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NC Poised as Africa's Next Industrial Powerhouse



Page 9



End of an Era: Mazibuko Dies at 77

Page 10

Kick-Off for Youth Opportunity

Page 12

"We're Suffering" Paraffin Price Hike Pain



Page 3

72-year-old Josephine Maboe confronted with a painful choice between warmth and survival. Picture: Baagedi Sethora

DoE Expands Support for Autistic Learners

Department targets underutilised schools for conversion to meet autism support needs



Kids playing with drawings. Picture: blazesanctuary.co.za

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

Parents of autistic children in the Free State face significant emotional and logistical hurdles due to the limited number of specialised schools in the province. Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting communication and social interaction, often involving repetitive behaviours and intense interests.

Because it is a spectrum, support needs vary widely, ranging from assistance with social awareness to comprehensive, ongoing care.

Currently, the Free State Department of Education has only one dedicated facility, the Bloemfontein School for Autism in the Mangaung Metropolitan Education District.

The department is now working to expand these services.

"The Department is identifying additional underutilised schools for conversion, with a plan to establish at least one autism-focused school per district," said spokesperson Howard Ndaba.

Ndaba confirmed that potential sites have already been identified through the Infrastructure Chief Directorate. In addition to new facilities, the department is implementing White Paper 6 to promote inclusive education.

This policy ensures that learners requiring mild to moderate support remain in mainstream schools, while those with high-level needs are **Continues on Page 2**

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Sol Plaatjie Municipality faces possible administration



By Lerato Mutlanyane

The Northern Cape Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs has given the Sol Plaatjie Municipality 14 days to explain why it should not be placed under administration.

The move follows the municipality's failure to meet a deadline set for April 2, 2026, to address governance failures.

The province says ongoing council instability, leadership disputes and poor service delivery have raised serious concerns.

Residents have also indicated plans to petition the national government for intervention.

Department spokesperson Tebogo Mnyo says the MEC is considering the next steps.

"We are concerned as the department about what is going on at the municipality, so MEC Vass is currently applying his mind as to what the way forward should be in terms of law and applicable legislation. As a way forward, I am sure MEC Vass will primarily take the next steps and the next decisions he will take will be to ensure good, sound administrative governance at the municipality so that ultimately the municipality can provide good services," said Mnyo.

The department says a decision will be taken after the municipality's response is received. **SABC**

SA Welcomes Revolutionary HIV Prevention Jab

Free State Health Department eyes fewer clinic visits and improved efficiency

By Bernell Simons

As South Africa receives its first shipment of a groundbreaking HIV prevention injection, health officials believe the country could be entering a decisive new phase in its decades-long battle against AIDS.

The arrival of 37,920 doses of Lenacapavir — a long-acting jab administered just twice a year — signals more than a medical milestone; it represents a fundamental shift in how HIV prevention may be delivered in a country still carrying the world's heaviest burden of the virus. For a fight long defined by daily pills, fragile adherence and overstretched clinics, this moment offers something rare: a simpler, more realistic path to protection — and, potentially, a turning point in the effort to end new infections.

For decades, the battle against HIV has shaped South Africa's public health story — fought in clinics, classrooms and communities against one of the most devastating epidemics of the modern era. Now, that fight may be changing shape.

The Department of Health has confirmed that the shipment landed via OR Tambo International Airport last week, marking the first time Lenacapavir will be available in the country.

For health authorities, this is more than a delivery. It is a shift.

From daily burden to twice-yearly protection

Unlike traditional HIV prevention methods that rely on daily tablets, Lenacapavir requires just one injection every six months — a difference experts say could be transformative.

In a country where adherence remains one of the biggest barriers to effective prevention, reducing HIV protection to two clinic visits a year offers something the system has long struggled to achieve: consistency. "This is about expanding choice," health officials say — particularly for people who face barriers to daily medication, including stigma, unstable living conditions or limited access to healthcare.

The drug is expected to play a key role in reaching populations most vulnerable to new infections, including adolescent girls and young women, sex workers, and men who have sex with men.

A system under pressure — and the promise of innovation



XXX. Picture: XXX

The breakthrough arrives within a healthcare system still under strain. Overcrowded clinics, long queues and staff shortages remain a daily reality for many South Africans.

That is where health officials say new approaches — not just new medicines — are critical.

FreeProvincial spokesperson Mondli Mvambi points to the rollout of six-month multi-month dispensing (6MMD) as part of a broader strategy to ease pressure on facilities.

"Patients who are stable and consistent can receive a six-month supply of their treatment," he explained. "That means fewer clinic visits, shorter queues, and more efficient use of resources."

The model is designed to reward adherence — and free up capacity for those who need care most.

In that context, Lenacapavir forms part of a wider shift: moving HIV care and prevention away from rigid, facility-based systems toward more flexible, patient-centred approaches.

