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FREE//MAHALA

JOURNAL

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**ANC Secretary-General stands
his ground as he wards
off pressure from
detractors and
reasserts his
stature as
ANC Boss**

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EDGAR LEGOALE FOUNDATION PRESENTS



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Pretorius: DA ready to turn Mangaung around

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

With less than two months to go before the local government elections, the Journal News Network sat down with Democratic Alliance (DA) Mangaung mayoral candidate Werner Pretorius to discuss his readiness to lead the metro should the party win on 4 November.

As a former Mangaung councillor, what would you do differently for the people of the metro?

We must be very clear that, under a DA government, we will not neglect the smaller towns outside Bloemfontein.

I have visited Soutpan, Thaba Nchu, Wepener, Van Stadensrus, Dewetsdorp and Botshabelo, and there is a sense in some of these communities that they have been forgotten by the ANC-led administration.

We must ensure that the same level of services is delivered across all the towns that form part of Mangaung. We also need to revisit the budget and formulate a truly pro-poor budget.

Currently, only 41% of indigent households, according to National Treasury standards, are registered as indigent in Mangaung.

That means there is a massive pool of people who still need to be registered so that the municipality can access grant funding and ensure that the poorest of the poor have access to basic services, water and electricity.

One of the major challenges, particularly in Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu, is the state of the roads. The road conditions are terrible and must be addressed. The DA often points to the City of Cape Town as an example of good governance. Why do you believe that model can work in Mangaung?

Firstly, the DA is a party that can be held accountable. In the DA, if people do not perform, heads will roll.

My head will roll as mayor if I fail to deliver for the people of Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu. My own party will hold me accountable.

We will work tirelessly, as we have done wherever we govern, to ensure that the mandate of local government is delivered. Every cent of grant funding received for upgrading bulk infrastructure must be utilised for its intended purpose.

Look at our track record across South Africa. Where we govern, we are upgrading bulk infrastructure, delivering housing and creating opportunities.

If you look at jobs created over the past five years, nine out of 10 jobs in South Africa were created in a-

as where the DA governs. That demonstrates that the DA understands local government. When local government works, people work.

You have spoken extensively about the DA's record. What would be your priorities if Mangaung voters give you the mandate?

The challenges facing Mangaung can be fixed, and we can grow the economy in a way that allows the metro to function as it should.

One of my priorities will be economic growth. But you cannot have economic growth when your roads are not functioning. When roads work, people work.

We also need to look at what has happened to factories and industries, particularly in Botshabelo, where many businesses have closed. Mangaung's tariff structure for commercial and business premises is quite high. The Financial Recovery Plan by National Treasury has indicated that the metro must consider reducing tariffs for businesses.

I visited the Botshabelo Industrial Park and, since then, we have received many direct messages from young entrepreneurs and small businesses asking for assistance. They want to grow, employ more people and contribute to the economy, but they need access to suitable business premises.

You appear to be placing particular emphasis on Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu. Why, and

what are you promising residents in these areas?

The people of Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu have immense potential.

We must go back to National Treasury and make the case for more funding because we want to invest more in these areas. We want to upgrade roads, improve bulk infrastructure and see these towns become economic hubs.

Thaba Nchu has immense potential. Botshabelo has immense potential.

What they need is a stable

government that delivers the basics and provides a foundation for people to build their lives, families and wealth.

Our message to voters in Thaba Nchu and Botshabelo is simple: give the DA an opportunity on 4 November.

We want to see Mangaung working so that people can find employment, earn a living, live with dignity and be proud of their cities and towns.

As the DA's provincial chairperson, do you believe good governance should focus only on Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu, or Mangaung as a whole?

Mangaung must become an example of good governance for the entire Free State.

Municipalities such as Matjhabeng, Metsimaholo, Ngwathe, Kopanong and Mohokare must be able to look at Mangaung and see what is possible.

If Mangaung does not work and set the example, if it does not achieve clean audits, progress economically and demonstrate what good governance looks like, I do not believe the Free State will work.

Mangaung must set the example and be ready for that challenge.

What we need now, on 4 November, is the support of the electorate. Give us your vote and hold us accountable. We will not shy away from accountability.

Unemployment remains one of the biggest challenges in Mangaung and across South Africa. What strategy does the DA have to reduce unemployment significantly?

We are fortunate in Mangaung to have two academic powerhouses: the Central University of Technology and the University of the

Free State.

We have experts and institutions that can help us find solutions. There has already been a call from the university for stronger cooperation with local government.

We need to establish a forum involving the private sector, all three spheres of government and tertiary institutions to ask: as Mangaung is located at the centre of South Africa, where can we invest heavily and what makes economic and scientific sense?

We cannot continue spending public money on projects that are set up to fail from day one. Local government investment must be based on data, evidence and science.

I believe there is massive potential in the health sector.

We have major hospitals and specialists, and people already travel from the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape to access healthcare services in Mangaung.

We need to explore how we can expand that sector and position Mangaung as a centre of medical expertise.

Tourism is another area with huge untapped potential. We need to ensure that our heritage sites are properly maintained and accessible to the public, while bringing local entrepreneurs and businesses into the sector.

But all of this must be evidence-led. Ultimately, the most basic thing Mangaung can do is deliver basic services.

If people have water in their taps, a stable power grid, reliable refuse collection and functioning roads, we will attract investment and encourage local businesses to expand and employ more people.

That is the fundamental responsibility we must fulfil in government.

Stray Dog Found with Infant Head

Search for suspect continues as concealment of birth case docket is opened at the Bloemspruit Police Station



By Katlego Mashwabi

Residents in Bloemside Phase Two in Bloemfontein were left traumatized after a stray dog dragged a severed infant's head into a residential yard. A neighbour returning from a nearby informal dumping site discovered the gruesome scene and immediately screamed for assistance.

"When another neighbour heard this, he came out of his yard to help and threw stones at the dogs to chase them away. That is when I went to fetch another elderly lady so we could go and look," local resident Bianca Prinsloo recounted.

"When we arrived, the dog had already moved to the side of the yard. It was lying down there with the head of the baby. The rest of the body was already gone," Prinsloo continued.

Police, emergency medical services, and Free State Forensic Pathology Services secured the scene at midday on Wednesday, drawing a large crowd of shocked and devastated community members.

A concealment of birth case docket at the Bloemfontein Police Station has been opened while law enforcement authorities continue their search for the suspect. A pathology source outlined the technical process required to gather crucial evidence which includes forensic specialists having to measure the head circumference and analyse insect activity on

the remains to establish when the child died.

"They will need to collect samples for forensic genetic testing, which will determine the biological age of the child and the gender," a pathology source explained, noting that while foetuses are typically measured from crown to rump, head circumference is used to estimate the development of infants.

Definitive answers may face lengthy delays due to systemic backlogs within government forensic departments.

This tragedy highlights an escalating crisis, as recent Social Development data shows the province consistently ranks among the top three for reported child abandonment cases in South Africa.

Official records from the National Child Protection Register reflect 69 registered cases in the region, trailing only KwaZulu-Natal's 92 cases.

Experts warn these figures represent a fraction of the reality, as many incidents go entirely unreported or are recorded as inquests rather than child protection cases.

Research by the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism shows abandoned remains of newborns and foetuses are regularly discovered in open spaces, public toilets, and landfills nationwide.

Bloemfontein police urge anyone with information regarding the identity of the child or the suspect to contact authorities immediately.



Body In Bag: Three Arrested

Three suspects have been arrested after the body of a foreign national was found dumped in a garbage bag alongside the R26 outside Fouriesburg.

The grim discovery was made on Wednesday morning when a community member spotted the body near Uitkyk Farm, about five kilometres from Fouriesburg towards Ficksburg. Police said the body had been covered with a large white recycling bag and concealed among trees next to the road. The deceased was wearing blood-stained clothing.

The victim was later identified by his brother, who lives in Fouriesburg. Police confirmed that the man lived alone and owned a tuckshop in Mashaeng

Township.

His brother last saw him on Sunday following a church service in Bethlehem. By Tuesday, he realised that the man was missing, along with his white Toyota Hilux bearing Free State registration plates, and opened a missing person's case.

One suspect was found in possession of 27 rounds of live ammunition. Police further allege that the stolen bakkie was sold in Gauteng.

The three suspects face charges of kidnapping, murder and theft of a motor vehicle, while one also faces a charge of unlawful possession of ammunition. They are expected to appear in the Fouriesburg Magistrate's Court on Friday.

Dj Warras Murder: Woman Arrested

Police have arrested a 40-year-old woman in Masinga, KwaZulu-Natal, in connection with the murder of popular DJ Warras, who was shot dead in Johannesburg in December 2025.

The arrest followed a police operation on Wednesday afternoon after detectives and Visible Policing members received information that the wanted suspect was allegedly hiding in the area.

Police followed up on the information, which led them to a homestead in the Ngcengeni area of Masinga, where the woman was found and arrested. She is expected to be handed over to Gauteng police for further investigation and court proceedings.

Her arrest follows a public appeal issued by police

in August for assistance in locating Hlengiwe Goodness Buthelezi. Buthelezi is believed to be the girlfriend of Victor Majola, who has been identified as the alleged mastermind behind the murder.

Majola, 44, is facing charges alongside 25-year-old Joaquim Armando Pacula, who previously pleaded guilty to murder and was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment.

DJ Warras, whose real name was Warrick Stock, was shot and killed outside the Zambesi Building in Johannesburg's central business district.

The latest arrest marks another breakthrough in the investigation as police continue to pursue all those allegedly linked to the murder.

Life Behind Bars for 'Sganai' Killers

Three men have been handed life sentences and a combined 150 years behind bars for a string of "Sganai" scam robberies and the murder of a South African National Defence Force member.

The National Prosecuting Authority welcomed the sentences imposed by the Garankuwa Magistrate's Court against Thapelo Ngwenya, Sifiso Maseko and Ntsindiso Mtunzini.

Ngwenya and Maseko were each sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of SANDF member Piet Masilo. Ngwenya received an additional 60 years for four counts of robbery with aggravating circumstances, while Maseko was sentenced to a further 75 years for robbery and unlawful possession of a firearm. Mtunzini received 15 years for robbery with aggravating circumstances.

Authorities said the trio operated as a syndicate between 2021 and 2022, using fraudulent advertisements on Facebook Marketplace to lure unsuspecting buyers to pre-arranged locations before robbing them. On 28 November 2021, Masilo travelled with his wife and five-year-old daughter to buy an ice-cream machine. A confrontation followed and he was fatally shot, while the suspects fled with his belongings. In other incidents, victims were lured to Winterveldt under the pretence of buying electronic and sound equipment. They were robbed of vehicles, phones, bank cards, cash and other valuables.

Mtunzini was arrested after police recovered a 9mm pistol and ammunition at his home. The remaining accused were later arrested and remained in custody.

