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... As they reject the National Commissioner's preliminary report into the 'mysterious' deaths of three Free State constables



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National Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola's preliminary report into the "mysterious" deaths of three Free State constables last year, rejected by families. Picture: Supplied

Female Taxi Boss Gunned Down in Shameless Night Attack

Newly elected QWAUTA chairperson Matshediso Nteo was shot multiple times while asleep at her parents' home, sending shockwaves through the Free State taxi industry.



Qwaqwa taxi association chairperson, Matshediso Nteo, was brutally murdered on Saturday. Picture: QwaqwaRadio

By Abigail Visagie

Thabana-Tshoana Village was plunged into shock on Saturday night after the newly elected chairperson of the Qwaqwa United Taxi Association (QWAUTA), Matshediso Nteo, was brutally murdered in a brazen night attack.

The killing has reignited concerns over taxi violence and the safety of women leaders in male-dominated industries.

The 58-year-old was gunned down in a hail of bullets and later found lying in a pool of blood inside a shack in an informal settlement.

According to police, Tseng SAPS received a report of a shooting at approximately 20:55. Upon arrival, officers discovered the body of an African female who had sustained multiple gunshot wounds.

Nteo, described as a dedicated and fearless leader who lived to serve the taxi industry, was allegedly asleep at her parents' home with her grandson when four unknown suspects knocked at the residence. She was fatally shot during the attack, while the suspects fled the scene in an unidentified white vehicle with Gauteng registration plates.

Free State MEC for Community Safety, Roads and Transport, Jabu Mbalula, said he was appalled and deeply shocked by Nteo's death, particularly as her husband had previously died under similar circumstances. He strongly condemned the killing and warned that continued bloodshed in the Free State taxi industry would not be tolerated.

"I extend my deepest condo- **Continues on Page 6**



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NC pastor arrested for alleged sexual assault on 16-year-old boy



A 65-year-old Northern Cape pastor has been arrested in Galeshewe township for allegedly sexually assaulting a 16-year-old boy. The incident allegedly occurred last year November and a case was opened this week after the minor finally reported the ordeal to his mother. Police spokesperson Merapelo Pilane says investigations are ongoing. "It is reported that on Tuesday, 25 November 2025, the 16-year-old male victim was in the company of a 65-year-old male, when he made sexual advances on him and allegedly sexually assaulted him. The incident was reported to the police and the male person was arrested. He is expected to appear in court for formal bail application."

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SIU returns R1.7bn to the NSFAS purse

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) says it has returned R1.7 billion to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme purse, which will be allocated to students' needs at institutions of higher education. The amount is part of the R2 billion that the SIU has so far received from universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and unqualified former students. "The funds in question were unallocated from 2016 to 2021. These unallocated funds represent financial resources that were designated for students who qualified for funding but later changed institutions or deregistered," the Special Investigating Unit said in a statement. "These funds are retained by the institution for one year but in this case, were kept them for more than a year. "The existence of unallocated funds can be attributed to inadequate control systems and a lack of reconciliation processes implemented by NSFAS during that period, resulting in a failure to recover these funds from institutions of higher learning," the SIU said. The corruption busting unit noted the announce-



ment by NSFAS earlier this month to implement the SIU's systematic recommendations by introducing a framework that includes a data-driven reporting process to ensure timely payments to providers. This framework will improve accountability, generating monthly occupancy and payment reports. NSFAS stated that it is considering an in-house payment functionality to streamline financial management

and eliminate the middleman. The SIU commended NSFAS for strengthening its systems and moving towards better governance. Contributing to the R2 billion recovery, the SIU has collected R126 478 184.64 from 1 055 parents and unqualified NSFAS beneficiaries who have signed acknowledgements of debt (AoDs), agreeing to repay the money over time.

The SIU is urging unqualified NSFAS beneficiaries, who have not been in contact with the unit, to come forward and arrange for repayment. Furthermore, the SIU has received R69 727 824.22 from the University of the Free State. This is the institution's second payment towards recovering unallocated funds. The SIU has also received a second payment from the University of Mpumalanga of R5 502 040.09, as well as R15 million from Tshwane North TVET College. The SIU, in terms of Proclamation R88 of 2022, is authorised to investigate allegations of corruption and maladministration in the affairs of NSFAS, and to recover any financial losses suffered by the State through corruption and negligence. The SIU is empowered to institute civil action in the High Court or a Special Tribunal in its name, to correct any wrongdoing uncovered during investigations caused by acts of corruption, fraud or maladministration. In line with the SIU and Special Tribunals Act 74 of 1996, the SIU will refer any evidence pointing to criminal conduct it uncovers to the National Prosecuting Authority for further action. **SANews.gov.za**

Operation Shanela II nets over 1 000 suspects in North West

Operation Shanela II – the South African Police Service's (SAPS) high density safer festive season operation - continues to ensure suspected and wanted criminals are taken off the streets in the North West. The SAPS, in collaboration with other stakeholders, has worked tirelessly to ensure that members of the community in all the five districts are and feel safe, with over 1 000 suspects apprehended for various crimes committed in the province. The weekly operation included vehicle check points (VCP's), stop and searches, roadblocks, tracing of wanted suspects, foot and vehicle patrols, and compliance inspections from Monday, 19 January 2026 until Sunday, 25 January 2026. "The weekly operations saw 1083 suspects arrested for crimes ranging from, among others, dealing in drugs, illegal dealing in liquor, robbery, murder, rape, assault GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm), assault com-

mon, burglaries at residential and businesses premises, theft off/out of motor vehicles, malicious damage to property, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and contravention of the Immigration Act," the police said in a statement. The dedication and commitment of the detectives to bring those who thought they could evade the long arm of the law resulted in the tracing and arrest of 268 wanted suspects for serious crimes, including murder, rape, assault, GBH, and illegal possession of firearms. In one incident, police received information about suspects who were in possession of unlicensed firearms, suspected to be involved in a spree of robberies, reported in Delareyville. "The information was operationalised on Friday, 23 January 2026 at about 22:00. The provincial Tracing Task Team, Lichtenburg K9 unit, as well as Mahikeng Crime Intelligence,



pounced on them when the vehicle they were traveling in had a puncture on the road between Delareyville and Vrisgewaagte," the police said. The four suspects were immediately arrested and charged with possession of unlicensed firearms after a search of their vehicle, a red Volkswagen Polo, led to the discovery of four firearms (all pistols) with serial numbers filed off, as well as 22 rounds of ammunition. They all appeared before the Delareyville Magistrate's Court on Monday and were remanded in cus-

tody until their next court appearance on Tuesday, 10 February 2026, for a formal bail application. Investigation into the matter continues, and linking the suspects to other cases are eminent. The Acting Provincial Commissioner in the North West, Major General (Dr) Ryno Naidoo, applauded the members for the dedication and professionalism displayed during the Safer Festive Season Shanela 2 operations. He emphasised that the SAPS in the province will continue to pursue criminals relentlessly and ensure that justice is served.

Steenhuisen Cracks Down on Unregulated Vaccine Use



Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen has issued a stern warning. Picture: Food for Mzansi

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen has issued a stern warning against the use of unregulated vaccines for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), cautioning that reckless practices could undermine South Africa's efforts to control the outbreak and restore its FMD-free status. The warning follows the development of a National Foot-and-Mouth Disease Response Plan (FNMDR) by a Ministerial Task Team made up of experts from both the public and private sectors, including scientists, veterinarians and academics in animal health. The FNMDR plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to contain, control and ultimately eradicate FMD, incorporating immediate, medium- and long-term interventions to curb the spread of the disease. Steenhuisen revealed that government has already procured, monitored and administered two

million vaccines sourced from the Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI). He added that the process of issuing permits to private companies to import vaccines as local agents is under way. Import permits for the Dollvet vaccine have been issued to Dunevax, while an additional permit for the Biogénesis Bagó vaccine is expected to be granted soon. The minister said the department had rejected calls for a "vaccine free-for-all", warning that such an approach is reckless and contradicts both international and local disease-control protocols. He cited the illegal importation of vaccines into Kwa-Zulu-Natal by farmers as a clear example of the dangers posed by unregulated vaccine use. "The scientific pathway to restoring South Africa's FMD-free status with vaccination is clear and guided by international standards set by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)," Steenhuisen said. To regain FMD-free status with vaccination,

South Africa must demonstrate that there has been no virus transmission for at least 12 months. This, he said, requires a strictly controlled vaccination rollout, official surveillance, tight animal movement controls and systematic vaccination coverage that can be documented and verified. Steenhuisen warned that failure to closely monitor the entire process could result in South Africa losing out on FMD-free status, causing long-term damage to agricultural exports and undermining the country's vaccination strategy. The department has also committed to working closely with private veterinarians and animal health technicians as the vaccination programme progresses. "In animal health, there is no safe shortcut," Steenhuisen said. "Verifying your vaccines is just as crucial as administering them. The integrity of our agriculture, the safety of our food and the viability of all farms depend on it."

Female Taxi Boss Gunned Down in Shameless Night Attack

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lences to the family, friends, and all those affected by this senseless murder. I am mortified that a woman leader was gunned down in this manner," said Mbalula, urging police to intensify efforts to track down the perpetrators and appealing for community assistance. The South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) in the Free State also expressed outrage and sorrow, describing Nteo as a fearless leader who served the industry with integrity and humility. "This is a painful loss not only for Qwaqwa and the Free State, but for the entire SANTACO family nationally. We strongly condemn this heinous act and urgently call on SAPS to prioritise this case. The perpetrators must be brought to justice without delay," said provincial spokesperson Mthimkhulu. SANTACO national president Mothabane Abnar Tsebe echoed these sentiments, warning that such violence leaves families and communities shattered. "The killing of Matshediso Nteo is deeply disturbing and highlights the broader crisis of violent crime in our country. It is especially alarming that women who step forward to lead in male-dominated industries are being targeted and killed. This cannot be normalised," said Tsebe, adding that protecting women and community leaders must be treated as a national priority. Nteo served the taxi industry in several leadership roles, including deputy secretary, secretary, deputy chairperson, and chairperson, holding leadership positions in 2017, 2021, and again in 2025. Her murder has sent shockwaves through the Qwaqwa taxi industry and the broader community, reigniting concerns about violence against women in male-dominated sectors. Police are appealing to anyone who may have witnessed the incident or has information that could assist the investigation to come forward.

Ramaphosa wants special task team to investigate those implicated in Madlanga Commission report



President Cyril Ramaphosa. Picture: Supplied

President Cyril Ramaphosa on Thursday directed acting Police Minister Firoz Cachalia and National Commissioner of the South African Police Service General Fannie Masemola to constitute a special investigations task team to investigate prima facie evidence of wrongdoing by people identified in the Madlanga Commission's interim report.

The Commission, chaired by retired Constitutional Court Justice Mbuyiseli Madlanga, assisted by Advocate Sesi Baloyi and Advocate Sandile Khumalo, submitted its interim report to the President in December.

Ramaphosa announced the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference and Corruption in the Criminal Justice System in July 2025, following allegations made by South African Police Service (Saps) KwaZulu-Natal provincial commissioner, Lieutenant-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi about the existence and operation of a criminal syndicate that had allegedly infiltrated the criminal justice system.

The commission has made several referrals concerning allegations of criminality, corruption, fraud, murder, perjury and other unlawful actions by officials and officers in the employ of the Saps, City of Ekurhuleni and the Ekurhuleni Metro Police Department (EMPD).

Prima facie evidence of wrongdoing in the Saps has been found against Major General Lesetja Senona, Major General Richard Shibiri, Brigadier Mbangwa Nkhwashi, Brigadier Rachel Matjeng, and Sergeant Fannie Nkosi.

Prima facie evidence of wrongdoing by current and former employees of the Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality (EMM) was also identified by the

Commission and implicates suspended EMPD chief of police Commissioner Julius Mkhwanazi, EMPD officer Bafana Twala, EMPD officer Aiden McKenzie, EMPD officer Kershia Leigh Stols, EMM former city manager Dr Imogen Mashazi, EMM fleet manager/proxy Chris Steyn, EMM head of department of human resources Linda Gxasheka, EMM head of legal Advocate Kemi Behari and Etienne van der Walt.

Ramaphosa said he accepted the recommendations made in the interim report and welcomed the referrals by the Commission for immediate criminal investigations and urgent decisions on prosecution, as well as recommendations on the employment status and recommended suspension of some individuals.

