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PASTOR AND CRIME ACTIVIST EMERGE AS FRONTRUNNERS FOR SOL PLAATJE MAYORAL RACE

Page 2

City Manager's Suspension Looms

- ***Precautionary suspension delayed as Mangaung's special council meeting postponed***
- ***Likely to be suspended at a fresh council sitting on Monday***

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

Embattled Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality City Manager, Sello More, will be placed on precautionary suspension at the upcoming special council meeting on Monday, 20 July 2026. This after the special council meeting that was scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 15 July was postponed after it failed to meet the necessary quorum to proceed.

The postponement effectively delayed More's imminent precautionary suspension, which according to a high ranked source in the metro, is attributed to insubordination, underperformance.

The source, however, revealed that More's forthcoming precautionary suspension is, in the main, significantly influenced by the largescale mismanagement of the metro's finances as per the Auditor-General's (AG) findings.

Before announcing the postponement on Wednesday, Council Speaker, Lawrence Mathae, briefly indicated that More's matter was indeed on the agenda – thus partially confirming the mole's information.

"I have a matter to table before council - the AG's findings on the City Manager," Mathae noted before adjourning the failed council meeting.

The poor audit outcomes for the 2024/2025 financial year have resulted in More being threatened with receiving a certificate of debt – which is a last resort legal prerogative or avenue used by the AG to hold public officials personally responsible for mismanaged State funds.

Under More's watch, Mangaung's finances have indeed been in total disarray, thus positioning the municipality as one of the worst performing in the country.

Earlier this month, National Treasury announced it is temporarily withholding the Juily 2026 equitable share transfers to mismanaged municipalities, including Mangaung.

This measure, according to Treasury, is to instil fiscal discipline and ensure that public money is properly managed and that unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure is addressed.

Treasury further stated that this grave undertaking also aims to ensure that municipal officials and office-bearers are held accountable where required by law.

Binding remedial actions to recover the funds the metro has lost and resolve existing problems have since been issued by the AG and are running concurrently with Treasury's retributive measures.

Failure to implement the AG's recommendations without a valid or justifiable reason would subsequently result in More being issued the certificate of Debt.

More's problems are further compounded by the fact that civil rights organisation, AfriForum, have also filed criminal complaints against him for failing to address waste management and many other issues in Mangaung. **Continues on Page 3**

Free State Athletes Secure Silverware Page 12

TheCarWashDate brings creators together Page 11

Sekoboto Unveils Vision to Reinvent Centlec Page 5

Dina Pule breaks 13-year silence: 'I let South Africans down but I paid the price

Social Development Minister Dina Pule has defended her return to Cabinet by declaring that she has already faced the consequences of the scandal that ended her political career, saying she learned from her mistakes and is prepared to do better.

In her first extensive comments since rejoining government under President Cyril Ramaphosa, Pule acknowledged that she had disappointed the country.

Speaking during an interview with the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) on Wednesday, Pule described her removal from Cabinet in 2013 as a painful chapter that forced her to confront her mistakes and rebuild herself away from the public eye.

"Some time ago, I did let down South Africans. And for that, I did pay a big price," she said.

Pule was dismissed by then-president Jacob Zuma after she was implicated in allegations that state contracts had been improperly channelled to her former partner and his associates.

Reflecting on the fallout, Pule said withdrawing from public life allowed her to examine her actions and seek forgiveness.

"I went back home and I took some time to deal with my own introspection… I begged to be allowed to speak to the people of South Africa and I said I'm sorry," she said.

Contact US

No 09 Henri Van Rooijen Street
New East End
Bloemfontein
9301

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

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

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

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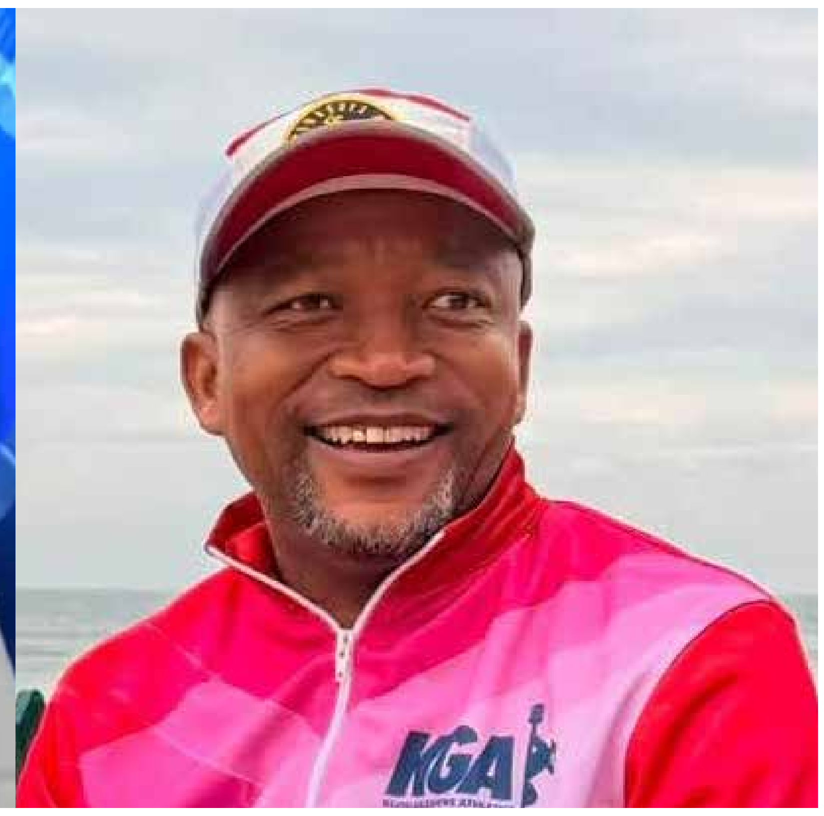
Pastor and Crime activist emerge as frontrunners for Sol Plaatje Mayoral Race

By Refilwe Mochoari



The race to lead Kimberley in the Northern Cape's largest and most politically significant municipality has reached a dramatic climax with a pastor and a crime-busting activist going head to head for control of Sol Plaatje Local Municipality's top position.

Apostle Grace Mbhungu, a respected religious leader in Kimberley, and Tebogo "Pantsi" Obusitse a crime activist have allegedly emerged as the frontrunners to steer Kimberley's future.

Mbhungu who is a blend of faith and politics, is no stranger to the Kimberley communities. She is the appointed Regional Chaplain for the ANC's Frances Baard Region and has long provided spiritual guidance and pastoral care to party members and structures.

Known for her leadership in interfaith prayers at government and ANC functions, Mbhungu has carved out a reputation as a mayoral compass in turbulent times.

Beyond her role as a political chaplain, Mbhungu heads the Latter Glory House Church in Kimberley, where she ministers to congregants and extends support to the community.

On the other side of the contest stands Tebogo "Pantsi" Obusitse from Galeshewe, a community activist who has built his profile by actively fighting crime through his work as the chairperson and co-founder of Operation Wanya Tsotsi, a crime-busting movement in Kimberley.

Obusitse's work has mobilized ordinary residents to reclaim their streets, positioning him as a champion of safety and accountability.

Journal News has learned that, both candidates have been interviewed by the party's National Executive Committee as part of the process to select the next mayor of Sol Plaatje.

In April this year, the ANC announced the official launch of the mayoral candidate selection process, introducing public submissions to strengthen the centralized and competency-based approach to identifying and deploying executive leadership in key municipalities.

According to ANC National Spokesperson Mahlengi Bhengu, including public submissions by inviting communities, stakeholders and broader society in the race for mayoral positions is a fundamental shift in how the party will govern and deploy leadership.

"The first phase establishes a centralized implementation machinery within the office of the secretary general, supported by a dedicated secretariat and working in coordination with the local government interventions committee and other organizational structures.

"This will ensure uniformity, strategic oversight, discipline and consistency in implementation across all provinces.

"Building on this foundation, the ANC will embark on an intensive national process of identifying and headhunting capable mayoral candidates from across society.

"This includes experienced public representatives, professionals, community leaders, veterans of government and individuals with proven leadership track records and governance capability, Bhengu said.

She said that this approach deliberately expands the pool of leadership beyond its robust internal ANC processes while remaining firmly rooted in the values and discipline of the organisation.

"In line with the ANC's commitment to deepen democracy and rebuild public confidence, the movement will open a window for public submissions, inviting communities, stakeholders and broader society to propose individuals they believe possess the requisite qualities to serve as mayors.

"This process will be complemented by structured consultation with provincial and regional leadership to ensure that the final pool of candidates reflects both national strategic priorities and the lived realities of communities, Bhengu said.

She also said a rigorous and transparent assessment process which includes competency-based interviews, verification of qualifications, background checks, and lifestyle audits where necessary will be undertaken.

"These measures are designed to ensure that candidates are not only politically grounded but possess the technical capability, administrative competence, ethical integrity and leadership capacity required to manage complex municipalities and deliver meaningful change.

"The ANC is clear, leadership must be earned through merit discipline and capacity.

"Deployment is not an entitlement, it is a responsibility and a mandate to serve, Bhengu said.

Top Four: ANC Mangaung Retains Leadershiptains Leadership

By JN Reporter

The race to become the African National Congress (ANC) mayoral candidate for Mangaung Metro Municipality has narrowed to four leading contenders, setting the stage for a fiercely contested battle ahead of the party's candidate selection announcement later this month.

The shortlist, which includes experienced party leaders and regional office bearers, has intensified political interest as ANC structures weigh who is best positioned to lead the metro into the 2026 local government elections.

However, with the ANC expected to announce its successful mayoral candidate on 26 July 2026, the party appears poised to retain Mangaung's current municipal leadership.

According to reliable sources within ANC provincial structures, the incumbent Executive Mayor Gregory Nthatisi has secured strong backing from national office bearers, despite reportedly lacking sufficient support from some branch structures.

Last week, Nthatisi was among seven candidates contesting for the position. Former ANC Free State Deputy Chairperson and former Mangaung Executive Mayor Thabo Manyoni, as well as former Free State Finance MEC Gadija Brown, are understood to have fallen out of contention, according to sources. Also failing to make the shortlist was Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Integrated Development Plan and Performance, Theodorah (Theo) Mosala, who is reportedly having failed to secure a nomination from her own branch.

"I can confirm that the ANC's top seven leaders have thrown their weight behind Comrade Nthatisi for re-election as Executive Mayor. Furthermore, other key leaders, including current ANC Regional Chairperson and Mangaung Speaker Lawrence Mathae, as well as Deputy Mayor Lulama Titi Odili, are also expected to retain their positions," one source said.

Another ANC branch chairperson in the region, who requested anonymity, confirmed to Journal News that the party had resolved to retain the current leadership in the metro.

"Yes, it is true that the Mangaung leadership will be retained. However, this follows the party's call for unity, with leaders agreeing to smoke the peace pipe and shift their focus to the upcoming local government elections. This is not about who supports whom, but about ensuring an overwhelming ANC victory in November," the source said.

It remains unclear how ANC Mangaung Regional Deputy Chairperson Vusi Soqaga will be accommodated under the new arrangement, given his ambition to become mayor. Soqaga is also expected to challenge Regional Chairperson Lawrence Mathae for the ANC Mangaung regional chairmanship.

Bloemfontein husband charged with wife's murder

Bloemspruit police have arrested a 38-year-old suspect in connection with the murder of his wife in Grasslands Three, Bloemfontein.

The incident occurred on Wednesday evening when Bloemspruit police responded to a report of a suspected murder at a residential property in the area.

The authorities said that upon arrival, officers met a tenant residing on the property who narrated that when they arrived home, he found the suspect highly intoxicated and sleeping outside the house.

The tenant then entered the main house, where he discovered the 38-year-old woman lying on the bed, covered with blankets, with blood visible around her mouth.

Emergency Medical Services and the police were immediately called to the scene and upon examination, the victim was declared dead at the scene.

The police highlighted that a preliminary investigation revealed visible marks on her neck, suggesting possible strangulation and it was also established that the couple's children were away on holiday at the time of the incident.

The suspect was immediately arrested at the scene and charged with murder.

The suspect is expected to appear before the Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court soon on a charge of murder. Police investigations are continuing.

The man appears in court for the murder of an EFF member

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) confirmed the brief appearance of Sipho Lucky Mahlangu (34) in the Cullinan Magistrates' Court.

Mahlangu, from Soshanguve, faces charges of murder and robbery with aggravating circumstances following the alleged killing of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Tshwane Region Two Secretary and Election Coordinator, Monica Dube.

The authority says that during the early hours of 13 June 2026, Mahlangu and an accomplice broke into the deceased's residence in Wallmansthal through a window, entered her bedroom, where they proceeded to shoot the deceased in the head in the presence of her children.

It is alleged that the duo then stole her cellphone before fleeing the scene. On 4 July 2026, the deceased's daughter allegedly recognised Mahlangu at a taxi rank and alerted the police, and he was subsequently arrested.

Klerksdorp authority seeks help identifying possible fraud suspects

The Klerksdorp-based Serious Commercial Crime Investigation Unit seeks public assistance in locating three men who can assist in resolving a fraud case in which a Klerksdorp-based 52-year-old woman was allegedly scammed out of R2 million.

This stems from an incident that took place in August 2025, in which the authority says the complainant met a man in Klerksdorp who introduced himself as Emmanuel Jackson Kigezi.

"Reports indicate that the complainant later got into a romantic relationship with Emmanuel. It is further alleged that Emmanuel showed the complainant a R14 million will which he claimed his father had left him," said SAPS.

It is reported that the complainant resigned from her work and received her R2,5 million pension money and allegedly transferred R2 million into the bank accounts of two companies as requested by Emmanuel for the cleansing of the R14 million will. However, after receiving the money, Emmanuel and his accomplices disappeared.

Roysten Collins was sentenced to an additional 15 years for robbery

The Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court has sentenced Roysten "Billy" Collins to an additional 15 years' imprisonment for multiple counts of housebreaking, theft, and business burglary.

Collins's reign of terror dates back to 2017, when he was known for housebreakings, business burglaries, and theft out of motor vehicles, and mostly terrorised the Brandwag, Universitas, and Westdene suburbs of Bloemfontein.

Authorities highlighted that his primary targets were university students residing in student accommodation and communes and he typically targeted high-value electronics such as laptops and cellphones and, in some instances, stole the clothing of his victims.

Although he had been traced and arrested multiple times in the past, previous cases were frequently struck off the rolls due to insufficient evidence.

