

Journal NEWS

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ES DETHRONED FROM TOP SPOT

...Marking the end of the provincial government's long-standing slogan, 'Retla ba phetha rebaphethe hofihlela ba tlwaela'

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Free State MEC for Education Mantlhake Maboya (left) and 2025 grade 12 learners at Hodisa Secondary School. Picture: Baagedi Sethora

Vosloo vows to deliver top-tier education



Northern Cape MEC for Education Abraham Vosloo. Picture: Facebook
By Abigail Visagie

The Northern Cape has exceeded expectations after achieving an 87.9% pass rate in the 2025 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, placing the province sixth nationally. The results reflect steady improvement over recent years, signalling a maturing and stabilising education system. Releasing the NSC results on January 12, Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube said the Northern Cape recorded the greatest improvement of all provinces. Northern Cape MEC for Education Abraham Vosloo attributed the achievement to consistent support for matriculants under the leadership of Premier Zamani Saul. The province improved from 74.2% in 2022 to 75.8% in 2023, 82.4% in 2024 and now 87.9% in 2025. Vosloo acknowledged that learner retention and dropout rates remain a challenge but said interventions are being strengthened to curb the problem and ensure learners remain committed to completing their schooling and obtaining the NSC. The province has five education districts, 551 schools and about 330 000 learners, with nearly 14 000 candidates sitting for the 2025 NSC examinations. Despite challenges such as long travel distances to schools, Vosloo vowed that the department would continue to prioritise quality education delivery. "We have had a process in place for the past five years and have shown gradual improvement. We have worked closely with various stakeholders under the leadership of the Premier's office," Vosloo said. "Important programmes have been rolled out, and we are focused on building on these gains to deliver quality education across the province."

Free State 91% Record Remains Unbroken

Province slips to second place after six-year reign as KwaZulu-Natal tops the 2025 matric results

By: Refilwe Mochoari

After six years at the summit, the Free State has slipped from the top spot in the national matric rankings — but its historic 91% pass rate remains untouched. The province has been overtaken this year by KwaZulu-Natal, which achieved a pass rate of 90.6%. Minister of Basic Education Siviwe Gwarube announced the 2025 matric results on Monday evening in Johannesburg.

Despite losing the number-one position, the Free State continues to rank among the country's most consistent and high-performing provinces in the education system. This year, the Free State recorded a pass rate of 89.33%, followed closely by Gauteng at 89.06%. The national pass rate stands at 88%. North West achieved



88.79%, while the Northern Cape recorded 87.79%. According to Gwarube, the class of 2025 made history, with all 75 education districts nationwide achieving pass rates above 80%. Free State MEC for Education Mantlhake Maboya

said the 91% pass rate achieved by the class of 2024 was the outcome of a targeted 90% ambition set by the province as far back as 2010. She said the department's sustained efforts and commitment had been key to this success.

"This is the highest matric pass rate in the history of our country and should be a moment of great pride and celebration for all of us. So, 14 years down the line, we have been working very hard towards that ambitious target of 90%," she said. Although the province did not top the rankings this year, the department remains satisfied with the results, and Maboya congratulated KwaZulu-Natal on its achievement. The Department of Basic Education reported that more than 900 000 matriculants wrote the 2025 examinations across over 6 000 centres, making it the largest NSC examination cohort in history. Of the total passes, 46% qualified for bachelor's degree studies, 28% for diploma programmes, and 13.5% for higher certificates. The Free State will host a matric "well done" function tomorrow at the Central University of Technology, where the province's top 100 matriculants will be honoured.

Police probe discovery of amputated human arm



By: JN Reporter

Police in the Free State have launched an investigation following the grim discovery of an amputated human limb at Thaba Bosiu Village earlier this week.

South African Police Service (Saps) regional spokesperson Sergeant Mahlomola Kareli said members of the Crime Prevention Unit attached to Namahadi Vispol received a tip-off regarding the discovery near a local bus stop on Tuesday afternoon.

When they arrived at the scene, officers met with a passerby who reported that he stumbled upon what appeared to be a human remains while walking through an open field.

"Decomposing left arm"

"Preliminary investigations at the scene confirmed that the remains consist of a decomposing left arm, which appears to have been amputated just below the elbow," Kareli said in a statement on Thursday.

"The limb was found in an open field in the vicinity of Thaba Bosiu village. Following the discovery, Saps members supported by local community volunteers, conducted an extensive search of the surrounding bushes and fields," Kareli said.

Police have not yet been able to locate the rest of the body.

Saps is appealing to any members of the community who may have information regarding a missing person or who may have witnessed suspicious activity in the Thaba Bosiu area to contact them.

Contact Detective Lieutenant Colonel Mokoena of Namahadi Saps on 082-567-5243, call police Crime Stop on 0860-010-111 or drop an anonymous tip-off on the My SAPS app.

Education Behind Bars: Rehabilitation Tool or Missed Opportunity?

By: Matshidiso Sebeleng

Education is a cornerstone of rehabilitation in South Africa's correctional system, with offenders given access to formal schooling, vocational training and higher education. However, questions persist about whether these skills translate into meaningful livelihoods once offenders are released.

According to the Correctional Services Act (Act No. 111 of 1998), the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is mandated to implement court sentences in a prescribed manner; detain all offenders in safe custody while ensuring their human dignity; promote social responsibility and human development among offenders and persons under community corrections; and manage remand detainees.

The Act further emphasises that health and safety, dignity, social responsibility and human development must guide the daily functioning of correctional services.

As the country marked the release of the 2025 matric results, some offenders who returned to school while incarcerated were also anxiously awaiting their final examination outcomes. While some wrote their matric examinations, others sat for assessments linked to higher education courses they had enrolled in during their time behind bars.

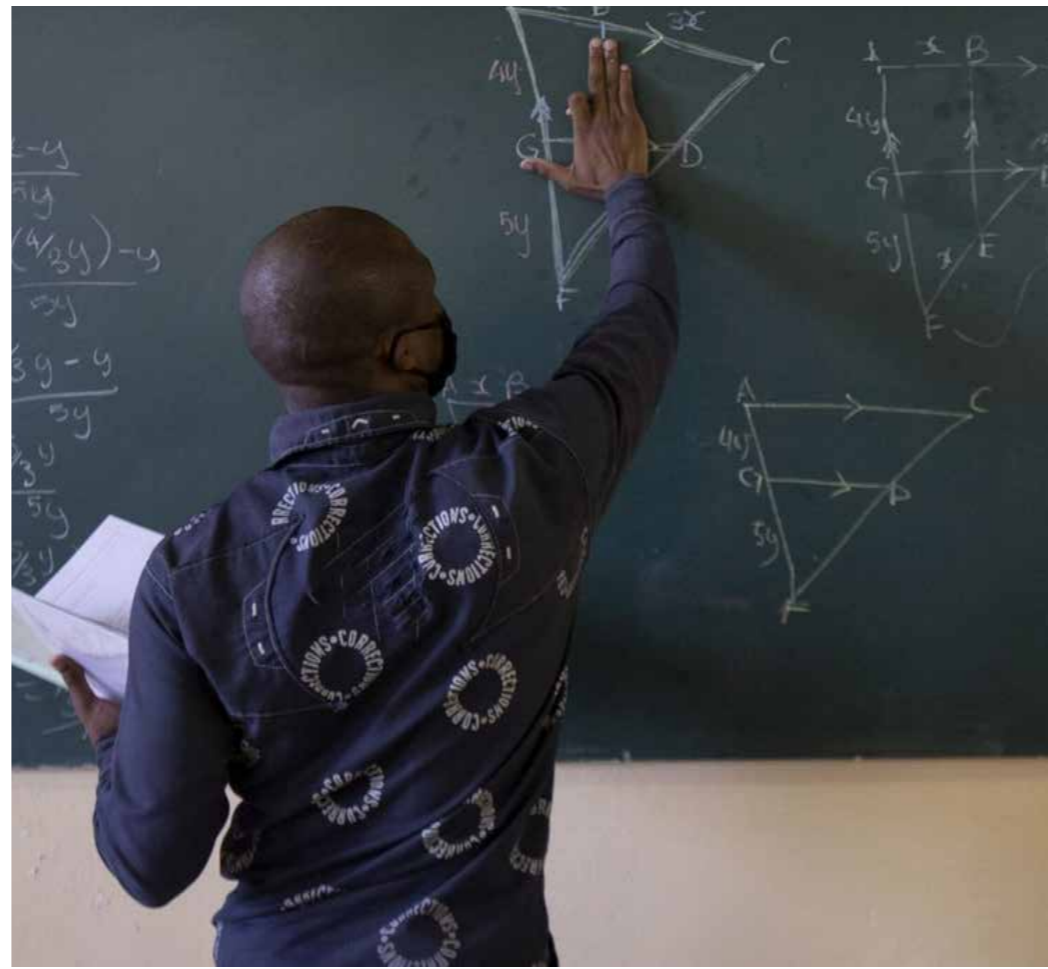
Thabiso Mokoena spent more than a year in prison, where he was taught various handcraft skills, including making belts, hats and photo frames from plastic materials. The programme not only promotes creativity but also encourages plastic recycling. However, five years after his release, Mokoena says he has been unable to use these skills to support his family.

"Education behind bars is just as good as fishing with a torn net and hoping to catch fish, because once people know about your past, it's not easy to get employed," he said.

"For the entire time I have been out, not even one day have I been able to use those skills to my advantage. I don't even tell people about them anymore because I know it's not going to happen for me."

Mokoena acknowledged that this experience does not apply to everyone, but noted that some offenders are trained in skills that lose value over time due to changing trends and market pressures. Despite the setbacks, he remains determined to return to school to study something that can sustainably support his family. Currently, he works as a farm labourer, an income he says is insufficient to meet his household needs.

While education is a fundamental human right



afforded to every citizen regardless of circumstance, questions remain about how former offenders are able to apply the skills and qualifications they acquire while incarcerated once they return to society.

According to DCS national spokesperson Singabakho Nxumalo, education is central to rehabilitation, human development and the maintenance of a stable correctional environment, including for offenders serving life sentences.

"Education promotes personal growth, critical thinking, discipline and a sense of purpose, which contributes to reduced violence and improved institutional behaviour," Nxumalo said.

"For offenders who may never be released, education enables meaningful participation in constructive activities within facilities and fosters dignity and hope."

He added that the majority of offenders will eventually reintegrate into society, and that education

plays a significant role in reducing recidivism, ultimately benefiting communities at large.

Nxumalo stressed that all correctional services schools follow Department of Basic Education (DBE) curricula, ensuring that qualifications obtained are credible and nationally recognised. Upon completion of their studies, graduates are able to apply for employment aligned with their qualifications, while skills acquired through training are utilised both within correctional facilities and, where possible, after release.

Within facilities, offenders contribute through roles such as maintenance work, arts and crafts, peer education and mentoring programmes, enhancing institutional self-sufficiency and order. For parole-eligible offenders, vocational and academic skills support employability and entrepreneurship upon release, particularly in fields such as construction, hairdressing, agriculture and small business de-

velopment. Life-sentenced offenders also apply their skills through workshops, production units and by transferring knowledge to fellow inmates.

Offenders who wish to pursue education must apply through an internal process at their correctional centre. Applications are assessed by educators and management, taking into account criteria such as conduct, sentence profile, academic readiness and programme availability. Successful applicants are enrolled in internal DCS schools offering Adult Education and Training (AET) and Further Education and Training (FET) programmes, or assisted with applications to external accredited institutions such as DBE-registered schools, TVET colleges under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), or universities.

Partnerships, including memoranda of understanding with institutions such as UNISA, help facilitate access to higher education. Educators provide ongoing support throughout the application and registration process.

"The Department provides a structured learning environment supported by qualified educators, DBE-approved learning materials, access to libraries and designated study areas," Nxumalo explained. "Where applicable, learners also access technology-enabled learning through secure computer labs and telematics systems."

Many eligible students receive financial support from their families, while bursaries and NSFAS funding assist those enrolled in TVET colleges and higher education programmes. Nxumalo noted that while not all offenders are automatically enrolled—due to eligibility requirements, institutional capacity and conduct—those who meet the criteria and qualify academically are considered.

Courses offered include AET, the formal school curriculum up to Grade 12, vocational and occupational programmes such as plumbing, electrical work, welding and carpentry, as well as selected university qualifications through UNISA. These programmes are aligned with rehabilitation goals, national skills priorities and employability needs.

"All educators employed by the Department of Correctional Services are fully qualified professionals registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE)," Nxumalo added.

"Lecturers involved in TVET and university programmes meet the standards set by DHET and their respective institutions."

This, he said, ensures that all teaching and learning within correctional facilities is credible, professional and aligned with national education standards.

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Controversy Follows New NDPP Appointment

President's decision to withhold the vetting report raises concerns over transparency and governance

By Lerato Mutlanyane

President Cyril Ramaphosa's unilateral appointment of Andy Mothibi as South Africa's new National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) has ignited a wave of legal and political controversy. The decision, taken without the endorsement of the independent interview panel, and the subsequent refusal by the Presidency to release the panel's confidential suitability report, has raised serious concerns about executive overreach and the integrity of the prosecuting authority.

Several political parties and civil society organisations have disputed the appointment, including the Democratic Alliance (DA), uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), GOOD Party, Corruption Watch, the Civil Rights Organisation and ActionSA. The DA has gone a step further by filing an application under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) to compel the President to release the report detailing the NDPP selection process.

The DA has called for urgent transparency, arguing that the public has a right to understand how the country's most senior prosecutorial position was filled.

While the DA has welcomed Mothibi's appointment, stating that it could bring stability and strengthen the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the party has expressed deep concern about the manner in which the process was conducted and the President's handling of it.

According to the DA, the selection process was deliberately undermined through delays, an inadequately constituted panel and a failure to properly execute its mandate.

"The organisation needs a strong leader who



Newly appointed National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) Andy Mothibi. Picture: Supplied

can rebuild its capacity and turn it into an effective crime-fighting institution," the party said.