"In the long term, this will assist us," Mvambi said. "If we prevent new infections among at-risk populations, we reduce the burden on the entire system."

The parallel battle: misinformation

Yet alongside medical progress, another battle continues — one not fought in laboratories, but in communities: misinformation.

Health officials are increasingly concerned about voices — including some community and religious leaders — who discourage people from using scientifically tested medication.

National Department of Health spokesperson Foster Mohale has issued a clear warning.

"When a medicine has been scientifically proven to be safe and effective, why would you believe someone who tells you otherwise?" he said.

He described such messaging as "dangerous and misleading," particularly when it deters people from accessing life-saving prevention and treatment.

"Taking scientifically tested medication prevents disease and saves lives. That is the reality."

Not a vaccine — but a breakthrough

Officials stress that Lenacapavir is not a vaccine. It is a preventive medicine designed to stop HIV infection before it occurs — but in terms of impact, experts say it could be just as significant.

Globally, it is being hailed as one of the most promising developments in HIV prevention in years, not only because of its effectiveness, but because of its practicality.

And in South Africa, practicality matters.

The country still carries the largest HIV burden in the world, with an estimated eight million people living with HIV. While more than six million are receiving antiretroviral treatment, new infections continue — particularly among young women and vulnerable communities.

The challenge has never been the absence of medicine. It has been whether people can realistically use it.

Phased rollout, long-term ambition

The Department of Health has confirmed that Lenacapavir will be introduced through a phased rollout, with priority given to high-incidence districts and vulnerable populations.

An official national launch is expected in the coming weeks, led by President Cyril Ramaphosa in consultation with Health Minister Dr Aaron Mokoena.

Government says the rollout aligns with the Global AIDS Strategy for 2026–2030, aimed at reducing new infections and sustaining long-term HIV prevention systems.

But beyond strategy and timelines, the arrival of Lenacapavir carries symbolic weight.

It signals a shift — from managing the epidemic to trying to end it.

South Africa's HIV response is already among the most extensive in the world. AIDS-related deaths have dropped by more than 60% since 2010, while new infections have declined significantly.

Lenacapavir does not begin that story.

It builds on it. A continuation shaped not by crisis, but by progress — by science, adaptation and persistence.

Still, no breakthrough exists in isolation.

Medicines require trust.

Systems require capacity.

And prevention requires behaviour change.

The arrival of 37,920 doses may seem small against the scale of the epidemic, but its significance lies elsewhere.

In what it represents.

A shift toward simpler prevention.

A move toward patient-centred care.

And a renewed push to outpace a virus that has shaped generations.

Because change does not always arrive in sweeping declarations or historic speeches. Sometimes it arrives quietly — in the form of a shipment, in the routine of a clinic, in a single injection.

And if this moment holds, Lenacapavir may one day be remembered not as just another medical advance, but as the point where the tide finally began to turn.

DESTEA Scrapped in Major FS Shake-Up



DEDT MEC Ketso Makume Picture: DEDT/Facebook

By Bernell Simons

The Free State government has officially pulled the plug on the Department of Economic, Tourism, Small Business Development and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA), ushering in a sweeping restructure that redraws the province's administrative map.

In a bold overhaul led by Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, the long-standing department has been stripped of its environmental mandate and rebranded with a sharper economic focus.

As of 1 April, environmental affairs and conservation — including nature reserves and related services — have been transferred to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The move, government says, is aimed at better aligning functions and boosting efficiency across provincial departments.

The changes form part of a broader executive reshuffle under the seventh administration and are in line with proclamations issued by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

With the environmental portfolio removed, the department will now operate as the Free State Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) — a streamlined entity focused squarely on business growth, investment and tourism.

Officials insist the rebrand is more than cosmetic. MEC Ketso Makume says the new identity must signal a decisive break from the past and drive a culture of performance.

"This new branding identity must inject urgency and renewed energy into service delivery, anchored in authenticity, effectiveness, integrity and credibility," said Makume, adding that the department must position itself as a people-centred institution.

Despite the restructuring, DEDT will retain rolled out to introduce the new identity, with communities, employees and stakeholders urged to adopt the updated name and branding for all official purposes.

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DoE Expands Support for Autistic Learners



Continues from Page 1

placed in special schools.

"Not all learners diagnosed with autism are to be referred to schools for autism; high-functioning learners may be supported within a mainstream school," Ndaba explained.

Data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) shows that 276 learners on the spectrum are currently in mainstream schools, while 358 are in special schools.

Placement is guided by the Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy to ensure early intervention.

Admission to special schools is reserved for those requiring high-level support based on a professional diagnosis. Specialised wings have been established in schools like Amari, Leboneng, Letti-Fouche, and Thiboloha to assist these learners.

Many parents still find the process daunting. Charmaine Thaele, whose son is non-verbal, noted that the assessment process and waiting lists can

take years, especially since private alternatives are often unaffordable.