The President said the establishment of a special task team is critical to ensure that these investigations take place as a matter of urgency.

The Commission will make referrals to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate on the status of their investigations and seek explanations for any delays.

Some of the implicated individuals will also return to the Commission to respond to allegations presented against them, while more witness testimony is expected.

The Commission emphasised that, except for EMPD chief Mkhwanazi, it had not yet heard responses from some of the relevant persons identified, thus the allegations against them remain prima facie allegations only and are not findings of the Commission. "The nature of these allegations, however, warrants the referrals for further investigation and potential disciplinary, prosecutorial or regulatory action right away," he said. **Polity**

Senona skips polygraph after R200m cocaine heist, admits he sent drugs to Port Shepstone



KZN Hawks head, Maj-Gen. Lesetja Senona, has testified at the Madlanga Commission from Tuesday to Thursday.. Picture: IoL

KZN Hawks head, Maj-Gen. Lesetja Senona, said he never underwent a polygraph test after cocaine worth about R200 million was stolen from a police strongroom in Port Shepstone, despite admitting that he personally directed that the drugs be taken there.

Testifying this week before the Madlanga Commission, Senona detailed how a record-breaking cocaine seizure became one of security failures in recent policing history, culminating in the disappearance of 541kg of cocaine from a supposedly secure Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) facility.

The seizure dates back to June 22, 2021. Acting swiftly, Hawks members, supported by Operation Response Services, inspected a shipping container at a local depot.

Inside, officers found 27 canvas bags, each containing 20 one-kilogram bricks of cocaine.

The bricks were wrapped in black and yellow plastics.

In total, the consignment weighed 541kg, with an estimated street value of R200 million.

Senona confirmed that after the seizure, he authorised the transportation of the drugs to the Port Shepstone DPCI offices.

The cocaine was placed in a walk-in strongroom previously used to store mandrax and hashish.

Access, he said, was regulated through a key-booking system, with restricted entry points and controlled movement.

Despite these measures, the entire stash was later stolen.

The theft was discovered when the investigating officer reported the exhibits missing, triggering an

internal investigation and a forensic inspection.

The commission heard that suspects allegedly gained entry by breaking into a hardware store adjacent to the police offices, vaulting a partition gate and forcing their way into the DPCI building.

A police officer stationed roughly 20 feet from the safe reported witnessing suspicious activity at the time. Records showed that the safe keys had been booked out to warrant officers.

A national task team, led by the National Head of the DPCI, was later established to investigate the burglary, with forensic work assigned to the Amanzimtoti laboratory.

Yet the commission's focus sharpened on what followed — and what did not.

Senona conceded that he was never subjected to a polygraph test, unlike others with knowledge of the storage arrangements.

He said it never occurred to him to volunteer and that such testing should have been ordered by his superiors.

When evidence leader Adv. Adila Hassim asked whether he should have requested a polygraph himself, Senona laughed. "It's too late. It's too late," he replied.

He insisted he would still submit to a polygraph if instructed, maintaining that he is "definitely" not implicated in the theft.

Commissioners were unconvinced.

Co-Commissioner Sesi Baloyi expressed concern that Senona had not aggressively pursued answers about whether the drugs were recovered or if anyone had been charged.

"This happened under your watch. It was your loss," she said, adding that she would have expected him to exhaust every avenue to clear his name.

"Please take this commission seriously," she said.

Senona said he wanted updates but believed he could not interfere because another team was handling the investigation. He admitted he does not know whether anyone has since been charged.

Co-Commissioner Adv. Sandile Khumalo described it as "reckless" that a cocaine haul of such magnitude was not protected by round-the-clock security.

Hassim further read into the record a document outlining glaring security failures at the Port Shepstone offices: no CCTV cameras, no alarm system, and no external beam sensors.

"There are CCTV cameras are installed in and around the premises. Two, there's no early warning alarm system in the office space, more especially in offices located on the ground floor. Three, no beam sensors located exterior next to the office location," said.

Senona has concluded his testimony at the commission. **IoL**

'We are not Kids' Families Warn Masemola

... As they reject the National Commissioner's preliminary report into the 'mysterious' deaths of three Free State constables



National Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola's preliminary report into the "mysterious" deaths of three Free State constables last year, rejected by families. Picture: Supplied

By Abigail Visagie

"We are not kids." Those were the sharp words from families of three Free State constables as they pushed back against National Police Commissioner Fannie Masemola's preliminary report into what they describe as the "mysterious" circumstances surrounding their loved ones' deaths, insisting they will not accept vague explanations or half-answers.

Nearly 10 months after Constables Boipelo Senoge, Keamogetswe Buys, and Cebekhulu Linda were reported missing in April 2025 — and later found dead in the Hennops River in Centurion, Gauteng — Masemola met with their families on Tuesday to provide an update on progress in the investigation.

What was initially scheduled as an hour-long presentation of the preliminary report, however, stretched into a three-hour, tense back-and-forth between the National Commissioner and the families. The prolonged engagement pushed a planned 4pm media briefing well after 7pm.

According to Lwazi Thepa, husband of Constable Keamogetswe Buys, the meeting dragged on as investigating officers tried to present the case as an ordinary accident.

Speaking to Journal News on the sidelines of the delayed media briefing, Thepa said the families felt undermined by the police.

"We are definitely not satisfied with the preliminary report. They (SAPS) made us look like we're kids who know nothing about this CIA program and whatever work they are doing there. It is not like they are top-class or that they did their level best, which they clearly did not," Thepa said.

"Although it is presumed that this was an accident, we hope the final report tells the truth. After the final report, we can decide whether it was an accident or not."

A representative referred to as 'Linda,' from Cebekhulu Linda's family, said that the family is still questioning a few intricate matters.

"We had a meeting with SAPS, where we were briefed by experts about what led to the accident or what transpired, so we are still questioning some things, but we are promised that we will be given a month for a final report so that we can put the matter at rest," said Linda.

Boipelo Senoge's mother, Jane, is not satisfied, mentioning that she will only be satisfied once the last whistle blows.

"I am trying to cope, but when you lose a child as young as my daughter, it shatters you, you shatter into pieces, and you don't know how to connect the dots," said Senoge.

Senoge said that she is encouraged by her daughter's words. "Boipelo would always remind me of my

strength. I can hear her words echoing in my head: "Mama, I know you are strong, you are my mother, so I know that you are strong," concluded Senoge.

The meeting was set to give the families a thorough progress report, and quite enough information was exchanged. Masemola confirmed that the investigation has not yet been finalised as there are several areas to divulge in and finalise, such as the forensic report and the post-mortem report, which is still not complete, nine months after the tragedy transpired.

"We will be meeting with the families in a month to track our progress and how far we've gone," confirmed Masemola.

Masemola and his team, consisting of a special crash investigation expert, elaborated on what could have transpired in the VW Polo that the three constables were travelling in.

"We know that it is an accident that has happened, but there are still a few areas that we need to investigate to support that.

"We cannot conclusively say that we are done with everything. Experts who were present in terms of electronic data can account for the movement of the car and how far it went, but some reports still need to be finalised," said Masemola.

Masemola mentioned that the cause of death, post-mortem, blood and alcohol reports are still not confirmed.

Ngwathe Disconnects Defaulting Parys Prison

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Ngwathe Local Municipality has disconnected electricity supply to the under-construction Parys Prison over an unpaid municipal debt, in a move aimed at enforcing payment compliance by the correctional facility.

According to the municipality, the construction site has been using municipal electricity in a questionable manner, with internal wiring in occupied buildings failing to comply with South African National Standards (SANS).

Executive Mayor Cllr Victoria De Beer-Mthombeni said the municipality's technical team uncovered unusually high electricity usage at the Parys Prison construction site during an ongoing audit of electricity consumption among large businesses, entities and institutions.

She said the site had been using electricity without being billed, prompting the municipality to disconnect supply on Thursday in order to protect municipal revenue and ensure public safety for nearby residents and workers on the project.

"Government departments collectively owe the municipality more than R250 million. Notices were issued in October last year, and only R8.8 million has been paid, which undermines our Credit Control Policy," De Beer-Mthombeni said.

"Correctional Services was disconnected after we



had also disconnected large alcohol-selling outlets for similar cases of unauthorised electricity consumption that compromised our revenue collection and service delivery."

However, Department of Correctional Services (DCS) national spokesperson Singabakho Nxumalo rejected the municipality's claims, insisting that there was no blackout at the facility.

Speaking to Journal News, Nxumalo said allegations of a total power outage were false and misleading.

"The facility is currently under construction and is

functioning as normal. The site was handed over to a contractor several years ago, therefore there is no outstanding bill as claimed," he said.

A complete power outage at a correctional facility would pose a serious national security and safety risk, potentially compromising perimeter security, disrupting communication systems and triggering unrest.

"For now, the official word from Correctional Services is clear: despite the claimed debt, the lights are on, the fences are electrified, and the facility remains under secure control," he said.

Tolashe Cheers Bartimea Learners as New Academic Year Begins

By: Matshidiso Selebeleng

As schools settle into the new academic year, Bartimea School for the Deaf and Blind is also preparing for the season ahead, with teachers and learners adjusting to the return to classrooms.

In support of the school community, Minister of Social Development Nokuzola Tolashe visited Bartimea as part of a back-to-school campaign, where she offered words of encouragement and appreciation to both educators and learners.

Tolashe commended teachers for their dedication to ensuring quality education for learners with special needs, noting the school's continued growth and positive impact on families and communities.

"The growth and success of this school would not have been possible without your individual and collective commitment. You inspire learners to reach new heights, think critically, and embrace the joy of learning. Your efforts have created an environment where students are not only educated but empowered to reach their full potential," she said.

Highlighting the shared responsibility in education, Tolashe also thanked parents and guardians for their ongoing support, acknowledging the challenges they face as caregivers. She emphasised that parents are a child's first teachers and play a critical role in their development.

The minister reiterated government's commitment to supporting families of children with disabilities through various programmes, including positive parenting initiatives designed to equip caregivers with knowledge and practical skills.

"These programmes aim to support caregivers in providing nurturing, responsive care for children with disabilities," she said. She further outlined social assistance measures aimed at reducing economic vulnerability, including the Disability Grant, Care Dependency Grant and Grant-in-Aid.

Tolashe also welcomed a donation from the Ashrafal Foundation, stressing the importance of partnerships and collaboration in advancing inclusivity in education.

Encouraging the class of 2026, she highlighted the school's strong academic performance, noting that the class of 2025 achieved a 94% matric pass rate.

"This is a remarkable achievement and a testament to the hard work, dedication and shared vision of everyone at the school," she said.

Addressing learners, Tolashe urged them to approach



Minister of Social Development Nokuzola Tolashe was joined by the Free State MEC for Social Development, Mathabo Hialele during her visit at Bartimes School for the Deaf and Blind. Picture: DSD Facebook

the year with confidence and curiosity.

"This year is an opportunity to learn, explore and challenge yourselves. Remember, you are part of a community that believes in you and is eager to see you succeed," she said. She added that the 2025 NSC results were a source of pride not only for Bartimea but for learners with special educational needs across the country.

"These results send a powerful message: with the right support from parents, caregivers, teachers and school leadership, learners with disabilities can excel—and even outperform their peers without disabilities," she said.

Farming Tools Spark New Hope in Kabe Village



North West MEC for Social Development Madoda Sambatha. Picture: Supplied

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Increased yields, reduced labour time and a pathway to economic self-sufficiency are now within reach for the women of Kabe Village, following support from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

On 26 January 2026, MEC Madoda Sambatha, together with MEC for Social Development Susanna Basetsana Dantjie and the Chair of Chairs in the Provincial Legislature, Hon. Tebogo Modise, formally handed over agricultural tools to women farmers in Kabe Village, just outside Mahikeng. The donation forms part of the department's broader initiative to strengthen household food security, create sustainable livelihoods and restore dignity within rural communities.

The programme equips women with the means to cultivate their own food while promoting sustainable farming practices that will benefit future generations. Crucially, the tools also open opportunities for income generation and local economic growth.

Traditional leaders and community members gathered to witness the handover, marking a significant step towards a more secure and productive future for the women of Kabe.

Beneficiaries expressed deep gratitude for the department's continued support.

