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ANC COURT FEUD THREAT

ANC top leadership urged to intervene immediately and halt impending courtroom disaster between secretary-general, Fikile Mbalula and party veteran, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

By **JNN Reporter**

The top leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) has been urged to intervene directly and halt the escalating legal confrontation between party Secretary-General (SG), Fikile Mbalula and party veteran, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma before public trial proceedings begin.

A senior party insider warned that allowing the defamation lawsuit between the party heavyweights to reach the witness

stand will cause severe institutional damage.

Speaking anonymously to Journal News Network (JNN), the national executive committee (NEC) member urged the party's top seven officials to step in immediately and resolve the dispute internally.

The call for urgent intervention follows the Johannesburg High Court order mandating that the high-profile legal dispute moves to oral evidence and cross-examination.

"In an attempt to extricate himself, this

case by the SG will only be putting the ANC itself on trial. We understand that he (Mbalula) is trying to clear his name, but this court case will basically offer those who want to destroy the ANC an opportunity to destroy the movement."

The insider emphasised that the national leadership structure cannot remain passive while public court proceedings expose internal party mechanics to hostile judicial scrutiny.

The senior official insisted that the top

leadership must exercise firm authority under internal party rules to prevent an embarrassing public spectacle that damages the organisation's standing.

"It would be prudent for the ANC leaders, the top seven in particular, to call in both parties and solve this matter. The top seven can't afford to fold its arms," asserted the party mole.

The legal battle stems from podcast allegations made by Dlamini-Zuma claiming that Mbalula distributed money to dele-

gates at the 2022 Nasrec national conference to influence election outcomes and secure leadership positions.

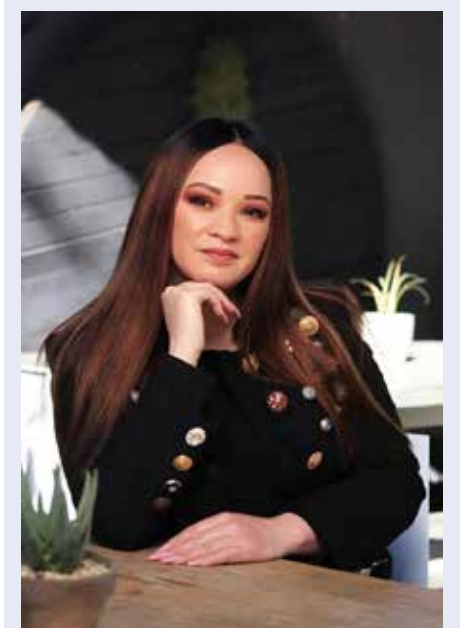
Dlamini-Zuma also linked the alleged financial payments to securing President Cyril Ramaphosa's re-election as party leader, maintaining that her statements are true, in the public interest, and central to addressing money in party elections.

Mbalula has subsequently strongly denied the vote-buying claims, challenging Dlamini-Zuma to

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EC gains 10,225-hectare Grassland National Park
18 properties secured under landmark conservation model to protect endangered grasslands and vital water resources



18 properties in the Eastern Cape declared as the new Grassland National Park, it falls within a strategic water source area. Photo: Supplied

By **Nonkululeko Ngubeni**

Eastern Cape - South Africa's Eastern Cape highlands have gained a major conservation boost, with 18 properties covering more than 10,225 hectares officially declared the new Grassland National Park to protect vulnerable ecosystems and safeguard critical water resources.

Situated between Nqanqarhu and Rhodes, the newly proclaimed national park will help conserve grassland ecosystems that remain underrepresented in South Africa's protected areas, including part of the Eastern Cape Drakensberg Strategic Water Source Area.

The declaration, published in Government Gazette No. 55531 under Government Notice No. 8002, formally establishes the area as a national park, marking a significant milestone in the country's biodiversity conservation efforts.

Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment David Maynier has assigned the park's management to South African National Parks (SANParks) in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003.

The declaration follows a notice of intention published in 2025 and the completion of the required legal processes.

Maynier said the establishment of the park was an important step towards protecting South Africa's grasslands and strategic water resources.

"The declaration of the Grasslands National Park is an important step in protecting one of South Africa's least-protected biomes and a strategic water source landscape.

It also demonstrates how conservation and compatible productive land use can reinforce one another through voluntary, long-term partnership," he said.

Landmark conservation partnership

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and SANParks worked alongside WWF South Africa and other partners to coordinate the establishment of the park.

The initiative was driven primarily through biodiversity stewardship, a conservation model that enables landowners to retain ownership of their properties while committing to agreed conservation and management measures.

Under this approach, compatible agricultural activities can continue, allowing landowners to sustain their livelihoods while contributing to the protection of biodiversity and vital water resources.

Maynier said the initiative was the first national park in South Africa established primarily through the biodiversity stewardship model.

"This initiative is an example of how inclusive partnerships can drive large-scale conservation success," he said.

Protecting grasslands and water security

The Grassland National Park's establishment represents a shift from a proposed protected area to a formally declared national park, strengthening efforts to conserve the Eastern Cape highlands' natural heritage.

Beyond protecting grassland biodiversity, the park's location within part of a strategic water source area highlights its importance for long-term water security and the sustainability of surrounding ecosystems.

The conservation model also demonstrates how environmental protection and productive land use can coexist when landowners, government and conservation organisations work together towards shared objectives.

With its formal declaration and SANParks management, the Grassland National Park adds a significant area to South Africa's protected landscape while creating a framework for long-term conservation through partnerships with landowners.

The initiative underscores the growing role of collaborative conservation in protecting the country's natural resources while supporting sustainable livelihoods.

Court Feud Threatens ANC

ANC top leadership urged to intervene immediately and halt impending courtroom disaster between secretary-general, Fikile Mbalula and party veteran, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

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produce evidence while demanding a public retraction, an apology, and damages.

On 5 October 2026, Acting Judge Henno Viljoen delivered a decisive judgment in the Johannesburg High Court, establishing that conflicting affidavits regarding alleged vote-buying present a genuine, material dispute of fact that cannot be resolved without oral testimony.

Viljoen restricted the upcoming oral hearing specifically to determine whether money was distributed to delegates at the 2022 conference, requiring both Mbalula and Dlamini-Zuma to step into the witness box for cross-examination.

The party insider highlighted that senior counsel, Muzi Sikhakhane, representing Dlamini-Zuma, may possibly use the cross-examination process to vilify Mbalula and simultaneously project the ANC as hub of illicit patronage.

The official further noted that even a favourable court judgment will not shield Mbalula or the party from the damaging fallout of intense cross-examination.

"The public will judge him based on the tough questions and allegations that may emerge from those questions, because obviously even if he says he himself never facilitated any bribe, there will still be that supposed inference that ANC conferences are run through channels of patronage," he insists.

Meanwhile, ANC President, Cyril Rama-

phosa, has also publicly addressed the ongoing controversy, dismissing the vote-buying allegations as rumours, while firmly maintaining that such practices must be completely rooted out of the organisation if they do exist at all.

Ramaphosa emphasised that delegates must be free to choose leaders based on the best interests of the party and the public without financial influence - framing the issue as part of the party's broader renewal process ahead of upcoming local government elections.

Referring to the ANC Constitution, the NEC insider pointed out that airing internal grievances in public courts directly violates established constitutional obligations under Rule 25, which stipulates that: "... all members submit to internal processes.

Publicly attacking or defaming other leaders violates the obligation under Rule 5.2.7 to 'observe discipline' and undermines collective leadership by airing internal grievances in the media."

The public litigation between Mbalula and Dlamini-Zuma conflicts with the latter rule.

The insider further expressed strong suspicions that lingering grievances from previous internal leadership contests are fuelling the current conflict.

The source suggested that external political forces born out of past conference divisions may possibly be prompting Dlamini-Zuma to destabilise party structures from



within.

"It is time for NDZ to pin her (ANC) flag to the mast as proof that she is still one of us. "She will have to take instruction and withdraw her attack on SG," insisted the NEC member.

The insider further referred to a historical party precedent where firm organisational discipline was applied to curb public attacks between senior members.

"Remember a precedent was set with

(Bantu) Holomisa when he wanted to rubish a fellow NEC member?" the source asked in retrospect, concluding that failure by the ANC's top leadership to rein in both figures will leave the governing party vulnerable to self-inflicted political destruction.

Mbalula Stands Tall After Apex Victory

ANC Secretary-General exudes resilience as relief and fatigue kick in post favourable ConCourt ruling



By **Mpho Sekharume**

Relief swiftly kicked in for African National Congress (ANC) Secretary-General (SG), Fikile Mbalula, as he broke down in tears after the Constitutional Court ruled in the party's favour in its appeal against an earlier Electoral Court ruling.

The ruling confirmed Journal News Network's earlier report on 12 October 2026 that the ANC was indeed set for a vital victory at the Constitutional Court, with the apex court yesterday finding that barring the party's candidates from participating in the upcoming local government election would disenfranchise the voters.

The victory averted an impending political crisis for the ruling party while buffering Mbalula's political career within the move-

ment, where detractors both inside and outside the movement had been actively hoping for an adverse finding that would severely impair his standing.

Handing down the majority judgment on behalf of the bench, Justice Ramma-ka Mathopo set aside the decision of the Electoral Commission regarding candidate submissions for the upcoming municipal elections.

"The first respondent, which is the Electoral Commission, is directed to do all things necessary to include the party lists and ward candidate nominations mentioned in paragraph four of this order in the lists and nominations onto the ballot papers and all other relevant processes for the purposes of the 4th of November 2026 elections," he said.

In an emotional address following the judgment, Mbalula expressed deep gratitude to ANC President, Cyril Ramaphosa, affiliated structures, and opposition leaders who supported their legal challenge.

"I thank the president of the ANC for his leadership through a hard month and for insisting at every turn that this movement takes the lawful road and no other."

Mbalula also extended appreciation to the ANC Women's League, the Youth League, trade union formations, and, surprisingly, Afrika Mayibuye leader Floyd Shivambu for providing crucial support during the litigation.

Despite collapsing shortly after addressing media representatives as sheer exhaustion took its toll, Mbalula's leadership stature has ultimately been bolstered.



Katlehong Shooting Fatalities Rise

The death toll from the deadly shooting in Sophangisa Street, Katlehong North, has risen to four after two more victims succumbed to their injuries in hospital. The deceased, aged 23 and 27, passed away following the violent attack that occurred on 13 October 2026 at approximately 18:50.

The shooting took place as victims were returning from a memorial service for a political party member held at Mogobeng Primary School. Seven people were targeted when a lone gunman opened fire, initially leaving two men, aged 21 and 23, dead at the scene.

The three remaining victims, aged between 12 and 27, continue to receive medical treatment for gunshot injuries in hospital. The suspect handed himself over to law enforcement officials shortly after the incident and remains in police custody.

Police authorities confirmed that the docket, containing multiple charges of murder and attempted murder, has been handed over to specialised investigators.

"The case docket, with charges of murder and attempted murder, has been assigned to the Gauteng Political Killings Task Team (PKTT) for further investigation."

Five More Arrested in Shepherd Murder

The Thabo Mofutsanyana District Executive Detective Service Structure has arrested five additional suspects in connection with the alleged mob justice murder of a shepherd at Mashaeng Commonage near Fouriesburg.

The recent arrests bring the total number of individuals apprehended in the matter to 17, following an initial arrest of 12 suspects aged between 24 and 59.

The incident occurred on Thursday, 3 September 2026, when Fouriesburg police discovered the deceased lying dead at the commonage with multiple bruises across his upper body and severe eye injuries.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the victim, a foreign national shepherd, was targeted after being accused of stealing a lamb, slaughtering it near a local dam, and discarding parts of the carcass.

Police initially traced a suspect found in possession of the victim's cellphone, which subsequently led detectives to identify and apprehend 11 further accomplices.

The five newly arrested suspects face murder charges and are scheduled to appear in the Fouriesburg Magistrate's Court on Tuesday, 20 October 2026, for a formal bail application.

Free State Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant General Thabang Lesia commended the police response while cautioning communities against vigilantism.

"People suspected of committing crimes must be handed over to the police to allow proper investigations to take place."

"Taking the law into your own hands is not a solution to crime. Those found to have committed offences will be brought before the courts to face justice," he added.

Boitekong Police Station Honours Retiring and Promoted Members

Boitekong SAPS management, led by Station Commander Colonel Smiley Mfuloane, hosted a farewell and recognition function on Wednesday, 14 October 2026, to honour retiring officers and acknowledge exceptional service delivery.

The event celebrated the careers of Warrant Officer Isaac Aupa Mpele and Warrant Officer Mziwanele Walter Dingiso, both of whom are retiring after years of service with in the South African Police Service.

The station also bid farewell to Warrant

Officer Kulani Oscar Montana following his promotion to a new role outside the precinct. In addition to the farewells, Colonel Mfuloane presented recognition awards to members from Detective Services, Support Services, and Visible Policing for their hard work and commitment to combating crime.

Management highlighted that acknowledging career milestones and daily dedication remains vital for maintaining morale, professionalism, and effective community policing across all components.