The department clarified that White Paper 6 does not officially recognise waiting lists, asserting that learners are supported within the mainstream system while awaiting specific placement.

There are currently 212 learners confirmed as awaiting placement provincially.

The department also debunked claims that learners are phased out at age 16, stating that transition planning is based on individual readiness.

Despite these assurances, Democratic Alliance spokesperson, Jafta Mokoena, expressed concern over the prioritisation of special needs education.

Mokoena called for better coordination and resources to ensure no vulnerable learner is denied their right to quality education.

The future of these children depends on the department fulfilling its promise to increase school capacity across the province.

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“We’re Suffering”: Paraffin Price Hike Pain

Soaring Paraffin Costs Force Gatvol Families to Choose Between Heat and Food

By Bernell Simons

As winter tightens its grip, families in Gatvol, an informal settlement in Heidedaal, are facing more than just the cold — they are confronting a painful choice between warmth and survival.

The latest R11 hike in paraffin prices has sent shockwaves through this struggling community, leaving households already on the edge scrambling to make ends meet. For many, the simple act of cooking a meal or keeping the children warm has become an impossible burden.

Despite government’s recent announcement of a temporary R3 reduction in the fuel levy for April 2026, residents like 72-year-old Josephine Maboe describe mornings spent in darkness and evenings shivering in their homes, forced to decide whether to pay for paraffin or stretch what little money they have on food and other essentials.

“Sometimes we go without,” Maboe says, her voice heavy with worry.

“We can’t pay our accounts, we can’t buy food, but we need paraffin to survive the cold. How are we supposed to live like this?”

For Maboe and her family, who depend entirely on her old-age pension, the spike in paraffin costs has already started to bite.

She says the current price, R35 per litre, already stretches her budget thin — and the R11 increase will make daily heating and cooking nearly impossible.

“I buy a litre of paraffin every day just to cook pap and boil water. Sometimes it’s not enough, and now it will be even harder,” she explains.

For some residents, the desperation has forced them into dangerous alternatives. Sixty-six-year-old Jan Belie De Wee says that when money runs out, he is left with no choice but to scavenge firewood from nearby dumping sites to cook.

“We have to go there to collect wood to make fire. It’s not safe, but we need to eat,” De Wee says.



72-year-old Josephine Maboe confronted with a painful choice between warmth and survival. Picture: Baagedi Sethora

The R11 increase comes at a time when food prices are already soaring, leaving families like the Maboes and De Wees caught between freezing in their homes and going hungry.

De Wee fears the upcoming winter will be the harshest yet.

“This winter is going to be the hardest because we are already struggling to make ends meet. One can only imagine what it will be like when it gets colder,” he says.

For families with children, the challenges are even greater. The De Wee family has converted a small, dilapidated outside room into a makeshift space to bathe their children in the mornings, trying to keep them warm despite holes in the walls and a lack of proper heating.

“It’s not perfect, but at least they are not freezing,” he says.

Residents also point out that the paraffin avail-

able to them is of poor quality, burning fast and emitting smoke that has caused respiratory problems in the community.

“The doctors have warned against the smoke from paraffin. I already have lung problems, but we have no other option,” De Wee explains.

In Gatvol, paraffin is not a luxury — it is survival. It fuels cooking, heats homes, and lights the darkness of long winter nights. With each price increase, families face an impossible balancing act: paying for fuel, food, or basic household necessities.

As the winter season approaches, Gatvol’s residents are left with a stark reality: cold, hunger, and uncertainty. For them, the R11 hike is not just numbers on a shelf — it is the difference between warmth and suffering.

“We’re suffering,” Maboe says simply, summing up the daily battle for survival in a community pushed to the brink.

Meanwhile, The Motor Industry Staff Association (MISA) has called for government intervention to address rising paraffin prices in South Africa.

MISA spokesperson Phakamile Hlubi-Majola told the SABC News, “The price of paraffin has gone up by a whopping 11 rand, and this has had a very direct impact on our poorest communities, people who depend on paraffin. We’re entering the winter months now, paraffin is something that the use of increases around this time, and we really think that the government needs to intervene.”

“This is why MISA is pushing that the government must implement targeted subsidies on paraffin. We believe that a targeted subsidy would be much more effective than, for example, relying on a fuel levy cut,” adds Hlubi-Majola.

Like in many other areas, winter in Gatvol will not wait — and neither will the struggle to survive it.

One dead after a collision between ambulance and light vehicle in FS



One person died in a collision on the N8 near Mandela View. Picture: X/@_ArriveAlive

One person has died following a collision between a Free State Department of Health patient vehicle and a light motor vehicle along the N8 near Mandela View.

Provincial Emergency Medical Services spokesperson Siphon Towa says the Mangaung Fire and Rescue team used the jaws of life to extract two people who were trapped in the patient vehicle.