However, the Provincial Forensic Investigative Leads Unit (FILU) took over the investigations, and they were able to positively link Collins to more than nine cases via DNA profiling.

Comprehensive forensic evidence was compiled from the Local Criminal Record Centre (LCRC), including fingerprint reports, photo albums, and expert statements, all conclusively pointing to Collins.

During the investigation, it was established that the 33-year-old was already incarcerated at Grootvlei Prison in Bloemfontein, serving a 15-year sentence handed down in 2025 for similar offences and he was subsequently subpoenaed in prison to face the newly added charges.

The investigative team said that there are currently more than seven outstanding cases linked to the accused's name, but they do not include additional dockets from other stations that are still being centralised and brought to the attention of the investigating officer.

Further investigations into Collins's remaining linked cases are ongoing.

City Manager's Suspension Looms

Continues from Page 1

These include the failure to manage landfill sites and the inadequate use of refuse trucks which at times remain stationery due to incessant diesel shortages.

Other factors highlighted by AfriForum, include the largescale neglection of public spaces and parks – with most of them remaining unattended for months on end. All these failures and several others have been well-documented in a petition that was launched by the civil organisation earlier this year.

According to the organisation, the petition had already collected over 600 signatures when it was last checked two weeks ago.

In addition, the petition further highlighted that More increased his salary in 2024 by around R700 000 for 'excellent performance' - even though the municipality was failing to deliver services to the people.

Speaking to Journal News Network, Christo Groenewald, AfriForum's District Coordinator for Bloemfontein, stressed that the organisation is still firmly pushing for More to resign, because he has not done anything to improve service delivery.

"Always comes with false statements of wanting to improve, but there is nothing happening. They are also always mentioning that they are receiving positive feedback on social media about the job well done they are doing, which is not true," he said.

He added that, More's tenure is described by deteriorating service delivery and negative comments from residents because they are not happy.

In a statement released on 1 July 2026, Democratic Alliance (DA) Mangaung mayoral candidate, Werner Pretorius, stated that AG's findings confirm that the metro is in severe financial distress after years of mismanagement.

Pretorius pointed out that infrastructure in Mangaung continues to collapse because the metro fails to invest in maintenance and renewal, while funds intended for poor households failed to reach beneficiaries due to poor governance.

"The Auditor-General identifies Mangaung as one of South Africa's metros showing the strongest indicators of financial distress, with the municipality now facing nine consecutive years of uncertainty over its ability to continue as a going concern," Pretorius said.

He further noted that despite years of interventions and promises of reform Mangaung's Financial Recovery Plan has been largely ineffective. "More than R1.85 billion has been lost through water losses and almost R1 billion through electricity losses over the past four years. "At the same time, infrastructure continues to deteriorate because the Metro spends less on repairs, maintenance and renewal than it loses through depreciation," Pretorius stated.

After being placed on precautionary suspension, More is likely to be put through a formal disciplinary hearing process, which is likely to bear adverse outcomes considering the beleaguered City Manager's mounting challenges from the various stakeholders in the metro's governance affairs.

While More faces bleak prospects, Journal News Network's attempts to get comment from the Mangaung Metro regarding his pending precautionary suspension proved futile.

FS's Silent Crisis:

Thousands of Children Face Malnutrition

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

Despite being regarded as South Africa's breadbasket, the Free State is facing a growing child malnutrition crisis, with thousands of children under the age of five suffering from stunted growth and severe undernutrition.

According to Grow Great, national evidence shows the province records one of the highest rates of severe acute malnutrition among children under five captured through the public health system.

The organisation's 2022 Community Stunting Survey in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District found that an estimated 12,696 of the district's 74,688 children under five were stunted, a condition caused by prolonged undernutrition that permanently affects a child's physical growth and brain development.

Grow Great Communications Lead Dudu Maziya said the findings paint a worrying picture, with malnutrition continuing to rise across the country.

"While we do not have confirmed year-on-year provincial data for the Free State, national trends are concerning. Evidence suggests that severe acute malnutrition in South Africa has increased in recent years, while stunting has remained persistently high for decades," she said.

Maziya attributed the crisis to soaring food prices, shrinking household incomes, child support grants that fall short of meeting children's nutritional needs, poor maternal nutrition during pregnancy and limited access to healthcare in some communities.

She stressed that tackling the crisis requires addressing its root causes by ensuring vulnerable families have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food, particularly during pregnancy and the first 1,000 days of a child's life—a critical period for growth and development.

Grow Great is calling for stronger income support for vulnerable households, improved access to nutrient-rich foods such as eggs, beans, lentils, tinned fish and fortified staples, and expanded community programmes promoting breastfeeding, maternal nutrition and early childhood development.

"Malnutrition in the Free State is both a public health challenge and a development challenge. It is not simply a question of whether families have enough food; it is about whether mothers and young children have access to the right nutrition, health services, support and living conditions during the critical first 1,000 days of life," Maziya said.

She added that the crisis is preventable if government, communities and the private sector work together.

"We know what works. By supporting pregnant women, promoting breastfeeding, improving access to nutritious foods, strengthening community health services and investing in young children early, we can dramatically improve outcomes."

Grow Great says every child deserves the opportunity to grow, learn and thrive, adding that reducing malnutrition is a shared responsibility requiring action from all sectors of society.

- Warning signs of child malnutrition include:
- Poor growth or being shorter than expected for their age.
- Weight loss or failure to gain weight.
- Thin arms and legs.
- Frequent illness or infections.
- Low energy and fatigue.
- Poor appetite.
- Developmental delays.

Parents and caregivers who notice these symptoms are urged to seek medical assistance from their nearest clinic or healthcare facility without delay.

Killed for Standing Against GBV: Justice Cry for UFS Student

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

What began as an ordinary night out ended in unimaginable tragedy for the family and friends of 25-year-old Kgotso Kgaeane, a University of the Free State (UFS) journalism student who was killed after allegedly intervening to stop an assault on a woman.

Rather than walking away, Kgaeane stepped in when he allegedly witnessed a woman being assaulted by her boyfriend. That courageous decision would ultimately cost him his life.

For those who knew him, his final act reflected the kind of person he had always been.

"He always wanted to help people. He never wanted to see anyone being treated unfairly. It does not surprise me that he stepped in to assist a woman who was being assaulted," said his girlfriend, Ontiragalletse Moorootsele.

Moorootsele, who witnessed the incident, said Kgaeane intervened after seeing the woman being assaulted by her alleged boyfriend.

She alleged that Kgaeane fell in front of the suspect's vehicle and was run over, suffering fatal injuries.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) has confirmed that a culpable homicide case has been opened and remains under investigation.

Police spokesperson Brigadier Thandi Mbambo said the incident occurred at approximately 05:38 on Sunday, 5 July, in Blomanda Township, Bloemfontein.

"No arrests have been made at this stage. The deceased was allegedly run over by a vehicle. Once all witness statements and outstanding reports, including the post-mortem report, have been received and analysed, the docket will be submitted to the Senior State Prosecutor for a decision," said Mbambo.

Kgaeane's older brother, Rethabile Kgaeane, said the family has been left devastated and frustrated by the pace of the investigation.

"Since his death it has been very difficult. We are angry because we feel it was not the right time for my little brother to die. His life was cut short and justice is being delayed," he said.

While acknowledging ongoing communication with the police, he said the family remained dissatisfied with the progress.

"We are not satisfied with how the investigation has been going, but there is communication from the police and there is movement—slow, but moving," he added.

Kgaeane's death has sparked widespread public outrage. Friends have remembered him as someone who always stood up for others, while the hashtag #JusticeForKgotso has gained momentum on social media as mourners continue to demand accountability.

Gender-based violence ambassador Roxane Hugo described the incident as a heartbreaking reminder of the devastating impact of violence.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of a young man who died trying to protect a woman from abuse. As a GBV Ambassador, we strongly condemn all forms of gender-based violence. This tragedy is a painful reminder that GBV affects entire communities and that no one should lose their life because of violence. We honour Kgotso's courage and call on everyone to stand together to stop GBV," she said.

The case has also drawn political attention.

The Congress of the People (COPE) has written to the Free State Provincial Commissioner of SAPS, calling for a thorough and independent investigation free from any political influence.

Meanwhile, Free State MEC for Community Safety, Roads and Transport Jabu Mbalula visited the Kgaeane family to offer condolences and assured them that justice would take its course.

The ANC in the Free State also extended its condolences to the family, describing Kgaeane's actions as an act of extraordinary bravery.

The party rejected any suggestion that political affiliation could shield anyone from accountability, insisting that no ANC member is above the law while reaffirming its condemnation of gender-based violence and its call for justice to prevail.

Mashaeng Gets Major Infrastructure Boost

By JN Reporter

Residents of Mashaeng in Fouriesburg are reaping the benefits of improved infrastructure after Dihlabeng Local Municipality officially took ownership of a newly completed 1.2km paved road, while simultaneously pushing ahead with the refurbishment of the local stadium.

The projects, championed by Executive Mayor Tseki Tseki, are expected to boost mobility, improve road safety, create jobs and enhance the quality of life for residents.

Tseki officially received the newly completed 1.2km paved road from the contractor during a handover ceremony in Mashaeng, marking the successful completion of one of the municipality's key infrastructure projects.

The road replaces deteriorated gravel surfaces that often became impassable during wet weather, providing residents with safe, all-weather access while improving connectivity within the community.

The investment is expected to benefit emergency services, scholar transport and public taxi operators by ensuring reliable access throughout the year.

Beyond improving transport, the project also delivered temporary employment opportunities for local residents through collaboration between the municipality, the contractor and the community, supporting Dihlabeng's commitment to local economic development.

Tseki thanked the residents of Mashaeng for their patience and cooperation throughout the construction period, saying their support played a vital role in the project's successful completion.

He also urged the community to protect the new infrastructure.

"This road belongs to the people of Mashaeng. It is a community asset that must be safeguarded and maintained so it can continue serving future generations," he said.

Following the handover, the Executive Mayor, accompanied by Technical Services Director Lungile Mokoteli and municipal officials, conducted an oversight inspection of ongoing infrastructure projects in the area. The delegation assessed progress on the newly completed road project and inspected the refurbishment of the Mashaeng Stadium, where contractors provided updates on completed work, construction currently underway and the remaining phases of implementation.

During the visit, Tseki stressed the importance of delivering projects on time, within budget and to the required engineering standards to ensure residents receive lasting value from municipal investments.

Once completed, the upgraded Mashaeng Stadium will provide a modern and safe sporting facility aimed at promoting youth development, encouraging active lifestyles and hosting sporting and community events.

The municipality said the combined infrastructure investments demonstrate its commitment to improving service delivery, creating economic opportunities and building communities with safer roads and better public facilities.

Tau Backs Local Businesses,

Cracks Down on Illegal Spaza Shops

The Moqhaka Local Municipality has pledged stronger support for township entrepreneurs while vowing to tighten enforcement against illegal and non-compliant businesses.

Executive Mayor Ramasimong Tau made the commitment during a Township Entrepreneurs and Spaza Shops Workshop in Maokeng's Constantia Hall on Wednesday, where local business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs and government stakeholders gathered to chart a path towards a stronger and more inclusive township economy.

The engagement follows growing calls from communities for more spaza shops to be owned and operated by local entrepreneurs, amid concerns over unfair competition, regulatory compliance and businesses run by undocumented foreign nationals.

The workshop focused on identifying practical solutions to strengthen township businesses while ensuring all enterprises operate within the law.

Among the key topics discussed were business registration, access to funding, municipal procurement opportunities and the formalisation of spaza shops to enable entrepreneurs to benefit from government support programmes, training and bulk-buying initiatives.

Addressing participants, Tau said the municipality was committed to empowering local entrepreneurs while enforcing the law equally.

"We hear the concerns of our people. Government's position is clear: we support local township entrepreneurs to own and grow their businesses. At the same time, we must enforce the law. Any business operating in Moqhaka must be registered, compliant, and those employing foreign nationals must ensure they are legally documented. We cannot have illegal operations undermining our local economy," he said.

Tau announced that the municipality would work closely with the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Home Affairs and Environmental Health officials to intensify inspections and strengthen compliance across the municipality.

He stressed that the municipality's objective was not to shut down businesses but to create a fair and sustainable trading environment.

"Our goal is not to destroy businesses, but to build a township economy where local people benefit first, where rules are followed, and where every business contributes to job creation and service delivery," he said.

The mayor added that similar workshops would be rolled out across other towns in the municipality, alongside a monitoring mechanism to track progress and ensure commitments made during the engagements translate into meaningful support for township entrepreneurs.

Home Affairs announces Absa joining banking sector to provide Smart IDs

Department of Home Affairs has announced another major milestone in a groundbreaking digital partnership with the banking sector, as Absa went live with digital Smart ID applications.

This makes Absa the fourth bank to offer the service through the department's new Digital Partnership Model.

Absa joins the likes of Capitec, Standard Bank and First National Bank, where South Africans can now access Smart ID services through a network of 296 participating bank branches across the country.

As part of today's rollout, 12 Absa branches have been enabled to provide Home Affairs Smart ID services, with a further 60 Absa branches scheduled to go live before the end of 2026.

In addition to its branch rollout, Absa will also introduce an innovative mobile service component, Bank on the Move, extending secure Home Affairs services to even more communities.

Further details on this innovation will be unveiled during the official rollout event.

More than 385 000 Smart ID applications have already been processed through the Digital Partnership, demonstrating the growing demand for convenient, digitally enabled services that make it easier than ever for South Africans to replace the fraud-prone green barcoded ID book with the far more secure Smart ID Card.

"The rapid expansion of our Digital Partnership with the banking sector demonstrates the success of our vision to fundamentally transform Home Affairs service delivery through digital innovation.

"Processing more than 385 000 Smart ID applications in just four months demonstrates that South Africans are embracing a faster, more secure and more convenient way of accessing Home Affairs services," Home Affairs Minister, Dr Leon Schreiber, said.

"Under our Home Affairs @ home reform programme, which includes expanding our new Digital Partnership to 750 participating bank branches by the end of this year, together with innovations such as Bank on the Move, we are bringing secure and dignified access to Smart ID services closer to where people live and work," Schreiber said. – ***SAnews.gov.za***

NW Brews New Coffee Industry to Boost Jobs and Exports

By Bernell Simons

The North West Government is betting on coffee as its next agricultural success story, launching an ambitious coffee bean production project aimed at creating jobs, diversifying farming and opening the door to international export markets.