Teenager Arrested with Stolen Vehicle in Mthatha

A 15-year-old boy was arrested in Mthatha after being found in unlawful possession of a suspected stolen vehicle, following a police operation on Wednesday, 14 October 2026.

The vehicle had been reported stolen from a garage in KwaLindile locality at approximately 02:00, prompting members of the Mthatha Central Police Station Crime Prevention Unit to track the vehicle down.

Officers intercepted and immobilised the vehicle near Mthatha Ultra City, arresting the underage driver at the scene.

A probation officer was consulted to process the required documentation for children in conflict with the law, and the suspect was subsequently transferred to a youth facility ahead of his appearance in the Children's Court. OR Tambo District Commissioner Major General Norman Modishana expressed deep concern over the incident and the involvement of a minor in serious crime.

"It is so shocking that a minor who is supposed to be at school being moulded for a brighter future is found in conflict with the law," General Modishana said.



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Motorists Welcome R59 Road Repairs

Municipal manager steps up oversight as deteriorating road conditions threaten motorists, businesses, and Parys tourism

By JNN Reporter

Free State - Motorists have welcomed ongoing repairs to the R59, saying efforts to tackle potholes and improve road conditions are a much-needed intervention on one of the key routes linking Parys to major economic hubs.

The work, receiving close oversight from Ngwathe Local Municipality Municipal Manager Dr. Futhuli Mothamaha, is aimed at improving road safety, reducing vehicle damage, and restoring confidence among road users.

The repairs come as concerns over the deteriorating road surface have mounted, with the R59 serving thousands of motorists, commuters, farmers, and tourists travelling to and from Parys.

Beyond easing daily travel, improved road conditions are vital to protecting local businesses and sustaining tourism in a town whose economy depends heavily on visitors and reliable transport links.

Truck driver Peter Dladla has welcomed the ongoing repairs to the R59, saying the road improvements will bring much-needed relief to motorists and businesses travelling between the N1 off-ramp and Parys.

Speaking to Journal News Network, Dladla said the deteriorating condition of the road had long been a headache for him and his employer, creating challenges for those who rely on the route to transport goods and support economic activity.

"I must commend the municipality for fixing the road.

This is a significant improvement for those of us who use this route regularly and bring business to Parys," he said.

Dladla said improved road conditions



Ngwathe Local Municipality Municipal Manager Dr. Futhuli Mothamaha during his site inspection on Tuesday, engaging directly with repair teams, assessing progress, and reinforcing the need to address road hazards without unnecessary delays. Photo: Supplied

would make journeys easier for truck drivers and other motorists who depend on the busy route.

Poor road surfaces can increase vehicle maintenance costs, cause delays, and create risks for road users.

He added that maintaining the R59 was important not only for daily commuters but also for businesses transporting goods into and out of Parys.

The road serves as a key link to the town, making its condition vital to local economic activity.

The repairs have therefore been welcomed as a positive step towards improving road-user experiences and supporting the movement of goods and services in the area.

Similar sentiments were shared by local taxi drivers who transport commuters between Parys and Sasolburg, saying the road

repairs would bring relief to drivers and passengers who regularly use the R59.

They said the poor condition of the road had made daily trips challenging, raising concerns about vehicle maintenance expenses, passenger comfort, and travel safety.

"The improved road surface will make our journey smoother and reduce the strain placed on us when travelling the route several times a day," said a taxi driver.

For taxi operators, whose livelihoods depend on reliable transport services, better road conditions could also help minimise unnecessary vehicle repairs and disruptions.

They welcomed the municipality's intervention, stressing that continued road maintenance would be essential to ensure the R59 remains safe and accessible for all road users.

For Parys, the stakes extend far beyond

the condition of the road surface.

The town has built a strong reputation as a tourism destination, attracting visitors to its antique shops, restaurants, outdoor recreation facilities, and the nearby Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site.

During his latest site inspection earlier on Tuesday, Mothamaha engaged directly with repair teams, assessing progress and reinforcing the need to address road hazards without unnecessary delays.

His approach places emphasis on active monitoring and accountability, rather than relying solely on reports from the field.

By visiting affected sections in person, the municipal manager can identify challenges, assess the work being undertaken and engage with teams responsible for repairs.

Mothamaha's involvement reflects a broader commitment to hands-on oversight of service delivery, with infrastructure maintenance receiving attention because of its direct impact on residents' daily lives and the local economy.

The municipality has acknowledged the patience of motorists and the broader community while repair activities continue, urging road users to remain cautious around work zones.

For Ngwathe, the priority is clear: ensuring that the R59 remains safe and accessible is essential not only for those who use it daily, but also for protecting Parys as a destination for investment, commerce and tourism.

Through closer monitoring and continued engagement with the relevant road authorities, the municipality aims to keep pressure on efforts to improve road conditions and safeguard the interests of the communities and businesses that depend on this vital route.



FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



First WARD: A MOVE TO UNLOCK WOMEN'S FARMING POWER

Targets barriers to land, funding, mechanisation and markets as government pledges stronger support for women in agriculture

Women farmers across the Free State are demanding more than access to land. They want the resources, skills, infrastructure and market opportunities needed to turn agricultural potential into profitable businesses — a message that took centre stage at the province's first-ever Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) Provincial Imbizo in Bloemfontein.

Hosted by the Free State Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs at Bloemfontein City Hall from 13 to 14 October, the two-day gathering brought together women farmers, producers, processors, government departments, development institutions and industry stakeholders to identify practical interventions that will strengthen women's participation in agriculture and agro-processing.

Held under the theme, "The Breadbasket in Her Hands — Safe on the Land, Resourced to Produce and Skilled to Lead," the Imbizo marked a significant step towards translating women farmers' concerns into concrete support programmes and sustainable economic opportunities.

The provincial gathering followed district consultations across all five districts, where women outlined their achievements, highlighted barriers to growth and proposed solutions to improve their participation in the agricultural value chain.

Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs Elzabe "Mmabatho" Rockman said the Imbizo was not the beginning of the conversation, but an opportunity for government to act on concerns women had raised during months of engagement.

"We listened to women voicing their achievements, challenges and proposals on how to practically empower and support women in agriculture and agro-processing. Today is therefore not the beginning of the conversation.

This Provincial Imbizo is the moment at which we must decide what we are going to do with what women have already told us," Rockman said.

She emphasised that women's ambitions extended far beyond primary food produc-



tion. Women farmers want to participate meaningfully in processing, packaging, transportation, supply chains, and formal and export markets.

According to Rockman, the challenge is not a lack of ambition among women, but the limited support systems needed to turn their efforts into sustainable, commercially viable enterprises.

"There is no shortage of ambition amongst women. The shortage is often in the ecosystem around women," she said.

Tackling barriers to agricultural growth

The district consultations identified several challenges that continue to restrict women's participation and growth in the sector. These include limited access to land and secure tenure, production inputs, mechanisation, training, finance, water infrastructure and markets.

Women also raised concerns about government administration and coordination, rural safety, stock theft and gender-based violence, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to supporting women in rural communities.

Rockman described the situation as a "broken conversion chain", where access to land does not necessarily translate into increased production, income, asset ownership and long-term commercial independence.

She said government interventions must move beyond isolated projects towards integrated support that connects women farmers with infrastructure, funding, skills development, appropriate machinery and reliable markets.

The MEC stressed that women had con-

tinued to demonstrate resilience despite structural barriers that often prevent them from reaching their full potential.

"Women are already holding up a significant part of our small and informal economy. Our women farmers, producers and processors must be assisted to transition into formal markets," she said.

Rockman also called for hidden discrimination against black female farmers to be confronted, particularly where unequal access to opportunities and established agricultural markets continued to limit their growth.

"Do not underestimate what it means that women survive in a system that was often not designed around women," she added.

Government commits to targeted investment

A key commitment highlighted at the Imbizo was the department's continued implementation of a 50% allocation for women in projects funded through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP).

The department also intends to place greater emphasis on measuring the actual impact of agricultural investments rather than simply counting the number of projects supported.

The approach aims to ensure that assistance translates into tangible improvements in production, business growth, market participation and economic independence for women farmers.

Rockman said targeted investment was necessary because the structural inequalities affecting women in agriculture were identifiable and could be addressed through

deliberate interventions.

"This is an affirmation that women must take up their rightful place. It is part of the required targeted investment because the structural gap is identifiable, measurable and correctable," she said.

Government departments urged to open market opportunities

The Imbizo also brought together other provincial departments, highlighting opportunities for collaboration to expand market access for women farmers and strengthen the agricultural value chain.

MEC for Treasury Toto Makume emphasised the importance of collaboration, noting the significant role women play in supporting families and communities. He encouraged women to build a culture of cooperation to strengthen their participation and collective impact in the agricultural sector.

MEC for Education Mamiki Maboya highlighted the potential of the School Nutrition Programme to create market opportunities for local farmers and producers.

She stressed the importance of maintaining quality standards through training and skills development, while encouraging women farmers to position themselves to supply food to schools.

"We need to ensure quality through training and skills development programmes. Education will be your biggest market," Maboya said. MEC for Health Viceroy Mahlatsi also pointed to the provincial health sector as a potential market for local agricultural produce.

He said the department had a responsibility to provide food to 32 hospitals, serving approximately 260,000 patients annually. He further indicated that departmental contractors were required to procure fresh produce and other food supplies from local farmers, helping to support agricultural production and local economic development.

These opportunities underscore the importance of linking women farmers to institutional buyers, where consistent demand can help them expand production, improve their businesses and build more sustainable income streams.

Strengthening women's collective voice

The Imbizo also recognised the role of the Free State Women in Agriculture and Rural Development structure, led by Selina Pinki Hlabedi, in conceptualising and organising the programme.

Rockman encouraged more women farmers to join WARD structures, saying stronger participation would help build support networks, improve advocacy and ensure that women's needs remained central to agricultural development planning. The initiative comes as the United Nations has declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

South Africa has also committed, under the African Union's Kampala Declaration, to reducing the productivity gap between male and female farmers by 2035.

For the Free State, the challenge now is to translate the commitments made at the provincial gathering into measurable outcomes that enable women to secure land, increase production, expand agro-processing businesses and access profitable markets.

With government departments identifying potential procurement opportunities and the agriculture department reaffirming its commitment to targeted support, the Imbizo highlighted the importance of coordinated action across the provincial government.

The message was clear: empowering women farmers requires more than promises.

It demands investment, practical support, access to markets and an agricultural system that enables

women to move beyond subsistence production and build sustainable, competitive businesses that contribute to rural development, job creation and economic growth.



Election Showdown: Parties Face Tough Questions



Members of different political parties and community members debated Mangaung's future, questioning representatives about what they can offer Mangaung. Photo: Katlego Mashwabi

By **Nonkululeko Ngubeni**

With service delivery, jobs, corruption and inclusive governance under scrutiny, political parties faced tough questions from students and community members at a University of the Free State election dialogue ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

Political promises came under fire at the University of the Free State (UFS) as students and community members challenged political parties to explain how their policies would translate into jobs, better municipal services, transparent tenders and equal opportunities for all.

The From the Ballot to Better Lives election dialogue, held on Monday, 12 September, placed the spotlight on the gap between campaign promises and the daily struggles of residents, particularly in Mangaung, where concerns about service delivery and economic opportunities remain central to the local government debate.

The engagement challenged party representatives to move beyond slogans and explain who benefits from good governance, how municipalities can be held accountable and what concrete measures would ensure that young people and people with disabilities are not left behind.

Five political parties participated: the Democratic Alliance (DA), uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), African Congress of Transformation (ACT) and African Alliance of Social Democrats (AASD).

The African National Congress (ANC) was not represented.

Representatives from the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC), the South African Human Rights Commission and UFS also took part, contributing to discussions on credible elections, human rights and effective municipal governance.

At the heart of the dialogue was a fundamental question: what does democracy mean to residents if elected leaders fail to deliver on their promises once in office?

DA challenged on who benefits from good governance

DA mayoral candidate Werner Pretorius faced pointed questions about whether the party's much-touted record of good governance benefits wealthy communities at the expense of poorer residents.

Nomthandazo, representing the EFF, questioned the DA's claims of successful governance, drawing on her experiences of living in different parts of Cape Town and raising concerns about conditions in Khayelitsha and Ward 23, which she said was also governed by a DA councillor.

She challenged Pretorius to explain what good governance looks like for residents who continue to experience service delivery

problems.

Pretorius defended the party's record, arguing that poor governance has a direct impact on people's lives and livelihoods. He cited municipalities where the DA governs, including Midvaal in Gauteng and uMngeni in KwaZulu-Natal, as examples of its approach to service delivery.

He also claimed that 75% of the City of Cape Town's spending goes towards poorer communities.

Turning to Mangaung's economic challenges, Pretorius said the metro had lost 43,000 jobs over the past five years, while the Western Cape had created 400,000 jobs during the same period. He presented the figures as evidence of the economic outcomes he associated with good governance.

The exchange highlighted the challenge facing parties seeking votes in Mangaung: convincing residents that their governance models can produce tangible improvements

When our leader was premier, jobs were created, roads were paved, and small businesses received funding.

in their own communities.