Towa says one patient was critically injured while eight others sustained moderate injuries.

“It is reported that a light motor vehicle had a tyre burst, lost control, and collided with a patient transport vehicle. The patient transport was carrying patients from Ficksburg to Bloemfontein.

“One patient was unfortunately declared dead at the scene, while three sustained moderate injuries. Other patients were taken to the National Hospital for psychosocial support. At present, one lane is closed, and traffic is moving past the scene.”



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Ngwathe Greenlights Luxury Hotel at Golf Estate



By JN Reporter

Ngwathe Local Municipality has officially approved a major new hotel development at the sought-after Vaal de Grace Golf Estate, signalling a fresh push to boost tourism, investment and local economic growth in the region.

The project is expected to elevate the estate's profile as a premier destination while creating much-needed jobs during both construction and operation phases.

Municipal officials say the development aligns with broader plans to unlock the area's tourism potential along the Vaal River, positioning Parys as a competitive leisure and hospitality hub.

While timelines and investment figures are yet to be fully disclosed, the approval marks a significant step toward transforming the estate into a high-end getaway for both domestic and international visitors.

Executive Mayor Victoria De Beer-Mthombeni, alongside Municipal Manager Dr Futhuli Mothamaha, directors and the Manager for Building Control, confirmed that the approved plans include a 50-unit luxury hotel expected to generate direct employment opportunities.

"More importantly, this development will act as

a major economic catalyst in our municipality and indirectly boost local supply chains and tourism-related businesses. The Vaal de Grace Golf Estate hotel project will bring outside monetary benefits into local communities, supporting jobs in accommodation, retail, transport, dining and many other industries," said Mothamaha.

She added that developments of this nature, particularly midscale and economy hotels, often deliver some of the highest levels of local employment impact.

Mothamaha welcomed the project, which was officially handed over this week to Vaal de Grace Golf Estate developer Chris Dreyer, and acknowledged the role of municipal administration in unlocking current and future development opportunities.

She further emphasised the importance of the project in advancing local economic development (LED) and tackling unemployment in Ngwathe.

With construction now on the horizon, the hotel development is poised to become a cornerstone of Ngwathe's economic revival strategy — a project that not only reshapes the local tourism landscape but also promises tangible benefits for communities through jobs, investment and sustained growth.

Global Partnership Set to Ignite Economic Growth in Matjhabeng

International youth federation partnership targets investment, skills development and job creation in key sectors



Matjhabeng Local Municipality Executive Mayor Thanduxolo Khalipha. Picture: Matjhabeng/Facebook

By JN Reporter

Matjhabeng Local Municipality is poised to benefit from a new international partnership aimed at unlocking economic development and attracting much-needed investment into the region.

The collaboration is expected to open doors for

infrastructure expansion, skills development and job creation, as the municipality works to reposition itself as a competitive destination for global investors.

Municipal leaders say the move signals a strategic shift towards leveraging international expertise and funding to revive key sectors of the local economy, including mining, manufacturing and small business development.

While full details of the agreement are still emerging, officials are confident it will fast-track development initiatives and restore investor confidence in Matjhabeng.

According to Executive Mayor Thanduxolo Khalipha, the initiative follows a high-level engagement earlier this week with a delegation from the China South Africa Youth Federation, led by its President, Luyanda Jonas. The meeting focused on fostering long-term collaboration between the Federation and the municipality.

"Key sectors identified for potential collaboration include manufacturing, agriculture, renewable energy and property development. These sectors are expected to play a critical role in stimulating local economic growth, creating employment opportunities and enhancing the overall socio-economic landscape of the municipality," said Khalipha.

He added that the China South Africa Youth Federation serves as a dynamic platform promoting cooperation between South African and Chinese youth through dialogue platforms, cultural exchanges and skills development initiatives.

The Federation also highlighted scholarship opportunities for deserving students, with Matjhabeng earmarked as a potential beneficiary for study programmes in China.

"This initiative is expected to open doors for local youth to access international education and acquire critical skills that will contribute meaningfully to the development of the municipality," Khalipha said.

As part of its community outreach, the Federation, in partnership with the municipality, is also set to visit two local schools to donate personal care products in a bid to support learners and promote dignity.

The engagement follows an invitation extended by the Executive Mayor to the Federation during the South Africa Investment Conference 2026 held in Sandton, led by the President of the Republic.

It forms part of ongoing efforts to position Matjhabeng as an attractive destination for both local and international investment.

The Federation has further extended an official invitation to Khalipha and his delegation to visit China — a move expected to deepen ties and unlock even greater economic opportunities for the municipality.