However, the Presidency has confirmed that it will not make the NDPP panel report public, claiming it

was intended solely to guide the President and that there is no obligation to release it.

"The President cannot exercise such sweeping constitutional powers behind a veil of secrecy," said

DA MP Glynis Breytenbach.

She stressed that the report was compiled to assess the legitimacy, rationality and fairness of the appointment and that the public was entitled to scrutinise it.

"This report goes to the heart of whether the NDPP appointment process was lawful, rational and fair. South Africans are entitled to see it," she said.

The legal challenge comes amid mounting criticism of the NPA, which continues to face scrutiny over stalled State Capture prosecutions, capacity constraints, leadership instability and public perceptions of political interference.

Analysts have reiterated that the credibility of the NPA can only be restored through transparent leadership appointments and decisive action on high-profile cases.

Concerns have also been raised about the vetting process itself. Six candidates were reportedly interviewed but not recommended, prompting the President's decision to appoint Mothibi, who was not vetted by the panel.

This move has intensified questions around transparency and governance.

ActionSA has also weighed in, expressing reservations about the appointment framework.

"Considering the uninspiring pool of shortlisted candidates, none of whom were recommended, ActionSA believes this presents an opportunity to seriously reflect on the inadequate framework through which the heads of our prosecuting authority are appointed," the party said.

ActionSA Parliamentary Leader Athol Trollip MP added that while the President may have acted within his constitutional authority, the appointment failed to meet public expectations.

"South Africans wanted a new broom to sweep clean but were instead presented with a figure drawn from the existing establishment. In the context of coalition governance, such a critical appointment made unilaterally by the President underscores the urgent need for reform."

Mothibi is expected to assume office on 1 February 2026, replacing outgoing NDPP Shamila Batohi, who is set to retire at the end of January 2026.

The dispute now shifts from the Presidency to Parliament and the courts. Its outcome will determine more than who occupies the prosecutor's office — it will test whether constitutional checks and balances on executive power are binding principles or merely symbolic.

The secrecy surrounding the appointment has cast a long shadow, one that only full transparency or a definitive court ruling can dispel.

FS Dethroned From Top Spot

Marking the end of the provincial government's long-standing slogan, 'Retla ba phetha rebaphethe hofihlela ba tlwaela'

By: Matshidiso Selebeleng



2025 grade 12 learners at Hodisa Secondary School. Picture: Baagedi Sethlora

and partners such as corporations. Education is a societal issue, and we need collective support to improve and maintain strong results," Ndaba said.

National Senior Certificate 2025 Overview:

- Overall pass rate: 88% (slight increase from 87.3% in 2024)
 - Higher Certificate passes: 13.5%
 - Diploma passes: 28.1%
 - Bachelor passes: 46.6%
- Provincial pass rates 2025 vs 2024:
- KwaZulu-Natal: 90.6% ↑ (89.5%)
 - Free State: 89.33% ↓ (91%)

- Gauteng: 89.06% ↑ (88.4%)
 - North West: 88.49% ↑ (87.5%)
 - Western Cape: 88.2% ↑ (86.6%)
 - Northern Cape: 87.79% ↑ (84.2%) – largest improvement
 - Mpumalanga: 86.5% ↑ (84.9%)
 - Limpopo: 86.15% ↑ (85%)
 - Eastern Cape: 84.17% ↓ (84.8%)
- The Northern Cape emerged as the province with the most significant improvement compared to 2024, showcasing the ongoing efforts to strengthen education across the country.

For six years, the Free State province reigned supreme in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results. That streak came to an end as KwaZulu-Natal clinched the top spot with a pass rate of 90.6%, pushing the Free State into second place at 89.33%.

Speaking on the results, Free State Department of Education spokesperson Howard Ndaba expressed satisfaction despite the drop.

"We want to congratulate the class of 2025 for doing an excellent job. Out of 38,205 candidates, over 34,000 passed, and 43% achieved Bachelor passes. Every district recorded over 85% pass rates, with Mangaung leading at 92%," he said.

Ndaba noted that the province's decline was largely due to lower performance in mathematics and accounting, which also saw national declines. To address this, the department plans retreats to strategize interventions and boost results in these critical subjects.

On the goal for 2026, Ndaba emphasized that the priority is quality, not ranking. "Our obsession is not position one, but achieving targets that allow learners to access higher education with strong marks. This year, our target was 95%, which we did not reach. Soon, new targets will be set, and we will work towards them," he said, adding that the province's only competition is itself.

Ndaba also praised KwaZulu-Natal for its achievement, noting the province had more than 100,000 exam candidates. He highlighted individual excellence, including 17-year-old Bokang Mokubung from Bluegumbosch Secondary School in Phuthaditjhaba, who ranked first among the top three learners in quintile 3 schools nationwide for Mathematics.

Mokubung will be celebrated among the top 100 learners at a function hosted by the Department of Education in partnership with the Central University of Technology today.

"We also want to thank learners, parents, teachers,

Kimberley journalist dismisses rape conviction as 'utter nonsense', signals appeal and bail bid



KIMBERLEY-based freelance journalist Douglas Mthukwane has dismissed his conviction on four charges of rape, relating to incidents that took place between 2016 and 2019, as "utter nonsense" and has indicated that he will appeal.

In an unrelated matter, Mthukwane's girlfriend, who reported that she was raped and assaulted with a knobkerrie on August 1, 2025, at Mthukwane's flat in Beaconsfield, has since withdrawn the charges. The State has, however, decided to proceed with the matter in the Kimberley Magistrate's Court on January 27.

Mthukwane remains in custody, as the latest rape charge was allegedly committed in contravention of his bail conditions. His previous bail application was dismissed in the Kimberley Magistrate's Court.

Should he be granted bail in the Kimberley Magistrate's Court, Mthukwane is also expected to apply for bail in the Northern Cape High Court ahead of sentencing for the multiple rape convictions, which is expected to take place on February 13.

"I am a hot head"

Mthukwane expressed his displeasure over the judgment handed down in the Northern Cape High Court on January 9 and denied that he owned a firearm.

"I'm a hot head, you would have heard if I threatened anyone with a gun," he said.

During the judgment, he jumped up and refused to "listen to this nonsense".

Acting Judge Sharon Erasmus warned that she would have him removed from the courtroom if he continued to interrupt her.

She requested psychiatrist Dr Netsa Kirimi to testify regarding the accused's condition, after he was diagnosed with prefrontal lobe epilepsy. "His condition may influence his ability to control his impulses and may have an impact on sentencing," she said.

Erasmus noted that while no weapon was found at Mthukwane's apartment, inside his motor vehicle or at his mother's house, she could not ignore the evidence of the three complainants who testified that they were threatened with a firearm.

She highlighted what she described as a similar modus operandi used to target the complainants. "The accused showed aggression and was prone to outbursts when he did not get his way. He failed to answer questions and would digress into semantics," she said.

She added that Mthukwane continued to blame the police, forensic nurses and the prosecution for incriminating him and fabricating charges against him.

"He said he was subjected to a kangaroo court and insulted the State prosecutor and members of the media without any factual basis," Erasmus said. Guilty on four rape charges

Erasmus said Mthukwane's version – that the

third complainant was "jealous of his spiritual powers" and wanted him to pay her R10,000 so that he could train under her to become a traditional healer in May 2019 – was "highly improbable".

"The complainant approached him as she regarded him to be a student leader. She requested assistance to draw up her CV and use his political connections in order to secure employment for her. Cleaning and sweeping the accused's flat is not the conduct of someone who wanted to have sexual intercourse with him.

"The accused referred to a flirtatious conversation that had a sexual undertone and implied that the relationship was serious. The complainant at some stage anticipated that she would have sexual intercourse with the accused. She had to assist him as he never had a full erection. She testified that she was threatened with a knobkerrie and a firearm and that he threatened to throw her out of the window."

Erasmus emphasised that the forensic nurse who conducted the physical examination noted that the injuries sustained were not consistent with consensual sexual intercourse.

She found that Mthukwane was guilty of raping the complainant twice, as there was a time lapse between the first incident and the second rape after she managed to escape to the bathroom to perform a ritual.

"She was still visibly traumatised when she testified," Erasmus said.

Erasmus also referred to the evidence of a 14-year-old complainant who testified that she was threatened with a firearm and raped at Mthukwane's flat after he had offered her a lift to school on May 30, 2016. The complainant was dressed in a school uniform at the time of the incident.

"She could not be mistaken as being above the age of consent. The accused called her promiscuous and said she was unhygienic and unbathed," Erasmus said.

She said it was unlikely that the second complainant would have agreed to sell her body, as Mthukwane had failed to pay her on August 20, 2017.

The complainant testified that she was raped at gunpoint after she climbed into Mthukwane's motor vehicle and assisted him with directions while on her way to a tuck shop to buy fish oil.

Previous attempted rape conviction

Senior State Advocate Adele van Heerden indicated that Mthukwane was found guilty of attempted rape in 1999.

"He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, wholly suspended for five years on condition that he was not found guilty of a similar offence. He was ordered to complete 16 hours of community service per month," she said.

The matter was postponed until February 19 for the submission of pre-sentencing reports and a possible bail hearing in the Northern Cape High Court. - DFA

Students encouraged to use Central Application Service

Higher Education and Training Minister Buti Manamela has encouraged prospective students who need guidance in accessing the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system to make use of the Central Application Service (CAS).

Manamela said that in previous years, the department introduced the Central Applications Clearing House (CACH) as a short-term intervention to match unplaced applicants with available spaces.

However, from the 2026 academic year, CACH will be discontinued as part of broader reforms to the PSET application process.

"CAS has been designed as a more comprehensive, integrated and long-term solution to improve access, visibility and coordination across the entire PSET system. CAS will progressively make visible a wider range of pathways beyond traditional university and college routes, while also helping to eliminate bogus institutions and protect prospective students from exploitation," the Minister said in a statement on Tuesday.

Students seeking information, guidance and support can WhatsApp the CAS Chat number 081 308 4196.

Warning against bogus colleges

The department has also warned prospective students to be vigilant against illegal colleges, noting that such institutions are not registered as required by law and do not offer credible qualifications.

Manamela said qualifications offered by private skills development providers must be quality assured by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

"Bogus colleges often exploit this period of transition, charging fees without providing recognised qualifications. Information on registered and accredited institutions is available on www.dhet.gov.za"

The Minister further appealed to all private education providers to comply with the law and not mislead students, urging parents and prospective learners to conduct due diligence before making any payments.

Student wellness and emotional support

Acknowledging that the transition from school to further study or training can be emotionally challenging, Manamela said the department, through Higher Health,



Higher Education and Training Minister Buti Manamela. Picture: Facebook

provides free and confidential psychosocial and mental health support services to students and prospective students entering the higher education system.

"Students requiring emotional or mental health support are encouraged to contact the 24-hour Higher Health Helpline on 0800 36 36 36 for assistance with stress, anxiety or crisis-related concerns," he said.

Expanded funding opportunities and SETA bursaries

The Minister also announced that more than 15 000 SETA bursaries have been made available to support students who do not qualify for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding, particularly those in the so-called "missing middle" and in scarce skills areas critical to economic growth.

He said the bursaries support studies at universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, covering tuition, learning materials and other study-related costs, forming part of government's broader strategy to widen access to post-school opportunities.

"As you embark on this next phase of education, training and upskilling, remain focused, disciplined, and open to the many pathways available to you. Every route of learning matters, and each contributes to building a capable, inclusive, and productive society," the Minister said.

Practical guidance for students and parents

The department has advised students and parents to

rely only on official communication channels when engaging with institutions or funding bodies.

Learners are encouraged to regularly check emails, SMS notifications and institutional portals, and to keep copies of application reference numbers and correspondence.

Manamela emphasised that no individual or organisation can guarantee placement or accommodation in exchange for payment, warning that such claims should be treated with caution.

He encouraged students who do not immediately receive offers to explore alternative pathways, including TVET colleges, Community Education and Training colleges, higher certificates, bridging programmes and learnerships, rather than abandoning post-school education altogether.

"Accommodation is limited and allocated separately from academic admission, and confirmation should always be secured before making travel arrangements. Parents are encouraged to provide emotional support and reassurance during this period.

"Delays, waiting lists or initial disappointment do not mean the end of educational opportunities. South Africa's post-school education and training system offers multiple entry points and second-chance pathways, and informed, calm decision-making will help young people navigate this transition successfully," Manamela said. – SAnews.gov.za

MKLWV Set for Leadership Elections

Refilwe Mochoari

All eyes will be on the African National Congress (ANC)'s Umkhonto weSizwe Liberation War Veterans (MKLWV) as the organisation prepares to elect new leadership in a process expected to shape its future direction and priorities.

More than 500 delegates have gathered at Imvelo Safari Lodge in Mangaung, Bloemfontein, for the organisation's inaugural national conference, aimed at strengthening the revolution and rebuilding the movement.

The MKLWV, established in 2022 in the Eastern Cape following the disbandment of both the MK Military Veterans Association (MKMVA) and the MKMVA Council, is convening in Mangaung – the birthplace of the ANC – to elect its first-ever president. The interim structure has

until now been led by convener Don Hato.

The highly anticipated conference, fully supported by the ANC, will feature keynote addresses from ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula, former president Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President Paul Mashatile, and ANC chair of chairs Gwede Mantashe.

Held under the theme "MKLWV for Renewal, Rebuilding and Revolutionary Discipline: Deepening the Gains of the Revolution,"

Hato said during a press briefing at the ANC Free State provincial office on Thursday that the primary objective of the conference is to engage in robust discussions about the future of MK military veterans and to ensure they enjoy decent living conditions.

"We are not only here to discuss what the government can do to take care of military veterans, but also to dis-

miss the renewal of the ANC," said Hato.

"We are not just soldiers; we are political soldiers. Therefore, we take an interest in the affairs of the ANC and in the affairs of South Africa. We are here to discuss the body politics of our mother body, the ANC, as well as those of the country."