MK Party calls for transparent tenders

MK Party representative Stanley Tamane was challenged to explain how the party would use municipal procurement to create economic opportunities while preventing corruption, favouritism and the manipulation of tender processes.

The question was posed by dialogue facilitator and news anchor Bongilewe Zwane, who pressed the party on how it would ensure that municipal contracts benefit communities through a fair and transparent system.

Tamane identified secrecy in procurement as a major contributor to corruption, arguing that greater transparency would help prevent favouritism and questionable dealings.

He also called for laws compelling municipalities to prioritise young people and individuals with the necessary skills when creating employment and business opportunities.

His response placed public procurement at the centre of the debate over how local government can stimulate the economy, support emerging businesses and ensure that opportunities are distributed fairly.

ACT defends its leader's record

African Congress of Transformation representative Nako Tamotso faced questions about why voters should trust the party, given that its leader had previously served as

Free State premier while Mangaung's municipal challenges have persisted for years.

Tamotso defended the former premier's record, claiming that jobs were created, roads were paved and housing projects implemented during that period.

He cited towns including Parys, QwaQwa and Ladybrand, arguing that service delivery had deteriorated since the former premier left office.

Tamotso further claimed that black-owned businesses had benefited from funding and support through black economic empowerment programmes during that administration, while many small businesses were now struggling or closing down.

"When our leader was premier, jobs were created, roads were paved, and small businesses received funding.

Since he left office, service delivery has declined, and many companies are struggling," Tamotso said.

His response placed the party's appeal on its former leader's provincial record, although the claims were not independently established during the dialogue.

AASD puts youth employment at the centre

Former Mangaung mayor and AASD representative Itumeleng Mokoena was asked what economic benefits residents could expect from the party, particularly regarding job creation and access to municipal tenders.

In response, Mokoena said the AASD was formed in Mangaung out of residents' lived experiences and was not a breakaway party from the ANC, as some might believe.

He said the party was contesting elections in Mangaung and Maluti-a-Phofung because both municipalities faced challenges involving employment and access to economic opportunities.

Mokoena identified young people as a priority, saying the party wanted to place job creation and economic empowerment at the centre of its plans for the mayor's office.

"Just to clear up the confusion, AASD is not a breakaway party from the ANC.

It was formed in Mangaung from the lived experiences of our people. We want to take back Mangaung and prioritise jobs and economic opportunities, especially for young people," he said.

However, the exchange underscored the need for parties to explain not only their priorities but also how they intend to turn those commitments into measurable outcomes for residents.

EFF addresses immigration and Ubuntu

EFF mayoral candidate Sam Matias faced questions about the party's belief in Ubuntu and how it would balance that principle with concerns about undocumented foreign nationals, pressure on public healthcare facilities and border security.

A participant questioned whether Ubuntu should extend to foreign nationals accused of disrespecting South Africa and asked whether the municipality would accommodate them amid concerns about overcrowded hospitals and clinics.

Matias said foreign nationals should be properly documented and that South Africa's borders must be secured to prevent people from entering or leaving the country outside established procedures.

He argued that those entering the country should use legal ports of entry and comply with documentation requirements, while also acknowledging the importance of South Africa's history.

"We are not saying illegal immigrants must not be documented. We are saying they must be documented, and our borders must be secured to prevent people from entering and leaving the country freely," Matias said.

"Anyone who wants to enter South Africa must use the proper ports of entry and be properly documented.

We must also recognise the history of this country," he added.

The exchange reflected the difficult balance facing political parties as they respond to residents' concerns about public services, immigration and the principles of human rights and Ubuntu.

Beyond the ballot box

The dialogue brought service delivery, municipal accountability, economic inclusion and credible elections into sharp focus ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

While the participating parties outlined their positions on governance, jobs, procurement and immigration, the questions from the floor reinforced residents' expectations that political commitments must be backed by practical plans and measurable results.

The involvement of SALGA, the IEC, the Human Rights Commission and UFS also broadened the discussion beyond party politics, highlighting the importance of accountable local government, the protection of rights and informed voter participation.

Ultimately, the engagement served as a reminder that democracy cannot be measured by voting alone.

Its value is also reflected in whether elected representatives deliver reliable services, create economic opportunities and respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

Gwarube declares war on matric pass-rate obsession

Minister wants provinces judged on learner skills, Mathematics performance and quality of education — not just pass rates



Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube says the matric pass rate should no longer be the only measure of education performance as 962 832 candidates prepare to write the 2026 NSC examination. Photo: Supplied.

By **Nonkululeko Ngubeni**

Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube has challenged South Africa's education system to look beyond the matric pass rate, warning that an obsession with producing impressive results could be undermining learner development and the country's ability to produce critical skills.

Gwarube says provincial education departments, districts and schools must be assessed on a broader set of performance indicators, arguing that a high National Senior Certificate (NSC) pass rate does not necessarily reflect the quality of education learners receive or whether they are acquiring skills needed by the economy.

Addressing the media in Pretoria on Sunday, the Minister said the relentless pursuit of higher pass rates had created unintended consequences, including practices that could compromise learner progression and participation in key subjects.

"This obsession has had unintended consequences and has incentivised the wrong kind of behaviour," she said.

Gwarube identified concerns about weaker learners allegedly being prevented from progressing to Grade 12, learners being kept in Grade 11 despite qualifying for progression under applicable rules, and learners being encouraged to take Mathematical Literacy instead of Mathematics to improve their chances of passing matric.

She warned that such practices could weaken South Africa's pipeline of skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as Accounting and Economic Sciences.

"This obsession with the matric pass rate and its perverse incentives has been to the detriment of this country's ability to produce skills in STEM professions, in Accounting and Economic Sciences. This must change; if our country is to be economically competitive, it needs great and meaningful skills in STEM and other gateway subjects," she said.

Beyond the pass rate

The Department of Basic Education intends to place greater emphasis on a wider range of indicators when evaluating provincial education performance.

These include Bachelor passes, distinctions, learner retention, participation and performance in gateway subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Accounting and Economics.

The proposed approach is intended to give provinces a more meaningful basis for comparing performance, identifying weaknesses and directing support to schools and learners who need it most.

Gwarube said the focus must shift towards understanding what learners are achieving, which subjects they are tak-

ing and whether they are developing the knowledge and skills required for further study and employment.

"The question should not only be whether learners passed, but whether provinces are improving literacy, numeracy, retention and subject participation," she said.

The shift would place greater emphasis on the quality and depth of learner achievement rather than treating the overall matric pass rate as the primary measure of success.

Record 962,832 candidates registered for 2026 matric exams

The Minister's remarks came as the department declared itself ready for the 2026 National Senior Certificate examinations, with 962,832 candidates registered for the October/November examination period.

Of these, 815,051 are full-time candidates, while 147,781 are registered as part-time candidates.

Gwarube said the increase in full-time registrations indicated that more learners were remaining in school and completing matric within the expected timeframe.

To strengthen examination readiness, the department has rolled out learner support interventions across all 75 education districts, reaching 159,180 learners at 1,262 centres.

The interventions include additional revision sessions, teacher support, mock examinations and access to learning materials aimed at addressing learning gaps and improving learner preparedness.

Addressing learning gaps

The department has also considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Class of 2026, whose schooling was disrupted during the transition from the Intermediate Phase to the Senior Phase.

Previous examination diagnostic reports have been used to identify persistent learning difficulties and guide teachers in strengthening curriculum delivery and learner preparation.

Gwarube said a broader assessment of provincial performance would help education authorities identify shortcomings more accurately and direct interventions towards areas where they would have the greatest impact.

The 2026 NSC examinations began on Tuesday, with the department reporting that preparations across all nine provinces had been completed.

As thousands of candidates sit for their final examinations, the Minister's message signals a wider debate about the future of basic education in South Africa: whether success should be measured primarily by how many learners pass matric, or by whether the education system equips them with the knowledge, skills and qualifications needed to succeed beyond the classroom.



R3.99m VAT FRAUD: 14 ACCUSED IN COURT

SARS-led investigation targets alleged tax fraud syndicate operating across four provinces

By **Nonkululeko Ngubeni**

Fourteen accused, including nine individuals and five entities, have appeared before the Siyabuswa Magistrates' Court in connection with an alleged R3.99 million VAT fraud scheme targeting the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

The accused began appearing in court on 6 October following coordinated arrests across Mpumalanga, Gauteng and the North West, in an operation aimed at cracking down on alleged tax fraud and protecting state revenue.

The arrests followed a SARS investigation into allegedly fraudulent Value-Added Tax (VAT) refund claims submitted through its eFiling system, with the operation receiving support from the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) and other law-enforcement agencies.

According to SARS, the alleged fraud involved the submission of false VAT returns between June 2016 and June 2020, resulting in an estimated R3.99 million loss to the revenue service.

The case forms part of Project Jan Vas, a broader national investigation into an alleged organised criminal syndicate suspected of targeting SARS through large-scale tax fraud.

The syndicate is suspected of operating across several provinces, including Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West and Gauteng, with South African and foreign nationals allegedly implicated.

SARS Commissioner Dr Johnstone Makhubu said the revenue service was determined to dismantle criminal networks exploiting the tax system for personal gain.

"Every rand stolen through VAT fraud is a rand taken away from building a capable state and delivering services to South Africans. SARS is resolute in its determination to dismantle criminal networks that abuse the



Fourteen accused are facing allegations of VAT refund fraud involving R3.99 million, with the case continuing at the Siyabuswa Magistrates' Court as bail proceedings remain underway. Photo: Supplied.

tax system for personal gain," Makhubu said.

He said advances in technology and data analytics, coupled with cooperation between SARS, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and law-enforcement agencies, were strengthening authorities' ability to detect and investigate tax-related crimes.

"Our message is unequivocal: those who seek to undermine the integrity of our tax

system will be detected, investigated and prosecuted," he said.

Makhubu warned that VAT fraud undermines the funding of essential public services, distorts fair competition and fuels illicit economic activity.

He added that SARS continued to invest in data-driven technology to identify suspicious transactions and detect potential fraud at an

earlier stage.

The case highlights ongoing collaboration between SARS, the NPA, the Hawks and other law-enforcement agencies to investigate alleged financial crimes and safeguard public funds.

Bail proceedings are ongoing, with the accused expected to return to the Siyabuswa Magistrates' Court as the matter proceeds.

Six Foreign Nationals Arrested for Cable Theft



The police say they have made a major breakthrough in Allanridge, Free State, in bringing down an alleged copper cable theft syndicate.

They arrested six foreign nationals on Monday after receiving a tip-off about the alleged criminals' whereabouts.

According to the police, the men were arrested through collaborative efforts between the police and the Eyes & Ears (E2) public-private crime-fighting initiative.

The police received information at about 9pm Monday night that two vehicles travelling from Bothaville to Welkom were carrying stolen copper cables.

The vehicle was stopped and police found 560.85kg of alleged stolen electrical wires, valued at an estimated R100 000.

The men, aged between 26 and 48, were

arrested and face charges related to the possession of suspected stolen property.

Preliminary investigations indicate the stolen copper cables belong to Transnet in the North West province.

The men were expected to appear in the Odendaalrus Magistrate's Court soon.

The arrests were part of the SAPS' crime-fighting Operation Shanela.

The policing intervention was launched in 2023 under former Police Minister Bheki Cele's directive.

It was relaunched at the start of 2025/2026 as Operation Shanela II.

The initiative has seen the arrest of several suspects across the country in recent years, with the deployment of police officers to identified crime hotspots. - **IOL News**

Nzimande to explore innovation and industrialisation at East London tech park



Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Blade Nzimande will visit the East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ) Science and Technology Park on Friday to explore how innovation, enterprise development and technical skills can help drive South Africa's industrialisation.

The strategic engagement will showcase the park's role in connecting new ideas and technological advances with industry, while identifying opportunities to strengthen collaboration across government, business and the innovation sector.

"The visit will also provide the Minister with an opportunity to engage directly with the leadership of the Provincial and Local Government, the ELIDZ, innovators and entrepreneurs on the opportunities and challenges involved in translating research, technology and new ideas into commercially viable products and services," the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation said in a statement.

Established in 2014, the ELIDZ Science

and Technology Park is South Africa's first and only science and technology park fully integrated within an Industrial Development Zone.

Through incubation, product development, specialised facilities and technology support, the park helps entrepreneurs develop their ideas and bring them to market.

It currently supports more than 71 enterprises, contributing to industrial competitiveness and economic development in the Eastern Cape.

The visit forms part of the Ministry's broader efforts to strengthen ties with Special Economic Zones and industry, build local and regional innovation ecosystems, and advance innovation-led industrialisation. Nzimande will be joined by the MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Nonkqubela Pieters; Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality Executive Mayor, Councillor Princess Faku; and ELIDZ Board Chairperson, Ayanda Kana. - **SANews.gov.za**

Mangaung sewage crisis exposed as R2bn repair bill looms

Deputy Minister finds Sterkwater treatment works in disrepair as raw sewage flows into river and quarry safety concerns mount

By **Nonkululeko Ngubeni**

Free State - Mangaung's worsening sewage crisis has come under fresh scrutiny after Water and Sanitation Deputy Minister Dr Jack Bloom expressed shock at the state of the Sterkwater Wastewater Treatment Works, where raw sewage reportedly flows directly into the Renosterspruit.

