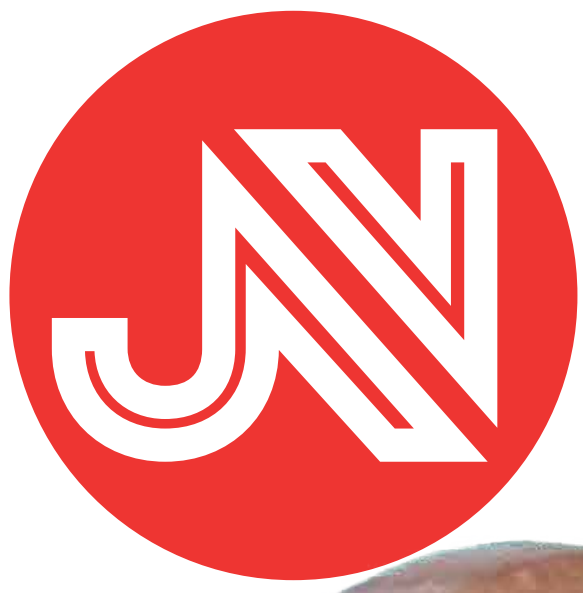




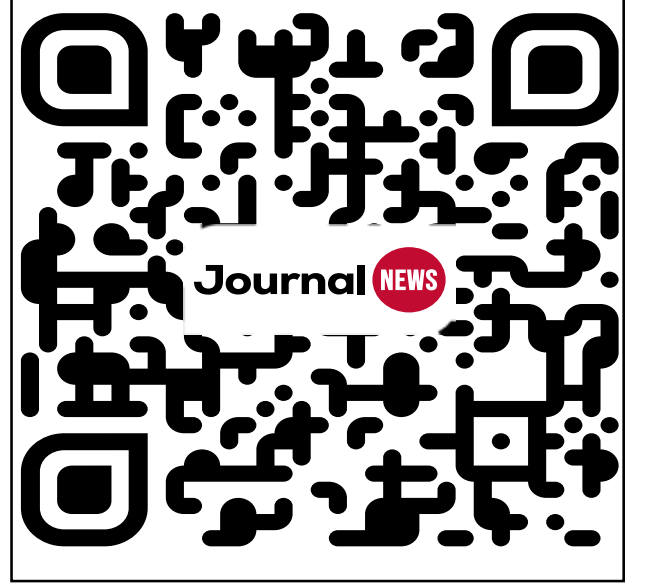
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SORRY!

Saul apologises for “political mishap” behind cabinet fall-out

Insists “there is no crisis” within the party leadership

Page 2

Who made the Cut?

Mangaung ANC Proportional Representation (PR) list revealed

By JN Reporter

The African National Congress (ANC) has reportedly finalised its Proportional Representation (PR) candidate list, naming those entrusted with leading the party's campaign to retain control of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in the upcoming Local Government Elections scheduled for 4 November.

The list, which Journal News has seen and has been widely anticipated amid intense internal lobbying and branch consultations, is expected to play

a pivotal role in shaping the organisation's election campaign in Mangaung.

It also provides an indication of the party's strategic choices as it seeks to strengthen its position in the Free State's only metropolitan municipalities following months of internal contestation.

According to a source within the ANC's regional leadership, a total of 89 Proportional Representation (PR) candidates were nominated from across the Mangaung Metro's 51 wards.

The source said only 11 candidates are expected to secure seats in the Mangaung Metro Council,

based on the number of PR seats currently held by the ANC.

“Although the metro is made up of 51 wards, some branches could not conclude their nomination processes on time. As things stand, we have 89 PR candidates on the list, but only 11 of them will make it to council if the ANC retains its current level of representation,” the source said.

According to the list seen by Journal News, incumbent Executive Mayor Gregory Nthatisi, Deputy Mayor Lulama Titi-Odili and Speaker Lawrence Mathae are among the top 11 candidates expected

to spearhead the party's campaign in the metro.

The list also indicates that Vusi Soqaga, Manthuse Letawana and Nthabiseng Jonas are in line to return to the council, while Sibongi Tsoaledi, Thoko Mokoanyana, Motshewa Tladi, Ncamile Nxangisa and Charles Mgwedleka are expected to replace Chief Whip Vumile Nikelo, Logan Kruger, Theodora Mosala, Alfred Qai and Pani Twala.

However, ANC Mangaung regional spokesperson Ncamile Nxangisa dismissed the circulating list, insisting that the party's internal processes have not yet been concluded.

Continues on Page 3



Banyana Face Hostile Moroccan Challenge Page 12



MACUFE Reclaims Its Roots Page 10



Families ID Victims of Deadly N1 Bus Tragedy Page 4



MANIFESTO LAUNCH

2 0 2 6

DATE: SUNDAY, 23 AUGUST 2026

TIME: 07H00

VENUE: RIVERSIDE, DIEPSLOOT

VOTE ANC



A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL



Zamani Saul Meets Construction, SMME and Sports Fraternity In ZF Mgcwau District



By JN Reporter

The Premier of the Northern Cape, Dr Zamani Saul, this week met with stakeholders from the construction and sports sectors in the ZF Mgcwau District Municipality in Upington.

The purpose of the meeting was to engage on the key challenges facing both sectors and to identify practical solutions to address them.

Saul was accompanied by the MEC for COGSTA, Bentley Vass, MEC for Health Nontobeko Vilakazi, Mayor of ZF Mgcwau District Municipality, Mariana Basson and the Mayor of Dawid Kruiper Local Municipality, David Kasi.

He emphasised that the Northern Cape Provincial Government remains committed to working with all sectors to unlock development and service delivery in the district.

The meeting was followed by a site visit to on-going school construction projects in the district.

The visit allowed the delegation to assess progress, identify challenges on the ground, and ensure that projects are delivered on time and within budget to benefit learners and communities.

Sorry! Saul Apologises for Cabinet ‘Political Mishap’

- *Saul apologises for “political mishap” behind cabinet fall-out*
- *Insisting “there is no crisis” within the party leadership*

By JN Reporter

African National Congress (ANC) Provincial Chairperson and Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul has come out guns blazing, describing the resignation of a member of his provincial cabinet as a “political mishap” that threatened to derail the organisation’s work.

Saul’s remarks follow the recent resignation of MEC for Roads and Public Works Fufe Makatong, just eight months after former Health MEC Maruping Lekwene stepped down from the provincial executive.

In a letter seen by Journal News, Saul issued a formal apology to ANC structures, acknowledging that the handling of Makatong’s resignation had created unnecessary political distractions during the party’s voter registration weekend.

He described the resignation as a political mishap that risked diverting the ANC’s focus from its organisational priorities and admitted that the matter should have been managed more carefully.

“I wish to extend a sincere and formal apology, on behalf of the entire PEC, for the political mishap that occurred over the weekend. This unfortunate incident threatened to derail our collective focus from our principal historic task: to defend and advance our glorious movement. As the leadership, we accept collective accountability for this matter and acknowledge that it ought to have been handled with greater care and revolutionary discipline,” Saul wrote in the



letter dated 3 August 2026.

The letter was addressed to ANC Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) members, Regional Executive Committees (RECs), Branch Executive Committees (BECs), as well as party members and volunteers.

Saul also sought to reassure party structures that there was no leadership crisis within the ANC in the province, despite Makatong’s departure from the Ex-

ecutive Council. He noted that Makatong remains a member of the ANC’s Provincial Executive Committee Top Five, serving as the party’s Provincial Treasurer.

“I want to state categorically and directly to you, as your provincial chairperson; there is no crisis. The PEC remains rock-solid, structurally sound and entirely focused on our dual mandate to fix local municipalities and secure an overwhelming and decisive victory at

the polls,” said Saul in the letter.

He said that the party’s Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) will convene this week and address the matter comprehensively.

“The collective leadership will thoroughly reflect on these developments and issue a coherent and unified directive to all our structures, members and supporters,” promised Saul.

‘He Lived for the People’: Emotional Farewell to Skully Nxangisa

Senior ANC leaders remember the former MEC as a humble servant whose commitment to the people and the movement never wavered



By Matshidiso Selebeleng

Thousands of mourners gathered at the Kaizer Sebethelo Arena in Botshabelo on Sunday to bid a final farewell to former Free State MEC and African National Congress (ANC) stalwart Thembeni “Skully” Nxangisa, who was honoured with a Special Provincial Official Funeral in recognition of his contribution to public service and the liberation movement.

Nxangisa died at his home on 23 July following a period of illness.

Among those paying their last respects were Free State Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, MEC for Police, Roads and Transport Jabu Mbalula, ANC Provincial Chairperson and Speaker of the Free State Legislature Mxolisi Dukuwana, former ANC Provincial Secretary William Bulwane, political leaders, comrades, friends and community members.

Speaking on behalf of the family, Nxangisa’s brother, Ncamile Nxangisa, described him as a devoted family man and committed leader whose determination transformed the lives of those closest to him.

“Thembeni did not wait for government or a tender. He single-handedly demolished the shack that had humiliated our family for years, using his own hands, sweat and the little money he had saved,” he said.

He said his brother’s teachings would continue to guide the family and described his passion for the ANC as unmatched.

“He loved the ANC so much that he made it his personal mission to understand everything about the organisation. He studied its Constitution, history, policies, culture and traditions.”

Delivering the ANC’s tribute, Dukuwana described

Nxangisa as a disciplined and principled cadre who remained loyal to the movement through difficult times.

“He understood that leadership is not defined by a position but by one’s actions. Many of us occupy leadership positions, but our actions tell a different story,” Dukuwana said.

He said Nxangisa exemplified the values of servant leadership, placing communities before personal interests and never losing sight of the ANC’s founding principles.

Premier Letsoha-Mathae remembered Nxangisa as a humble leader who dedicated his life to serving the people of the Free State.

“It is no exaggeration to say that he truly embodied service to the people. He served without expecting recognition or reward,” she said.

She added that public service was not merely a career for Nxangisa but a calling.

“He lived for the people and remained a man of the people throughout his life.”

Nxangisa’s political journey was built on a foundation of public service and organisational development. He studied Municipal Finance at the School of Governance before working at Volksblad between 1993 and 1996. He later joined the ANC as an organiser, rising through the ranks to serve as MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) from 2019 to 2022.

In 2022, he was appointed MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, a position he held until 2024 before becoming a Member of the Free State Legislature.

As mourners gathered to celebrate his life, speakers agreed that Nxangisa would be remembered not only for the positions he held, but for his humility, dedication and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others.

CRIME REPORTS

R27 Million Property Scam Lands Estate Agents Behind Bars

The Acting Provincial Head of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) in the Free State, Brigadier Paulus Mbongo, has welcomed the hefty prison sentences handed down to two property practitioners convicted of orchestrating a multimillion-rand property fraud scheme that swindled victims out of nearly R27 million.

Hawks Free State Spokesperson, Warrant Officer Fikiswa Matoti, said the scam, which ran between 2014 and 2025, saw the accused advertise residential properties for sale, arrange viewings and facilitate offers to purchase before directing unsuspecting buyers to deposit purchase funds into the director’s account.

“Although payments were received, the property transfers were never completed, leaving both buyers and sellers financially prejudiced while the money was allegedly diverted for personal use,” said Matoti.

On 4 August 2026, the Bethlehem Regional Court sentenced Peters Wilhelmus Viljoen (52), director of Blue Key Properties, to 20 years’ direct imprisonment on multiple counts of fraud. He also received six years’ imprisonment for contravening the Property Practitioners Act, with the sentences to run concurrently.

His co-accused, Samuel Kamolase Mofokeng (48), an estate agent, was sentenced to 18 years’ direct imprisonment for multiple counts of fraud and an additional four years’ imprisonment for contravening the Property Practitioners Act, also to run concurrently.

The court further convicted Blue Key Properties Brokers on multiple counts of fraud and imposed a wholly suspended R3 million fine for five years, on condition that the company is not convicted of a similar offence during the suspension period.