He added that MK military veterans played a crucial role in keeping the ANC united until 1990, when, under the leadership of Oliver Tambo, it was handed over intact to the next generation of leaders.

Joining the MK military veterans in Mangaung from January 15 to 17 is the leadership of the South African branch of Mozambique's Liberation Front (Frelimo), which supported the ANC during the liberation struggle. Frelimo is a democratic socialist political party in Mozambique.

Safety Success at ANC Birthday Rally

Medical teams praise coordinated response despite heat and large crowds

By: Abigail Visagie

Despite hosting a large public gathering amid back-to-back political activity, the African National Congress (ANC) has recorded zero fatalities and no serious injuries at its 114th January 8 celebrations.

The party deployed a comprehensive medical team comprising qualified doctors, nurses and emergency response personnel to ensure the safety of attendees. Journal News spoke to the team leader, Dr Lucky Madikane, who was on duty as part of the ANC medical team.

Madikane said the team was responsible for the well-being of everyone at the event — including members of the public, performers and political leaders.

"The President and Deputy President are attended to by the presidential medical unit, which includes members of the military medical professionals," he explained.

He added that the ANC medical team worked closely with the Department of Health at both district and provincial level. Provincial emergency medical services (EMS) were deployed, with additional health professionals integrated into the ANC medical structure to ensure full coverage.

"Some of us anticipated extreme heat, while others expected heavy rain that could have caused muddy conditions," said Madikane. "But from the start of the celebrations to the end, nothing major was reported. We only dealt with routine cases."

Madikane urged people living with chronic conditions to always carry and take their medication when attending large events.

"They should never leave their medication at home," he stressed.



Dr Lucky Madikane (middle) and his team of capable medical team to assist at 114th ANC celebrations. Picture: Supplied

While the heat posed a potential risk due to the open nature of the stadium, Madikane confirmed that no serious heat-related incidents were reported.

"There was only one mild case of heat exhaustion. Medically, we were prepared for anything," he said.

He added that the ANC medical operation included a main medical station inside the stadium, supported by mobile clinics positioned around the venue.

"Wherever there were crowds, a medical team was deployed," Madikane said.

Dion George's miscalculated exit from the DA



Democratic Alliance's shadow finance minister Dion George. Picture: Supplied

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Dion George, the Democratic Alliance's shadow finance minister and chief fundraising officer, resigned abruptly on 15 January 2026 following a highly publicised fallout with party leader John Steenhuisen. His sudden departure removes one of the DA's key economic strategists and has triggered internal turmoil just months ahead of a critical election.

George announced his resignation during an interview with eNCA, ending a 30-year association with the party. He stepped down as the DA's federal chairperson of finance and resigned as a Member of Parliament, citing what he described as intolerable circumstances.

"The situation has become intolerable. I am being pushed out and it is no longer feasible for me to remain in the party," George said.

During the interview, George alleged that Steenhuisen was "capturing" the party on behalf of rival political interests and claimed that criminal activities were being used to undermine the DA's leadership.

These allegations have intensified divisions within the party.

George's resignation came just days before a scheduled disciplinary process involving himself and Steenhuisen, stemming from a series of in-

ternal disputes. These include his replacement as Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, allegations of credit card misuse, and tensions linked to Minister Aucamp.

George said his legal team had repeatedly requested documentation explaining his removal as minister, but alleged that no documents or written reasons were provided.

The situation escalated further after Aucamp accused George of misusing state resources to fund a political smear campaign.

In response, George lodged a formal complaint with the Public Protector against both Steenhuisen and Aucamp.

According to the Public Protector's office, George's complaint calls for an investigation into Minister Aucamp's conduct, including the alleged failure to disclose personal commercial interests and potential conflicts of interest, which may constitute a breach of the Executive Ethics Code.

George also accuses Aucamp of unlawful interference in the mandate and functions of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

The outcome of these investigations is expected to play a decisive role in determining whether the DA can recover from the growing crisis that now threatens its leadership credibility and electoral prospects.

Desperate NTI employees peacefully demonstrate frustrations



The NTI employees showed up in numbers to display their frustrations. Picture: Abigail Visagie

By Abigail Visagie

Disgruntled workers at the North West Transport Investment (NTI) say they continue to suffer the consequences of prolonged unpaid labour, with some alleging they have gone more than a year without salaries.

Journal News previously reported on longstanding challenges at the entity, including non-compliance and serious financial irregularities, which have directly affected employees' livelihoods.

Mosiwa Phiri, an NTI employee, said workers have not been paid for over 14 months, plunging many into desperate circumstances.

"For the past three years, we have been dealing with a business rescue practitioner who has not come to the party or made any meaningful attempt to save the entity. No turnaround plan has been presented for the company to move forward," said Phiri.

He added that the situation has left employees destitute and without support.

"Our cars are being repossessed, some of our children can no longer go to school, and people's livelihoods are at stake. The situation is dire," he said.

NTI workers, who are affiliated with COSATU through

the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU), staged a peaceful demonstration during the ANC January 8 celebrations in Moruleng, North West. The workers said they hoped their presence would draw the attention of national leadership, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, to their plight.

"We came here peacefully to express our frustrations with NTI and to appeal for intervention from the MEC's superior," Phiri said, referring to North West MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Kedibone Diale.

Phiri alleged that public officials tasked with resolving the crisis have since gone silent, despite the company allegedly having generated millions in revenue.

"We have tried everything to salvage the situation, but we are being let down by our own comrades. Without salaries, life is extremely difficult for every employee," he said.

Earlier in 2025, NTI appointed Mohamed Mahier Tayob as its business rescue practitioner after the Gauteng High Court ruled that the former practitioner, Thomas Sammons, be replaced. The court found that Sammons had failed to stabilise the company or ensure employees were paid in line with his mandate.

The ruling was made enforceable under Section 18

of the Superior Courts Act, despite Sammons' appeal.

Journal News further reported that Mafikeng Mail published an article alleging that 14 NTI employees had taken their own lives following months of unpaid salaries. The report also quoted Freddy Sonakile, an overseer of the NTI committee, who expressed deep concern and outrage, saying families were suffering while homes were being repossessed as legal processes dragged on.

When Journal News contacted Sonakile directly to ask whether the Premier or the NTI board had provided any support to the families of the deceased, he said no assistance or compensation had been offered.

"No support of any form has been rendered to the families as yet. They are still awaiting a report from the Premier's office," Sonakile said.

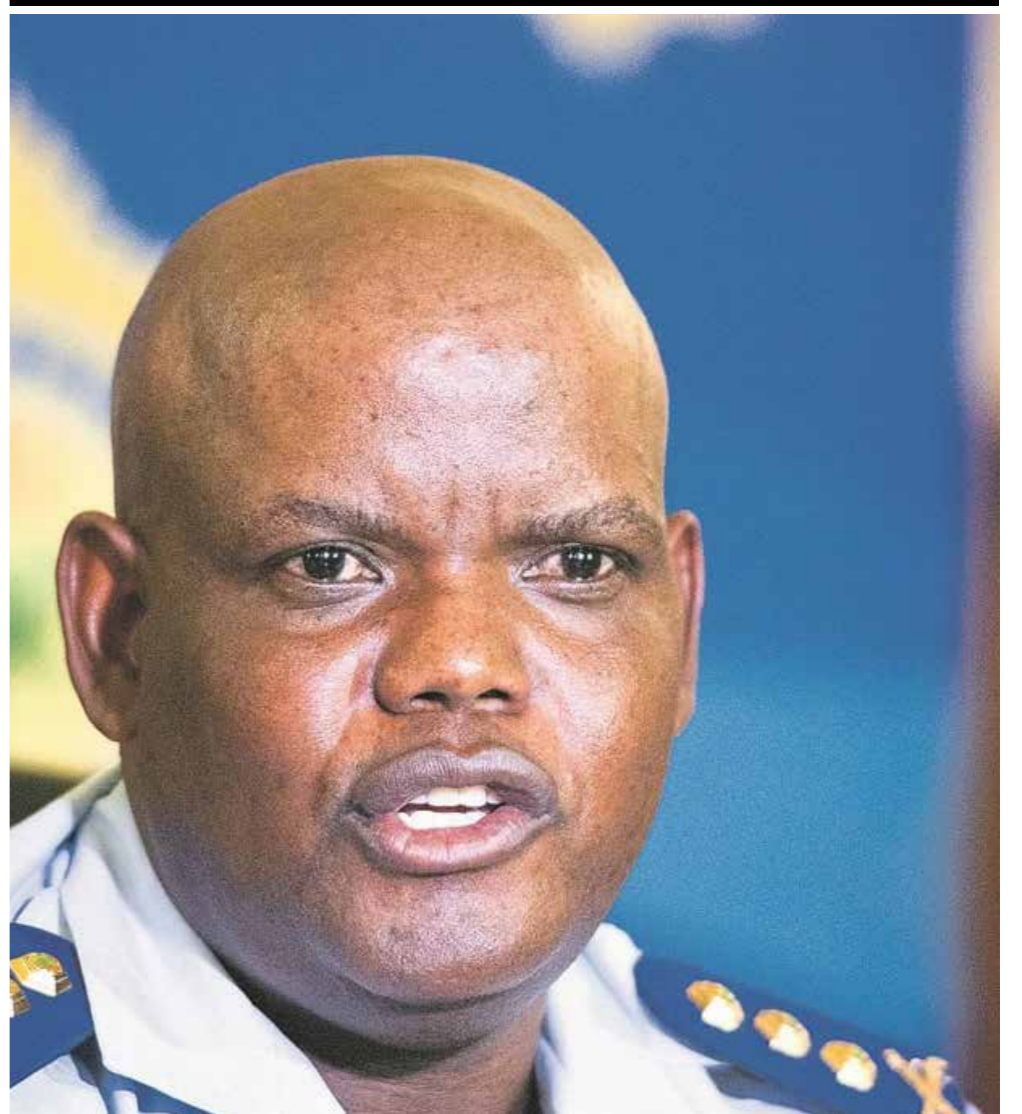
The emotional toll on workers has continued to mount. In a Facebook post, Hope Mzolisto wrote:

"We are dying slowly. Some of our colleagues are in hospital as we speak due to stress and depression."

Phiri, like many other NTI employees, has pleaded with government to urgently intervene.

"We continue going to work because we have nowhere else to go. All we ask is to be compensated for our labour, because not only our lives, but our families' livelihoods depend on this," he concluded.

Ad Hoc Committee warns Phahlane against using the inquiry to discuss his labour dispute over his dismissal



Former acting commissioner Khomotso Phahlane. Picture: Supplied

The committee objected to Phahlane veering off topic and from the committee's terms of reference to complain about his suspension and dismissal from former police minister Fikile Mbalula.

Members of Parliament's Ad Hoc Committee investigating police corruption have warned former acting commissioner Khomotso Phahlane against using the inquiry to discuss his labour dispute and dismissal from the police.

The committee objected to Phahlane veering off topic and from the committee's terms of reference to complain about his suspension and dismissal from former police minister Fikile Mbalula.

Phahlane is still fighting his 2020 dismissal in

the Labour Appeals Court.

But committee chairperson Soviet Legkanyane told Phahlane that the committee hearings are not some kind of labour forum.

"We have not said it once in the proceedings we said it many times, that general Phahlane, we are not a dispute resolution forum and we are not in a review process."

Committee member Glynis Breytenbach also added her voice saying Phahlane's evidence is irrelevant.

"Mr Phahlane is now just talking constantly, like prosecuting his own labour related issues. It's got nothing to do with the terms of reference of this committee. It's completely irrelevant to the work we have to do." *EWN*

NW clamps down on overloaded scholar transport



North West scholar transport. Picture: Supplied

By: Matshidiso Selebeleng

As the first term of the new academic year begins, many learners across the North West rely on scholar transport to travel safely between their homes and schools. However, incidents of overloading continue to pose a serious risk to learner safety.

In November 2025, traffic officers in the province impounded a 15-seater scholar transport vehicle that was carrying 29 learners—almost double its permitted capacity. The incident was strongly condemned by the Department of Community Safety and Transport Management.

According to departmental media liaison officer Charles Matlou, while the province does not experience widespread challenges with scholar transport overloading, authorities remain vigilant and are urging communities to report any violations.

“We don’t have a major challenge with overloading because the service level agreement between the department and service providers is very clear,” said Matlou. “We specify how many learners must be transported to a particular school, which determines the type of vehicle to be used. However, we urge parents and community members to report any cases of overloading so that we can investigate.”

Matlou warned that offenders will face the full

might of the law.

To address the issue proactively, the province has deployed traffic officers across major routes to monitor scholar transport vehicles.

“Our traffic officers are active throughout the province. If they come across an overloaded vehicle, action is taken immediately. Fines are issued and the trip is halted until an additional vehicle is arranged to transport the excess learners,” he said.

MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Wessels Morweng, has reiterated that learner safety cannot be compromised under any circumstances.

While transport operators are primarily responsible for overcrowding, Matlou said parents also have a role to play.

“We urge parents to report service providers who overload vehicles, but we also caution them not to contribute to the problem by allowing their children to use unsafe, overloaded transport,” he said.

Matlou added that all traffic offences carry legal consequences.

“It becomes complex with parents because the department has agreements only with service providers. However, service providers who are pressured to break the law must report those responsible. Ultimately, we call on all parents to ensure that they never put their children’s lives at risk,” he said.

Creecy Hails Free State For Road Fatalities Reduction



Transport Minister Barbara Creecy. Picture: Supplied

By: JN Reporter

Transport Minister Barbara Creecy has commended the Free State for a significant reduction in road fatalities, attributing the improvement to strengthened law enforcement, public awareness campaigns and improved cooperation between authorities.

Presenting the 2025/26 festive season road safety report during a media briefing at the GCIS Ronnie Mamoepa Centre in Pretoria on Wednesday, Creecy said five provinces recorded declines in road deaths, with the Eastern Cape and Free State achieving the highest percentage reductions.