During an oversight visit to Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality on Monday, 12 October, Bloom assessed the deteriorating water and sanitation infrastructure, investigated reports of sewage pollution and examined safety concerns following repeated drownings at an unsecured quarry.

The visit exposed the scale of the challenges facing the metro, with its ageing wastewater treatment infrastructure struggling to cope and an incomplete treatment plant adding to concerns about the municipality's ability to prevent further pollution.

Although partially operational, the Sterkwater facility is struggling to treat sewage effectively, while a new section built approximately 10 years ago remains incomplete.

According to Solomzi Henge, Mangaung Metro's sanitation manager, only the concrete structure of the new facility was completed.

Essential screws were never installed, and the treatment dams were never commissioned, leaving the old plant to carry the burden of wastewater treatment.

However, the old facility is also in poor condition and is currently out of order.

Henge said repairs to restore the old plant were expected to be completed by January. Responding to Bloom's questions about the unfinished facility, he indicated that the new plant could become operational within approximately 18 months, provided funding was secured.

Additional equipment would still need to be ordered before the facility could operate fully.

R600m needed to fix Sterkwater
The financial scale of Mangaung's wastewater crisis is substantial, with Henge estimating that approximately R2 billion would be needed to restore all 13 wastewater treatment plants across the metro to full opera-



The Renoster Spruit, part of the stream, flows next to the Sterkwater Wastewater treatment plant. Photo: Supplied.

tion.

Sterkwater alone would require an estimated R600 million to reach full capacity.

Henge warned that the old plant remained in poor condition and could fail again, raising the risk of continued sewage pollution and further environmental damage.

During the oversight visit, Bloom accompanied officials and Democratic Alliance (DA) members to the Renosterspruit downstream from the treatment works, where visible sewage pollution highlighted the environmental consequences of the facility's failures.

Auditor-General's warnings raise alarm
The oversight visit followed repeated calls for intervention, including a request submitted by the DA on 20 August for Bloom to inspect Mangaung's water and sanitation infrastructure.

DA councillor Dirk Kotze urged the Deputy Minister to assess what he described as the severe deterioration of the metro's water and sanitation systems, as well as persistent failures previously highlighted by the Auditor-General and the South African Human Rights Commission.

Kotze said the Auditor-General had repeatedly raised concerns about the municipality's failure to prevent pollution of water resources linked to the Botshabelo, Sterkwater and

Thaba Nchu wastewater treatment works.

"Untreated or inadequately treated sewage continues to contaminate groundwater and rivers, while the accounting officer has failed to take appropriate corrective action despite material irregularities being identified and referred to the Department of Water and Sanitation," Kotze said.

He warned that residents continued to face sewage spills, failing treatment plants, deteriorating water infrastructure, polluted rivers and streams, and repeated interruptions to basic water services.

"These failures are not isolated incidents, but are indicative of a systemic deterioration in governance, infrastructure management and service delivery," he said.

Ring-fenced revenue offers potential solution

Kotze also pointed to a 2024 council decision to establish the Department of Water and Sanitation as a separate service business unit within the metro.

The arrangement took effect on 1 July, ring-fencing revenue generated by the department for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance.

Bloom said the metro's wastewater treatment facilities could also provide opportunities to generate additional income, including

through power generation.

The potential revenue streams could help support infrastructure investment, although the immediate challenge remains securing the funding needed to restore failing facilities and prevent further pollution.

Botshabelo plant and quarry safety under scrutiny

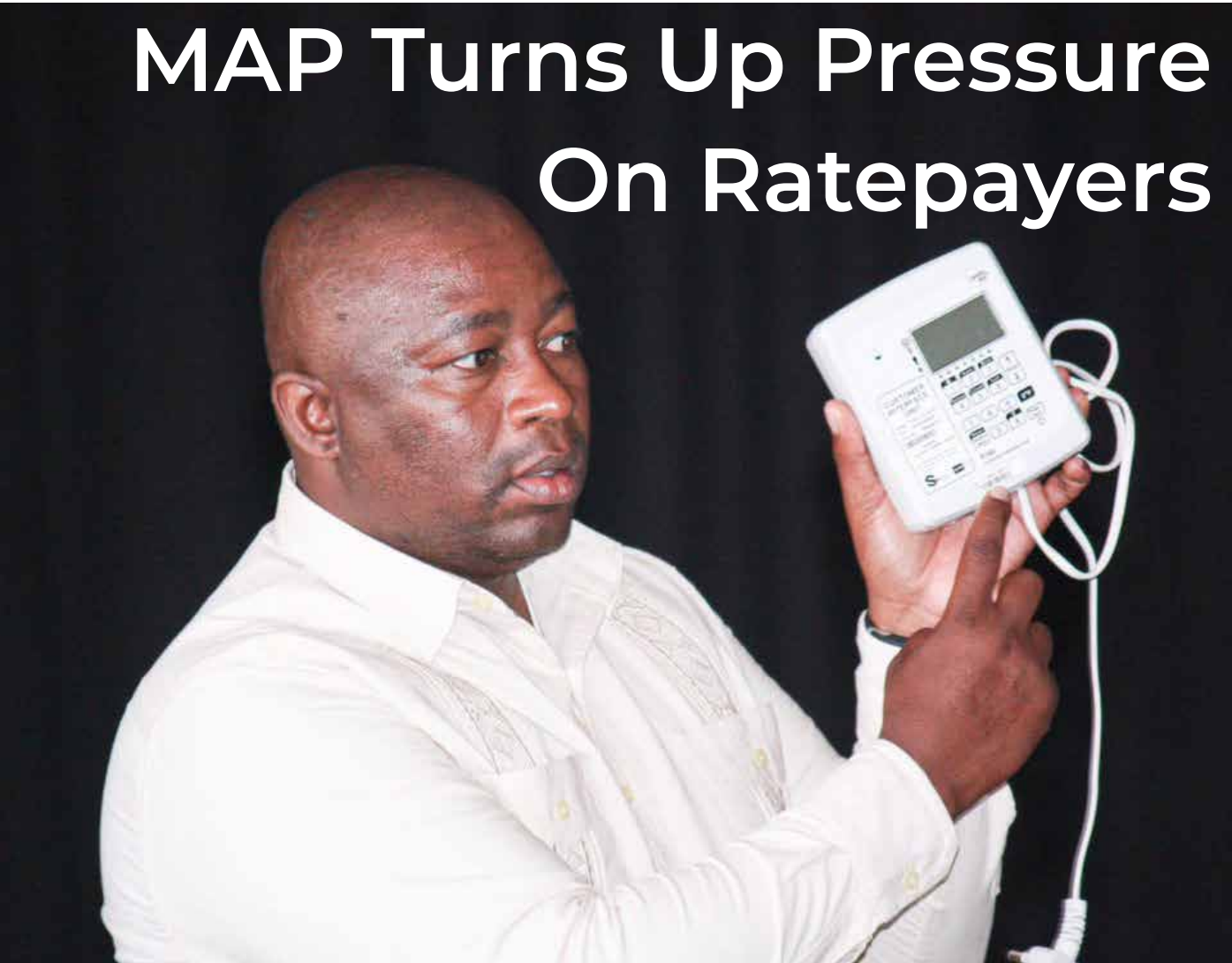
The oversight programme also included an inspection of the Botshabelo Wastewater Treatment Works, where reports of untreated or partially treated wastewater being discharged from the facility were to be investigated.

Bloom's visit further extended to Heidedal Quarry, where safety measures were assessed following repeated drownings at the unsecured site.

The inspections place renewed focus on Mangaung's responsibility to protect public health, safeguard water resources and address safety risks at hazardous locations.

Bloom is expected to submit recommendations to the Department of Water and Sanitation following the oversight visit.

For Mangaung residents, the challenge now is whether the findings will translate into urgent repairs, improved wastewater management and stronger safeguards against pollution and preventable loss of life.



By JNN Reporter

Free State - Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality is pressing ahead with its smart-meter rollout while sending a firm message to residents: those who can afford municipal services must pay their bills, while households genuinely struggling financially should register for indigent support.

The latest phase of electricity meter installations is under way in Harrismith, covering Tshiame A, Tshiame B, Tshiame C and Makgoloeng, in collaboration with Eskom. Once the Harrismith phase is complete, the programme will move to QwaQwa.

The municipality says the initiative goes beyond installing modern meters. It is intended to improve billing accuracy, strengthen revenue collection and promote accountability in the consumption and payment of municipal services.

Council Speaker, Mandlenkosi Dlamini said residents who could afford to pay had a responsibility to settle their municipal accounts

to help the municipality maintain infrastructure and provide sustainable services.

“A culture of user-pay in Maluti-A-Phofung must become the norm. Gone are the days of robbing the municipality of the revenue it needs to provide sustainable services to our communities,” said Dlamini.

He urged residents to recognise that paying for services was essential to keeping the municipality financially capable of meeting community needs.

“Every household that pays for the services it consumes contributes towards the municipality’s ability to maintain infrastructure, improve revenue collection and deliver sustainable services,” he added.

However, while calling for greater payment discipline, the municipality acknowledged that some households cannot afford municipal services.

Residents who meet the qualifying criteria are encouraged to register as indigent households to access available assistance and free basic services.

Dlamini said the approach should distinguish between residents who can pay but fail to do so and those who genuinely need financial relief.

“If a household can afford its monthly DStv subscription, it should also make every effort to pay for the municipal services it consumes. We must build a culture where those who can pay, pay and those who genuinely cannot afford to pay are properly registered and supported through the indigent programme,” he said.

Dlamini’s message is that smart meters, accurate billing and responsible payment must go hand in hand if the rollout is to support more sustainable service delivery.

Residents are urged to cooperate with municipal officials and Eskom teams during installations and to ensure that their household circumstances are properly recorded.

The municipality says improved revenue collection, alongside support for qualifying indigent households, is central to its efforts to maintain infrastructure and deliver reliable services across Maluti-A-Phofung.

HENNOPS RIVER HORROR: PASTOR FACES MURDER CHARGES



A pastor and two women from Atteridgeville face several charges that includes murder allegations and GBV related offences

By Gomolemo Winkel

Gauteng - A pastor, his partner and a third suspect have appeared in the Atteridgeville Magistrates’ Court in connection with the alleged rape of a mother and the murder of her four-month-old baby during a purported spiritual cleansing ritual.

The three suspects briefly appeared in court on Monday, 12 October, facing a string of serious charges, including murder, human trafficking, conspiracy to commit murder and fraud. The case was postponed to Friday, 16 October, for legal aid representations and bail proceedings.

The accused are Pastor Caiphus Mkhawane, Tsako Angel Makhubela and Amanda Manono Mnguni, aged between 25 and 36.

Mkhawane and Makhubela face additional charges, including human trafficking, premeditated murder, rape, two counts of kidnapping and robbery with aggravating circumstances.

According to National Prosecuting Author-

ity (NPA) spokesperson Lumka Mahanjana, the case stems from an incident that allegedly occurred on 7 October at the Hennops River, where the victim was reportedly taken under the pretext of undergoing a spiritual cleansing ritual.

Mahanjana said the accused allegedly took out several funeral policies in the victim’s name in August 2026, before the death of her infant.

“It is alleged that during August 2026, the accused took out several funeral policies in the name of the mother of the deceased infant,” Mahanjana said.

The victim was allegedly told that the ritual would free her from evil spirits and protect her children.

Mahanjana said that, upon arriving at an area near the river, two of the accused allegedly instructed the victim to undress and tied her up.

Makhubela allegedly washed her using water from a bucket before the pastor took her

to the river, leaving the baby with Makhubela.

At the river, the pastor allegedly washed the woman again and raped her.

He then allegedly returned to collect the infant, after which he and Makhubela allegedly took the child into nearby bushes and killed the baby.

The victim reportedly managed to escape and alert workers at a nearby construction site, who assisted her in contacting the police.

An investigation by Erasmus detectives led to the arrests of all three suspects.

Makhubela was arrested on 7 October after the victim allegedly identified him. Mnguni was arrested later that day, while Mkhawane was arrested on 10 October.

The NPA reiterated its commitment to holding perpetrators of gender-based violence and related offences accountable through the criminal justice system.

The accused remain subject to the court process, and the allegations have yet to be tested in court.

New Kgosi Inaugurated As Premier Pledges Palace, Council Offices



Northern Cape Premier Dr Zamani Saul has called on the community to support and protect newly inaugurated Kgosi Mompoti Mahura, urging the traditional leader to serve his people with commitment and unity.

By JNN Reporter

Northern Cape - Premier Saul officiated at the inauguration of Kgosi Mompoti Mahura as the new leader of the Bathaping boo Phuduhutswana Ba Ga Mahura.

Kgosi Mahura assumes the throne following the death of his father, Kgosi Vincent Mahura, who passed away in December last year.

