature's Code of Conduct by allegedly attempting to influence the appointment of a municipal manager.

In a damning report submitted to Speaker Sebonta Francinah Desbo Mohono, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that Mokgosi be issued with a formal written warning and forfeit an entire month's salary and allowances linked to the position he occupied at the time of the alleged misconduct.

The recommendations follow months of hearings into allegations that, while serving as ANC Chief Whip in 2023, Mokgosi sought to interfere in the appointment of a Municipal Manager at Naledi Local Municipality.

The investigation centred on claims by Naledi Local Municipality Mayor Clifton Groep, who alleged that Mokgosi instructed former municipal employee Thabo Appolus to alter an interview panel report to block the appointment of Modisenyane Segapo.

Although Mokgosi repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and insisted there was no evidence linking him to interference in the recruitment process, the committee reached a different conclusion. After reviewing witness testimony, documentary evidence and WhatsApp messages, it found that he had participated in an attempt to manipulate the recruitment process.

The committee concluded that Mokgosi's actions fell short of the standards of honesty, integrity and ethical leadership expected of public representatives, finding that his conduct undermined the credibility and dignity of the provincial legislature.

Evidence before the inquiry also included allegations that confidential recruitment documents were improperly accessed and that efforts were made to derail the appointment through altered reports and fabricated complaints.

Mokgosi's spokesperson, Sello Tatai, said the Premier will not comment until the report has been formally tabled before the Legislature.

"The report will now be debated by members of the North West Provincial Legislature, who will decide whether to adopt or reject the recommended sanctions.

"If approved, the penalty would rank among the most severe disciplinary actions ever recommended against a sitting North West Premier", said Tatai.

This is a developing story and will be updated as more information becomes available.

The haunting question of missing children: A Northern Cape mother's tragic story

Families in the Northern Cape are left in despair as children continue to vanish without a trace.

And one mother has died without answers about the whereabouts of her five-year-old son Le-Virno. Lieen van Wyk died in June 2026, without ever getting answers or knowing if she would ever see her son again.

Little Le-Virno, from Louisvaleweg disappeared in broad daylight on Tuesday, 31 May 2022. After school, he went to play with friends near a railway line close to the Skierlik informal settlement in Upington, but he never returned home.

He was last seen wearing a yellow T-shirt, mustard pants and black boots. Despite extensive searches by police and community members across farms, swamps and dumping sites, no trace of him has ever been found.

The South African Police Service in the Northern Cape offered a monetary reward for information that could help locate the child, yet Le-Virno remains missing. Another family's heartache

The search is also ongoing for teenager David Waterboer. Fourteen-year-old David, a pupil at Sacred Heart Primary School, left his home on Friday morning, 7 February 2025. He told his mother he was heading to a sports event in nearby Concordia but never arrived.

He was reportedly seen later that day at the athletics event and was allegedly spotted at a local bus stop the following morning.

David is approximately 1.60m tall with a slender build. He has a mole between his eyes and a scar on his right knee from a previous operation. He was wearing a black T-shirt, black or black-and-red pants, and navy blue sandals or flip-flops when he went missing.

Police have offered a reward of R75,000 for any information that may lead to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator or perpetrators and to David's safe return.

Authorities continue to urge anyone with information about either boy to come forward. Crime Stop can be contacted on 08600 10111. ***IoL***

Nthatisi Defends Mangaung Recovery as Treasury Funds Remain Frozen

By Gomolemo Winkel

Mangaung Executive Mayor Gregory Nthatisi has defended the metro's financial recovery plan, insisting the municipality is steadily emerging from years of financial distress despite a National Treasury funding freeze and continued national intervention.

While acknowledging that the city remains under severe financial pressure, Nthatisi says improved revenue collection, expanded service delivery plans and ongoing engagements with Treasury signal that the municipality's turnaround is gaining momentum.

Addressing the media at the municipal offices in Bloemfontein on Thursday, Nthatisi said Mangaung has made significant progress in improving its revenue collection, although it remains below the municipality's target.

"You would remember that we are now staggering at between 75% and 76% of collection, whereas we need to be between 90% and 95%. There are impediments along the way that we need to resolve. Having emerged from 49%, under normal circumstances people would regard where we are as a distinction, but that does not cover the money that we need to ensure we address services on the ground. So yes, 90% to 95% remains our target," he said.

To further improve revenue collection and bring services closer to residents, Nthatisi announced that the municipality plans to establish regional offices across Mangaung's seven towns.

"We have decided to decentralise municipal services by opening regional offices in our seven towns so that our people do not have to travel long distances and incur costs to access municipal services," he said. Nthatisi stressed that Mangaung's financial situation differs from that of many municipalities because it remains under a Section 139 intervention and is implementing a Financial Recovery Plan under national oversight.

On National Treasury's decision to withhold part of the municipality's equitable share allocation, Nthatisi confirmed that the metro has already engaged the Department of Finance and written to the Minister of Finance in an effort to resolve the matter.

"Our finances are still limping, and we would be the municipality most affected should our concerns not be considered. As soon as we received the communication, we responded and we now await the Department of Finance's response on how the matter will be handled," he said.

The mayor also confirmed that the proposed R50 monthly electricity surcharge has been put on hold following concerns raised by residents. He said the municipality would first undertake public consultations before making any decision and assured that indigent households, unemployed residents and other vulnerable groups would be protected.

"We have decided to defer the matter. We want any decision taken by the municipality to be informed by the understanding and support of our communities. We will engage residents to find the best possible way of dealing with issues that directly affect them," he said. Housing also featured prominently during the briefing, with Nthatisi revealing that approximately 84,000 residents remain on Mangaung's housing waiting list. He warned against illegal land occupations, saying the municipality is actively working to accelerate housing delivery.

"We discourage anyone from attempting to occupy municipal or privately owned land illegally. We will act decisively because we are working hard to ensure our people are accommodated through lawful processes," he said.

The mayor further highlighted the scale of Mangaung's ageing infrastructure challenges, saying the metro requires an estimated R3.1 billion to modernise its water and sanitation systems, including replacing ageing waterborne sanitation infrastructure.

He acknowledged that maintaining deteriorating infrastructure remains costly but said the municipality remains committed to investing in long-term solutions despite its financial constraints.

Free State Breeder Breeds Champion Boerboel

By Gomolemo Winkel

Years of meticulous planning, selective breeding, and a deep passion for preserving authentic South African Boerboel bloodlines (SABBS) paid off in a remarkable achievement for Free State breeder Ziyaad Issa of Bandit Boerboels.

His dog, Bandit Orion, secured top honors at the SABBS International Boerboel Show in June 2026.

The dog esteemed competition took place in Parys, Free State on 25 and 26 June.

Brandit Orion was crowned Dog of the Year, Senior Champion, Grand Champion, and winner of Class 7B Males (18–24 months).

The achievement follows Bandit Boerboels' runner-up finish at the 2025 SA Studbook Elite Awards, further cementing the kennel's reputation among South Africa's leading Boerboel breeders.

For Issa, the victory was the result of years of dedication rather than a single competition.

After winning Class 7B, Issa believed Orion had the potential to compete for the overall titles, but says the final moments in the championship ring tested his emotions.

"When they announced positions five to two and my dog's number had not been called and I was extremely nervous.

"Why did I not exit the ring but it turns out we showed our hearts out and I felt elevated and ecstatic at the same time, almost as if I ran a marathon.

"This is certainly a moment that I will always remember and cherish," he said.

Behind the championship title lies five years of rigorous work aimed at restoring valuable Boerboel genetics that have gradually disappeared over time.

Issa, says he deliberately sourced older bloodlines to recreate a balanced Boerboel.

"My mission was to recreate a well-balanced dog with sound movement and an excellent temperament, he said.

Issa says he invested in developing his own expertise by attending breeder workshops, studying the breed extensively, and pursuing qualification as a SABBS Junior appraiser.

He says he ensured that Bandit Orion met strict health standards through comprehensive health testing, embark on some DNA testing and registration as a semen donor.

Issa's passion for Boerboels dates back to his childhood. As a Grade 1 learner, he visited a farmer in Lady Grey in the Eastern Cape who owned Boerboels.

He says their impressive size and commanding presence inspired a dream that would eventually grow into Bandit Boerboels.

He says that same year, his mother bought him his first Boerboel puppy, laying the foundation for a lifelong pursuit.

Today, Issa encourages aspiring breeders and dog owners to focus on learning rather than immediate success. Issa says every competition offers valuable lessons, whether through victories, setbacks, or new knowledge.

"Start by attending local puppy classes to familiarise yourself with basic socialization, basic commands and obedience training with your four-legged friend, enter the very first show you can attend and go there to have fun and learn. "The mission is never to always win but to walk away with something whether it may be knowledge, insights or losses but the aim is to participate," Issa said.

AMCU blasts years of border failure

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Years of poor border management and weak enforcement have allowed illegal immigration to escalate, according to the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which says the government's recent crackdown is a belated response to a problem of its own making.

AMCU President Joseph Mathunjwa, in a statement, said the union was "flabbergasted" by what it called the government's sudden ability to act on illegal immigration ahead of planned public protests.

The union said illegal immigration remains closely linked to the economic, political, and labour-market conditions of the Southern African region. However, it argued that weak border management, failures within the Department of Home Affairs, and poor governance allowed the problem to grow over many years.

Mathunjwa said this following the release of the Department of Home Affairs, report stating that over 109 000 deportations took place over the past two financial years.

The report also states that the Border Management Authority shows that thousands of attempted unlawful border crossings were intercepted during peak travel periods.