Ex-Lover Gets 15 Years for Knife Attack

A 53-year-old man has been sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after brutally stabbing his 63-year-old former girlfriend in an attack that left her with life-threatening injuries.

The incident occurred on the morning of January 19, 2026, in Kathu, Northern Cape, according to the John Taolo Gaetsewe District SAPS.

Police said Eva Witbooi was walking along the street with a friend when her former boyfriend, Joseph Moeti, allegedly emerged from a nearby yard armed with a knife.

Witbooi attempted to flee but was caught by her attacker. She was stabbed in the shoulder and back,

sustaining serious injuries. She was rushed to hospital in Kuruman, where she received medical treatment. The case was investigated by the Kathu Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit. Moeti remained in custody throughout his court appearances before the Kathu Regional Court.

On Saturday, the court found him guilty of attempted murder and sentenced him to 15 years' imprisonment. However, five years of the sentence were suspended for five years on condition that he is not convicted of assault during the suspension period. The court also declared Moeti unfit to possess a firearm.

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Mbalula Fights Back

ANC Secretary-General stands his ground as he wards off pressure from detractors and reasserts his stature as ANC Boss

By Mpho Sekharume

ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula has launched a fierce counterattack against internal critics calling for his removal. Addressing a packed press briefing at Luthuli House, the defiant administrator went on the offensive following intense fallout over the party's election registration administrative lapses.

Mbalula delivered an uncompromising warning to anonymous party members feeding critical leaks to weekend newspapers.

"I will not conduct the movement's business through unnamed comrades in the Sunday papers," insisted the SG.

He made it explicitly clear that he would not yield to public pressure or step down on account of these unnamed whisperers, while reasserting his stature at Luthuli House.

"There have been suggestions from within the movement of deliberate wrongdoing. I say to every comrade at every level, if you hold evidence, the movement's structures are open to receive it.

"What the ANC will not do is try its own comrades in the press ... It is the movement using its own employees as cover and I will not permit it as the Secretary-General and the boss of the ANC," he continued.

Mbalula went on to pour cold water on public criticisms levelled against him by senior National Executive Committee (NEC) member, Mondli Gungubele.

Despite the latter publicly describing the registration issues as a scandalous failure through social media, Mbalula appeared to sideline the challenge by maintaining a calm posture.

It remains open whether Mbalula is taking a superior moral high ground or strategically blind-siding a prominent political rival to neutralise the attack.

"Accountability in the African National Congress follows a report through the structures. It does not follow a weekend news cycle.

"If there are errors, they will be accounted for internally through the formal processes of the National Executive Committee and the Electoral Committee, not on social media or in public squabbles," Mbalula continued.

Throughout the press conference, Mbalula repeatedly asserted his authority as the supreme administrative chief of the governing party.



Ready for War ... Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula is standing his ground as critics zone in on ANC presidential hopeful. Pictures: Facebook

Observers consider this aggressive projection of raw institutional power a calculated message to his growing list of detractors, considering that he is increasingly being punted as a serious contender to succeed Cyril Ramaphosa as ANC president.

Demonstrating total authority at Luthuli House, therefore, not only flexes power but also serves as essential reassurance to his supporters that their man is still standing.

"They say, 'What kind of boss is this Mbalula who cannot submit a complete list of candidates?' Those are nonsensical people who do not know what they are talking about.

"I'm the secretary-general. I'm the first stop of everyone who wants to blame someone, but I'm unfazed; it comes with the job," he insisted.

Mbalula remains resolute that the party's internal dispute processes will run their course without succumbing to external narrative pressure. His combative performance makes it clear that he will fight back against any internal campaign to unseat him before the next elective conference.

Meanwhile, the Electoral Court will hear a legal challenge by the ANC against the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on 15 September 2026.

The governing party is fighting to overturn the IEC's alleged exclusion of 181 of its ward and municipal candidates from registering before 17:00 on 28 August 2026.

The IEC has, however, rejected the ANC's claims that its members have been excluded, maintaining that its online candidate nomination system remained fully operational throughout the prescribed registration window.

Rooigrond Escape Exposes Prison's Vulnerability



Prison Concerns Mount ... Rooigrond Maximum Correctional Centre has experienced three escapes by prisoners within the last five years. Pictures: Facebook

By Lukhanyiso Khanyile

Serious questions surround structural fortification and perimeter integrity at Rooigrond Maximum Correctional Centre following Edward Khomotso Madiba's second prison escape in four years.

Despite being caught 72 hours later in his latest escape, Madiba had previously managed to successfully breach the prison's heavy guard back in 2022 alongside four other inmates.

The 6 September 2026 escape by Madiba marked the third security breach by inmates at the Mafikeng facility in the last five years, therefore exposed severe physical vulnerabilities and operational failures within the aged complex.

For his second escape, Madiba, is believed to have severed his cell's steel bars with a machine saw, directly exposing compromised access points that allowed heavy equipment to enter the facility undetected.

Department of Correctional Services (DCS) national commissioner, Makgothi Thobakgale, confirmed that the cuts were not made through manual labour, thus pointing to possible internal staff collusion that gives rise to suspicions of a deeply entrenched patronage system that exists at the prison.

"A full-scale investigation into the circumstances surrounding the escape, including the security measures at the facility. This is to establish how the escape occurred and to determine whether any negligence or breach of security contributed to the incident," the department said in a statement.

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) emphasised that structural decay across the long-standing apartheid-era building severely compromises perimeter security and monitoring functions. Union leaders warned that failing infrastructure and unserviced access barriers create persistent hazards for surrounding communities, where escaped dangerous convicts pose an immediate threat of reoffending.

"The investigation must therefore go beyond establishing who was on duty when the inmate escaped. It must establish how the inmate breached the security system; whether any part of the physical infrastructure contributed to the escape; whether the relevant security equipment was functional; whether staffing levels during the shift were adequate; whether established security procedures were followed; and whether previously reported infrastructural defects at the facility had been attended to," the union stated in their own separate statement.

POPCRU further revealed that it plans to push prison authorities to conduct an urgent physical audit of cells, locking mechanisms, perimeter fencing, and electronic surveillance to gauge how facility defects enable recurring breakouts.

The infamous Madiba is serving a 20-year sentence for kidnapping, illegal firearm possession, aggravated robbery, and parole violations.

Kids Drown at Harmony Mine Dam



Neglected Deadly Dams ... Harmony Mine's neglected dams have claimed the live of two young boys. Pictures: Facebook

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Two young boys aged eight and nine have died in two separate drowning incidents at unsecured dams on Harmony Gold Mine premises near Nyakallong township in Allanridge. This unfortunate double tragedy unfolded on 29 August 2026 after a group of four children went for a swim in the unattended water bodies.

Divers recovered the body of Thabo Diloko Jeremiah (9), on the day of the incident after a passer-by failed to pull him from the deep water.

The second boy, Lethabo Duncken Abraham (8), is believed to have disappeared later on that same day after, but his body was only found and retrieved from an adjacent dam the following day.

Lethabo's death remains shrouded in mystery as police continue their investigations.

Representatives from the Pule Maile Foundation visited both grieving families to offer support and to also help facilitate discussions regarding accountability.

Foundation spokesperson, Shima Mahlatsi, confirmed that while the mining company assisted with burial expenses, further engagements remain pending.

"If (on) Tuesday they don't come, (then) at 2:00 pm Tuesday we will meet with the two families, then map a way forward of legally challenging the negligence on the side of Harmony," said Mahlatsi.

The families granted the mine until 15 September 2026 to engage them directly before initiating potential legal action over alleged negligence.

Foundation leadership emphasised that allowing the families space to mourn remained the immediate priority.

Allanridge police registered two separate inquest dockets to investigate the drown-

ing incidents. Police spokesperson, Sergeant Palesa Thabana, outlined the scope of the ongoing law enforcement inquiry.

"Allanridge police have registered two separate Inquest dockets," Thabana said.

Investigators are determining whether security failures occurred at the site and if criminal liability exists.

Police further confirmed that post-mortem results are pending and questioning mine management forms part of the investigation.

"Further investigations will be conducted to determine whether any criminal liability or negligence exists," she added.

Local authorities and community leaders urged parents to supervise children strictly around dangerous bodies of water such as neglected mine dams and quarries.

Furthermore, police appealed to residents to ensure individuals swim only in designated and supervised facilities.



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Free State hosts the Technical Schools Skills Competition, giving Grade 11 and 12 learners an opportunity to showcase and sharpen their technical skills. Pictures: Facebook

Skills Competition Unleashes Young Talent

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

What started in 2018 as a welding competition has grown into one of the Free State's most anticipated annual showcases of technical talent, giving learners an opportunity to turn their classroom skills into real-world excellence.

The Technical Schools Skills Competition has expanded to include disciplines such as Fitting and Machining, Woodworking, Construction, Plumbing and Automotive, among others.

The latest provincial competition brought together 120 Grade 10 and 11 learners and 80 educators from 40 schools, with finalists battling it out across different technical disciplines on Thursday.

The competitions were hosted at HTS Louis Botha, the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), and Mangaung Technical Vocational Centre.

According to the Department of Education, the participating schools had already emerged victorious at district level, earning their places in the provincial competition after demonstrating exceptional technical ability. Director for Curriculum Secondary Schools, Janette Nel, said the Free State was the first province to host the competitions and revealed plans to broad-

en participation.

"We want to expand the competition to include Grade 8 and 9 learners so that learners can have an opportunity to come back and try again. These competitions not only build skills but help us increase participation in technical subjects," said Nel.

The department said the competition is aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, which identifies the development of skilled artisans as a key priority for South Africa.

The provincial winners will now represent the Free State at the National Competition at the end of September, taking their skills to the national stage.

On Saturday, Free State MEC for Education Mami-ki Maboya announced the winners in each category, with learners receiving certificates and trophies in recognition of their achievements.

Among the top performers were Leseding Technical School in Lejweleputswa, which secured first place in Automotive; Iketseng MST School in Fezile Dabi, which claimed first place in Fitting and Machining; and HTS Sasolburg, also in Fezile Dabi, which took first place in Power Systems.

Maboya also applauded the department's sponsors and partners for helping strengthen the competition,

with Sasol Foundation contributing R650 000 towards the programme from district level.

"Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to our sponsors and partners, Sasol Foundation, which has sponsored R650 000 towards these competitions from the district level," said Maboya.

MSE Training & Development also contributed significantly, offering two R320 000 bursaries to the top two Plumbing winners in the province.

Meanwhile, the Department of Community Safety, Roads and Transport's Government Garage donated five vehicles to the top Automotive schools in each district.

Learners and educators also received starter-pack toolboxes aligned with their respective specialisations, enabling them to continue developing and sharpening their practical skills beyond the competition.

Maboya said the province is also expanding access to technical education to ensure more young people are equipped for opportunities in the skilled trades.

The number of schools offering technical subjects has increased from 32 to more than 50, signalling the province's growing investment in technical education and the development of a new generation of artisans.