Addressing the ceremony, Saul reflected on the strong working relationship he shared with the late Kgosi and expressed his readiness to build a similar partnership with his successor. The Premier emphas-

ised that traditional leadership remains an important partner in strengthening communities and advancing development.

He urged residents to work with Kgosi Mahura, respect his leadership and protect him as he takes on his new responsibilities.

In turn, Saul called on the newly inaugurated Kgosi to remain accessible to his people, work closely with the community and ensure that their needs and aspirations remain at the centre of his leadership.

The Premier’s message highlighted the importance of cooperation between traditional leadership, communities and government in promoting development and preserving cultural heritage. He also an-

nounced that the Northern Cape Provincial Government would return to Deersburg in the near future to conduct the sod-turning ceremony for the construction of a Great Palace and Traditional Council Office.

The planned developments are expected to provide dedicated facilities for the traditional leadership and the work of the Traditional Council.

The inauguration marks a new chapter for the Bathaping boo Phuduhutswana Ba Ga Mahura, with expectations that the new Kgosi will build on his late father’s legacy while working with government and the community to advance local development.

Mokgosi: Accountability Must Improve Lives



By Staff Reporter

North West Premier Lazarus Kgosi Mokgosi has challenged public institutions to move beyond tick-box compliance and embrace accountability, ethical leadership and good governance to improve service delivery and strengthen public trust.

Speaking at the Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) PFMA Clean Audit Awards for the 2025/26 financial year in Rustenburg last night, Mokgosi said clean audits must translate into tangible benefits for communities, rather than merely reflect sound financial records.

“The purpose of accountability is not merely to satisfy auditors. The purpose of accountability is to improve lives,” he said.

Mokgosi stressed that sustainable improvements in audit outcomes require strong leadership, effective oversight, timely corrective action and consequence management. He warned that compliance alone would not eliminate recurring audit

findings without a firm culture of accountability.

The awards recognised provincial departments and public entities that demonstrated sound financial management, strengthened internal controls and improved governance.

The North West Department of Finance secured its 13th consecutive clean audit, while the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs achieved its first. The North West Provincial Legislature recorded its third consecutive clean audit. The North West Gambling Board, Klein Marico Recreation Centre and Donkerloft Recreation Centre were also among the recognised entities.

AGSA North West Business Unit Leader Mthokozisi Sibisi said the awards celebrated progress while encouraging institutions to continue improving their governance standards.

“We are not just recognising excellence because the journey is complete, but because there is a need to pave the way for

future improvements,” Sibisi said.

MEC for Finance Kenetswe Mosenogi revealed that ten provincial departments, five state-owned entities and three municipalities are participating in Project Clean Audit, led by Provincial Treasury, to improve audit performance across the province.

“A clean audit is possible for all of us. We just need to instil a culture of discipline and decisive consequence management and pay proper attention to the right things,” Mosenogi said.

Mokgosi reaffirmed the provincial government’s commitment to building transparent, ethical and effective institutions that manage public funds responsibly and deliver meaningful results for communities.

“The quality of our governance will determine the quality of our development. The strength of our accountability will determine the strength of our institutions. Let us lead with integrity, govern with purpose and deliver with excellence,” he said.



Ramaphosa Woos Voters in Bloemfontein



ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa engages with residents during a door-to-door campaign in Mangaung. Photo: Supplied.

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Free State - ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa took his local government election campaign to the doorsteps of Bloemfontein residents on Sunday, confronting persistent service delivery failures while promising renewed efforts to tackle unemployment and improve living conditions.

His campaign trail through Caleb Motshabi and Grassland placed the spotlight on some of Mangaung's most pressing challenges, including pit latrines, housing shortages, poor infrastructure and the urgent need for jobs.

The visit formed part of Ramaphosa's two-day campaign programme in Mangaung, following engagements in Botshabelo on Saturday, where residents also raised concerns about inadequate housing and the continued use of pit latrines.

During Sunday's door-to-door campaign, Ramaphosa visited households and engaged residents to hear their concerns and assess the conditions in which they live.

He also highlighted what the ANC regards as achievements of the party-led government in the Free State, including housing assistance for elderly and vulnerable residents, as well as educational support for learners and students through programmes such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

However, the unresolved pit latrine crisis in Mangaung emerged as a major concern, with

Ramaphosa expressing disappointment that the sanitation challenge persisted despite funds reportedly having been allocated to address it.

"It is disheartening to hear that the pit latrine toilets are still a problem in Mangaung because money was given to Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to change these toilets, but it was sent back because of the mismanagement, but we thank you for still having hope in the ANC that will bring change," he said.

Ramaphosa called for a clear, transparent and measurable service delivery programme, stressing that accountability was essential to restoring residents' dignity.

Residents also raised concerns about everyday hardships, with reliable access to basic services such as water, sanitation and proper roads remaining central to their expectations of local government.

The ANC said issues raised during the door-to-door engagements had been referred to the relevant government departments for attention.

Beyond municipal service delivery, Ramaphosa identified economic growth and job creation as key priorities for the Free State, pointing to a proposed electric vehicle manufacturing project as a potential boost for the provincial economy.

The proposed Joylong Automotive manufacturing project, announced during the Free

State Catalytic Investment and Industrialisation launch in QwaQwa on Friday, is valued at approximately R5.5 billion.

It is expected to create 1,500 direct jobs over five years, with a projected annual production capacity of up to 8,000 electric vehicles.

The project forms part of a broader provincial drive to attract investment, expand manufacturing and stimulate economic activity.

Ramaphosa stressed that employment creation should benefit not only young people but also those aged 35 and older.

"We want the economy to improve so that it can create jobs because the main aim now is to create more jobs in the Free State, not only for the youth but also for the people who are 35 and beyond," he said.

Under the theme of building better communities together, the campaign sought to link economic development with improved municipal services and greater access to government programmes.

However, the engagements also underscored the gap between political promises and the daily realities of residents still grappling with longstanding service delivery problems.

As the ANC campaigns ahead of the local government elections, residents will be looking beyond promises for measurable improvements in basic services, decent housing and sustainable employment opportunities.

Malatsi to engage ICASA on safeguards for online gamblers



Communications and Digital Technologies Minister Solly Malatsi will engage the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) to establish whether sufficient safeguards are in place to protect online gamblers and whether operators are complying with regulatory requirements.

"I think it is important that we understand what measures can appropriately be taken within ICASA's regulatory mandate where electronic communications networks and services are used to facilitate access to gambling and betting products," the Minister said on Wednesday in Johannesburg.

Speaking to leaders from government, broadcasting, sports federations, brands and clubs at the annual Sport Business Forum, Malatsi said his department is responsible for ensuring that all South Africans are safe online, including when gambling.

"Sports betting has grown exponentially in recent years, supported by the evolution of smart devices and technology. This offers strong revenue opportunities for teams, federations and other stakeholders in sport.

"But we have a duty to be aware of the impacts online gambling is having in a country where many people are poor, unemployed, desperate, and have low levels of financial literacy," Malatsi said.

While new technologies bring major drawbacks, including job displacement, privacy and security risks, environmental damage and negative health impacts, the Minister focused on harnessing their benefits to grow the sports business industry.

Malatsi said digital technology has opened new avenues for revenue generation, disrupted stagnant business models

and brought brands, institutions and public figures closer to their audiences than ever before.

"Technology is driving the same evolution in sport, with video and big data analysis informing load management and new commercialisation models being opened through digital advertising, team platform ownership, in-house content production and influencer revenue streams," he said.

The Minister highlighted how artificial intelligence (AI) is improving broadcasting processes and enabling businesses to identify, measure and assess sponsorship more effectively.

"Clever use of geolocation and adaptive advertising means that adverts flighted during the same event can be targeted to different audiences in different markets, expanding the commercial opportunities for sponsors, broadcasters, federations and teams.

"For fans, digital technology allows for streaming onto smart devices, deeper connections with their favourite teams and personalities through more content, and easier access to online communities. Stars, teams and fans are now in charge of telling their own stories," he said.

The Minister noted that the evolution of digital technology has also fostered the growth of new audiences and a resurgence in the popularity of school sport, creating more opportunities for young people to be scouted.

"SuperSport's school and university offering could soon be competing with some of the best youth sport coverage we see in markets like the United States of America.

"By beaming school and club sport into the homes of millions of people, fans are now connecting with the stars of tomorrow, tracking their journey from their school first

teams to the professional ranks and possibly even into the national teams. Youngsters such as Markus Muller, Ethan Adams, and Kwena Maphaka have become household names from their exploits in school sports. Scouting has been amplified," Malatsi said.

He added that technology is already pushing human endeavour to greater heights, stressing that communications and digital infrastructure will become as essential to sport at most levels as floodlights, turnstiles and turf.

"Many of the sponsors and investors in sport are leading technology businesses, whether they be telecommunications giants, software developers, hardware companies or broadcasters.

"This may already be happening in certain spheres, but I would urge sporting teams to look beyond financial models of support and to leverage their commercial partnerships to drive innovation in their own teams, sporting fields or federations," Malatsi said.

He emphasised that, for sport to grow, more people need to watch it, whether at a stadium or on a screen.

"It is therefore important that attending games in person or watching them virtually is within reach of as many South Africans as possible.

"It cannot be that only the elite or urban citizens have access to the stars who bring us so much joy – or pain, if you support Manchester United.

"I urge you to remember the digital divide and how you can play your part to build a more inclusive society by using technology to connect with more people – not to deepen that divide by building products and experiences limited to a fortunate few," the Minister said. -SAnews.gov.za

Agricultural innovation ahead of World Food Day



Innovation in agriculture and sustainable food production will take centre stage at the 2026 World Food Day commemoration, where government and its partners will showcase initiatives aimed at strengthening food security, improving livelihoods and combating hunger.

The event will be held at Tosca Village, in the Kagisano-Molopo Local Municipality in the North West, on 16 October 2026, in partnership with the national Department of Agriculture, the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the

United Nations (FAO).

Agriculture Minister Willie Aucamp and North West MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Madoda Sambatha will lead the commemoration, which will bring together government leaders, farmers, community members, development partners and other stakeholders.

Held under the theme: "Innovate Today. Nourish Tomorrow", this year's World Food Day commemoration will highlight the role of innovation in improving agricultural production, building resilient food systems and ensuring sustainable access to food.

The North West province was selected to host the national event, in light of food security challenges in parts of the province, as highlighted in the er. The commemoration will showcase practical interventions to increase food production, support vulnerable households and encourage communities to participate in sustainable agricultural activities, with support from government and its partners.

Several food security projects will also be launched as part of ongoing efforts to improve access to food, strengthen livelihoods and contribute to the eradication of hunger.

-SAnews.gov.za

OPINIONS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

EDITOR'S JOURNAL



Mpho Sekharume
Editor-in-Chief

ConCourt Correctly Chose Voters Over Procedure

... but the IEC must start imposing hefty penalties to deter non-compliance in future

The Constitutional Court’s ruling on the electoral submission dispute gets to the core of South Africa’s constitutional project: administrative convenience must never trample democratic participation. When the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) barred candidate lists due to technical submission bottlenecks, it sought logistical bliss at the expense of fundamental rights. The apex court rightly stepped in to declare that bureaucratic strictness cannot disenfranchise voters. Section 19 of the Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to vote for their chosen representatives. In an electoral system, administrative deadlines exist to facilitate democratic participation, not to serve as arbitrary traps that erase candidates from the ballot. When thousands of voters face the prospect of a stripped-down ballot simply because a political party stumbled over electronic submission gates, the harm does not fall primarily on the offending party. It falls squarely on the electorate. The apex court recognised, as a fundamental truth, that procedural rigidity must yield to the ultimate sovereign right of the people to choose their government. Yet, upholding voter rights should not mean letting negligent political parties off the hook. When parties like the ANC fail to comply with submission timelines, they cause genuine operational chaos. The IEC is forced to scramble, reprinting millions of ballots, rescheduling logistics, and incurring significant legal and emergency processing expenses. To resolve this tension without stripping citizens of their constitutional franchise, the IEC should look to financial penalties for non-compliance. Imposing administrative levies on late or non-compliant political parties would create a direct revenue stream for the commission’s upkeep, thus shifting the financial burden of administrative delays from taxpayers and directly to the defaulting parties. We already see this principle working elsewhere in statutory administration. Under the Political Funding Act (PFA), the IEC enforces compliance by issuing directions but must apply to the Electoral Court to officially impose administrative fines on political parties or independent representatives who fail to submit financial records on time. These financial penalties are used to deter non-compliance and maintain transparency without automatically barring parties from participating in democratic processes. Another example could be the model used by revenue authorities and corporate regulators globally. They charge tiered late-filing fees and interest to cover the administrative overhead generated by tardy submissions, ensuring operational costs are fully recovered. By adopting a similar model, the IEC could charge substantial administrative late fees to offset emergency ballot reprinting and overtime processing costs incurred by delayed filings. However, a crucial caution is necessary. While gazing financial levies solves the IEC’s administrative cost-recovery problem and avoids disenfranchising voters over technical errors, it risks turning strict election deadlines into a mere financial transaction. If left unchecked, political organisations with deep reserves could treat fines as a routine cost of doing business - effectively buying extra time that smaller parties and independent candidates cannot afford. To prevent well-funded entities from purchasing operational extensions, any future penalty framework must crucially include legislated statutory caps, clear boundaries defining what constitutes an extendable deadline and strict safeguards to guarantee equal application across all contesting entities. Financial accountability offers a practical middle ground that protects the ballot paper while holding political parties accountable. Ultimately, democracy requires both discipline and inclusivity.