He also says that these figures demonstrate that illegal immigration is a genuine enforcement challenge but also expose years of state failure in preventing unlawful entry into the country.

"We trusted this government with the borders, with Home Affairs, with documentation, and with the safety of the country.

"They allowed the problem to grow, but when there is a march, suddenly the state can organise itself against its own citizens, with undertones of threats," he said.

Mathunjwa also pointed to Statistics South Africa census data that shows that the country's foreign-born population increased from 835 216 in 1996 to over one million in 2001, two million in 2011, and reached 2.5 million in 2022.

The union said this represented an increase of approximately 1.58 million foreign-born residents over the 26 years.

The union also questioned the involvement of senior political leaders, including Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi and Acting Police Minister Firoz Cachalia, in responding to public demonstrations over illegal immigration.

"The urgency should be directed towards tackling crime, corruption, document fraud, labour exploitation and the deterioration of public services," he said. Mathunjwa also criticised the R600 million security allocation linked to the illegal immigrant protests that took place last week saying that the state's response reminded him of the events leading up to the Marikana tragedy in 2012.

"The calling of the security cluster by President Cyril Ramaphosa and securing a budget of R600 million, just to silence the voice of South Africans protesting against illegal immigrants, lacking border control and corrupt Home Affairs officials, reminds us of what happened at Marikana," he said.

"Mineworkers had been demanding improved working conditions and a living wage when the state deployed security forces.

"In 2012 at Lonmin, workers demanded better working conditions, including a living wage of R12 500, but little did they know that the state was conniving with the white monopoly capital to protect the BEE and Foreign Direct Investment," he said.

He added that no politician or government official had been held accountable for the deaths of mineworkers during the Marikana massacre.

Mathunjwa said the challenges surrounding illegal immigration stem from failures in governance, accountability and leadership.

He argued that, instead of directing significant resources towards policing public protests, the government should prioritise strengthening border controls, improving immigration management and addressing corruption within Home Affairs.

Beyond the build: Green jobs in SA's renewables industry

South Africa's renewable energy industry has created tens of thousands of jobs, but most disappear once construction ends

Adams Solar Park in Northern Cape created 167 jobs during construction, which dropped to just six permanent positions once the project became operational. Picture: **Enel Green Power**

South Africa's green economy is being promoted as a major source of future employment, with an estimated 1.3-million jobs created by 2030, rising to as many as 4.3-million by 2050.

Renewable energy projects have already generated tens of thousands of jobs through the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPP), positioning the sector at the centre of the country's Just Energy Transition.

But a closer look at the data reveals a more complex reality: while construction jobs are plentiful, far fewer workers remain employed once projects begin operating.

Not all green jobs are equal

Data from the REIPPP Office shows that while the programme has created around 70,000 jobs since its inception, only about 6,000 are permanent.

Most employment is concentrated in the construction, manufacturing and installation phases of projects, which typically last between six months and two years.

Once projects become operational, staffing needs drop sharply.

Unlocking Africa's Green Transition, a report commissioned by FSD Africa, Shell Foundation and Shortlist, and produced by Genesis Analytics in June 2026, argues that not all green jobs are equal.

While utility-scale solar projects generate substantial employment during construction, those opportunities are largely temporary. Employment falls sharply once projects begin operating, whereas sectors such as clean cooking, solar home systems and distributed energy continue creating jobs through ongoing installation, sales, maintenance and servicing.

The report also cautions against measuring the success of the green economy solely through large renewable energy projects. It argues that many of Africa's future green jobs are likely to come from small businesses and informal enterprises, with between 29-million and 37-million livelihoods expected to emerge by 2050 through community technicians, informal distributors and household energy service providers.

Employment pattern

According to the National Union of Mineworkers' national energy sector coordinator, Khangela Baloyi, this employment pattern has become one of the biggest concerns surrounding South Africa's renewable energy transition.

"Renewable energy technologies are not job intensive. They generate jobs during the construction phase, but during operation the jobs are minimal," Baloyi told Oxpeckers during an interview in June 2026.

"Compared to renewable energy, coal technology creates more job opportunities during operation and across the value chain," he said.

Baloyi said workers employed during construction often struggle to find work once projects are completed, and insufficient attention has been given to retraining and retaining workers affected by the country's transition away from coal.

Short vs long-term benefits

Ian Steuart, chief economist at Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies, an independent, non-profit economic research institution based in Pretoria, agreed that renewable energy is creating jobs, but said expectations about long-term employment need to be realistic.

"The available evidence shows that employment is being created in South Africa's renewable energy sector, but it is coming off a relatively low base," Steuart said.

He questioned whether communities hosting renewable energy projects are receiving lasting employment benefits.

"I would say that some communities are benefiting in the short-term from REIPPP projects, but whether they are benefiting from long-term employment opportunities is doubtful. Remember that far fewer employment opportunities are generated in the operations and maintenance phase of a renewable energy project, so any longer-term benefit is limited."

According to Steuart, construction remains the most labour-intensive stage of renewable energy development.

"The construction phase of renewable energy projects such as solar parks and wind farms is the most employment-intensive compared to the development or operation and maintenance phases, but employment in construction is of limited duration.

"In other words, any jobs created by the construction of renewable energy projects are eventually lost unless we can keep building new ones."

Steuart believes greater employment opportunities lie beyond the construction of renewable energy plants themselves.

"The South African Renewable Energy Master Plan aims to create 25,000 jobs in the manufacturing of renewable energy and battery energy storage components by 2030.

However, even if this target is achieved, these jobs would still account for a relatively small share of total manufacturing employment."

90% drop in permanent jobs

An analysis of Oxpeckers' #PowerTracker database reveals a consistent trend across renewable energy developments in South Africa: construction employment dwarfs permanent operational jobs.

According to the #PowerTracker map, out of the 65 projects where employment numbers were available, a total of 130,877 were construction jobs and this dropped by close to 90% during operations: only 16,561 translated into permanent or full-time jobs.

The majority of these are solar powered, followed by wind. Most of the projects mapped are in the Northern Cape, followed by Mpumalanga.

Adams Solar Park in the Northern Cape illustrates this trend.

According to the project's developer, the SOLA Group, the project created 167 jobs during construction, with 63% filled by people from local communities. Once operational, however, employment was limited to six permanent positions in electrical maintenance, plant operations and security.

Speaking to Oxpeckers, Katherin Persson, the managing director at SOLA Group, explained that during construction the workforce peaked at approximately 170 employees.

"Throughout construction, a strong emphasis was placed on creating employment opportunities for surrounding communities, with local residents being prioritised for suitable roles wherever possible," she said.

According to Persson, local workers participated in practical skills development programmes designed to equip them with experience in key areas of utility-scale solar project delivery.

"Training focused on electrical works, mechanical works, and photovoltaic (PV) module installation, enabling local employees to contribute directly to the construction of the solar facility while developing transferable skills."

She said that by combining structured on-the-job training with hands-on experience, the programme helped strengthen the long-term employability of local workers within South Africa's growing renewable energy sector.

Similarly, Mulilo's Longyuan De Aar 2 North wind farm supports around 45 permanent jobs after construction, highlighting the relatively small workforce required to operate a modern wind facility.

Redstone Solar Thermal Power Plantpresents a different picture.

The project created more than 2,000 construction jobs, including around 400 reserved for local residents. Because concentrated solar power requires more complex operations than conventional solar photovoltaic plants, the facility is expected to sustain significantly more operational jobs than typical solar projects, at around 600 people.

Across the broader #PowerTracker dataset, the pattern remains consistent: construction employment creates an initial surge in jobs, followed by a steep decline once projects become operational.

Can localisation change the picture?

The wind industry believes the solution lies not only in building renewable energy projects but also in developing local manufacturing and supply chains.

According to South African Wind Energy Association chief communications officer Morongoa Ramaboa, localisation, manufacturing and skills development are fundamental to unlocking the sector's full employment potential.

"They determine whether the energy transition simply delivers electricity, or whether it also creates sustainable industries, jobs and long-term economic growth," she said.

Oxpeckers has been reporting on localisation efforts for several months. In November 2025, we uncovered a landmark High Court challenge to government departments and independent power producers accused of flouting localisation laws meant to drive South Africa's green industrial development. (See Court case tackles not-so-proudly South African solar power)

In June 2026 in Is local lagging?, Oxpeckers found that while there has been an increase in localisation requirements under REIPPPP, inconsistent enforcement, global supply chain pressures and fiscal constraints are undermining these efforts.

Ramaboa said the draft Integrated Resource Plan, which sets out South Africa's long-term electricity generation strategy, provides an opportunity to significantly expand the country's wind energy sector.

"By 2042, South Africa plans to deploy approximately 43GW of wind energy, representing almost a tenfold expansion of today's installed wind capacity."

According to her, this level of deployment has the potential to provide jobs for between 25,000 and 30,000 people by 2030.

Policy certainty

She cautioned, however, that realising those employment opportunities depends on policy certainty.

"Manufacturers invest in local facilities when there is a long-term project pipeline. Skills providers develop programmes when there is confidence that graduates will find employment, and investors commit capital when policy signals are matched by consistent implementation."

Ramaboa said employment created by the sector extends beyond wind farms themselves: "They include engineers, electricians, artisans, technicians, environmental specialists and many others."

She said South Africa's wind industry has already generated more than 74,000 GWh of clean electricity, with wind contributing around 62% of the country's renewable energy generation.

The Public Investment Corporation and the University of Oxford suggest that large-scale green investment could generate around 70,000 jobs annually if South Africa successfully expands its green economy.

The evidence shows the country's renewable energy programme is creating jobs, but not necessarily the kind many communities expected.