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Fires Devastate North West Classrooms and Futures



By Lerato Mutlanyane

Across South Africa, school fires are leaving classrooms in ashes, education disrupted, and government coffers drained. In North West province alone, a string of fires since 2018 — from Boitseanape Technical High to FM Ramaboa Technical School — has destroyed classrooms, educational resources, and infrastructure, even claiming the lives of three children at the North West School for the Deaf.

Schools are meant to be sanctuaries — yet in North West, desks are turning to charcoal and chalkboards to cinders. The Department of Education describes the fires as “barbaric,” and every blaze is a setback to progress in infrastructure and learning outcomes.

Research into fire safety management in special needs schools shows a troubling pattern: learners, management, and stakeholders are not sufficiently engaged in fire safety programs. Limited implementation of fire safety protocols and poor adherence to legislation have left schools vulnerable, while community vandalism and protests exacerbate the risk.

The practical impact is devastating: lessons halted, final exams disrupted, and maintenance projects delayed, leaving long-term scars on learners’ education.

Earlier this week, FM Ramaboa Technical School in the Itsoeseng Region was hit by another fire. MEC for Education Viola Motsumi condemned the incident in the strongest terms:

“On behalf of the Department, I wish to condemn in the strongest terms this barbaric incident, which

seeks to destroy learners’ education. I call on the South African Police Service to get to the bottom of this incident and arrest whoever is responsible. Such culprits need to be given the harshest sentence to show others that destroying educational assets is unacceptable.”

The North West Education Department is working to restore order and prevent further damage. Spokesperson Vuyo Mantshule noted that while many schools have 24-hour surveillance and functional fire-alarm systems, gaps remain, especially in townships and villages where funding is limited. Safety audits are inconsistent, and fire-extinguishing equipment is not always maintained.

“Yes, this is a huge setback in terms of infrastructure,” Mantshule said. “Three schools have burned down this financial year alone — two in Bojanala and one in Ngaka Modiri Molema Districts. We are conducting workshops and training to ensure that staff and communities know how to respond and prevent future incidents. We are working hand in hand with SGBs, community forums, and the police to monitor schools day and night.”

Experts warn that these fires are not just infrastructure problems — they are a threat to the future of education. Each blaze erases more than buildings; it steals learning resources, disrupts studies, and fractures the sense of safety that schools are meant to provide.

For North West learners, the cost of these fires goes far beyond repairs. Each destroyed classroom is a lost lesson, each scorched textbook a stolen opportunity, and each fire a stark reminder that the battle to protect South Africa’s schools is far from over.

Madlanga Commission reveals how Malatji’s refusal to halt ad hoc contracts cost Tshwane R14 million



Director of Assets at the Tshwane Metro Police Department, Tshukudu Malatji, testified at the Madlanga Commission on Thursday on the alleged corruption in the department. Picture: IoL

Director of Assets at the Tshwane Metro Police Department, Tshukudu Malatji, has admitted that he defied clear instructions to terminate irregular contracts, allowing the City of Tshwane to bleed at least R14 million in unlawful expenditure.

Testifying before the Madlanga Commission on Thursday, Malatji conceded that he failed to act on direct orders to cancel all ad hoc service deployments, despite mounting concerns that the contracts were illegally awarded.

The instruction, issued by his superior, Deputy Chief of Police Revo Spies, was for him to terminate the contracts immediately. Malatji did not.

Instead, he continued processing and engaging on payments linked to the same service providers already flagged as irregular.

“I had a problem with the instruction,” Malatji told the commission, chaired by Justice Mbuyiseli Madlanga, an explanation that drew sharp criticism from the panel.

Madlanga did not mince his words.

“This is a serious oversight, more serious than an oversight,” he said, rejecting Malatji’s attempt to frame the failure as an administrative lapse.

“You failed. As a result, the municipality incurred a R14 million expense. I don’t think you should come and sit there and say it’s an oversight. You must take full responsibility.”

The R14 million in question was incurred over just two months, between January and February 2025, during which Malatji remained in a position

to halt the payments.

The commission heard that Malatji had both the authority and the means to stop the financial losses.

He could have blocked further deployment letters, centralised approval processes, or instructed service providers to verify authorisation directly with him.

He did none of it.

Under sustained questioning from co-commissioner Advocate Sandile Khumalo, Malatji’s defence began to unravel.

Initially claiming there were ongoing discussions with superiors, he later suggested he was waiting for written confirmation—despite evidence that the instruction had already been issued in writing.

Khumalo pressed him on the contradiction. “You were given a direct instruction to cancel these deployments, and you did not do so because you say you had a problem with it,” Khumalo said.

“In other words, you were content for the City of Tshwane to continue incurring irregular expenditure.”

“It is not correct, Commissioner. I was not happy,” Malatji responded. “I am not happy.”

His testimony painted a picture of a breakdown in accountability at the senior level, where instructions were questioned, delayed, or simply ignored, with costly consequences.