Petrol at R30: The tank is full, but the wallet is empty



South Africa has crossed a painful fuel-price threshold. Petrol 95 unleaded now costs R30.25 a litre inland and R29.38 at the coast, over R1 500 to fill a 50-litre tank. In March, petrol was about R20.30. In seven months, the price has risen by nearly half. Demands for government action are understandable, but another broad fuel-levy cut would be expensive and poorly targeted. The priority must be protecting households least able to absorb the shock. What R30 petrol means Fuel affects almost everyone, taxi and bus fares, food transport, inflation, interest rates and household budgets. Petrol rose 12,4% in a single month, from R26.92 to R30.25 inland. Fuel is roughly 4% of the South African Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket, so this could add close to half a percentage point directly to inflation, pushing headline inflation back above 5%, possibly to 5-6% in October and November. The effects spread predictably: first the fuel line in CPI and illuminating paraffin (up R4.77 to R31.82 a litre); then, within one to two months, minibus taxi and bus fares; then, over two to four months, food and goods, because diesel above R33 a litre wholesale feeds into every truck, tractor and delivery van. In South Africa, almost everything travels by road. Not just a temporary problem The increase is linked to higher oil prices from the US-Iran conflict and disruption around the Strait of Hormuz. If those pressures ease, some of the in-

crease could reverse. But petrol will not return to R20 a litre soon. South Africa imports most refined fuel after refinery closures, exposing it to international prices, shipping costs and global disruptions. Fuel levies rise over time, regulated margins increase, and the rand remains vulnerable. Households should plan for fuel in the mid-to-high R20s as normal. The era of cheap petrol is over. Who feels the shock most? Poorer households are often hardest hit. They may buy little petrol but pay indirectly through higher taxi fares, food and paraffin. Many live far from work with few affordable alternatives. Middle-income households face higher petrol bills alongside vehicle finance, home loans and rising expenses. Someone travelling 1 500 km a month could pay about R400 more monthly. Rural and inland households face even greater burdens due to longer distances and higher inland prices. The impact is uneven: poorer households through transport and food, lower-mid-

dle-income through fuel and debt, rural through distance and limited alternatives. Should government cut the fuel levy? Targeted relief makes more sense than a broad levy holiday. A levy cut is fast and visible, but most benefit goes to car owners, who are not necessarily the poorest. The previous relief (April-June) cost R17 2 billion over three months. With government finances under pressure, another broad cut would require spending cuts or more borrowing. Instead, relief should be targeted: temporary increases to the SRD and child support grants, support for commuter and taxi fares, and help for households relying on paraffin. If the levy is reduced, it should be small, temporary, time-limited and credibly funded. The goal is not cheap petrol for all, but preventing a temporary shock from becoming permanent hardship for the vulnerable. The cost goes beyond the petrol station Higher fuel prices raise operating costs across the economy. Farmers, mines, man-

ufacturers, retailers and logistics companies face higher costs, passing them to consumers or absorbing them through lower profits, investment and employment. Higher fuel prices raise inflation and limit the Reserve Bank’s ability to cut rates, while high rates weaken demand and increase debt burdens, potentially prolonging higher-for-longer rates. Fiscal policy is equally constrained: debt is high, revenue limited, and every rand for fuel relief is a rand unavailable for health, education, infrastructure or social protection. What government should do Government should accelerate its fuel-margin review and implement recommendations quickly. Regulated margins should be reassessed, and petrol prices could gradually be deregulated below a maximum cap to encourage competition, once consumer protections are in place. Margin reform would lower prices without costing the fiscus. The R2.25-per-litre RAF levy should be re-

formed, but cutting it before fixing the Fund would worsen its liabilities. A no-fault, defined-benefit model with lower legal costs could reduce long-term costs. Levy cuts should follow structural reform, not short-term relief. Restore reliable rail and bus services, reduce dependence on imported refined fuel, and accelerate the shift to electric and hybrid vehicles. Protect people while fixing the system South Africa cannot spend its way out of every fuel crisis, but households under pressure cannot absorb every international shock alone. The sensible response combines targeted short-term relief with long-term structural reform. Part of the current shock may reverse if oil prices fall and tensions ease. But R20 petrol is unlikely soon. Import dependence, higher levies and rising margins have lifted the structural floor. Deregulation can only touch regulated margins, not oil prices, the rand, or the fuel and RAF levies. Those are decisions for National Treasury. Dr Buthelezi is an nGAP lecturer in Economics. He holds a PhD in Economics with specialisation in fiscal policy, public debt dynamics, and macroeconomic stability. His recent work examines fiscal consolidation, geopolitical risk, and the transmission of monetary policy to financial markets. He writes in his personal capacity. **The views expressed here do not reflect those of Journal News Network.

When false information moves faster than the facts: Rethinking government communication

Government has put in place programmes and processes to ensure that the information it shares with the public is accurate, credible and verified. However, accuracy alone is not always enough to win the battle against misinformation and disinformation, finds a new study. The study, which examined the role of social media management strategies in countering misinformation and disinformation within a national government department in South Africa, highlights the growing challenges government communicators face in the digital age. It drew on the experiences of nine communication practitioners who are directly involved in managing the department’s social media platforms. One of the study’s key findings is that having accurate information does not necessarily guarantee that official information will be the first to reach the public or that citizens will engage with it. Unlike unverified online content, government communication is guided by strict processes designed to ensure accuracy and accountability. Information must be verified, relevant stakeholders consulted and, where necessary, approvals obtained before any public response is issued. While these processes are essential in maintaining credibility and public confidence, the challenge, according to the study, is finding ways to respond quickly without compromising accuracy. Misinformation and disinformation The study also highlighted the importance of distinguishing between misinformation and disinformation. It adopted definitions used by the European Commission and UNESCO, which describe misinformation as false or misleading information shared without the intention to cause harm, while disinformation refers to deliberately false information shared with the intention to deceive. Although both can have harmful consequences, the distinction is important because each may require a different communication response. Through semi-structured interviews with the nine communication practitioners, the study explored the strategies used to counter misinformation and disinformation, how these strategies are implemented in practice, the factors that influence their effectiveness and opportunities for improvement. We cannot only communicate when something goes wrong One of the study’s key findings was that countering misinformation and disinformation cannot be limited to correcting false information after it has already spread. Participants indicated that the department uses a combination of proactive and reactive approaches, including disseminating accurate information, engaging with the public, monitoring the information environment and issuing corrective communication when necessary. The study found that clear and consistent

communication about government policies, programmes and services can help reduce the information gaps in which speculation, misinformation and disinformation are able to thrive. The findings suggest that countering misinformation should not begin during a crisis, but should be embedded in everyday government communication efforts. A strategy may be sound, but can we implement it quickly enough? The research also highlighted the gap that can exist between having a strategy and being able to implement it effectively. Communication practitioners operate within policies, guidelines, approval processes and coordination structures that are designed to ensure accuracy and accountability. Government cannot respond to an unverified claim with information that has not itself been verified. However, the study found that limited capacity, coordination challenges and procedural delays can affect the effectiveness of the response. These internal challenges are compounded by the speed and complexity with which misinformation spreads across digital platforms. One participant captured the challenge simply, citing: “Slow turnaround times due to approval processes, which can allow misinformation to spread rapidly.” The finding raises a critical question for the Public Service: how can government retain the checks and balances that protect the credibility of official communication without allowing those same processes to delay urgent responses? The study does not suggest abandoning verification or approval procedures. Instead, it points to the need to assess whether existing processes are suited to the demands of the digital communication environment. This includes having clear mechanisms for verifying information, escalating urgent matters and securing approval when a rapid response is required. It is also important to ensure that decision-makers are available when issues arise. While these may appear to be operational considerations, the study found that they can have a significant impact in the fast-paced social media environment. They can determine whether government engages in a developing conversation in real time or responds only after a false narrative has already gained traction. Better tools help, but technology is not the whole answer The study also points to the need for stronger monitoring capabilities and appropriate technology. Government communicators need to know what is being said, where conversations are taking place and when an emerging issue requires intervention. Another participant highlighted a particular challenge:

“Closed platforms such as WhatsApp present additional challenges, as misinformation spreads in private groups that cannot be directly monitored.” This means that even advanced monitoring tools cannot give communicators a complete picture of how misinformation and disinformation circulate. Information shared in private groups may only come to government’s attention when someone reports it or it appears on a public platform. One participant highlighted another important consideration: how official information is presented matters: “A key challenge is that government messaging is often perceived as too formal and less engaging. Misinformation tends to gain more traction because it is presented in a more appealing or relatable way.” Accuracy remains non-negotiable, but accuracy alone does not guarantee that people will notice, understand or engage with the information. A challenge for the Public Service The research does not suggest that government is starting from scratch. Strategies, structures and communication practices already exist. Rather, the findings point to the need to strengthen and refine existing approaches. The study recommends strengthening organisational capacity, improving coordination and response processes, enhancing technology and monitoring tools, and adopting a more audience-centred approach to communication. The findings also reveal that misinformation and disinformation cannot be left to communication units alone. Communicators depend on programme managers, subject specialists and decision-makers to provide accurate information quickly. Effective responses, therefore, require cooperation across an institution. The study ultimately underscores the important role of the Public Service in ensuring that reliable information remains accessible, visible and responsive to the needs of citizens. The Public Service must be able to verify information, make decisions and communicate promptly when false claims emerge. The responsibility remains the same: to provide the public with information that is accurate, credible and useful. What has changed is the speed at which this now needs to be done. In an environment where false information can travel in minutes, the truth cannot routinely arrive hours or days later. By Zanele Mngadi Zanele Mngadi is the Head of Editorial and Production of Public Sector Manager magazine and Chief Director: Products and Platforms at the Government Communication and Information System. She conducted the study as part of her Bachelor of Public Administration Honours degree at MANCOSA

Breaking the Silence: Why Men’s Mental Health Deserves Our Attention



Mental health is an essential part of human well-being, yet it remains a difficult subject for many men to discuss openly. Across our communities, men are often expected to be strong, provide for their families, solve problems and face life’s challenges without showing vulnerability. But behind this expectation lies an important question: who takes care of the men who are struggling? For generations, society has reinforced the belief that men should not cry, express emotional pain or ask for help. Phrases such as “men don’t cry” and “be strong” may appear harmless, but they can discourage men from acknowledging their struggles. Consequently, some men suffer in silence, fearing that speaking about their feelings will be interpreted as weakness. It is time to change this narrative. Men experience mental health challenges just as anyone else does. Depression, anxiety, grief, loneliness and overwhelming stress can affect men regardless of their age, background or professional status. Financial pressures, unemployment, relationship difficulties, family responsibilities and uncertainty about the future can further contribute to emotional distress. In communities across the Northern Cape and throughout South Africa, we must create environments where men feel safe to speak about these challenges without fear of judgement or discrimination. True strength is not the absence of struggle; it is the courage to acknowledge when support is needed. Mental health challenges do not always present themselves in obvious ways. A man who is struggling may become withdrawn, unusually irritable, angry or lose interest in activities he once enjoyed. Changes in sleeping patterns or increased reliance on alcohol and other substances may also indicate that something is wrong. While these signs do not necessarily mean a person has a mental health condition, persistent changes deserve attention and, where appropriate, professional assessment. We must learn to look beyond appearances and genuinely ask the people around us how they are doing. Families, workplaces, schools, churches, sports clubs and community organisations all have an important role to play in breaking the stigma surrounding men’s mental health. A simple conversation can open the door to support. Listening without judgement, offering encouragement and helping someone access professional assistance can make a meaningful difference. We must also challenge harmful stereotypes about masculinity. Men should be encouraged to understand that seeking help from a healthcare professional, psychologist, counsellor or social worker is not a sign of failure. It is a responsible step towards protecting their well-being and improving their quality of life. As communicators, we have a responsibility to promote awareness, share accurate information and use language that encourages understanding rather than stigma. The conversations we facilitate can help create a society in which mental health is treated with the seriousness it deserves. Government, civil society, healthcare professionals and community leaders must continue working together to promote mental health education and improve access to appropriate support. Awareness initiatives should extend beyond commemorative campaigns and become part of our everyday engagement with communities. Importantly, we must remember that men should not be expected to carry the responsibility for their well-being alone. Strong support systems, meaningful relationships and accessible professional services are essential. We must build communities where people feel comfortable asking for help and where those who reach out are met with compassion. The message to every man is simple: you do not have to suffer in silence. You can be a father, husband, brother, colleague or leader and still experience difficult emotions. You can be strong and still need support. As a society, let us raise boys who are emotionally strong and can deal with these challenges. The time to break the silence is now! By Monwabisi Nkompela - Head of Communication, Office of the Premier, Northern Cape



Business

Markets and Indicators			
Rand/Dollar	16.44	0.28%	▲
Rand/Pound	21.87	-0.07%	▼
Rand/Euro	18.47	0.11%	▲
Platinum	1,640.09	0.29%	▲
Brent Crude	105.18	0.02%	▲
Gold	4,176.00	0.12%	▲
Ethereum	2,434.66	-0.88%	▼
Bitcoin	80,943.33	-0.42%	▼

Mashatile Warns AI Could Deepen SA’s Jobs Crisis



The Deputy President warns that AI could worsen South Africa's unemployment crisis as the unemployment rate hits 33.6%. Photo: Supplied.