Knife-Wielding Rape Suspect to Face Court in Zastron

A 29-year-old man from New Location in Matlakeng, Zastron, is expected to appear in the Zastron Magistrate’s Court on a charge of rape following the alleged sexual assault of a 24-year-old man at Lere-La-Thuto Sports Ground in Kanana Location.

According to police Spokesperson, Sergeant Sinah Mpakane, the incident allegedly occurred at about 23:00 on Friday, 31 July 2026, as the victim was walking home. He said that while passing a bottle store in Kgotsong, Matlakeng, he was confronted by a man who emerged from the darkness armed with a knife.

“The suspect allegedly held the knife to the victim’s throat, threatening to stab him if he resisted,

and forced him to walk to the nearby Lere-La-Thuto Sports Ground. Once at the sports ground, the suspect allegedly sexually assaulted the victim. Despite attempts to resist, the victim was overpowered. As people passed nearby, he called out for help and managed to break free and flee. The suspect reportedly tried to chase him but was unsuccessful,” said Mpakane.

Police said the suspect is known to the victim. The victim sustained a knife wound as well as a bite injury during the attack.

The 29-year-old suspect has since been arrested and is expected to appear before the Zastron Magistrate’s Court on a charge of rape.

Son Arrested After Father Dies in Alleged Cigarette Dispute

A 32-year-old man has been arrested for the alleged murder of his 61-year-old father following a violent assault that reportedly stemmed from an argument over a cigarette in Mokwallo, Vredefort.

Vredefort police arrested the suspect after his father, Ndule Lenong (61), died from injuries sustained during the alleged attack.

Sergeant Josephine Rani, said Police were called to a residence in the Mapetla Section of Mokwallo at about 16:10 on Sunday, 2 August 2026, where they found Lenong lying on a bed with severe head injuries and a swollen face.

“Officers were informed that he had allegedly been assaulted by his son with an unknown object. The injured man was rushed to Parys Hospital before being transferred to a hospital in Bloemfontein for specialised medical treatment. However, he succumbed to his injuries at about 09:10 on Monday, 3 August 2026,” said Rani.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the fatal assault was allegedly triggered by a dispute over a cigarette.

The 32-year-old suspect was arrested at his residence and charged with murder. He is expected to appear in the Vredefort Magistrate’s Court soon.

Border Bust: Three Eswatini Nationals Held With Stolen Firearm

Three Eswatini nationals have been arrested after police recovered a stolen unlicensed firearm and ammunition during a late-night stop-and-search operation near the Ficksburg Port of Entry.

The arrests followed a community tip-off that a vehicle carrying four Eswatini nationals had entered South Africa from Lesotho and that its occupants were allegedly armed.

Police Spokesperson, Warrant Officer Mmako Mphoring said police received the information at about 00:26 on Sunday, 2 August 2026, and quickly located the vehicle as it entered Ficksburg. Officers gave chase, during which one of the four occupants jumped from the vehicle and escaped on foot.

“The remaining three suspects were stopped and searched.

Although all three were found to have valid passports, police discovered an unlicensed firearm hidden beneath the driver’s seat. None of the occupants could produce a firearm licence or any legal documentation for the weapon,” he said.

Further investigations revealed that the firearm had been reported stolen from Motetema Police Station in Limpopo in May 2023, with the serial number confirming its status as a stolen weapon.

The three suspects were arrested and charged with possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition. They are expected to appear before the Ficksburg Magistrate’s Court soon.

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Heartbreak as Families Identify Victims of Deadly N1 Bus Tragedy

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

Heartbreak filled the Free State Government Mortuary in Bloemfontein on Thursday as grieving families began the painful process of identifying loved ones killed in last week's devastating N1 bus crash.

The identification process was attended by Free State Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, MEC for Community Safety, Roads and Transport Jabu Mbalula, and Zimbabwe's Consul-General, Eria Phiri, who offered support and condolences to the bereaved families.

The victims died when a long-distance bus travelling from Cape Town to Zimbabwe overturned on the N1 between Trompsburg and Edenburg in the early hours of Friday, 31 July.

Addressing grieving relatives, Letsoha-Mathae acknowledged that no words could ease the pain of losing loved ones.

"Today, we are here to pass our condolences. We are here to say we are sorry and that we are with you

in our prayers. We know words alone cannot comfort you, nor can they explain your profound loss," she said. The Premier also urged long-distance passengers to ensure their details are recorded before travelling, saying passenger registers are critical in helping authorities identify victims and notify next of kin during emergencies.

"If you travel by taxi or bus, ensure your details are captured in the passenger register. It greatly assists authorities in contacting families when tragedies like this occur," she said.

According to Free State police spokesperson Sergeant Mahlomola Kareli, the bus was carrying approximately 78 people, including the driver, when it allegedly lost control and overturned.

Ten passengers were declared dead at the scene. The victims included four adult women, one adult man, three girls and two boys.

Kareli said 57 passengers sustained injuries and were transported to Albert Nzula District Hospital in Trompsburg, while nine critically injured passengers were transferred to Pelonomi and Universitas hospi-

tals in Bloemfontein for specialised treatment.

He confirmed that the bus driver had been taken in for questioning as part of the investigation.

"A case of culpable homicide has been opened and investigations are continuing," Kareli said.

Mbalula said improving road safety remained a priority for both national and provincial governments, with regular engagements taking place to reduce fatalities on South Africa's roads.

"In our MinMec meetings we continuously assess how to make our roads safer for everyone. Unfortunately, no one can predict when an accident will occur, but we extend our deepest condolences to all the affected families," he said.

He also wished the injured a speedy recovery and urged transport operators and motorists to remain vigilant and strictly comply with road safety regulations, particularly on long-distance routes.

As investigations continue, authorities are working closely with affected families to complete the identification process and ensure the victims are laid to rest with dignity.

Basotho New Year Marks 20 Years of Culture, Heritage and Unity



By Katlego Mashwabi

The Basotho Cultural Village in QwaQwa came alive with colour, music and tradition on Saturday as thousands gathered to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Basotho New Year, a milestone event honouring the rich heritage and enduring identity of the Basotho nation.

Coinciding with the start of Women's Month, this year's celebration was held under the theme "Mosa-di ee, ha oa e bonela tlung," a Sesotho proverb recognising that a woman's wisdom, resilience and contribution extend far beyond the home, acknowledging the vital role women play in society alongside men.

Festivities began on the evening of 31 July with the Ditswakotleng Cultural Dialogue, where participants gathered under the stars for storytelling and discussions centred on Dinaledi (the eight stars), a symbol deeply rooted in Basotho cosmology and identity. The dialogue traced the ancient origins of the Basotho New Year and set the tone for the main celebrations.

Hosted by the Free State Provincial Government, the official programme got underway on Saturday morning, transforming the Basotho Cultural Village into a vibrant showcase of Basotho culture. Men, women and children proudly wore traditional attire and the iconic Basotho blanket, while a colourful procession of horse riders added to the spectacle.

The atmosphere was filled with the sounds of Mohobelo music and accordion melodies as visitors enjoyed traditional dance, poetry, cultural exhibitions, authentic Basotho cuisine and performances by pop-

ular artists Sannere and Abuti Thabiso.

For the Basotho nation, 1 August marks the beginning of a new agricultural season after the long winter months and symbolises hope, renewal and prosperity. In keeping with tradition, the first crops of the season were dedicated to Tlatlamatjholo (Divine Intervention) as an expression of gratitude and a prayer for a successful harvest.

"It is true, it is a new year of prosperity and luck for the Basotho nation," said attendee Justice Mofokeng.

The celebrations extended beyond South Africa's borders, with Lesotho also marking the Basotho New Year at the Marokoane Sacred Garden in Maseru under the theme "Moea oa Selemo sa Basotho." The event celebrated indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage as Lesotho commemorated 60 years of independence.

The anniversary celebration attracted a distinguished delegation of political, traditional and cultural leaders from both South Africa and Lesotho. Among those in attendance were Free State MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation Ntombizanele Sifuba, Free State and Northern Cape Regional Commissioner of Correctional Services Subashini Moodley, MEC for Finance Ketso Makume, Lesotho's Minister of Tourism, Sport, Arts and Culture Mputi Stephen Mputi, representatives of the Royal Council and the House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, as well as legendary actor Khotso Nkhato.

Together, they celebrated a milestone that not only honoured two decades of the Basotho New Year celebrations but also reaffirmed the enduring legacy, unity and cultural pride of the Basotho people.

Water Affairs Addresses Proposed Raw Water Use Charges



By Marcus Motshegwa

The Vaal-Orange Catchment Management Agency (VOCMA) in the Free State Province, in partnership with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) held a public consultation meeting with water users in Bethlehem last week under the Dihlabeng Local Municipality as part of its stakeholder engagement procedure on the planned raw water use charges for the 2027/2028 financial year.

The consultation brought together representatives from the agricultural sector, municipalities, industries, businesses, organized water user associations, and other key stakeholders to discuss the proposed tariff adjustments and provide an opportunity for participants to raise questions, share concerns, and make submissions before the charges are finalized.

Raw water use charges emerge as a serious role player in safeguarding sustainable running of South Africa's water resources. The revenue made from these charges is used to support the maintenance, operation, and restoration of national water infrastructure. The charges also strengthen water resource management programs and enhance the smooth delivery of water services across the country.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Executive Officer of VOCMA Lerato Morake, emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders throughout the tariff-setting process. "Public participation is a basis of effective water resource management.

"These consultations provide water users with an opportunity to understand how the proposed charges are determined while allowing the Agency to consider valuable input before the tariffs are approved", said Morake.

Morake further highlighted the importance of cooperation between government and water users in protecting one of the country's most valuable and scarce natural resources.

"Water is a mutual resource that requires shared responsibility. Through these engagements, we are strengthening partnerships with stakeholders to ensure that water resources are managed sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations," she said.

During the consultation, officials explained the methodology used to determine the proposed raw water use charges, including factors such as infrastructure operation and maintenance costs, inflationary pressures, water resource management requirements. Participants were also in-

formed of the legislative framework governing water pricing and the public consultation process.

Participants welcomed the opportunity presented to engage directly with officials, with some raising questions on the possible impact of the proposed charges on farming operations, municipal water supply, and economic development within the region.

Taking into consideration the number of critical vacancies still to be filled in the agency for efficient operations, VOCMA's CFO Neo Smouse responded to the concerns and encouraged stakeholders to submit additional written comments within the prescribed consultation period.

The Department reiterated its obligation to transparent, inclusive and accountable governance, noting that meaningful stakeholder contribution remains essential in achieving equitable and sustainable water resource management. Water users were encouraged to continue participating in the consultation process to help shape decisions that will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the county's water sector.

The consultation forms part of a wider national program by DWS to engage water users across South Africa before finalizing the raw water use charges for the next financial year.

SIU Zeroes In on Mangaung's Multi-Million-Rand Contracts



By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

President Cyril Ramaphosa has authorised the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to investigate nine procurement contracts linked to the establishment and operation of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipal Police, placing millions of rands in municipal spending under the spotlight.

The investigation, authorised under Proclamation 329 of 2026 in terms of the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act, will determine whether there was maladministration, irregular expenditure, fraud, corruption or any unlawful conduct in the awarding and implementation of the contracts.

The proclamation directs the SIU to investigate allegations relating to the establishment and operationalisation of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipal Police, as provided for in Provincial Notice No. 124 of 2019. It will also examine alleged overpayments to suppliers reflected in the municipality's annual financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2024.

Among the contracts under scrutiny are those for branding and marketing material, corporate gifts, catering services, decorating items, structural condition assessments of the Civic Theatre, Gabriel Dichabe offices

and Housing Offices in Thaba Nchu, the upgrading and relocation of municipal police offices, the procurement of eight Toyota Corolla vehicles, the purchase of a fire truck, and the appointment of contractors to construct trunk routes for the municipality's Integrated Public Transport Network.

The SIU has also been mandated to investigate all unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure recorded in the municipality's expenditure registers for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years.

Investigators have been empowered to examine the conduct of municipal officials, employees, suppliers, service providers and any other individuals or entities that may have benefited from or participated in the transactions.