The report recorded 1 427 fatalities from 1 172 crashes, the lowest number of crashes in five years and equal to the fatality rate of the 2023/24 festive season. This represents a 5% decrease in both crashes and deaths compared to the previous year.

“The data shows that the 2025/26 festive season recorded the lowest number of crashes in five years and the same number of fatalities as the 2023/24 season,” Creecy said.

“Five provinces reported reductions in fatalities, with the highest percentage reduction recorded in the Eastern Cape, followed by the Free State. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate those provinces for the extremely hard work undertaken during the festive season.”

However, preliminary data shows an increase in road fatalities in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape and the Western Cape.

While welcoming the overall decline, Creecy said the continued loss of life on South Africa’s roads re-

mains a cause for national shame, noting that fatalities surged between 15 and 28 December, accounting for more than 40% of crashes and deaths.

“This confirms that festive season crashes and fatalities increase once travellers reach their final destination and engage in festivities, rather than during peak travel periods,” she said.

The most common crashes involved pedestrian collisions, hit-and-runs, single-vehicle overturns and head-on collisions. Many incidents occurred over weekends between 7pm and 9pm, and between midnight and 1am.

The highest number of pedestrian fatalities were recorded in the City of Cape Town, City of Johannesburg, eThekweni, Nkangala District and the City of Tshwane. Small motor vehicles accounted for 55% of crashes, while light delivery vehicles contributed 20%. Minibuses and trucks accounted for 7% and 6%, respectively.

Based on the findings, Creecy reiterated her call for a total ban on drinking and driving, saying the current law allowing alcohol consumption below a set limit must be amended.

“Our drinking and driving policy was formulated almost 30 years ago. In today’s South Africa, it is totally unacceptable that there is a law that allows people to drink and then drive,” she said.

“The time has come to amend the law so that we have a clear, easy-to-understand and unambiguous policy that says drinking and driving is not allowed.”

The call comes as data shows 8 561 of the 173 695 drivers tested during the festive season were found to be over the legal alcohol limit — a 144% increase compared to the previous year.

FS Foot-and-Mouth Cases Escalate: Parties React



By: Lerato Mutlanyane

Deadly, fast-spreading disease is decimating herds, sending shockwaves from farm to fork. As prices near the brink of soaring and supermarkets edge toward ration warnings, the outbreak has reached the halls of power, where political parties are diagnosing the crisis through starkly different lenses—not as a political battle but as an agricultural emergency.

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is highly contagious, primarily affecting cloven-hoofed animals including cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and various wildlife species. It directly impacts livestock health, production, and trade, posing a significant threat to the farming and livestock industry. Symptoms include fever, blisters, lesions, lameness, reduced milk production, rapid breathing, and decreased appetite.

Farmers are urged to control contact between infected and healthy animals and to ensure surfaces and environments are not contaminated. Preventative measures include isolation, supportive care, vaccination, culling, and strict biosecurity protocols.

On 9 January 2026, the Free State Department of Agriculture and Land Reform reported 194 confirmed active cases across all 11 local municipalities, including Moqhaka, Ngwatho, Mestimaholo, Mafube, Dikhalabeng, Nketoana, Phumelela, Maluti-A-Phofung, Matjhabeng, Nala, and Setsoto. KwaZulu-Natal, meanwhile, remains an epicenter with over 200 cases, according to the Farming Portal.

The disease has now crossed into commercial beef and dairy herds as well as game farms targeting cloven-hoofed species.

The South African red meat industry, valued at approximately R80 billion, faces immense pressure as prices fluctuate and farmers struggle to move animals

to abattoirs, resulting in major financial losses.

“Foot-and-mouth is a big problem, especially for upcoming farmers! They need income from selling stock, but the disease hinders them greatly. Some areas of the Free State are fortunate because they are not affected,” said farmer Barry Maree.

He added, “Vaccines are also difficult to obtain. The government has done nothing over the past 14 years to secure vaccines. In short, government has been sitting on its hands.”

However, Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen said the crisis is systemic, requiring significant change, financial commitment, and strict enforcement of animal movement controls. Towards the end of 2025, he announced the rollout of vaccination aimed at supplying 1 million doses.

Logistical constraints, potency concerns, and the high number of animals to vaccinate pose significant challenges, with private sector involvement needed for long-term self-sufficiency.

“South Africa’s path to regaining FMD-free status through vaccination will take years of sustained effort. Failure risks prolonged export bans, economic damage, and deepening rural hardship. For now, the nation watches as the most ambitious disease-control effort in modern history begins—impacting food security, rural stability, and the future of livestock farming,” stated the Farming Portal.

Political parties have demanded urgent intervention for months, but progress appears slow.

“Foot-and-mouth disease is no longer a distant threat—it is an active risk to farmers, food security, and the Free State economy. Urgent oversight, coordination, and accountability are needed. I have formally requested a joint meeting of the Legislature’s economic and governance committees to engage the Departments of Agriculture and Community Safety and key

agricultural organisations. We need clarity on vaccine availability, testing delays, and animal movement controls. Delays and fragmented responses will only worsen the crisis,” said Armand Cloete, Free State Freedom Front Plus Chairperson.

Thomas Macingwane, Provincial Deputy Chairperson of the Economic Freedom Fighters, added: “The Department of Agriculture’s lack of support for small-scale farmers has contributed to the rapid spread of contagious diseases.”

Most emerging farmers lack resources to vaccinate their livestock, delaying disease control. The Department focuses on established agricultural sectors, but neglecting the smallest farmers undermines the safety of the entire food chain.”

Roy Jankielsohn, DA Free State Provincial Leader, said: “We are in contact with both local and national agriculture departments regarding farmers’ concerns. We are also concerned about the lack of enforcement of restrictions when FMD is identified. Municipalities have failed to control cattle on public lands, allowing them to move freely across boundaries without permits.”

Dr. Wayne Boshoff, VF Plus National Leader and veterinarian, called for drastic action: “A state of disaster should be declared to contain FMD in the beef industry. Ministerial task teams’ recommendations have not been implemented since 2016. Declaring a state of disaster would secure additional public funds exclusively for disease control. Vaccine production capacity exists in South Africa, but it must be activated.”

The crisis escalated significantly under the current Minister; failure to act urgently would be unforgivable.”

The fight against foot-and-mouth disease continues, with the nation awaiting decisive action from the national government.

NW school hit by Grade R overcrowding

North West Education MEC Viola Motsumi has expressed concerns that Tshenolo Primary School may experience overcrowding in its Grade R classes, with numbers expected to exceed 100 pupils, while the school currently has only three classrooms for the youngest learners.

Motsumi spoke on Wednesday morning as schools across the province reopened for the 2026 academic year.

This comes after Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube released the 2025 National Senior Certificate exam results on Monday, which showed an 88% pass rate for the class of 2025.

Gwarube and Motsumi officially launched the 2026 Back-to-School programme at Tshenolo Primary in Lehlabile Township, focusing on Grade R and Grade 1 learners attending school for the first time.

Motsumi confirmed she had engaged with the principal and school management to assess readiness for reopening.

“They indicated that they are ready for today, but raised some concerns about walk-ins from parents, especially for Grade R,” she said in an interview with broadcaster Newzroom Afrika.

Last year, the school had 95 Grade R learners. This year, numbers are expected to exceed 100.

“If it increases to 150 or 170, the school will face overcrowding, which will require additional classrooms and teachers,” Motsumi said.

She emphasised the province’s focus on the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), which is a government initiative that provides nutritious meals to learners in public schools, especially in underprivileged areas, to improve health, concentration, and educational outcomes.



“Many schools do not yet have the programme fully operational. At this school, classes are being used to support the NSNP, and the school has received Section 21 funding without issues,” she said.

She said that while stationery has been delivered, textbooks are still pending, awaiting final enrolment figures.

Motsumi said Tshenolo Primary was built in 1992 and has historically faced infrastructure challenges. She said Gwarube’s visit to a township school, rath-

er than a suburban one, allowed her to see these issues firsthand.

“The expectation is that the minister can assist with interventions, including engaging the Treasury to support improvements in the education sector,” she said.

Motsumi praised the school’s management, saying that it currently has only one teaching vacancy.

“The district director has already signed off on an extra teacher, who will be in place before March,” she said. **!ol**

Back-To-School With Journal News

Big Smiles Mark Grade 1 Beginnings

Cheers, hugs and proud smiles filled thousands of homes as little bundles of joy stepped into their first-grade classrooms for the very first time.

A moment that will be remembered for years to come.

Journal News Senior reporter, **Abigail Visagie**, caught up with our beloved readers, parents, as well as grade 1 learners, to hear what they had to say.



Reabetswe Phele is the proud mother of her superstar, Bothale Phele, who started the first day of school on Wednesday. Reabetswe hopes that Bothale will enjoy the amazing adventures, meet new people and learn interesting things. "Be courageous, compassionate, and remember to have fun! Mommy and Daddy love you," said Reabetswe.



Chanzil Jacquire officially became an eendjie as she started her first day of school at Oranje Meisieskool in Bloemfontein. Proud parents Charnette and Denzil Jacquire only wish the very best for Chanzil and hope that her school journey will be filled with so many adventures filled with learning, playing and valuable friendships.



Lesedi Mosoeu started his first day at the Tweespruit Primary school. His mother, Tsholofelo Mosoeu, said this: "To my big boy, as you start grade 1, be brave, be kind and never stop trying. I am so proud of you and will always be by your side."



Liyema Makhamba started his first day at Bergmanshoogte Primary school in Philippolis on Wednesday! His parents would like to congratulate him and hope this new journey will be a fruitful and good year that will produce good results.



Proud father, Khotso Hlobelo, would like to wish his bundle of joy, Nyakallo, all the best as she embarks on this magnificent journey. "I am so proud of you, Nyakallo, I know you will do very well!" said Hlobelo.



Daddy Setshaba Marumo Wa Tshimega's little princess, Phatsimo, started the first day of her school career and her father said that all he wants is for her school career to be filled with sweet and loving memories.



Proud mother Bianca Fillies shares that her pride and joy, Kairo Fillies, started his first day of school at Joe Solomon Primary school, and she could not be more excited and proud of him. "May God grant you all the wisdom and knowledge," prays Fillies.



Cherry-lee Jacobs encourages her little angel, Lia Jacobs, to continue sparkling and shining like the star she is. "May you continue to flourish and grow amazingly," said Jacobs.



Sherozaan Sieberts started her school journey at Heide Primary School and is quite eager to explore her new classroom. She said she cannot wait to learn mathematics and how to write her name!



Owaratwa Mofokeng began her first day of school at Clubview Primary School in QwaQwa, and her mother truly believes that she is destined for greatness. Her mother wished her nothing but the best!



started her first day of school on her birthday at Fundoland Christian Academy. Her proud parents believe that she is going to rock her first year of school and believe fully in her potential and capacity.



Remothabetswe Raleting said that although her first day at Fauna Primary school may be overwhelming and scary, she is really excited to be in grade 1!



Amogelang Molathegi's mother said that she is so proud and prays that he will keep on succeeding and will do well during his school career.



Riley Mokomela's mother hopes that the grade 1 learner at Heide Primary school will have quite the adventure at school, but will also do tremendously well, as she's the hope at home.



Letlotlo Anesu Ncamane started his first day at Brebner Primary School, and his mother hopes he begins his school journey with respect, determination, love and forgiveness.



Maboea Puisano's parents encouraged the Grade 1 learner from Sentinel Primary School in Qwaqwa to put on his big-boy pants as his little heart beats fast. "We'd like to wish you an incredible year in Grade 1," they said.



Pulane Mofokeng started Grade 1 on Wednesday, and her mother shared a heartfelt message: "My precious daughter, my firstborn, as you step into school today, remember that my love wraps around you like a warm hug. Every step you take makes my heart swell with pride. Be brave, be kind, and shine like the star you are."



Aphiwe Nyama began her school journey at Matsikeng Intermediate School and was excited about her new adventures and the friends she made. Her mother hopes Aphiwe will learn a lot and have fun along the way.



Christina Modise is proud of her little bundle of joy, Tlotliso Modise, who showed great eagerness to meet his new friends and teacher on his first day of school.



Kyle Scheepers' mother, Fezakiah Strauss, wished her son a year filled with happy learning, new friends, big smiles and exciting adventures. "Keep being kind, curious and brave. You are going to do amazing things. I am so proud of you and can't wait to see how much you grow," she said.



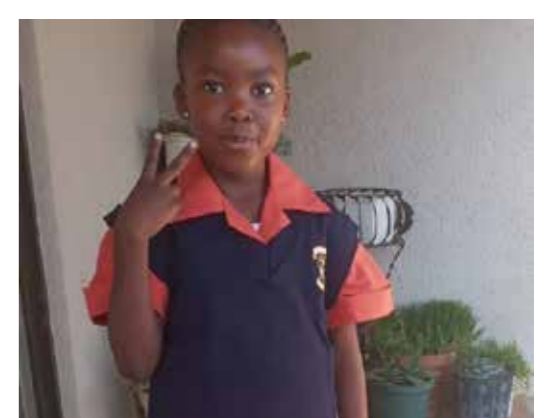
Langa Mochoari has officially started Grade 1, and his mother could not be prouder. "I'm excited to see you make new memories and friends. May God protect you and fulfil all the desires of your heart. Remember to be kind, listen to your teacher, and always try your best. I will be thinking of you every day and cheering you on from afar."



Vivian Rantji's precious daughter, Letlotlo Rantji, started Grade 1 at Mmusi Moroka Royal Academy in the North West. "I am so proud of you. Every day you try your best, and that makes my heart happy. You are smart, kind and exceptional. Remember, when something feels hard, don't give up—keep trying," she said.



their daughter, Kayden Munnick, a blessed year in Grade 1 at Academy of Excellence. "First day, best day. Books, pencils and lots of dreams! Off to a great start—make the best of it!"



Lethabo Tsoala started her schooling career in Marquard Primary school as a grade one scholar. She is happy and quite excited to officially start school.