Malatji has concluded his testimony before the commission. **IoL**

R2.5 Billion Crisis Forces Provincial Takeover of Matlosana



CoGTA and Treasury Intervene to Rescue Matlosana’s Finances. Picture: Supplied

By Lerato Mutlanyane

A deepening financial crisis at the Matlosana Local Municipality, with debt soaring to R2.5 billion, has triggered decisive provincial intervention as authorities move to prevent a total collapse of governance and service delivery.

The North West Departments of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) and Treasury have stepped in, unveiling a revised Provincial Mandatory Financial Intervention and Support Strategy at an official gathering on Thursday, 2 April 2026.

The intervention is aimed at restoring financial stability and administrative control in the struggling municipality.

The embattled municipality—covering Klerksdorp, Orkney, Stifontein, and Hartbeesfontein—was on the brink of being placed under full provincial administration after the ruling party’s provincial leadership called for the invocation of Section 139(1)(b) of the Constitution. T

he call followed what has been described as a collapse in governance, financial management, and service delivery.

ANC Provincial Secretary Louis Diremelo said the intervention was unavoidable.

“This intervention is both political and administrative in nature. It is intended to restore effective governance, ensure service delivery, and safeguard the interests and dignity of the people of Matlosana,” Diremelo said.

For years, Matlosana has battled deteriorating infrastructure, erratic water supply, recurring electricity outages, mounting debt, and ongoing instability in leadership. The ANC has positioned the intervention as part of a broader push to stabilise local government across the province.

“As the governing movement, we remain unwavering in our commitment to ethical leadership, cooperative governance, and constitutional accountability across all spheres of government,” Diremelo added.

Intervention Strategy Reinforced

While initial calls were made to place the municipality under Section 139(1)(b), the provincial government has instead opted to strengthen an existing mandatory intervention under Section 139(5).

Lerato Gambu, spokesperson for the MEC of CoGTA, confirmed that the decision followed several failed attempts to stabilise the municipality.

“The decision to place Matlosana under Section 139(1)(b) remains subject to approval by the Provincial Executive Council. However, this follows numerous unsuccessful interventions aimed at turning the municipality around,” Gambu said.

MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs, Gaoage Oageng Molapisi, explained that the province would reinforce the current intervention rather than replace it.

“Our considered view was to place the municipality under Section 139(1)(b), taking over full powers. However, after consultation with the Minister and careful deliberation, we resolved to strengthen the existing

intervention under Section 139(5),” Molapisi said.

He noted that legal considerations under the Municipal Finance Management Act influenced the decision, particularly that the municipality did not meet the criteria required to terminate the current intervention.

Tightened Oversight and War Room Approach

The strengthened intervention will expand the powers of the provincial executive and intensify oversight of the municipality’s finances and operations.

Molapisi outlined a series of immediate measures, including strengthening the intervention team with additional expertise in governance, legal, technical, and financial management.

“We are amending the terms of reference and reinforcing the intervention team with capacity in critical areas such as service delivery, governance, legal and technical support,” he said.

A quarterly “technical war room” will also be established to monitor progress on the implementation of the Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) and other priority areas.

“We want the municipality to move decisively towards improvement. These war room sessions will ensure accountability and track progress,” Molapisi added.

Political engagement will also be intensified, with provincial authorities set to engage municipal leadership to clarify expectations and ensure alignment between the intervention team and council.

Treasury Backs Intervention

North West MEC for Finance Kenetswe Mosenogi stressed that the intervention is grounded in law and necessity, warning that failure to act decisively would worsen the crisis.

“We are not acting out of our own accord—we are acting within the legal framework. Both provincial and national assessments have shown that previous interventions have failed,” Mosenogi said.

She emphasised that the municipality is now under a mandatory financial recovery framework, which will require strict adherence to a revised Financial Recovery Plan.

“If we do not take full ownership of this intervention, we risk total failure. The municipality must now implement a structured and enforceable financial recovery plan,” she said.

Mayor Welcomes Move

Despite the severity of the situation, Executive Mayor of the City of Matlosana, Fikile Mahlophe, welcomed the intervention, expressing optimism that it would stabilise the municipality.

“We welcome this decision in good spirit. It will bring stability, restore effective administration, and fast-track service delivery,” Mahlophe said.

Turning Point for Matlosana

The reinforced intervention marks a critical turning point for Matlosana, as provincial authorities move to regain control over a municipality that has long struggled under financial strain and governance failures.

With enhanced oversight, strengthened technical capacity, and a renewed focus on accountability, the province hopes to restore basic services, rebuild infrastructure, and put Matlosana back on a path to financial sustainability.

Whether the intervention succeeds will depend on strict implementation, political will, and cooperation between all spheres of government—but for now, the message from the province is clear: decisive action can no longer be delayed.