While construction phases continue to provide valuable short-term employment, permanent operational jobs remain comparatively few.

This article was first published on Oxpeckers Environmental Journalism.

Industry leaders argue that localisation, manufacturing and skills development will be key to turning the energy transition into a source of long-term jobs and industrial growth. Picture: **ARTsolar**

War brewing over plan to impose BEE laws on Springboks vs All Blacks Tour

A legal battle is brewing over the government's plan to grant special protected status to the upcoming Rugby's Greatest Rivalry 2026 Tour.

The tour will see South Africa's Springboks take on New Zealand's All Blacks between August and September this year.

The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) recently published a notice proposing that the tour be declared a protected event under Section 15A of the Merchandise Marks Act of 1941.

If approved, the designation would give organisers additional legal protection against the unauthorised use of event-related branding, logos, slogans and trademarks associated with the Springboks, All Blacks and the tour itself.

The protection would cover a wide range of names and visual marks, helping organisers combat counterfeit merchandise and unauthorised commercial activity linked to the event.

However, the proposed declaration comes with a number of conditions that have sparked criticism from trade union Solidarity.

The union argued that the government wants to impose procurement and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) requirements on what is essentially a private sporting event.

Under the notice, the South African Rugby Union (SARU), as the organiser, would be required to align its procurement processes with constitutional procurement principles, including fairness, equity, transparency and competitiveness.

The organisation would also have to comply with the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act and apply the DTIC's B-BBEE codes of good practice when evaluating suppliers.

In practical terms, this means a supplier's B-BBEE status must be considered alongside price and other factors when contracts for the tour are awarded.

The notice also requires organisers to support South African businesses, particularly those from previously disadvantaged communities.

They will also have to submit an impact assessment report to the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition between six and twelve months after the event concludes.

The report would need to outline the tour's economic and social impact and demonstrate how opportunities were created for local and disadvantaged businesses.

Supporters of the approach argue that the conditions ensure that major events deliver broader economic benefits and create opportunities for historically disadvantaged enterprises.

However, Solidarity has strongly opposed the proposal and has indicated that its legal team is already preparing submissions against the regulations.

According to Theuns du Buisson, economic researcher at the Solidarity Research Institute (SRI), the government should not use the protected-event designation to enforce procurement policies on independent event organisers.

"Our biggest concern is the attempt to impose BEE regulations and procurement requirements on the organisers of the All Black tour," he said.

"Solidarity is already challenging the Public Procurement Act in court. Imposing these requirements on independent events while the Act is still being challenged makes no sense."

He argued that the proposal could interfere with existing commercial arrangements and create uncertainty for businesses that have already entered into contracts related to the tour.

"Where does this decision leave businesses that have already signed contracts for supporter jerseys, marketing and other products?" he asked.

Du Buisson further warned that the requirements could have significant consequences if applied strictly.

"If the law is applied to its fullest extent, only 100% black-owned businesses may have the right to manufacture or sell Springbok supporter jerseys. Such an outcome is simply absurd."

Solidarity also believes the proposal could establish a precedent that extends government influence over private events beyond rugby.

"Once a minister can declare anything to be in the 'public interest' and subsequently subject it to state procurement requirements, there is virtually no limit to state interference," Du Buisson said.

The organisation has also raised concerns about the administrative burden imposed by the reporting and compliance requirements associated with protected-event status.

"Mandatory impact reports to the minister and other regulatory requirements increase the cost of hosting major events. South Africa should encourage international sporting and cultural events, not deter them through excessive state control," he said.

The proposal is open for public comment, with interested parties given 15 days from publication of the notice to submit feedback.

The notice, in its entirety, along with the protected marks and terms, can be viewed below. – ***Business Tech***

NC Makes History with South Africa's First District Energy Council

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

The Northern Cape has become the first province in South Africa to launch a District Energy Council, a landmark initiative aimed at transforming how government, Eskom, business and communities work together to tackle energy challenges, improve electricity planning and strengthen local energy security.

Electricity and Energy Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa officially launched the country's first District Energy Council (DEC) in the ZF Mgcawu District Municipality in Upington, describing it as a historic step towards a more coordinated and accountable energy sector.

"I am extremely proud to have launched the first District Energy Council today in the ZF Mgcawu District Municipality in Upington, Northern Cape," Ramokgopa said. The Council, developed by the Minister's office, will be implemented over the next 12 months under the Department of Electricity and Energy's Integrated National Electrification Programme.

It brings together representatives from the Department of Electricity and Energy, Eskom, district and local municipalities, the agriculture and business sectors, and civil society to strengthen collaboration on energy planning and service delivery.

Council members signed a pledge during the launch, committing themselves to the initiative's objectives and expressing confidence in the new governance model.

According to Ramokgopa, the District Energy Council will meet at least once every quarter to improve coordination between Eskom and municipalities, strengthen cooperation between national and local government, involve major electricity users such as agriculture and business in decision-making, and ensure that energy remains a strategic priority across municipalities in the district.

He said the Council would also serve as a platform for implementing departmental programmes, while giving stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to energy policy development and future planning.

"This approach enables all participants to hold one another accountable while ensuring consistent energy throughout the district," Ramokgopa said.

The minister added that the initiative gives practical effect to the constitutional principles of cooperative governance while promoting the public participation requirements contained in the Municipal Systems Act.

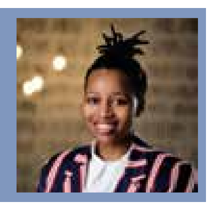
Ramokgopa thanked the leadership of the ZF Mgcawu District Municipality, Dawid Kruiper Municipality and the mayors of Kgatelopele, Tsantsabane, Kheis and Kai Garib municipalities for supporting the pilot project.

Following its successful launch in the Northern Cape, the District Energy Council model will also be piloted in the Bojanala Platinum District in North West, the Sarah Baartman District in the Eastern Cape and the Cape Winelands District in the Western Cape.

Ramokgopa said additional pilot districts would be announced before the model is refined and expanded nationally, with the pilot phase aimed at improving collaboration, strengthening communication and delivering faster, more coordinated responses to energy challenges at district level.

Opinion

Lusanda Madikane
Directorate for International Partnerships and Relations, University of the Free State



Dependence on digital media is slowly distancing us from reality

The emergence of social media has created a digital community in which new identities, narratives, and perspectives are constantly produced and shared. This transformation has connected people across the world, but it raises an important question: Are we shifting from traditional communities to digital communities? Social media has been flooded with posts from individuals crying for help, and thousands of people have donated money to rescue people in the worst situations. On the other hand, it appears that people are losing touch with traditional communities as people often rely on online spaces for interaction, support, and a sense of belonging. Although digital communities have promoted unity and responded to social issues, they have also introduced new challenges that reshape social norms, values, and relationships.

Online generosity: The true cost of digital support

Digital communities have created platforms for their members to receive assistance from a wide range of audiences in a short period of time. However, the online generosity may appear inspiring, but it often comes with hidden social pressures and unexpressed expectations. An individual who receives donations becomes indebted to the digital community, which then affects their relationships with it. The shift from the traditional community is good, but it comes with a loss of humanity and a sense of entitlement, such as expecting conformity in return. Unlike the traditional community, where any kind of support is guided by the spirit of Ubuntu, emphasising empathy, compassion, respect, and shared humanity, digital communities often foster entitlement and conformity.

In traditional communities, respect for elders, social norms, and hierarchies play a significant role in maintaining order and mutual respect. However, in digital communities, such structures do not exist; even worse, young and old social media users interact on an equal footing, which often leads to disrespect and bad conduct. Expressions such as ("Yi data yam le - This is my data" and "Ucinguba ungubani? - "Who do you think you are?") highlight the prevalence of rebellious behaviour and resistance to accountability.

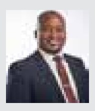
The shift from brick and mortar stores to social media marketing

A significant positive impact of digital communities is the rise of online entrepreneurship. Consequently, the digital community has provided its members with accessible opportunities to start businesses without traditional barriers such as rent, location, or infrastructure. A considerable number of young people have ventured into the reselling business, selling products such as clothing, flat-tummy teas, shoes, iPhones, and other items. While others are pursuing a network marketing business or building their personal brands to attract large audiences. It is without a doubt that the digital community offers convenience, allowing customers to browse and purchase products from multiple sellers with a single click. Digital communities have removed geographical limitations and barriers; for example, someone living in the Eastern Cape can order goods from a seller in Cape Town. This shift has made e-commerce even more inclusive and efficient; however, this convenience poses a significant threat and challenge to traditional businesses and local economies, as traditional stores now compete with online sellers who operate with lower costs and fewer or no regulations. As a result, the rise of digital marketplaces may contribute to the decline of traditional community-based businesses.

In conclusion, digital communities have significantly transformed the way people interact and support one another and opened a platform for them to explore growth opportunities. They also offer valuable opportunities for economic growth and social awareness; however, on the flip side, they disrupt traditional values, social structures, norms, and community relationships. People struggle to find a balance between the digital and traditional communities and to embrace nuanced perspectives, which then affects their ability to preserve traditional principles alongside digital innovation. When the balance is compromised, dependence on digital communities may potentially distance us from the realities of the world around us.