The initiative, officially unveiled on 13 July 2026 at the state-owned Kgora Farmer Training Centre near Ramatlabama outside Mahikeng, is a partnership between the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). It marks the province's first structured effort to establish a local coffee industry.

Launching the project, MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Madoda Sambatha said the initiative delivers on a commitment made during his 2026 Budget Vote and represents a bold step towards expanding the province's agricultural economy beyond traditional crops.

"This project marks an important step towards diversifying agriculture in the North West. Through our partnership with TİKA, we are introducing a new commodity that has the potential to create jobs, support farmers and open new market opportunities," Sambatha said.

Unlike conventional farming projects, the initiative will develop the entire coffee value chain—from cultivation and harvesting to processing, roasting and packaging.

A dedicated processing facility at the Kgora Farmer Training Centre will enable locally grown coffee to be prepared and packaged before reaching consumers, adding value and increasing income opportunities for producers.

Provincial leaders believe the project will create new opportunities for emerging farmers while positioning North West as a player in South Africa's growing speciality coffee market.

Sambatha said the Kgora project would serve as a pilot, with plans to expand coffee production across the province if it proves successful.

"Our aim is for this project to grow and benefit more communities across the province. As we implement it, we will assess opportunities to expand coffee production to other areas and ensure that more farmers can participate in this value chain," he said.

TİKA has supplied coffee seedlings and specialised processing equipment, while also committing to provide technical expertise, farmer training and support in accessing both local and international markets, including potential export opportunities to Türkiye.

Beyond commercial production, the project will equip aspiring farmers from communities around Kgora and Ramatlabama with practical skills in coffee cultivation, processing and value addition, strengthening their long-term participation in the agricultural economy.

The initiative is also expected to reinforce the role of the Kgora Farmer Training Centre as a hub for agricultural innovation. Centre manager Thuthukani Hlangu said the facility is committed to equipping emerging and established farmers with practical, hands-on skills that improve productivity and sustainability.

Government believes the project will stimulate employment throughout the production chain while promoting value-added agriculture—an area increasingly viewed as critical to growing rural economies and improving farmers' incomes.

While South Africa is traditionally known for crops such as maize, citrus, grapes and macadamias, provincial officials believe the North West's climate offers favourable conditions for selected coffee varieties under carefully managed production systems.

If successful, the project could establish an entirely new agricultural industry for the province, demonstrating how international partnerships can drive innovation, attract investment and create sustainable livelihoods in rural communities.

Sekoboto Unveils Vision to Reinvent Centlec

By Gomolemo Winkel

Reappointed Centlec Chief Executive Officer Dr Malefane Sekoboto has unveiled an ambitious plan to transform the Mangaung electricity distributor from a traditional power utility into a technology-driven infrastructure company, with a new data centre, diversified revenue streams and major infrastructure upgrades at the heart of the strategy.

Addressing the media at Centlec's Bloemfontein headquarters, Sekoboto reflected on his nearly 23-year journey with the utility, having joined the organisation in 2003 as an operational technician before rising through the ranks to become CEO.

"I am not someone who arrived yesterday. I grew through the ranks and understand this institution," he said.Centlec currently generates about R4 billion in annual revenue, manages assets worth approximately R11 billion, employs 878 staff members, supplies electricity to nearly 196,000 customers across Mangaung and provides free basic electricity to more than 41,000 registered indigent households.

The utility operates an extensive electricity network, including more than 107 kilometres of 132kV overhead lines, almost 90 kilometres of 33kV lines, over 15,000 kilometres of underground cables, and approximately 35,000 street lights across the metro.

A key pillar of Sekoboto's vision is reducing Centlec's dependence on electricity sales by expanding into the digital economy.

He announced that the utility will soon launch a four-petabyte data centre, enabling government departments, businesses and private organisations to securely host their digital information while generating new revenue and creating employment opportunities in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector.

"We are at a crossroads where we can no longer rely solely on the traditional utility model. We are actively diversifying our revenue streams to protect the financial health of this institution by leveraging our existing footprint and assets through data centre development and advanced telecommunications infrastructure," Sekoboto said.

He added that the facility would be launched soon and invited organisations to host their data securely with Centlec.

Sekoboto also warned consumers about some third-party electricity vendors charging unlawful fees on prepaid electricity purchases.

He said Centlec had observed that certain vendors and managing agents were adding unauthorised charges under the guise of banking or service fees, despite electricity tariffs being regulated.

"The reality is, what they are doing is wrong. Any agreement between a third-party vendor and a shop owner should never affect the customer," he said.

The CEO acknowledged that ageing infrastructure remains one of Centlec's biggest challenges, with the utility facing a maintenance backlog of approximately R664 million.

However, he welcomed a R153 million Urban Development Fund grant from National Treasury, which will be used to replace, upgrade and maintain critical electricity infrastructure across Mangaung.

"We are grateful that, out of our R664 million maintenance backlog, this funding will allow us to address urgent maintenance, upgrades and infrastructure replacement during the current financial year," Sekoboto said.

Heidedal in Shock as Schoolboys' Dispute Ends in Kidnapping Case

By Bernell Simons

What began as a playground argument between two 12-year-old boys over a bottle of cooldrink has escalated into a criminal case that has stunned the Heidedal community, raising troubling questions about how a children's disagreement allegedly spiralled into the kidnapping, assault and intimidation of a minor by an adult.

At the centre of the case is Trevor Barlow, a well-known Heidedal resident who now faces allegations of kidnapping, common assault and intimidation following an incident involving one of the boys. The allegations, which have not yet been tested in court, have sparked widespread concern among residents and cast an uncomfortable spotlight on one of the suburb's most respected family names.

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), the incident occurred on Friday, 10 July 2026, after two 12-year-old boys became involved in a physical altercation at the corner of Daly Street and Parish Avenue.

Free State police spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Thabo Covane confirmed that police are investigating allegations that the grandfather of one of the boys intervened after learning about the fight.

"It is alleged that two boys aged 12 had a fight at the corner of Daly Street and Parish Avenue. The grandfather of one of the boys heard about the fight and allegedly chased the victim, forced him into his motor vehicle and took him to his house, where he assaulted and threatened the child," Covane said.

Police said the child's parents were informed of the incident and, accompanied by members of the community, went to the suspect's home to retrieve the boy before opening a criminal case at Heidedal Police Station.

While police investigations are continuing, interviews conducted by Journal News with the child's family and eyewitnesses paint a disturbing picture of how the dispute allegedly unfolded.

Residents claim the disagreement started when one boy mocked the other, saying his parents could not afford to buy him a bottle of cooldrink. The insult reportedly led to an exchange of words before the younger boy ran away.

Witnesses allege that tensions escalated the following day when the younger child slapped the other boy before fleeing again.

According to residents, the child was later warned that the other boy's grandfather was looking for him. Believing the matter could be resolved peacefully, he allegedly approached the family's home. However, after seeing several people gathered outside, he became frightened and ran into a nearby house seeking safety.

It was there, witnesses allege, that the situation took a dramatic turn.

One eyewitness, who requested anonymity because the matter is before the courts, claimed the accused cornered the child inside the house before allegedly assaulting him.

"The boy was trying to get away. He was ducking and trying to escape, but he was cornered," the witness said.

The witness further alleged that the child's head was slammed against a wooden front door with such force that part of the door broke. Journal News has seen photographs showing damage to the door, although the cause of the damage has not been independently verified.

The witness also alleged that the accused produced a firearm, ordered the child not to move and continued assaulting him. These allegations have not been confirmed by police and remain untested before the court. Residents further claim the injured boy was then forced into a vehicle and taken away against his will. Neighbours said the child repeatedly cried out for someone to call his parents while trying to resist being taken.

The boy's mother Mothia Booyse said she rushed to the property after receiving a call from a neighbour and found her son visibly in pain, beaten "without any remorse".

"My son was stripped half naked, kicked on the head countless times. When my son tried to dodge the punches and kicks, he allegedly pulled out a gun, ordered my son to stand still and continued beating him," said Booyse

She immediately took him home before reporting the matter to the police.

Court documents seen by Journal News confirm that Trevor Barlow was arrested and appeared in the Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court on 13 July 2026. He was released on R1,000 bail, and the matter was postponed to 6 August 2026 for further investigation.

Police confirmed that detectives are continuing to gather evidence relating to the charges of kidnapping, common assault and intimidation.

The case has sparked outrage throughout Heidedal, where many residents say they are struggling to understand why an adult allegedly became involved in a dispute between children.

"Children fight, argue and make peace," one resident said.

"As adults, we teach children that when they are afraid, they must come to us for protection. When an adult is accused of becoming the threat instead, it shakes the whole community."

Another resident described the incident as "every parent's worst nightmare", saying no child should fear an adult over a disagreement with another child.

Beyond the criminal allegations, the case has also revived discussion about the legacy of the Barlow family in Heidedal.

Trevor Barlow is the son and namesake of the late Corporal Trevor Barlow (1912–1984), a decorated Second World War veteran, respected sports administrator and community leader whose contributions to youth development remain deeply woven into the suburb's history. The elder Barlow dedicated decades to mentoring young people, promoting cricket, football, tennis, table tennis and snooker, and championing community development during a difficult period in South Africa's history.

His legacy lives on through the Trevor Barlow Library in Heidedal and through generations of residents whose lives he helped shape.

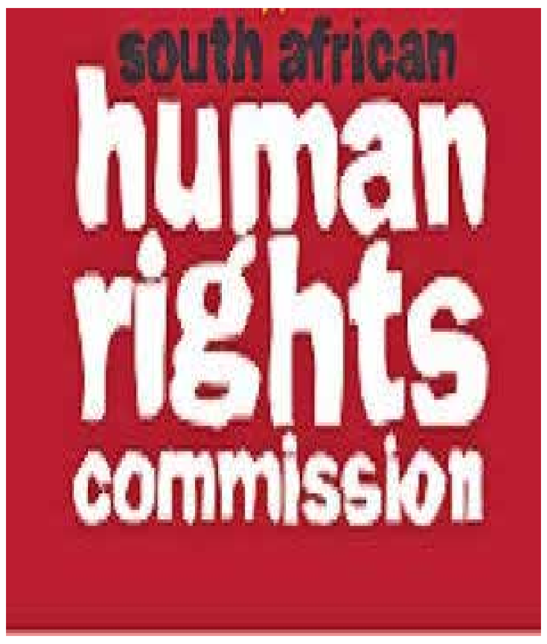
Residents say the contrast between that legacy and the allegations now before the courts has left the community deeply saddened.

Trevor Barlow remains presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty, and the allegations against him will ultimately be decided by the courts.

For the family of the 12-year-old boy, however, the focus remains on helping a child recover from what they describe as a traumatic ordeal.

For Heidedal, the case has become far more than a criminal investigation. It has ignited a community-wide conversation about anger, accountability and the responsibility adults have to protect children—turning what began as a childhood quarrel into one of the suburb's most talked-about court cases.

SAHRC flags human rights violations in North West



By Gomolemo Winkel

The North West South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) have 24 months to address overcrowding, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate detainee care, and chronic governance failures at the centres by

On Monday, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) released findings that are contained in the Commission's investigative report following an extensive rights inquiry conducted between 2023 and 2025.

The investigation formed part of the commission's constitutional mandate to monitor, investigate and report on the observance of human rights.

During the inspections, the commission found recurring problems across detention facilities, including overcrowded cells, unsafe and dilapidated infrastructure, shortages of staff and vehicles, poor sanitation, inadequate detainee care, limited telecommunications facilities, delays in accessing medical treatment and broader administrative shortcomings.

According to the report, several police stations were found to have no detention facilities or had detention cells that had been closed because they were unsafe, placing additional pressure on neighbouring police stations and correctional centres.

The inquiry included inspections of police stations and correctional facilities across the province, engagements with the SAPS, the DCS, the DPWI and other stakeholders, as well as a subpoena hearing held under the South African Human Rights Commission Act.

The commission found recurring problems across detention facilities, including overcrowded cells, unsafe and dilapidated infrastructure, shortages of staff and vehicles, poor sanitation, inadequate detainee care, limited telecommunications facilities, delays in accessing medical treatment and broader administrative shortcomings.

Several police stations were also found to have no detention facilities or detention cells that had been closed because of safety concerns, placing additional pressure on neighbouring police stations and correctional centres.

After assessing the evidence, the commission concluded that the problems are not isolated incidents but are the result of persistent failures in governance, maintenance, planning, funding, and institutionalising accountability.

While acknowledging that some facilities had undergone repairs to detention cells, ablution facilities, generators, plumbing systems and security infrastructure, "These improvements remain inadequate when compared with the scale of the problems across the province." Said the commission. Also noting that many infrastructure projects remain delayed, unfunded, or lacking clear implementation timelines.

Among the key findings, the commission concluded that conditions in many police stations and correctional centres violate detainees' constitutional rights to human dignity, freedom and security of the person, and protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The commission said SAPS and DCS bear the primary constitutional responsibility for protecting the rights of detainees, officials and the communities they serve, despite the maintenance responsibilities assigned between the departments, with maintenance backlogs, funding constraints, and delays in infrastructure projects, which have significantly contributed to the ongoing human rights violations.

To address the shortcomings, the commission recommended that SAPS and DCS immediately improve detainee care by ensuring timely medical treatment, adequate toiletries, nutritious meals, clean bedding, and regular fumigation of detention facilities.

"Within 90 days, the departments must, in consultation with the DPWI, develop comprehensive, time-bound plans to address infrastructure, staffing, vehicle, furniture and operational deficiencies over the next 24 months, prioritising dysfunctional detention facilities, the report states.

The Commission warned that detention facilities remain subject to constitutional scrutiny and stressed that the treatment of detainees and the conditions under which law enforcement and correctional officials work are key indicators of South Africa's commitment to human dignity, constitutional democracy and the rule of law.

Government issues a warning to anyone who employs a domestic worker in South Africa

The Department of Employment and Labour has warned that employers who hire a domestic worker for 24 hours or more per month could face legal action if they do not register them for the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

The warning comes as the government intensifies efforts to strengthen protections for workers in South Africa's informal economy, where many employees continue to face insecure work, poor working conditions and limited access to social protection.

Speaking after the National Policy Dialogue on Strengthening the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights of Workers in the Informal Economy in Pretoria, Inspector-General Aggy Moiloa stressed that employers cannot ignore their obligations.

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

The department warned that employers who fail to register qualifying domestic workers could face legal consequences.

Acting Deputy Director-General for Labour Policy and Industrial Relations Sipho Ndebele said protecting workers in the informal economy remains a government priority.