Free State, North West royals unite to drive rural growth



By: Matshidiso Selebeleng

In a move aimed at unlocking rural economic potential, Free State MEC for Finance, Economic Development and Tourism Ketso Makume joined traditional leaders from Qwa-Qwa on a high-level visit to Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela monarch Kgosi Nyalala Pilane in the North West, strengthening inter-provincial cooperation and knowledge sharing.

Makume, together with His Majesty Morena Moremoholo Mopeli, Morena Montwedi Mota and Morena Napo Mopeli of Qwa-Qwa, visited His Majesty Kgosi Nyalala Pilane of the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela in the North West Province on Friday.

According to the Chief Executive Officer of the Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority (FSLTA), Obakeng Seseane, the visit reflects a united commitment by traditional leadership in the Free State to explore sustainable development models aimed at uplifting rural communities.

"The visit formed part of ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral relations between the Free State and North West provinces, which share common socio-economic characteristics, particularly being

predominantly rural and home to large communities under traditional leadership and monarchies," said Seseane.

He added that the engagement sought to request Kgosi Pilane to share insights and best practices drawn from the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela's economic development achievements. These include community-driven development, investment partnerships, governance of communal assets and inclusive economic participation, with a key focus on promoting rural tourism through monarchies.

The shared characteristics between the two provinces place them in a strong position to grow their local economies through collaboration, which could ultimately contribute to the national economy. This view was echoed by MEC Makume, who emphasised that when rural areas are properly supported and led through effective collaboration between government and traditional authorities, they can become viable centres of economic growth and social development.

Lessons drawn from the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela's experience are expected to inform strategies aimed at strengthening rural economies in the Free State, particularly in Qwa-Qwa and other traditional areas.

Seseane said the meeting reaffirmed the importance of inter-provincial cooperation, knowledge sharing and partnerships as catalysts for sustainable development, job creation and improved livelihoods in rural communities.

"The Free State Provincial Government remains committed to working closely with traditional leadership structures to unlock economic opportunities and ensure that rural development remains a priority within the broader provincial and national development agenda," he said.

Kgosi Pilane is expected to undertake a follow-up visit to the Free State, during which he will tour the Qwa-Qwa area to explore its economic potential and opportunities.

The visit will also seek to identify possible interventions to stimulate economic growth in the region and contribute to the broader development of the province.

The meeting was also attended by His Majesty Prince Herman Malatsi Siwa from the Khoisan community, a youth leader, cultural activist and artist known for his efforts to preserve and promote Khoisan heritage.

Another twist in Sol Plaatje municipal manager debacle

SOL PLAATJE municipal manager Thapelo Matlala could return to his desk next week if he succeeds in an urgent application to overturn his suspension.

The municipality withdrew an urgent application in the Northern Cape High Court on January 12 to prevent Matlala from entering the municipal offices in Kimberley to protect the integrity of disciplinary proceedings against him.

The charges relate to the awarding of a R25 million tender for the upgrading of the Roodepan and Legaeng pump stations, and the appointment of the chief financial officer.

Matlala reported for duty on January 5 with private bodyguards after his three-month precautionary suspension automatically lapsed on December 17. He was unable to enter as the locks and keys to his office had been changed.

The Speaker, Dipuo Peters, proceeded to lay charges of intimidation, citing fears for her safety as well as that of senior managers and staff, as the bodyguards were armed and were "unknown personnel" entering the municipal offices.

Matlala's legal representative maintained that no one was threatened and that "there was nothing wrong with him beeping up security" since his suspension occurred under "chaotic circumstances".

On the same date as his return, Matlala was instructed by a private law firm appointed by the municipality to vacate the building and return on January 6.

Members of the public objected strongly to Matlala's return prior to the completion of the investigation.

An attempt was made to grind open the door last week following a special council meeting that proceeded to suspend Matlala again on January 8 for a further 90 days.

Opposition parties indicated that procedures were not followed as they were not permitted to vote for or against the motion to suspend him.

While his disciplinary hearing commenced on January 13, it was indicated in court papers that should disciplinary processes against a senior manager not be concluded within a three-month suspension period, it automatically lapses.

It was argued that the special council meeting was irregular and that no proper records existed of the resolution to suspend Matlala.

Matlala stated that the failure to allow him an opportunity to make written representations was an act of "gross unfairness and a brazen act of lawlessness".

He believed that his right to work was being violated, while the absence of an explanation as to why he should not assume his duties as municipal manager was "unforgivable" and amounted to an abuse of power.

He described the suspension as "illegal and shameful".

The charges Matlala was charged for the cessation of a contract with True Build to Kapa Koni Investments for the upgrading of the Eagle Street and Legaeng pump stations in Roodepan in August 2022.

Payments were made to Kapa Koni Investments, although no work was rendered and the site was abandoned.

Mass community protests were staged over the stalled project as a result of constant sewage spillages.

The former acting director of Infrastructure and Services, Phetole Sithole, was suspended shortly after refusing to approve the R4.2 million payment due to the contractor's non-compliance status and concerns that supply chain management processes were flouted.

He raised concerns as True Build had been paid R2.2 million for the site establishment of the Roodepan pump stations.

The R4.2 million payment was later signed off, where an amount of R500,000 was deducted from the main amount to pay the South African Revenue Service (Sars) on behalf of the service provider to assist them in becoming tax compliant.

Matlala has also been charged for the "irregular appointment" of the chief financial officer, where the appointment will have to be taken on review.

Need to restore public trust and order

Sol Plaatje executive mayor Martha Bartlett, in court papers, pointed out that the "widespread public reaction, civic mobilisation and political sensitivity" surrounding Matlala's conduct heightened the instability caused at the municipality.

She added that Matlala was facing serious charges, including interference in supply chain management processes, irregular appointments, abuse and misuse of financial resources, and financial misconduct.

Bartlett stated that personnel were alarmed by the presence of the armed security guards, while administrative duties were disrupted. - DFA

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Building an Army of Women Leaders

Through mentorship, strategy, and collaboration, Modisenyane is equipping women entrepreneurs with the tools to succeed and leave a lasting legacy



Businesswoman Tshipiso Modisenyane. PHOTO: Facebook

By: Lerato Mutlanyane

Businesswoman Tshipiso Modisenyane is rewriting the rules for women in business. Through her Precious Women Organisation, she is turning ambition into action—mentoring, networking, and equipping women entrepreneurs with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to thrive in a competitive market.

On 9 January 2026, she brought together 83 SMME owners for a masterclass in strategy, compliance, and growth, proving that the future of women-led business is unstoppable.

With a decade of success, the Precious Women Organisation prioritizes SMMEs, youth, women, and children, with a clear goal of fostering growth and economic empowerment among local business owners.

"Upon establishing this organization, I realized that most businesses operate traditionally and often don't comply with legislative

requirements. That's when I decided to use my acquired business knowledge, alongside my family lineage of successful entrepreneurs, to enlighten others," Modisenyane shared.

The event brought together existing SMMEs and startup enterprises to engage on crucial aspects of business foundations, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and everyday challenges entrepreneurs face.

Heavyweights of the business spectrum were invited, including stakeholders, motivational speakers, and industry experts, to help forge a supportive structure for women business owners to ascend to success.

A total of 83 SMME owners attended, benefiting from masterclasses and presentations by Nedbank, SEDFA, SARS, and FDC.

Tshipiso Modisenyane is proving that the future of women in business is collaborative, strategic, and unapologetically powerful. She is not just hosting events—she is curating a legacy of leaders.

Opinion

NW University blog post



How Online Learning Is Redefining The Education Journey

The South African education landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. For ambitious South Africans, especially young millennials juggling careers, family, and personal growth, online learning is no longer just a flexible alternative; it's fast becoming the smart, strategic choice for tertiary education.

Choosing to study online in South Africa through North-West University (NWU) allows you to obtain a high-quality qualification at an affordable price, accelerating your career right from home.

Here is how NWU's online offerings are redefining the education journey for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Why Online Learning Works

Online learning is poised to redefine the mainstream learning landscape in South Africa by leveraging technology to solve traditional barriers.

- **Flexibility and Accessibility:** Online education offers unparalleled flexibility, enabling you to tailor your studies to your own pace and schedule, making it ideal for working professionals and those with family commitments. It provides access to education for a wider audience, including those in remote or rural areas.

- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Online learning can often be more cost-effective than traditional on-campus programmes, as it saves on costs associated with commuting, housing, and textbooks.

- **Future-Ready Skills:** The digital learning environment prepares students for an evolving digital future by fostering collaboration on shared platforms and utilising digital tools for communication and problem-solving.

Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate Applications

The process to study online in South Africa at NWU is streamlined, but the required documentation and deadlines differ significantly depending on your academic level.

Undergraduate & General Distance Learning Ap-



Application

- **Who Applies:** New students applying for a Bachelor's degree, Diploma, or Certificate.
- **Application Process:** The process is primarily online. A single application form must be completed in full.

- **Key Documents:** You must submit certified copies of your ID and your final Grade 11 or Grade 12 results electronically.

- **Deadlines:** Application dates vary by program. For example, BEd programs may close earlier (e.g., July 30), while others, such as the Advanced

Diploma in Education, may close later (e.g., September 30).

Postgraduate (Honours, Master's, and Doctoral) Application

- **Who Applies:** Students who already hold a relevant Bachelor's degree and seek advanced study.

- **Application Process:** There are two options: applying online through the relevant portal (one for Honours and one for Master's/Doctoral studies) or by emailing the PDF-fillable application form to the Higher Degree Administration office at the relevant campus (Mahikeng, Potchefstroom, or Vanderbijlpark).

- **Key Documents:** You must include records of previous university results. For Master's and Doctoral studies, you are advised to contact a probable supervisor/promoter who must sign your form.

- **Deadlines:** Master's application closing dates are determined by the faculty and vary widely, with some as early as June 30. PhD studies have no official closing date, but contact with a promoter is advised before applying.

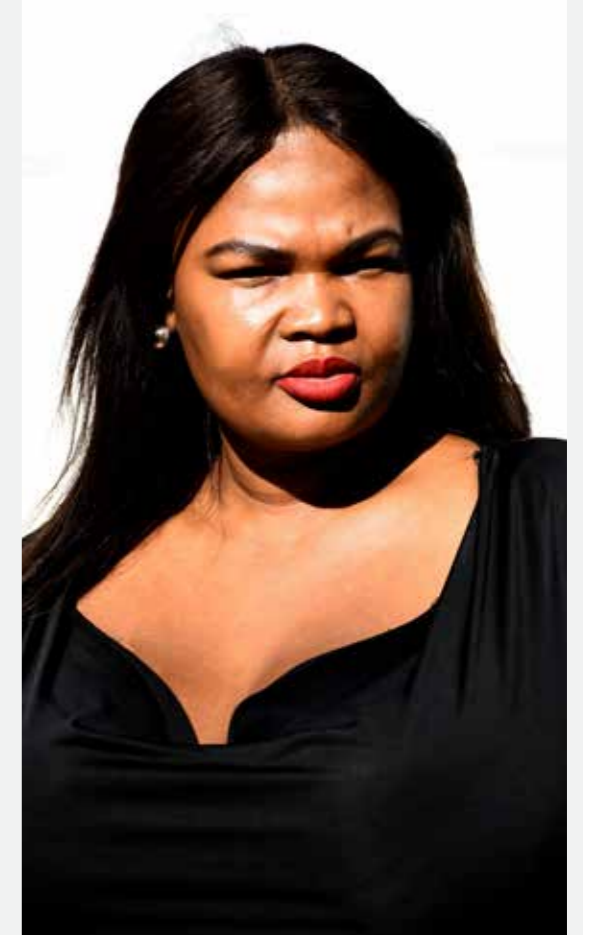
- **Exam Experience:** Fully Online and High-Tech NWU's study online South Africa approach ensures that even the final examination process is adapted for the digital age, offering convenience without sacrificing integrity.

- **Fully Online Assessments:** NWU has implemented a fully online assessment process where you receive, complete, and submit your exam papers entirely online.

- **Device Requirements:** You must have access to a computer (laptop/desktop) with a functional camera and microphone, as well as a stable internet connection.

- **The Invigilator Application:** NWU uses the full functionality of The Invigilator application to ensure exam rules are strictly adhered to, allowing you to write from home or any suitable venue.

Top Achievers must chart their own path



Refilwe Mochoari
Editor-in-Chief

It is that time of the year again when learners have to choose careers that will help shape their future.

Contrary to the excitement of looking forward to the start of a new journey learners are often bombarded and overwhelmed with expectations from family, friends, and society as a whole.

Hi everyone, my name is Refilwe Mochoari, let's talk about Matric top achievers and why they need to break away from societal expectations.

This week I was in an e-hailing taxi to work and the driver excitedly shared with me about his granddaughter who has achieved a Bachelor's pass along with one distinction in her Matric results.

He told me she was coming to the Free State to search for a school because they did not help her apply to any higher education institution last year.

When I asked why they did that, he said they (the family) did not expect her to pass, and I would like to quote him.

"We did not think that she would even complete Grade 12 or even get a simple pass. I cannot believe that she achieved such good marks because she was not serious about her schoolwork."

"We expected nothing more from her. We were not even certain that she wrote all her exams...."

In other words, this family expected the worst from their child. They expected her to be a failure in life and she was able to break free from that stigma.

Sadly this is not an isolated incident. We see how the opposite is expected from top academic achievers.

In South Africa, the narrative around academic achievement is often dominated by traditional careers such as medicine, law, engineering, and accounting fields, but what about the students who defy convention and pursue their passion? Art, literature, or philosophy?

The truth is, the arts and humanities are the fields that shape our culture, challenge the norms, and inspire innovation.

These fields are the backbone of a vibrant society, and our fixation on "top achiever careers" is doing society a disservice.

Top academic achievers who choose Humanities face intense pressure and are often met with eyebrows and unsolicited advice that they should be practical in the careers that they choose.

But, what about what they want? Why is society putting pressure on top achievers who are breaking the standards set by society?