Letter to the Editor

The editor reserves the right to edit and reject letters and all correspondence must include your full names, address and phone numbers. Write to: editor@journalnews.co.za



Pastor Motsamai Kareli
Empowerment Ministries International

SA Must Defeat the Triple Crisis of Unemployment, Poverty and Inequality

South Africa's democratic promise was founded on the hope of building a nation where every citizen could live with dignity, enjoy equal opportunity, and participate meaningfully in the economy. More than three decades into democracy, however, three interconnected challenges continue to threaten that vision: unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

These are not merely economic indicators discussed in policy documents. They represent millions of South Africans who wake up every morning without work, parents who struggle to provide for their children, graduates who cannot find employment despite their qualifications, and communities trapped in cycles of hopelessness. They also contribute directly to rising crime, social instability, substance abuse, and declining public confidence in state institutions. Addressing these challenges requires more than political slogans or short-term interventions. It demands courageous leadership, sound economic policy, ethical governance, and a renewed commitment to the common good.

Biblical Principles for National Leadership

As a pastor, I believe that Scripture offers timeless principles that can guide public leadership. The Bible reminds us, "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan" (Proverbs 29:2).

This is not a call for theocracy but a reminder that integrity, justice, and servant leadership are indispensable to national prosperity.

1. Prioritise Job Creation

The first priority must be job creation. Employment restores dignity because work enables people to provide for themselves and their families. Government should accelerate investment in infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, mining, renewable energy, and the digital economy. These sectors possess significant potential to absorb labour while stimulating economic growth. Public infrastructure projects, when managed transparently, can create thousands of jobs while improving the country's competitiveness.

2. Empower Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs

South Africa must become one of the easiest places in Africa to start and grow a business. Small and medium-sized enterprises are recognised globally as the largest creators of employment. Yet many entrepreneurs continue to face unnecessary regulatory burdens, limited access to finance, unreliable electricity, inadequate infrastructure, and bureaucratic delays. Government should simplify business registration, improve access to affordable funding, reduce administrative obstacles, and expand entrepreneurial training, particularly for young people and women.

3. Wage an Uncompromising War Against Corruption

Corruption is not merely a legal offence; it is a moral failure that steals opportunities from the poor. Every public rand lost through corruption represents fewer schools, fewer hospitals, fewer roads, and fewer employment opportunities.

Proverbs 16:8 teaches, "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice." Ethical leadership must become the standard rather than the exception.

4. Strengthen Education and Skills Development

Education and skills development require urgent attention. While South Africa has expanded access to education, there remains a significant mismatch between what many graduates are trained for and the skills demanded by the modern economy. Greater investment in technical and vocational education, apprenticeships, digital literacy, engineering, agriculture, and artisan development would strengthen the country's workforce while reducing youth unemployment.

5. Unlock the Potential of Agriculture

Agriculture deserves renewed national attention. Vast portions of rural South Africa possess enormous agricultural potential but remain underdeveloped.

Strategic investment in irrigation, transport infrastructure, farmer support, market access, and agricultural innovation could simultaneously improve food security, stimulate exports, and create employment in rural communities. As Proverbs 12:11 reminds us, "Those who work their land will have abundant food."

6. Restore Investor Confidence

Government must restore investor confidence. Policy certainty, efficient public administration, reliable energy supply, improved logistics, and a firm commitment to the rule of law are essential if South Africa is to attract domestic and international investment. Investors seek stable environments where contracts are honoured, institutions function effectively, and economic policies remain predictable.

7. A Shared National Responsibility

While government bears primary responsibility for economic policy, business, civil society, faith communities, educational institutions, and ordinary citizens all have indispensable roles to play. Sustainable development is achieved when society works collaboratively rather than in isolation.

8. The Church's Prophetic and Practical Role

The Church should continue to pray for national leaders while serving communities through education, skills training, youth mentorship, entrepreneurship programmes, and poverty alleviation initiatives.

Our prophetic responsibility is not merely to criticise government but to encourage righteousness, accountability, and servant leadership. Scripture declares, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). This principle remains profoundly relevant today. Nations flourish not only because of economic resources but because justice, integrity, and responsible leadership shape their institutions.

Conclusion

South Africa possesses extraordinary human talent, abundant natural resources, and remarkable resilience. Our greatest obstacle is not a lack of potential but the absence of consistent implementation, ethical governance, and long-term planning.

The time has come to move beyond political rhetoric and embrace practical solutions. We need policies that create employment rather than dependency, encourage entrepreneurship rather than bureaucracy, reward productivity rather than patronage, and unite rather than divide.

If government governs with wisdom, integrity, and accountability, supported by an active private sector, a responsible citizenry, and a praying Church, South Africa can overcome the triple crisis of unemployment, poverty, and inequality. Our nation deserves nothing less.

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." — Psalm 33:12

The Queen takes Government to the Queue

It is a bitterly cold Friday morning in Botshabelo. The kind of Free State cold that makes even someone who never studied geography suddenly appreciate the value of cuddling. But the freezing weather has not kept people indoors.

The Botshabelo Arena is already overflowing with life. Elderly people wrapped in blankets, mothers carrying babies, young people clutching folders filled with documents and workers hoping to sort out their affairs before the day slips away. They have all come for the government services they deserve.

The Premier of the Free State, Hon. MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, is walking among the people. Not waving from a stage but moving from queue to queue, speaking to residents, checking on officials and making sure government is doing what it is supposed to do. That image for me says more than a hundred speeches ever could.

Just a few days earlier, social media was buzzing with frustration. Residents posted pictures and videos of painfully long queues at SASSA offices in Botshabelo. The complaints were impossible to miss. Pensioners waited for hours. People stood in the cold from the crack of dawn. The anger was real because the suffering was real.

Many politicians have mastered the art of pretending not to see. They become experts in silence, hoping tomorrow's scandal will bury today's embarrassment. It is almost a universally agreeable tradition. But this time was definitely different. The Premier did something particularly refreshing; she simply moved government.

Within days, departments from across government were brought together in Botshabelo. Services that normally require people to spend days moving from one office to another were brought under one roof. Instead of making citizens to chase government, government was made to come to the people. That is exactly how it should be.

For too long we have normalised that poor people must suffer twice. First, they struggle with unemployment, poverty and rising costs. Then they must spend money they do not have on transport, stand in endless queues and return home without being helped because the system has closed for the day.

Somewhere along the line, as government officials, we started behaving as if this was normal and it is not. The state exists to serve the people, not the other way around.

The Premier has reminded us of something we should never have forgotten. Leadership is not measured by how many press statements are issued, but by how quickly we respond when our people cry out. That response matters.

When government listens, our people notice. When government acts quickly, people begin to believe that their voices carry weight. That confidence is precious because it cannot be bought. It must be earned.

I am in no way pretending that two days of integrated service delivery will resolve every problem facing Botshabelo and the Free State as a whole. Our people still need jobs. Roads still need fixing. Water systems still need attention. Our municipalities still have very tall mountains to climb.

But leadership is revealed in moments like these. A complaint appears on Monday. Government is on the ground before the week is over. That sends a powerful message that we have a government that listens.

Imagine if every sphere of government worked with that kind of urgency. Imagine if every MEC, every mayor and every senior official treated public frustration as a call to action instead of a public relations headache. We would spend less time explaining service delivery failures and more time delivering services.

The people of Botshabelo deserved to be heard. More importantly, they deserved to be helped. On this cold Friday, they witnessed government at work. That is the leadership the Free State needs. A leadership that does not wait for protests before acting.

A leadership that understands that every queue is made up of human beings, not statistics. A leadership that knows the shortest distance between government and the people is not another meeting but showing up.

Tshediso Mangope moonlights as a social and political commentator in his spare time...

***** The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of this publication (Journal News).***

The November 2026 Mayoral Campaign is Bizarre

Refilwe Mochoari
Editor-in-Chief

Why does the 4 November 2026 local government elections mayoral campaign feel like such a circus to me?

Hi everyone my name is Refilwe Mochoari, let's talk about the mayoral campaigns and candidates leading to the 2026 local government elections.

Breaking news and a massive twist for me is controversial poet Ntsiki Mazwai announcing her candidacy for Johannesburg mayor under the Land Party.

Helen Zille who is currently involved in a campaign that depicts the harsh realities of failed service delivery in municipalities is running for Johannesburg mayor.

What is expected to be a serious exercise in leadership selection has instead started to look like a game show where controversy, recycled faces, and celebrities are dominating the stage to be in charge of service delivery.

I still find it hard to believe that the government is proud that it cost them R600 million for the security of the 30 June illegal immigrant protests.

This week the National Treasury due to persistent serious non-compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act and its supporting regulations, announced that it is in the process of temporarily withholding the July 2026 equitable share transfers to some municipalities across all nine provinces to instill fiscal discipline and ensure that public money is properly managed.

National Treasury took this step to address unauthorized, irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure so that municipal officials and office bearers are held accountable where required by law.

Last week the Auditor General's office of South Africa, released audit findings in its report that only 15% of South Africa's local municipalities were able to receive a clean audit.

How did South Africa get here?

In less than six months, South Africans are expected to exercise their democratic right by voting for a political party that they trust.

There is a pool of political parties to choose from, but which one do South Africans go with?

For 30 years, the ANC has governed, but South Africans are still not certain who to vote for.

Is it because the ANC has disappointed the people so much that, everyone thinks that they can run the government?

In my home city, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, the race has reached its final stages.

Some of the candidates have already been interviewed and in my view, only one of the seven candidates may be fit for the office of the mayor.

The core question voters have though is, Who will be able to fix the municipalities?

While citizen participation is important in democracy, the normalization of treating political office as a stage for personal reinvention and personal gain is extremely troubling because running a city is not a performance. It is governance, accountability, and service delivery.

The current state of affairs in South Africa feels surreal. The chaos in Ekurhuleni district, the revelations in the Madlhanga Commission of Inquiry, and people staging drive-by shootings.

It is as if running the country has been reduced to a joke, a casual pastime where anyone can step up regardless of track record, suitability or eligibility.