According to the proclamation, the investigation covers allegations dating back to 1 October 2016 through to 31 July 2026, while also allowing the SIU to investigate any related conduct before or after that period. This includes instances where payments were made for goods or services that were either not delivered or only partially rendered.

Responding to the proclamation, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality City Manager Sello More said the municipality would fully cooperate with the investigation.

"The municipality recognises and respects

the constitutional and legislative mandate of the Special Investigating Unit to investigate allegations of maladministration, corruption and related unlawful conduct, and will cooperate with the SIU within the framework of the law," More said.

He said it would be inappropriate to comment on the specific allegations while the investigation is underway but stressed that the municipality remains committed to good governance, accountability, transparency and sound financial management.

"The investigative process should be allowed to run its course," he added.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) in Mangaung welcomed the proclamation, describing it as a significant step towards restoring accountability in the metro.

"This proclamation marks an important step towards restoring accountability in a municipality that has suffered years of mismanagement and corruption. Investigations alone do not restore public trust. Residents expect consequences," said DA Mangaung mayoral candidate Werner Pretorius.

Should evidence of wrongdoing be uncovered, the SIU may institute civil proceedings to recover state funds lost through irregular conduct, while any evidence of criminal offences will be referred to law enforcement agencies for possible prosecution.



70 Years

1956 - 2026

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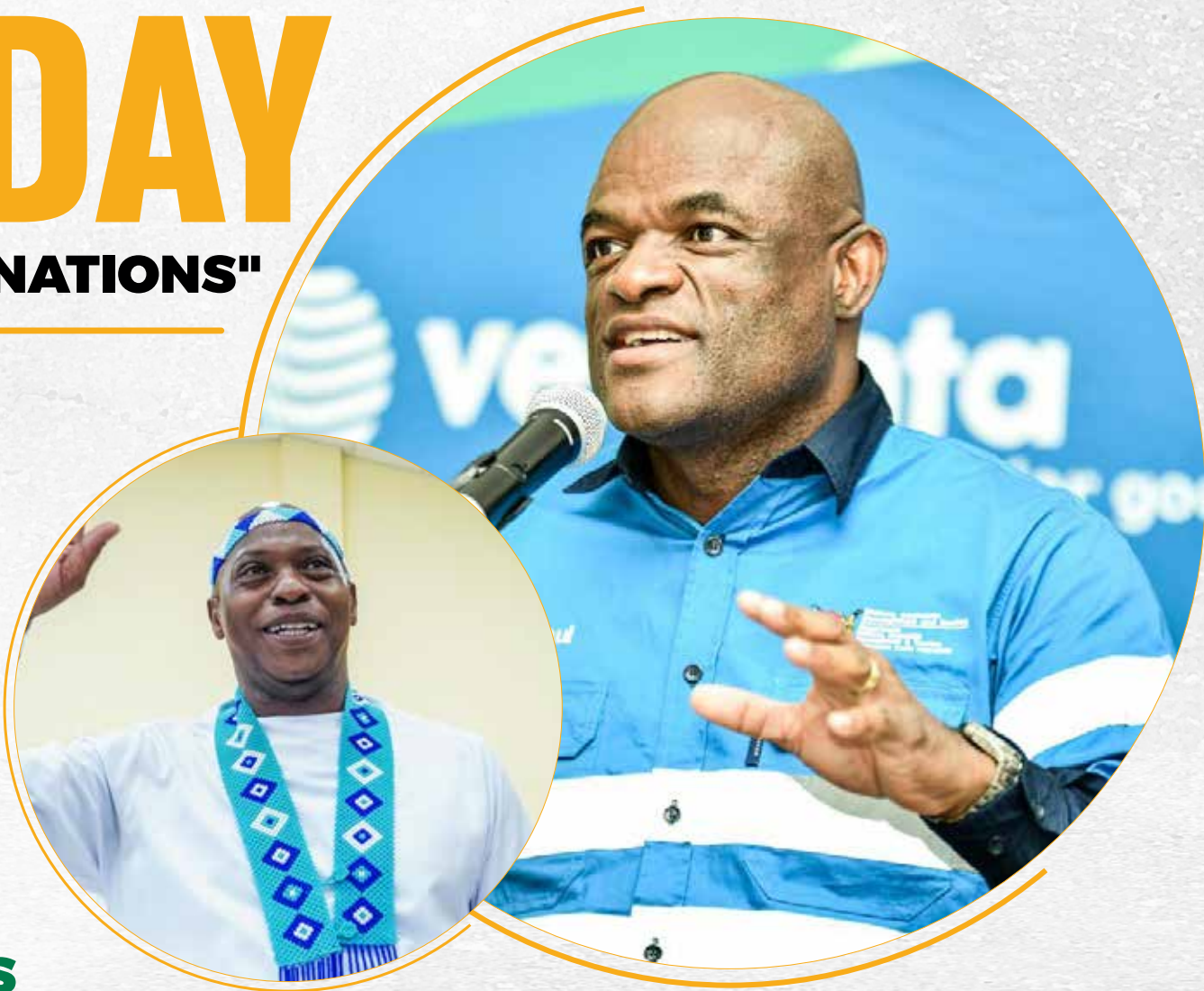
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GAMAGARA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY - 08:00



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INVESTMENT



“Discover a municipality rich in opportunity, innovation and strategic partnerships. Join industry leaders, investors, entrepreneurs and government stakeholders as we unlock the economic potential of Matjhabeng”

MATJHABENG THE DOOR TO IN INVEST

Third Investment Summit showcases strategic partnerships in renewable energy, infrastructure and local business



The Matjhabeng Local Municipality reaffirmed its commitment to economic growth and sustainable development by hosting its third annual Investment Summit at the Fezile Dabi Hall on Thursday under the theme, “From Commitments to Construction: Building Strategic Partnerships to Unlock Matjhabeng’s Next Wave of Investment.”

The summit brought together investors, business leaders, government stakeholders and potential investment partners from across South Africa to explore opportunities that are reshaping Matjhabeng into a competitive investment destination.

Addressing delegates, Executive Mayor Thanduxolo Khalipha said the municipality’s investment summits have evolved from attracting investor interest to delivering tangible results through strategic partnerships and catalytic projects.

“Today, we gather to demonstrate that those commitments are translating into visible projects, functioning partnerships and measurable outcomes that are changing the economic landscape of our municipality,” said Khalipha.

He reflected on the municipality’s investment journey, noting that the inaugural summit in 2023 marked a turning point by

repositioning Matjhabeng as a destination for investment and that the municipality was once again open for business.

According to Khalipha, the municipality has since shifted from securing commitments to implementing projects that drive economic growth, create employment and restore investor confidence.

The summit also served as a platform to report on the progress made during the current administration, highlighting commitments in renewable energy, infrastructure and other strategic areas that are driving local economic development.

Recognising that investment in a stable and well-governed environment is key, the municipality has prioritised strengthening governance, improving administrative capacity, rebuilding relationships with strategic stakeholders and creating a favourable climate for business.

A key focus of the municipality’s economic strategy is restoring Matjhabeng’s historic status as one of South Africa’s leading energy hubs.

Through partnerships with renewable energy developers and investors, the municipality has



NT SUMMIT 2026

G OPENS BILLIONS MENT

ategic partnerships driving
ong-term economic growth



an attractive and signalling again open focus has commitments stimulate employment and report-back the current catalytic in- y, electricity gic sectors develop- t thrives in nvironment, d strength- institution- ships with ating an en- ality's eco- atjhabeng's uth Africa's leading re- and private as facilitat-

ed significant investments in solar energy generation, battery energy storage systems and supporting electricity infrastructure.

"These investments have not only contributed to South Africa's energy transition but have also positioned Matjhabeng as an important player in the country's renewable energy future," Khalipha said.

He added that the projects are expected to generate employment opportunities during both construction and operation, stimulate local procurement, attract further private-sector investment and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the local economy.

As this was the final Investment Summit of the current administration ahead of the Local Government Elections in November, Khalipha said he hopes his leadership will be remembered for establishing systems and partnerships that will continue to benefit Matjhabeng long after his term of office.

The municipality remains committed to working hand-in-hand with investors, government and industry partners to unlock new opportunities, drive inclusive economic growth and build a prosperous future for the people of Matjhabeng.



Energy, Industry, Opportunity

Matjhabeng Local Municipality is laying the foundation for long-term economic prosperity through a series of high-impact catalytic projects designed to unlock investment, create employment and transform the region into a leading industrial and energy hub.

The municipality's ambitious programme focuses on energy, gas, bulk infrastructure, industrialisation, logistics and institutional reform—strategic initiatives that have been rolled out since 2022 and continue to gain momentum.

Speaking during the Matjhabeng Investment Symposium on Thursday, Chief Financial Officer Thabo Panyani said the municipality's vision, conceived nearly four years ago, has moved beyond planning and is now becoming a reality through projects that are reshaping the local economy.

"What started as a vision is now taking shape through catalytic investments that are creating opportunities for businesses and communities alike," said Panyani.

He explained that the municipality's investment drive is aimed at creating an enabling environment for private-sector investment while generating sustainable employment opportunities for residents.

According to Panyani, the impact is already visible.

"We have seen a decline in the number of people coming to the municipal offices looking for jobs or tenders," he said. "Many of those individuals are now employed by private companies operating within our investment projects, which demonstrates the positive impact these initiatives are having on our local economy."

He added that attracting investment not only creates jobs but also strengthens the municipality's long-term financial sustainability by expanding its revenue base.

Panyani emphasised that leadership is about shaping the future rather than maintaining the status quo.

"Our responsibility is to create opportunities that will benefit future generations while positioning Matjhabeng as a competitive investment destination," he said.

Building on the more than R50 million in investment secured by 2025, the municipality has now

set its sights on attracting an additional R100 million in new investment.

Energy remains at the heart of Matjhabeng's growth strategy, with ongoing engagements involving the Minister of Electricity and Energy and the Free State Provincial Government to formally position the municipality as a recognised energy hub.

Alongside renewable energy and gas projects, significant emphasis is being placed on upgrading critical infrastructure to support economic expansion.

"As we build our energy and gas economy, we are equally committed to strengthening the infrastructure that supports sustainable investment and development," Panyani said.

The municipality is also advancing plans for industrialisation through Special Economic Zones (SEZs), which are expected to attract manufacturing industries and stimulate logistics development.

The revitalisation of the local airport is expected to play a key role in supporting future trade, freight and business connectivity.

To further improve the ease of doing business, the municipality is establishing a dedicated private entity that will accelerate investment processes and provide streamlined support for business proposals.

"Council has resolved to establish a private entity, potentially known as Matjhabeng Pty Ltd, which will focus on fast-tracking investment applications and facilitating business development," Panyani explained.

Through these strategic interventions, Matjhabeng Local Municipality continues to position itself as a municipality that is open for investment, committed to innovation and focused on building an inclusive, resilient and sustainable economy for future generations.

From Mining Legacy to Investment Future

Matjhabeng Local Municipality continues to make significant strides in repositioning itself as a destination for investment, with billions of rands committed to catalytic projects that are driving infrastructure development, economic diversification and long-term growth.

Presenting the municipality's 2025 Investment Summit Progress Report, Acting Municipal Manager Dr Vuyo Adonis described the report as a disciplined, evidence-based account of how investment commitments made in previous summits are now translating into tangible projects.

"This report demonstrates how our investment journey has moved from pledges to construction, from commitments to implementation," said Adonis.

He reflected on Matjhabeng's proud history as one of South Africa's mining powerhouses, which played a pivotal role in the country's industrial and economic development. However, the decline of the mining sector brought significant economic and social challenges, including ageing infrastructure, rising unemployment and declining municipal revenue.

"We experience these challenges every day," Adonis said. "But instead of allowing them to define us, the municipality made a conscious decision to reimagine its future through strategic partnerships, institutional reform, infrastructure investment and a shared vision for inclusive growth."

He explained that the municipality's investment

summits were established to reposition Matjhabeng as a competitive investment destination capable of attracting capital into strategic sectors such as renewable energy, logistics, manufacturing and industrial development.