Why are they not allowed to succeed on their own terms?

Why do families put pressure on their children? Often these top achievers get to higher institutions and are faced with anxiety, stress, and depression because they are being discouraged from being their authentic selves, and in some instances fall into the trap of substance abuse.

Siza Gule, a Soweto-born top achiever from St Johns College in Johannesburg scored nine distinctions with an aggregate of 94%.

He has secured a spot at the Ivy League university Harvard to study Theatre, Politics, and will major in Law.

His course choice has sparked widespread debate and he has received backlash for choosing to study politics and theatre.

Why do we, as a society, feel entitled to scrutinise his choices?

Can we not celebrate him without judgment? Can we not celebrate his courage to pursue his dreams the way he feels is right?

In 2026 let us allow people to do what they want with their lives.

Societal expectations discourage people from being their authentic selves. Today as the Free State Department of Education celebrates the top 100 matriculants, I would like to encourage every adult and all citizens to congratulate the learners without judgment.

Let us celebrate them for their hard work.

As they embark on a new chapter of their life journeys, let us encourage them to excel and pursue their chosen studies.

Let us not dictate to them which career paths they have to take.

It is not fair to them, nor is it fair to anyone.

It is not fair to live according to the expectations of others.

This way we will have fewer students dropping out of their courses, fewer students falling into depression and anxiety.

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

The Art Of Unlearning

Many of us strive for growth. This comes through pushing yourself, learning, and experience. But, many aren't as intentional with the process of unlearning out-of-date and ineffective things. If we aren't unlearning, we're not adapting effectively. The only question is, how do we unlearn?

We can't just start unlearning things. First, we need to identify what is out of date and no longer a useful or effective method, process, position, etc. The only way we can do this is if we take a step back and look at what's working and what's not working in our organization and our leadership.

We have to look closely at what processes are no longer aiding our organization and its mission. Once we know what doesn't work, then we can unlearn.

This shouldn't be a mission you undergo alone. Get your team to sit down together and voice their experiences – they most likely have a unique insight into the processes and programs you're discussing and can help you and your team come to a conclusion.

Involve your team and make sure they are heard. This is key to an effective analysis and successfully unlearning the useless information your organization is still holding onto.

In conclusion, while it is paramount each of us pursues learning over each of our lifetimes, we also must be intentional to unlearn what is no longer necessary. Take time to analyze your systems, structures, and processes. Change what needs to be changed – eliminate what is no longer of use to your organization's mission and goal. We must be deliberate to unlearn!

Different ways you can use to unlearn:

- Receive outside help from a professional coach or mentor
- Read books that are relevant to your industry
- Associate with those ahead of you
- Expose your mind to greater things related to your industry
- Ask important and relevant questions

The process to improvement is simple you learn, unlearn and relearn. See you at the top

New NDPP Faces a Tough Task to Fix Broken NPA

Asked a direct question by the CNN award-winning journalist, Christiane Amanpour, on whether he has "any information that might implicate President Zuma in any acts of corruption", the late Pravin Gordhan responded matter-of-factly. "No, I don't have any personal information, but as I said, there are all sorts of suggestions not just about the president".

Interestingly and embarrassingly so, Amanpour asked the most basic question that had escaped South Africa's journalistic fraternity. Hoodwinked by the so-called state capture narrative, the media fraternity eagerly lapped up everything coming out of Gordhan's mouth.

In the end, Gordhan was exposed as nothing more than a petty, jealous, and probably racist state capture propagandist. It didn't help at the time that, for the media fraternity, South Africans were divided into saints and demons. Anyone with a remote connection to the former President Jacob Zuma was considered a demon.

The likes of the former Public Protector Busiswe Mkhwebane were routinely targeted. The Constitutional Court stopped this infectious conduct in its tracks. In a majority judgment penned by Justice Madlanga, the apex court remarked. "There appears to be a developing trend of seeking personal costs orders in most, if not all, matters involving the Public Protector.... with no consideration whatsoever of special circumstances that justified the order.... And in the instant matter, the High Court – in its conclusions – has carefully selected and used epithets and particular nouns that are suited to awards of personal costs orders, but there is not a scintilla of evidence to support those epithets and particular nouns and, therefore, the conclusions. Thus, the conclusions simply cannot stand up to scrutiny." Justice Madlanga concluded by pointing out that "courts must be wary not to fall into the trap of thinking that the Public Protector is fair game for automatic personal costs awards."

The appointment of Advocate Shamila Batohi as National Director of Public Prosecution came at a time when citizens were perceived as either good or bad. Batohi wasted no time in embracing the so-called state capture narrative. In doing so, she quickly branded herself corruption buster in chief.

She promised to solve high-profile cases. She failed. Spectacularly so.

Batohi's tendency to hide behind the so-called state capture could take her so far, and no further. Providing the background behind her resignation in late 2021, the head of the National Prosecuting Authority's (NPA) Investigating Directorate, Hermi-

one Cronje, cited deep institutional dysfunction, resource constraints, and an inability to implement necessary reforms. Cronje reportedly felt isolated. She reportedly averred. "It was very exhausting and frustrating because on the one hand you are trying to build a case and on the other hand you have nothing. You have no staff, no infrastructure, no budget, just generally no support."

Batohi has had enough time to institute the necessary reforms. She dismally failed to do so. Instead, the NPA relied on "temporary or borrowed staff who were often overwhelmed or inexperienced, and an inability to recruit top talent due to uncompetitive government pay scales."

Athol Trollip, ActionSA MP, could not have been clearer. "Under Batohi's leadership, the NPA reels from one scandal to the next. South Africans are left wondering if these failures are merely a result of incompetence or if there is a deliberate agenda to protect the corrupt."

While Batohi has sought to blame others for her unquestionably poor track record, the way she conducted herself in the ongoing commissions reveals that she was the personification of incompetence and all that is wrong with the NPA.

During her appearance before the Ad Hoc Committee of Parliament, for instance, Batohi came across as dishonest.

She feigned ignorance of the repeated submissions made by former Mayor Herman Mashaba. Mashaba had, starting in 2019, implicated Gauteng Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Advocate Andrew Chauke in allegedly refusing to investigate over 6,000 cases totalling more than R35 billion.

Batohi was forced to backtrack after ActionSA MP Dereleen James presented emails showing Batohi was copied on these reports. She has since been accused of enabling within the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA).

Batohi found herself in hot water after she tried to irresponsibly link the suspended Gauteng Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Andrew Chauke to activities related to the so-called state capture. When quizzed, she admitted that she had no personal knowledge or evidence to support her imputation. To cast aspersions against colleagues seems to come easily to Batohi. That she has lasted so long in the position is a serious indictment of the self-proclaimed defenders of constitutionalism and the rule of law. In what could be described as a display of pomposity and total disrespect, Batohi decided to abandon, while under cross-examination, an inquiry set to look into Gauteng Director of Public Prosecutions Advocate Andrew Chauke's fit-

ness to hold office. Batohi's conduct drew a sharp rebuke from the inquiry's chairperson, retired Justice Bess Nkabinde. Nkabinde remarked. "Advocate Batohi, you have been totally disrespectful to everybody... we have been so patient with you... Today you decided to be totally disrespectful to this hearing, not only to us but to everybody here."

A clearly incensed chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of Justice and Constitutional Development, Mr Xola Nqola, concurred.

"[Batohi's] abrupt departure and subsequent refusal to continue testimony without consultation, despite being on the witness stand, are deeply troubling. It constitutes an unacceptable disregard for the principles of accountability and respect for due process."

The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) is the cornerstone of our criminal justice system, and its leadership must at all times exemplify the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and commitment to justice."

The highest standards of integrity and professionalism were clearly absent. Batohi's lack of fitness became glaringly obvious when the NPA became reluctant to prosecute Ramaphosa following a detailed report by an independent parliamentary panel, which established, prima facie, that Ramaphosa is in serious violation of the law and the constitution. Batohi could not bite the hand that fed her. President Ramaphosa's decision to appoint Advocate Andy Mothibi, the current head of the country's Special Investigating Unit (SIU), to replace Batohi has solicited mixed reactions.

In some quarters, Mothibi is seen as someone who, like Batohi, would shield Ramaphosa from being accountable for his misdeeds on the Phala Phala farmgate scandal. Mothibi was appointed after the panel, chaired by Justice Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi and composed of leaders of the legal fraternity and Chapter 9 institutions, advised the President that none of the interviewed candidates were suitable for the role of NDPP.

The decision by President Ramaphosa to abandon the use of a panel to appoint the Mothibi comes as no surprise. The use of the presidential panel was always deceptive.

Appointing the head of the NPA through parliament is the surest way to shield the NPA from executive influence and control. So far, the jury is out on whether Mothibi would rise to the challenge of ensuring that the NPA exercises its functions without fear, favour, or prejudice.

* **Professor Sipho P. Seepe, Higher Education and Strategy Consultant.**

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.33	0.42%	▲
Rand/Pound	21.86	0.85%	▲
Rand/Euro	18.95	0.76%	▲
Platinum	2 376.05	-0.82%	▼
Brent Crude	63.51	-3.25%	▼
Gold	4 606.88	-0.42%	▼
Etherium	3 324.55	-1.19%	▼
Bitcoin	9 6613.1	-0.84%	▼

Moruleng Traders Cash In on ANC Festivities

By: Abigail Visagie

The African National Congress's (ANC) decision to host its January 8 celebrations in the dusty streets of Moruleng village in the North West province thrust the area into the national spotlight — delivering a short-term economic boost for both formal and informal traders.

The influx of party leadership, delegates and supporters injected fresh spending into the local economy, driving demand for accommodation, transport and food. Small businesses, in particular, benefited as visitors opened their wallets during the weekend-long celebrations.

However, the strategy of using major political events to stimulate local economic recovery drew mixed reactions. While some residents welcomed the activity, others criticised the ANC for staging the event in the rural village of Moruleng, where the stadium — built to accommodate 20 000 people — failed to reach full capacity.

Despite what some interpreted as a muted show of political support, business was brisk for many traders.

Up-and-coming Rustenburg-based entrepreneur Tshepamoo Mmusi secured her first-ever catering gig at the ANC's 114th anniversary celebrations and exceeded her projected earnings.

Mmusi, who launched her catering company last year, said she had struggled to gain entry onto the Central Supplier Database (CSD). Once approved, her business, K&T Consultant, landed a catering contract for the event.

"Although I faced a few challenges, I made more revenue than I had anticipated. It was a valuable learning experience, and overall I truly enjoyed it," said Mmusi.

She added that income from selling hot dogs, cold drinks and confectionery items would help sustain her business through January's typically slow trading period.

Entrepreneur Sithembiso Mthethwa travelled from Gauteng in hopes of tapping into the festive crowds.

"Locals were initially hostile, especially since I'm not from the North West," Mthethwa said.

Undeterred, he set up his stall in the early hours of the morning — a move that paid off. Mthethwa, who owns Sassy Food Pro in Gauteng, said food entrepreneurship was more than just business.

"When something is your passion, you naturally work smarter and harder," he said. "I exceeded my in-



Local vendors, Tshepamoo Mmusi and Sithembiso Mthethwa. Picture: Abigail Visagie

come expectations and really enjoyed learning more about the North West and its local economy."

Not all experiences were positive.

A local chef from Moruleng expressed frustration after spending nearly R3 000 on compliance and acceptance certificates, only to struggle to trade on the day.

"I arrived early with an official vendor access ticket, but I couldn't even park my car or trailer at the selling point," she said. "I was told the area was already full, and I had to leave some of my equipment behind."

The chef said she earned just R300, far below expect-

tations, and felt sidelined as vendors from other provinces were allowed to operate with fewer hurdles.

"I urge the ANC to stop being disorganised and honour its promises. If compliance certificates are required, they must be properly enforced — some of us spent our children's school fees hoping to make a decent return," she said.

While the celebrations brought cash into Moruleng, they also raised difficult questions about fairness, planning and who truly benefits when politics comes to town.

Eskom at Its Strongest in Five Years



Eskom Group CEO Dan Marokane. Picture: (x) @mybroadband

Eskom has announced that it has entered the New Year with a "structurally stronger system" than it has in five years.

The power utility said this was the result of the implementation of the Generation Recovery Plan which commenced in April 2023.

Eskom comes into 2026 with an additional 4400 MW of capacity available than it did last year.

"The big picture through the peaks and troughs of delivering the Generation Recovery Plan is that Eskom has moved from a heavily constrained power system to an increasingly stable one, a power system that can reliably deliver 24/7, 365 baseload power," Eskom Group Chief Executive, Dan Marokane said.

Results of the delivery of the plan include:

The Energy Availability Factor (EAF) has risen from 56.03% to 64.55%. During the current financial year, from 1 April 2025 to date, the fleet has achieved or exceeded the 70% benchmark on 55 occasions.

Scheduled maintenance, also known as Planned Capacity Loss Factor (PCLF), reached a high of 12.76% in Financial Year (FY) 2025 following an intensive period of maintenance, and is currently at 9.32%, trending towards the global-best practice for power systems.

The Unplanned Capacity Loss Factor (UCLF) declined from 31.92% to 16.02%.

The savings from diesel usage in FY 2025 were around R16 billion and continues to decrease in FY 2026, due to the reliability of the coal fleet increasing, enabling the safe reduction in the use of the open-cycle gas turbines (OCGTs), which play a vital role in providing emergency support during periods of supply shortage.

"We will now maintain and build upon these early gains through a rigorous focus on operational reliability and sustainability.

"It has been 'short-term pain for long-term gain', and I would like to thank the country for its understanding and support, as well as our employees for continuing to deliver on our strategy," Marokane added.

Furthermore, the R254 billion Eskom Debt Relief package provided by government has reduced the pressure on the power utility's balance sheet and allowed it to carry out essential maintenance and investment into the fleet.

"A reliable power system is not just measured in megawatts; it is measured in investor confidence.