Spring Storms Leave Destruction Trail

Communities in Northern Cape and North West provinces left devastated by the recent severe weather



Storms Wreak Havoc ... Houses and schools were destroyed by recent severe storms in South Africa's central interior. Pictures: Supplied

By Nonkuluko Ngubeni and Likhanyiso Khanyile

Destructive winds and severe storms swept across the North West and Northern Cape between 4 and 5 September 2026, causing widespread destruction to public infrastructure, schools, and private residences.

The severe weather placed intense pressure on disaster management teams in both provinces. Emergency services worked continuously to assess structural damage and clear fallen debris.

In the North West, strong winds damaged 60 schools across all four education districts.

The Dr Kenneth Kaunda District suffered the worst impact with 23 affected schools, followed by Ngaka Modiri Molema with 13, Bojanala with 12, and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati with 11.

The destruction includes ripped-off roofs and destroyed mobile classrooms. North West Education MEC, Dr Desbo Mohono, expressed deep concern over the extensive damage, noting that the department was already managing the impact of recent school fires.

"We are deeply concerned by the extent of the damage caused by these destructive winds, particularly because our Department is already dealing with the impact of recent school fires," Mohono said.

"I want to particularly assure our Grade 12 learners, educators and parents that we understand the importance of this period in the academic calendar. Their learning programme must continue, and we will put the necessary measures in place to support them as they prepare for their final examinations," he added.

To prevent learning disruptions, the education department is implementing shift systems and using available classrooms for different learner groups.

Where classrooms were completely destroyed, the department said learners will be temporarily re-

located to neighbouring schools during all repairs in preparation for the fourth term.

The public has voiced frustration on social media over recurring wind damage at unfortified facilities.

Facebook user, Hosia Tihole, urged authorities to plant protective trees around school grounds.

"If it is like that, plant trees that will help to prevent these. Otherwise, we are still going to encounter the same strong winds in the near future," said Tihole.

Meanwhile, in the Northern Cape, emergency services in the Sol Plaatje Local Municipality responded to multiple incidents across Kimberley.

Heavy wind gusts blew off the roofs of eight houses and uprooted trees, causing widespread electricity disruptions and a shack fire in Galeshewe Township.

The South African Weather Service placed the region under an orange-level warning for severe weather, warning of hail, lightning, and localised flooding. Sol Plaatje Local Municipality spokesperson, Thabo Mothibi, issued urgent safety advisories to residents.

"The municipality also called on residents to exercise extreme caution when using heating methods to keep warm, particularly during the adverse weather conditions," said Mothibi.

"The municipality urged motorists to drive carefully on slippery roads with their headlights on and to avoid flooded subways and driving through water," he added.

Northern Cape MEC for Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Lebogang Motlaping, confirmed that the Provincial Disaster Management Centre is evaluating structural damage across the Frances Baard, Pixley ka Seme, and John Taolo Gaetsewe districts.

Provincial disaster teams and municipal officials in both provinces continue to monitor high-risk areas as recovery efforts proceed.

Biodiversity Summit Drives Conservation Action

Calls for stronger national partnerships to advance vital conservation action



By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Delegates gathered at the Mittah Seperepere Convention Centre in Kimberley for the 4th National Biodiversity Stewardship Conference to strengthen conservation partnerships. The event highlights the urgent need to protect the nation's natural resources while building a thriving biodiversity economy.

Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform head, Zolile Monakali, welcomed participants to the province. He emphasised the joint responsibility required from all role players to safeguard natural resources.

"Biodiversity is critical and must be pursued by all role players," he said.

Held under the theme connecting people and nature through partnerships, the gathering focuses on expanding conservation options beyond traditional protected areas.

The national programme incorporates national parks and nature reserves alongside entry-level partnership models and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures.

Delegates conducted site visits to Vaalbos Farm, Dronfield, and Kamfersdam on 7 September 2026 to observe how alternative mechanisms complement formal nature reserves. These visits demonstrated practical approaches to conserving critical ecological zones outside state-managed land.

This year marks 25 years of implementing biodiversity stewardship across South Africa. The milestone allows stakeholders to evaluate progress while addressing long-term sustainability goals.

South Africa holds global recognition for exceptional species richness, endemism, and ecosystem diversity. Discussions will continue throughout the event to enhance cooperation and secure long-term protection for the nation's natural heritage.

Ngwathe Strikes R84m Debt-Relief Victory



Ngwathe Local Municipality Municipal Manager Dr. Futhuli Patric Mothamaha. Pictures: Supplied

By JN Reporter

Ngwathe Local Municipality has secured a major financial breakthrough after the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) confirmed a debt write-off of more than R84 million, strengthening the municipality's efforts to restore financial sustainability and redirect resources towards essential service delivery.

The breakthrough follows Ngwathe's participation in the DWS Debt Relief Scheme, which commenced on 1 July 2025 and provides municipalities with an opportunity to have qualifying capital debt written off when they meet strict payment and compliance conditions.

Upon entering the scheme, Ngwathe was required to settle all invoices relating to the 2024/25 financial year to qualify for the first one-third debt write-off. The municipality successfully met this requirement, paving the way for further relief.

The second phase required the municipality to maintain regular monthly payments towards its DWS obligations during the 2025/26 financial year.

Ngwathe has continued to meet this condition, with DWS subsequently confirming further debt write-offs.

In recent correspondence and engagements with the municipality, DWS confirmed that more than R84 million in debt has been written off under the subsequent phase of the programme.

The municipality is continuing to settle its DWS

invoices every month as it works towards qualifying for the final debt write-off. It has also committed to maintaining its payment obligations beyond the conclusion of the three-year DWS Debt Relief Scheme.

At the same time, Ngwathe is pursuing a similar solution to its Eskom debt.

The municipality is engaging with Eskom, National Treasury, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the national Department of Cooperative Governance to explore a debt-relief arrangement in line with the provisions of Section 78 of the Municipal Systems Act.

Municipal Manager Dr. Futhuli Patric Mothamaha said the combined interventions were aimed at placing Ngwathe on a stronger and more sustainable financial footing.

"All these efforts will collectively ensure that the municipality becomes financially sustainable in the medium term, while continuing to contribute positively to our municipal service delivery programmes."

Dr Mothamaha said the debt relief would enable the municipality to channel more resources towards critical priorities, including road maintenance and water provision across all towns within Ngwathe Local Municipality.

The R84 million write-off therefore represents more than a reduction in municipal debt—it provides Ngwathe with additional financial breathing room to strengthen its operations and accelerate service delivery while continuing its broader efforts to achieve long-term financial sustainability.

Search Intensifies for Missing Police Reservist

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

The search for missing South African Police Service (SAPS) reservist Moabi Alex Thekiso has intensified, with police and community members racing against time to find the Excelsior officer who disappeared under unexplained circumstances.

On Monday, Free State MEC for Community Safety, Roads and Transport Jabu Mbalula visited the traumatised Thekiso family to offer support as uncertainty continues to surround his disappearance.

Mbalula urged the family and community to cooperate fully with investigators and allow the law to take its course.

"His disappearance is a concern to the entire policing community. I am calling on the family and community members to cooperate and work with the police during the investigation and allow investigators to do their work," said Mbalula.

Thekiso, affectionately known as Muvas or Modoi, went missing on 31 July. He served at Excelsior SAPS as a Rural Safety Coordinator and was a long-serving police reservist.

He lived in Mahlatsweta and regularly travelled to areas including Ficksburg, Clocolan and Ladybrand. At the time of his disappearance, he was reportedly wearing a brown jacket and grey jeans.

His disappearance has deeply affected the Mahlatsweta community, which continues to rally behind his family while calling for intensified efforts to locate him.

Community members have also taken to social media to remember Thekiso and highlight his contribution to policing.

"He solved more cases than most trained officers alive; from a young age he arrested the most hardcore criminals, and yet they failed to give him his flowers," said Teboho Chris Mohono in a Facebook post.

Another community member, King Morena, ex-



SAPS and the family continue the search for missing police reservist Moabi Alex Thekiso. Pictures: Supplied

pressed concern over Thekiso's long service as a reservist and called for his safe return.

Thekiso's younger brother, Thabo Thekiso, recalled the events surrounding his disappearance, saying his brother left home in the early hours of 29 July after allegedly receiving a call from his superiors informing him that they would collect him for an operation.

"They came to fetch him, and he went to work, and he was never seen again. Then the next day I received a call from one of his colleagues asking for him," said Thabo. He said some family members also received calls from the same colleague asking about Thekiso before they were aware that he was missing.

The family has expressed frustration over what it believes has been a lack of progress in locating Thekiso. His brother said the disappearance has caused immense emotional distress, particularly for his children.

"The Captain at the police station promised us that he would investigate our brother's disappearance himself, but we were shocked when he retired without giving us the progress of the case," he said.

SAPS, however, maintains that efforts to locate Thekiso are continuing. Lieutenant Captain Thabo Covanani confirmed that investigations into the reservist's disappearance remain ongoing.



TICKETS
R300
COMPUTICKET

mangaung african cultural festival
when your heart and soul is african

MAIN Festival

12 SEPTEMBER 2026
ROSE GARDEN

LIRA | ZONKE | SANNERE | NATHI | NTANDO
JAZIEL BROTHERS

KUTHALA * FANTAS THE DJ * PULENG PHOOFOLLO * VICTOR
KGANTLAPE * KHAYA * PETER NTHWANE BAND * THABISO WA MALUTI
DJ FINZO

MC: THEMBI SEETE & TEBOHO NKADU

11 DAYS, ONE PEOPLE, COUNTLESS STORIES

TICKETS
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DIVAS MUSIC FESTIVAL

11 SEPTEMBER 2026
LEMO GREEN PARK

LIRA | ZONKE | BRENDA MTAMBO
SIPHOKAZI

PULENG PHOOFOLLO * NTHABI SINGS * S'NAZO * MO'LES TWINS

EVENT MC: ALPHI

11 DAYS, ONE PEOPLE, COUNTLESS STORIES

TICKETS
R250
COMPUTICKET

mangaung african cultural festival
when your heart and soul is african

GOSPEL FESTIVAL

13 SEPTEMBER 2026
OLD GREYS CONVENTION CENTER

LEBO SEKGOBELA | MINISTER SPOKES | TEBOHO MORUTI
SELLO MALETE | WINNIE MASHABA | JABU HLONGWANE

WILLIAM MTHETHWA * TEBOHO MOLOI * KATLEGO SEGBI * ANDISWA MBANTSA
KELETSO MOFOKENG * RE GAO * KGOSI LEBITSA
MORUTI THAMI * PULENG MARCH * DJ SHIMMY