According to Adonis, the municipality has deliberately shifted its focus from relying on its mining legacy to building a diversified and sustainable economy.

"Our future cannot depend on nostalgia. We are clear that our future cannot remain in the past," he said.

Reviewing the municipality's investment journey, Adonis noted that the inaugural summit in 2023 focused on rebuilding investor confidence and reopening dialogue with the private sector. The 2025 summit introduced an investment platform showcasing opportunities in energy, logistics and manufacturing, while this year's summit focused on reporting progress and demonstrating implementation.

The municipality has secured investment commitments of between R41 billion and R49 billion across renewable energy, utilities modernisation, manufacturing and other strategic sectors.

While some projects are progressing through environmental approvals, financing negotiations and regulatory processes, Adonis said these developments remain on track and continue to strengthen Matjhabeng's long-term investment pipeline.

Among the key milestones highlighted were:

- R27 billion infrastructure pipeline covering water, sanitation, electricity modernisation and road rehabilitation.
- R4.235 billion allocated to sewer and wastewater programmes, with R947 million already invested.
- R2.44 billion dedicated to replacing ageing water infrastructure responsible for approximately 85% of water losses.
- R18.327 billion committed to strengthening energy security and electricity reliability.
- R10 billion to R13 billion in private-sector renewable energy investment.
- R5 billion earmarked for the development of the Welkom Cargo Airport, including an international cargo terminal, passenger facilities and an integrated logistics hub.
- R49 million invested in the Matjhabeng Enterprise Industrial Park.

The municipality has also attracted several leading investors, including Mulilo, Spectrum Utility, Hangda Steel, EOG Group and Sébastien Group, whose combined investments form part of the R41 billion to R49 billion investment portfolio currently being implemented in Matjhabeng.

Through these strategic partnerships and catalytic investments, Matjhabeng Local Municipality continues to strengthen investor confidence while laying the foundation for sustainable economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity for its communities.

Opinion

Prof Narnia Bohler-Muller
Research Theme Leader: Flourishing Life, Directorate Research Development, University of the Free State



Hunger is flourishing denied

Hunger is not only a shortage of food. That is what it looks like from the outside, and what our policy language has taught us to see: a gap between calories required and calories delivered, closable by a better grant or a fuller plate. But chronic, structural hunger is something else. It is the foreclosure of a becoming, meaning the closing-down of a future the self was entitled to grow into.

The isiZulu word ngisazophumelela – I am still becoming; I am still going to succeed – carries in its grammar one small, stubborn word: still. Hunger negates the still. And because the self is formed within a web of care, structural hunger does not merely weaken a body. It tears the relational web through which personhood is constituted. This is what I mean by flourishing denied: not only a material harm, but a constitutional and an ontological one.

Not the residue of a crisis passing through The scale of the denial is a matter of public record. The Human Sciences Research Council’s recent Food and Nutrition Security Survey (2024) finds 63.5% of South African households food insecure, and 17.5% severely so. These figures are not the residue of a crisis passing through. They are the ordinary, annual output of the arrangements we have made, which is why the language of emergency, with its implication of exception, flatters us.

Our Constitution knows this. Section 27(1)(b) guarantees everyone the right of access to sufficient food and water; Section 27(2) then qualifies the guarantee by ‘progressive realisation’ within the state’s ‘available resources’. Section 28(1)(c), the child’s right to basic nutrition, carries no such qualification. For the child, the Constitution names a threshold owed not at the horizon of fiscal convenience but now. Lawyers are trained to read that asymmetry as a drafting quirk. I read it as a confession.

It is the constitutional text conceding, in the case of the child, precisely what our courts have as yet failed to concede: an immediately owed minimum below which the self cannot form. In the housing

rights case, Government of the Republic of South Africa and Others v Grootboom and Others (2000), the Constitutional Court declined to read the child’s right to shelter as a directly enforceable claim upon the state, locating the primary duty with families. Irene Grootboom herself died in 2008, still living in a shack. In Minister of Health and Others v Treatment Action Campaign and Others (No 2) (2002), it exchanged the minimum core for the softer discipline of ‘reasonableness’. The threshold was acknowledged but no court has named what, at minimum, the state must provide, to whom, and by when. A right without measurements: nothing against which a budget could be held. No recognised minimum core.

Exploring the bounds of socioeconomic rights Thirty years into the constitutional era, a scattered body of judgments has begun to explore the bounds of socioeconomic rights.

In Equal Education and Others v Minister of Basic Education and Others (2020), the court refused to let the state, under cover of the pandemic, allow the school nutrition programme to lapse for children no longer physically at school. Nutrition, it held, attaches not to attendance but to the child.

In Institute for Economic Justice and Others v Minister of Social Development and Others (2025), the court tied the qualifying threshold for social assistance to the food poverty line, refusing to let the indignity of hunger be excused by a plea of unaffordability – the Constitution disciplining the budget, rather than the other way about. The case is before the Supreme Court of Appeal on 25 August; whether a court may hold the shape of the state’s purse to the shape of the poverty line is, as I write, undecided.

Most recently, on 23 June 2026, in Friends of South Africa Early Childhood Development Forum and Another v KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, the High Court in Pietermaritzburg named a right our law had not before named: that every child holds a right to early childhood development, and that a province’s failure to pay the modest per-child subsidy on which community crèches depend was

not an administrative lapse but an infringement of that right. The court did not merely order payment; it bound the province to account, centre by centre, until it complied. Because the province neither opposed nor appeared, the reasoning is thin and the ruling untested. But the order locates a direct, supervised state duty at exactly the point Grootboom left us: not where the family has vanished, but where poor families sustain their children’s earliest becoming through community institutions that cannot survive without public support. The crèche is where the constitutional threshold is met or missed. The subsidy is the thread by which the state holds, or drops, the web of care.

Hunger is not the poor’s misfortune, it’s a wound in the common life

Set beside one another, these cases are moments in which courts have begun to treat the child’s nutritional and developmental threshold as a floor rather than a horizon – immediately owed and structurally enforced. Each case turns on whether a child is permitted to become. The minimum core, on this reading, is not a quantum of calories. It is the material condition of a self that can still say I am still becoming and be believed because the food, the care and the classroom that make the sentence true are actually there.

Here ubuntu does constitutional work that the liberal idiom of the solitary rights-bearer cannot. If personhood is relational, then a polity that engineers scarcity does not merely fail an individual claimant; it corrodes the relations through which any of us becomes a person. Hunger is not a private misfortune that befalls the poor. It is a wound in the common life. It is not a fate we suffer but a distribution we choose, renewed in every budget that defers the child’s threshold to a more convenient year.

And if the obligation is relational, it cannot stop at the state. Hunger in South Africa is priced. The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity Group, which tracks shelf prices in the same city that produced the crèche judgment, put the household food basket at R5 502 in June 2026, and the cost of feeding one child a basic nutritious diet at R977 a month

– against a Food Poverty Line of R855 and a Child Support Grant of R580. Nor is the pricing innocent: the producers of bread once fixed the price of the staple; cartel conduct for which Competition Commission v Pioneer Foods (Pty) Ltd (2010) exacted its penalties. Section 8(2) of the Bill of Rights binds private actors where the nature of a right permits, and the right to food – a right that passes, at every point of its realisation, through corporate hands – permits a great deal. A jurisprudence of becoming must learn to say so: through competition law, through the accountability the Human Rights Commission’s inquiry has begun to demand of retailers and producers, and, in time, through the horizontal application of Section 27 itself. The web that ubuntu names is not woven by the state alone; those who profit from its strands answer for its tearing.

I am still becoming Nor is South African hunger sui generis. It is, in part, the afterlife of colonial extraction – of land and labour and food systems reorganised to feed others first.

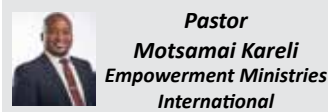
The right to adequate food in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) still speaks the grammar of the individual claimant against the individual state. Ubuntu offers a different grammar – obligation that is relational and, in the end, planetary; in which no one flourishes while another is starved, and no nation’s plenty is quite innocent of another’s want. That is not yet the law. But it is the direction in which a jurisprudence of becoming must travel.

So let me end where I began. Hunger is flourishing denied. Our Constitution already holds, in the unqualified nutrition right of the child, the seed of a relational minimum core; our courts have lately begun to let it grow.

The task – for scholars, for advocates, for anyone who reads the budget as a moral document – is to insist that the threshold below which the self cannot form is not a policy aspiration but a constitutional floor: that every child, and in time every person, is entitled to say I am still becoming, and to live in a country that makes the sentence true.

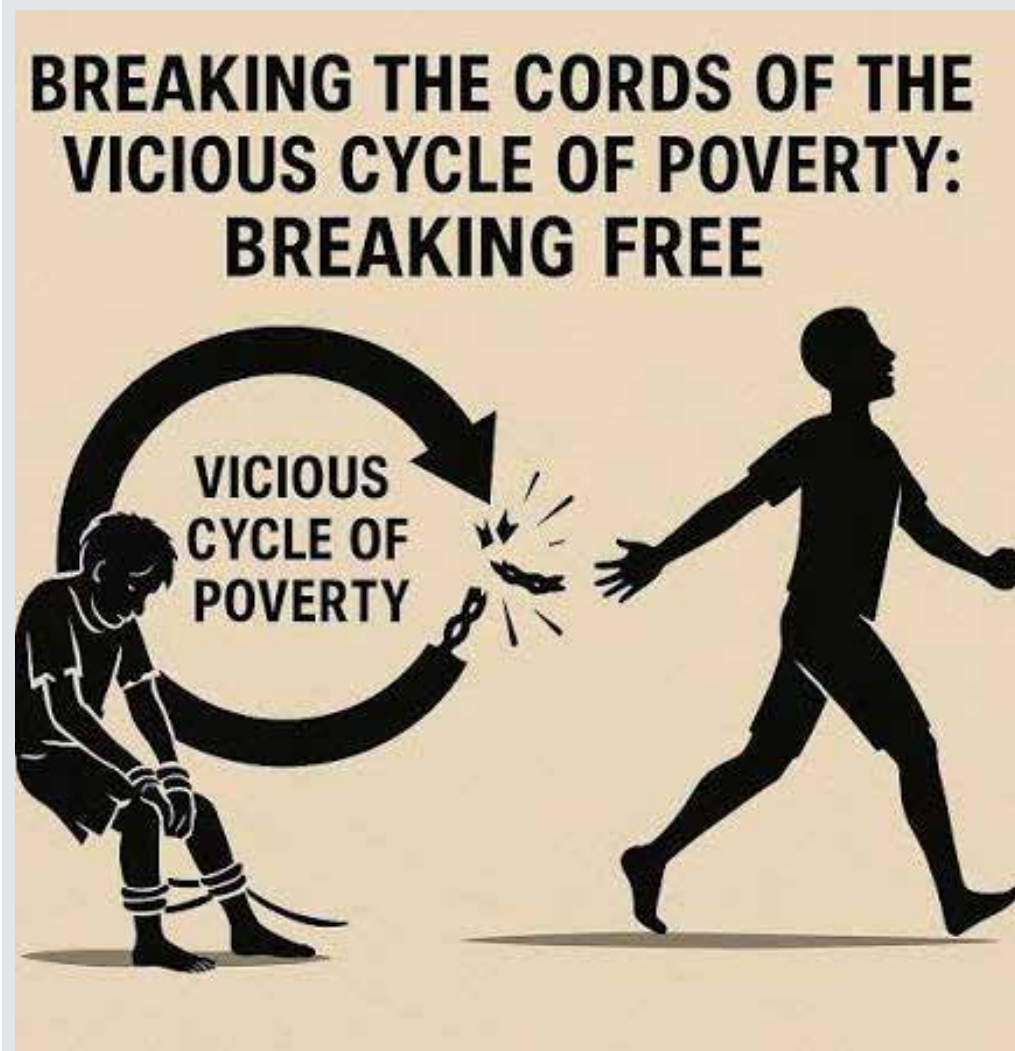
Letter to the Editor

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



Pastor Motsamai Kareli
Empowerment Ministries International

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: From Survival to Sustainable Prosperity



Poverty is one of the greatest challenges confronting our communities today. It is more than the absence of money; it is the absence of opportunity, access, hope, and sometimes even dignity. Poverty affects families, weakens communities, limits educational opportunities, contributes to crime, and leaves many believing that their circumstances can never change. Yet history has repeatedly demonstrated that poverty is not a permanent destiny. It is a condition that can be overcome through vision, discipline, education, entrepreneurship, good leadership, and collective action.