We are normalizing dysfunction and in doing so, we are sliding further into what many have already called a "banana republic"

The City of Johannesburg itself has proven over the past five years that mismanagement can leave a city in tatters.

Yet instead of learning from failure, we continue to recycle the same mistakes.

As a citizen, I struggle to take these campaigns seriously. The stakes are too high, for us to treat leadership like it's a game.

Municipalities are collapsing, service delivery has failed and ordinary South Africans are paying the painful price.

Governance has become chaotic and the citizens are suffering the repercussions.

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.29	0.18%	▲
Rand/Pound	21.88	-0.23%	▼
Rand/Euro	18.66	-0.16%	▼
Platinum	1 625.05	0.19%	▲
Brent Crude	76.35	0.53%	▲
Gold	4 116.83	-0.17%	▼
Ethereum	1 765.95	1.17%	▲
Bitcoin	63 812.55	0.97%	▲

Kimberley Revival Tops Saul's Budget Agenda

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul has unveiled a R324.794 million budget for the Office of the Premier, outlining an ambitious plan to accelerate service delivery, revive Kimberley's economy, strengthen municipalities and create thousands of opportunities for young people despite a 26% reduction in the department's budget. Delivering the budget vote at the Galeshewe Community Hall earlier this week, Saul said the province would focus on governance, infrastructure, healthcare, skills development and economic growth during the 2026/27 financial year.

Kimberley and Sol Plaatje revival

Saul said the provincial government was working closely with Sol Plaatje Local Municipality to restore stability and improve service delivery.

He highlighted major progress on the municipality's seven-year, R2.5 billion Riverton Water Treatment Works upgrade, saying the project had already ended the city's daily and nightly water shutdowns.

"Today we can proudly pronounce that daily and nightly water shutdowns are a thing of the past," Saul said.

He added that water quality had improved significantly while leakages had been substantially reduced. Once completed, the project is expected to secure clean drinking water for the next 50 years, create 442 local jobs and support almost 50 small businesses.

The municipality is also nearing the finalisation of funding to upgrade sanitation infrastructure to tackle persistent sewer spillages.

Saul said government was simultaneously repairing potholes, cleaning the city and rolling out youth skills programmes as part of efforts to restore Kimberley's status as the provincial capital.

He reaffirmed government's vision of transforming Kimberley from a historic mining town into a vibrant university and tourism city.

To support that goal, the province continues to promote major events under its Diamonds and Dorings tourism brand, including the Jazz Festival, ABSA Wildeklawer Sports Tournament, Yonder Hartsfees, Kimberley Big Hole Marathon and Kimberley Diamond Cup.

Driving accountability and service delivery

Saul said the Office of the Premier would continue coordinating provincial programmes while closely monitoring government performance.

He identified four key priorities for the year:

- Improving healthcare.
- Accelerating agriculture and rural development.
- Speeding up housing delivery.
- Strengthening infrastructure development.

Monitoring teams have already inspected 40 healthcare facilities across the province, with recommendations now being implemented.

To improve frontline healthcare services, government has appointed 31 support workers, including cleaners, food aides, laundry aides, porters and mortuary attendants, at 11 flagship facilities.

A second recruitment phase to fill 41 additional posts is expected to take effect on 1 August.

Saul said the Department of Health had also been instructed to implement facility improvement plans, with progress monitored through the province's integrated monitoring and evaluation system.

Investing in youth despite budget cuts

Although the Office of the Premier's budget has been reduced by 26%, Saul said the department remained committed to delivering measurable results.

"We continue to employ innovative means to remain of service to the people of the Northern Cape. Every rand appropriated must reflect value for money and produce measurable outcomes," he said.

Through partnerships with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the province has supported:

- 383 artisans
- 2,212 learnerships
- 990 internships
- More than 3,200 skills programme participants
- 862 bursaries
- 611 work-integrated learning opportunities

Saul also announced a new R137 million partnership with the Services SETA that will benefit 1,662 young people while providing internships for 1,000 unemployed graduates.

In addition, the province awarded R14.4 million in bursaries to 259 students for the 2026 academic year, with 36 beneficiaries graduating during the recent autumn graduation ceremonies.

Strengthening governance

Saul said a revised organisational structure had been approved to improve governance, policy coordination and institutional capacity, with priority to be given to filling critical vacancies.

He also announced that all provincial departments would be required to incorporate gender-responsive planning and budgeting, while the Provincial Women's Economic Council would continue driving women's economic empowerment.

Saul reaffirmed government's commitment to the Provincial Sanitary Dignity Programme and intensified efforts to combat gender-based violence through coordinated interventions.

He added that the province's Operation Clean Audit campaign remained on track as government works towards achieving clean audits across all provincial departments.

Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul. Picture: **Baagedi Setlhora**

Treasury Cracks Down on Wasteful Spending

Northern Cape Finance MEC Venus Blennies-Magage. Picture: **Baagedi Setlhora**

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Northern Cape Finance MEC Venus Blennies-Magage has drawn a firm line against financial mismanagement, unveiling a R466 million Treasury budget aimed at tightening oversight, enforcing accountability and improving service delivery across the province. Tabled on Tuesday, the 2026/27 Budget Vote signals a tougher stance on departments with poor audit outcomes and persistent irregular expenditure, while investing in digital transformation, skills development and stronger municipal financial management.

Tougher oversight and accountability

Delivering her budget speech, Blennies-Magage said weak financial management and poor governance would no longer be tolerated.

Framing her address within Nelson Mandela Month and the anniversary of the apartheid-era Group Areas Act, she described the budget as a commitment to social justice and responsible governance.

"A budget is more than a technical document comprised of numbers, allocations and programmes," she said.

"It is a moral statement about the kind of society we are building."

She said public finances must restore dignity, address historical inequalities, strengthen public institutions and improve service delivery.

To achieve this, Treasury will intensify in-year financial monitoring, tighten expenditure controls and intervene in departments and entities that fail to meet governance standards.

The budget will fund programmes covering administration, municipal finance management, financial governance, internal audit, supply chain management and sustainable resource management.

Blennies-Magage also announced a new consequence management framework aimed at tackling financial misconduct, negligence and persistent non-compliance, particularly within the Health and Education departments, which continue to record unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

Digital transformation and skills development

The MEC announced that R5 million has been allocated to modernise Treasury operations through the rollout of Microsoft 365, automation of business processes and strengthened cybersecurity.

She said the department intends filling 113 vacant posts during the current financial year.

In addition, 93 officials are furthering their studies through the Treasury bursary programme, while 136 graduates are participating in the FASSET internship programme to strengthen financial management capacity.

To improve infrastructure delivery, 30 graduates will be deployed across 13 municipalities to support engineering, project management and infrastructure monitoring.

Improving revenue and procurement

Blennies-Magage said the province had achieved its own revenue target during the 2025/26 financial year after several years of underperformance.

Although provincial own revenue accounts for only about 2% of the budget, with the remaining 98% funded through national transfers, Treasury is finalising an integrated revenue strategy to improve collections.

The department is also working to recover approximately R215 million owed by municipalities, the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison, and the Road Traffic Management Corporation.

She noted improvements in municipal financial management, revealing that rollover requests totalled R104 million in 2024/25, while surrendered commitments declined to R31 million, a significant improvement from the previous financial year.

On procurement, the province spent R5.29 billion during 2025/26, including R840.5 million awarded to youth-owned businesses and R608.4 million to businesses owned by persons with disabilities.

Better governance

The MEC said governance standards are gradually improving, with the number of provincial departments receiving clean audits increasing from eight to nine in the latest audit cycle.

Treasury has also begun piloting gender-responsive budgeting in six provincial departments ahead of its full implementation during the 2027 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.

Concluding her address, Blennies-Magage said sound financial management is essential to improving the lives of Northern Cape residents.

"When we strengthen financial controls, we protect money meant for clinics, schools, roads, housing, infrastructure and municipalities," she said.

"When we improve procurement, we open doors for women, youth, persons with disabilities and small businesses. When we enforce accountability, we defend the integrity of the democratic state."

Makatong Bets R2.3bn on Roads, Jobs and Economic Growth Despite R4bn Infrastruc-ture Backlog

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

The Northern Cape government has committed R2.347 billion to rebuilding and expanding the province's infrastructure, with three-quarters of the budget directed towards transport infrastructure as it battles flood damage, ageing roads and a R4 billion reconstruction backlog.

While acknowledging mounting financial and operational pressures, Roads and Public Works MEC Fufe Makatong says the investment will drive economic growth, improve service delivery and create thousands of employment opportunities across the province.

Transport infrastructure has been allocated approximately 75% of the department's total budget, while Public Works Infrastructure received R247 million, Administration R221 million and Community-Based Programmes R108 million.

Makatong revealed that recent floods caused extensive damage to more than 1,000 kilometres of provincial roads, with repairs estimated to cost R1.2 billion.

The province's overall road reconstruction backlog now stands at an estimated R4 billion.

"We are starting from baseline. We are starting from a deficit," she told the legislature.

She said infrastructure investment remains fundamental to unlocking the Northern Cape's economic potential, particularly as the province continues to position itself as a mining, logistics and renewable energy hub.

"The Northern Cape is a province built for infrastructure-led growth. We hold over 77% of the world's on-land manganese resources.

"We are home to the Namakwa Special Economic Zone, targeting growth from R164 billion to R200 billion in GDP and 60,000 new jobs by 2030.

"But none of that potential moves without infrastructure. Manganese does not export itself because every tonne of ore, every megawatt of energy, and every crate of fruit travels, at some point, on a road this department maintains," she said.