DA Slams ‘Failure’ as 10,000 Learners Left Stranded

By JN Reporter

The Democratic Alliance (DA) has launched a scathing attack on the Free State Department of Education after nearly 10,000 learners were left stranded without access to school, describing the situation as a “catastrophic failure” of leadership and planning.

The crisis has sparked outrage among parents and communities, with many learners unable to attend classes due to unresolved school transport disputes.

The DA says the situation reflects deep-rooted inefficiencies within the department, accusing officials of failing to act proactively despite clear warning signs ahead of the academic year.

The party has called for urgent intervention, demanding accountability from senior officials and immediate measures to ensure that affected learners return to classrooms without further delay.

This comes after transport operators downed tools this week, forcing learners to find alternative transport while demanding renegotiation of contracts and payments.

DA Education Spokesperson Jafta Mokoena said the ongoing failure to resolve contractual disputes and pay operators has pushed the system into crisis, with devastating consequences for learners.

“Transport operators, who have not received any payment since January, are now expected to wait yet another month. This is not only unacceptable, but directly impacts and violates learners’ rights to basic education.”

“The DA has repeatedly warned, including during the recent adjustment budget debates, that the Department’s budget allocation is inadequate and unsustainable. The current situation confirms these concerns and raises serious questions about financial mismanagement. We would not be surprised if more service providers resort to legal action as the Department continues to fail in meeting its obligations,” said Mokoena.

Department spokesperson Howard Ndaba has confirmed that most scholar transport operators have not been paid for up to three months.



He told SABC News the delays are due to financial constraints but assured that funds will be released, with payments expected by next Friday.

Ndaba also acknowledged that current transport rates are too low, saying the department is considering

an increase in line with rising fuel costs.

He said the department is engaging operators and plans to introduce longer-term contracts of up to five years to improve stability and prevent future disruptions.

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Opinion

Tswelopele Makoe

A gender and social justice activist and editor at Global South Media Network. She is a researcher, columnist, and an Andrew W Mellon scholar at the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice, UWC



Understanding the importance of informed voting in SA

SOUTH Africa loves the performance of democracy. We love the long queues. The selfies. The inked thumbs held up like badges of honour. We love saying “we showed up”. We love the language of participation.

But here’s the truth we don’t say out loud: we keep showing up without knowing what the hell we’re showing up for.

This week, the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) unveiled a new logo. A slick rebrand. A reset. A signal that the 2026 local government elections are here. Registration is locked in for June 20–21. By the end of the year, we’ll be back at the polls.

The message is simple: Get up. Show up. Vote. But vote for what? Because if we’re honest, this country is not politically divided — it is politically disoriented.

Every election, we collapse into the same shallow script: African National Congress (ANC) versus Democratic Alliance (DA). Liberation versus “delivery”. History versus “efficiency”. As if those are the only three stories we’re allowed to tell about ourselves. As if democracy is a three-option multiple-choice question.

And while we recycle that tired binary, something far more dangerous is happening: We are forgetting how to think politically. Because politics is not about parties only. It is about values. And right now, South Africa has a values crisis.

There was a time in this country when politics was alive. When it was contested. When it was imaginative. During the anti-apartheid movement, we didn’t just have one voice — we had multiple. The ANC, yes, together with its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

We also had the Steve Biko-inspired Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), and its armed wing, AZANLA forces. There was also Robert Sobukwe-founded Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), and its early military wing, POQO, which later became APLA.

Different ideologies. Different pathways and visions. Different dreams of what freedom could look like. We were not politically confused. We were politically alive, alive with possibilities.

Now? We have reduced ourselves to brand loyalty. Vote ANC because of history — even when that history is no longer translating into positive and material change. Vote DA because of “development” — without interrogating who that development is actually for, and who it continues to embrace and exclude.

Because let’s be very clear: development in our South African context is not neutral. Never has been. It has geography. It has colour. It has history. So when you say you want “service delivery”, what you are really saying is: Whose lives must improve first? And if your answer does not include the townships, the informal settlements and rural villages, then what you are defending is not development. It is the toxic preservation of a failing system.

And on the other side, if your vote is anchored in liberation history alone, you have to confront a different reality: History alone does not govern. Policy does. Implementation does. Accountability does.

And for millions of South Africans, nothing much has changed for the better. Not in any meaningful, structural way. Over 30 years into democracy, people are still waiting. It’s not yet Uhuru. Masses of our people are still merely surviving. Still locked out of an economy that was never redesigned to let them in the majority.

So we have to ask the question we keep running

away from: Who actually holds power in this country? Because it is certainly not just politicians. It is institutions. It is capital. It is systems that were built long before 1994 and quietly carried forward, rebranded as “post-apartheid,” while remaining fundamentally intact, driving development of the rich minority whilst stifling the millions left over across our nation.

Call it what it is: A neocolonial reality. Less obvious. More subtle and polite. But still painful and deeply unequal.