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Deputy President Paul Mashatile has warned that artificial intelligence (AI) and automation could deepen South Africa's unemployment crisis if workers are not equipped with the skills, protections and representation needed to survive an increasingly digital economy.

"The rise of artificial intelligence presents organised labour with a historic challenge," Mashatile said, cautioning that workers who are unprepared for technological change risk being pushed further into inequality and economic exclusion.

Speaking at the eighth national congress of the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) on Wednesday, Mashatile called on trade unions to take a leading role in preparing workers for an economy increasingly shaped by AI, automation and uncertainty.

"Those who anticipate change and prepare workers with the skills, protections and voice needed in the digital economy will help shape the future," he said.

His warning comes amid mounting pressure on the labour market, with South Africa's official unemployment rate reported at 33.6%, representing approximately 8.5 million people without jobs. Mashatile also cited a 0.2% economic contraction in the second

quarter of 2026, highlighting the challenges facing sectors such as mining, manufacturing and trade.

He pointed to graduates struggling to enter the workforce and communities affected by factory closures as examples of the economic hardship facing South Africans.

Mashatile urged organised labour to negotiate stronger protections covering workplace data, technological restructuring and skills development, while ensuring that informal workers and people employed through digital platforms are represented.

He acknowledged that AI could improve productivity but warned that its benefits would come at a cost if technological advances were allowed to displace workers without adequate safeguards.

The Deputy President argued that retrenchments should not be treated as an inevitable consequence of corporate restructuring. He called for mandatory, good-faith engagement between employers, government, employees and trade unions before retrenchment notices are issued.

He also called for the Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) to operate more efficiently and transparently to help struggling businesses maintain stability, protect jobs and strengthen industrial competitiveness.

On economic transformation, Mashatile said South Africa's labour market continued to reflect historical inequalities based on race, gender and disability, particularly in senior management positions.

He said progressive labour legislation alone was insufficient, urging employers to address discriminatory recruitment practices and pay disparities.

Trade unions, he added, must monitor employment equity plans and hold employers accountable.

Acknowledging tensions between government and its social partners over slow reforms and inadequate consultation, Mashatile said these concerns could not be ignored.

He reaffirmed that inclusive economic growth and job creation remained priorities for the Government of National Unity.

Government interventions include reforms to secure electricity supply, improve freight logistics, expand infrastructure investment and strengthen the Labour Activation Programme through apprenticeships and artisan development.

Mashatile's message to organised labour was clear: preparing workers for technological change must become central to protecting jobs, reducing inequality and ensuring that South Africa's digital transition benefits more than businesses alone.

Ministers Ndabeni, Kubayi lead professionals and business sector engagement in Mthatha



The Ministry of Small Business Development, in partnership with the King Sabata Dalindyebo (KSD) Local Municipality, will convene the KSD Professionals and Business Sector Engagement under the theme: "Rebuilding KSD: Professionals and Business at the Centre of Economic Renewal."

The engagement seeks to mobilise the expertise, experience and leadership of professionals, business leaders and government stakeholders to contribute to the economic

rebuilding of the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality. The initiative aims to strengthen collaboration between government and the private sector while creating practical solutions to challenges affecting key economic sectors.

The engagement will bring together national and local government leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs, academics and business representatives for high-level discussions on economic development, infrastructure investment, the legal sector and

healthcare as strategic drivers of local economic growth.

A special recognition will honour pioneers and outstanding processionalss from the KSD for their contribution to the municipality's socio-economic development, symbolising the transfer of knowledge and leadership to future generations.

The platform presents an opportunity for business sector and professionals to network, and define the trajectory of development within KSD. - [Sagovnews.co.za](#)

Ramaphosa Inaugurates Gamsberg Phase 2



By JNN Business Reporter

President Cyril Ramaphosa will today, Friday, 16 October 2026, officiate the inauguration of the Vedanta Zinc International Gamsberg Phase 2 expansion project in the Khâi-Ma Local Municipality, located within the Namakwa District of the Northern Cape.

The inaugural event is hosted under the theme 'Partnerships for Progress', signalling

a major milestone in the mining group's long-term investment commitments in South Africa.

Officials noted that the project plays an integral role in aligning with the Northern Cape provincial government's strategic target of creating 60 000 regional jobs by 2030.

During operational phases, the expanded infrastructure is expected to sustain between 800 and 1 000 direct jobs, with recruitment prioritising local residents from across the

Northern Cape.

Presidency statement highlighted the international significance of the infrastructure project for the country's extractive sector. "The expansion also positions Gamsberg to become one of the world's largest zinc-producing operations."

The Phase 2 capital investment enhances local mineral processing capabilities, bolstering both the district's industrial standing and South Africa's global export footprint.

BMA Official Arrested for Fraud and Corruption

The Commissioner of the Border Management Authority (BMA), Dr Michael Masiapato, has confirmed the arrest of a 56-year-old BMA official stationed at the Maseru Port of Entry on the border with Lesotho.

At the time of the arrest, the official was allegedly found in possession of 22 stamped passports belonging to Lesotho nationals, although the lawful holders were not present, as well as R2 100 in cash.

The arrest followed an intelligence-driven operation conducted by the BMA Integrity Management Unit, the Department of Home Affairs Counter Corruption Unit, the South African Police Service (SAPS) Ladybrand Detectives and K9 Unit, and Crime Intelligence Free State.

The arrest took place just over 10 days after the fifth instalment of the Anti-Corruption Awareness Campaign, which was hosted under the auspices of the Border Management and Immigration Anti-Corruption Forum at OR Tambo International Airport.

The operation was initiated after the State Security Agency provided information about several passports belonging to Lesotho nationals that had been placed under monitoring.

Intelligence indicated that the passports had allegedly been transported from Limpopo to Ladybrand to be stamped unlawfully, thereby extending the holders' visa validity and stay in the Republic of South Africa without their being physically present, as required by law.

Acting on this information, law enforcement authorities conducted an operation

that led to the BMA official's arrest.

The suspect is expected to appear before the Ladybrand Magistrate's Court on charges related to corruption, possession of passports without lawful authority and immigration offences.

The investigation is ongoing, and further arrests have not been ruled out.

Since the BMA was established three years ago, several officials have been arrested under Masiapato's leadership and direction.

"The BMA was established to address longstanding challenges related to illegal migration and corruption within the border management ecosystem. South Africa is beginning to see the tangible benefits of the BMA leadership's firm and uncompromising stance against corruption.

"The BMA is currently finalising more than 60 labour relations and disciplinary cases involving breaches of internal controls, fraud, corruption and other misconduct affecting organisational integrity. In the past three months, 17 officials have been dismissed from the BMA, and more dismissals are expected," Masiapato said.

Masiapato, who brings extensive intelligence experience to his leadership role, has made it unequivocally clear that the Border Management Authority remains committed to combating corruption and safeguarding the integrity of South Africa's ports of entry.

The Authority will continue to work closely with law enforcement and security agencies to detect and investigate unlawful conduct and ensure that officials involved are prosecuted. - [SAnews.gov.za](#)

NOTICE IN TERMS OF REGULATION 68 OF THE DEEDS REGISTRIES ACT, 1937 (ACT 47 OF 1937), IN RESPECT OF A LOST TITLE DEED

Notice is hereby given in terms of regulation 68 of the Deeds Registries Act, 1937, of the intention to apply for the issue of a certified copy of Certificate of registered title Number T11294/1973 in favor of MATJHABENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, in respect of ERF 2297 ODENDAALSRSUS EXTENSION 4, DISTRICT ODENDAALSRSUS, PROVINCE FREE STATE

EXTENT: 800 (EIGHT HUNDRED) SQUARE METRES

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

Dated at Bloemfontein on 07 October 2026

Electronically sent thus unsigned
RC ISHMAIL ATTORNEYS
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BJJ NOTICE OF LOST OR DESTROYED 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 Grant No. G427/1988 passed by THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT TRUST in favour of MAJIMINI MARIA YUNDU in respect of certain ERF 152 BOTSHABELO-A, DISTRICT THABA'NCHU, PROVINCE FREE STATE, which has been lost or destroyed.

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

SIGNED AT BLOEMFONTEIN on this 09th DAY OF OCTOBER 2026.

BEREKA MOSADI CONSULTANTS (PTY) LTD
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Our Ref: BMC080/2026/MGR

TRIBUTE

To Our Beloved Ntsoaki



It is with a heavy heart and profound sadness that we honour the life, legacy, and beautiful spirit of our dear sister, colleague, and friend, Ntsoaki 'Swakla' Dan.

Born into this world on 7 September 1987, Ntsoaki brought an irreplaceable light, passion, and creativity to everyone she touched until her untimely passing on 12 October 2026.

As we prepare to celebrate our milestone 10th anniversary, we write this tribute to remember, celebrate, and thank a remarkable woman whose impact on our organisation and our hearts will endure forever:

Ntsoaki was more than just an employee; she was family, a loyal friend, a dedicated team member and someone who genuinely cared about the people around her.

She was an incredibly hardworking, committed, and dependable individual who always had the best interests of Free State Fashion Week at heart.

She never viewed Free State Fashion Week as just a job; she embraced the organisation as something she was personally invested in, and its success meant the world to her.

What made Ntsoaki exceptionally special was that her loyalty extended far beyond the workplace. She stood by me, supported me, and genuinely wanted to see me succeed. Losing her is not only a tremendous loss to Free State Fashion Week but also a deeply personal loss to me. We have lost a remarkable woman whose dedication, loyalty, and love will never be forgotten.

There is so much that we will miss about Ntsoaki, but above everything, we will miss her passion, her loyalty, her creativity, and the profound love she had for Free State Fashion Week.

Ntsoaki played an instrumental role in shaping the creative direction of our events over the years. Being a creative herself, she was always deeply involved in brainstorming ideas, selecting artists, choosing colour palettes, developing event concepts, and helping bring our shared vision to life.

One of her greatest responsibilities was managing backstage operations. She worked closely with makeup artists, hairstylists, and models, ensuring that everyone was properly prepared, beautifully styled, and ready to walk the runway. Ntsoaki handled these heavy responsibilities with absolute dedication and grace because she genuinely loved what she did.

What makes her passing even more heartbreaking is that this year's Free State Fashion Week, taking place on 16 and 17 October, will be the first in many years without her. Just two weeks ago, Ntsoaki said something to me that I will carry in my heart forever. She told me that she wanted to recover quickly because she could not afford to miss Free State Fashion Week this year.

Those words keep replaying in my mind. Little did we know that she would not be with us to celebrate this milestone, but I know she will be there with us in spirit.

She was looking forward to being there, doing what she loved, and contributing to another successful event.

Ntsoaki may no longer be physically present, but her fingerprints will forever remain.

We will forever be grateful for the years she dedicated to Free State Fashion Week.

Rest peacefully, our beloved Swakla. You were loved, you were valued, and you will never be forgotten.

Love,
Candy Smith, Founder and Chairperson of Free State Fashion Week



Free State Fashion Week 2026

Celebrating a decade of legacy, style, growth and success

Free State Fashion Week is celebrating a decade of shaping the province's fashion industry, unearthing emerging talent and creating opportunities for local designers to turn their creativity into thriving businesses. As the spectacular platform marks its 10th anniversary this October, Journal News caught up with Candy Smith, visionary entrepreneur and chairperson of the Free State Fashion Council, to reflect on the journey so far, the wealth of local talent and her ambitious plans to position the Free State on the global fashion stage. From a milestone runway celebration to international expansion, Smith shares her vision for the next decade of South African fashion.

By **Katlego Mashwabi**

This October marks a major milestone—10 years of Free State Fashion Week! If you had to sum up this decade-long celebration in just three words, what would they be?

Legacy. Evolution. Excellence!

Ten years is an incredible

milestone for us. When we started FSFW, the vision was to create a platform where designers from our province could be seen, celebrated and given real opportunities to grow.

This year's runway is a massive celebration of our journey, the designers who have grown with us and the incredible new talent coming through.

Without giving too much away, what major surprise or unique element can attendees look forward to this year?

If I tell you, then it wouldn't be a surprise! (Laughs.) Celebrating ten years gives us the perfect opportunity to do something unforgettable.

We are deliberately keeping certain elements under wraps, so guests will have to be at the runway to experience the magic firsthand. Expect some truly special moments!

FSFW has built a reputation for discovering and showcasing hidden talent. Is there a particular collection or emerging designer whose work has blown you away during preparations?