The question before us is not whether poverty exists. The real question is: How do we break its cycle? The cycle of poverty is dangerous because it often repeats itself across generations. A child born into poverty may grow up without quality education, proper healthcare, mentorship, or economic opportunities. Without intervention, that child may become an adult who struggles with unemployment or low-paying work, eventually

raising another generation under the same conditions. Unless something intentionally interrupts this pattern, poverty reproduces itself.

One of the greatest misconceptions about poverty is that it is simply a financial problem. In reality, poverty is multidimensional. It includes a poverty of knowledge, poverty of vision, poverty of opportunity, and sometimes a poverty of mindset. While structural inequalities and economic conditions certainly play a significant role, individuals and communities must also cultivate the attitudes and skills necessary to seize opportunities when they arise.

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for breaking the cycle of poverty. It equips people with knowledge, critical thinking, technical skills, and confidence. However, education must extend beyond obtaining certificates. Financial literacy, digital skills, entrepreneurship, leadership development, and vocational training have become equally important in today’s rapidly changing economy. We must raise a generation that is not

only employable but also capable of creating employment for others.

Entrepreneurship offers another powerful pathway out of poverty. Every thriving economy is built by people who identify problems and provide solutions. Small businesses create jobs, stimulate local economies, and generate wealth within communities. Instead of waiting endlessly for employment opportunities, many young people should be encouraged and equipped to start enterprises, however small they may seem.

Every successful business began with an idea, courage, and persistence.

Breaking poverty also requires a culture of saving and wise financial management. Income alone does not create wealth; disciplined stewardship does. Many households remain trapped because every rand earned is immediately consumed. Saving, budgeting, investing, and avoiding unnecessary debt are essential habits that build financial resilience.

Wealth is accumulated gradually through consistent discipline rather than overnight success. Equally important is the development of productive habits. Poverty is often reinforced by hopelessness, procrastination, dependency, and the fear of failure. Prosperity, on the other hand, is supported by hard work, continuous learning, innovation, integrity, and perseverance. While not every hardworking person becomes wealthy, sustainable prosperity is rarely achieved without diligence and commitment.

Government also carries a significant responsibility. Public institutions must create an enabling environment where businesses can grow, infrastructure functions efficiently, corruption is eliminated, and investments are encouraged. Economic development requires reliable electricity, quality roads, effective municipalities, sound education systems, and policies that promote inclusive growth. Poverty cannot be defeated by government alone, but government must remove unnecessary barriers that prevent citizens from participating meaningfully in the economy.

The private sector must likewise play its part by investing in communities, developing local suppliers, mentoring emerging entrepreneurs, and creating sustainable employment opportunities. Businesses thrive best in stable and prosperous communities. Corporate social investment should move beyond charity and focus on empowering people with skills, opportunities, and access to markets.

Faith communities also have an indispensable role. Churches, mosques, temples, and other faith-based organisations have long served as centres of hope, compassion, and moral formation. Beyond providing temporary relief through food parcels or clothing drives, faith communities should actively promote education, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, mentorship, and character development. Compassion should always be accompanied by empowerment.

Families remain the first institution where poverty can either be perpetuated or defeated.

Parents who prioritise education, model hard work, teach financial responsibility, and cultivate strong values give their children a foundation for a better future. Every family should intentionally build a culture of learning, saving, planning, and mutual support.

Communities must also reject the mentality that success belongs only to a privileged few. Every child deserves the opportunity to dream beyond their current circumstances. Mentorship programmes, youth development initiatives, reading clubs, business incubators, and community partnerships can expose young people to possibilities they may never have imagined.

Technology has opened unprecedented opportunities for wealth creation. Digital platforms now allow individuals to learn online, offer services globally, market products, and access information that was once unavailable. The digital economy rewards creativity, innovation, and adaptability. Those who embrace technology position themselves for opportunities that previous generations could scarcely imagine.

However, perhaps the greatest obstacle to overcoming poverty is the loss of hope. When people stop believing that change is possible, they stop preparing for change. Hope inspires action. Vision creates direction. Determination sustains the journey. Every significant economic transformation begins with individuals who refuse to allow their present circumstances to define their future.

Breaking the cycle of poverty is not achieved through wishful thinking, political slogans, or temporary relief alone. It demands a partnership between individuals, families, communities, businesses, educational institutions, faith organisations, and government. Each has a unique responsibility to create an environment where people can flourish.

The journey from poverty to prosperity is seldom immediate. It requires patience, resilience, sacrifice, and continuous improvement. There will be setbacks, disappointments, and obstacles. Yet history reminds us that countless individuals and nations have risen from severe poverty through determination, innovation, and disciplined leadership.

As we reflect on the future of our communities, let us shift our focus from merely managing poverty to creating prosperity. Let us invest in education rather than ignorance, entrepreneurship rather than dependency, productivity rather than passivity, and hope rather than despair.

Poverty should never become our identity. It is a challenge to overcome, not a destiny to accept. When vision replaces hopelessness, when knowledge overcomes ignorance, when discipline replaces wastefulness, and when opportunity meets preparation, the cycle of poverty can indeed be broken.

The responsibility belongs to all of us. Together, we can build families that are economically resilient, communities that are productive, and a nation where every person has the opportunity not merely to survive, but to prosper.

Compassion Without Wisdom Invites Exploitation

Every sovereign nation eventually confronts the same difficult question: How can it remain compassionate toward those fleeing hardship while also protecting its own citizens, institutions, and borders?

It is a question with no easy answers. Yet history offers one lesson repeatedly. Compassion without wisdom can produce consequences that neither help vulnerable migrants nor serve the long-term interests of the countries that receive them.

Spain’s recent experience illustrates this dilemma. Following a ruling by the country’s Supreme Court affecting the handling of migrants attempting to reach the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, authorities reported that human trafficking organisations quickly moved to exploit what they perceived as a new opportunity. Smugglers encouraged more desperate people to attempt dangerous crossings, with tragic consequences, including lives lost at sea.

This is not simply Spain’s challenge. It is a warning for Europe, North America, and Africa alike.

Human traffickers are remarkably adaptable. They monitor changes in immigration laws, court rulings, and enforcement practices with extraordinary speed. They do not view migrants as human beings deserving dignity. They view them as a profitable commodity. Every perceived legal opening becomes another sales pitch to desperate families seeking a better future.

The greatest victims are often the migrants themselves.

Many sell everything they own, borrow heavily, or entrust their children to criminal networks based on promises that rarely reflect reality. Some arrive burdened by debt. Others become victims of forced labor, sexual exploitation, or organised crime. Many never arrive at all. Good intentions alone cannot defeat criminal enterprises.

Communities also bear significant costs. Border towns frequently experience increased demands on emergency services, policing, housing, healthcare, schools, and local budgets. Residents who had no role in creating international migration pressures are often asked to absorb their immediate consequences while national governments debate broader policy.

None of this diminishes the genuine suffering that drives many people to leave their homes. Around the world, millions flee war, political persecution, famine, economic collapse, or environmental disasters. Their humanity deserves recognition. Their circumstances deserve compassion.

But compassion and border security are not opposing values.

A nation has both a moral obligation to treat people with dignity and a sovereign responsibility to determine who enters its territory, under what conditions, and through what legal process. Those responsibilities reinforce rather than contradict one another.

South Africa should pay close attention. Our nation has long demonstrated generosity toward refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from neighbouring countries. That tradition reflects both African solidarity and our own history of struggle against injustice. Yet South Africa also faces exceptionally high unemployment, strained municipal services, infrastructure challenges, housing shortages, and rising concerns about public safety.

Ignoring those realities serves no one.

The debate should never descend into hostility toward migrants as individuals. Most are seeking exactly what every parent desires: security, opportunity, and hope for their children. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

At the same time, governments cannot ignore the incentives created by weak enforcement or inconsistent policy. When legal systems become predictable targets for organised trafficking networks, it is ordinary citizens and vulnerable migrants alike who pay the highest price.

The world has witnessed similar patterns before. Several European countries initially embraced border migration policies with admirable humanitarian aspirations. Over time, many governments were forced to tighten border controls after confronting mounting pressures on public services, integration challenges, and growing public concern. These experiences do not prove that compassion was misplaced. They demonstrate that compassion without sustainable planning is difficult to maintain.

Successful immigration policy requires balance.

It requires secure borders, efficient legal pathways, effective screening, international cooperation against trafficking networks, and humanitarian protection for those genuinely fleeing persecution. It also requires honesty with citizens about both the benefits and the costs of migration.

Democracies function best when governments acknowledge difficult realities rather than pretending complex problems have simple solutions.

South Africa would be wise to study the experiences of other nations before repeating their mistakes. It is always easier to prevent a crisis than to recover from one.

The debate should never be framed as compassion versus enforcement. The real choice is between policies that unintentionally enrich criminal smugglers and policies that protect both vulnerable people and the communities receiving them.

History consistently reminds us that good intentions are not enough. Lasting humanitarian policy demands wisdom, accountability, and the courage to recognise unintended consequences before they become permanent realities.

True compassion protects the vulnerable. Wise leadership ensures that compassion is not exploited by those who profit from human suffering.

* Armstrong Williams is the manager and Sole Owner of Howard Stirk Holdings I & II Broadcast Television Stations and the 2016 Multicultural Media Broadcast Owner of the year.

** The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of Journal News.

Business

Markets and Indicators			
Rand/Dollar	16.35	-0.05%	▲
Rand/Pound	22.00	-0.07%	▲
Rand/Euro	18.84	-0.05%	▲
Platinum	1,724.73	-0.93%	▲
Brent Crude	83.34	5.41%	▲
Gold	4,240.06	-0.23%	▲
Ethereum	1 904.39	-0.03%	▲
Bitcoin	64 358.99	-0.05%	▲

R8.1 million cigarette bust exposes the hidden trade draining SA’s economy



Police and other law enforcement agencies have seized more than R8.1 million worth of illicit cigarettes and arrested nine suspects in intelligence-driven operations across South Africa in recent weeks, while the Hawks and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) are investigating a suspected illicit ethanol storage facility in Gauteng.

This comes as government and industry intensify efforts to combat the illicit economy, warning that illegal trade is costing the fiscus billions in lost revenue, undermining legitimate businesses, distorting competition and threatening thousands of jobs.

Revenue from these activities has contributed to high-level corruption, political party funding, and other criminal endeavours, making the consequences of illegal cigarettes a concern for every South African, according to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

The latest police operation took place on Wednesday when the Hawks’ Serious Commercial Crime Investigation unit, based at its Pretoria headquarters, and SARS raided premises in Kempton Park identified as a storage facility for imported ethanol.

Investigators allegedly found imported ethanol being off-loaded into 1,000-litre flow bins at an unlicensed and unregistered facility. Additional flow bins and storage tanks were also found on the premises. No arrests have been made and the investigation is continuing.

Fake ciggies

The ethanol raid follows a series of operations targeting the illicit cigarette trade.

Earlier this month, police arrested three suspects in Boshof, confiscating 339 boxes and more than 15,000 packets of illicit cigarettes worth R3.6 million. In Mpu-malanga, two suspects were arrested after police seized illicit cigarettes worth about R2 million during operations in Nelspruit and White River, involving SARS Customs.

In the Free State rural town of Wepener, two suspects were arrested after police confiscated illicit cigarettes worth R500,000, with the pair also facing bribery charges. In Klerksdorp, in the North West, two suspects were arrested after police intercepted a truck carrying illicit cigarettes worth more than R2 million.