"The impact of Eskom's improved performance has contributed towards South Africa receiving its first credit rating upgrade in two decades and the risk rating associated with Eskom's 2033 bonds has dropped, providing early indicators to investors warning of the turnaround," Marokane noted. — [SAnews.gov.za](#)

New year, new training budget: The skills decisions that will matter most this year

For many South African organisations, the new year brings renewed pressure to justify every line item, including training budgets.

But while skills development is often treated as a compliance exercise, forward-thinking businesses are using their annual training spend to solve far more practical

According to CTU Training Solutions, organisations that approach skills development strategically at the start of the year gain a measurable advantage, not just in compliance, but in operational resilience.

Emmentia Booysen, Skills Development Manager at CTU, says the biggest mistake employers make is assuming that training must be generic to be compliant.

"One of the most persistent myths is that skills development has to be disconnected from real business needs," Booysen explains.

"In reality, the strongest skills strategies are the ones that solve immediate operational challenges while still meeting learnership and WSP requirements."

The Skills Gap Is No Longer Abstract

South African businesses are no longer talking about skills shortages in theory, they are experiencing them daily. Cybersecurity incidents, cloud migration challenges, data capability gaps, and inexperienced junior managers are placing pressure on teams that are already stretched.

"What we're seeing is that companies don't necessarily need more training, they need the right training," says Booysen. "That's where occupational certificates and structured learnerships become extremely powerful." Unlike short courses, occupational qualifications are designed around real job roles, making them ideal for organisations looking to build capability internally rather than recruit scarce skills externally.

Occupational Certificates That Align With Real Roles CTU has seen growing demand for occupational



qualifications that directly support priority business functions, particularly in technology and management. Among the most popular learnership-aligned programmes are:

- Occupational Certificate: Cybersecurity Analyst (NQF 5)
Ideal for organisations needing internal security monitoring, risk awareness, and incident response capability.
- Occupational Certificate: Cloud Administrator (NQF 4)
Supports businesses transitioning to cloud-based environments or managing Microsoft and hybrid infrastructure.
- Occupational Certificate: Artificial Intelligence Software Developer (NQF 5)
Designed for organisations exploring automation, AI-driven solutions, and data-led innovation.
- Higher Certificate in Management (NQF 5)
Frequently used to upskill junior managers, supervisors, and team leads — a critical but often overlooked

risk area.

These qualifications are practical, structured, and highly applicable. They allow businesses to invest in people who already understand their organisation, rather than constantly trying to hire from a shrinking talent pool.

"When training is aligned to an actual role, the return on investment becomes far easier to see," says Booysen. This approach also simplifies WSP reporting and creates clearer links between training activity and business performance.

Watch this space: Annual WSP Online Event
CTU's Corporate Division will be hosting an online awareness session in March focused on Workplace Skills Planning, annual training spend, and practical skills development strategy.

The session will unpack how organisations can make smarter use of their training budgets, navigate WSP requirements with confidence, and align skills development with real workforce needs.

Further details will be shared closer to the event. **BT**

NW businesses maintain optimistic outlook despite slow end to 2025, finds NatWest Growth Tracker

The latest NatWest Growth Tracker showed a subdued end to 2025 for the North West's private sector economy, although business expectations for the year ahead remained positive, reflecting hopes of a recovery in market conditions.

The high street bank's headline North West Business Activity Index — which measures changes in the region's output of goods and services — registered 46.6 in December. This was down slightly from November's reading of 46.9. A reading below 50 signals contraction.

In December, firms operating in the North West maintained a preference for lower workforce numbers, which they attributed to cost pressures and lower sales. However, employment did fall at a slightly slower rate than the month before.

Malcolm Buchanan, Chair of the NatWest North Regional Board, said:

"Continuing the trends seen throughout much of 2025, business activity and hiring remained relatively subdued across the North West in December.

"Despite a challenging end to last year, which was hampered by heightened levels of business uncertainty, firms remain optimistic about their growth prospects in 2026.

"One thing worth keeping a watchful eye on in the coming year is inflation, given the potential for lower interest rates to help spur growth.

"Price pressures ticked up again in December, with firms reporting a steep and accelerated increase in cost, alongside a faster rise in charges for goods and services."



Firms in the North West continued to face challenging demand conditions in December, with a further decrease in inflows of new work being reported.

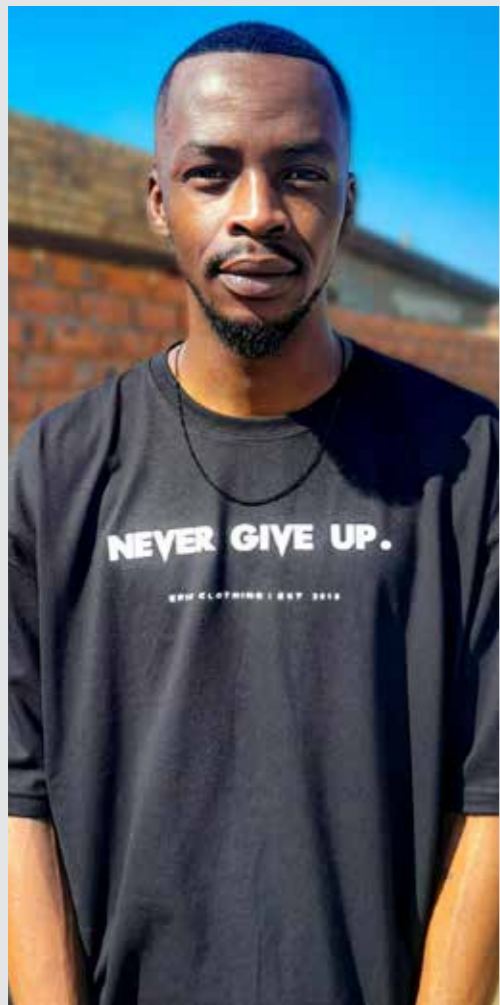
However, the rate of decline was slower than the month before. The result contrasted with an increase in new work at the UK level.

Business expectations softened slightly across the North West in December, easing to their lowest for eight months.

Nevertheless, firms generally anticipated an increase in business activity over the year ahead, reflecting hopes of a recovery in market conditions and plans for new products. **Marketingstockport**

GET TO KNOW YOUR DJ

Behold, the Vibe Curator – EPIK



Ntlantla "EPIK" Kutuyunga. Picture: Supplied

Crafting late Saturday nights with hypnotic basslines and seamless transitions, EPIK commands the floor as shifting energies ripple through fog-filled rooms. With every drop, walls sweat, bodies move and the crowd waits in anticipation for the next hit — a soundscape that travels far beyond the dancefloor.

Born and raised in Trompsburg in the Xhariep region, Ntlantla "EPIK" Kutuyunga (33) has been carving his path in the music industry for more than 12 years. From humble beginnings, he has steadily grown his brand through live performances, events and strategic collaborations.

"I fell in love with DJing in 2011 while I was a varsity student," EPIK recalls. "I was influenced by Prince Kaybee, who was a resident DJ at one of the clubs in Bloemfontein. What started as a passion soon became a serious career as I immersed myself in learning the art of deejaying and understanding music beyond just entertainment."

EPIK's signature sound is shaped by some of South Africa's music heavyweights, including Kabza De Small, Oscar MBO and Prince Kaybee. His carefully curated mixes set the mood and transform spaces into immersive musical experiences.

"I major in Amapiano and Afro-house/3-Step," he explains. "I'm known for reading the crowd, delivering high-energy sets and creating memorable experiences through smooth transitions and well-curated playlists."

Like many independent artists, EPIK has self-funded his career, reinvesting personal savings into equipment, branding and skills development.

"My journey hasn't been without challenges — limited resources, stiff competition and the difficulty of breaking through as an independent artist," he says. "But resilience and consistency have been key to my growth."

A dreamer at heart, EPIK envisions himself performing on bigger stages, releasing signature mixes and original productions, and expanding his presence nationally. He also hopes to mentor upcoming DJs and contribute meaningfully to the creative industry.

"I aspire to become one of the pioneering event coordinators, open a clothing store and have my clothing brand recognised nationally," he adds.

For a dose of EPIK's signature sound, catch him this Saturday at the ANC 114th Anniversary After-Party at Chesanyama, Trompsburg.

For bookings and enquiries, email bookings.epik@gmail.com.

Naledi Aphiwe sets sights on debut album and global growth in 2026



Naledi Aphiwe plans to release more music this year and her debut album.

Naledi Aphiwe, the 19-year-old Afro-pop artist, has announced that she is now focused on her musical growth and stated, "This year I want to release more music and my debut album."

The musician started the year 2026 with gratitude after being nominated for Best African Duo or Group in R&B alongside Mawelele at the 9th All Africa Music Awards (Afrima), which concluded in Lagos on Sunday, January 11.

Although they did not win the award, Naledi Aphiwe is honoured to have been nominated and believes this progression will open doors for her. "I want to become a complete all-around artist. I want to start touring in other countries, just expanding my reach and pushing boundaries," she stated.

She was up against the likes of Kunmie from Nigeria, Manal from Morocco, and 2024 Grammy award-nominee, Rema.

Naledi Aphiwe expressed that she couldn't believe that she was nominated among global artists, such as Rema.

"This puts me in the conversations among

other prominent artists and no longer being referred to as the young artist on the come-up.

She appreciates award ceremonies, but wants to focus more on making great music than on awards in general.

"Awards come with praise but also with disappointments, but I will always appreciate my name being mentioned in such celebratory events because it shows that my work is getting more recognition," she stated.

However, she does recognise the opportunities that come with her name being recognised and being nominated for awards.

She elaborated, "This nomination made me realise I have the potential to shine outside of my comfort zone. Not just locally, but in other countries as well."

As a young artist, she has already achieved significant success through her dedication. Notably, she won the Sofn'free Africa Afro Pop Artist of the Year award at the Basadi Music Awards in 2024.

In 2025, she went on to remarkable strides, which rewarded her with a Best African Song and Best R&B Song nomination at the Metro FM Music Awards for her hit song "Romeo & Juliet" alongside Mawelele. **IOL News**

DJ Shimza Donates 3,000 School Shoes



By: Lerato Mutlanyane

Renowned music producer and DJ Ashley "DJ Shimza" Raphaela continues to prove that his influence extends far beyond the dancefloor.

Through his annual Hopeful Sole School Drive, Shimza, via the thriving Shimuzic Foundation, donated 3,000 pairs of school shoes to underprivileged children—marking a significant increase from last year's initiative.

In 2025, the foundation distributed 2,000 school shoes across the City of Ekurhuleni in Gauteng.

This year's drive reflects both growth and sustained commitment.

"This year we were able to donate 3,000 school shoes, a growth from last year's 2,000," Shimza shared.

While giving back remains central to his mission, Shimza's 2026 calendar is already heating up. Preparations are underway for the Kunye Show in Cape Town, set for 7 February at Grand Africa Café & Beach. The event boasts a sizzling line-up including Kabza De Small, Enoo Napa, MillaRose, Pierre Johnson, Rosey Gold, Rudy Julius, and more.

Future editions of Kunye are also planned for Nairobi and Johannesburg, with the platform continuing its core aim:

connecting South Africa's emerging electronic music producers to the global stage—carefully curated by Shimza himself.

In an era dominated by highlight reels, Shimza's grounded act of generosity stands out.

It was not just about handing out 3,000 pairs of shoes, but about taking 3,000 meaningful steps toward dignity, confidence and a brighter future for children in underprivileged communities.

Celebrities support Christall Kay amid bullying allegations on 'The Real Housewives Ultimate Girls Trip: Africa'

Celebrities have come together to support Christall Kay, a star from *The Real Housewives of Johannesburg*, following allegations of bullying on *The Real Housewives Ultimate Girls Trip: Africa* (UGT).

After Showmax released the trailer for the latest episode, both celebrities and netizens expressed their outrage over Christall's treatment by her castmates.

Kay was the last member of the cast to arrive in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the show was filmed. After three episodes, the reality TV star decided to leave the vacation villa to protect her mental peace.

This decision followed heated disagreements with castmates, including Mariam Timmer from *The Real Housewives of Lagos*, Princess Jecoco from *The Real Housewives of Abuja*, and Annie Mthembu and Angel Ndlela from *The Real Housewives of Durban*.

"I have not commented on the show yet as I am in the USA on vacation. I see clips of it on my socials. Firstly, this UGT Africa is extremely disturbing to watch; the way the girls rallied together to bully Christall was appalling.

"@goatoriginals.tv, this was not fun to watch. Yes, on my season, I thought it was a bit kooky, but it was all fun. We all understood her. @showmaxonline, constantly showing women bully women is not entertaining television," wrote Liz Prinsloo, a castmate from *The Real Housewives of Gqeberha*.

DJ and artist Lady Du remarked: "A person moving from a mansion to a two-bedroom apartment is weaponised. What is it supposed to do, embarrass



her?"

South African activist Zulaika Patel expressed her dismay, saying, "I can't believe we've really turned bullying into entertainment. I'm not sure about this type of content. This can't be normalised; honestly, this is contributing to the decay of our society."

Radio personality Eva Modika added, "This is very disturbing to watch! @showmaxonline, noooo."

Following the airing of the episode, Kay appeared on the *Engineer Your Life* Podcast, where she opened up about her experiences on the show.

"If you have ever watched *Real Housewives* from the start, the edits have been quite accurate. You'll see that I've never started insulting any of those ladies. I've never been that girl who said one nasty thing about their dress, their eye, their bag, or anything else. I've only reacted to them coming for me," she stated.

"I challenge anyone to find a place where I started the fight," said Kay.

In a separate incident, she was allegedly involved in a violent physical clash with DJ Tira's wife, Gugu Khathi, on *The Real Housewives of Johannesburg* season 3.

The clash, which happened at a nightclub in Pretoria, resulted in Kay suffering injuries, including a black eye.

Kay claims the incident was recorded on camera. As a result of the altercation, which also reportedly involved fellow cast member Brinnette Seopela, filming was stopped, and season 3 was ultimately cancelled.