MC: TEBOHO THAPONG | TINA MNUMZANA

11 DAYS, ONE PEOPLE, COUNTLESS STORIES

mangaung african cultural festival
when your heart and soul is african

MAIN EVENTS

09 SEP	MAIN THEATRE PRODUCTION: ARABANG	TICKET R100	PACOF'S ANDRE HUBUENET 14:30
09 SEP	MAIN THEATRE PRODUCTION: ARABANG	TICKET R100	PACOF'S ANDRE HUBUENET 19:30
10 SEP	MAIN THEATRE PRODUCTION: ARABANG	TICKET R100	PACOF'S ANDRE HUBUENET 14:30
10 SEP	MAIN THEATRE PRODUCTION: ARABANG	TICKET R100	PACOF'S ANDRE HUBUENET 19:30
09-10 SEP	COMEDY AND POETRY	TICKET R150	BLOEMFONTEIN CITY HALL 19:30
11 SEP	DIVAS MUSIC FESTIVAL	TICKET R300	LEMO GREEN PARK 18:00 - 02:00
11 SEP	AMAPIANO VS HIP HOP MUSIC FESTIVAL	TICKET R120	ROSE GARDEN 18:00 - 02:00
12 SEP	MAIN MUSIC FESTIVAL	TICKET R300	ROSE GARDEN 18:00 - 02:00
13 SEP	GOSPEL MUSIC FESTIVAL	TICKET R250	OLD GREYS 09:00 - 23:00

11 DAYS, ONE PEOPLE, COUNTLESS STORIES

mangaung african cultural festival
when your heart and soul is african

COMEDY & POETRY

9&10 SEPTEMBER 2026
CITY HALL

SHAUN DIHORO | CELESTE NTULI | SPUTNIK

RASTA EYE AND EYE * MASHABELA GALANE * TIEHO KHAKHAU
SUI-GENERIS * LES-AFRICA * LADY BIRD * CHRIS MAPANE * SHAXE KHUMALO

11 DAYS, ONE PEOPLE, COUNTLESS STORIES



FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Rockman Strengthens Farmers' Voice in Nketoana



The Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs (DARDEA), Ms Elzabe Rockman, has reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to building stronger partnerships with farmers and delivering practical solutions to challenges confronting the agricultural sector.

MEC Rockman hosted a farmers' engagement session at the Reitz Town Hall in the Nketoana Local Municipality, bringing together farmers from Arlington,

Motseki Sehloboko from the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development presented on strategic land acquisition and development.

Warrant Officer Tsoenyane from the South African Police Service also addressed the serious challenge of stock theft.

Farmers were then afforded an opportunity to engage directly with MEC Rockman and other stakeholders, raising concerns ranging from access to grazing land and water provision to nursery start-up support,

provincial government and municipalities.

"Our commonage development falls through the cracks between the Department and the Municipality. We first met with the Municipality and shared some of the concerns, including lease agreements, and fortunately the Municipality has already started addressing this issue through its by-laws," said Rockman.

The MEC added that concerns relating to branding and other administrative processes had been referred to the National Department to assist farmers who were experiencing challenges.

Rockman also raised concern about the continued threat of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, noting that Thabo Mofutsanyana has one of the province's largest cattle populations.

She said the Free State had vaccinated approximately 1.5 million cattle, describing it as a significant milestone, while emphasising that many animals still needed to be reached.

"Please do not hide FMD, because this is where all our problems start. Should you see animals being moved, please report it. We must have the courage to fight this and take action ourselves," she urged.

The MEC acknowledged the important role played by the private sector in supporting vaccination efforts, including assisting with the transportation of Animal Health Technicians and veterinarians.

The engagement demonstrated DARDEA's commitment to ensuring that government remains accessible and responsive to the needs of farming communities.

Through strengthened partnerships with municipalities, farmers, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders, the Department continues to pursue practical and sustainable solutions aimed at advancing agriculture, empowering young people, supporting commonage users and strengthening rural economies across the Free State.

MEC Rockman's engagement with farmers in Nke-



Lindley and Petrus Steyn, alongside government officials and key agricultural stakeholders.

The engagement created an important platform for direct dialogue between government and the farming community, allowing farmers to raise pressing concerns while engaging with relevant stakeholders on possible solutions to improve productivity, sustainability and growth within the sector.

On behalf of Nketoana Local Municipality, Mayor Cllr Godfrey Nhlapo warmly welcomed delegates and described the engagement as an important opportunity to unlock growth and create employment in the area. He highlighted the municipality's role in addressing long-term lease agreements for farmers, motivating funding proposals for council approval, strengthening food security interventions and supporting local economic development.

Thabo Mofutsanyana District Director, Mr Mxolisi Tawana, said the primary purpose of the engagement was to create an open platform for farmers to discuss their challenges and collectively explore sustainable interventions. The session reaffirmed DARDEA's commitment to supporting and empowering farmers across the Free State.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were Nketoana Local Municipality Mayor Cllr Godfrey Nhlapo, Speaker Cllr Pani Fume, EXCO representative Ms Matshidiso Koloi and Ward Councillor Cllr Koo Mofokeng.

Stakeholders delivered informative presentations on critical issues affecting the agricultural sector, including Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), strategic land acquisition and land development, and stock theft.

Mr Petrus Khambule, an Animal Health Technician from DARDEA, addressed farmers on FMD, while Mr

funding opportunities, mentorship programmes, internships for agricultural graduates and cooperation with fire protection associations.

The impact of cold disasters on livestock and the need for stronger support mechanisms for farmers also featured prominently during discussions.

Responding to the concerns, MEC Rockman said the Department had initiated the engagement programme for two key reasons: to reconnect with farm-



ers and strengthen working relations between DARDEA and municipalities.

She highlighted the importance of closer cooperation, particularly around commonage development, which she said often falls through the cracks between

toana forms part of a broader commitment by DARDEA to bring government closer to communities and ensure that interventions are practical, timely and capable of making a meaningful impact on the lives and livelihoods of farmers.



Premier, MEC Delivered as Luncheon Club Re

The Premier of the Free State Province, MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, has reaffirmed her commitment to improving the lives of senior citizens after returning to the Bambanani Sizwe Luncheon Club in Phase 6, Bloemfontein, to deliver on promises made during her previous visit.

Accompanied by the MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Elzabe Rockman, and Head of Department Tshepo Mabolo, Premier Letsoha-Mathae engaged with members of the Luncheon Club following concerns they had raised about theft, a dilapidated structure and inadequate fencing.

In a welcome boost for the facility, MEC Rockman

announced that the erection of a security fence would commence on Monday next week, addressing one of the key safety concerns raised by the elderly members.

The visit also brought much-needed support through partnerships with MTN and the Red Cross. Senior citizens received cellphones, food parcels, blankets and groceries to support activities at the Luncheon Club.

*It brings me
come back a
promises I*

Women Farmers T

The Free State Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs (DARDEA) is calling on women farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs and women involved in agro-processing to participate in the upcoming Women in Agriculture District Imbizos, leading to the Provincial Women in Agriculture Imbizo.

The initiative is designed to create a platform where women in agriculture can connect, share ideas, raise challenges and unlock opportunities across the agricultural value chain.

The District Imbizos will bring together women involved in crop production, animal production and agro-processing, alongside key stakeholders from financial institutions, training and research centres, the National Department of Agriculture and Land Reform and Rural Development, WARD and other strategic partners.

Participants will have an opportunity to access valuable information on funding, market access, training, research, networking and business development, while engaging directly with institutions that can support the

growth and sustainability of their agricultural enterprises.

The Imbizos also aim to address critical challenges facing the agricultural sector by bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives and identifying practical solutions that can strengthen rural economies and advance women's participation in agriculture.

The Women in Agriculture District Imbizo programme has been tailor-made to benefit women in the agricultural business, providing a platform for meaningful engagement, knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

Women in Agriculture Imbizo Dates

- Tuesday, 15 September – Simon Sifuthi Hall, Botshabelo, Mangaung
- Friday, 18 September – K9 Kutlwano, JC Motumi Secondary School, Odendaalsrus, Lejweleputswa District
- Monday, 21 September – Trompsburg, Xhariep District
- Friday, 25 September – Parys, Fezile Dabi District

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



ivers on Promise ceives Major Boost

Demonstrating a commitment to environmental sustainability, the dignitaries also planted indigenous trees to promote environmental awareness and create a greener environment for the community.

Addressing members, Premier Letsoha-Mathae said the project held a special place in her heart, particularly because she had previously visited the centre and committed herself

to addressing some of its challenges.

"It brings me great joy to come back and fulfil the promises I once made. I have a beautiful plan for this place and will continue engaging other government departments to make their contributions towards ensuring its sustainability," said Premier Letsoha-Mathae.

The Premier concluded by expressing her appreciation to MEC Rockman for going beyond expectations in providing support to the Luncheon Club.

The visit underscored the Free State Provincial Government's commitment to responsive leadership, community upliftment and ensuring that senior citizens receive the dignity, care and support they deserve.

ake Centre Stage



- Monday, 28 September – Bethlehem, Thabo Mofutsanyana District
 - 6–7 October – Provincial Women in Agriculture Imbizo
- Women farmers across the Free State are encouraged to participate, engage and make their voices heard as the province works towards a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable agricultural sector.

Rockman Brings Relief and Hope to Storm-Hit Koppies Community



Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs (DARDEA), Elzabe Rockman, has continued to demonstrate the provincial government's commitment to supporting communities affected by natural disasters, leading a major relief intervention in Koppies under the Ngwathe Local Municipality.

In a powerful show of collaboration, DARDEA joined forces with the South African Red Cross Society and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to deliver essential humanitarian assistance to 200 residents affected by the devastating hailstorm and strong winds that struck the area on 10 August 2026.

The relief initiative, held at the Kwakwatsi Hall, brought much-needed support to residents whose homes and livestock were severely affected by the extreme weather conditions.

Ngwathe Local Municipality Administrator, Dr Motingoe, welcomed community members and stakeholders and outlined the purpose of the intervention, emphasising the importance of coordinated efforts in responding to communities affected by disasters.

Beyond providing immediate relief, MEC Rockman stressed the importance of linking emergency interventions with sustainable development and long-term food security.

Addressing the community, Rockman highlighted the strength of partnerships between government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations

in bringing meaningful change to vulnerable communities.

"We work together with the Red Cross and IDC, bringing together the private sector as well as NGOs, because together we can make a difference in our communities," said MEC Rockman.

She reflected on DARDEA's earlier interventions in the area, noting that the Department had previously

supported churches and Early Childhood Development centres with seeds and gardening tools to promote household food production.

"We were here in March and assisted several churches and ECDs with seeds and garden tools to promote food security and encourage people to produce their own food," she said.

MEC Rockman also encouraged young people to explore agriculture and food production as opportunities for economic empowerment, particularly in the face of high unemployment.

"To the young people, unemployment is very high, but by producing your own food, you will not only be able to generate an income for yourself, but you will also be feeding other people," she added.

The Koppies disaster relief intervention once again demonstrated DARDEA's commitment to ensuring that communities are not left behind during times of crisis. Through strategic partnerships and sustainable development initiatives, the Department continues to combine immediate humanitarian assistance with long-term interventions aimed at strengthening food security, building resilient communities and creating opportunities for economic participation.