"These tools will truly make a huge difference in our lives. We have always loved working the land, but the lack of resources often discouraged us. After today, everything feels different," said beneficiary Keabetswe Methikga.

She explained that challenges such as birds destroying crops and limited access to equipment had previously disrupted production. "Now we have nets to protect our gardens and proper tools to work the land. We can grow enough food for our families and even sell produce to support our children," she said.

MEC Sambatha stressed that the initiative goes beyond the provision of equipment.

"This intervention is about more than tools; it is about restoring hope, dignity and self-reliance. When we support women in agriculture, we are directly supporting families, fighting poverty and strengthening food security. These women are not just beneficiaries; they are producers and partners in the development of our province," he said.

The initiative aligns with national priorities on gender equality in agriculture and sustainable community development, recognising women as key agents of change in the fight against poverty and food insecurity.

"By supporting food production initiatives such as this, we are strengthening the social fabric of our society. We will continue working closely with the Depart-

ment of Social Development to ensure that these projects are sustainable," MEC Sambatha concluded.

Traditional leadership welcomed the initiative and pledged ongoing support. Speaking on behalf of the Royal House, Kgosana Keesilwe Mokgosi said the collaboration between government and communities was vital.

"When our women are empowered to produce food, the entire village benefits. We commit ourselves to supporting all beneficiaries and ensuring that these tools are used for their intended purpose," he said.

Women are once again being placed at the centre of development, not merely as recipients of assistance but as active drivers of food production, economic participation and community resilience.

The department indicated that, through its rural development and food security programmes, the initiative will be expanded to communities across all four districts of the province. By equipping women with the tools and skills to cultivate their own livelihoods, the programme aims to foster self-reliance, reduce dependency and build resilient households.

As the women of Kabe Village left the ceremony, their hands were no longer empty. They carried with them the practical means to turn hard work into abundant harvests and a more secure future—proof that the right support can help a community flourish.

Mbalula: ANC preparing mass action against hostile foreign powers



ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula. Picture: Radio786

ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula says the party is preparing mass political and civil action against what it describes as "imperialist and unilateral" governments whose conduct threatens South Africa's sovereignty — singling out the United States as persistently hostile on what he called "unfounded" grounds.

Mbalula was speaking on Thursday during the ANC's post-National Executive Committee (NEC) Lekgotla briefing, where he outlined key outcomes and resolutions adopted at the meeting held from 24 to 26 January.

He said the responsibilities enshrined in the Constitution must remain the benchmark for South Africa's domestic and foreign policy.

"The ANC will intensify mass organising and mobilisation to defend South Africa as a sovereign constitutional democracy," Mbalula said.

"Our Constitution is a product of struggle and popular will, and no foreign state or external interest has the right to undermine or infringe upon the sovereignty of the South African people."

He said the ANC would organise simultaneous marches across the country to deliver a unified and unmistakable national message.

"The movement will reaffirm through this mass action that popular participation is the foundation of constitutional democracy and assert that South Africa's sovereignty belongs to its people and will be defended through their organised and conscious action," he said.

The march is planned for 21 March, which Mbalula described as a deliberate and defiant show of posture, warning that South Africa would not "bend its knees" or be "bullied" amid recent assertions by the Donald Trump-led administration that the country's sovereignty is under siege.

Mbalula accused Trump of behaving like a "world policeman", seeking to unilaterally influence global affairs in favour of US interests while disregarding established international diplomatic channels.

"In defence of our sovereignty, which is under attack, we are marching against imperialist aggression that seeks to dictate what must happen to other states," he said.

"We are marching against unilateralism and the undermining of multilateral forums."

He expressed concern that despite South Africa's restraint and diplomatic decorum in managing its strained relationship with the US, the Trump administration had further intensified its isolation of the country — including moves to exclude South Africa from G20 processes — describing the situation as a form of "cold war" between the two states.

Beyond foreign policy, Mbalula said the Lekgotla had also focused on the ANC's renewal agenda, aimed at salvaging the party's relevance both as a liberation movement and as a governing party.

He acknowledged that renewal must be comprehensive and sustained over the long term if the party is to regain lost support and rebuild its traditional strongholds.

"Renewal must be visible in leadership conduct, deployment practices, internal culture and the quality of services rendered to communities," he said.

"The credibility of the movement depends on its ability to live its values in practice, lead by example and earn public trust through visionary, servant, capable, ethical and effective leadership."

Mbalula further conceded that the party continues to face persistent challenges, particularly youth unemployment.

He said the Lekgotla underscored the urgency of accelerating job creation while reinforcing the importance of the social wage to support households, alongside continued investment in education, transport and healthcare.

He also reiterated the ANC's recommitment to addressing high levels of crime, which he said undermine economic growth and destabilise communities.

"The Lekgotla further resolved to intensify the crackdown on illegal mining operations, including zama-zamas, whose activities terrorise communities, destroy infrastructure, undermine the rule of law and endanger lives," Mbalula said.

"A coordinated, intelligence-led response involving law enforcement, border management and mining regulators will be intensified." — *Inside Politics*

Rockman Hails Glen College Graduates



Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs, Elzabe Rockman at the graduation ceremony. Picture: Facebook

By Abigail Visagie

Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs, Elzabe Rockman, joined dignitaries, stakeholders and proud families last week to celebrate the Glen College of Agriculture's annual graduation ceremony in Bloemfontein.

A total of 63 graduates walked across the stage to receive their Diploma certificates in Agriculture (NQF Level 6) after successfully completing their three-year programmes.

The intensive curriculum covered crop production, animal production and agribusiness. Through a combination of scientific theory, technology and hands-on practical training, graduates are now equipped to enter the diverse agricultural sector.

Rockman highlighted that although agriculture was historically viewed as a white male-dominated field, agricultural colleges such as Glen are reshaping the narrative by creating opportunities for youth, women and people with disabilities.

"We want to reach a point where black commercial farmers dominate the industry, and the starting point is through our agricultural colleges," said Rockman.

She added that Glen College plays a critical role in empowering young people and contributes meaningfully to the fight against unemployment, poverty and inequality.

"Agriculture will always be a top priority because everyone needs to eat. As long as you are willing to put in the hours, there will always be opportunities in this sector," Rockman said.

Guest speaker Dr Pascalina Pilane from the University of the Free State echoed these sentiments, noting that the graduates now possess

tools and knowledge vital to both the provincial and national economy.

"Agriculture is the heartbeat of the Free State and the country at large. The future of this vital sector lies in your hands," said Pilane.

"You are now instrumental in improving food security, creating employment and reducing unemployment."

Top achiever Fumane Junior Lenkoe emerged as the standout graduate, receiving five trophies and achieving top marks in Animal Production, Pasture Science, Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Engineering. Lenkoe was also awarded the prestigious Dux Student Award for 2026.

In addition to the Glen qualification, Lenkoe has completed an Advanced Diploma in Agricultural Management at the Central University of Technology (CUT) in Bloemfontein and is set to graduate in March 2026. She has also been admitted for a Postgraduate Diploma in Agricultural Management at CUT.

"Being named the overall top achiever was an emotional and unforgettable moment," said Lenkoe. "Seeing the proud smile on my mother's face made me want to do even more. The journey was challenging, but giving up was never an option."

She credited her success to the support of her family and friends, and her determination to create a better life through education.

"I wanted to set a high standard for the next generation in my family and across the province," she said. Rockman concluded the ceremony by reminding graduates that they had been equipped with the necessary skills and training.

"Now it is up to you to use the knowledge gained at Glen College of Agriculture to shine in the agricultural sector and make us proud," she said.

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Hospital Rejects Allegations, Opens Books to Public Scrutiny

By Lerato Mutlanyane

In an era where public trust in healthcare institutions remains fragile, allegations of misconduct can spread rapidly and leave lasting reputational damage. Moses Kotane District Hospital recently found itself at the centre of a storm of social media allegations, sparked by anonymous online posts and a sensational local news segment.

The claims ranged from in-house hot water challenges and dysfunctional boiler systems, to the alleged unavailability of toilet paper and other consumables, deteriorating service standards, and even unlawful handling and sale of human body parts. Though vague, the allegations were serious enough to unsettle the community the hospital has served for decades—covering 49 clinics, 34 wards, 107 villages and two townships.

Rather than retreating behind a wall of silence or issuing a brief legal denial, Moses Kotane District Hospital chose a different route, responding with a comprehensive and public refutation grounded in transparency and verifiable information.

The North West Department of Health acknowledged the allegations circulating on social media, reportedly raised by a member of the GATVOL lobby group. In response, MEC for Health Sello Lehari, accompanied by his team, conducted an oversight visit to the hospital on 26 January 2026. The visit included representatives from NEHAUWU and the GATVOL lobbying group, with the aim of investigating the allegations and identifying areas requiring intervention.

On hot water challenges and boiler systems, the department explained that the hospital was constructed at a time when boilers were being phased out due to high financial and maintenance costs, with heat pump systems introduced instead.

“Provincial Infrastructure Delivery and Technical Services (IDTS) has appointed consultants to conduct a comprehensive assessment and develop a bill of quantities to enable the tender process. This intervention is anticipated to be implemented in the 2026/27 financial year. In the interim, the hospital has procured hydroboils and urns for all wards to ensure continuity of service,” the department said in a statement.

Regarding the availability of toilet paper and consumables, the department stressed that the hospital procures supplies on a monthly and quarterly basis to uphold patient dignity and quality of care. “In cases of delivery delays, the hospital collaborates with neighbouring health facilities to ensure patients’ basic needs are met,”



it added.

Concerns about deteriorating service standards were also addressed. Hospital management reaffirmed its commitment to providing care in line with the Batho Pele Principles, the Patient Rights Charter and the Service Charter. “Management remains open to constructive feedback and encourages community members to report specific service gaps to allow for prompt corrective action,” the hospital stated.

Some community members, however, called for a more engagement-driven approach. One view shared noted that patient and community concerns should not be dismissed as mere allegations, but seen as opportunities for learning and improvement. “Where complaints stem from misunderstanding, it is an opportunity to explain kindly. Such engagements must be encouraged and welcomed,” the statement read.

Positive experiences were also shared online. “My own experience at this hospital was very good. I took my niece there last year, and her life was saved by firm, friendly and attentive maternity night staff. I was highly impressed by the quality of care,” commented Malome Kagiso in a Facebook post.

On allegations related to the handling and sale of human body parts, the department clarified that such processes are governed by the National Health Act, the Human Tissue Act and the National Environmental Management: Waste Act. “The department has appointed a licensed service provider for healthcare risk waste management, and Moses Kotane District Hospital fully participates in this contract while continuously monitoring compliance,” it said.

The department reiterated its commitment to providing safe, dignified and quality healthcare services to all communities it serves. MEC Lehari has since appointed an investigative team to probe all allegations made against the hospital. The team is expected to commence work on 27 January 2026 and submit a preliminary report to the Acting Superintendent General by the end of February 2026.

The episode highlights that, in the face of serious allegations, transparency remains the most effective response. For Moses Kotane District Hospital, addressing the claims marks only the first step, with a renewed commitment to openness, accountability and continuous improvement shaping the road ahead.

Magashule, co-accused back in court

Case might be delayed again as former personal assistant pushing for another trial-within-a-trial

The trial against former ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule and 16 co-accused charged with corruption relating to the R255m asbestos roofing tender in the Free State could face yet another delay.

The trial is expected to start Monday but could face more delays, as his former personal assistant Moroadi Cholota is expected to initiate a trial-within-a-trial after the Constitutional Court ordered her matter to be remitted to the Free State High Court in Bloemfontein.

The top court, in a precedent-setting judgment on Friday, partially overturned Free State High Court judge Phillip Loubser’s court order setting Cholota free on the basis that her extradition from the US in 2024 was unlawful.

The court said the fact that the extradition was unlawful did not mean the high court did not have criminal jurisdiction to proceed with Cholota’s case.

The NPA’s extradition was unlawful because the prosecuting authority led the application and did not have a sign-off from the national executive.

The top court ruled that the national executive, not the NPA, has the legal authority to file for extradition applications to foreign states.

Cholota returns to the dock today when the trial starts. “The main trial is unlikely to continue on Monday,” Cholota’s attorney Piet Tibane told Sowetan’s sister publication Business Day.

Tibane said the legal team would start Cholota’s trial-within-a-trial anew today, confident they would win the case again.