Among the strategic projects earmarked for implementation during the financial year is the continued upgrade of the Mamathwane Road (MR938) between Kathu and Hotazel, together with resurfacing and regravelling programmes that will be rolled out across all five district municipalities.

The department also plans to intensify pothole repairs through Operation Vala Zonke, targeting the repair of 23,000 square metres of potholes in partnership with municipalities.

In a move aimed at improving efficiency and reducing outsourcing costs, Makatong announced that the province's R98 million yellow fleet has officially been transferred to the Department of Roads and Public Works following the dissolution of the Northern Cape Fleet Management Entity.

The fleet includes graders, excavators, tipper trucks and water tankers, which will significantly strengthen the department's in-house road maintenance capability.

Roads and Public Works MEC Fufe Makatong. Picture: **Baagedi Setlhora**

On the public infrastructure front, Makatong highlighted several completed projects, including upgrades to Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital, Schmidtsdrift Clinic, Voorspoed Primary School and the Dr Arthur Letele Medical Depot.

Construction is also progressing at the Tshwaragano Hospital upgrade in Kuruman, while work continues on 11 education infrastructure projects across the province.

However, she warned that criminal interference at construction sites continues to hamper infrastructure delivery, citing repeated disruptions at the new Galeshewe Library project.

"The department has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to site disruptions and intends to utilise legislation aimed at organised crime and intimidation to protect public infrastructure projects," she said.

Addressing technical capacity, Makatong said the department is implementing a comprehensive restructuring process while investing heavily in artisan development to reduce dependence on external contractors.

More than 800 young people are currently enrolled in the Phakamile Mabija Apprenticeship Programme, receiving training in welding, refrigeration, fitting and turning, boilermaking and other scarce technical skills.

"Our long-term goal is to absorb qualified artisans into permanent positions to strengthen our in-house technical capacity," she said.

Government also intends expanding employment through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), with a provincial target of creating 22,643 work opportunities during the current financial year.

Of these, 3,605 work opportunities will be created directly through the Department of Roads and Public Works.

On financial management, Makatong said the provincial government had significantly reduced outstanding municipal rates and taxes from R700 million to below R400 million, including concluding a settlement agreement with Sol Plaatje Municipality.

She added that the department intends unlocking greater economic value from government assets by improving the management of 13,443 hectares of vacant state land and redeveloping 33 vandalised government buildings through strategic partnerships.

Concluding her budget speech, Makatong acknowledged that the department faces enormous infrastructure challenges but insisted that continued investment in roads, public facilities and skills development would remain central to the province's long-term growth strategy.

"Behind every kilometre of road unrepaired, a family is waiting; behind every work opportunity not created, there is a young person still hoping; and behind every building not maintained, there is a community that deserves better," she said.

The Beat Never Stopped: Avi Da DJY's Inspiring Rise

By Bernell Simons

What started with burning CDs for a family tavern in Mount Fletcher has evolved into a remarkable journey behind the decks for Botshepehi Makeng, better known as Avi Da DJY. From teaching himself to mix music in his bedroom to earning a residency at a popular Bloemfontein venue and becoming one of the city's versatile DJs, his story is one of resilience, passion and an unwavering commitment to perfecting his craft.

The rest of the story can remain largely unchanged, with only minor edits for flow:

Some DJs discover music in nightclubs, but for Botshepehi Makeng, better known as Avi Da DJY, his journey began at his family's tavern in the small Eastern Cape town of Mount Fletcher when he was just 16 years old.

Long before he touched professional DJ equipment, Makeng had already become the unofficial soundtrack curator of the family business.

"Every festive season, whether it was 16 December, Christmas, Boxing Day or New Year's Eve, I spent hours burning CDs, carefully arranging playlists and making sure the music never stopped," he recalled. "It was a responsibility that laid the foundation for my lifelong passion."

By high school, he had progressed from burning CDs to using Virtual DJ software, spending countless hours refining his skills from his bedroom.

"Like many aspiring DJs, I had no audience, only determination and an unwavering belief that one day my opportunity would come," he said.

That opportunity arrived unexpectedly in 2017 at Boho Bistro in Bloemfontein. After noticing the venue was playing a pre-recorded mix, Makeng confidently predicted every song before it played. Impressed, the owner handed him the decks.

"By the end of the night, I had secured a residency," he said. His breakthrough was soon followed by a reality check. After being booked to perform following renowned South African hip-hop DJ PH, Makeng realised he was not yet confident using Pioneer CDJs—the industry standard in professional clubs. Rather than allowing the setback to define him, he sought mentorship through DJ Nation, where he mastered the equipment and turned the challenge into the foundation of his professional career. For Makeng, 2018 marked the true beginning of Avi Da DJY.

Today, versatility has become his signature. His performances seamlessly blend Deep House, Soulful House, Afro House, Amapiano and Private School Amapiano, always with one objective: keeping the dance floor alive.

Behind the decks, he remains committed to continuous growth. He credits DJ Nayshen for helping shape his early career, while respected industry figure Sir Honest has spent the past five years mentoring him in professionalism, discipline and understanding the business side of the music industry. Like many independent DJs, the journey has not been without challenges. Low-paying bookings remain one of the biggest frustrations, particularly within Bloemfontein's nightlife scene.

Makeng believes DJs invest far more than the hours they spend performing, arguing that the preparation, experience and artistry behind every set deserve far greater recognition.

Today, while his professional career is in the corporate sector, music remains the heartbeat of his life. For Avi Da DJY, DJing is no longer about chasing fame—it's about staying true to the passion that first began with a stack of CDs in a family tavern.

Selflez B's Award Journey Hits Another High Note

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

From humble beginnings on Patrysrand Farm in the Free State to earning recognition on some of the country's biggest music stages, 21-year-old Sempane Masiteng, popularly known as Selflez B, continues to prove that talent and determination can break through any barrier.

The rising artist has once again captured the spotlight after receiving two nominations at the upcoming Central Music Awards.

Selflez B has been nominated in the Most Streamed on All Digital Platforms category and Best Duo/Group Artist, alongside his longtime collaborator and friend, Kedibone "Sasa" Leshage.

For the young musician, the recognition is a testament to years of dedication and perseverance despite growing up in a rural community where opportunities in the music industry are limited.

"This nomination means a lot to me because it showcases the hard work and passion we've put into our music. Coming from a farm, where opportunities in the music industry are scarce, being recognised at this level is truly an honour," he said.

He also expressed gratitude to everyone who has supported his music by streaming his nominated hit, Ntho Tse Ntle.

Selflez B hopes his journey will inspire other aspiring artists, particularly those from rural communities, to pursue their dreams regardless of their circumstances.

His latest nominations add to an already impressive list of achievements. In 2023, he won Best Hip Hop Artist of the Year at the Mzansi Arts and Media Awards.

A year later, he claimed Best Afropop/Afro Soul Artist of the Year at the Central Music Awards after receiving a nomination in the same competition.

He also earned national recognition through a nomination in the Best Upcoming Artist category at the South African Traditional Music Achievement Awards (SATMA).

Selflez B believes every nomination represents countless hours of hard work, and he is hopeful that this year's recognition will translate into another major victory. "Winning these two awards would mean a lot to us. It would show that people appreciate our music and the effort we've invested in it.

It would also motivate us to keep creating better music, reach more audiences and open even more doors for our careers," he said.

He credits much of his success to his mother's prayers and says his music is rooted in three core values—faith, hope and love.

Driven by a desire to inspire and unite people through music, Selflez B recently expanded his reach beyond South Africa by collaborating with Lesotho artist Mthethi on the song Mama, which has already attracted thousands of streams on YouTube.

"I am grateful for how far I've come, and I'm excited for what the future holds," he said.The organisers of the Central Music Awards are yet to announce the official date for this year's ceremony.

Living Forest to Keep Riky Rick's Legacy Alive

By Katlego Mashwabi

More than three years after his passing, the legacy of South African hip-hop icon Riky Rick is set to take root in the Free State through a Living Memorial Forest dedicated to healing, hope and environmental restoration. Spearheaded by the Riky Rick Foundation in partnership with the Naledi Village Communal Property Association, the initiative will honour the late musician's passion for creativity, mental health advocacy and community upliftment while creating a lasting symbol of renewal.

The two-day launch will take place on 18 and 19 July at the Rustlers Valley Regenerative and Eco-tourism Farm, about 23 kilometres from Ficksburg.

Makhado, who died by suicide in February 2022 after battling mental health challenges, remains one of South Africa's most influential hip-hop artists. His message of "We never die, we multiply" continues to inspire the work of the Riky Rick Foundation, which champions mental health awareness and support.

His mother, Louisa Zondo, described the memorial forest as a living tribute that reflects her son's enduring spirit.

"The memorial forest absolutely aligns with Riky Rick's energy—doing things that move and inspire people, creating something meaningful that will continue to live on," she said.

The launch programme will combine environmental conservation with community healing. The first day will feature tree planting and eco-friendly activities, including tile art painting, while the second day will focus on a community healing programme that uses environmental regeneration as a pathway to processing grief and restoring hope.

The memorial forest will also honour the late community leader Anton Chaka, who served as farm manager at Rustlers Valley, and Frik Grobbelaar, the visionary who transformed the farm into a renowned counter-culture festival destination after his family acquired the property in the 1990s.

According to Zondo, the forest celebrates three individuals whose contributions continue to shape communities through leadership, creativity and environmental stewardship.

"The three figures at the heart of this forest each played a significant role in leading communities, advancing the spirit of artivism and pioneering a culture of hope and transformation," she said.

Known for its regenerative agriculture, eco-tourism and community-led farming initiatives, Rustlers Valley provides a fitting home for a memorial designed to nurture both people and the planet—ensuring that Riky Rick's legacy continues to grow for generations to come.