The collaboration between DARDEA, the South African Red Cross Society and the IDC stands as a testament to the impact that can be achieved when government, development institutions and civil society work together to restore hope and rebuild communities.



Opinion

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

When projects delay or fail it is communities that suffer

South Africa has a sophisticated procurement and infrastructure regulatory framework, yet the country continues to experience projects that are delayed, abandoned, poorly constructed or repeatedly require additional funding. When projects delay it has dire consequences for the community that it is meant to services.

In recent years there have been multiple infrastructure projects relating to water and sanitation launched in municipal areas that have been facing ongoing challenges. Parliament has called for stricter consequence management. The delay in projects lead to ballooning in the initial cost of the projects at times tripling or quadrupling in cost.

This means that it is not only the community that suffers but also the tax payer. It should be put into perspective however that at times it is not always the contractor to blame. Issues such as delay or non-payments by clients, defective designs, changes in scope, community disruption due to job creation issues as well as the weather may also have adverse effect.

Parliament has previously called for penalty clauses to be used against contractors delaying water and sanitation projects, highlighting the relationship between delays, cost escalation and poor value for money.

Penalties should not be viewed simply as punishment; they should create an economic incentive to perform. One of the most damaging features of public infrastructure failure is the time between the original failure and the eventual consequence.

A project can be delayed for months on end while a new deadline is agreed upon between the contractor, consultant and the Department. Variations are approved followed by another variation and investigation by consultant.

What follows is that another contractor is appointed and an investigation ensues. By the time meaningful accountability occurs, the original project may be years behind schedule with cost escalated.

The water and sanitation crisis cannot be solved simply by allocating more money. South Africa needs to ensure that the money already allocated produces functioning infrastructure.

In the Free State, the Department of Water and Sanitation Provincial Head, Dr Tseliso Ntli has instigated frequent committee meetings with municipalities, implementing Agents, consultants and in some instances the contractors.



These engagements that also include site visits assist to unblock any bottle necks that may crop up and intends to curb any foreseeable delays during construction.

Through his dedication and stewardship municipalities such as Matjhabeng, Ngwatho and Maluti-a-Phofung have been able to progress in water and sanitation projects and refurbishment with some projects

handed over to the municipalities while others are still in the process.

Dr Ntli always emphasise the upkeep and operations of these infrastructures preceding the handover to municipalities stressing the fact that proper operations and maintenance must be conducted and qualified individuals be appointed to prohibit decay of the newly build or refurbished infrastructure. Proper security measures also must be put in place by the municipalities to deter vandalism.

Individuals must be held accountable when infrastructure meant to last for decades is damaged due to negligence, we owe this to the rate and taxpayers.

Parliament is currently overhauling its legislative framework through the National Water Amendment Bill to address severe infrastructure decay, and this will reshape how water rights are managed and hold public office bearers to account. **By Larry Crisp, Communications and Marketing Manager, Department of Water and Sanitation Free State.**

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

Beyond the collapse: UFS-led research collaboration revisits the lessons of the Jagersfontein disaster



The aftermath of the Jagersfontein tailings dam collapse on 11 September 2022, which released millions of cubic metres of mining slurry, claimed two lives, damaged approximately 200 homes, and contaminated around 1 600 hectares of agricultural land. Pictures: Dr Anita Venter

On the morning of 11 September 2022, the tailings dam at Jagersfontein collapsed, releasing between five and six million cubic metres of mining slurry into the surrounding area. Two people were killed, one person was never found, about 200 homes were damaged, and roughly 1 600 hectares of agricultural land were contaminated. Residents received no official warning. Many only realised what was happening when the wave of waste was already moving towards their homes.

Four years later, researchers from the Centre for Development Support at the University of the Free State argue that the disaster remains one of South Africa's most important lessons in mining governance, disaster preparedness, and community recovery. Their new policy brief draws on a four-year collaborative project with the University of Queensland and asks a simple question: what have institutions actually learned?

According to Prof Lochner Marais, principal investigator on the project, the central message is that "disasters should not become isolated events from which institutions learn little". Prof Deanna Kemp of the University of Queensland adds that "documenting every disaster supports learning and risk reduction".

Prof Vasu Reddy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation & Postgraduate Studies), echoes these views: "The lessons from Jagersfontein remind us that governance failures can be as consequential as technical failures. Effective early warning systems are not defined by technology alone, but by whether they reach and protect communities."

The University of the Free State's collaboration with the University of Queensland demonstrates the value of international research partnerships in addressing complex societal challenges. Universities have a vital responsibility to generate evidence that informs policy, preparedness, and public accountability," says Prof Reddy.

Three years of research, six urgent lessons

The brief, Let's learn from disasters: Six lessons from the Jagersfontein tailings dam disaster, draws on a four-year collaborative research project between the University of the Free State and the University of Queensland, supported by the Australian

Research Council. Grounded in extensive interviews with survivors and institutional stakeholders, it examines the disaster through the experiences of those who lived through it as well as the systems that failed them.

According to Prof Lochner Marais, principal investigator and researcher in the Centre for Development Support, the central message is straightforward: "Disasters should not become isolated events from which institutions learn little."

His colleague, Prof Deanna Kemp from the University of Queensland, makes a similar case. "Documenting every disaster supports learning and risk reduction," she says.

The researchers argue that the conditions leading to the catastrophe were decades in the making. The Jagersfontein mine closed in 1971 but reopened in 2010 to reprocess historical mine waste. Over time, ownership transfers, technological changes, evolving operational practices, and fragmented oversight created a governance environment in which risk steadily accumulated.

Satellite imagery identified progressive wall movement and deformation around the tailings facility as early as 2019. That information was available to the mining company and the Department of Water and Sanitation. It was never communicated to the community.

Governance, not geology, is the deeper problem

The official investigation report referred to the term 'failure' more than 400 times. The word 'disaster' appeared only four times. To the researchers, that distinction matters. It reveals how disasters are often framed as engineering events rather than broader social and governance failures.

The first lesson of the policy brief is that tailings storage facility disasters emerge from long-term governance problems, not technical malfunctions alone. While engineering weaknesses played a significant role in the Jagersfontein collapse, it unfolded in a context marked by regulatory gaps, ownership changes, inadequate oversight, and limited accountability. Technical explanations, the researchers argue, tell only part of the story.

The second lesson follows naturally. Detecting danger is not the same as reducing risk.

Warning signs existed. Regulatory reports identified

concerns. Miners raised questions. Community members noticed changes. Yet the institutions responsible for acting on that information failed to connect monitoring systems with communication systems and emergency planning.

The brief argues that an effective early warning system must combine risk knowledge, monitoring, communication, and response capacity. At Jagersfontein, these functions remained fragmented. Information remained within technical and regulatory processes rather than reaching the people whose lives depended on it.

"An early warning system that never reaches a community is not an early warning system," the report effectively suggests. The lesson is clear: data only becomes useful when it prompts action.

Communities as partners, not afterthoughts

A third lesson highlights the importance of community participation. Residents and mine workers noticed warning signs and voiced concerns before the disaster, but these concerns did not translate into preventative action. The researchers argue that communities should play an active role in disaster risk reduction through accessible risk information, reporting mechanisms, evacuation planning, and emergency drills.

The fourth lesson draws on what researchers call 'disaster scenes', detailed reconstructions of events based on survivor testimony. These accounts reveal how people interpreted risks, navigated escape routes, and relied on neighbours when formal emergency systems failed. At Jagersfontein, residents effectively became their own first responders. The brief argues that future emergency planning should incorporate this lived experience instead of relying solely on technical assessments and institutional procedures.

Recovery that is not recovery

Perhaps the most sobering lesson concerns recovery. Four years after the collapse, many households continue to live with unresolved losses. While some reconstruction has occurred, residents report unfinished repairs, lost assets, economic hardship, and reduced spending on essential needs such as food and healthcare.

The researchers argue that recovery should be measured not by the number of houses rebuilt but

by whether people's livelihoods, security, dignity, and social well-being have truly been restored.

The final lesson is that disasters must be documented and continuously reflected upon. Official investigations often focus on technical causes and legal compliance, yet they can miss the experiences of affected communities and the institutional weaknesses that allow risks to escalate. The policy brief argues that documenting survivor experiences, recovery outcomes, and governance failures is essential to preventing future disasters.

A national warning

The significance of the policy brief stretches far beyond a single Free State town.

South Africa is home to hundreds of active and inactive tailings storage facilities. Many are linked to decades of mining activity, changing ownership structures, and varying levels of oversight. The researchers argue that the lessons from Jagersfontein should inform disaster risk reduction, mine governance, environmental regulation, and recovery planning across the country.

Among their recommendations are stronger lifecycle regulation of tailings facilities, better integration of monitoring data into public early warning systems, greater transparency in risk information, meaningful community participation in disaster planning, and independent oversight of compensation and recovery programmes.

Four years after one of South Africa's most significant mining disasters, the mud may have settled, but the questions remain.

The researchers' warning is clear: unless institutions learn from Jagersfontein, the next disaster may already be in the making.

"Recovery should be measured not only by infrastructure restored, but by livelihoods rebuilt, dignity protected, and trust renewed. Research-led policy briefs such as this help translate academic insight into practical solutions for communities and decision-makers.

Jagersfontein is a powerful reminder that sustainable development requires transparency, accountability, and proactive governance. The most important lesson from Jagersfontein is simple: institutions must learn, adapt, and act," remarked Prof Reddy. **By SIQHAMO HLUBI JAMA**

Editor's Corner

System failure meets party scramble

Both the ANC and the IEC bear responsibility for the candidate submission crisis

Mpho Sekharume
Editor-in-Chief

The chaotic scramble surrounding candidate list submissions has once again exposed the fragile intersection of political preparedness and public administration. When deadline pressure collides with sluggish servers, the resulting fallout triggers a predictable war of words over who bears ultimate culpability. This is exactly where we are now with the African National Congress (ANC) and Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) impasse.

While the political rhetoric has been sharp, a clear analysis reveals a dual failure. At the heart of the issue sits the governing party's failure to manage operational risk.

In any high-stakes administrative procedure, leaving critical compliance tasks to the final hours before a statutory cutoff represents a profound lapse in management. This is in no way an inference to the office of the party's secretary general, but a broader observation.

While attending the special ANC NEC meeting last month on 25 August at Radisson Hotel OR Tambo, as part of the media entourage, I remember asking myself whether the delegates were aware that the IEC's candidates submission deadline was fast approaching. My curiosity intensified when another similar meeting was held on 27 August 2026 just a day before the IEC deadline at the Birchwood Hotel.

It was at these two special meetings that the ANC was supposedly finalising its lists. When you factor in internal candidate selection disputes, prolonged branch deliberations, and last-minute documentation checks, it then becomes obvious that a late submission bottleneck would inevitably be created.