Addressing the policy dialogue, Ndebele notedthat millions of South Africans rely on informal work to survive, making the sector a critical part of the country's economy.

However, he said domestic workers and many others continue to experience insecure employment, unsafe working conditions, limited access to social protection and difficulties enforcing their rights.

According to Ndebele, these are not just labour market challenges but human rights issues that require coordinated action.

He said the government is committed to strengthening labour inspections and enforcement, but added that meaningful progress will depend on cooperation between the government, organised labour, employers, and workers themselves.

The focus on domestic workers also comes amid mounting pressure from some of South Africa's biggest trade unions.

The South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU), backed by Cosatu, has called on the government to do more to ensure domestic workers are recognised as formal employees with the same basic labour rights as other workers.

Domestic workers are entitled to labour protections guaranteed under South African law

The union has argued that many domestic workers are still excluded from UIF registration and are not paid fair wages, despite often being the primary breadwinners in their households.

According to data from SweepSouth, the average domestic worker supports four dependents while earning relatively low monthly wages.

The sector has also shrunk significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic. Employment in domestic services declined from roughly 1.2 million workers before the pandemic to around 839,000.

Apart from UIF registration, employers also have obligations under the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA).

Domestic workers are legally entitled to compensation if they are injured or contract a disease because of their work, but employers must register and comply with the Compensation Fund for those protections to apply.

The department has urged employers to ensure they are registered with both the Compensation Fund and UIF.

For COIDA, employers must register through the Compensation Fund's Return of Earnings (ROE) online system and submit annual declarations of their domestic workers' earnings.

Failure to submit the required declaration can result in penalties. For UIF, employers must register as domestic employers through the uFiling system.

Monthly contributions equal 2% of the employee's earnings, with employers contributing 1% and deducting the remaining 1% from the worker's salary before paying it over to the UIF.

The department said these measures are designed to provide an essential financial safety net for domestic workers who lose their jobs or become unable to work, and ensure they enjoy the labour protections guaranteed under South African law. – ***Business Tech***

SABR appeals as Donor Breastmilk Supplies Run Low in NC

By Gomolemo Winkel

The South African Breastmilk Reserve (SABR) has issued an urgent appeal for breastmilk donations after supplies at Dr Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital in Kimberley and Dr Harry Surtie Hospital in Upington dropped to critically low levels.

According to Sister Motshidisi Mokoena from SABR, donated milk is used to nourish premature and critically ill babies whose mothers are temporarily unable to produce enough breast milk.

Founded in 2003, SABR operates a nationwide network of human milk banks and works with hospitals across South Africa to provide life-saving donor milk to babies in need. According to the organisation, more than 31,000 premature and vulnerable infants have benefited from its services since its inception.

"Donor breastmilk is often the only safe source of nutrition for vulnerable newborns during their first days or weeks of life, helping to reduce the risk of serious complications while supporting healthy growth and development," said Mokoena.

She says donor human milk plays a vital role in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), where it is used to help improve the survival and health outcomes of babies born prematurely or with serious medical conditions.

Breast milk contains nutrients, antibodies, and other protective components that reduce the risk of infections and support healthy development.

The organisation is urging healthy breastfeeding mothers with surplus milk to consider donating. All donated milk undergoes strict screening, testing and pasteurisation before being distributed to neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), ensuring it is safe for fragile infants.

The appeal comes as healthcare workers continue to rely on donor milk to provide the best possible care for vulnerable newborns, particularly those admitted to NICUs. Without enough supplies, hospitals may struggle to meet the nutritional needs of babies who require donor milk during the critical stages of life.

"Breastmilk is very important and healthy to both the baby and the mother. For the baby, the main benefits for the baby are brain development, immune system support and prevention against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)." Said Sister Motshidisi Mokena,

She also mentioned the importance and benefits of breastfeeding to the mother, which are faster postpartum recovery, natural weight loss, lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer, delayed menstruation, and convenience.

"The SABR encourages breastfeeding mothers who have surplus milk to come forward and register as donors.

"The donation process is safe, straightforward and carefully managed to protect both donors and recipients.

"Women who are interested in donating can contact the South African Breastmilk Reserve or speak to healthcare staff at Dr Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital in Kimberly or Dr Harry Surtie Hospital in Upington for information on donor eligibility and the registration process.

"Increasing the number of donors is crucial to maintaining a reliable supply of life-saving breastmilk for the country's smallest and most vulnerable patients," concluded the Mokoena.

Kgetlengrivier Debt Crisis Tops R340m as Province Tightens Grip

By Bernell Simons

Nearly three years after the North West Provincial Government placed Kgetlengrivier Local Municipality under a mandatory Financial Recovery Plan, the municipality's financial crisis has worsened dramatically, with known liabilities now exceeding R340 million.

The deepening debt burden, ongoing governance failures and collapsing service delivery have prompted the North West Government to strengthen its intervention by expanding the powers of the Provincial Executive Representative (PER) under the municipality's Section 139(5) administration, signalling that the original recovery plan has failed to restore financial stability.

Kgetlengrivier, which serves Koster, Reagile, Swartruggens, Derby, Redile and Borelelo, was placed under a mandatory Financial Recovery Plan in July 2023 after National Treasury found it could no longer meet its financial obligations.

Announcing the expanded intervention this week, North West MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs Kenetswe Mosenogi said the revised Terms of Reference would accelerate implementation of the Financial Recovery Plan, strengthen governance and improve service delivery.

However, she acknowledged that the municipality continues to battle unfunded budgets, severe cash-flow shortages, poor revenue collection, weak financial management and mounting debt to bulk service providers.

"The expanded Terms of Reference respond to persistent financial and governance challenges experienced by the municipality, including the continued adoption of unfunded budgets, deteriorating cash flow and liquidity constraints, escalating debt owed to bulk service providers such as Magalies Water and Eskom, weaknesses in revenue collection and financial management, as well as broader governance and institutional inefficiencies," Mosenogi said.

The scale of the crisis is reflected in the municipality's ballooning debt. According to court papers in the long-running Ideal Prepaid litigation, Kgetlengrivier's debt to Eskom has surged from R16.4 million in 2017 to about R250 million. The latest Magalies Water Corporate Plan further shows the municipality owes R42.85 million in capital debt, rising to R47.44 million with accumulated interest.

During the municipality's adjustment budget debate in June, Democratic Alliance PR Councillor Mduduzi Maphanga warned that officials had failed to budget for an additional R10.1 million required to meet salary obligations arising from job evaluations, despite repeated warnings.

"Taken together, the municipality's known liabilities exceed R307 million, excluding other creditors and operational obligations. Once cash-flow deficits and costs incurred by residents to restore failing infrastructure are included, the financial burden rises to well over R340 million," Maphanga said.

He said years of unfunded budgets, weak financial controls and governance failures have translated into failing service delivery, with residents enduring unreliable water supply, deteriorating sanitation, damaged roads and crumbling infrastructure.

In one of South Africa's most remarkable community interventions, local businesses, farmers and residents raised about R17 million to repair collapsed water and sanitation infrastructure after obtaining a court order allowing them to temporarily operate the systems.

Businessman Willie Jones contributed R2.5 million, while volunteers restored water supplies within 46 hours and rehabilitated the wastewater treatment works. Residents, however, say many of those gains were lost after control returned to the municipality.

Under the expanded intervention, the PER will be supported by a multidisciplinary technical team tasked with implementing the Financial Recovery Plan, restoring financial discipline, strengthening governance, improving institutional capacity and ensuring compliance with financial legislation.

Mosenogi stressed that the intervention was intended to support—not punish—the municipality.

"The success of this intervention will depend on the collective commitment and cooperation of Council, municipal administration and all stakeholders in implementing the Financial Recovery Plan," she said.

Although the Kgetlengrivier Municipal Council has welcomed the expanded intervention, governance experts remain sceptical.

Director of the Dullah Omar Institute at the University of the Western Cape, Professor Jaap de Visser, said financial recovery plans often fail because they focus on compliance while leaving political instability, weak leadership and governance failures unresolved.

"Without competent administration, improved revenue collection and accountability for financial mismanagement, municipalities frequently slip back into crisis once interventions lose momentum," he said.

For Kgetlengrivier residents, the strengthened intervention represents yet another attempt to rescue a municipality whose decline is measured not only by hundreds of millions of rand in debt, but also by failing infrastructure, unreliable services and declining public confidence.

Locked into coal: South Africa's broken transition

An unrehabilitated coal mine near the Duvha Power Station. Picture: **Ihsaan Haffejee**

Delayed coal closures are keeping ageing power stations online – raising questions about who is shaping the energy transition, and at what cost. Tulani Ngwenya investigates for #PowerTracker.

South Africa's latest coal-fired power station, Kusile, took decades to finish building, cost hundreds of billions of rands, and became one of the most controversial infrastructure projects in the country's energy history.

Now, finally fully operational, it is being celebrated as a solution to a power crisis – even as the country has formally committed to ending its dependence on coal, the fossil fuel that powers it.

The completion of Kusile's sixth and final unit in 2025 marked the end of a construction programme that began in 2008, ballooned from an initial budget of around R80-billion to an estimated R161-billion, and became a byword for state capture, contractor corruption and engineering failure. For years, partially built units sat idle and completion dates were missed repeatedly.

When it entered commercial operation in September 2025, national utility Eskom declared the end of its multi-decade build programme. Load shedding – the rolling blackouts that blighted homes and businesses for more than a decade – had already eased significantly, and Kusile was held up as proof that the country had turned a corner.

During an April 2026 visit to the power station, based near Witbank / Emalahleni in the Nkangala District of Mpumalanga, President Cyril Ramaphosa described it as "the backbone of South Africa's electricity supply", together with Medupi power station in Limpopo. Both stations are designed for an operational lifespan of 50 years.

This means that Kusile will only retire in 2060, three decades beyond government commitments to phase down coal by 2030 in order to contribute to international efforts to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Coal is still king

The president's visit to Kusile in April signalled that the country's ambitions to wind down coal are slipping.

As the latest data collated and shared by the Oxpeckers #PowerTrackermapping tool shows, 14 coal-fired power stations in Mpumalanga and Limpopo still anchor the national grid, with nearly 38,000MW of installed capacity. The tool also identifies 16 coal mines in both provinces, producing about 125-million tonnes of coal annually.

According to the Integrated Resource Plan of 2019, which set out the country's energy mix and procure generation capacity, more than 11,000MW of coal capacity was expected to be retired by 2030. However, Eskom has delayed the shutdown of several ageing stations due to electricity supply risks.

Only one power station has been closed so far. As of April 2026, only Komati near Bethal had been retired, ending its generating capacity of 1,140MW. According to #PowerTracker, "Eskom envisions that the Komati site will eventually provide 370MW of solar, wind and battery storage power to the grid".

Other power stations including Hendrina, Camden and Grootvlei are now expected to operate beyond previously determined timelines, with some units likely to remain online beyond 2030. Duvha, Kendal, Kriel and Matimba power stations will only be decommissioned between 2035 and 2040.

Politics, policy and mistrust

Researchers say the slowdown is not only technical – it is also political.

Julia Taylor, a researcher at the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, said the Just Energy Transition (JET) introduced new tensions into South Africa's policy environment.

"In a paradoxical way, the JET agreement with global north countries created suspicion locally," she said. "It shifted priorities and reduced buy-in from some domestic actors."

Taylor said consultation failures have deepened mistrust: "People were informed, not engaged. Eskom should be going to communities and asking what the transition means for them."

She also raised concerns about whether the transition to renewables is delivering on its core promise.

"I am concerned that the transition is proceeding in an unjust way," Taylor said.

"We should be tracking electricity prices, energy poverty, unemployment and inequality to understand whether it is working."

International debt

Debt tied to fossil fuel infrastructure keeps coal plants alive to repay loans, said Alia Kajee of civil society grouping Fair Finance Coalition: "This locks South Africa into the mineral-energy complex," she said.

Kajee explained that public finance institutions act as guarantors, "ensuring profits are realised by private actors while vulnerable communities carry the lived reality of extraction".

She said lack of transparency around JET processes leaves workers and households least likely to know how funds are realised. "Without radical transparency, we risk a transition of murky deals where a few benefit at the expense of those most vulnerable."

She called for independent monitoring, community led oversight and non debt creating finance such as grants. "Accountability must be ensured through practical, justice centred mechanisms," she said, warning that without them, funds pledged under the JET will bypass workers and households.

Climate targets under pressure

South Africa's international climate commitments are tied, in part, to the coal phase-down.

The country's nationally determined contributions (NDCs) – commitments made under the Paris Agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions – set limits on how much the country can emit by 2025 and 2030. These targets were developed alongside the Integrated Resource Plan 2019, which assumed that a significant share of coal-fired power would be phased out over time.

Energy-sector emissions accounted for about 78% of national greenhouse gas emissions in 2022, making electricity generation the central lever for reducing emissions.

There is also a timing risk. South Africa's emissions trajectory assumes a shift from a plateau into a decline in the 2030s. Delayed coal closures compress this transition window, increasing the likelihood of a more abrupt and potentially disruptive transition in later years.

Cynthia Moyo, climate and energy campaigner at activist group Greenpeace Africa, said the current trajectory raises serious concerns about whether South Africa can still meet its NDC commitments without significant policy reversal.

"South Africa's NDC targets were designed around a planned decline in coal use," she said.

"Every extension of a coal plant moves the country further away from that pathway and increases the scale of cuts required later. What we are seeing is not just delay – it is a structural widening of the gap between policy commitments and implementation."

She added that this gap is already reshaping the country's emissions outlook.

"If coal remains online longer than planned, the 2030 targets become significantly harder to achieve, and the transition after that point becomes far more abrupt and economically disruptive."

As President Ramaphosa left Kusile Power Station on April 10, journalists fired questions at him. Oxpeckers asked, "Is the country's climate commitment slipping out of reach?"

Ramaphosa answered the group collectively and sidestepped the climate query entirely. His broad response echoed his speech minutes earlier at Kusile, with no mention of emissions targets or Paris Agreement timelines. Instead, he folded the answer back into the government's core message: securing electricity supply, stabilising the grid, and sustaining economic growth.

Pollution and public health

The consequences are not only global – they are local.

South Africa's minimum emission standards regulate pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and particulate matter. Many older coal plants cannot meet these standards without costly retrofits.

In 2025, the government granted time-limited exemptions that allow several plants to continue operating beyond compliance deadlines.

Environmental organisations argue that this prolongs exposure to harmful air pollution.