Ace Model's Carika lands Mrs SA Finalist

By Katlego Mashwabi

The South African leading pageant for married women showcased the Mrs South Africa top 30 on Friday, 3 July 2026 at the Theatre of Marcellus, Emperors Palace in Johannesburg.

Born and bred in Bloemfontein, Director of Ace Models Bloemfontein Carolize Delport (36) says she is looking forward to participating in the pageant and attributes her inspiration to her husband.

Officially sashed on 3 July by the current Mrs South Africa, Carika Bebb, Delport gave a heartfelt thank you to the current queen for the incredible privilege of continuing to show her beauty with a purpose. Delport says she has built a reputation for herself in the corporate and modelling industries, creating a balance between work and passion.

Dis-Chem became her personal silver sponsor for the competition, supporting her through the journey.

Delport puts her value of family support at the centre of her pageantry journey.

"I will never disappoint my biological and my Ace Models kids, Bloemfontein will never disappoint them." So much so that she became the Director of Ace Models Bloemfontein and purchased a franchise of the International modelling house in February 2026 for the development of children in Bloemfontein who are looking to pursue a career in modelling.

"I entered Mrs South Africa because I wanted to inspire and uplift young children, to help them believe in themselves and their dreams," said Delport.

Delport says the highlight of her Mrs South Africa journey is the sisterhood she formed in the pageant and the challenges they had to overcome together in the background.

"I am reminded that I have to run my beauty with a purpose campaign differently. I have to be beautiful inside and out," she said.

Twenty-five years of Vrystaat Kunstefees

By Katlego Mashwabi

The thrill of twenty-five years of the Free State Arts Festival has hit Bloemfontein, sharing stories and celebrating culture.

The 2026 Kunstefees is underway at the University of the Free State, while other instalments of the festival are taking place at various craft locations such as the Boyden Observatory and Navil Hill Planetarium in Bloemfontein from the

The two-day festival that took place on 7 and 8 July brought local and international talent to the Free State with theatre performances from local producer and playwright Jane Mpholo-Mehlape who showcased her documentary "The Nights Were Velvet".

Different plays including the "QwaQwa: Place of Barriers" and "Bridges" short film, were on stage to give the festival-goers a taste of South African talent in the heart of Bloemfontein.

Multi-award-winning actor Warren Masemola was among the actors who graced the Kunstefees stages.

Artist and curator Liz Voster was on display at the festival gallery walls. The walls are filled with oil and mud artworks on the top floor of the gallery at the university's Scholtz Hall.

The music stage featured work performances too, both local and national artists were part of the musical plays.

Afrikaans rockstar Kurt Darren graced the audience with his electrifying performances, while other musical performances kept the Odeion, with Lynelle Kenned giving classic music performances from the Vivaldi en di Vondeling musical.

Craft markets, food carts, and thrift stalls were abuzz outside of the stages, literature halls, art galleries, science fairs, and art showcases, including astronomical shows and stargazing.

BOKWA INCORPORATED
Perseverance beyond passion

NOTICE IN TERMS OF REGULATION 68 OF THE DEEDS REGISTRIES ACT,1937, IN RESPECT OF A LOST TITLE DEED

Notice is hereby given in terms of regulation 68 of the Deeds Registries Act,1937, of the intention to apply for the issue of a certified copy of Certificate of Registered Title T9219/1986 passed by JOHANNES ALBERTUS MEINTJIES and KARL PAUL EMIL VAN SCHALKWYK in favour of CITY COUNCIL OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF JAGERSFONTEIN in respect of PORTION 25 (OF 2) OF THE FARM JAGERSFONTEIN 14, DISTRICT FAURESMITH, PROVINCE FREE STATE

IN EXTENT 6447 (SIX THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED AND FORTY SEVEN) Square metres

HELD BY Certificate of Registered Title T9219/1986

All interested persons having objection to the issue of such copy are hereby required to lodge the same in writing with the Registrar of Deeds: FREE STATE at BLOEMFONTEIN within two weeks from the date of the publication of this notice.
Dated at Bloemfontein this 06 July 2026

CONVEYANCER
ABEL JACOBUS DU PLESSIS BENADé
(LPCM-57419)
BOKWA LAW INC.
121 PRESIDENT REITZ AVENUE
WESTDENE
BLOEMFONTEIN9301
Email: omolemo@bokwalaw.co.za
Telephone no: 051 4486369

HEALTH

Why heatwaves hit women harder

Extreme heat can affect anyone. But heatwaves are a "stress-test" for women's cardiovascular systems, and hit them harder than men, Dr Nighat Arif, an NHS GP who specialises in women's health, told the BBC.

Women may also be marginally more vulnerable to heatwave-related death than men, though more evidence is needed, said Dr Cat Pinho-Gomes, an academic public health consultant at UCL's Institute for Global Health.

So as climate change drives increasingly intense and frequent heatwaves to the UK, experts are calling for better awareness of the risks to women and more targeted efforts to protect them.

Hormone levels and body response to heat

Biologically, women's greater risk comes down to two things: the natural rise and fall of our hormone levels and our body's response to heat, which are different to men's, Dr Arif said.

Women produce less sweat and start sweating at a higher temperature, research – including this 2025 study – shows.

This impairs our ability to quickly shed excess heat and makes it harder to judge when our bodies are under burden, simply because we can't see as much sweat on our skin or clothing.

The same research found that women also have a higher core body temperature and body fat percentage than men, which acts like an extra insulating layer.

Now combine this with the natural fluctuations of women's hormones, which already put our brain's temperature regulation systems "out of kilter", according to Dr Arif.

Our levels of oestrogen and progesterone shift most substantially during the menstrual cycle, perimenopause, menopause, pregnancy and while breastfeeding – which can make you less able to regulate your temperature.

All of this is hard work for our cardiovascular systems, especially in hot weather.

But it's not just biology that puts us more at risk, said Dr Pinho-Gomes, co-author of a review into sex differences in heatwave-associated deaths.

Our socioeconomic circumstances – such as being lower paid or the most likely caregiver to loved ones – can have an even greater impact on how well we are able to look after ourselves in hot weather, she said.

Age is another factor. The older you are, the more vulnerable you are to heat – and since women live longer on average than men, we are more at risk of health impacts, Dr Pinho-Gomes explained.

Elderly people are also more susceptible to dementia, which can limit the ability to recognise thirst, or conditions that require diuretics, used to lower blood pressure – both of which can further expose you to heat stress, she said.

Your period might feel more uncomfortable

As hormone levels dip and rise throughout your menstrual cycle, so does your sensitivity to heat, Dr Arif explained.

Progesterone rises during the second half of your cycle, before your period begins. This can raise core body temperature, only adding to the discomfort when you're already hot, she said.

Then the period hits and oestrogen – the hormone which drives your thermoregulatory system – drops to its lowest level, putting more pressure on your heart to cool down.

"I bled a normal amount but noticed a big increase in fatigue, dizziness, anxiety and sleepless nights," said Michaela Finn, from north London, who was on her period during the late June heatwave.

"My shifts at work landed on the same days, too. During my morning shower, I felt faint; I had to be realistic and call in sick. My body was completely exhausted, aching and cramping." - ***BBC***

FASHION

From sculptural gowns to 15-inch boots:

Cardi B and Teyana Taylor rule Paris Fashion Week

Fashion's most glamorous week is in full swing, and the biggest names in the entertainment industry have touched down in Paris as famous designers from luxury fashion houses unveil their latest collections.

Celebrities have been stepping out in one incredible look after another, but Teyana Taylor and Cardi B have completely stolen the show, as per usual.

From denim sets to sculptural gowns that will leave you in awe, both the A-list celebs are definitely our favourites when it comes to serving fashion.

Let's unpack some of our favourite looks so far:

Cardi B

Starting with Cardi B, the rapper hardly disappoints during Fashion Week. I don't know, but her wardrobe team definitely knows how to get the internet talking about her looks.

What fashion enthusiasts like about her is that she is very experimental with her looks. From donning a simple dress to then wearing a jaw-dropping outfit topped with the most creative hairstyle ever, it is insane (in a good way).

The first look that had the internet talking was the stunning red gown that she wore for the Robert Wun fashion show.

It's not only Zendaya who can wear something straight from the runway, but the "Bodak Yellow" rapper's gown was also straight from the runway.

She styled the bold gown with a matching sphere-shaped bag.

For her second look, the 33-year-old rapper looked ethereal in a body-hugging gown for the Rahul Mishra fashion show.

The white dress featured embroidery, sculptural detailing and hand embellishments, creating a look that looked like wearable art.

She certainly looked like a modern-day goddess as the dress also had layers of beadwork wrapped around the neckline and extending over the shoulders.

She paired the beautiful dress with crystal chandelier earrings and an ornate crystal ornament on her forehead.

The third look that turned heads is the black-and-white zebra-print bodysuit as she attended the Jean Paul Gaultier fashion show.

I know, it looks like a typical bodysuit that you can certainly get from any clothing store.

But Cardi B elevated the look completely with 15-inch thigh-high boots that you wouldn't think of wearing for any type of event.

She accessorised the look with tie-inspired bracelets and a necklace.

FOOD *Recipes*

Protein Power Waffles

Ingredients:

30 ml (2 Tbsp) smooth cottage cheese
1 egg
1 scoop vanilla protein powder
125 ml (½ cup) You First Banting Bread Flour
125 ml (½ cup) almond milk
5 ml (1 tsp) baking powder
Pinch of salt

Protein-rich, low-carb and truly delicious. Made with You First Banting Bread Flour and cottage cheese – all the indulgence of a classic waffle, without the guilt.