Relying on last-minute access to digital portals is a gamble, and when time runs out, the responsibility for that strategic miscalculation rests squarely with the submitter. Therefore the party willingly absorbed this operational hazard.

Conversely, the Electoral Commission cannot entirely escape scrutiny regarding its technical readiness. In an era where digital submission portals are standard, high traffic spikes in the hours leading up to a hard deadline are easy to predict or anticipate.

When a public portal experiences degradation or latency during predictable peak windows, it highlights a distinct vulnerability in administrative preparation.

An electoral body managing crucial democratic processes must design digital infrastructure built for maximum capacity, stress-tested against severe load spikes, and fortified with sufficient failover redundancy.

While technical friction does not erase a party's duty to comply on time, state-run digital systems must remain robust under pressure to maintain public confidence.

This episode serves as a vital lesson for both political organisations and state institutions moving forward.

For political parties, the directive is plain: internal processes must be streamlined to ensure compliance days before cutoffs.

For the IEC, investing in resilient, high-capacity digital infrastructure is non-negotiable to prevent technical bottlenecks from overshadowing democratic processes. True administrative integrity requires both disciplined political management and fault-tolerant state systems.

Whatever the outcome at the electoral court, the judgement should fairly set a precedent that encourages all parties operating within the realms of governance to embrace punctuality and preparedness to preserve harmony and stability.

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.19	-0.97%	⬆️
Rand/Pound	21.87	-0.65%	⬆️
Rand/Euro	18.80	-0.76%	⬆️
Platinum	1 781.00	-6.63%	⬆️
Brent Crude	108.63	6.91%	⬆️
Gold	4 316.58	-1.94%	⬆️
Ethereum	2 462.99	0.16%	⬆️
Bitcoin	77 232.61	-1.11%	⬆️

COSATU Hits Back at TFG Over 280 Store Closures



By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has urged The Foschini Group (TFG) to reconsider plans to close about 280 stores across Africa, warning that the move could deepen job losses in an already strained economy.

TFG says the closures are driven by changing consumer behaviour and the rapid growth of online shopping, which is increasingly outperforming its physical stores.

About 80 stores are expected to close in the financial year ending March 2027, followed by a further 100 closures in each of the next two financial years. The group has already shut 85 stores it deemed economically unviable during the 21 weeks ended 22 August 2026.

The retailer is restructuring its footprint as it shifts investment towards e-commerce. Physical-store sales in Africa grew by just 0.2%, while online sales surged by 54% during the period.

Online sales now account for nearly 16% of TFG’s total sales, up from about 14% a year earlier.

Its Bash platform, which hosts brands including Sportscene, Totalsports, Markham, Fabiani, @home, American Swiss and Exact, has been a major driver of the growth.

TFG operates more than 3 400 stores in South Africa, making the planned closures a major concern for workers and communities reliant on retail jobs.

The announcement has also triggered mixed reactions among consumers, with some welcoming the convenience of online shopping while others remain concerned about losing access to physical stores.

“I don’t like online shopping. If I need shoes or a dress, I

want to get it now, not wait a few days. I would also like to see the quality of the item,” said Bettie Fritz.

COSATU has warned that the closures could worsen South Africa’s employment crisis, particularly amid weak economic growth and increasing automation and artificial intelligence across industries.

“Behind Foschini Group’s popular clothing brands Foschini, Sportscene and Markham are hard-working individuals,” said COSATU Communications Officer Nonzuzo Dlamini. The federation said TFG’s success was built on workers across its operations, including manufacturing, logistics and retail sales.

COSATU said employees must not be left without adequate support as TFG restructures, adding that its affiliates, the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers’ Union (SACCAWU) and the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU), would seek alternatives to protect jobs.

“It is vital that Foschini Group demonstrates solidarity towards its workforce, engage in good faith and find alternatives to store closures,” said Dlamini.

TFG, however, expects consumers to remain under pressure and says it will continue optimising its store footprint while expanding its digital offering.

The shift comes as South Africa’s e-commerce market continues to grow.

A World Wide Worx, Mastercard, Peach Payments and Ask Afrika report estimates that online consumer spending will reach about R159 billion this year, with online retail growing by approximately 23%.

The growing divide highlights the challenge facing traditional retailers: adapt to a rapidly digitalising market without leaving thousands of workers behind.

BBU to focus on boosting Gauteng townships economic activities



The Black Business Unity (BBU), an advocacy group, says it will focus on boosting economic activities in different wards within Gauteng townships instead of relying on government.

This comes after the organisation decided to halt formal government petitions due to what it describes as systemic neglect of township economies.

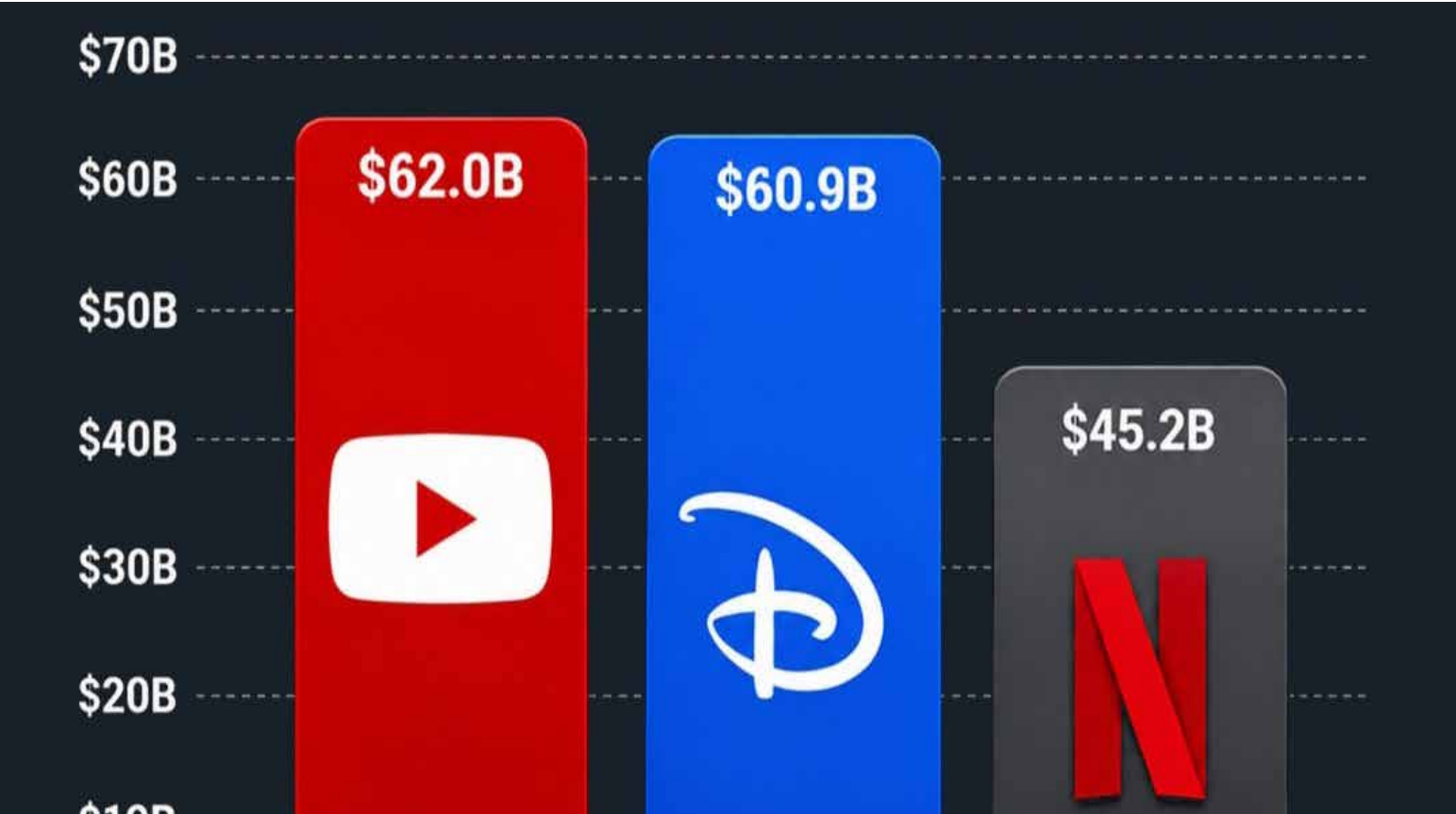
The group has accused the Department of Small Business Development of ignoring funding accountability queries and failing to implement the Gauteng Township Economic Development Act.

Founding member of the BBU, Mike Molloyi, says that from next week, they will be launching a project aimed

at raising funds to boost economic activities within municipal wards. “So what we’re doing is we’re going to be launching what we call mini chambers within the wards. So we’re able to raise funds and become independent, talk to communities, engage them and say, listen, we need to start taking control of the economic activities within our wards.”

“Because this dependency and waiting for somebody who’s supposed to create an environment and give support to business is not doing their job. There was a call for an establishment of economic development centres, a one-stop centre within the township. But none of that has happened,” adds Molloyi. **SABCNews**

YouTube Topples Disney as World’s Biggest Entertainment Giant



By Katlego Mashwabi

YouTube has overtaken Walt Disney Co. to become the world’s largest entertainment business by annual revenue, marking a historic shift in the global media landscape.

According to financial insights firm Invest Billionaire Sight, YouTube generates about \$62 billion in annual revenue, edging ahead of Disney’s \$60.9 billion in core media revenue, excluding its theme parks and experiences division. Netflix follows with \$45.2 billion, while Warner Bros. Discovery records \$37.3 billion.

What began as a video-sharing platform has evolved into a global media powerhouse, fuelled by advertising, subscriptions and billions of users.

YouTube’s estimated \$40.4 billion in advertising revenue reportedly exceeds the combined advertising revenue of Disney, NBC, Paramount and Warner Bros. Discovery.

The platform’s rise is also reshaping South Africa’s media and entertainment market. By 2025, YouTube reportedly accounted for about 66% of local streaming search attention, while DSTV’s share fell to around 14%.

Lower data costs, widespread smartphone access and free content have accelerated YouTube’s growth, with the platform surpassing Facebook in local usage since 2020.

Its growing influence has also attracted regulatory attention. Following a Competition Commission antitrust probe, Google and YouTube committed R688 million over five years towards supporting South African national, community and non-English-language media.

For local creators, YouTube has become more than an entertainment platform—it is an economic opportunity. Educational content on digital mar-

keting, SEO, video editing and artificial intelligence is helping some users develop freelance income streams. YouTube has also changed how views are measured, with public views now counting from the first frame of a video, while “engaged views” remain important for monetisation.

Despite relatively low local advertising rates, successful South African creators are increasingly combining advertising with sponsorships, memberships and brand partnerships.

MacG’s podcast, for example, attracts millions of monthly views and demonstrates how independent digital creators can build commercially powerful media businesses outside traditional broadcasting. YouTube’s rise signals a fundamental transformation: the future of entertainment is increasingly being shaped not by traditional broadcasters, but by platforms, creators and audiences operating directly in the digital economy.