“On Monday, the trial-within-a-trial will have to start de novo [from the beginning] so that we ventilate the other grounds that we have raised. We are saying that the manner in which Cholota was extradited, her rights were violated, which, on its own, should be able to get our client off the hook. She will walk free again,” he said.

Loubser, when setting the trial for January 26 took a tough stance against delays and said he would not accept the matter being further stalled. The trial has suffered delays for more than five years due to interlocutory applications by the accused, including businessperson Edwin Sodi.



Adv Wim Trengove representing NPA and National Director of Public Protector Adv Shamila Batohi during the state’s appeal in Moroadi Cholota and Johnathan Schultz case at the Constitutional Court. Picture: Business Day

Cholota said, despite accumulating more than R5m in legal costs, she was not willing to back down from fighting in court.

“I am not willing to stop the fight for my freedom. I will fight for my rights. I am grateful to everyone supporting me.”

University of Pretoria senior law lecturer, Llewelyn Curlewis, told Business Day the top court ordering the case back to the high court was a saving grace for the NPA to continue with prosecution despite unlawful extradition.

“The court [Constitutional Court] is not in favour of people taking procedural shortcuts to evade prosecution. I like that principal and now it’s a prosecutorial principle,” he said.

Cholota was freed based on the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) judgment in the case of SA fugitive Johnathan Schultz, who faced theft charges but won the case based on the unlawfulness of his extradition application. He lives and works as an artist in Las Vegas, US.

The SCA ruled that only the minister of justice and constitutional development had the power to file extradition applications.

Curlewis said the top court ordering Cholota back in the dock meant not everyone extradited unlawfully can “use it as a free get out of jail ticket”.

“There would have been a floodgate and opening of past transgression by people who have been convicted as a result of extraditions that might not have been lawful,” he said.

The NPA in the top court sought an order to limit the retrospectivity of the Schultz judgment.

Schultz remains free because the top court refused the NPA’s condonation for the late filing in the case.

The NPA took more than three months to file for appeal in the Schultz matter and argued the SCA judgment would lead to the escape of 89 of the country’s “most serious fugitives”.

The judgment penned by justice Leona Theron, however, stipulated in law that there is a principle a court ought not to decline to exercise its criminal jurisdiction on the mere basis that the accused’s extradition request was unlawful.

This means other accused in the same position as Schultz will not be as lucky as he in escaping prosecution based on an unlawful extradition application and mitigating the NPA’s fears.

“This principle, it seems to me, would hold for any extradition request that was made before Schultz SCA,” the judgment read.

“Accordingly, even without the order sought by the NPA to limit the retrospectivity of Schultz SCA, the harm they fear to the administration of justice is largely, if not completely, ameliorated by this court’s findings [in Cholota case].”

University of Johannesburg law professor Hennie Strydom said the NPA in future applications needs to follow procedure because the extradition law, which was a grey area, has been clarified.

“Now we have certainty about the role the executive has to play and what the role of the NPA is. The NPA will now have to re-strategise its approach in extradition cases and avoid cases like this in the future,” Strydom said.

NPA spokesperson advocate Mthunzi Mhaga said the state would study the impact of the court judgment on other cases.

“The task we have been given is to reflect on the implications for other matters that may be affected. It is now settled by law that only the national executive can formally make a request. It is a task that we believe we are capable of discharging. It will not be an easy one,” he said. **SABCNews**

Nail in the coffin for green ID books in South Africa



The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) says it issued a record 4 million Smart ID cards in South Africa in 2025, with an accelerated rollout of digital services set to end the fraud-prone green ID book.

According to the DHA, it issued 4,002,964 Smart ID Cards in the 2025 calendar year, marking the highest delivery rate in the department’s history.

“This milestone represents a 17% increase on the 3,427,468 Smart IDs issued during 2024, which was itself a new record at the time,” it said.

The 2025 performance is about 1.3 million more than the number of Smart IDs issued in 2023 and 2022, respectively.

It said that the record sets the tone for the future rollout of Smart ID services, with the Home Affairs @ Home initiative taking shape.

Through the initiative, the DHA is finalising a major rollout of its new digital partnership with South Africa’s banking sector, which will give access to Smart IDs at hundreds more bank branches around the country, close to where they live.

The rollout is expected to take shape over the coming months, with the DHA planning to have services at 100 more branches by the end of March 2026, and at 1,000 more branches by 2029.

Most of South Africa’s major banks have signed onto the project, including Capitec, Tyme-Bank, and others that will be offering these services for the first time.

The DHA said the accelerated Smart ID rollout serves its aim of eliminating the old green ID book in the country.

“Smart IDs are vastly more secure than the fraud-prone green barcoded ID book,” it said. “The green bar-coded ID book has become a soft target for fraudsters and is estimated to be 500% more vulnerable to fraud than the Smart ID.”

It previously expressed plans to stop producing green ID books as early as 2026, with an ultimate goal of discontinuing the document by 2030.

The long-term goal is to move towards a digital ID along similar timelines, with a target of having a digital ID system in place by the 2029 general elections.

Ending downtime

The DHA said that one of the key changes that has allowed it to ramp up the issuing of Smart IDs is the upgrade to the country’s Online Verification Service (OVS).

Minister Leon Schreiber noted that this system was previously underfunded and abused by some external users.

The department last year increased verification fees from R0.15 to R10, with a bulk offline fee of R1.

“Correcting this has led to higher uptime and better performance of the population register at Home Affairs offices, directly contributing to giving more South Africans access to Smart IDs than ever before,” the DHA said.

The change has not gone unchallenged, however.

A lobby group representing South Africa’s largest telecommunications network operators has started legal proceedings against Home Affairs over the increased fees.

The Association of Communications and Technology NPC (ACT) launched the legal challenge, claiming that the 6,500% increase in the cost of utilising the OVS has a direct negative impact on ACT members’ processes and, ultimately, on consumers.

“This huge increase will make it far more expensive for network operators, banks and other companies to verify their customers’ identities,” it said.

In response, Schreiber welcomed the legal challenge, saying that it gives the DHA an opportunity to expose how businesses had been abusing the system.

“Home Affairs welcomes the opportunity to now expose before the courts, in granular detail, how some users came to rely on unsustainably underpriced access to the personal information of South Africans to drive profits under the previous fee structure at public expense,” he said.

“This even included apparently creating intermediaries to on-sell data at a premium, on the basis that the OVS that they had themselves driven to near-collapse through underfunding and abuse, was unreliable.” **BusinessTech**

Construction, EPWP workers feeling the heat in Kimberly



Construction and EPWP workers in Kimberley in the Northern Cape say they are trying to cope with the current heatwave.

Many say they are trying to stay in the shade and hydrate by constantly drinking water. Some workers, including a skin cancer survivor, expressed deep concern over prolonged sun exposure.

This comes after the South African Weather Service (SAWS) issued a heat wave warning for the Northern Cape, Free State, and North West.

These workers had this to say.

“We survive just by drinking water, trying to stand under the shade as long as possible. But, you know, we still have to push production. But, you know, we’re keeping up in there, we are used to it. We’ve been working in the sun for a while now.”

“It’s hot, hot, hot and I’m afraid of skin cancer because I’m a cancer survivor. We drink the whole day, water, water, water and after that water, we get runny tummies.” - SABC

Matjhabeng's Sewage Challenge Gets Ministerial Focus



Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation Sello Seitholo and Matjhabeng Local Municipality Mayor Thanduxolo Khalipha. Picture: Supplied

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

In an effort to address persistent water and sanitation challenges in the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation Sello Seitholo conducted an oversight visit last Saturday. The visit aimed to assess progress on the municipality's wastewater infrastructure refurbishment program, implemented by the Vaal Central Water Board. Last year, the Board cut off Matjhabeng's water supply due to an unpaid debt of R6 billion. In response, Executive Mayor Thanduxolo Khalipha urged residents, businesses, and government departments to settle their outstanding accounts. Matjhabeng has struggled with water supply issues for years, affecting thousands of residents. To restore services, Mayor Khalipha reached an agreement with the Vaal Central Water Board, making an initial payment of R60 million, followed by a

monthly repayment plan to settle the debt. During his visit, Seitholo met with Khalipha, senior officials from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the Vaal Central Water Board, and the Vaal Orange Catchment Management Agency (VOCMA), among others. According to Nkhumeleni Musekene, acting Head of the Department for Water and Sanitation in the province, the municipality has 11 wastewater treatment works, 10 of which are in poor condition. Musekene also highlighted that Matjhabeng has faced multiple directives and criminal cases in the past due to non-compliance. In a statement released Tuesday, Seitholo urged municipalities nationwide to adopt decentralized and cost-effective sanitation technologies to address growing pollution and capacity challenges. "South Africa cannot continue to rely solely on conventional wastewater treatment facilities and pump

stations, especially in municipalities that cannot afford them. Decentralized and innovative sanitation solutions are essential to prevent sewage from flooding our streets, protect our rivers, and uphold basic dignity," he said. He added that the Water Research Commission (WRC) has already tested waterless and semi-water sanitation innovations that could be scaled up in municipalities like Matjhabeng. Seitholo said the oversight visit is part of a broader ministerial intervention aimed at turning the municipality around and ensuring government efforts translate into tangible improvements. "The Ministry of Water and Sanitation remains committed to supporting Matjhabeng in stabilizing its wastewater systems, safeguarding environmental and public health, and restoring confidence in municipal sanitation services," he said.

Police officer rewarded with brand-new car for saving mother and child



A 41-year-old police officer who saved a mother and child from a violent domestic incident has been rewarded with a brand-new car for his heroic efforts. Sergeant Masibulele Qinisile received his prize at the South African National Police Service (Saps) National Excellence Awards in Bloemfontein on Monday. He also won an additional prize, a four-night cruise on a luxury ship to Pomene, Mozambique. Held under the theme "Serving with integrity, celebrating excellence," Saps awarded more than 350 top performers for going above and beyond the call of duty during its 11th edition of the awards. "Courage under fire" Qinisile is a visible policing member attached to Cadadu Police Station in the Chris Hani District, Eastern Cape. "One of his crew members got disarmed during a confrontation with the suspect, who started shooting at the members. "Qinisile showed courage under fire and engaged the suspect single-handedly, which led him to save the lives of the suspect's wife, their child, and his crew," Van Wyk said. A first-time car owner "Qinisile was crowned as this year's Laureate Award Winner as well as a National Commissioner's Award recipient and walked away with a brand-new vehicle, making him a first-time car owner." Every year in January, the Saps members gather

to celebrate outstanding performance, exceptional commitment and bravery displayed by its men and women in blue. Van Wyk said acting Police Minister Firoz Cachalia, together with national police commissioner Fannie Masemola and other officials, were joined by senior Saps leadership in commemorating service excellence. "Carry that standard forward," says police minister. During his keynote address, Cachalia congratulated all winners and nominees. "Each award presented this evening recognises not just a moment of bravery or exceptional service, but a pattern of behaviour that reflects the highest standards of policing. "Carry that standard forward. Let your conduct be the example that transforms doubt into confidence, fear into safety, and alienation into partnership," said Cachalia. There are more than 40 award categories in the National Excellence Awards. Mathe said the event serves as a powerful reminder that behind every accolade is a story of sacrifice, resilience and service – "being a police officer is not merely a profession, but a calling." "The National Excellence Awards reinforce the Saps' unwavering commitment to ethical conduct, discipline and high standards of policing, while celebrating its men and women in blue who embody the values of the organisation," Van Wyk said. - **The Citizen**

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SAPS Hosts 11th National Excellence Awards

By: Matshidiso Selebeleng

The South African Police Service (SAPS) hosted its 11th National Excellence Awards under the theme "Serving with Integrity, Celebrating Excellence" at Lemo Green Park in Bloemfontein, Free State. The ceremony was attended by Acting Minister of Police Firoz Cachalia, Deputy Ministers Dr Polly Boshieho and Cassel Mathale, SAPS National Commissioner General Fannie Masemola, and Free State Premier Maqoana-Osese, alongside representatives from other provinces. The awards aim to honour the men and women in blue who dedicate their lives to keeping communities safe and holding offenders accountable. The event also recognises outstanding performance, commitment to community relations, innovation, professionalism and acts of bravery within the SAPS. More than 40 award categories were presented, including the prestigious National Commissioner's Awards and Ministry Awards. Addressing attendees, Masemola said the awards serve as a reminder that excellence is not a once-off achievement, but a daily discipline. He also commended SAPS provincial leadership for their continued dedication. "This evening we are witnessing excellence that few talk about, but millions depend on — excellence that unfolds in the dead of night, in courtrooms, in forensic laboratories and on the streets of our communities. We thank you for standing firmly with our members and championing ethical, professional policing," Masemola said. He added that the ceremony celebrates a habit of excellence embedded in the DNA of the men and women in blue. Among the award recipients was Tshelo Lediga, a SAPS financial clerk and accomplished sportsman, who was named Sports Person with Disability of the Year (Chess).