In March, SARS said it was supporting the National Illicit Economy Disruption Programme announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation Address and was “disrupting and dismantling the illicit economy, organised corruption, and fraud linked to customs and tax processes”.

SARS said “these crimes damage and displace legitimate economic activities. Economic growth, job creation, and prosperity for all South Africans are at stake”. Cigarettes that retail for under R24 are illegal as no tax has been paid on them, while a 750ml bottle of spirits should cost more than R100.

Shutting shop

The impact is already being felt by legitimate businesses.

In January, British American Tobacco South Africa (BATSA) announced it would close its Heidelberg manufacturing facility by the end of 2026, attributing the decision to the “devastating impact of the illicit cigarette trade” on the local market. The company warned that the closure, together with its broader value chain, places about 35,000 jobs at risk.

The Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGC-SA) estimates the illicit economy drains as much as R100 billion in state revenue annually, undermining legitimate industries and endangering public health.

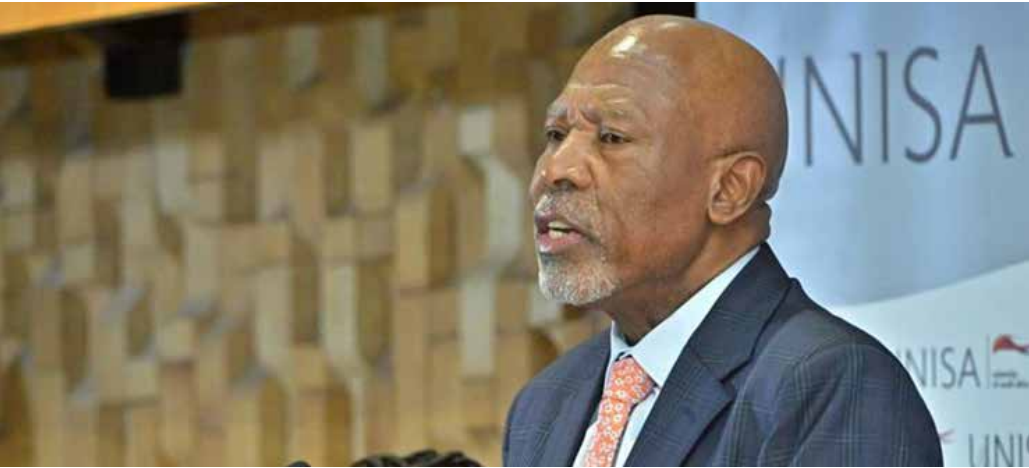
Together with more than 20 industry associations, it has established Illicit Economy Task Forces to press for stronger action from government, Parliament and the National Economic Development and Labour Council.

The Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade’s (TRACIT’s) 2025 review of South Africa’s fight against illegal trade found the country remains vulnerable to illicit activities across sectors including alcohol, tobacco, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, agri-chemicals, mining and wildlife trafficking.

“These illegal markets undermine legitimate businesses, erode public revenues, distort trade flows, and deepen inequality,” said TRACIT.

Business Leadership South Africa has estimated the country loses about R250 million a day in tax revenue to illicit trade, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates South Africa loses between \$3.5 billion (R58 billion) and \$5 billion (R83 billion) a year – more than 1% of gross domestic product as of 2023 – to illicit financial flows. IOL BUSINESS

Kganyago pushes for growth-oriented reforms



South African Reserve Bank (SARB) Governor Lesetja Kganyago has urged South Africa to be less risk-averse and take greater risks to support economic growth.

Kganyago welcomed the government’s decision to partner with the private sector to implement growth-enhancing structural reforms but said there is a need for greater urgency.

He noted that living standards are now lower than they were in the early 2000s.

He was addressing delegates at the Principal and Vice-Chancellor Public Lecture and Leadership Engagement at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria.

Kganyago says while a strong private sector has helped sustain the economy, investment remains below the level needed to drive growth. He added that although South Africa, like many emerging markets, has shown resilience, economic growth remains subdued.

“Remember, we have a large and sophisticated private sector in South Africa, and that’s the reason

we are still much richer than our neighbours, even if we don’t grow. But that private sector has been in survival mode. Investment has stalled. Firms are not pouring their energies into growing their South African business; the ones that are here are treading water, and the others are in places where things work, like Australia or Canada or Dubai,” Kganyago says.

He stressed that achieving stronger economic growth will require a greater willingness to take risks. Kganyago says, “South Africans love to gamble, but when it comes to growth, it turns out we are risk-shy. We like protecting incumbents. We like detailed rules, regulations and controls. We are reluctant about shaking things up to make them more efficient. We would be much better off if we could stop betting on sports and start betting on growth instead.”

The Reserve Bank has forecast downside risks to economic growth, warning that the ongoing war in the Middle East could disrupt the expected recovery. SABCNews

PSA hopeful stability will return to PIC following board resignations



The Public Servants Association (PSA) says it is hopeful some stability will return to Public Investment Corporation (PIC) following the boards’ resignations.

Last week, the corporation, which handles more than R3-trillion in government employees’ pension funds, saw the resignation of eight board members led by Deputy Minister David Maseko.

The PSA’s Assistant General Manager Claude Naiker says with a new board in place, recommendations are in place on how to manage the fund.

“We called upon the Minister firstly act very swiftly

when several of the non-executive directors have resigned last week, so he’s installed a new board in place. That brings us some assurance that hopefully there will be some stability at the investor.”

“A couple of years ago, there was a commission of inquiry that was set up, and it made several recommendations. And we’ve been given assurances that most of the recommendations have been implemented. The other ones are in the pipeline. I think if this is done, we need to give them space. They need to govern ruthlessly they need to stick to the mandate,” adds Naiker. SABCNews

New visa changes for South Africa launching next week

South Africa will officially launch its new Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) technology at OR Tambo International on Wednesday, 12 August 2026.

An ETA serves as a digital travel permit, allowing eligible travellers to travel without a traditional visa and is intended to speed up boarding times.

The technology has already been adopted by several other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Canada.

The new system will allow travellers to complete applications and biometrics online, then fast-track them through traditional immigration queues at the airport.

The launch of the ETA technology follows its initial pilot during South Africa’s G20 presidency and is considered a cornerstone of the Department of Home Affairs’ current digital transformation efforts.

“The ETA will be officially launched as the cornerstone of South Africa’s modern digital immigration system and the flagship reform of the Department of Home Affairs’ digital transformation programme,” the Presidency said.

The technology comes as part of a broader immigration system overhaul, which includes advanced biometrics and an upgraded Electronic Movement Control System (eMCS 2.0).

The presidency said the new digital ecosystem is designed to make travelling to and from South Africa “faster, simpler and more secure for legitimate travellers.”

“This reform will enhance South Africa’s competi-



tiveness as a destination for tourism, business and investment, while supporting more efficient and secure border management.”

The presidency said that the launch of the new ETA technology is a significant milestone in its efforts to modernise immigration systems.

The technology is planned to be launched at OR Tambo International on Wednesday, 12 August, by

President Cyril Ramaphosa and Home Affairs Minister Leon Schreiber.

Immigration and visa consulting firm, Xpatweb, has previously welcomed the digitisation of South Africa’s immigration system.

It said that the first phase of this process produced tangible results and reduced work visa processing times from up to six months to 5-10 business days.

The digital overhaul forms part of the Trusted Employer Scheme (TES), which is designed to streamline the immigration process for skilled workers.

Xpatweb noted that the TES does not extend to unskilled or low-wage labour, which will not benefit from the upgraded technologies.

The firm said that expanding the ETA system to all visa categories would “supercharge the system even

more.” The Department of Home Affairs acting deputy-director general, Yusuf Simons, said the overhaul of digital technologies could lead to some visa processing times being slashed to only five days.

He said the overhaul is intended to make South Africa a premier investment destination by facilitating the immigration of critical skills needed for economic growth.

Xpatweb managing director, Marisa Jacobs, said the introduction of the TES has been one of the most significant contributions from the current Home Affairs Department.

“It also sends a strong signal that South Africa is ready to welcome businesses by enhancing digital efficiency and providing more predictable pathways for much-needed critical skills to enter the economy,” she said. The new phase of the TES will include streamlining visa processes for critical-skills employees working on strategic infrastructure projects.

Xpatweb emphasised that the overhaul of the immigration system comes with specific obligations for employers.

This includes keeping accurate records of internal recruitment searches and qualification verifications.

It also includes the mandatory submission of regular workforce reports to the Department of Home Affairs.

The Department has previously warned that failure to comply with these reporting standards could lead to businesses being excluded from the TES system. BusinessTech

Maxwell cancels South Africa concerts



Fans of the Grammy-winning R&B singer-songwriter Maxwell were looking forward to his concerts in South Africa, but have now been met with disappointment as the performances have been officially cancelled.

Cancellation announcement

Promoter Vertex Events announced the cancellation of Maxwell's concerts, initially scheduled for August 8 in Pretoria and August 11 in Cape Town. This decision was made due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the artist's control.

According to Vertex Events, several options were explored with Maxwell's management to facilitate the concerts, but ultimately none were viable, leading to the difficult decision to cancel. Maxwell's statement to fans

Maxwell expressed his regret over the cancellation in a heartfelt message to his South African fans, apologising for the disappointment and emphasizing that the decision was not made lightly.

Promoter Vertex Events reported that they attempted to reschedule the concerts for 2026. However, no suitable dates could be confirmed due to unavoidable scheduling conflicts.

Refund

For fans who purchased tickets, Vertex Events confirmed that full refunds would be provided. Customers can expect to be contacted directly by Webtickets regarding the refund process.

Despite this setback, Maxwell is committed to returning to South Africa, with Vertex Events already in discussions to secure new concert dates in 2027. IOL

MACUFE Reclaims Its Roots as a Cultural Anchor

By Katlego Mashwabi

A vibrant new chapter for the Mangaung African Cultural Festival (MACUFE) has officially been unveiled. On 31 July, the Free State MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Hon. Ntombizanele Sifuba, took to the podium at the Bloemfontein Anglo-Boer War Museum to launch the highly anticipated 2026 edition of the province's flagship cultural event.

The high-profile launch was well-attended by key stakeholders who gathered to signal their support. Among the stakeholders were representatives from the Free State Arts and Culture statutory bodies, Free State Sport Confederation President Edward Saunderson, and the House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders. Also in attendance were Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (PRHA) representative Rev. Thabiso Mashiloane, Portfolio Committee Chair Hon. Zama Sigwebela, the HOD of COGTA, the Acting CEO of the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (PACOFs), and Mr. Brian Mokete representing ABSA.

Following the opening performance of the national anthem, Vincent Khetha, Chief Director of Cultural Affairs, welcomed guests and outlined the event's core purpose. He emphasized that MACUFE has evolved into a vital platform where local artistry, heritage, and culture truly come alive to preserve the province's rich history. Offering a message of support, Portfolio Committee Chairperson Hon. Zama

Sigwebela praised the festival's enduring impact and economic viability "It is an event that lives in our memories forever," Sigwebela said. "It connects the people, brings people together to showcase their talent, to network, and to ensure that all artists, businesses, and communities become successful. As the portfolio committee, we see the value for money in this particular programme.

We want the MEC and the departmental staff to continue so that MACUFE becomes the greatest event throughout the history of the province. "Attendees were reminded of MACUFE's power as an international fixture that fosters deep social cohesion—recalling the iconic October 2008 installation where a rainy setting brought together thousands of strangers in unity during Maxwell's performance.

In her keynote address, MEC Ntombizanele Sifuba began



with a sombre tribute to the recently passed Free State gospel artist, Itu, who had been a beloved performer at previous MACUFE Gospel installations. MEC Sifuba detailed the deliberate transformation the festival has undergone since 2022 to realign with its core mission. Following a two-year absence, the event was re-established last year on 1 August as a "recalibrated and reimagined" programme. Part of this strategic shift included moving the primary festival dates to September to directly coincide with National Heritage Month. "As part of this repurposing and reimagining, the festival was last year staged in September, which is the month in which we celebrate our cultural heritage," MEC Sifuba stated.