Sibanye-Stillwater job cuts: Here’s what NUM is proposing instead of mine closures and retrenchments

The National Union of Mineworkers (Num) in Rustenburg, North West, has urged government to take a closer look at mining giants shutting down operations in South Africa because of declining production.

The union says smaller-scale mining companies could step in and take over operations when larger miners believe there is no longer enough value left to justify continuing.

This comes as Sibanye-Stillwater enters section 189A consultations on the proposed restructuring of the Kwezi shaft at its South African platinum group metals (PGM) operations in Rustenburg.

Sibanye-Stillwater is not the first giant to close shop. De Beers recently issued employees at the Venetia mine in Limpopo with section 189A notices as it plans to pause production for two years.

NUM breaks silence on mine closures

A section 189A notice and consultation is a formal labour-law process used when a large employer plans mass retrenchments for economic or operational reasons.

“We are seeing this closure of operations becoming our fashion number,” NUM Rustenburg Regional Chairperson, July Radibe, told The Citizen.

“We are now calling upon our government to look at the small scale of mining because if now these big companies are going to shut down these operations because they’re not making a massive production, they can then give these mining licences to the small-scale mining companies to mine these operations.”

NUM believes there is still a way

According to Sibanye-Stillwater, the Kwezi shaft within the Rustenburg operation has reached the limits of the approved mining licence area. “As such, and in line with expectations, the shaft is approaching the end of its economic life,” said the company.

Radibe added that the union believes some mines still have production left, even if it is not massive.



“We believe that there’s still production left, even though it’s not a massive production like at the lifespan of Anglo, but we can still make a living out of these operations because we can upscale the operations and make a profit, when obviously, it’s a small-scale mine,” he said.

Sibanye-Stillwater loses millions

Sibanye-Stillwater, on Monday, said in a note to shareholders that it would embark on retrenchment consultations with relevant parties. The company noted that Kwezi shaft reported losses of approximately R208 million in 2024 and R91 million in 2025.

Although stronger PGM prices supported positive margins in the first half of 2026, Kwezi is forecast to return to losses in the second half of 2026 as production declines, the company said.

“Based on the outcome of a detailed operational and financial review of Kwezi shaft, the Company considers it necessary to commence a section 189A consultation process regarding the proposed restructuring of Kwezi shaft,” said Sibanye-Stillwater.

Over 1000 employees affected

Section 189A consultations do not always result in retrenchments. Before retrenching employees, companies must assess whether affected employees can be placed in other vacant positions if they have the necessary skills and qualifications.

Radibe said it gives the union hope that the company will consider alternative vacant positions within the group before retrenching employees. The Kwazi shaft restructure will affect 781 employ-

ees and 333 contractor employees.

“One of the guidelines in terms of the section 189A consultations is that we should save as many. And what gives us comfort, as the National Union of Mineworkers, is that Sibanye, as a company, is an international company.

“So we’ll look at alternatives of jobs that they’re having within their space of work and would then place those employees that are affected in different areas where that’s operating.”

Save jobs

Sibanye-Stillwater also noted that the consultation process will, among other things, “consider measures to avoid or minimise job losses, mitigate the impact on affected employees and evaluate alternatives that may improve the shaft’s viability. No final decision has been made.”

To support the declining production at the shaft, Sibanye-Stillwater said Kwezi produced 20 658 4E ounces in the first half of 2026, representing less than 3% of total managed and attributable SA PGM production of 734 645 4E ounces for the period.

“We acknowledge and are sensitive to the uncertainty that consultation processes create for employees and their families, and remain deeply committed to engaging constructively throughout the process. Unfortunately, given the depletion of economically mineable reserves and the corresponding declining financial outlook, it is necessary to commence consultations regarding the future of Kwezi shaft,” said Richard Stewart, chief executive officer. **TheCitizen**

LGBTQIA+ Dialogue Demands State Accountability



By Katlego Mashwabi

The South African Human Rights Commission North West Provincial Office and the Colour Me Foundation recently wrapped up a three-day dialogue tour across the province. The initiative demanded immediate institutional accountability for the local LGBTQIA+ community.

The tour ran from 2 to 4 September 2026 across Klerksdorp, Vryburg, and Mahikeng. It confronted the stark divide between constitutional protections and the grim realities faced by queer individuals accessing public services.

Departing from superficial awareness workshops, the tour was designed as a series of targeted community hearings. The objective was to place vulnerable individuals from rural areas face-to-face with human rights commissioners to forge strict strategies for institutional oversight.

High-ranking representatives from the South African Police Service, Department of Home Affairs, National Prosecuting Authority, and Department of Health were forced to answer directly to the public. Community members, led by a visible transgender delegation, exposed systemic prejudice and widespread discrimination by government officials.

Attendees weaponised the Constitution to extract firm policy commitments from state departments. The sessions initiated localised action plans for the commission to formally log and monitor human rights violations committed by state workers.

Organisers declared the massive turnout a definitive sign that the movement is no longer confined to major urban centres.

"What you are building is bigger than attendance. It is a community becoming more visible, more connected and more certain that we belong here."

The Colour Me Foundation issued a closing warning to participating state departments, confirming that activist monitoring will intensify. They emphasised that every bureaucratic promise will be strictly tracked until implemented.

Kgoroge Masterclass Unpacks Industry Realities

Film heavyweight reveals technical infrastructure gaps holding back Free State filmmakers at Macufe Film Festival

By Katlego Mashwabi

Veteran thespian and international film star, Tony Kgoroge, has called for more funds to be availed to develop the Free State film industry.

While delivering a masterclass on screenwriting and resource management presentation at the Mangaung African Cultural Festival (MACUFE) Film Festival on 8 September 2026, Kgoroge addressed the technical infrastructure gaps holding back local filmmakers.

Kgoroge, who stars in Netflix series Umthetho, noted that other provinces access far more advanced camera packages.

While expressing frustration at this infrastructure gap, he also believes that the playing field will soon be levelled for the Free State to fully participate in the film industry.

"I know that our Department of Arts and Culture (sic) is working on developing something called the Film Hub. So we're hoping that you know when that comes, that's when people will be able to get decent cameras, decent lighting equipment, sound for them to make their decent movies," Kgoroge said.

The highly experienced actor also shared critical logistics insights with regional creators aiming for international streaming platforms.

Turning to storytelling mechanics, Kgoroge outlined core principles and screenwriting tactics that ultimately end with leaving the audience in suspense.

"Always when you write a story, you have to make sure that you are different from the one before, even if the one that inspires you, be different from it."

"The best films or series always have a cliffhanger, they never finish the story, they always leave you to think, oh my god, what's gonna happen next."

"We don't conclude our story, we leave it hanging so that you can watch the next episode, and you watch the next episode and the next episode,"

Drawing from his screen credit on Blood Diamond, Kgoroge cautioned writers against including animals in low-budget scripts. While advocating for cost-saving measures like community sourcing for extras and wardrobe, Kgoroge drew a hard line on crew welfare.

"Good food is non-negotiable for maintaining high crew morale."

The afternoon session shifted to specialised broadcasting skills as acclaimed writer Dikledi Mthimkhulu facilitated a masterclass on copyrighting and writing specifically for television. Mthimkhulu has written scripts for the SABC and Takalani Sesame.

The festival's robust industry lineup continued on 9 September with a masterclass facilitated by Shaka ilembe co-creator Mpumelo Paul Grootboom as well as the show's director, Mqondisi Ngubane. Attendees also got to enjoy the screening of a local production, Arabang.

International film star, Tony Kgoroge. Pictures: Sunday-World

Scorpion Kings Concert Line-up Revealed



The wait is over as Scorpion Kings Live officially unveils its highly anticipated lineup, bringing together an extraordinary collection of South Africa's biggest and most influential music names for a defining live experience on 19 September 2026.

Uniting pioneers, chart-toppers, and the next generation of local talent, the historic gathering at FNB Stadium will celebrate Amapiano, Afro-soul, hip-hop, house, and contemporary African sounds in front of more than 70 000 fans.

At the centre of the showcase are Kabza De Small and DJ Maphorisa, joined on one stage by Ami Faku, Amaroto, Aymos, Angekebabuye MC, Beekaysa28, Blxckie, Bontle Smith, Busiswa, Busta 929, Daliwonga, Dladla Mshunigisi, Focalistic, Kabelo Sings, Kamo Mphela, Kammu Dee, Key Tech, Khalil Harrison, Lady Du, Leehleza, LeeMcKrazy, Madumane, Mark Khoza, MaWhoo, Mhaw Keys, Miano, Mkeyz, Mlindo The Vocalist, Mnqobi Yazo, Mr JazziQ, Msaki, Mthunzi, Nasty C, Nia Pearl, Njelic, Nkosazana Daughter, Nobuhle, Nokwazi, Pcee, Ricky Lenyora, Ringo Madlingozi, Scotts Maphuma, Semi Tee, Soweto's Finest, Sykes, Thatohatsi, Toss, Tman Xpress, Tracy, Uncool MC, Vulela, Xduppy, Young Stunna, Zaba, and Zawadi Yamungu.

Gates open early at 12h00 for a pre-show to set the tone for a full day of music and culture.

From the soulful melodies of Ami Faku, Msaki, and Mlindo The Vocalist to the high-energy Amapiano rhythms of Young Stunna, Focalistic, and Kamo Mphela, the event spans multiple generations of music lovers.

The festival also features genre-crossing performances from hip-hop heavyweights Blxckie and Nasty C alongside the enduring afro-pop presence of Ringo Madlingozi.

To deliver a complete festival experience, the event has partnered with key national brands across broadcast, transport, and lifestyle sectors.

SABC1 joins as the Official Broadcast Partner, while GalxBoy handles official merchandise distribution.

Transport logistics will be supported by Gautrain to ensure seamless access for attendees travelling to the iconic venue.

Sprite and Castle Lite serve as refreshment partners, with McCafé and RocoMamas providing dedicated on-site activations.

Together, these collaborations reinforce the immense scale of an event that extends beyond music into fashion, food, and youth culture.

"This is a celebration of South African music and the vibrant communities that make the country a global creative force."

Limited tickets remain available online via the official event portal - entertainmentsa.co.za

Mahika Mahikeng Promises Major Economic Impact

By Katlego Mashwabi

The North West Province is gearing up for a massive economic and tourism boost following the official announcement of the 2026 Mahika Mahikeng Cultural Music Festival.

The Department of Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation (ACSR) confirmed the flagship showcase is locked in for late November and December.

Anticipation builds as the festival rolls out a revamped format designed to appeal to diverse audiences. ACSR MEC Wessels Morweng expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming edition.

"This year's Mahika Mahikeng will be a jam-packed celebration of culture, music, sport and entertainment," he announced.