Lediga serves as Chairperson of Free State SAPS Chess, President of the Xhariep District Chess Association, and President and Coach of Trompsburg Chess Club. He is no stranger to accolades, having received awards at both provincial and national level since 2023. He said this achievement means a lot to him and encourages him to keep working hard to leave a mark, and that he ensures to keep the children safe beyond his call of duty. "It means a lot because automatically it encourages the young and old to put more effort into the game and motivates them to never give up, though it is not easy. Some of the prizes (cash prize) I do share it with my Club by buying them chess equipment, such as chess sets, since the club is growing and now has over 50 children aged between 5 and 17." He said. Lediga added that the recognition to him also means that they are being acknowledged for their excellent and outstanding dedication as members of SAPS in their different SAPS components and subcomponents. He encouraged his fellow men in blue to go above and beyond at their different subcomponents and the community that they reside in, because they will never know who is watching or who they motivate. The Acting Police Minister also chimed in to thank the men and women in blue for their dedication into their job. Cachalia said that even though there is a story being told about SAPS in the full view of the public, the story is not false, but is also not complete. "The officers whom we honor and celebrate today, live exemplify that truth, we have seen inspiring examples of that conduct across the country and that's what we honor today. I have seen officers come in volatile situations, I have seen the officers go extra mile to ensure a victim of GBV receives care and protection," he said. He added that over the last 30 years they have built a police service through the efforts of the members of SAPS, and that it is also a story that must be told.

Opinion

By Alan Hirsch
University of Cape Town



South Africa’s new immigration policy takes a digital direction – will it succeed?

South Africa has a new draft white paper on immigration, citizenship and refugees. This, the fourth in three decades, represents a step change from the previous efforts. It is a genuine attempt to develop an efficient but humane set of policies.

Based on my work on migration over two decades, I am convinced that the policies in this new paper are far more ambitious than previous reforms. They represent a genuine attempt to address a complex and sensitive set of challenges in a comprehensive way, using state-of-the-art technological tools. The key question is: are the reforms practically and politically feasible?

The first post-apartheid immigration white paper, published in 1997, led to the new Immigration Act of 2002. This was the second significant reform to immigration policy in the post-apartheid era. The first was the Refugee Act of 1998. The Refugee Act represented a bold realignment. In it South Africa acceded to global and African refugee treaties. It also placed human rights at the centre of the policy.

The 2002 Immigration Act was reformist rather than revolutionary. It was rightly criticised for not getting to grips with the legacy of migration patterns in southern Africa.

The white paper represents a far more coherent and systematic rethink than previous South African piecemeal reforms or similar attempts elsewhere in Africa.

The changes are being driven by Home Affairs minister Leon Schreiber. Schreiber is unusual among politicians. He is a real political scientist with real expertise in public policy. He is ambitious and seems determined to accomplish as much as he can in the current term of government. The impression I get is that his senior officials buy into the reforms – indeed, they devised many of them.

The generational change is essentially digitisation. All civil records about citizens, migrants, prospective migrants, visitors, asylum seekers and refugees will be digitised and integrated. If it works, it could result in a watertight management system

for immigration, citizenship and refugee protection. This would be a huge step up from the current jumble of paper-based and incomplete datasets.

If completely successful it would eliminate both the massive inefficiency of the Department of Home Affairs, and the fraud and general confusion which still plague the governance of migrants and refugees in South Africa.

Fit for the 21st century

Digitisation and integration of information systems was recommended by the Lubisi enquiry into documentation fraud commissioned by the previous minister.

In my own work on South Africa’s migration policies, I made similar recommendations, with the benefit of the evidence in the Lubisi report and other sources.

At the heart of the system being proposed in the new white paper is an Intelligent Population Register. This is a modern, digitised system to manage and use comprehensive population data. Countries like Estonia and Denmark have pioneered such systems, and India has shown how a digital ID system can be extended to its massive population. Botswana already has an integrated civil registration system similar to the one South Africa is planning.

As the minister of Home Affairs put it, an intelligent population register

uses advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, biometrics, interoperability and real-time data integration, to improve governance, integrated service delivery, and national planning.

The new system will require mandatory birth and death registration, and biometric data not only for citizens but also for foreigners, regular and irregular, who reside in the country. This would provide data that enables far more effective social and economic policies than the current incomplete population register.

Irregular foreigners, including asylum seekers and others whose status is yet to be determined, will be:

- allowed to use the banking system irrespective of their status
- expected to pay tax.

Other improvements are that it will be:

- more difficult for unethical visa applicants to game the system
- easier to keep track of refugees and asylum seekers
- more difficult to carry out identity theft.

The other major change is that the new system will introduce a “merit-based path” to naturalisation, in contrast to the existing “mechanical and compliance-based” pathway.

Merit is preferred to years served. After five years of permanent residence, naturalisation will be acquired according to a set of accomplishments that are yet to be detailed. This will be available to immigrants who have come in through a points-based system as well as to current citizens of Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Angola holding exemption permits. The yet to be finalised points system will include assessments of educational qualifications, acquired skills, and some measure of social impact.

The points-based system for skilled immigrants will replace or, for now, complement the critical skills list.

Other immigration reforms include a new start-up visa for tech firms, a subset of an investment visa which replaces the business visa, and new age and income requirements for retiree immigrants. The recently introduced Trusted Employer Scheme, Trusted Tour Operator Scheme and the remote work visa are endorsed in the white paper.

Reforms are proposed to speed up the asylum applications process, including a dedicated immigration court. Even those who obtain refugee status may be returned to the “first safe country” that they passed through when exiting their perilous country.

Countries which are safe for returnees would be designated by government – those which do not have raging civil wars or extreme repression or similar hazards for their citizens. South Africa would have to get agreement from the designated safe

countries that they would accept returnees without prejudice.

Caveats and concerns

None of these reforms will be easy. Some, like the various points-based systems for entry, permanent residence and citizenship, and the establishment of dedicated refugee courts, are complex proposals not yet fully explained.

Other concerns include the privacy implications of the intelligent population register and the willingness of other countries to agree to being designated first safe country. Both issues are vulnerable to court challenges. Prospective first safe countries may require some incentive to cooperate, and South Africa might have to offer to accept a considerable share of the refugees.

There are also some issues covered in previous white papers not addressed here. Whether and how to draw on the financial and networking resources of the South African diaspora is not discussed. Nor is the issue of proactive policies to promote the social integration of foreigners.

Also not covered is the issue of lower-skilled migrants. However, migrant labour, mostly low-skilled, is the focus of the White Paper on National Labour Migration Policy republished by the Department of Employment and Labour last year.

The ambition signalled in the new policy paper is impressive. Whether it is doable, and whether the project will be completed, depends on many things, political, technical and judicial.



Good day Tshwane, I saw Sodi in Bloem...



Refilwe Mochoari
Editor-in-Chief

In South Africa’s ongoing struggle with business corruption, tender system irregularities, and mismanagement of state funds, a few names evoke as much controversy as that of businessman and socialite Edwin Sodi.

According to several news reports, Edwin Sodi is missing and the City of Tshwane cannot trace him..

The Democratic Alliance has even appointed a tracing agent to find Sodi.

Hi everyone my name is Refilwe Mochoari, let’s talk about Edwin Sodi and why he is the most wanted businessman in the country.

In 2019, a consortium led by Sodi was awarded a R292 million contract to upgrade the dysfunctional Rooiwal wastewater treatment plant which was meant to serve the community of Hammanskraal.

However, the municipality was forced to cancel the contract after the consortium abandoned the site with most of the work still incomplete.

Despite this, they received full payment.

It is also alleged that this wastewater treatment plant is one of the contributing factors to the 2023 Cholera outbreak that killed 31 people in Hammanskraal, North of Pretoria.

As a businessman who was once regarded a prominent figure in the construction and engineering sector, Sodi’s reputation has steadily eroded under the weight of incomplete projects, failed promises, and high-profile court appearances.

When you see Sodi in the news, it is typically for negative reasons.

He is wanted by the Special Investigation Unit.

He is wanted by Tshwane.

He is wanted by the Democratic Alliance

And, he is wanted by the judicial system to account for all the alleged corruption cases.

The SIU issued a probe to recover over R600 million in public funds that were lost through unlawful tenders that are also linked to Sodi.

In 2023, Tshwane authorities pledged to blacklist Sodi and his partners because

But over the past few days, the City of Tshwane said it cannot trace Sodi and associates for their companies to be blacklisted from doing business with the government.

In September 2025, a report by Tshwane’s supply chain management revealed that attempts to serve Sodi and his partners with letters that inform them of their blacklisting were unsuccessful because the city could not trace them.

The irony is that while Tshwane claims it cannot trace Sodi, the man is hardly living in the shadows.

He owns two high-end nightclubs which he frequents, LIV Sandton and LIV Cape Town.

This week he appeared in court for another scandalous tender case that he is involved in, the R255 million Free State asbestos trial where he is one of 17 accused, in the Bloemfontein High Court.

This contradiction raises uncomfortable questions.

How can a municipality fail to “trace” a businessman who is living his life openly?

The inability to enforce accountability by government speaks less about Sodi’s elusiveness and more about the inefficiency and unwillingness of the state to act decisively against individuals who have long benefited from political connections.

Sodi’s track record of incomplete projects is not just a personal failing, it is a reflection of a broader culture of impunity.

Sodi is just one of many individuals who get away with acts similar to this.

Incomplete projects, fraudulent issuing of tenders where communities are left with half-built homes, poor services, unemployment and a society of crime in action.

The blacklisting of companies that do not deliver should be applauded in principle and must be enforced.

Yesterday Tshwane after being put under extreme pressure, announced that it has submitted an application to National Treasury to blacklist Edwin Sodi and affiliated businesses from doing business with the state.

The municipality says the delay was to ensure that it was “done properly”

Accountability must be consistent, otherwise it becomes yet another headline in South Africa’s long list of corruption cases..

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. Writte to: editor@journalnews.co.za



Pastor Motsamai Kareli
Empowerment Ministries International

The philosophy of thinking

“Where success is concerned, people are not measured in inches, or pounds, or college degrees, or family backgrounds; they are measured by the size of their thinking”. - David Schwards

Claude M Bristol wrote in the Magic of Believing: “The succesful people in industry have succeeded through their thinking. Their hands were helpers to their brains”. To make progress in any field, you have to take action. But how succesful you will be in your actions depends on the quality of your thoughts.

Why you must think?

It is true that if you stop thinking you start stinking. You can literally watch your life deteriorate just by refusing to think. Use your mind or lose it. To improve your life you must improve your thinking. Let me show you a few reasons why thinking is important:

1. Thinking is an Ancestor of every action.

Every thing begins with a thought. This very article began with a thought. There can be no action without thinking. I know that you may be saying that sometimes you find yourself acting without thinking. It may feel that way, but it is not true.

2. Thinking Sets Everything in Motion

Thinking is not just an ancestor of every action, but thinking is everything, including the way you see the world and relate to it.

3. Those who Think Rule Those Who Dont .

If you want to influence the world, you will need to think. This world is run by thinking people. Think about what Napaleon Hill said when he wrote: “More gold has been mined from the thoughts of men than has ever been taken from

the earth”. All great leaders have learnt the art of thinking. Jack Welch, former Chairman of General Electric, said: “The hero is the one with ideas”. This world is on the move because of thinkers.

4. Thinking Eliminates Superstition.

Thinking is a cure for the disease called superstition. In my leadership seminars, i always tell my audiences that “Believing without Thinking is superstition”. Believing is great, but to do so without thinking causes the believer to be dumb.