Method

Prepare a waffle iron with non-stick cooking spray, then preheat.
In a mixing bowl, add the cottage cheese, egg and almond milk and whisk until smooth. Then fold in the remaining ingredients until incorporated.
Depending on the size of the waffle iron, add 2–3 Tbsp and cook for 4–6 minutes or until golden brown.
Repeat with the remaining batter. To serve, drizzle with honey and top with some fresh berries.
To serve:
You First Honey
Chopped fresh berries of your choice

The looks that won big at this year's Durban July

Fashion once again shared the spotlight with horse racing at the Hollywoodbets Durban July, as South Africa's most stylish racegoers transformed Greyville Racecourse into a celebration of creativity, culture and couture.

This year's Country Allure theme came to life on Saturday during the Raceday Fashion Awards, presented by Durban Fashion Fair, where 150 entrants competed for top honours across four coveted categories.

The Pulse Stage became a runway of bold fashion statements, with entrants drawing inspiration from South Africa's sweeping landscapes, rich cultural heritage and timeless elegance. From impeccably tailored suits and flowing silhouettes to intricate handcrafted accessories and eye-catching hats, the competition showcased the country's flair for fashion.

Among the biggest winners was Gistine Kifubula, who claimed the Classic Racewear Female title in a striking Country Allure-inspired creation by designer Nqobisa Ndabeni.

"I'm so grateful and amazed to have won," Kifubula said after receiving the award.

In the Most Striking Couple category, Larnelle Maddocks and Pamela Shabane succesfully defended their title, taking home top honours for the second consecutive year in coordinated bronze and ivory outfits designed by Brenda Warring.

Richard Tulinatbitu was named Classic Racewear Male winner after impressing judges with an earth-toned ensemble that blended contemporary tailoring with traditional African-inspired craftsmanship.

The Exceptional Raceday Hat award went to Zama Nkosi, who modelled an elegant headpiece designed by Zandile Masondo.

Each category winner received R5,000 in prize money from Race Coast and Schweppes, along with Kryolan professional make-up prizes and Mangwanani Spa vouchers.

Second- and third-place finishers also walked away with cash prizes.

SPORT

Hail Hometown Hero ... Bethlehem received their hero Teboho Mokoena with cheers of pride and jubilation after returning from the 2026 World Cup. Picture: SABC

Bethlehem Rolls Red Carpet Out for Mokoena

Bafana talisman received hero's welcome in hometown following World cup exploits

By Gomolemo Winkel

Thousands of residents lined the streets of Bethlehem on Monday, 6 July 2026, as Bafana Bafana and Mamelodi Sundowns midfielder Teboho Mokoena received a heartfelt hero's welcome in his hometown following his exploits on the international stage.

The celebrations were part of a homecoming programmes organised to honour one of the most celebrated sporting figures from the Eastern Free State, whose achievements continue to inspire aspiring footballers across the Thabo Mofutsanyana District.

Following his official welcome, Mokoena visited Bohlokong New Hall, where he was greeted by jubilant supporters, residents and football enthusiasts. The energy was electric as songs, cheers and applause echoed through the venue, with community members proudly celebrating one of their own.

The celebrations then went to Boiketlong Hall, where another enthusiastic crowd gathered to recognise Mokoena's remarkable football journey and applaud his continued success both for Bafana Bafana and Mamelodi Sundowns.

The day's programme ended at Dihlabeng Mall, where Mokoena spent time interacting with supporters, posing for photographs and expressing his appreciation to the community that has supported him throughout his career.

Reflecting on the emotional reception, Mokoena said that the overwhelming support exceeded anything he had imagined growing up.

"I feel privileged. I feel proud. I am excited to see, especially now, my community here to celebrate me and welcome me back home. It is such an awesome feeling. I never thought as a kid I would be here and experiencing such an atmosphere.

"I have been to three places, and I have received so much love from the community of Bethlehem. I am so excited and I can only say thank you to everyone who has been there for me, giving me the support," said Mokoena.

The Thabo Mofutsanyana District Sports Confederation attended the celebrations in a full capacity, marking the occasion as a historic moment for the region. Sports administrators and stakeholders from across the district joined community members in celebrating Mokoena's achievements and recognising the impact he has made on South African football.

SAFA Thabo Mofutsanyana Regional President, Elizabeth de Koker, praised Mokoena not only for his performances on the field but also for the positive values he continues to promote among young people.

"We are very thankful for what he has done for the community, using football as a vehicle to inspire a lot of young people.

"What I like today is that he has emphasised respect, encouraging young people to respect others and keep themselves busy with things that matter, especially sport," De Koker said.

Dihlabeng Executive Mayor, Tseki Tseki, also commended Mokoena's commitment to giving back to his hometown, highlighting the football activities he has organised with local schools.

"Teboho is having some of the games that he has organised with schools within the municipality. We are part of the stakeholders working with him to ensure that he continues to plough back into the community while promoting sport throughout the area," said Tseki.

Mafikeng Rocks, Experience FC in Promotion Showdown

By Gomolemo Winkel

Mafikeng Rocks FC and runners-up XI Experience FC are preparing to contest the North West inter-regional play-offs at Alabama Stadium this weekend. Both clubs secured their spots after finishing as the top two sides in the 2025/2026 Ngaka Modiri Molema Men's Regional League.

The South African Football Association's (SAFA) Ngaka Modiri Molema Region confirmed these final standings in a statement released on 2 July 2026. This promotion tournament represents a critical opportunity for the teams to elevate their competitive status.

Coach Oscar Motsisi noted that the league title, clinched with a dramatic late goal against Marauding FC on the final day, rewarded his squad's long-term perseverance. He emphasised that maintaining faith during difficult patches proved vital to their eventual success.

"Winning the league was a motivation going to Alabama (Stadium). It showed that everything we have been doing at training was evident in our performances. We have to enjoy this moment, remain humble and execute our plans properly.

"We always believed that we were going to win the league even when the results were not going our way. We kept faith. When the boys showed character and finished strong to win the league," Motsitsi said.

Despite previous training facility struggles, Motsisi confirmed that municipal support has allowed the team to undergo thorough preparations for these upcoming matches.

The club has utilised the last three weeks to refine their strategy for the regional play-offs.

"We are good now. We are getting good treatment and given proper support," he said.

Meanwhile, XI Experience FC head coach, Hendrick Potilo Melken, has prioritised mental recovery to ensure his squad is prepared to compete at this higher level. He insisted that his players have moved past the disappointment of missing the top spot.

"After finishing second, both the players and our supporters were disappointed, but as head coach I had to take responsibility and rebuild their confidence. Mentally, the boys are in a good space and we are ready to fight this coming weekend.

"We know nothing about our opponents, but we have prepared our own way of approaching the games. Our plans remain a closed book until kick-off," Melken said.

He added that he remains optimistic about his team's chances despite the absence of eight key players who are currently attending matric school camps.

Melken further expressed full faith in the depth and unity of the remaining squad members.

"We are not a one-man team; we are one family. The players who will take the field have our full confidence because this team is built on unity, hard work and belief.

"Our management, technical team and coaching staff have worked tirelessly to develop these young players, and although their education comes first, those selected are ready to represent the club with pride," he said.

Botshabelo Academy Unlocks Global Opportunities

By Gomolemo Winkel

The Motloung Foundation Development Academy's (MFDA) intense focus on youth development is unlocking potential and exposing young football talent from Botshabelo to elite international opportunities, which may result in possible breakthroughs.

Despite being just over a year old, the academy has already facilitated the participation of seven local players in the prestigious Real Madrid Educational Football Program in Spain. Five of these talented youngsters travelled this month, building on the success of two others who completed the programme earlier this year. "I realised the opportunities are there, but they don't reach disadvantaged communities," said Thabang Motloung, the founder of MFDA in an interview with Journal News Network this week.

"Many parents believe those opportunities are only for middle-class families. I wanted to change that mentality and show parents that they can invest in their children's talent," he continued.

Motloung launched MFDA in January 2025 with the vision and mission that seeks to open disadvantaged youngsters from areas like Botshabelo to existing opportunities in the broader global space. The general aim is to dismantle beliefs that professional development pathways are reserved exclusively for those with privileged backgrounds.

The academy has since inception indeed proven its competitive mettle despite having limited training time, with its under-15 side claiming victory in the Real Free State Development Initiative tournament during their maiden season.

"They did not know one another (because they came) from different areas. The coach managed to meet them for two months. We only trained on Sundays. But they managed to win a tournament. It shows that talent is there in the townships," added Motloung.

Subsequent successes at the ITEC Tournament and the St Andrew's Knights Tournament further cemented the academy's reputation.

Two young players from the newly formed Under-13 division were scouted for the trip to Spain after impressing international observers.

"We opened the under-13 division within a month. They won a Plate Cup. And two of them were identified by Cape Town scouts, leading them to Spain this week," narrated an elated Motloung.

He tells of how he successfully leveraged digital visibility to attract international attention by circulating footage of his players to global football networks. This ingenious effort secured invitations for the latest group to participate in the Real Madrid programme.

"I got an invitation after they saw the videos of some of my players that we have distributed all along. They were identified and were requested to come to their Real Madrid programme. 5 players went," Motloung revealed. Beyond the training programmes, several players have been paired with international agents tasked with securing professional club contracts and educational scholarships.

Motloung maintains that these life-changing outcomes remain the true measure of his organisation's progress. "My trophy is not the cup. The trophy is when someone phones me and says they have identified one of our players and want to assess or sign him. That is success because it changes a child's life," he said.