It is impossible to single out just one because we have around 30 phenomenal local designers showcasing their collections this year! Every designer brings their own creativity, identity and unique story to the runway.

How many fashion collections will be showcased, and how is this year's runway structured?

The runway is divided into three important segments: Student Designers, Emerging Designers and Professional Designers.

This structure represents the beautiful development journey of a fashion entrepreneur—from discovering their creative voice to building a sustainable, world-class brand right here in the Free State!

You have consistently created opportunities for industry figures to share their knowledge and experience. Who should aspiring designers and fashion enthusiasts be excited to learn from this season?

This year, we have made a deliberate decision to shine a major spotlight on Free State talent.

Our local designers will share their personal journeys, challenges and lessons.

Sometimes, the greatest inspiration for an emerging designer is seeing someone who started exactly where they are and realising: "If they can build a successful fashion career from here, so can I!"

More than 300 hopefuls attended the model auditions. How challenging was it for the judging panel to select the final line-up?

It was incredibly tough because the level of talent at this year's casting was out of this world! We had to narrow more than 300 aspiring models down to approximately 100 who will grace the runway.

Through the Free State Fashion Hub

and the Fashion Council, you are helping transform creative passion into viable businesses. What is your biggest goal for the next decade?

My vision for the next decade is to focus heavily on building a sustainable, economically viable manufacturing sector in the Free State.

We want to empower our designers to move beyond producing individual pieces and develop established fashion brands that create jobs and thrive 365 days a year.

Another major goal is to take Free State designers beyond South Africa's borders.

We are working to establish international partnerships and connect our local talent with global buyers and fashion markets.

The next ten years are all about positioning the Free State as a recognised global fashion destination!

Looking back on this incredible journey, what would you say to your 16-year-old self today?

I would look at her and say: "Keep going, young lady! Your dreams are valid, you are stronger than you think, and never stop believing in yourself."

The fashion industry has plenty of glamour on the outside, but behind every successful brand are years of sacrifice and hard work. Build something meaningful, keep your faith at the centre of everything and, above all, never forget to reach back and help others rise as you grow!



Masters of the Thread: Meet the Designers of FSFW 2026

By **Katlego Mashwabi**

Kgalaletso Letsoalo (Brand: K-Compass)

The Designer:

A 23-year-old Bloemfontein-based designer, young farmer, and entrepreneur pioneering modern eco-luxury. Born in Thaba Nchu and trained at Motheo TVET College, she uniquely merges crop farming with fashion by cultivating her own natural fibers like cotton and wool.

Established: 2022

Signature Palette: A dynamic mix of all colours, constantly experimenting with new combinations.

Brand: AFUR Fashion

Mpho Edmund Pudumo (Brand: AFUR Fashion)

The Designer:

A prominent Bloemfontein native delivering contemporary, innovative, and stylish apparel for both men and women. The brand is built on elite craftsmanship, modern aesthetics, and a unique local vision.

Established: 2007

Signature Palette: Black and white, chosen specifically to challenge creativity on a plain canvas.

FSFW Runway Line: Unnamed Line (A boundary-pushing collection blending day-wear, eveningwear, and mixed fabrics).

Current Projects: focused on perfecting his up-ion week showcase.

Brand: The Grace Collection

Kananelo Dolo Sekoli (Brand: The Grace Collection)

The Designer:

A 24-year-old powerhouse creating bold local streetwear that blends youth culture with an African perspective. Following her studies at a TVET college, she broke out at local events before securing her major runway milestone at FSFW.

Established: 2023

Signature Palette: Classic black and

Brand: House of Rebecca

Rebecca Thato Madikgetla (Brand: House of Rebecca)

The Designer:

A 24-year-old powerhouse creating bold local streetwear that blends youth culture with an African perspective. Following her studies at a TVET college, she broke out at local events before securing her major runway milestone at FSFW.

Established: 2023

Signature Palette: Classic black and

Brand: K-Compass

Omphemetse Thato Mosala (Brand: OTM Designs)

The Designer:

A seasoned local creator specializing in bespoke styling and custom garments. Grounded in a fierce "Buy Local, Wear Local" philosophy, the brand recently marked a massive 10-year milestone in the industry with a celebratory "Sip and Buy" event.

Established: 2016

Signature Palette: Pink.

FSFW Runway Line: Animo Flora

Current Projects: Channelling all current creative energy directly into the FSFW runway.

Brand: OTM Designs

Pamela Ingrid Stander (Brand: Fran-Sue's Elegance)

The Designer:

A multi-talented Bloemfontein design-

Brand: Fran-Sue's Elegance

er, pageant director, and entrepreneur behind a premier local dress hire and custom formalwear brand. She frequently partners with modeling agencies like YEZ and V-Models to mentor and scout rising talent.

Established: 2009

Signature Palette: Typically known for dramatic shades of orange and purple.

FSFW Runway Line: A controversial, rule-breaking twist on classic bridal silhouettes—big, bold, and heavily infused with unexpected color.

Current Projects: Finalizing her upcoming runway pieces.





FREE STATE FASHION WEEK 2026

FRIDAY
16
OCTOBER 2026

SATURDAY
17
OCTOBER 2026

STARTING
AT 18:00
DAILY

VENUE

CITY HALL, BLOEMFONTEIN

TICKETS: GEN: R250 / VIP R750

HOSTED BY

DJ SABBY . MOOZLIE . NAKED DJ
LERATO KGANYAGO . ANGELA LINDA



10 YEARS OF
RUNWAY EXCELLENCE



FASHION
DESIGNERS



EMPOWERMENT



RUNWAY
EXPERIENCE



BUY LOCAL
WEAR LOCAL

TICKETS
AVAILABLE AT

web tickets
AVAILABLE AT PicknPay

GET YOU TICKETS
BEFORE THEY SELL OUT



SAFA Explains VAR Delays

The implementation of VAR in South Africa is edging closer, but operational and technical hurdles must be resolved first

By **Gomolemo Winkel**

South African Football Association CEO Lydia Monyepao has dismissed assumptions that introducing the video assistant referee system is merely a matter of purchasing equipment, following a ministerial briefing held at the Freedom Park Heritage Site in Pretoria on Wednesday, 14 October.

Addressing media representatives regarding delays in the rollout, Monyepao explained that modern football administration involves complex protocols that must be finalised prior to launch.

"It is a complex football-modernisation programme requiring; FIFA approval, referee certification and training, competition integration, broadcaster compatibility, infrastructure readiness, procurement compliance, sustainability planning as well as long-term operational funding," she said.

An investigation conducted by the national VAR task team highlighted several practical obstacles affecting execution, recommend-

ing that future progress requires formal consensus between SAFA and the National Soccer League on a unified strategy.

Monyepao noted that an organisational capability review revealed additional operational risks.

"The internal readiness assessment, conducted internally, identified a number of significant risks including, compatibility with existing broadcast environments, connectivity reliability for remote VAR operations, camera coverage requirements, referee communication systems, asset replacement and lifecycle planning as well as ongoing maintenance and support cost," she said.

"These matters must be resolved before full deployment can responsibly take place," she added. With initial deadlines having passed, Monyepao stated that a definitive implementation timeframe remains unconfirmed due to ongoing consultations with broadcasters, the Premier Soccer League, and FIFA. "I cannot really give a guarantee on that because it will depend on the further



engagements that we need to have with the PSL and the broadcasters," she said.

Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, expressed confidence that the technology will eventually be integrated into local matches.

"VAR is not an easy thing, but I will say this to you, VAR is going to happen, and

VAR is busy happening. We have dates, not next year, but tomorrow. So we are not going there tomorrow to shake hands, we are going to talk to FIFA so that we can move," McKenzie said.

SAFA President, Dr Danny Jordaan, emphasised that implementing video review technology is essential for reducing deliber-

ate foul play and protecting athletes.

"A lot of injuries occur when the players think that the referee is not looking. So, there will be a 360 view of the match by the referee and VAR.

This will help to protect the players and to modernise the game," he said.

Jordaan added that high-level continental

discussions have positioned technological adoption as a vital component for improving the competitiveness of African football internationally. "It's not the kind of talk that has ever happened anywhere in a conversation on African football.

And therefore, VAR becomes critical in that process," he stated.

Sasol, Banyana Partnership Yields Success

Sasol reaffirmed its obligation to support Banyana Banyana's pursuit of international success.

By **Gomolemo Winkel**

Sasol sponsorship manager Dean Somerset praised the company's 17-year partnership with the South African Football Association after Banyana Banyana qualified for the third round of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games qualifiers on Tuesday, 14 October 2026.

The qualification came as the South African women's national team completed a dominant victory over Madagascar, led by braces from in-form Ronnel Donnelly and Gabriela Moodaly-Salgado in the return leg, securing a 7-0 aggregate win with two clean sheets at Toyota Stadium in Bloemfontein.

In the first leg played last Friday, Donnelly produced a memorable hat-trick alongside an own goal to secure a comfortable 4-0 victory.

Somerset noted that the long-standing alliance between SAFA and its commercial sponsor has stood the test of time, yielding transformative results for women's football in South Africa.

"Well, our relationship with SAFA is heading towards two decades now since 2009. And really a proud relationship that we have started back then. All in the spirit of wanting to change the landscape of women's football in this country," he said.

Recalling the initial years of the venture, Somerset highlighted the challenging state of the national women's team prior to sustained corporate backing.

"We have seen over the years, when women's football was not fashionable, Sasol put their hand up to make that difference. Today, we have a track record of this team playing in multiple international matches," he said.

He noted that the breakthrough achieved by the senior squad demonstrates the lasting value of consistent financial and operational support.

"We have seen this team playing in FIFA



Women's World Cup consecutively in 2019, 2023. And now the team is getting themselves ready to again, go back into the Olympics. And if you look at the achievements of Banyana Banyana, since Sasol has come on board. That is commendable with, obviously, the partnership with Sasa," he added.

Somerset also indicated that the enterprise celebrates the individual career achievements of national team members competing in top overseas leagues.

"We are really proud of the players, and what they have achieved in their individual careers as well, which obviously extend into the broader women's football achievements in South Africa. Today, we have multiple players that are signed for big clubs abroad," he said.

The sponsorship manager explained that hosting the national team in Bloemfontein

formed part of an intentional strategy to inspire local youth.

"And coming to Bloemfontein, we were very intentional. It is about making sure that Banyana Banyana, being the role models that they are, touch the lives of these young, women footballers in Mangaung and abroad, and at large," he added.

He emphasised that ongoing corporate backing remains crucial to maintaining operational standards across all national team training camps ahead of global fixtures.

"Our support is Banyana Banyana. And in particular, this very camp that we are now part of, to make sure that the team is resourced, and also give Coach Des, and her technical team the necessary support, so that we can have camps of this nature, getting the team ready to play international matches," he said.

Siwelele Targets Season Turnaround



By **Gomolemo Winkel**

Free State - Siwelele FC captain, Grant Magerman, is confident the team will produce a commanding performance as they chase their first Betway Premiership victory of the season against Polokwane City at Free State Stadium in Bloemfontein.

Speaking ahead of the fixture, the midfielder is among several squad members facing a potential booking ban. Magerman believes the squad has enough quality to climb away from the relegation battle.

"I feel we have the players and capacity to ensure we improve the results going forward.

We just need to make sure we apply ourselves better defensively and do what the coaches demand from us as a team," he said.

Both sides enter the match with multiple players walking a disciplinary tightrope. According to an official Betway Premiership disciplinary report, Siwelele FC players on the edge of suspension are Grant Mager-

man, Vincent Pule, Neo Mokhachane, Relebogile Mokhuoane, Siphelele Jeza, Tebogo Potsane and Thato Letshed. Polokwane City squad members at risk include Banele Mnguni, Bonginkosi Dlamini, Edwin Ramaja, Manuel Kambala, Mpho Mvundlela, Raymond Daniels and Tshiamo Mashele.

The Free State-based club has endured a difficult start to the campaign and are currently 14th on the league table without a win following their opening fixtures. Rise and Shine occupy 10th place, having registered one win, four draws and two defeats.

The team captain added that the atmosphere within the camp remains positive.

"The overall mood of the team has been great over the past few weeks. I think the break has helped us well and everyone has been putting their hand up for Sunday's match," said Magerman.

The 28-year-old praised the senior players for guiding the club's younger members.

"We have a young squad, but the senior players have been doing well in keeping the

younger ones motivated and encouraging them at all times to bring fresh energy into the team," he said.

Magerman expressed gratitude to supporters for standing by the club.

"We appreciate the support the fans have been giving us. We know it has been a difficult start, but we encourage them to keep coming to the stadium. The boys will turn things around," he added.

Meanwhile, caretaker coach, Godfrey Moetsa, provided an update on former Kaizer Chiefs defender, Happy Mashiane, who is currently training with the club.

"There are just a couple of things that need to be sorted out administratively. We cannot deny that he is a very good player and has a lot to offer.

From the technical side, we see someone who can help take this team out of the woods. It now depends on what happens behind the scenes between management and his agent in resolving the outstanding issues," said Moetsa.