5. Thinking is an Answer to Indoctination

Education without the capacity to think is indoctrination. There is nothing as dangerous as acquiring information without taking time to think about it. In fact, the educated, when they are lazy to think, find themselves equipped for the world that no longer exists. I am totally convinced that this world is run by people who think (who may or may not be educated). In fact, the majority of great thinkers are not that educated. It is interesting to note that generally: Uneducated thinking people employ highly educated non-thinking people to manage their businesses. If you do not think, you will be hired to take

care of the affairs of those who do. Do not be a prisoner of your education. Think and be free!

6. Thinking is the foundation for intelligence

To increase your intelligence , you must think. I define intelligence as “the ability to interact with the environment profitably”. By environment , I mean everything that is not you - other people, the economy, circumstances, and the world at large. Intelligence means that you are able to make the environment work to your advantage. You do not just cope with the environment but you create the environment. You do not just cope with the present but you create the future. You are not under the circumstances but above them.

The matric pass rate illusion and the quiet elitism of mathematics and science education

Matric results season has become a ritual in South Africa’s public life. The numbers are announced; celebrations ensue, and bold statements proclaiming progress soon dominate the conversation.

This year is no different. With an 88% pass rate, the highest on record, and more than 650 000 learners passing, the results have been framed by President Cyril Ramaphosa as evidence that education reforms are bearing fruit and that the system is progressing towards greater equity.

At one level, this optimism is understandable. The results are worth celebrating. But celebration can also obscure as much as it reveals.

While pass rates rise, access to meaningful science education is narrow in ways that quietly reproduce inequality.

To his credit, the president acknowledged one uncomfortable statistic. Of the 1.2 million children who entered grade one in 2014, only 778 000 reached Grade 12 in 2025. Nearly half a million learners disappeared somewhere along the schooling journey.

The large number of dropouts reflects the cumulative weight of inequality.

However, a second, quieter culling takes place inside the schooling system itself, particularly in mathematics and physical sciences.

Culling from mathematics and physical sciences

As learners move through Grades 9 to 11, many are steered away from subjects seen as too risky to pass. Schools under pressure to maintain high overall pass rates often encourage learners to replace mathematics, life sciences or physical sciences with subjects perceived as easier to pass, such as tourism or business studies.

Between 2023 and 2024, mathematics enrolments dropped by more than 12 000 learners. Physical sciences enrolments fell by nearly 7 000 over the same period.

This redirection is rarely described as exclusion. It is framed as guidance, as helping learners make “realistic” subject choices. In practice, it functions as a system-level strategy to protect pass rates. For learners in under-resourced schools, this is often the only pragmatic option.

There are no laboratories, no functional equipment, and no specialist teachers.

And by grade 10 most of these students lack the cognitive foundations to successfully tackle physical science and mathematics at matric level. Re-

peated failure makes persistence feel futile.

In other words, the system is not only struggling to improve performance. It is managing the pass rate by steadily narrowing who is allowed to participate in science and mathematics.

The argument has never been that every learner should pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers at university. Differentiated pathways are both necessary and desirable.

Economies need artisans, technicians, teachers, caregivers, entrepreneurs, artists and tradespeople alongside engineers and scientists.

At its core, this is an argument about opportunity.

In a fair system, learners should leave STEM subjects because of informed choice, interest and aptitude. Not because their schools lack laboratories, qualified teachers or basic learning resources or because they lack adequate foundational cognition to handle science and mathematics.

The contrast between school contexts makes this pattern difficult to ignore.

In the under-resourced township and rural schools, subject exit is often a rational response to multiple barriers. In former model C and some private schools, the picture is markedly different. Laboratories function.

Classes are smaller. Subject specialists are available. Learners are far more likely to remain in mathematics and physical sciences classes through matric, even when they struggle initially. Unsurprisingly, distinctions cluster in these schools. Over time, studying science and mathematics has become elitist.

Seriousness delayed is opportunity denied

When declining performance in mathematics and science is acknowledged, it is often explained as a problem of weak foundations in the early grades. This admission is important.

The problem is not that urgency arrives in matric, but that it arrives there for the first time. In subjects such as mathematics and physical sciences, seriousness delayed is opportunity denied, and no amount of late-stage intervention can fully recover what should have been built steadily from the foundation phase.

Opinion article by Dr Remeredzayi Gudyanga, Lecturer in Curriculum Studies and Higher Education, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State

Business

Markets and Indicators			
Rand/Dollar	15.76	0.04%	▲
Rand/Pound	21.74	0.13%	▲
Rand/Euro	18.84	0.04%	▲
Platinum	1 979.76	-3.75%	▼
Brent Crude	69.53	2.96%	▲
Gold	5 312.15	-1.88%	▼
Etherium	2 797.76	-7.21%	▼
Bitcoin	84 011.35	-5.88%	▼

Free State Bets on Industrialisation



DESTEA Head of Department Pakiso Lebone. Picture: BT

By Lerato Mutlanyane

The Free State Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DESTEa) hosted an Industrialisation Indaba yesterday as part of its ongoing efforts to drive industrial development and promote shared economic prosperity in the province.

The Indaba aimed to attract investment, strengthen business networks and support growth in manufacturing and related industrial sectors. DESTEa Head of Department Pakiso Lebone said the gathering was designed to provide a platform for engagement with industry stakeholders, share insights, showcase innovation and contribute to the development of the Provincial Industrialisation Policy.

Lebone said the Indaba would also serve as a strategic platform to strengthen joint ventures between the public and private sectors, with a focus on competitiveness, job creation and economic transformation.

The Indaba forms part of a broader initiative to improve the province's socio-economic outlook. DESTEa MEC Ketso Makume said the event is grounded in

South Africa's Constitution.

"Section 22 of the Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to choose their trade, profession or occupation freely," Makume said.

Discussions also highlighted investment opportunities across key sectors, including agriculture, agro-processing, manufacturing, ICT, infrastructure development, green energy, construction, tourism and trade.

An overview of the Free State Industrialisation Policy and the industrial cluster programme was presented by Tisetso Makhele, who noted the province's strong agricultural output. He said the Free State supplies 53% of the country's sorghum, 45% of sunflowers, 33% of potatoes, 32% of groundnuts, 26% of dry beans, 24% of wool, and nearly 90% of South Africa's cherries.

"Red meat and dairy are also important products, while game hunting is a growing sector. Crop production accounts for about two-thirds of the province's gross agricultural income," Makhele said, adding that maize and wheat remain the main crops, alongside sunflowers, sorghum and soybeans.

Makhele further noted that close to R300 billion had

been spent over the past decade, but said the National Investment Forum indicates that the investment did not fully reach its intended targets.

He added that opportunities are emerging in the province's gas and energy sector, with exploration licences being granted. A R200 million plant began producing liquefied natural gas (LNG) and helium in 2022.

The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) has spent approximately R50 million to revitalise FDC-owned factories in Botshabelo and Phuthaditjhaba, improving occupancy rates. DESTEa has also invested more than R12 million in rental subsidies and factory refurbishments, particularly targeting manufacturing enterprises and creating direct jobs.

Makhele said efforts to strengthen the labour force through Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and TVET colleges may need to be intensified to improve employment prospects across industries.

However, the department acknowledged that a key challenge remains the lack of a coordinated approach among stakeholders, particularly between skills development providers and employers.

SAFTU warns SA heading towards 'warehouse economy' as BAT exits country

Labour body urges parliament to rethink Tobacco Control Bill amid economic concerns

The SA Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu) said the proposed closure of British American Tobacco (BAT) is the latest example of big corporations shutting down local operations, warning this trend is steadily turning South Africa into a warehouse economy.

It also called on parliament to not pass the Tobacco Control Bill in its current form, as it would weaken legal tobacco producers while strengthening illicit and criminal operators. The bill, if passed, would accelerate factory closures and "finish off thousands of remaining manufacturing jobs", Saftu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi said in Johannesburg on Thursday.

He was briefing the media following the labour federation's meeting with BAT regarding the proposed closure of its Heidelberg manufacturing plant. The decision by the London- and Johannesburg-listed company will result in the group not manufacturing cigarettes locally for the first time in more than 50 years, resorting to imports to serve the South African market.

BATS, which produces popular brands such as Peter Stuyvesant, Pall Mall and Dunhill, recently informed the political leadership of the Lesedi municipality, where its Heidelberg manufacturing facility is located, that it would close the plant by the end of this year. BAT blamed the decision on the proliferation of illegal cigarettes, which it said now accounts for 75% of the market.

Vavi characterised the proliferation of illegal cigarettes as the "total murder of the economy". He said the proposed closure threatened 200 direct jobs and thousands of indirect jobs.

The country was being turned into a "warehouse economy", as corporations had steadily closed factories and relocated production overseas or to neighbouring countries, while keeping distribution and sales networks in the country.

"This is deindustrialisation by design. [BAT's proposed closure] mirrors Goodyear closing its tyre plant in Kariega, while retaining distribution networks," Vavi said, while blaming the effect of sin taxes, saying since 2014 they had increased by about 88%.

Illicit cigarette manufacturers do not pay excise tax to the SA Revenue Service (Sars), enabling them to undercut the prices charged by companies that are compliant.



The illicit trade costs Sars R28bn a year, according to BAT.

Saftu wanted parliament to not pass the Tobacco Control Bill and engage workers first.

Among other things, the bill also proposes introducing graphic health warnings and plain packaging for all tobacco and nicotine-containing products, including e-cigarettes. It also proposes a ban on the sale of single cigarettes, prohibits vending machines and point-of-sale advertising, and introduces further restrictions on smoking in public places.

"We therefore demand that parliament halt the bill and suspend its processing at portfolio committee level, and conduct a full employment and socioeconomic impact assessment," said Vavi. Parliament needed to balance health objectives with jobs and development.

The BAT Heidelberg factory is the eighth-largest factory for global BAT and accounts for a significant total production for both domestic consumption and export

into the wider Southern African region. The group employs at least 1,500 people in South Africa. BAT's 2023 results were negatively affected by an impairment of goodwill regarding South Africa of £291m due to the continued "negative effect of illicit trade". The group also called for the "urgent" introduction of a minimum retail price of R37 per pack, saying it should be illegal to sell a box of 20 cigarettes below the threshold, which it said is "economically viable".

BAT has acknowledged the "recent" moves by Sars to clamp down on illegal cigarettes. During Saftu's meeting with the BAT leadership on Wednesday, Vavi said the company told the union federation it wanted to increase volumes of what it sells to remain profitable.

"They said they are unable to do so when competing with illegal trade. They said they would not leave if they get a commitment that illegal trade will stop," *Business Day*

Reserve Bank keeps repo rate at 6.75%



The South African Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee has kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.75%.

This was announced by Reserve Bank Governor, Lesetja Kganyago on Thursday.

The prime lending rate will also stay steady at 10.25%.

"Two members [of the MPC] favoured a cut of 25 basis points, while four preferred a hold.

"The Quarterly Projection Model continues to forecast gradual rate cuts as inflation subsides. The model interprets the policy stance as moderately restrictive currently, with rates reaching neutral levels during 2027.

"As before, this rate path remains a broad policy guide. Our decisions will continue to be taken on a meeting-by-meeting basis, with careful attention to the outlook, data outcomes, and the balance of risks to the forecast," he said.

Kganyago added that South Africa's economic growth "looks steadier", noting that there has been expansion for four quarters – with available data suggesting that "it grew further in the most recent quarter".

"This would mark the longest unbroken growth phase since 2018. The main growth driver has been household consumption, up by more than 3% last year, compared to an estimated 1.3% for the overall economy.

"Unfortunately, investment has been weak, contracting during the first half of 2025. However, the third-quarter data showed a rebound. We hope this investment recovery will be sustained, allowing the economy to achieve structurally higher growth.

"Our forecasts continue to show growth moving somewhat higher, approaching 2% over the medi-

um term. We see some upside risks to these projections," he said.

Inflation came in higher towards the end of 2025 at 3.6% in December but is expected to slow.

"Indeed, our near-term inflation forecast has fallen, with the rand stronger and a lower oil price assumption.

"We are, however, keeping an eye on food inflation, especially meat prices, which are being affected by a serious outbreak of foot and mouth disease. We are also concerned about electricity prices, given that NERSA's price correction may rise from R54 billion to R76 billion.