It is reported that both Kay and Khathi opened assault cases against each other following the incident.

The assault was never aired as the season did not make it to television. Kay said that though she didn't formally continue with the case, she might do so in the future. **IOL News**

Why Calabash South Africa 2026 was cancelled – and what fans need to know

Calabash SA has been cancelled after headliner Muse withdrew. Here's what went wrong, how refunds are being handled, and what fans are saying.

Music lovers across South Africa had been gearing up for what was billed as one of the country's biggest live music events of 2026. But instead of packing stadiums in Johannesburg and Cape Town, Calabash South Africa has been abruptly cancelled, leaving fans disappointed and organisers scrambling to manage ticket refunds.

Calabash South Africa: Festival cancelled after Muse withdraws

Organisers confirmed that the highly anticipated music festival, scheduled for early February 2026 at FNB Stadium in Johannesburg and DHL Stadium in Cape Town, will no longer go ahead as planned. Multi-Grammy Award-winning alt-rock giants Muse were billed to headline Calabash South Africa 2026. Picture: Supplied

The main reason? British rock band Muse, who were due to headline the Calabash South Africa event, pulled out of their scheduled international tour — including dates in the United Arab Emirates, South Africa and India — citing reasons beyond their control.

Organisers said they were unable to find a replacement headliner in time.

"We're sad to share that Calabash South Africa 2026 has been cancelled," the official statement read, adding that the logistics involved in presenting such a large-scale touring festival made a quick fix impossible.

Refunds underway — but confusion reigns

Despite the official announcement, many ticket holders reported receiving refund notifications even before formal confirmation.

News24 reported that organisers have assured attendees that full refunds will be processed for tickets, parking and related purchases, with refunds expected to take several business days to reflect.

Ticketmaster has been contacting customers whose payment details are no longer valid.

However, the communication around the cancellation has been criticised for a lack of clarity, with some fans lamenting the absence of timely updates from Big Concerts and other organisers.

According to some fans on Reddit, money started appearing back in accounts via Ticketmaster before the statement was released, leading to speculation that the festival might have been quietly shelved. A Day To Remember and Simple Plan: SA fans lose out on big names

Muse was not the only international act slated to perform. Canadian pop-punk outfit Simple Plan, American rockers A Day To Remember, and British alt-rock band Nothing But Thieves were all on the roster — making the cancellation even more disappointing for fans who had hoped to see huge names in South Africa.

Simple Plan expressed their disappointment publicly, saying they were "so sad" to hear the festival had been cancelled, and apologised to fans who had looked forward to the performances.

Calabash South Africa 2026 cancelled: Fans react

Across social media, ticket holders reacted with sadness and frustration. Many expressed how excited they were to see their favourite bands, and some suggested poor timing and fan communication may have contributed to weak ticket sales, potentially compounding the festival's problems.

One common comment thread on Reddit noted that announcing the event late in the year — close to festive spending season — may have deterred buyers, leading to slower sales and heightened uncertainty.

What's next for Calabash?

For now, the future of Calabash South Africa remains uncertain. Organisers have expressed hope that the festival will return, but as of mid-January 2026, no rescheduled dates have been announced.

Music fans are left hopeful that 2026 will still bring exciting live events — but for now, Calabash's cancellation stands as a stark reminder of how reliant large festivals are on confirmed international headliners and strong communication. **The Citizen.**

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Sport



'Be Patient with Magidigidi' - Broos

Bafana Bafana coach has urged the striker's new potential club to allow the player to adjust to the European climate and the Belgium style of play

By: Mpho Sekharume

South African national team coach, Hugo Broos, has urged K. Beerschot V.A to be patient with Siviwe Magidigidi and allow him to acclimatise to playing conditions in Belgium after it was announced that an imminent move by the player to the Challenger Pro League outfit out was on the cards.

Magidigidi's current club, Sivelele FC, revealed through a statement on Monday that the 20-year-old striker would soon be flying out to join his new club in Belgium pending the finalisation of negotiations.

Broos, a Belgian native himself, has advised Magidigidi's suitors to give the South African under-20 international time to adjust to the cold European weather before weighing heavy expectations on the player.

"I do think some patience is required: he might need some time to adjust. That's not easy; it will depend on how he's welcomed at the club.

"You can't forget that he's being pulled away from his surroundings. Besides, it's really cold here in Belgium right now for a player from South Africa. He'll have to adapt to the temperatures and the Mannekes' style of play.

"Magidigidi needs to feel at home. Beerschot shouldn't leave him alone too much and must

guide him well. That's very important for young Africans when they come to Europe," said the Bafana Bafana coach in an interview with Belgian publication, Nieuwsblad.

The 73-year-old, however, believes Magidigidi has what it takes to make it in the Belgian second tier league, which he claims is less competitive than the Betway Premiership.

"He certainly has potential, but it has to come to fruition, and that's not always the case. If it works out, Beerschot has a good striker on their hands. You have to keep in mind that he's a young player. I think 1B (Challenger Pro League) could be a good stepping stone in that regard.

"The South African first division is a bit stronger than the Belgian second division, but not on the level of the Jupiler Pro League," said Broos.

Despite Magidigidi's heroics at Sivelele FC, the Bloemfontein club sounded very keen and optimistic to cash-in on the talented youngster in their press statement on Monday notwithstanding media reports that the club was experiencing financial problems.

Although the club's chairman, Calvin Le John, has vehemently denied the rumours, the sale of Magidigidi to a European club is set to bring in some healthy essential revenue.

"We have always believed in matching ambition with opportunity. When Beerschot significantly improved their offer, more than doubling their initial

one, the deal became acceptable and aligned with the best interests of Sivelele FC," said Sivelele FC CEO, Lerato Kholoanyane, in the statement.

Kholoanyane added: "While the transfer is not yet final, we are now in the process of concluding negotiations."

Magidigidi has indeed proven his prowess in front of goal in Sivelele colours this season. At the conclusion of the first half of the season, the former SuperSport United talent had notched up four league goals and one assist for the Bloemfontein premiership side.

He famously announced himself to Sivelele faithful by scoring a crucial brace against Lamontville Golden Arrows in August 2025 - a match where Sivelele FC claimed maximum points with a 3-1 win.

On the international front, Magidigidi represented the country at the FIFA Under-20 World Cup where he memorably also scored a brace in the 5-0 routing of New Caledonia in October 2025.

With age on Magidigidi's side, Kholoanyane also expressed belief in the player faring well in Belgium.

"We have no doubt that Belgian defenders will soon be experiencing exactly the kind of trouble he caused across the PSL.

"We are proud of him, we are grateful to him, and we look forward to watching his journey unfold," Kholoanyane said.

Gallants unveil three signings



Marumo Gallants have bolstered their squad with the signing of three new players ahead of the re-start of the Betway Premiership having seen two exit to Orlando Pirates.

Gallants lost Zimbabwe international winger Daniel Msendami and left-back Mpho Chabatsane in this window, but have moved swiftly to replace them.

The club have signed Ivorian striker Romaric Dogminin Quattara from Algerian Ligue 1 club Olympique Akbou to add goals to their attack.

They have also roped in Zambian forward Emmanuel Mwinde, who previously played for several clubs in the United Arab Emirates and the likes of Nkana FC, Zanaco and Forest Rangers in his homeland.

Gallants coach Alexandre Lafitte has more attacking power in the form of former AmaZulu winger Msindisi Kunene.

Gallants, who lost the Carling Knockout final to Pirates in December, begin the second half of the season away at TS Galaxy next Wednesday.

They are currently four points above the relegation play-off position.



Sivelele Cashes In...The pending sale of striker, Siviwe Magidigidi, is set to inject good revenue for Sivelele FC Picture: Supplied

Morocco Face Senegal in AFCON Final Showdown

Hosts Morocco will play Sadio Mane's Senegal in this weekend's Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) final after both emerged victorious in tense last-four ties on Wednesday as Mohamed Salah's dreams of winning the title were again dashed.

Morocco beat Nigeria 4-2 on penalties after their semi-final showdown of few chances in capital Rabat finished 0-0 at the end of extra-time, with goalkeeper Yassine Bounou performing heroics by saving twice in the shoot-out.

SPARKED WILD CELEBRATIONS
Bounou, of Saudi side Al-Hilal, saved from Samuel Chukwueze and Bruno Onyemaechi, allowing Youssef En-Nesyri to convert the winning kick and spark wild celebrations among over 65 000 fans inside the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium.

As well as joy there was relief for Hamza Igamane, who had appeared distraught after his kick - Morocco's second in the shoot-out - was saved by Nigeria goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali.

He was the only Moroccan player to fail to score in the shoot-out, however, with captain and talisman Achraf Hakimi among those who converted their penalties.

"It was one of the hardest matches we have had against a very solid and talented team," said Morocco coach Walid Regragui, who played in the last Atlas Lions team to reach the AFCON final when they lost to Tunisia in 2004.

"I am very happy for the players and for the Moroccan people who really deserve this.



can people who really deserve this.

"It is a great gift for them to be in the final but we will need to recover quickly because we put a lot of energy into the game."

CAGEY ENCOUNTER

The shoot-out came after a cagey encounter, with almost all the chances of note coming in the first half and Nigeria mustering just two shots in the entire game.

Morocco have been under enormous pressure to

deliver a first AFCON title for their country in half a century and just their second overall.

However, as their dream remains alive it is an agonising way for Nigeria's hopes to end, two years after they lost the final to the hosts in Ivory Coast.

Led by two recent winners of the African player of the year prize in Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman, Nigeria had been arguably the best team at the tournament up to the semi-finals and the top scorers with 14 goals in their first five matches.

"The players fought for every ball and it is difficult to lose on penalties, but this is football and we have to accept it," said Nigeria coach Eric Chelle.

He added: "I am proud of my players but I am disappointed for them because the reality is we were maybe the best team that there has been in this AFCON."

MANE ENDS SALAH'S DREAM

Earlier, Mane scored a 78th-minute winner to give Senegal a 1-0 victory over Egypt in Tangiers, then said he was playing in the tournament for the last time.

"I'm very happy to be able to play in my very last AFCON. I hope to win it (the final) and bring (the trophy) back to Dakar," the 33-year-old said.

Senegal, champions in 2022, dominated possession against cautious Egypt as the Cup of Nations title continues to elude Liverpool superstar Salah.

This was Salah's fifth AFCON and the closest he has come to a winners' medal is finishing a runner-up twice.

'DESERVED TO WIN'

It will be Senegal's fourth Cup of Nations final appearance overall and their third in the last four editions. "I think we managed the game well from start to finish and, overall, we deserved to win. We'll try to be ready for the final, above all to give our best," said Mane. The most important thing for me is that Senegal wins every time... I am a soldier of the nation. I try to give my all every day, whether in training or in matches. The Africa Cup of Nations is the most difficult competition in the world. All the teams are evenly matched. Referring to his former Liverpool team-mate Salah, Mane said the Egyptian is "one of the best players in the world".

The goal that decided the game came with 12 minutes remaining, as Mane's low shot flew past the goalkeeper and into the net.

The final in Rabat will take place on Sunday, 18 January at 21:00 (SA time), while the bronze medal clash between Egypt and Nigeria is scheduled for Saturday, 17 January at 18:00 (SA time). *TheSouthAfrican*

New Dawn for Tsantsabane Football

New Tsantsabane Local Football Association executive takes office with unity and focus on long-term development

By: Mpho Sekharume

The landscape of South African grassroots football took a decisive step forward this past Saturday as the Tsantsabane Local Football Association (TSALFA) convened its 2026 Ordinary Congress.

Hosted at Blinkklip High School, the congress served as both a reflective summit and a democratic milestone, culminating in the election of a new Executive Committee (EXCO) tasked with steering the beautiful game into a professionalised future.

With a quorum firmly established under the TSALFA Constitution, delegates from across the footballing spectrum - ranging from the Motsepe Foundation Championship's Hungry Lions to the local promotional league - gathered to chart a course for the region's talent. The significance of the event was underscored by the presence of high-ranking SAFA ZF Mgcawu Re-

gional officials, led by President Emma Hendricks, who observed the proceedings as a testament to the LFA's commitment to transparency and good governance.

Outgoing Chairperson, Lebogang Daniels, set a sobering yet inspiring tone in his final address. Daniels, who has been a vocal advocate for the modernisation of the local game, reminded the congress that football has transitioned from a mere pastime into a sophisticated business environment.

He called for a clear distinction between club interests and TSALFA responsibilities, urging the incoming leadership to prioritise infrastructure, coaching, and the often-overlooked sectors of refereeing and school football.

The electoral process was characterised by order and a shared sense of purpose. Elridge Asten Davids emerged as the newly elected Chairperson, backed by a diverse and experienced team including First Vice



Strong Development Focus...The new Tsantsabane local football leadership is targeting structural reform in grassroots football in the area. Picture: Football Stage/X.com

Chairperson, Joan Ruiters, and the retention of Daniels in the pivotal role of Secretary.

In his maiden address, Davids offered a principled vision that resonated with the delegates. Davids positioned football as a vital engine for social cohesion and discipline.

"The LFA must be a space where clubs are supported, talent is developed, and administration is conducted with integrity," Davids stated, pledging to strengthen ties with SAFA structures while ensuring that women's and youth football receive the resources

they deserve.

The regional leadership was quick to praise the conduct of the congress.

SAFA ZF Mgcawu President, Emma Hendricks, commended TSALFA for its "clear show of character", noting that the absence of infighting set a benchmark for other associations.

However, she issued a stern reminder that the path ahead is fraught with challenges. Hendricks emphasised that an LFA's success is predicated on the active participation of its clubs and a commitment to the col-

lective good over individual club agendas.

She specifically challenged the new EXCO to become tireless advocates for the growth of women's football.

As the new executive takes office with immediate effect, they inherit a region rich in potential but hungry for structural reform.

With a mandate for unity and a focus on long-term development, the 2026 term begins with a key objective of ensuring that the next generation of Tsantsabane stars has a professional stage upon which to shine.