A report released on April 22 2026 by Greenpeace Africa, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, and non-profit organisation groundWork estimates that delaying the phase-out of coal could result in 32,000 additional premature deaths between 2026 and 2050.

"Our analysis shows that the health impacts of coal pollution are severe, widespread, and entirely preventable," said Daniel Nesan, an analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

Communities left behind

In Komati and surrounding areas, residents describe a transition that has already happened, but without support.

"There's a massive information gap between the community and stakeholders," said Martin Sefawa, a community leader from the Mining Affected Communities United in Action (Macua). "The closure of Komati happened without proper consultation. Massive job losses followed."

Residents say the economic effects have been immediate.

"It's a coal area. When you shut down the power, you shut down the people," said Buti Rakgetse, a former coal mine worker. "Komati was alive. Now it's dead."

For others, the issue is exclusion.

"We were never properly informed," said Gloria Modise, a local resident. "I don't know what the just transition is. People come, take names, and leave."

In Emalahleni, similar concerns persist.

"We are not included in any planning," said Elizabeth Motloung, a resident from Masakhane informal settlement. "You just hear that opportunities exist – and they're already taken."

Environmental activist Zanele Msibi said the burden of the transition is falling unevenly.

"When Komati closed, it brought a lot of burden to women," she said. "There is no trust. For many years there have only been empty promises."

With 32,000 additional premature deaths projected if coal phase-out is further delayed, and international climate finance tied to a transition that is stalling, the gap between South Africa's stated commitments and the reality on the ground continues to widen.

**This article was first published on Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism*

Communities living in the shadow of ageing power stations depend on coal for basic household energy needs. Pictured here, a local resident collects coal from an unrehabilitated coal mine near the Duvha Power Station. Picture: **Ihsaan Haffejee**

Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely named DWYPD acting Director-General

Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Sindisiwe Chikunga has appointed Dr Praveena Sukhraj-Ely as the Acting Director-General of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD).

Sukhraj-Ely, who is totally blind, is an Advocate of the High Court with extensive experience in governance, constitutional law, disability rights, Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), public administration and policy development.

She holds a PhD in Public Policy and a Master of Arts in Political Science, awarded Cum Laude, and has built a career focused on advancing inclusive governance, democracy, and human rights.

As the state's representative on the Commission for Employment Equity, Sukhraj-Ely has advocated for a target of 7% employment of persons with disabilities by 2030.

She has also represented South Africa at international platforms, including the United Nations, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), and the International Disability Alliance, promoting disability rights.

Her public service record includes contributing to the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, the development of the Femicide Strategy and the drafting of the Disability Access to Justice Policy.

Chikunga said the appointment signifies government's commitment to advancing equality, dignity, and inclusive leadership.

Welcoming Sukhraj-Ely to the department, Chikunga commended her integrity, legal expertise and understanding of constitutional mandates, especially in advancing rights for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

"The appointment underscores the government's focus on inclusive leadership and reflects efforts to promote equal representation," the Minister said.

Chikunga expressed full confidence in her leadership to enhance the department's performance and promote rights and socio-economic development. – SAnews.gov.za

Chikunga calls for bold action to make quality education accessible to learners with disabilities

Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Sindisiwe Chikunga has called for urgent action to remove the barriers that continue to prevent learners with disabilities from accessing quality education and meaningful employment opportunities.

Delivering the keynote address at the Recreation Aid Foundation (RAF) Graduation Ceremony in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, on Wednesday, Chikunga said South Africa must build an education system that embraces inclusion and ensures every learner has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Congratulating the Class of 2026, the Minister commended the foundation for empowering academically disadvantaged learners and young people with special educational needs through academic and vocational training.

She stressed that the greatest obstacles facing learners with disabilities are not their disabilities, but education systems and environments that fail to accommodate their needs.

"The obstacle is not the learner's difference. It is the exclusionary design of our schools, our systems, our curricula and, more often than not, our attitudes," Chikunga said.

The Minister highlighted that many schools, particularly in townships, rural areas and farming communities, continue to operate from buildings that were never designed to accommodate learners with disabilities. She added that inadequate assistive devices and limited specialist support remain major challenges.

"Many of our schools still operate in buildings never designed with accessibility in mind: classrooms without ramps, corridors too narrow for a wheelchair, toilets that cannot be used by a child with mobility needs.

"These physical impediments are not neutral. If a learner cannot enter a classroom with dignity, the conversation about inclusive education has already failed before the lesson begins," she said.

Chikunga emphasised that inclusive education must be built on respect, high expectations and a genuine sense of belonging, rather than "pity or tolerance".

She also called for stronger investment in teacher training to better equip educators to support inclusive classrooms, noting that while South Africa has a progressive policy framework, implementation continues to lag.

"We are not short of policies – it is implementation that continues to falter. Our White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is lauded on multilateral platforms," she said.

Among the proposals announced was the transformation of special schools into resource and support hubs serving the broader education system.

Drawing on international best practice, Chikunga said special schools should become centres of expertise that provide outreach services, adaptive curriculum resources and specialist support to mainstream schools.

"By resourcing special schools to act as knowledge exporters, rather than silos, we multiply their impact across entire districts, especially those that are lagging behind. We need investment sufficient to embed multidisciplinary support teams within special schools," she said.

The Minister noted that South Africa's Constitution, the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Development Plan all recognise disability inclusion as a national priority.

According to the National Development Plan (Vision 2030), persons with disabilities account for about 12.34% of South Africa's population. Government is working towards ensuring that at least 10% of employment opportunities and 7% of skills development opportunities are reserved for persons with disabilities by 2030.

Chikunga also outlined several initiatives aimed at expanding opportunities for persons with disabilities, including closer collaboration with the National Skills Fund's R1 billion Disability Support Fund, launched in 2024 to support workplace training, enterprise development and economic inclusion.

She said her department also plans to partner with state-owned enterprises, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and industry to channel corporate social investment towards improving infrastructure and educational outcomes at special schools.

Another initiative under development is the Disability Inclusion Research, Advocacy and Mainstreaming Centre of Excellence, which will support teacher training, help bridge the digital divide and promote disability-inclusive education across the country.

Congratulating the graduates, Chikunga said their success reflected not only their determination but also the unwavering support of their families, educators and communities.

"Your achievement today is not only your own. It is the achievement of your families, your teachers and your communities, and of every South African who believes that our society is stronger when every one of its members is included, respected, and equipped to lead," the Minister said. – ***SAnews.gov.za***

Opinion

Dr Ambrosé Ray du Plessis
Senior Lecturer, Department Political Studies and Governance, University of the Free State

Local government elections: Why coalition readiness is now central to democratic governance

The local government elections are set to take place on 4 November 2026. These elections are expected to produce a significant number of hung councils. In other words, few political parties are likely to achieve 50 plus 1 percent to govern outright. In this context poor voter turnout may once again become the deciding factor.

Voter turnout has fluctuated over time. In the 2011 local elections, turnout stood at 51.8%. In 2016 it rose to 58%, before dropping sharply to 45% in 2021. This downward trend is also reflected in the 2024 national and provincial elections, where turnout reached a historic low of 58.64%, and is expected to continue into 2026.

The 2026 local elections will be a major test of South Africa's 32-year democracy. Increasingly, voters are questioning not just political parties, but democracy itself. Liberal democracy is unfolding differently from what thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama once predicted.

Liberal democracy is no longer widely accepted as the inevitable end point of political development. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2024) reports continued democratic decline globally: only 25 countries are classified as full democracies, 46 as flawed democracies, 36 as hybrid regimes, and 60 as authoritarian regimes. What is emerging is a mix of political ideologies in which democratic institutions coexist with increasingly authoritarian practices. States may retain elections and formal institutions while steadily weakening democratic substance.

South Africa reflects this trend. The Afrobarometer 2025 survey shows that 70% of citizens are dissatisfied with the way democracy functions. This signals a deep legitimacy crisis. It also creates ungoverned or contested spaces where citizens become open to alternative "new ideas" of governance outside formal democratic channels.

As the campaigning season begins, political parties appear focused on elections but are poorly prepared for coalition governance. This reflects the decline or failure of pre-election coordination efforts. The reluctance to negotiate coalition arrangements before elections creates serious risks for policy stability and service delivery in local government.

Instead, parties tend to wait for the 14-day post-election period to form governments. This approach risks further weakening already fragile public trust. Trust in national government has fallen from 64% in 2004 to 19% in 2025, parliament from 65% to 20%, and local government from 55% to 18% over the same period (HSRC, 2026).

These trends point to a deeper problem: reactive politics is eroding democratic legitimacy. Democracy depends not only on institutions, but on public confidence in those institutions. When trust collapses, governance becomes unstable and unpredictable.

Conclusion: A warning, not a prediction

The 2026 local government elections should be treated as a warning sign, not a routine democratic event. Analysis of the 2024 national and provincial elections voting district results shows that many municipalities – particularly metropolitan areas – are entering an era of fragmented electoral competition in which outright majorities are becoming less certain. While national results cannot directly predict local outcomes, voting patterns already provide clear signals of where coalition governments are becoming structurally more likely.

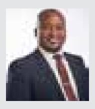
In KwaZulu-Natal, where the MK Party secured 45.35% of the provincial vote in 2024, the electoral landscape has already been fundamentally reshaped. These patterns point towards coalition governments becoming increasingly common.

Yet political parties continue to treat coalition formation as an afterthought rather than a core component of electoral strategy. Much of the current approach assumes that governance negotiations only begin once results are declared, despite clear evidence that voter behaviour already signals fragmented mandates. What is currently required – but largely missing – is the development of parallel structures within political parties: dedicated campaigning teams focused on electoral mobilisation, and dedicated negotiation teams tasked with post-election coalition design and governance planning.

Without this institutional separation, parties will remain tactically focused on winning votes while strategically unprepared for governing outcomes. The danger is unprepared coalition government. Without early planning and realistic engagement with voter behaviour, South Africa risks unstable councils, weakened service delivery, and further erosion of public trust in local democracy.

Letter to the Editor

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



Pastor Motsamai Kareli
Empowerment Ministries International

Fighting to Live Life at the Top

Every generation is confronted with defining moments that test its character, resilience, and determination. While circumstances differ from one generation to another, one reality remains constant: life is a battlefield. Every individual is fighting something. Some are fighting poverty, unemployment, sickness, disappointment, broken relationships, addiction, discouragement, or the silent battles of anxiety and hopelessness. Others are fighting to build businesses, raise responsible children, complete their education, or simply provide for their families. The question is not whether we will face battles; the question is whether those battles will defeat us or develop us. Too many people have accepted survival as the highest level of living. They have lowered their expectations because life has repeatedly disappointed them. Dreams have been abandoned, ambitions have faded, and hope has slowly been replaced with resignation. Yet I believe that every human being was created with the capacity to rise above limitations and become a person of purpose and significance. Living life at the top should never be confused with material wealth or social status. A person may possess great wealth and yet live an empty, purposeless life. Likewise, another may have limited financial resources but possess extraordinary influence, integrity, wisdom, and fulfilment. Living at the top is about reaching your God-given potential, living with excellence, and making a meaningful contribution to your family, your community, and your nation. The world celebrates talent, but God honours character. Talent may open doors, but it is integrity, discipline, humility, and perseverance that keep those doors open. Many people are gifted, but only those who cultivate strong values build lives that endure the test of time.

One of the greatest obstacles to living at the top is not found outside of us—it is found within us. Fear, self-doubt, negative thinking, and the belief that our circumstances define our future have prevented countless people from pursuing their dreams. Long before people lose opportunities, they often lose confidence. They begin to believe they are victims of their environment instead of becoming agents of change within it. The renewal of the mind is therefore one of the most important transformations any person can experience. When our thinking changes, our choices change. When our choices change, our habits improve. Over time, those habits shape our character and ultimately determine our destiny.

This is why faith remains indispensable. Faith enables people to see possibilities where others see impossibilities. It allows us to persevere when immediate results are absent. Faith is not the denial of reality; it is the confidence that present circumstances do not have the final word.

The Scriptures remind us that "the Lord will make you the head and not the tail" (Deuteronomy 28:13). This promise reflects God's desire that His people become leaders, contributors, and examples of excellence rather than prisoners of defeat and mediocrity. Throughout history, every great leader has endured seasons of struggle. Nelson Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison before helping to lead South Africa into a new democratic era. Countless entrepreneurs have experienced failure before building successful businesses. Great athletes have endured years of disciplined training before standing on victory podiums. Exceptional leaders are not produced by comfort; they are refined through adversity. Our own nation continues to face significant challenges. Youth unemployment remains high. Many families struggle under economic pressure. Communities wrestle with crime, substance abuse, corruption, and failing infrastructure. These realities are undeniable. Yet history teaches us that societies are transformed not merely by governments or institutions, but by ordinary citizens who refuse to surrender to hopelessness.

South Africa does not simply need more critics; it needs more builders. It needs educators committed to shaping future generations. It needs ethical business leaders who create employment. It needs public servants who value integrity above personal gain. It needs parents who model responsibility, churches that restore hope, young people who pursue excellence, and communities willing to work together for the common good.

Complaining has never transformed a nation. Vision does. Hard work does. Integrity does. Prayer does. Courage does. Every positive contribution, regardless of how small it may seem, helps move society forward.

As believers, we recognise that lasting transformation begins with transformed people. A healthy society is built upon healthy families. Healthy families are built upon healthy individuals. Healthy individuals are shaped by strong values, sound character, and unwavering faith in God.

The Apostle Paul encouraged believers to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). This is not a call to aggression but to perseverance. It is a reminder that life's greatest victories belong to those who refuse to abandon hope, purpose, and conviction. The fight of faith is the daily decision to trust God, pursue excellence, remain honest, and continue doing what is right even when the results are not immediately visible.

There will always be setbacks. There will be seasons when progress seems painfully slow. Doors may close. People may disappoint us. Opportunities may be delayed. However, setbacks should never become permanent residences. They are classrooms in which resilience is developed and character is refined.

Success is rarely achieved overnight. It is built one disciplined decision at a time. Every day presents opportunities to improve, to learn, to serve, and to grow. Small acts of consistency eventually produce extraordinary outcomes. The highest achievers in every field understand that greatness is not an event but a process.

As we look to the future, we must reject the culture of mediocrity that encourages people to settle for less than their potential. We must raise a generation that believes in hard work, honours integrity, values education, embraces innovation, and places its confidence in God rather than circumstances. The future belongs to men and women who refuse to be defined by yesterday's failures. It belongs to those who continue learning, continue serving, continue believing, and continue rising after every fall.