"This is part of our resolve to emphasize that MACUFE is not only a music and entertainment event, but a fundamentally cultural programme.

The launch concluded with the thrilling announcement of the 2026 artist lineup, which promises a heavy blend of local legends and contemporary stars across various genres. Comedy will have Shaun Dihoro, Spooknik, Mashabela, and Nthaby, while the Divas Concert will be headlined by Zonke, Lira, Puleng Phoofole, and Sinazo Moloi. The Amapiano vs Hip-Hop will feature Khuli Chana, Murda, and Emtee. Gospel Music Festival will be Showcasing Winnie Mashaba, Lebo Sekgobela, and Puleng March. The flagship Main Festival, scheduled for 12 September, will boast performances by Sannere, Khaya, the Jaziel Brothers, Zonke, Lira, Thabiso wa Maluti, the Peter Nthwane Band, and Semito. Organizers also confirmed that negotiations are currently underway to secure world-renowned music icon Salif Keita as this year's international headline act, promising an unforgettable celebration of African music and culture.

Etlang Hae: Napo Masheane Calls Global Sisterhood Home to the Qwaqwa Mountains

By Katlego Mashwabi

Multi-award-winning South African playwright, director, and renowned poet Napo Masheane is bringing 70 years of women's voices to the Free State. The acclaimed Her Story International Festival makes its highly anticipated return from 7 to 10 August 2026, relocating to the culturally rich mountains of Qwaqwa.

After its 2022 debut in Johannesburg, the festival faced a four-year hiatus due to funding challenges. Its resurgence marks a deeply personal homecoming for Masheane. Born in Soweto but raised in Qwaqwa, the visionary creator credits the landscape for her artistic identity. "The mountains shaped the Mosotho woman, girl, and child that is in me," Masheane said when asked why she bypassed urban hubs like Soweto for this year's edition, Masheane emphasized the spiritual connection of the region. "When you go home, it's different—the vibe, the energy, the air, the taste, and the smell. That's why I'm like, 'Sister-friends, let's go home. Etlang hae—come home'".

Recognized as one of South Africa's leading filmmakers, Masheane has curated this year's international theatre festival under the poignant theme "Her, Her Voice, Her Stage: 1956–2026." The event serves as a creative commemoration of the 70th anniversary of South Africa's historic 1956 Women's March. The four-day festival will breathe

life into several monumental locations across the region, including the Basotho Cultural Village and the Golden Gate Highlands National Park. The final, flagship installation will take place at Joe's Lifestyle on 9 August, featuring a strict "Black with a touch of Gold" dress code.

The festival boasts a robust daytime programme designed to empower local creatives and foster international collaboration. Attendees can look forward to a masterclass hosted by Shakespeare in Mzansi actress Shoki Mmola, and physical theatre as an intensive session titled Acting: The Body as Language. Literary Arts as a specialized Poetry in Translation class led by Dr Mara Boccaccio, a lecturer in 20th-century and contemporary Italian poetry. Cultural Exchange of Live storytelling, workshops, and diverse art exhibitions.

The festival features a stellar global lineup, drawing top-tier artists from five countries: the USA, Brazil, Italy, Sweden, and Jamaica. The crown jewel of the weekend is the Her Story Concert on 9 August (National Women's Day). The main stage will feature headline performances from Afro-pop and soul heavyweights Maleh, Wanda Baloyi, and Tamara Dey. Expressing her excitement for the unique venue, dance-cultural icon Tamara Dey said, "I'm there with bells on. It is just an incredible opportunity to share the stage with such phenomenal artists, to celebrate female artists, and to go to such a beautiful place."



Bloemfontein Educator Rewrites the Influencer Playbook

By Katlego Mashwabi

In the modern digital landscape, the term "influencer" is often associated with fleeting internet fame.

However, one South African-born creator is completely rewriting the script. Born in one of South Africa's largest townships, Botshabelo in the Free State, Ntseto has successfully transformed her digital footprint into a multifaceted business empire, all while maintaining her roots as a dedicated Life Orientation teacher based in Bloemfontein.

Known affectionately to her followers as Zar, she has mastered the art of intentional content creation. By day, she guides the next generation through classroom lessons and impactful career development talks as a guest speaker at events. All while she manages a diverse portfolio of business ventures that seamlessly blend into her highly aesthetic online presence. Her digital feed serves as a masterclass in modern entrepreneurship. Followers are treated to a curated mix of high-end fashion, beauty tips, and home décor inspiration.

Zar expertly utilizes her platform to market her custom apparel clothing line, MaDlamini, alongside her thriving beauty brand, Lashes By Zar. Her business acumen does not stop at cosmetics and

fashion, as she has recently expanded into the property market with MaDlamini Student Accommodation, solidifying her status as a force in the real estate sector too.

This unique combination of professional stability and entrepreneurial drive has made her a highly sought-after partner for major corporations. As an established brand collaboration content creator, Zar commands rates ranging around \$1,000 (R16 314) for posts and promotional packages.

Her versatile appeal allows her to bridge the gap between vastly different industries, with a partnership portfolio that spans construction companies, eyewear brands, cosmetics giants, food outlets, retail clothing stores, service sector corporations, and luxury travel agencies.

As a premier travel influencer, her adventures take her across the length and breadth of South Africa, as well as to idyllic adjacent islands, with her latest geographical pin being Thailand. Yet, despite the glamorous jet-setting lifestyle, Zar remains deeply grounded.

A defining pillar of her online identity is her unwavering commitment to her spiritual values. Interspersed between luxury travel vlogs and fashion lookbooks, she regularly shares videos of herself singing church hymns and posting relatable Bible

verses, offering her audience a sense of peace and authenticity.

Ntseto's journey from Botshabelo to corporate boardroom favourite serves as a powerful blueprint for aspiring South African creators. By combining practical career guidance with a relentless entrepreneurial spirit, she proves that one does not have to choose between a traditional career and building a life-long legacy.



Black Coffee's epic July: highlights from his adventures with Drake and Ye



Grammy Award-winning music producer Black Coffee had an epic July travelling around the world, thrilling crowds and enjoying life's experiences.

Black Coffee shared a carousel on Instagram, featuring highlights from July. From linking up with rapper Drake to watching the FIFA World Cup games, he has had a busy month.

Drake and Black Coffee have quite the history, having worked together on music before. The picture Black Coffee showed that the two were more than just music collaborators as they embraced each other like friends who hadn't seen each other in a while.

Most recently, Drake won a \$770,000 (R13 million) bet on Canada to defeat South Africa in the 2026 FIFA World Cup Round of 32, after being "chirped" in his DMs by Black Coffee, prompting him to raise the stakes.

Black Coffee and Kanye West finally met in person during Kanye's live show event in Madrid; they hung out together backstage and on the dance floor. The music producer shared moments from the concert and moments on his stories featuring Naomi Campbell and fellow local DJ Shimza.

Black Coffee's son Esona was also at the concert along with Black Coffee's partner Victoria Gonzalez. The "Superman" hitmaker's dump also showcased moments from his travels, private jet lifestyle, and watching Spain in the World Cup with his good friend Shoba.

One picture even showed a helicopter written Black Coffee Express and the DJ driving a boat. Luxury was the theme of Black Coffee's dump; he also shared a picture of his timepiece, an Audemars Piguet Royal Oak, which is worth between R3 million and R3.5 million. IOL

Ariana Grande steps back from West End debut due to health concerns

Pop star Ariana Grande has dropped out of what would have been her debut appearance in London's West End, the show's producers said Sunday, as a representative for the singer said she wants to take a "step back" from the public eye.

The 33-year-old Grande had been slated to star opposite her "Wicked" castmate Jonathan Bailey in the Stephen Sondheim musical "Sunday in The Park with George" in the summer of 2027 at London's Barbican theater.

But amid renewed public scrutiny of the singer's health, especially on social media, her representative said she wanted a "much-deserved break from public-facing work and appearances" when her "Eternal Sunshine" tour wraps in London on September 1.

"We can confirm that she has decided to step back from 'Sunday in The Park with George'," producers said in a statement carried on the show's official X account, without providing a reason for Grande's withdrawal.

"We know this cannot have been an easy decision, and she makes it with our complete understanding and support," the statement said, adding that the show would go ahead as planned and casting would be announced "in due course."

"We wish her nothing but the best." Grande's representative told People magazine that while the Grammy-winning artist is eager to complete her tour, she wants to take a "step back from visibility," as her many appearances have "led to endless, ongoing public scrutiny."

Fans have expressed growing concern for her health, particularly after Friday's release of a music video for "Petal" in which the pint-sized singer appears to have lost significant weight.

Grande has said before that body-shaming comments are "really dangerous."

She began her career as a teen on Broadway before embarking on a hugely successful pop career. Her star turn as Glinda in the film adaptation of "Wicked" earned her an Oscar nomination for best supporting actress.

But the massive success of the film and its sequel "Wicked: For Good" meant Grande was doing constant media appearances for the better part of two years.

She is set to appear in the comedy "Focker-in-Law" opposite Ben Stiller and Robert De Niro, which hits theaters in November. IOL

WEEKEND Gig Guide

ALL OVER BLOEMFONTEIN FROM
08 - 10 AUGUST 2026

BONFIRE EXPERIENCE
SATURDAY - 08 AUGUST 2026
KOTA JUNCTION

SESOTHO MUSIC EXPERIENCE
SATURDAY - 08 AUGUST 2026
SANDYS BAR

TEAM SIYA - SPIN EXPLOSION
SUNDAY - 09 AUGUST 2026
BLOEM SHOWGROUNDS

PERFECT SUNDAYS
SUNDAY - 09 AUGUST 2026
THE OTHER VENUE

MOGODU MONDAY - DAYTIME EVENT
MONDAY - 10 AUGUST 2026
SECHABA LOUNGE

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LIFESTYLE

HEALTH

DR ZAMANI SAUL TO LAUNCH FIRST BOOK ON POLITICS, DEVELOPMENT AND GEOPOLITICS

Northern Cape Premier and ANC Provincial Chairperson Dr Zamani Saul is set to launch his debut book, *Between Theory and Praxis*, on 31 October 2026 at the Petrusville Primary School Hall.

The publication is a collection of 35 thought-provoking articles exploring South African politics, Africa, development and geopolitics.

The book brings together Saul's reflections on policy, governance and broader socio-economic issues that have shaped public discourse over the years.

The launch is expected to attract political leaders, academics, community members and readers interested in public policy and contemporary political thought.

Book launches by public leaders often provide an opportunity to move beyond day-to-day politics, offering readers a deeper understanding of the ideas and philosophies that inform leadership and decision-making.

Whether one agrees with the author's views or not, publications of this nature contribute to public debate and help preserve perspectives for future generations.

Between Theory and Praxis marks Dr Saul's entry into the growing body of South African political literature adding a Northern Cape voice to national conversations on governance, development and Africa's place in a changing global landscape.

INVITATION TO A

BOOK LAUNCH

31 OCTOBER 2026

VENUE:
Petrusville Primary School Hall

TIME:
18h00

RSVP:
Ms Swazi Mhlanga
076 954 8448
swazimhlanga5@gmail.com

BOOK 1

BETWEEN THEORY AND PRAXIS

A Collection of 35 Thought-Provoking Articles of Dr Zamani Saul on South African Politics, Africa, Development and Geopolitics

FASHION

'Coat Your Pain' Conference Inspires Healing in Thaba Nchu

By Katlego Mashwabi

Women from across the Free State gathered at Tawana Primary School in Thaba Nchu on Saturday, 25 July, to confront their deepest wounds and embrace a journey of healing at the sold-out "Coat Your Pain" conference.

The event, hosted by content creator, public speaker and empowerment advocate Keabetswe Khetsi, attracted more than 150 women determined to transform their personal pain into purpose through faith, community and honest conversations.

Explaining the inspiration behind the conference, Khetsi said the concept was built on the belief that healing does not erase life's scars but gives them new meaning.

"Just as paint covers a wall, we don't erase the crack—we make it beautiful. We don't ignore pain; we transform it," she said.