"More positively, inflation expectations have fallen, with the latest survey showing longer-term expectations at record lows. We look forward to expectations declining further, as South Africans experience ongoing lower inflation and learn more about the new target," Kganyago noted.

He described the past year as a "watershed year for the South African economy".

"Despite a volatile global backdrop, there was significant progress on domestic reforms, including a new inflation target.

These efforts have been rewarded with lower borrowing costs, a rapid decline in inflation expectations, and steadier growth.

"It is crucial to sustain this progress. For monetary policy, our main contribution is to deliver on the new target, which means stabilising inflation at 3% over the next few years.

"Further gains in economic performance would come from reaching a prudent public debt level, lowering administered price inflation, and continuing structural reforms that raise potential growth," Kganyago concluded. *SAnews.gov.za*

Bloem Mall Loses Utility Bill Battle

High Court rules Loch Logan Waterfront mall to settle R150 million electricity debt with CENTLEC

By: Abigail Visagie

Bloemfontein-based power utility, CENTLEC (Soc) Ltd, has emerged victorious in its legal battle against Loch Logan Waterfront (Pty) Ltd and the representative of The Michael Family Trust (TMFT), which owns the mall.

The popular shopping mall - which covers over 80 000 m² and stands as the largest mall in central South Africa - is expected to pay R150 million in electricity debt to the energy utility.

TMFT, represented by trustees Joseph Reynolds Chemaly who was the first applicant, Michael Nicolas Georgiou and Andriana Georgiou, who were the second and third applicant, respectively, had brought an urgent application before the Bloemfontein High Court on 16 January 2024, in which it sought to interdict CENTLEC from interrupting the supply of electricity to its business premises, due to non-payment of outstanding account. An intermediate application was also filed a month later.

Interim orders were granted for both applications on the basis that the applicants comply to a debt settlement agreement that was reached by both parties on 24 October 2023. It was agreed that Loch Logan Waterfront would duly settle around

R150 million owed to the energy utility.

Judge S. Naidoo rejected the primary lawsuit and ordered the applicant to pay the legal fees for the other side. This payment includes the high-level costs for the lawyers (Scale B) and the expenses for three specific court dates: 25 January 2024, 5 February 2025, and 6 February 2025.

Additionally, the judge cancelled the temporary court order (the Rule nisi) and dismissed the secondary legal request, again ordering the applicant to pay those costs as well.

CENTLEC spokesperson, Tseliso Leba, confirmed that the rule nisi (a provisional court order) in the interlocutory application was also discharged and dismissed with costs.

"As CENTLEC, we welcome and appreciate the judgment of the High Court in our favour. Failure to honour its obligations and the provisions of the approved Credit Control and Debt Collection Policy is what led us to the situation we find ourselves in.

"As we had previously indicated, disconnection is not our primary goal; however, CENTLEC's survival depends on the monies owed to the utility. This judgement will enable us to recover our long-standing debt with The Michael Family Trust No. TM 2505," concluded Leba.

GET TO KNOW YOUR DJ

From Welkom to World Stages: DJ VISTA's Afro-Electronic Rise



By Lerato Mutlanyane

Thumping beat drops, unmatched energy, and hypnotic basslines define the sound of Welkom-born Thabiso “DJ VISTA” Selokoe (25), now based in Paul Roux. Having started his musical journey at a tender age, DJ VISTA has been steering his career with purpose and passion for an impressive 16 years.

A true curator of dancefloors, DJ VISTA blends nostalgic Amapiano, Afro Tech, and electronic music to create immersive sonic experiences that captivate audiences wherever he performs. His versatility and innovative approach have positioned him as a rising force aiming to take his sound beyond South Africa's borders.

Currently, DJ VISTA is working on new material infused with authentic African elements—music crafted for global stages, from nightclubs to major festivals.

“Driven by consistency, growth and innovation, I am positioning myself as a global Afro-electronic force—one set, one track, one horizon at a time,” he said.

His energy-charged performances have electrified major music events including Uniondale Game Farm, Marquard Homecoming Festival, Red Cup Festival and Summer Splash. In 2019, he claimed top honours at Bethlehem Got Talent and has since released numerous mixtapes featuring respected local acts such as DJ Konopo, DJ Fantasi, DJ Judy Jay, DJ Twynky-Star, Black Diamond and others.

Beyond the decks, DJ VISTA is deeply committed to community upliftment. He has spearheaded several charitable initiatives, including donating school uniforms to underprivileged children in his hometown of Fateng Tse Ntsho in Paul Roux.

Through VISTA Entertainment, he also plays a vital role in keeping young people off the streets by nurturing talent and sharpening creative skills, impacting more than 200 youths.

With his talent, work ethic and dedication, DJ VISTA has firmly established himself as one of South Africa's most exciting emerging acts, continuing to inspire music lovers with infectious beats and positive energy.

For bookings and enquiries, contact dseloko@gmail.com or officialdjvistabookings@gmail.com.

Coldplay and Antonio Vivaldi to headline City of Roses on Valentines

Candlelight Concerts returns to Bloemfontein for a promising night of music, warm glow, and seismic atmosphere for this years Valentines day.

Th Bloemfontein Sand du Plessis theatre will be the place to be next week as Candlelight Concert will be paying tribute to the legendary British rock band Coldplay and Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi..

As the lights dim, a sea of flickering candles reveals an intimate atmosphere where music and ambiance unite.

Event organizers, Fever Up says this is not just a concert, it is a multi-sensory escape.

They say these atmospheric concerts transform spaces into magical concert halls, where the glow of thousands of candles create an unparalleled setting for reimagined masterpieces.

Be transported by the enchanting glow of thousands of hand-lit candles creating a magical pathway and canopy of light, transitioning from classi-



cal masterpieces to contemporary hits.

Each performance showcases talented artists in an immersive sensory journey for every music lover.

Bring your family, bring your special somebody for a night of candlelight bliss. Experience the mag-

ical performances of the Candlelight concerts like never before bathed in the warm, magical glow of a thousand candles from Theatre with tickets ranging from R350.

Sun City introduces South Africa's first outdoor slot machines



In staying with modern times and abreast of the latest gambling technology, Sun City now has outdoor slot machines, which is said to be a first for South Africa.

This popular entertainment hub has introduced the first countertop slot and poker machines at its transformed pool area.

When Sun City opened in 1979, the world was quite different to the way it is now.

Leggy models in ostrich feather plumage were very much part of the glamour of the exciting new hotel and casino, known for sheer extravagance and entertainment.

Times change, however, and not only did a grand dame need a bit of a cosmetic lift to maintain the

razzle dazzle for which the resort is world famous, but Sun City kept up with modern times. A central staircase now leads guests down to an entertainment pool level with its core a dedicated DJ island, where curated soundscapes create a vibrant mood by day or night.

From dancing under the stars to lounging poolside with signature cocktails, it also now offers the chance to play in the sun.

“With this visionary transformation, the Sun Terrace and pool emerges as a dynamic cultural and lifestyle destination,” says Brett Hoppé, the Resort’s General Manager.

Swimming and sunbathing are still very much on the menu in this area, but MVG members and day

card holders can now also spin the wheels on six new countertop machines right at the poolside bar, the first of their kind in South Africa.

Each machine offers slots, poker and roulette games, allowing guests to stay close to the water while enjoying a little gaming.

The machines are the same as those found inside the casino, with multiple denominations for classic as well as slots, poker and roulette games.

For those who prefer indoor play or a break from the sun, the casino has also been updated in time for the past December holiday season.

The main casino floor has also been refreshed, with slot machines rearranged to improve flow and comfort for players. - **IOL**

From ‘Water’ to ‘Chanel’: Tyla slays on ‘The Tonight Show’ stage once again



Returning to the critically acclaimed show, Tyla made the most of her second appearance on “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.”

The 23-year-old singer continues to make her mark on international stages, this time with a stellar performance of her hit single “Chanel” on “The Tonight Show” stage.

She delivered her first-ever televised performance of “Chanel” on the late-night show, commanding the stage with ease and confidence.

From the moment she entered, her intro made it clear that this was not just another performance, but a fashion statement moment.

It was the kind of performance that pulls you in without shouting for attention, and one thing about Tyla is that’s her speciality.

Her choreography was effortless, and she didn’t need backup dancers this time. The song is about being out in Chanel, so of course, the singer came to the party with the looks.

Tyla wore a bold, sheer Chanel Spring/Summer 2026 skirt set layered over a bra and micro shorts underneath, pairing high fashion with her signature confidence.

The sheer skirt was styled with a matching Chanel top, which she left on the floor as she strutted to the stage.

The look was layered with multiple silver and red beaded necklaces across her chest. Reminding everyone of her reputation as an artist who understands how style and music can work together.

The “Chanel” performance also felt like a full-circle moment. In 2023, Tyla stood on the same stage performing her hit song “Water”, the breakout single that introduced her to a global audience and went on to rewrite history for African female artists on international charts.

Two years later, she returned not as a newcomer but as a proven hitmaker with another song dominating music charts and playlists.

While “Water” marked her arrival, “Chanel” shows that she’s here to stay. The song has continued to climb on streaming platforms, driven largely by TikTok, where its dance challenge took on a life of its own.

The growing numbers, paired with moments like her Fallon performance, are proof that Tyla is no longer chasing momentum; she has it, and she’s keeping it.

Her return on “The Tonight Show” reflects just how far she has come and how comfortable she now looks owning spaces that she’s worked so hard for to reach.

As of now, “Chanel” has peaked at number 15 according to Tyla Charts on X.

STRAMPE DU PLESSIS INC.
ATTORNEYS, CONVEYANCERS & ESTATE ADMINISTRATORS
REGISTRATION NUMBER 00158752/2017

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

Notice is hereby given in terms of regulation 68 of the Deeds Registries Act, 1937, of the intention to apply for the issue of a certified copy of Deed of Transfer T11256/2009 passed by Seun Piet Taabos, Identity Number 8712155979083, Unmarried, and Mohanuoa Lydia Mohale, Identity Number 8308310886089, Unmarried in favour of, Tisetso Meshack Moloi, Identity Number 6809255556084, Unmarried, in respect of Erf 21563 Heidedal Extension 29 District Bloemfontein Province Free State In extent: 603 (Six Zero Three) square metres

All interested persons having objection to the issue of such copy are hereby required to lodge the same in writing with the Registrar of Deeds at Bloemfontein within two weeks from date of the publication of this notice. Dated at Bloemfontein this 16 July 2025

CONVEYANCER
NICOLAAS ALRBETUS STAMPE (LPCM 57743)
STRAMPE DU PLESSIS ATTORNEYS
58C KELLNER STREET
WESTDEN
BLOEMFONTEIN
Email: admin@sdatt.co.za
Telephone no: 051 430 0841

SECTION 24G APPLICATION FOR RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF LISTED ACTIVITY BY KOPANONG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

- Notice is hereby given, in terms section 24(G) regulation (Government Regulation 696 of 2027) in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) as amended to the department of Economi, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Free State for the commencement of activity listed under EIA Regulations of 2017.
- The activity location is farm Phillipolis 143 portion 0 in Phillipolis, Free State.
- The development triggers the following listed activities in terms of EIA regulations, 2017 as amended.
 - GNR 327 Activity 23: The development of cemeteries of 2 500 square metres or more in size.
 - GNR 327 Activity 27: The clearance of an area of 1 hectare or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation:
- The date of placement of this notice is 30 February 2026
- Queries regarding this matter must be referred to: The Environmental Consultant, Retso Con (Pty) Ltd, Unit 5, Gold Reef Estate, Langenhoven Park, Bloemfontein, 9301 or Email: liketso@retsocon.com.
- Parties wishing to formally register as an I&AP are requested to forward their comments (and contact details) to Retso Con (Pty) Ltd within 30 days of placement of this advertisement, which is on or before 2 March 2026

BATHO LOCATION, MANGAUNG 9323
E-MAIL: matshedisoramolula@gmail.com
CONTACT: (+27) 65 862 3469

SECTION 24G APPLICATION FOR RECTIFICATION OF UNLAWFUL COMMENCEMENT OF LISTED ACTIVITY BY ATLAS DIESEL DEPOT AND TRUCK INN (PTY) LTD.