The road to the top is seldom easy, but it is always worthwhile. The greatest victory is not simply reaching the top; it is helping others rise with you. Leadership is measured not by how many people serve us, but by how many people we empower. Success finds its highest expression when it becomes a blessing to others.

My encouragement to every reader is simple: do not surrender your dreams to your circumstances. Refuse to become comfortable with mediocrity. Invest in your personal growth. Build your character. Serve your community. Keep your faith alive. Rise after every setback and remain committed to becoming the person God created you to be. The climb may be difficult, but the destination is worth every sacrifice. Continue fighting—not against people, but against complacency, fear, discouragement, and every limitation that seeks to keep you from fulfilling your purpose. With determination, disciplined effort, and unwavering faith in God, you can live life at the top and become a source of hope and inspiration to generations that follow.

How the draft procurement regulations will raise costs and deepen corruption

There is no authoritative estimate of the value of goods and services procured by government departments and state-owned entities from the private sector each year, but it is considerably more than R500bn. And yet, South Africa's public procurement system is one of the country's great institutional weaknesses.

Service delivery failures, though driven by bad policies, are amplified by a procurement system that sometimes cannot buy the goods, services and infrastructure government needs. Even when the goods are procured, the government generally cannot buy them at the right price and have them delivered on time.

This is why the Treasury's new draft procurement regulations matter.

Procurement is not a technical back-office function. How procurement money is spent determines whether citizens have access to the water, electricity, roads, textbooks, healthcare and policing they need. Getting even a small percentage of this spending wrong results in large financial losses. Getting it as badly wrong as we have been costs much more. Procurement failures weaken service delivery, destroy trust in government and expand the space for corruption.

The proposed regulations have some good features. Greater transparency and better central reporting are welcome steps in the right direction. These reforms should be retained and strengthened. But the core preferential procurement mechanisms in the regulations — set-asides, prequalification and compulsory subcontracting — are likely to make procurement more expensive, less efficient and more vulnerable to abuse.

Broadening economic participation is legitimate and necessary. The problem is not the goal but the instrument. The proposed regulations try to drive transformation by restricting who may compete for public contracts.

For contracts up to R20m, certain tenders may be set aside for bidders meeting certain designated category tests. For contracts between R20m and R100m, bidders may have to meet procurement or subcontracting conditions in favour of businesses that are wholly owned by designated groups. For contracts above R100m, tender rules may impose compulsory subcontracting requirements. In effect, the regulations move from a system that relies on giving preference points to certain bidders to one that is premised on excluding some bidders altogether. That shift is bound to be expensive. And dangerous. Efficient procurement depends on competition. The more capable bidders there are, the more likely it is that the government will pay a competitive price and receive what it ordered. Restricting the pool of eligible bidders has the opposite effect. It reduces competition and increases the likelihood that the state will pay a premium.

The regulations try to mitigate this risk by requiring that preferential procurement can happen only when there are at least three qualifying potential suppliers. But the existence of three potential suppliers is not enough to guarantee a competitive price (even assuming they all bid on the tender). Restricting entry to a small group of qualifying bidders is guaranteed, on average, to make the state pay more than it needs to.

This risk is greatly magnified by the provision that the new rules will apply across the public sector irrespective of differences in institutional capacity. A small municipality, a provincial department, a major state-owned enterprise and a specialised public entity will all have to navigate the same complex regulatory architecture. But these institutions do not have the same skills, markets, operating pressures or operational needs.

Eskom and Transnet need to procure specialised equipment and services in global markets, often under severe operational pressure. A small municipality may struggle to prepare basic specifications and monitor performance. A one-size-fits-all system will not improve the performance of either. In weak institutions, it will encourage mechanical compliance, delays, audit anxiety and reliance on consultants. In commercially orientated entities, it will make procurement slower, less flexible and more expensive.

The set-aside provisions are particularly troubling. They require, in many cases, 100% ownership by members of designated groups. This requirement excludes firms that may be substantially transformed but not perfectly aligned with the prescribed ownership formula.

A company that is 90% black-owned would be excluded because the rule requires 100% ownership. A company that has spent years complying with broad-based BEE codes could find that its hard-earned empowerment credentials are now irrelevant. This is economically costly. It also undermines the pursuit of non-racialism: if even 90% black-owned firms are excluded from these opportunities, how can we expect a non-racial commercial culture to emerge?

The prequalification rules for tenders between R20m and R100m create another layer of difficulty. Bidders may need to show that at least 40% of prior procurement was spent on enterprises that are at least 51% black-owned and managed. This requirement doesn't align with the existing broad-based BEE framework, under which firms have long measured their own preferential procurement spending according to broad-based BEE contributor levels of their suppliers, which are not determined by ownership levels. Many firms may know the broad-based BEE level of their suppliers but not their precise ownership structure.

Why should firms that comply with existing rules be penalised if it should turn out that their suppliers' high broad-based BEE scores were not determined by black ownership level but by compliance with other elements of the codes?

Compulsory subcontracting (for tenders over R100m) is perhaps the most dangerous mechanism of all. For large contracts, the regulations contemplate subcontracting at least 25% of contract value to firms that are wholly owned by members of designated groups, albeit this must be preceded by a feasibility study.

The corruption risks of all of this are obvious. South Africa's procurement system is already vulnerable to manipulation, fronting, inflated prices and politically connected intermediaries. The regulations would add many new discretionary decision points: whether qualifying suppliers exist, whether preferential procurement is feasible, whether ownership structures of bidders' suppliers comply, whether subcontracting plans are acceptable, whether feasibility studies are reliable, and whether substitutions of subcontractors should be allowed. Every additional test creates another place where insiders can shape outcomes.

Most importantly, procurement reforms should build institutions, not bury them under rules. South Africa needs skilled procurement professionals, open contracting data, stronger contract management, and real-time monitoring of cost overruns and delays.

The proposed regulations should therefore be substantially redrafted.

By restricting competition and overloading weak institutions, they are likely to generate exactly what South Africa can least afford: more waste, more inefficiency and more corruption. The fastest way to empower the largest number of black South Africans is to have a state that works, not one mired in corruption and complicated, time-consuming regulations. South Africa's government needs value for money, which will help all citizens.

Ann Bernstein is head of the Centre for Development & Enterprise. ***This article is based on CDE's submission to the National Treasury, Buying Badly: Written By Ann Bernstein***

Opinion By Dammon Rice

One of the major themes to emerge from one of the biggest human resources (HR) events globally, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Annual Conference in the UK this past month, was that HR has got to be more engaged in shaping organisations, shaping jobs and making sure that it is creating a human future of work.

According to Peter Cheese, the CIPD's chief executive, in the conference keynote, future forces include fast-changing technology and employee demographics, new operating models and ongoing debates about corporate culture and building leadership effectively - this he says requires HR to take on a more strategic role. "HR has to step up and we've got to ¬invest in building these strategic capabilities and competencies to operate in this space."

Talent management is no longer what Cheese called the classic talent management cycle of HR, one that focuses solely on hiring, developing and exiting people. Now it is about shaping the right jobs and understanding organisational design and business operating models.

This is supported by global research, such as Deloitte's 2016 Global Human Capital Trends research where more than 90percent rated redesigning the organisation as very important or important, making it the leading trend in this year's report. More than 7000 HR and business leaders from 130 countries responded to this year's survey. One of the primary ways the researchers see this organisational restructuring playing out is in the rise of teams - companies moving away from traditional hierarchical organisation structures and empowering networks of teams centred on customers, products, markets, or missions. And South Africa is no different; if anything we face a more challenging emerging market environment with a shortage of scarce skills and a low-growth economy adding to the pressures on HR.

Strategic HR

As we move through that usual "classic talent management cycle of HR", as Cheese puts it, where the traditional slog of annual performance appraisals are concluded, perhaps it is also an opportunity to reflect on how to break HR out of managing more administrative and non-strategic tasks. Strategic HR itself is not a new concept and the value to business is of course well documented; but the real challenge it would appear is more around "how" the shift can be made.

There is no doubt that South African companies need to respond innovatively to the challenges of competitiveness but this cannot happen without an injection of creativity and innovation into HR departments. This is the critical problem: doing the same things over and over again each year can simply not deliver the innovation required for competitiveness in our challenging local economy and globally.

Creativity is characterised by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions. Any business, regardless of the product or service it offers to the market, needs creative energy to problem solve and generate new systems, services and products. This can give HR professionals a lens and focus areas to build on driving certain sub-strategies forward that support the overall organisational goals and vision. Through creative thinking one is able to step away from the expected (which often is subjective) and look objectively at what needs to be done to drive HR forward. In this way HR will be invited to the table - and acknowledged for the added value they bring. Ultimately this will lead to better employee sourcing, recruiting and development, clear employee development plans, better reward structures, thought through succession planning, etc. The value of creativity in business was the motivation for launching Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) Creative, unique to South Africa in offering creative kick-starters to businesses.

One of the focal areas is creativity as a way to facilitate a shift into Strategic HR. It gives HR leaders a set of tools that will give them direction to move into a strategic space and way of thinking. It is about understanding that the tactical work that HR does is not irrelevant, but that it forms the foundation of "how it" is done. The strategic is "what" the purpose is - often something we lose focus on. And if companies get this right, they can fire up competitiveness.

Excellence in HR

Research conducted this year by the Top Employers Institute, an independent global organisation that certifies excellence in HR practices and the environment employers have in place for employees to advance their development, and the HR Certification Institute, the leading professional credentialling organisation for HR professionals worldwide, found:

Stock prices during 2011 to 2015 of companies certified by Top Employers outperformed the stock indices in their respective countries by an average of 51 percent over the same five-year period.

Compounded revenue growth rates of companies certified by Top Employers outperformed relevant industry average compounded growth rates by 14percent when comparing 2010 with 2014 revenues.

Unilever, which received the accolade of top employer in Africa for the third time in a row last month, is an example of this level of innovation. Mechell Chetty, Unilever's vice-president of human resources, commenting on the company's award, said its secret to success was the fact that the company consistently aimed to empower its employees to be able to make a direct impact on the business. "We put our people at the heart of our business and their development and contribution will be second to none on the continent of Africa," she said. "Our employees are given significant scope for creativity and we aim to create a culture where they have the freedom to act with speed and deliver on their objectives.

"We also encourage innovation across the workforce, with different attitudes towards authority by developing strong line managers who are equipped to deal with the challenges of a multi-generational and multi-cultural workforce." Reinvention, though, can only happen with an injection of a bit of creativity. Dammon Rice is the head of CCDI Creative, a consultancy offering creative workshops to unlock competitiveness. e-mail dammon.rice@ccdi.org.za.

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.39	-0.46%	▼
Rand/Pound	22.05	0.13%	▲
Rand/Euro	18.72	-0.12%	▼
Platinum	1 629.20	-3.09%	▼
Brent Crude	84.96	-0.16%	▼
Gold	3 976.18	-2.06%	▼
Ethereum	1 874.18	-2.31%	▼
Bitcoin	64 080.86	-1.02%	▼

Windmill Casino faces mass retrenchment

…As Sun International embarks on the section 189A process across its business

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) is strongly opposing the retrenchment process that is pending at hospitality group Sun International which is expected to leave hundreds of workers unemployed.

This comes after the company confirmed that it has initiated a Section 189A retrenchment consulting process affecting four of its casino operations as part of a review aimed at improving their long-term financial sustainability.

The casinos are, Windmill Casino in Bloemfontein, Flamingo Casino in Kimberly, Golden Valley in Worcester, and Meropa Casino in Polokwane, and say the aim is to improve profitability and long-term sustainability.

According to Sun International, the review was in response to sustained pressure between revenue performance and operating costs at the affected casinos.

"Our financial results show the four casinos have underperformed compared with their broader urban casino business. "During the previous financial year, Meropa reported adjusted operating profit of R32 million, while Windmill generated R15 million. Golden Valley and Flamingo, however, recorded adjusted operating losses of R8 million and R7 million, respectively. By comparison, Sun International's urban casino division reported adjusted operating profit of R1.3 billion.

But SACCAWU spokesperson Sithembele Tshwete said this move is legally defective, procedurally unfair and inconsistent with the public-interest obligations attached to the company's gaming licenses.

Tshwere says the union's concern stems from the first Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) facilitated consultation, following which it held a national meeting to assess the employer's proposals.

Tshwete said, the assessment identified significant legal, procedural and substantive shortcomings that raise questions about both the legitimacy of the consultation process and the employer's commitment to meaningful engagement with organised labour.

The union alleged that some departments within the company have already undergone retrenchments while others have been earmarked for job cuts before consultations with organised labour have been concluded. "Such actions undermine the purpose of Section 189A of the Labour Relations Act, which requires employers to consult with employees and their representatives before implementing retrenchments.

"We are considering approaching the Labour Court for urgent relief to interdict the retrenchment process until the company fully complies with the requirements of the Labour Relations Act, he said.

Tshwete also questioned Sun International's broader restructuring strategy, saying it is concerned that one of South Africa's leading tourism and gaming companies is reducing employment at a time of persistently high unemployment.

SACCAWU further argued that gaming licences are privileges granted subject to commitments relating to employment creation, transformation, skills development and local economic development.

It had called on the Provincial Gambling and Gaming Boards to investigate whether Sun International remains compliant with the employment and public-interest obligations attached to its gaming licenses.

Among the issues the union wants regulators to examine are whether alternatives to retrenchments have been adequate, whether meaningful consultation has taken place before operational decisions were implemented, and whether organised labour has been provided with sufficient information to participate effectively in the consultation process.

"We will continue to defend affected workers through legal proceedings, regulatory engagement and other avenues available under the law as the consultation process continues, Tshwete.

Ramokgopa promises electricity price relief for industries

The Minister of Electricity and Energy, Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa addresses the opening of the Manufacturing Indaba in Sandton.. Picture: GCIS

Electricity and Energy Minister Dr. Kgosientsho Ramokgopa has sought to assure high-intensity energy users and manufacturing industry players that plans are at an advanced stage to introduce a dispensation that will cushion the industry from the high costs of electricity.

This comes amid calls for government to extend energy price relief to various industrial sectors.

Transalloys, South Africa's last remaining manganese smelter, recently halted production at its eMalahleni facility in Mpumalanga, citing years of financial losses caused by high electricity tariffs.