For Khetsi, the conference marked the culmination of a deeply personal journey. She first envisioned the initiative in 2024 as a simple picnic but felt the timing was not right. After enduring one of the most difficult seasons of her own life, she turned

her grief into a mission to help other women heal.

"Internalising your pain means being honest that I have been broken too," she said. "But God taught me that my scars are not my shame; they are my assignment. I coat my pain with prayer, community, speaking out and helping other women do the same." One of the conference's most emotional moments was a therapeutic painting session, where participants illustrated their hidden struggles before sharing the stories behind their artwork.

Kelebohile Sennyane painted a flourishing garden, describing it as a symbol of her dream of achieving financial independence.

"I want to be able to earn my own money and make my own financial decisions," she said.

Another moving testimony came from Thandie Daliwa, who had earlier moved the audience with a gospel performance. Through tears, she explained her painting of a dark figure surrounded by red and yellow streaks. "These two yellow streaks are my two children," she said. "They are the light that keeps me going even when everything seems heavy."

Khetsi also bravely shared her own painting—an ambulance—which represented the trauma of suf-

fering a miscarriage while unknowingly carrying on with her daily routine.

Beyond the art therapy, guest speakers encouraged women to remain spiritually grounded, emphasising faith as a source of strength during life's most challenging moments. A special "cupcake moment" saw participants sharing cupcakes decorated with biblical scriptures, reinforcing Khetsi's personal mantra: "Woman is prayer."

The day concluded with a symbolic balloon release as women gathered outside to send white, heart-shaped balloons into the sky, signifying the release of past hurts and the beginning of new chapters.

In her closing remarks, Khetsi thanked the women who travelled from across the province, her friends, sponsors and the principal of Tawana Primary School for helping make the event a success.

The overwhelming response has already sparked calls on social media for a men's healing conference, with many suggesting the title "Tie Your Pain." Fresh from announcing her engagement, Khetsi has hinted that such an event could become a reality in the future.



FOOD Recipes

Smashed Grilled Zucchini with Za'atar and Labneh



Ingredients: Method:

4 medium (8-ounce) zucchini (about 2 pounds total)
1/4 cup olive oil
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 clove garlic, finely grated
2 teaspoons za'atar seasoning
3/4 teaspoon Aleppo pepper
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Seasoned Labneh and Toppings:
1 1/2 cups labneh
1/4 cup olive oil
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 clove garlic, finely grated
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup fresh mint leaves, torn
1/3 cup toasted pistachios, roughly chopped
Za'atar, for sprinkling

For the smashed zucchini: Trim the ends off the zucchini and discard. Cut each zucchini in half crosswise, then smash with a meat mallet. The zucchini should be in large pieces with uneven, craggy edges; do not over-smash or the zucchini will be in pieces too small and might fall through the grill basket or grill grates.

Whisk together the olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, za'atar, Aleppo pepper, 1 teaspoon salt and several grinds of black pepper in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Add the smashed zucchini and toss until evenly coated. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours.

Meanwhile, for the seasoned labneh and toppings: Whisk the labneh, olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, 1 teaspoon kosher salt and several grinds freshly ground black pepper in a medium bowl until smooth. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Once the smashed zucchini has marinated, preheat a grill to medium-high for direct-heat grilling.

Once hot, place the zucchini in a grill basket, leaving behind any residual marinade in the baking dish. Place the basket on the grill grates and close the lid. Grill, turning the zucchini halfway through, until charred in spots and just tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Return to the baking dish and toss in the marinade until evenly coated.

To serve, smear the labneh in an even layer on a large serving platter. Top with the smashed zucchini. Scatter the mint and pistachios evenly over the top and sprinkle generously with za'atar.

Zucchini is a summer staple and perfect for grilling quickly and deliciously. Smashing zucchini is pretty fun, but the real reason we do it is to create the perfect craggy edges to soak up the marinade and get charred on the grill. A smear of creamy labneh seasoned with lemon and garlic forms the base of this dish and after piling on the tender zucchini, we finish it off with toasted pistachios and fragrant mint for crunch and freshness.



SPORT



Banyana Face Hostile Moroccan Challenge



Back on track...Banyana Banyana stand a good chance to advance to the semifinals if they beat host Morocco tomorrow. Picture: USSA

By Gomolemo Winkel

South Africa's Banyana Banyana head into their high-stakes Women's Africa Cup of Nations quarter-final showdown against hosts Morocco holding an undeniable psychological advantage.

The reigning continental champions boast a flawless head-to-head record against the Atlas Lionesses on North African soil, having most notably overcome them in Rabat to lift their maiden title.

However, historical dominance guarantees nothing when a spot at the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup is on the line. The host nation is extra determined to rewrite history and turn their fortunes around against their familiar rivals.

Driven by the pain of past defeats, Morocco enters the knockout fixture in formidable form, having topped Group A without conceding a single goal.

Supported by a passionate home crowd, the hosts present a stern test for the South Africans, who must rely on their big-stage temperament and composure.

Banyana Banyana forward, Gabriela Salgado, acknowledged the immense test awaiting the team while expressing confidence in their ability to advance.

"It's not going to be easy against the hosts. We want to get the World Cup ticket, and we can defeat Morocco," she said.

South Africa's journey to the last eight required immense resilience following a rocky group stage. After an opening defeat, Desiree Ellis's side displayed remarkable character to secure their qualification, proving that their championship pedigree remains intact under pressure.

Head coach, Desiree Ellis, warned her squad against complacency, emphasising that previous victories will count for nothing inside a partisan stadium.

"History shows that we can do it, but it doesn't give us the right that it's going to happen. It's a different team with different challenges. The home crowd, all of that comes into play," Ellis said.

With automatic World Cup qualification serving as the primary prize for the victor, Ellis believes the outcome will be decided by sheer determination

and tactical discipline.

The veteran coach highlighted the magnitude of the occasion for both squads.

Ellis continued: "It's basically going to come down to who wants it the most. We know what's up for grabs. It's a World Cup spot and it could not be any bigger motivation than that."

Navigating the host nation's intense atmospheric pressure will demand tactical adaptability from the South Africans.

Ellis noted that her team is prepared to prioritise defensive solidity and pragmatism over aesthetics to secure the desired result.

"Sometimes it doesn't have to be pretty. We stuck defensively.

We were organised. Sometimes that is what wins your games. If we keep a clean sheet, we're going to create chances," she added.

If Banyana Banyana can combine their proven big-match composure with defensive discipline, the former champions stand a strong chance of silencing the Rabat crowd and securing their global showpiece ticket.

Kovsies Kick-off Title Defence Campaign



By Gomolemo Winkel

Champions, University of the Free State (Kovsies) will host the University of Pretoria (Tus) today, 7 August 2026, at Shimla Park in Bloemfontein, as they begin their defence of the Varsity Football title.

This fixture will officially mark the beginning of the annual premium tournament that brings together university teams from across the country for another thrilling football season.

Mokete Tsotetsi, Kovsies head coach, noted that preparations are proceeding smoothly as the squad embraces their title defence challenge.

"So far, the preparations are going well. And the boys are responding well, as well. So, yeah, I can say the boys' mentality is ready," he said.

Several squad changes occurred since last season, with a few players from last season having moved on to pursue new opportunities. One standout move is that of influential player, Jose Mundi, who is now plying his trade in the Major Soccer League (MLS) whilst pursuing his studies in the United States.

"It is a plus for us. It shows that there's something

right that we are doing," Tsotetsi stated regarding players progressing internationally.

Meanwhile, goalkeeper, Tiisetso Seodinyane, is no longer eligible to play in the tournament due to exceeding the tournament's 25 years age limit.

But despite the roster reshuffle, the coach remains confident that solidarity and hard work will guide the team forward.

Reflecting on his first season success, Tsotetsi highlighted how the previous triumph fostered immense pride and unity throughout the entire university community.

"Lifting the trophy last year was an unforgettable feeling of pride and joy.

"Hard work and mainly, unity, being one, fighting for each other and playing as a team will keep them alive in the tournament," he emphasised

Tsotetsi also praised the Varsity Football tournament for successfully bridging the gap between university sports and the professional game.

"You see now there is balance in giving the student-athletes the opportunity to have that professional setup in sport," he concluded.

Nelson Ralenkoane joins Marumo Gallants after Orlando Pirates exit

Nelson Ralenkoane has completed a move to Marumo Gallants after leaving Orlando Pirates' development structure, giving the Betway Premiership club another defensive option.

The former Orlando Pirates defender has agreed to join Bahlabane Ba Ntwa as he begins a new chapter in his career. His arrival adds depth to Marumo Gallants' defensive department and provides him with another opportunity to compete at the highest level of South African football.

Ralenkoane recently parted ways with Pele Pele, Orlando Pirates' ABC Motsepe League side, bringing to an end his time within the Soweto giants' development structure. Following that departure, he became a free agent and was able to consider the next step in his career.

The move to Marumo Gallants represents a fresh opportunity for the defender, who will be looking to re-establish himself in the professional game. He spent time with Orlando Pirates' development set-up and also

gained first-team experience during a loan spell at Orbit College.

That spell provided Ralenkoane with valuable exposure to senior football before he returned to the wider Pirates structure. Now, his switch to Marumo Gallants offers him the chance to build on that experience and demonstrate his ability in a new environment.

Ralenkoane will be hoping to make a strong impression under newly appointed head coach Phuti Mohafe. The defender's immediate task will be to establish himself within the squad and earn a regular role as he competes for a place in the team.

For Marumo Gallants, the signing strengthens their options at the back while giving Ralenkoane the opportunity to continue his development after becoming available as a free agent.

The club will expect the former Pirates player to bring the benefit of his experience from both the development structure and his loan spell at Orbit College. *AfricaSoccer*

Giants Chase Continental Glory

By Gomolemo Winkel

The Johannesburg Giants have rapidly established themselves as an emerging African basketball powerhouse after an extraordinary debut campaign.

The newly formed South African champions recently qualified for the Basketball Africa League following an unbeaten national season.

"So in our very first year as Johannesburg Giants, we never lost a game," said Coach Florsheim 'Flosh' Ngwenya.

The club claimed the national title in Cape Town with 28 consecutive victories before advancing to continental competition.

They subsequently dominated the Southern Elite 16 qualifying tournament by defeating rivals from Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe before competing in Kenya.

"We are the champions of SADC. We made the finals in our very first year of Road to BAL, which was held in Kenya," Ngwenya stated.

"In our very first year, we have qualified for the Basketball Africa League. Which takes some teams even 20, 30 years. It takes them a lifetime to actually make it there. In our very first year, we have qualified," Ngwenya said.

The team is now preparing to defend its Af-



rican Club Championship title later this year. Securing another national title remains essential for maintaining their spot on the continental stage.

"We expect to qualify again. We are having the

South African Club Championships, I think, in September. We have to go defend our crown.

Because that is how you qualify. You have to win your country's championship and then you move from

there," he said.

Founded in 2025 by former player, Lesego Molebatsi, alongside Ngwenya, the club combined over six decades of collective basketball expertise.

The venture originally grew out of an existing academy following casual discussions between the co-founders.

"I said to him, me and you are in this game together. We were raking up about 60 years in the game, combined, you know? Why can't we just open up our own team? And he's like, actually, that's not a bad idea. And that is how Johannesburg Giants was born," Ngwenya recalled.

"Just me and him sitting and talking and said, okay, we have already opened up an academy," added Ngwenya.

Despite their rapid emergence, leadership insists that domestic honours represent only the start of their long-term vision.

According to Ngwenya, the organisation aims to build a lasting legacy comparable to Africa's premier sports franchises.

"This is just the beginning. We want Johannesburg Giants to become one of the best clubs on the African continent. We want our name mentioned alongside the continent's elite teams, just as Mamelodi Sundowns has done in football.

"This is just the beginning. We actually want to put Johannesburg Giants under the Sundowns of this world.

"It's the best clubs in South Africa but the best clubs in the continent as well. So we strive to replicate what Sundowns has done over the years," said Ngwenya.