- Notice is hereby given, in terms section 24(G) regulation (Government Regulation 696 of 2027) in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) as amended to the department of Economi, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Free State for the commencement of activity listed under EIA Regulations of 2017.
- The activity location is farm Engela's Rust 895 portion 0 in Bothaville
- The development triggers the following listed activities in terms of EIA regulations, 2017 as amended.
 - GNR 327 Activity 14: The development and related operation of facilities or infrastructure, for the storage, or for the storage and handling, of a dangerous good, where such storage occurs in containers with a combined capacity of 80 cubic meters or more but not exceeding 500 cubic metres..
 - GNR 327 Activity 27: The clearance of an area of 1 hectare or more, but less than 20 hectares of indigenous vegetation:
- The date of placement of this notice is 30 February 2026
- Queries regarding this matter must be referred to: The Environmental Consultant, Retso Con (Pty) Ltd, Unit 5, Gold Reef Estate, Langenhoven Park, Bloemfontein, 9301 or Email: liketso@retsocon.com.
- Parties wishing to formally register as an I&AP are requested to forward their comments (and contact details) to Retso Con (Pty) Ltd within 30 days of placement of this advertisement, which is on or before 2 March 2026.

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Sport



McKenzie To Plough Back Home

By: Mpho Sekharume

Bloemfontein is preparing to host a significant series of infrastructure handovers this coming Monday, marking a major investment in the grassroots sporting landscape of the Free State.

Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, will return to his hometown to oversee the official opening of new facilities and the distribution of high-end equipment at select local venues.

This visit represents a homecoming with a purpose, as McKenzie focuses on the Heidedal township where he was raised, ensuring that the next generation of local athletes has access to essential resources that will contribute to sport development and excellence.

At the heart of this homecoming is the handover of a state-of-the-art multipurpose sport facility at Credence Primary School. This project, completed through a public-private partnership with MultiChoice, serves as a cornerstone for community sport infrastructure.

Furthering this development, the Sports Minister will also visit Heide Primary School to hand over table tennis equipment donated by the People's Republic of China. This international collaboration, facilitated by the South African Table Tennis Federation (SATTF), is specifically designed to bolster school-level sport and uncover talent in areas that have historically been overlooked. The day will conclude at the Stadium Swimming Pool with the handover of legacy equipment from the 2025 National School Sport Championships - ensuring the benefits of major tournaments continue to serve local residents long after the final whistle has blown.

While these infrastructure projects are vital, the revival of the local football spirit remains one of the most visible impacts of McKenzie's commitment to Bloemfontein. He played a pivotal role in the establishment of Siwelele FC, a move that successfully filled the void left by the dysfunction and demise of Bloemfontein Celtic.

Led by his son, Calvin Le John, Siwelele FC has become the new symbol of local pride and cultural restoration. Under Le John's leadership, Siwelele FC has captured the imagination of the Mangaung fans, bringing the legendary atmosphere back to the stands and proving that local ownership can breathe new life into the professional game.

Beyond these specific events, McKenzie has championed several other initiatives throughout the country. He has been a driving force behind the refurbishment of community sports hubs and has consistently advocated for increased funding for regional training centres. His Project 300, where he aims to send 300 South African athletes to the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, US, may be deemed too ambitious but exudes great intention and determination by McKenzie, while igniting the hopes of thousands of athletes that aspire for international acclaim in their respective sporting codes. Through the combination of international diplomacy and important private sector partnerships, McKenzie is systematically transforming the South African sporting sector into a well-oiled machine, while ensuring that his legacy is written in the very streets and stadiums.

Below is the full schedule of events:
MultiChoice Multipurpose Sport Facility Handover
Date: Monday, 02 February 2026
Time: 13:30 for 14:00 – 15:30
Venue: Credence Primary School, Bloemfontein
Table Tennis Equipment Handover (SA–China Donation)
Time: 15:30 for 15:45 – 16:30
Venue: Heide Primary School, Bloemfontein
Swimming Pool Legacy Equipment
Handover Time: 16:30 for 16:45 – 17:30
Venue: Stadium Swimming Pool, Bloemfontein



In Defence Mode ... Kaizer Chiefs will look to use their current vein of good form to defend their Nedbank Cup title. Picture: PSL

Chiefs Cup Defence Campaign Commences

Nedbank Cup champions, Kaizer Chiefs, launch cup defence quest, while minnows aim to cause major upsets in Round of Last 32

By: Mpho Sekharume

The thrill of knockout cup football is about to get unleashed with the return of the Nedbank Cup as the round of the Last 32 is set to kick off this coming on Wednesday, 4 February 2026, with the spotlight shines brightest on the opening night as the defending champions, Kaizer Chiefs, begin their quest to retain the throne.

The Amakhosi face a daunting start to their campaign as they travel to the Western Cape to lock horns with a formidable Stellenbosch FC at the DHL Stadium.

This high stakes encounter on Wednesday evening serves as a perfect litmus test for the holders, who will need to navigate the tricky coastal conditions and a disciplined Winelands outfit to keep their title defence alive.

Simultaneously, the powerhouse of Mamelodi Sundowns will be in action at Loftus Versfeld Stadium, where they play host to Gomora United.

While the Brazilians are perennial favourites in any competition they enter, the 19:30 kick-off offers Gomora United the ultimate stage to attempt a historic upset against one of the continent's most decorated sides.

As the midweek energy transitions into the weekend, on 6 February Durban City FC will seek to utilise their home advantage against a resilient Chippa United side that often finds its best form in knockout football.

On the same night, the romanticism of the cup is further highlighted as CR Vasco Da Gama takes on Luthuli Brigades FC - a match that represents the very essence of the Nedbank Cup's inclusive nature.

The tournament will reach fever pitch on 7 February with six fixtures scheduled across the nation. The headline act of the day features Orlando Pirates traveling north to face Tshakhuma FC. The Buccaneers, with their rich cup history, will be wary of the motivated hosts in what is expected to be a packed football showdown.

Elsewhere that very same Saturday, the footballing map expands as FC Cardinals and Jacksa Spears battle for supremacy, while Highbury FC tests their mettle against Sekhukhune United. The day will be rounded up by Army Rockets FC hosting Casric Stars, Uppington City welcoming Magesi FC, and Lamontville Golden Arrows entertaining Orbit College FC in what promises to be a showcase of diverse playing styles.

TS Galaxy, a club that famously won this competition as a lower-division side, will face Marumo Gallants in a match that could easily go the distance on Sunday, 8 February.

Meanwhile, a familiar rivalry is renewed as Hungry Lions and the University of Pretoria (AmaTuks) square off in a clash where psychological edges will be just as important as technical skill.

The Sunday roster also includes Mkhambathi FC versus Lerumo Lions and an intriguing battle be-

tween Siwelele FC and Richards Bay FC.

These matches provide a vital platform for provincial pride and offer players a rare chance to catch the eyes of national scouts.

The opening round of action finally draws to a close on 10 February, with two encounters.

SSU M-17 FC will host Milford FC at Dobsonville Stadium, while the Old Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane will provide the backdrop for an all-top-flight affair between Polokwane City and AmaZulu FC.

This final pair of matches ensures that the drama remains high until the very last whistle of the round.

History has proven that the room for the amateur clubs to cause major upsets in the Nedbank Cup is a fathomable possibility.

It is in this competition where small clubs either forge their dreams or have them ruthlessly shattered by the local giants. It is a period that promises the usual blend of David-versus-Goliath narratives, tactical chess matches, and the raw emotion that only a winner-takes-all tournament can provide.

For amateur footballers in the lower divisions, the Nedbank Cup is a once in a lifetime opportunity that can serve as a significant launch pad into a successful football career.

The competition also offers a relentless feast of nail-biting football that either induces great excitement or considerable heartbreak for fans across the country.

PSL Log



betway
premier
ship

		P	W	P
1	Mamelodi Sundowns	15	9	32
2	Kaizer Chiefs	12	8	30
3	Orlando Pirates	13	9	29
4	AmaZulu FC	15	8	27
5	Sekhukhune United	16	7	26
6	Durban City	16	7	25
7	TS Galaxy	16	7	24
8	Polokwane City	15	6	23
9	Richards Bay	15	4	18
10	Siwelele FC	16	4	17
11	Golden Arrows	15	5	16
12	Stellenbosch FC	15	4	15
13	Marumo Gallants	16	3	15
14	Orbit College FC	16	4	13
15	Chippa United	16	2	12
16	Magesi FC	14	2	11

EPL Log



Premier
League

		P	W	P
1	Arsenal	23	15	50
2	Manchester City	23	14	46
3	Aston Villa	23	14	46
4	Manchester United	23	10	38
5	Chelsea	23	10	37
6	Liverpool	23	10	36
7	Fulham	23	10	34
8	Brentford	23	10	33
9	Newcastle	23	9	33
10	Everton	23	9	33
11	Sunderland	23	8	33
12	Brighton	23	7	30
13	Bournemouth	23	7	30
14	Tottenham Hotspur	23	7	28
15	Crystal Palace	23	7	28
16	Leeds United	23	8	26
17	Nottingham Forest	23	7	25
18	West Ham	23	5	20
19	Burnley	23	6	15
20	Wolves	23	1	8



THREE-WAY TUSSLE TEARS
UP BETWAY PREMIERSHIP

With every match a must-win, the battle for those
covered top three spots and glory they bring
is reaching fever pitch.



Potch teen qualifies for Australian Open Junior Championships main draw

Jahnie van Zyl (16) qualified for the Australian Open Junior Championships main draw after a dramatic win over Japan's Kokona Ishii.

Potchefstroom tennis star Jahnie van Zyl (16) has started her year on a high note with qualification to the main draw of the 2026 Australian Open Junior Championships. Potchefstroom Herald reports this is a major achievement for Van Zyl, who will compete against the top juniors in one of the four biggest tournaments on the tennis calendar.

Tough win seals qualification

Yesterday, Van Zyl beat Kokona Ishii of Japan in a thrilling match by 7-5, 4-6, 6-4 to qualify for the first round of the main draw.

At 5-3 in the final set, Van Zyl had a match point but could not convert. She then faced an uphill task, being 0/40 on her serve with three break points against her. Her steely determination and will to win shone through as she finally won her third match point in that service game.

She also had to beat Musemma Cilek of Australia by 6-4, 6-4 before overcoming Ishii for the final spot.

Local talent with international experience

The former Laerskool Mooirivier and Potchef-



stroom Gimnasium learner is currently ranked 96th in the world. She won two junior ITF titles in 2024 and also has four ITF doubles titles in her career.

Van Zyl is currently based in France at the French Touch Academy, close to Montpellier. A former Riaan Venter Tennis Academy (RVTA) player, she still trains with RVTA head coach Riaan Venter when she is in Potchefstroom. She put in a couple of training sessions with Venter before heading off to Australia.

Family follows the action

Her parents, Hannelie and Japie, followed the action with live scoring from Potchefstroom, while her older sister and well-known tennis player, Mari-Louise, followed the action from the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, US.

"It was nerve-wracking and emotional – yet incredibly rewarding. For those who have stood in the parent's role, you'll understand the tension, pressure, and what you experience in those moments," stated Japie. – *Rekord News*

Local stars plot Midmar Mile comeback after two years of foreign dominance



South Africa's leading open-water swimmers will head into next weekend's aQuellé Midmar Mile with a clear mission: to prevent a third successive victory by an overseas swimmer.

Matthew Caldwell and Henré Louw will spearhead the local challenge at Midmar Dam in Kwazulu-Natal from February 5-8, with three-time French Olympian Damien Joly shaping up as the biggest threat in a strong elite men's field.

The last two editions of the iconic race were won

by foreign swimmers, with New Zealander Louis Clark edging a sprint finish last year and Australian Nick Sloman claiming the title in 2024. Neither will be on the starting pontoon this time, opening the door for South Africa's top contenders to strike back.

Caldwell, who finished third behind Louw last year, has left little doubt about his confidence heading into the race.

"I think I'll call it now: top three, not in order, but top three will be amongst Henré Louw, Damien Joly, the French swimmer, and myself," Caldwell said. "We will be fighting for first, second and third, us three, I think. That's my opinion."

Louw believes the race will be decided by finer margins and a wider group of contenders – adding the likes of Sven van der Linde and Connor Albertyn to the list. Albertyn and Van der Linde finished fifth and sixth last year, although the pair placed second and third the year before.

For Louw, who has finished as a runner-up twice at Midmar, the focus this year has been on execution late in the race. – *!OL*