Ramokgopa says government has identified 11 energy-intensive companies that will soon benefit from subsidised electricity, similar to Glencore and Samancor

"We have done the first phase, I always make the point. Glencore and Samancor were the first on the queue. So, now we've done a framework that accommodates everyone, have taken it through to a cabinet. We are good to go, so we're going to be making the announcement of the next phases of those who will benefit. So, everyone that qualifies is going to benefit. The intention here is that we must ensure that industries remain open, people remain in jobs, and not just that, but expand capacity utilisation. And with this support, we are not going to sub-socialise the cost. So, the end consumer won't bear the responsibility of the support we are giving. We have designed an instrument that helps us to address both sides."High-intensity energy users are intensifying calls on government for energy price relief, saying high electricity prices are hollowing out South Africa's industrial base.

"The electricity pricing issue is a major threat to first, the industrialisation, it's a major pain point. And I think this point can even be made up to the household level and what more for industrial users of electricity. I mean that is a pressure point. This industry employed north of 500 000 people just a decade and a half ago, 575 000 to be exact. Now it's down to about 360 000. So that's about 22o 000 jobs lost in the period of a decade and a half," says Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa's CEO, Tafadzwa Chibanguza. ***SABCNews***

Toyota's R10 billion investment shows confidence in SA: Ramaphosa

President Cyril Ramaphosa says Toyota South Africa's R10.4 billion investment in its Durban manufacturing plant is a strong vote of confidence in the country's manufacturing sector, despite growing global competition for investment.

Ramaphosa delivered the keynote address via a pre-recorded video that was played to delegates during the launch of Toyota's new-generation Hilux.

The investment comes after years of disruption at Toyota's Prospecton plant, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the July 2021 unrest, and the devastating 2022 floods that submerged the facility and caused billions of rands in damage.

Ramaphosa says the new investment will create jobs and reinforce the country's position as a key automotive manufacturing hub.

"It is also a reminder of the powerful multiplier effect of industrial investment. I understand that approximately one third of the motor's investment has been directed towards strengthening local supplier capacity, as well as tooling. While suppliers themselves have invested an additional R2 billion to expand localisation.

That is how resilient industrial ecosystems are built. That is how domestic manufacturing capabilities are deepened.

That is how small the medium enterprises are empowered to grow." ***SABCNews***

Middle East turmoil becomes the rand's new normal

Middle East turmoil is increasingly becoming part of the background for global markets, with renewed flare-ups still moving oil prices and the dollar but eliciting a more muted response from the rand.

The local currency has traded in a relatively narrow range of between R16 and R16.50 to the US dollar since early May, despite recurring escalations in the Middle East and renewed concerns over shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, Trading Economics has noted.

TreasuryONE currency strategist Andre Cilliers said the dollar has also strengthened as investors seek safety during periods of heightened uncertainty.

Annabel Bishop, Investec chief economist, said the US dollar index had "reached its strongest point since June 2025, as risk aversion is elevated in global financial markets, although not to the degree of the disruption of US tariffs, but is preventing the rand from strengthening currently."

Yet, the rand has remained around R16.30 and similarly has not lost much ground against the Euro or pound, or even the Yen, in the top half of emerging market currencies performance since the start of the war at the end of February, Bishop said.

Background noise

Middle East turmoil had become part of the markets' background, "eliciting less of a response on flare-ups than before," said Bishop.

That does not mean the conflict no longer poses a threat to the currency. Cilliers said the latest increase in geopolitical tensions and risk aversion had seen the rand weaken overnight to around R16.44, broadly in line with weaker emerging-market and commodity currencies.

The latest escalation has again threatened hopes of progress towards a ceasefire, with attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz and renewed concerns that the strategic shipping route could be closed, said Bishop.

Bishop described R16 to the dollar as a major resistance level that the rand could break once global risk aversion subsides and markets return to a risk-taking phase.

Such a shift would allow South Africa's improving fundamentals to have a greater effect on the currency. However, a rapid end to Middle East tensions remains unlikely.

"While the rand would attempt further strength on a winding down of the Middle East conflict, this is unlikely to happen quickly or easily, and the rand is still likely to average around R16.30 for the third quarter of 2026, although risks to this forecast prevail too," Bishop said.

Macroeconomics

Trading Economics similarly noted that spillovers from geopolitical tensions to the rand had remained limited. It attributed the currency's relative resilience to South Africa's improving macroeconomic fundamentals, including the South African Reserve Bank's policy credibility, stronger fiscal metrics and continued structural reforms.

The South African Reserve Bank raised interest rates in May for the first time in three years and Governor Lesetja Kganyago has maintained a hawkish stance, leaving open the possibility of further tightening should inflationary pressures persist, said Trading Economics. South Africa's relatively low inflation environment had also limited the impact of the oil price shock to some degree, Bishop said.

Oil prices moved up overnight on the back of recent hostilities. Cilliers said oil moved up to around $85 a barrel amid escalating geopolitical risks and renewed disruption fears around the Strait. IOL BUSINESS

DJL Spins Her Way to the Top of Free State's House Music Scene

By Bernell Simons

When DJL steps behind the decks, she delivers more than music – she creates an unforgettable experience.

Born and raised in Bronville, Welkom, 32-year-old Dipuo Juli-Ann Légonia Thinane, better known as DJL, is steadily making her mark in the Free State's house music scene. With her infectious energy, signature style and passion for soulful beats, she is proving that talent and determination can break barriers in an industry where female DJs remain underrepresented.

Music has always been part of her life. Growing up in a home filled with old-school house music, DJL developed a deep love for the genre from an early age.

"I've always loved music. It was part of everyday life growing up, and I wanted to create those same feelings for other people," she said.

Her dream became reality in 2021 when she enrolled at African Eskimo for professional DJ training, where she refined her signature sound by blending old-school, soulful and deep house.

Over the past five years, DJL has become a familiar name at popular venues and lifestyle events across Welkom and surrounding towns, including Street Corner Braai, Kla-K Lifestyle, Rooftop Garden Bar Lounge, Phase Vibe and K&Q's. She also featured on Serendipity, a soulful house production by LnSoul.

Despite technical setbacks and equipment challenges, DJL remains focused on delivering memorable performances.

"I always give people my best. No matter what happens behind the scenes, the crowd deserves a great experience," she said.

She credits mentors Sega SA, Tshidiso and Eazy T for helping shape her journey and continues to inspire audiences with music that people don't just hear—they feel.

Thabethe, Marawa Romance Spark Online Frenzy

By Katlego Mashwabi

After years of denying romance rumours, entrepreneur and Thabooty Shapewear owner Thando Thabethe and veteran sports broadcaster Robert Marawa have finally gone public with their relationship following a viral moment at the 2026 Hollywoodbets Durban July.

A photograph of Thabethe sitting on Marawa's lap at the prestigious event quickly spread across social media, seemingly confirming what many fans had long suspected.

The pair first sparked dating speculation in October 2023 when they attended a Rugby World Cup quarter-final in France and separately shared photos from the Eiffel Tower. Although they were repeatedly spotted together, both dismissed claims of a romantic relationship. The rumours resurfaced in 2025 after the two posted holiday photos from what appeared to be the same overseas beach before later deleting or archiving the images.

The Durban July photo has now placed their relationship firmly in the public eye, with much of the online conversation focusing on the couple's 17-year age difference.

"Robert is the one who wants the relationship to be a secret. Thando is not much bothered whether it goes out or not. People already know about it. They look silly trying to cover it up," an insider close to the couple reportedly revealed.

The latest public appearance follows several sightings of the pair together at high-profile events, including the Nedbank International Polo and soccer matches. Most recently, Thabethe, 36, and Marawa, 53, attended an Orlando Pirates match, where television cameras captured the actress affectionately linking arms with the broadcaster.

As debate over their age gap continues online, relationship expert and author of Uncomplicated Love, Shelly Lewin, has weighed in, arguing that communication, compatibility and mutual respect are far more important than age in determining a successful relationship.

Her comments have further fuelled online discussion, with some users agreeing that age is irrelevant, while others argued that wealth and public perception continue to shape opinions about high-profile relationships.

Mrs SA Hopeful Inspires Young Models

Carolize Delport hopes her recent pageantry feat serves as inspiration for her young proteges

By Katlego Mashwabi

After officially making the Mrs South Africa Top 30 finalists cut, Ace Models Bloemfontein director, Carolize Delport, hopes her recent pageantry success will serve as a profound inspiration to aspiring young models.

The 36-year-old model and mentor - who purchased the Bloemfontein franchise of the international modelling house in February 2026 to focus on local child development in the industry - places immense value on family support and remains dedicated to guiding the youth in her community.

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

"I will never disappoint my biological and my Ace Models kids Bloemfontein (sic). I will never disappoint them," she added.

The leading pageant for married women showcased its finalists at the Theatre of Marcellus at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg on 3 July 2026. Delport was officially sashed by current Mrs South Africa, Carika Bebb, whom she thanked for paving the way for her to continue this inspiring journey of beauty with a purpose.

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

The Bloemfontein-born modelling mentor attributes much of her inspiration to her husband while building a reputation that balances her corporate work and modelling passion.

She noted that a major highlight of her journey has been the strong sisterhood formed with other contestants to overcome challenges together.

Delport is also actively supported on this journey by Dis-Chem, which serves as her personal silver sponsor for the competition.

BOKWA INCORPORATED

Perseverance beyond passion

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

Notice is hereby given in terms of regulation 68 of the Deeds Registries Act,1937, of the intention to apply for the issue of a certified copy of Deed of Transfer T23671/2005 passed GORDON TERENCE DRISKEL, Identity Number: 440214 5123 08 3, Married out of Community of Property in favour of 1. CARL JACOBUS MARE, Identity Number: 621215 5026 08 6, Married out of Community of Property and 2. TERRI-ANN MARE, Identity Number: 670107 0064 08 1, Married out of Community of Property, in respect of

ERF 4330 BLOEMFONTEIN EXTENTION 22
DISTRICT BLOEMFONTEIN
PROVINCE FREE STATE

IN EXTENT: 1099 (ONE THOUSAND AND NINETY NINE) SQUARE METRES

All interested persons having objection to the issue of such copy are hereby required to lodge the same in writing with the Registrar of Deeds: Free State at BLOEMFONTEIN within two weeks from the date of the publication of this notice.
Dated at Bloemfontein this 16 JULY 2026

CONVEYANCER
STELLA SMITH
BOKWA LAW INC.
121 PRESIDENT REITZ AVENUE
WESTDENE
BLOEMFONTEIN
9301
Email: stella@bokwalaw.co.za
Telephone no: 051 4486369

Veteran actor Seputla Sebogodi passes away at 63 following diabetes complications

South Africa is mourning the loss of veteran actor Seputla Sebogodi, whose family has confirmed that he died on the evening of July 15, 2026 following complications related to diabetes.

In a statement shared, the family announced his passing and appealed for privacy as they come to terms with their loss.

"The immediate family of Seputla Sebogodi confirms, with profound sadness, his passing on the evening of 15 July 2026 following complications related to diabetes."

The family added: "The family kindly requests privacy as they mourn this immense loss and navigate this difficult time together."

Sebogodi leaves behind a remarkable legacy as one of South Africa's most respected actors, with a career spanning decades across television and theatre.

He became a household name through memorable on-screen performances in Generations, Suburban Bliss, Bophelo ke Semphego, Redemption, and, most recently, Scandal!,

where he continued to captivate audiences with his powerful performances.

Beyond television, Sebogodi was a celebrated theatre actor whose stage career included acclaimed productions such as Big Dada, Waiting for Godot, The Rivonia Trial, Once a Pirate and Mooi Street Moves, among many others.

Paying tribute to his contribution to the arts, the family said:

"Seputla Sebogodi leaves behind an extraordinary legacy in South African theatre and television. He will be remembered for his memorable performances in Generations, Suburban Bliss, Bophelo ke Semphego, Redemption and most recently Scandal!, as well as his acclaimed theatre work in productions including Big Dada, Waiting for Godot, The Rivonia Trial, Once a Pirate and Mooi Street Moves, among many others."

Dear Sis Dolly Charms Moviegoers

By Katlego Mashwabi

After years of captivating readers through Drum Magazine's beloved agony aunt column, Sis Dolly has made the leap from print to cinema in the heartwarming comedy-drama Dear Sis Dolly.

The film is the brainchild of Tshepiso Chikapa-Phiri, popularly known as Sis Dolly, a visionary entrepreneur, Group CEO of Known Associates Group (KAG), and award-winning film and television producer whose credits include Beast and The Woman King.

Released in South African cinemas on 3 July, Dear Sis Dolly has already secured a spot among the country's top 10 box office films.

Inspired by the iconic Drum Magazine advice column created by editor-in-chief Liz Khumalo, the film celebrates the publication's legacy of helping readers navigate love, family and life's personal challenges through heartfelt letters. The column itself drew inspiration from The Sunday Times Style advice column by Dolly Alderton, known for her compassionate guidance on modern relationships and life's complexities.

The comedy-drama follows Kethiwe, a young psychologist who runs a free mental health centre in Gauteng. Portrayed by Didintle Khonou, Kethiwe enters a fierce competition to become the magazine's new Sis Dolly after her centre faces closure due to financial difficulties. She soon discovers the role requires far more than professional expertise, demanding empathy, resilience and courage.

"I wanted to bring the humanity and soul of this character to the forefront," said Khonou. "She's simply a young woman determined to uplift and empower her community. She's ambitious and full of potential."

Khonou, who also has experience as a television and film producer, said growing up surrounded by copies of Drum Magazine helped her connect deeply with the stories that shaped the column.

"Although mental health is often considered a hot topic, it is still frequently overlooked in many Black communities. I hope this film inspires people to pursue careers and passions that positively impact the lives of others," she said.

The film also boasts a stellar cast, including Abigail Khubeka, Dineo Langa, Natasha Thahane and S'Thandiwe Kgoroge, who plays the magazine's editor-in-chief, Melody Makaringe.

HEALTH

African Medicines Agency and Medicines for Africa Join Forces to Protect Patients from Unsafe Medicines Across Africa

By Refilwe Mochoari

The African Medicines Agency (AMA) and Medicines for Africa (MFA) this week signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen advocacy and communication on the continent's collective response to substandard and falsified medical products.

Under the agreement, AMA will leverage the expertise of MFA in advocacy and communication to support National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) in Africa in their initiatives to combat substandard and falsified medical products.

Director-General of the African Medicines Agency, Dr Delese Mimi Darko said,

"The African Medicines Agency was established to strengthen regulatory cooperation and improve access to safe, quality and efficacious medical products across Africa. Substandard and falsified medical products thrive on fragmented supply chains and regulatory oversight. By strengthening continental coordination and regulatory harmonisation on SF medical products, and combining this with the targeted public engagement that MFA leads, we will ensure that regulatory excellence translates into safer outcomes for patients and stronger public confidence in medical products.