To execute this vision, the department has further announced the appointment of Big Daddy Events as the official festival organiser on a three-year contract. The prominent promotions company is well-known as the host of major regional events, including the Tlokwe Jazz Festival.

A spokesperson for the department highlighted the inclusive nature of the event schedule.

"All events are important and by popular de-



Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse.

mand, they are according to the heterogeneous community," the spokesperson said.

The journey begins on Tuesday, 6 October 2026, with an official media and stakeholder launch at Hartbeespoort Dam, where full operational details

will be unveiled. The main festival programme kicks off on Saturday, 28 November 2026, with a community-focused Fun Walk at the Mmabatho Stadium parking grounds.

Musical festivities take centre stage the following week, launching on Thursday, 3 December 2026, with a Gospel Festival at the Mmabatho Convention Centre.

The spiritual showcase features a stellar lineup of top-tier talent, including Lebo Sekgobela, Simon Makgatholela, and Kgethang Konese.

The energy shifts on Friday, 4 December 2026, when the festival moves into Mmabatho Stadium for the Youth Festival. The stadium will host a vibrant celebration of contemporary dance music, driven by amapiano pioneers Scorpion Kings alongside Royal Musiq and Benzo.

The weekend concludes on Sunday, 6 December 2026, back at Mmabatho Stadium for the finale Jazz Festival.

The closing day promises a sophisticated showcase of South African music history, featuring legendary icons Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse, Ringo Madlingozi, and Jimmy Dladla alongside contemporary powerhouse Ezra Neethings.



U.S Open 2026 Fashion



WEEKEND Gig Guide

ALL OVER BLOEMFONTEIN
11 - 13 SEPTEMBER 2026

VEGAS FRIDAYS
FRIDAY - 11 SEPTEMBER 2026
VEGAS CLUB

MACUFE TAKEOVER
SATURDAY - 12 SEPTEMBER 2026
NEWS CAFE

THABO SMOL - THUPA TSA SMOL
SATURDAY - 12 SEPTEMBER 2026
FOOD 'N THINGS RESTAURANT

EDUTAINMENT
SATURDAY - 12 SEPTEMBER 2026
CUT - TOKKIE PARK

EXTENDED SOUL SUNDAYS
SUNDAY - 13 SEPTEMBER 2026
SECHABA LOUNGE

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THEBE SANNERE SCOTTS MAPHUMA NTATE STUNNA KATLEHO SEOBI
LEEMCKRAZY MASTERPIECE_YVK CLEMENT MAOSA**

**SPITJO DIPITJHI SCOVA RANDY DA DJ LAWKIID CHEEZ BEEZY HEMUSTBEFABULOUS MASEDI
LEGOODY & FANTAS THE DJ DJ LEBZA DJ KID LEFA AFRIKA TRILL KAY LITCHYLEE
WALTER SEFATSA MOHAU MAPRINZOZO RAPSIKO PIANO KINZ KINGTBOS**

ON STAGE MC'S

SOMIZI LEBU MOLAX HAPPY K BINOBOY MAKHWENKHWE BA2CADA MS VEE

EVENT HOSTS

NOTA THAKGI MSHEPEPE WASE VAAL BONOLO MISS KAY MBATHA SKATANA

**GENERAL
ACCESS**

**EARLY BIRD
R60
15 MAY - 01 JUN**

**PRE-SALE
R60
02 JUN - 01 JUL**

**PHASE 1
R350
02 JUL - 26 SEP**

**GENERAL TICKET
R450
AT THE GATE**

**COOLERBOX
R100
COMPUTICKET**

**COOLERBOX
R150
AT THE GATE**

AVAILABLE AT **SHOPRITE** **Checkers**

VIP

**EARLY BIRD
R60
15 MAY - 01 JUN**

**PRE-SALE
R60
02 JUN - 01 JUL**

**VIP NORMAL
R750
02 JUL - 19 SEP**

**VIP NORMAL
R1000
AT THE GATE**

**COOLERBOX
R100
15 MAY - 19 SEP**

**COOLERBOX
R150
AT THE GATE**

VVIP

**TABLE PACKAGE
R4K
4 PEOPLE**

**TABLE PACKAGE
R8K
8 PEOPLE**

**INDIVIDUAL
R1.5K
1 PERSON**

**NO COOLERBOX
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SPORT



Coaching Exodus Grips PSL

Pressure mounts on coaches as poor results prompt club dismissals

By Gomolemo Winkel

Poor performances and results in the opening quarter of the 2026/2027 season have set off the seasonal local football custom of dismissing coaches. Siwelele FC and Marumo Gallants are the recent club to fire their respective coaches in Lehlohonolo Seema and Phuti Mohafe, following hot on the heels of Sekhukhune United who initiated the coaching exodus by firing Cedric Kaze.

Kaze was shown an early exit by Sekhukhune United after recording four defeats and three wins in seven matches. In an official statement, the club confirmed the technical changes while stressing the need for internal solidity.

This week Siwelele became the latest team to depose their manager, handing Lehlohonolo Seema and his assistant their pink slips following a 3-2 defeat to Kaizer Chiefs last Sunday in Dobsonville.

Siwelele chairman, Calvin LeJohn, stressed that supporters deserve better outcomes after a rocky start to the campaign.

"This has been a challenging period for the club,

and our supporters deserve better than what they have seen so far this season," he said.

Gallants also relieved Mohafe and his assistant of their duties after a winless start yielded just two points from five matches.

Bahlabane Ba Ntwa, as they are affectionately known, confirmed the departures through an official media release while declining further commentary. "The Club will not be commenting further on the circumstances surrounding the decision or engaging on the merits of the matter," the statement read. Early managerial changes are not new, with Sekhukhune and Gallants previously demonstrating a willingness to make swift technical adjustments. Babina Noko dismissed Peter Hyballa during the 2024/2025 pre-season, while Gallants parted ways with Dylan Kerr around the same period.

This pattern reflects the rising pressure placed on coaches by club management, supporters, and key stakeholders. Attention now turns to how the affected clubs rebuild, as remaining Premiership managers remain fully aware that consistent results are essential for job security.



Coaching Pressure Rising ... PSL coaches are facing intense performance scrutiny as pressure to deliver good results mounts.

Wimbledon Bans Influencers



By Katlego Mashwabi

In an era where sports entertainment increasingly bends to the whims of social media algorithms, the All-England Lawn Tennis Club is staging a firm counter-offensive.

The club has officially confirmed it will not introduce a dedicated media accreditation category for influencers or content creators at its 2027 tournament.

The decision marks a definitive rejection of modern digital disruptive trends, reaffirming tennis as a sport anchored in strict etiquette, silence, and cultural conservatism.

The enforcement comes as a direct response to a chaotic 2026 US Open, where the United States Tennis Association's decision to accredit around 100 content creators as official media backfired spectac-

ularly.

What was meant to be a progressive bid to attract younger audiences quickly collided with the rigid, centuries-old expectations of tennis decorum.

During her first-round match in New York, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was forced to wait as the chair umpire repeatedly scolded spectators in the hospitality suites.

The disruption was caused by creators using a bright portable ring light to film a video during active play, casting a glaring distraction across the court while Osaka was attempting a shot.

"The umpire told everyone to quiet down—more than I have ever heard in an umpire's tone," Osaka later told Sky News, visibly frustrated by the incidents.

"If you come to a sporting event, you have to respect the sport. It's a common courtesy to read up

on the etiquette. It could be a good thing for making the sport popular, but it has to be managed a lot better."

Osaka was not alone in her grievances.

American star Coco Gauff also spoke out about the shifting atmosphere, pleading with attendees to respect the flow of the game.

"Try not to talk too loud... and definitely not mouthing TikTok in the middle of a point," Gauff remarked.

Meanwhile, world number one Aryna Sabalenka faced her own bizarre disruptions when a match had to be paused due to a heavy smell of marijuana drifting from stands populated by content creators, leading to the swift revocation of several credentials.

From creators filming group videos during live rallies to others posing for selfies with active matches serving merely as a background aesthetic, the behaviour exposed a fundamental misunderstanding of the sport.

Tennis has long stood apart from sports like basketball or football, relying on absolute crowd silence during points so players can hear the ball hit the racket string—a technical necessity for anticipation.

Wimbledon, the oldest and most prestigious tournament in the world, has always been the ultimate gatekeeper of these values.

Famed for its uncompromising all-white dress code for players and its refusal to allow commercial advertising hoardings around the courts, the tournament prioritises an environment entirely free of modern distractions.

By banning influencer credentials and announcing that security will actively confiscate ring lights, selfie sticks, and any equipment deemed disruptive to play, the All-England Club is ensuring that tradition remains uncompromised.

In a statement distributed via the Press Association, the All-England Club made its priorities clear, noting that while social media can help grow the game, traditional media, player focus, and the authentic atmosphere of the sport must always come first.

As other global events continue to reshape themselves for maximum online engagement, tennis is drawing a boundary line in the grass.

For Wimbledon, the message is uncompromising: the dignity of the royal sport is not for sale to the highest follower count.

New Era for Kovsie Netball



Kovsies have unveiled a new coach after Burta De Kock's retirement

By Gomolemo Winkel

Newly appointed Kovsie Netball head coach Karla Pretorius will look to make a strong start when the University of the Free State (Kovsies) takes on Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Madibaz) on Sunday.

The Round 6 Varsity Netball encounter takes place at Rembrandt Hall in Pretoria.

Pretorius was officially unveiled on Wednesday, succeeding long-serving coach Burta de Kock after her 24-year tenure at the helm.

The upcoming match marks a familiar rivalry, with Kovsies having dominated recent meetings through emphatic 79-26 and 66-25 victories.

Madibaz have also produced rare upsets, defeating Kovsies by 11 points in 2013 and edging them 41-40 in 2018.

Sunday's fixture will mark Pretorius's first encounter with Madibaz as a coach, a decade after facing them as a player.

Youthful squad shows steady progress

Despite Kovsies occupying fourth place on the standings, Pretorius expressed satisfaction with the team's development.

Pretorius shared her perspective on the team's current log standing.

"Being fourth on the log is not a bad position for Kovsies. At the end of the day, during a project and a tournament, we are not overly concerned about positions one to four," she said.

She also emphasised the value of introducing young players to elite competition early in the tournament.

"For us, we are very glad to throw the youngsters on court. It allows a young team to gain experience because you cannot buy it."

With 13 of the squad's 20 players being first- and second-year students, the programme is focused on long-term development.

Pretorius believes the squad is in good shape and remains enthusiastic about building a cohesive unit.

She warned against overlooking Madibaz insisting that past results will have little bearing on Sunday's outcome.

"We will never underestimate any team. At the end of the day, we will go hard and strong, focus on our strengths and we will take court with confidence."

"We do not want to focus on previous games or the name of the opposition. The important thing is for our players to be mentally prepared, execute our game plan and give their best performance on the court," Pretorius said.

This weekend's match presents an opportunity for Pretorius to launch a new era at Kovsie Netball.