Every day, millions of Africans rely on medical products to prevent disease, manage chronic conditions, and save lives. Yet according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in ten medical products in low- and middle-income countries fail quality testing.

"Complex and fragmented supply chains and regulatory oversight are among the drivers which create the conditions for these unsafe products to reach patients, resulting in patients at risk of potentially severe or fatal consequences and the erosion of public trust in health systems.

Dark said no single institution can solve this challenge alone and as the continental regulatory convener, AMA is partnering with MFA, an African-led patient safety organization with a track record in advocacy and communications on substandard and falsified medical products, to ensure that safe, quality, and efficacious medical products are the standard across Africa

Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Medicines for Africa, Dr Lenias Hwenda, said the partnership reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that patient safety is put at the centre of Africa's medicines agenda.

"Together with the African Medicines Agency, we will undertake joint communication and advocacy programmes and initiatives that will help in combatting the circulation of substandard and falsified medical products in Africa" said Hwenda.

FASHION

Bloemfontein Winterfall Fashion Show Showcases Street Talent

By Katlego Mashwabi

The start of wear was served elegantly at this year's Bloemfontein Winterfall Fashion Show that took place on 11 July at the Bloemfontein Civic Theatre.Supermodel and the show's creative director Priscilla Mohotsi emphasised the pressures that she faced during the preparation for the event.

"The team was a bit under pressure since it was our first time planning a fashion show. We wanted to do the best we could.

"It was not easy at all but it was worth it because everything about it turned out amazing, she said.

The Bloemfontein Winterfall Fashion Show is an annual event under the Question Art Multimedia house. It was established in 2023 by Kwanto and has been growing ever since.

Mohotsi says the show boosted the profiles of some local designers who showcased their collections.They include Sidlu Kotini's TCO Creations, Yours Faithfully by Faith Sonopo and Dezzanna Tranx.

Models and local hip hop artists were also a highlight of the performances, while the show was stolen by their youngest model on the runway being a one-year-old.

Being a former model herself, Mohotsi says the purpose of the event is to shape young models to be more than they can be, enhancing their skills.

She says she feels proud to have pulled this event through because it was a major stepping stone from being a model, now she can do more for other young models.

The Winterfall Fashion Show turns the spotlight on futuristic bold winter looks for winter, working to form part of the November Att Kulture Festival that showcases local creative culture.

FOOD Recipes

Skip the takeaway:

Make this easy chicken chow mein at home in just 30 minutes

Few dishes are as comforting as a steaming plate of chicken chow mein. Packed with tender chicken, crisp vegetables and noodles coated in a savoury sauce, it's a meal that feels like a treat without the hefty takeaway bill.

The good news is that chicken chow mein is surprisingly easy to make at home using everyday ingredients available at most South African supermarkets. It also comes together in around 30 minutes, making it an ideal weeknight dinner for busy families.

Ingredients:

- 300g egg noodles
- Two chicken breasts, thinly sliced
- Two tablespoons of vegetable oil
- One onion, thinly sliced
- Two cloves of garlic, crushed
- One teaspoon of grated fresh ginger
- One carrot, cut into thin strips
- One red pepper, sliced
- Two cups of shredded cabbage
- Three spring onions, sliced

Method

- Cook the egg noodles according to the packet instructions.
- Drain well and rinse briefly with cold water to stop them sticking together. Set aside.
- In a small bowl, mix together the soy sauce, oyster sauce, sweet chilli sauce, sesame oil, brown sugar, water and cornflour until smooth.
- Heat one tablespoon of vegetable oil in a large frying pan or wok over a high heat.
- Add the sliced chicken and stir-fry for five to six minutes until cooked through and lightly browned.
- Remove from the pan and set aside.
- Add the remaining oil, then fry the onion for two minutes before adding the garlic and ginger.
- Cook for another minute until fragrant.
- Stir in the carrot, red pepper and cabbage.
- Cook for three to four minutes so the vegetables remain slightly crisp.
- Return the chicken to the pan and add the cooked noodles.
- Pour over the prepared sauce and toss everything together until the noodles are evenly coated and heated through.
- Sprinkle over the spring onions and serve immediately.

Arcata's #TheCarWashDate brings Mangaung creators together

By Katlego Mashwabi

The City of Roses was abuzz last weekend as hundreds of content creators and influencers packed out the prestigious lifestyle residential estate Arcata Estate in Bloemfontein for one of Mangaung's biggest creator parties yet, #TheCarWashDate.

What started as a casual online conversation about a Sunday catch- up session at the Arcata Car Wash grew into a full-scale networking event aimed at uniting the province's digital community.

The event was hosted by social media influencers Bonolo "Softie" Maloka and Dibuseng "Bucie" Tlhokwe.

They told Journal News Network that the idea was sparked by a conversation between themselves and another lifestyle content creator Zandile "Tsontso" Hlongwane, when Hlongwane encouraged Maloka to host a gathering for content creators in Bloemfontein.

Maloka reached out to most of the content creators and her online bestie Tlhokwe where they decided that it was a date.

They say the significance of unity and collaboration as content creators, is to ensure that everyone wins and benefits from campaigns.

The two influencers say they have realised that unity is very important and that hating on one another is not helping any of them to flourish the way that they are supposed to.

They highlighted the importance of joining hands with brands in order to make money and grow their online engagements.

Tlhokwe, an educator by profession said, "There is so much potential that still needs to be unlocked for content creators in the Free State.

"We want to bring content creators together to create a buzz about our content so that we grow our audience online.

The creators party attracted a large number of people and some of the creators who showed up include Kelebohile Rantsonyane, Ernest Mofokeng, Keabetswe Khetso, Karabo Sesing, and many more.

SPORT

Beaming with Pride … The Free State School team made their mark at the National School Sports Competition in the Eastern Cape. Picture: **xxx**

FS Athletes Secure Silverware

School athletes return with silverware, pride and their chins up as they look to improve for next year's school sports competition

By Gomolemo Winkel

Free State finished the 2026 Winter National School Sports Competition (NSSC) in sixth place overall after securing four medals at the prestigious event in KuGompo City - formerly East London - in the Eastern Cape.

The provincial squads earned one silver medal and three bronze medals across the various tournament divisions.

The boys' rugby team claimed the silver medal after reaching the tournament final.

Bronze medals were secured by both the boys' and girls' hockey teams along with the Under-17 football side.

"Overall, we finished in position six. To be honest, we feel we could have done better, but it was also not easy," said Sello Nduna, NSSC Marketing and Media Commission head.

"Some provinces returned home without medals, while we managed to bring back four medals," he continued. Nduna identified early team selection as a vital improvement to ensure better preparation and chemistry on the field. He also expressed concern regarding wealthier provinces recruiting top talent through scholarships and superior development facilities. "Other provinces identify talented learners at these championships and take them to their academies. We need to find ways to retain our talent because the quality is here," he added.

Free State Sports Confederation (FSSC) President, Edward Saunderson, highlighted that the province consistently competes among the top teams despite operating with one of the country's smallest sport budgets. He noted that the tournament remains essential for promoting social cohesion, discipline, and long-term career prospects for young athletes. "We are one of the least-funded provinces when it comes to sport. Based on our budget, we should be finishing near the bottom, but we consistently compete among the top provinces. In terms of value for money, we're actually doing very well," said Saunderson.He praised the participants for their dedication and confirmed that preparations for the upcoming Summer Games are already being prioritised."They did very well. We are proud of them, but there is always room for improvement. We will regroup, get stronger and prepare for the Summer Games later this year," Saunderson added.

City Ladies Target Provincials


Bloem's Conquering Queens … The recently crowned Bloemfontein Engen Knockout Tournament champions, City Ladies Picture: **xxx**

By Gomolemo Winkel

After securing the 2026 Bloemfontein Engen Knockout Tournament title this past Thursday City Ladies are now preparing for the provincial qualifying tournament in Thaba Nchu on 25 July 2026.

The club earned their advancement with a 2-1 victory over Queens FC at the Chris Hani football ground and successful progression in the upcoming provincial stage will guarantee them a spot to compete at the looming Engen Champ of Champs tournament in Johannesburg this September.

"Winning the Engen Knockout Challenge means everything to us. It is the reward for months of hard work, discipline and sacrifice from the players and technical team," said club owner and head coach, Tshidiso Diboka.

Diboka credited the team's mental toughness and unity for their ability to navigate high-pressure matches throughout the tournament.

He noted that the squad remained committed to their game plan against formidable opponents until the final whistle.

"We have faced many challenges throughout the season, but we never stopped believing in ourselves. This trophy is a proud moment for our club and everyone who has supported City Ladies FC," said Diboka.

The coach expressed deep gratitude for the support received from families and the local community. He emphasised that the collective ambition to represent Bloemfontein well served as a primary motivator for the players.

"The first thing that came to my mind was gratitude. I thanked God for giving us the strength to reach this moment.

"I was proud of the players because they worked incredibly hard for this achievement. I also thought about our supporters and everyone who believed in us. This victory belongs to all of them," he continued.

Diboka added that he hopes their success will encourage more young girls in the city to pursue their football-ing ambitions.

He remains focused on ensuring the team remains disciplined as they prepare for the next phase of the competition.

"I hope this victory shows every young girl that with hard work, discipline and determination, anything is possible. No dream is too big. We want them to believe in themselves, work hard, and know that they can also achieve success in football," Diboka concluded.

Tears Flow as Football Mourns Jayden Adams

By Gomolemo Winkel

There was hardly a dry eye inside the Stellenbosch Town Hall on Thursday, 16 July, as South African football united to celebrate the life of Mamelodi Sundowns and Bafana Bafana midfielder Jayden Adams. Family, friends, teammates, coaches, football officials and supporters gathered to pay tribute to a player described as a once-in-a-generation talent whose legacy extends far beyond the football pitch.

Adams, who died on 11 July at the age of 25, was remembered not only for his exceptional football ability but also for his humility, infectious smile and unwavering commitment to those around him.

The emotional memorial service was filled with heartfelt tributes from some of the biggest names in South African football, each reflecting on the profound impact Adams had both on and off the field.

Mamelodi Sundowns captain Ronwen Williams described Adams as a global superstar whose passing has left an enormous void in South African football.

"To the Adams family, my condolences to you. Not only have you lost a son, a brother and a father, you have also lost a global superstar. Jayden's loss will leave a big gap to fill and massive shoes to replace," Williams said.

He fondly recalled Adams' fearless personality during the CAF Champions League final, sharing a humorous story that perfectly captured the midfielder's character.

"There is a wonderful photo on the internet of Jayden standing head-to-head with an opposition player. I asked him after the game, 'My brother, that guy doesn't understand Afrikaans vulgar, why did you say that?' He just looked at me and burst out laughing. That was the character he was and the mentality he had on the field."

Williams said South African football had lost a player whose influence could never truly be replaced.

"We will miss your quality, your passes, your vision and your brotherhood. We will carry you in our hearts, carry you on this badge and forever you will remain part of us."

Former Stellenbosch FC coach Steve Barker, who played a crucial role in Adams' rise through the ranks, described him as one of the greatest footballers he had ever coached.

"He was a winner. He was a powerful player that in the changing room you always wanted next to you because you knew Jayden was with you," Barker said. "He is one of the best guys I have ever coached. If I am ever asked who is the best player I have coached, Jayden will be the first name in my best eleven and the first player selected."

Barker also thanked Mamelodi Sundowns for helping Adams fulfil his dream following his move from Stellenbosch, saying the midfielder continued to flourish while remaining grounded and true to the values that shaped him.

Representing Mamelodi Sundowns, senior coach Steve Komphela delivered one of the day's most emotional speeches, revealing the devastating effect Adams' death had on everyone at Chloorkop.

"I wish you could see what was going on at that bench as these speeches were coming through, but we are better off now. You must have seen us on the first day when the news broke," Komphela said.

He described Adams as the heartbeat of Sundowns' style of play, praising his football intelligence, composure and selfless approach to the game.

"He understood the game like a coach and played it as a player. My advice to young players is to understand the game like a coach and play it like a player. He was a masterpiece."

Komphela thanked the Adams family for allowing Sundowns to share in Jayden's journey and assured them that his memory would continue to inspire generations of players.

"Our Sundowns midfield simply will not have the same shine without Jayden. To the family, thank you for sharing him with us. Please know that the warmth, dedication and love you showed him at home was something we experienced with him every day at Chloorkop. We are deeply mourning with you."

As the service concluded, it became clear that while South African football has lost one of its brightest stars, Jayden Adams' legacy will continue to live on through the countless lives he touched, the teammates he inspired and the unforgettable moments he created on the field.

At just 25 years old, his career was still reaching new heights, but those who knew him best agreed on one thing: Jayden Adams' impact on South African football will never be forgotten.

Mofokeng Headlines PSL Awards

By Gomolemo Winkel

Former Orlando Pirates star, Relebohile Mofokeng, has emerged as the standout name in the 2026 Betway Premiership end-of-season awards.

The attacker earned four nominations following a sensational campaign that established him as one of South African football's brightest talents.

The Premier Soccer League (PSL) announced the final nominees on 3 July. The annual awards are set to be presented during a televised ceremony on Monday, 27 July 2026.

Mofokeng has been nominated in four of the competition's most prestigious categories. These include Footballer of the Season, Players' Player of the Season, Midfielder of the Season, and Young Player of the Season.

The 21-year-old enjoyed the absolute finest season of his senior career. He played a pivotal role as Orlando Pirates secured a historic domestic treble, whilst also lifting four trophies across all competitions.

His remarkable consistency and attacking influence made him one of the absolute standout performers in the country.

In the Betway Premiership, Mofokeng registered 10 goals and eight assists whilst tormenting defenders with his pace, close control, and eye for goal. His performances drew broad praise from supporters, teammates, and opponents throughout the campaign.

For the coveted Footballer of the Season award, Mofokeng faces incredibly stiff competition from Mamelodi Sundowns midfielder, Teboho Mokoena. He also faces former Orlando Pirates teammate, Oswin Appollis. Appollis enjoyed an outstanding campaign before securing a lucrative move to Belgian side Royale Union Saint-Gilloise.

Mofokeng's remarkable form also earned him a place in Bafana Bafana's FIFA World Cup squad.

He played an important role in the national team's historic progression to the knockout stages. His exploits on both the local and international stage convinced Royale Union Saint-Gilloise to sign him. The Belgian side secured his services on a four-year contract.