And yet, we walk into elections like none of the above exists. We argue about parties, but we don’t interrogate power. We debate personalities and fail to examine systems. We vote, but we hardly understand. That is the most dangerous part.

South Africans are not just disengaging from politics — they are disengaging from a system they do not trust and do not fully understand. In 2021, voter turnout collapsed to 45.9%. The lowest in our democratic history. Millions registered, yet chose to stay at home. And instead of asking why, we defaulted to labelling people “apathetic”.

But what if people are not apathetic? What if they are unconvinced? What if they are looking at the ballot and asking themselves: Where do I exist in all this?

Where is voter literacy in this country? We talk about financial literacy. We talk about health. But voter literacy — understanding how the system works, what the options actually mean, what your vote materially does — is almost completely absent.

We are asking people to participate in a system



The social media election is upon us



Screenshot from helenzille26 on Instagram

A video of the DA’s Johannesburg mayoral candidate, Helen Zille, in a wetsuit, swimming cap and snorkel taking a dip in a Douglasdale pothole, has got the electorate talking.

It also sparked action from the Johannesburg mayor, Dada Morero.

On Wednesday last week, a local publication put out a story about the problematic pothole that has been plaguing residents for over three years. On Saturday, Zille arrived with her snorkel and went for a swim. The video went viral. Residents had repeatedly logged complaints, but the problem was never fixed. On Sunday morning, the Joburg Roads Agency arrived and worked throughout the day to fix the hole. On Tuesday, Morero visited the site and did a dull, lengthy piece to camera with as much inspiration as a wet fish.

The comparison between how Zille has embraced social media to campaign and how the ANC has failed to do so is a communications thesis.

Zille’s team has clearly thrown resources at the strategy with regulation content, high-level production values and creative exchanges.

At the launch of the IEC’s new slogan and logo for local government elections, the CEO, Sy Mambola, emphasised the importance of digital campaigning.

“Any brand that ignores the use of social media is living in old times. For you to remain relevant and for you to reach people who you intend to reach, such as the youth, such as the general voting population,” said Mambola. The IEC has specifically developed a new tag line and bright logo to appeal to young people on digital media.

The media landscape has changed, and so too has how politicians reach the electorate during campaigns. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025 speaks of the rise of news consumption via video platforms such as TikTok.

It highlights a shifting South African media landscape dominated by smartphone access, high social media consumption, and growing AI scepticism. Audiences show great concern regarding misinformation, selective news avoidance, and increased reliance on video platforms and influencers.

(Note: The data is based on a survey of English-speaking, online news users in SA, an important part of a larger, more diverse media market. Respondents are generally more affluent, younger, have higher levels of formal education and are more likely to live in cities than the wider South African population, so findings should not be taken to be nationally representative.)

For South Africans, their source of news is 88% online, 71% via social media, television has declined to 55%, and print has plummeted from 40% in 2019 to 19%.

The majority of South Africans, 88%, use their phone to access news.

Not all politicians have grasped this changing landscape.

Some are early adopters. The Mayor of Cape Town, Geordin Hill-Lewis, has been getting it right for some time now. His Instagram and Twitter feeds regularly show him doing pieces to camera on the ground, explaining policy and interacting with citizens.

What both Hill-Lewis and Zille have got right is that they are not afraid of new media, they poke fun at themselves, and they use humour to engage. They distill the story, keep the narrative simple and produce content that is palatable and shareable.

Other politicians from other political parties are making the shift, too.

The Patriotic Alliance’s Gayton McKenzie has worked out that if he uses Facebook Live to communicate with his base, his message will be unfiltered by the media. He rarely gives interviews to ‘mainstream media’ but rather chooses to deliver addresses via his own personal social media platforms.

Some in the ANC are getting it right. None more so than President Cyril Ramaphosa. However, it is quite apparent that it is the team behind him, primarily his social media guru Athi Geleba, that is making him shine on his platforms. The behind-the-scenes content and snippets from official engagements make him more accessible than any other ANC politician.

While some of this is posted on her own personal account, the President’s Twitter and Facebook feeds are well curated, although his Instagram account hasn’t been used since 2021.

ANC Secretary General Fikile Mbalula is another who ‘gets it’. He has a personal media content team that follows him around. When I went to interview him at Luthuli House last year, high-resolution photographs of the interview were up on his X account within minutes. He uses the platform to self-promote, to subtweet, to land political messages and to engage with his more than 3 million followers.

Similarly, Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufu uses X to give him the common touch and make himself accessible. So too does the EFF’s Julius Malema, Action SA’s Herman Mashaba, Rise Mzansi’s Songezo Zibi, BOSA’s Mmusi Maimane and others.

Political commentary and analysis are firmly shifting into the digital space. Podcasts are the new currency. It’s where people are going to make up their minds about important issues. Politicians are going to have to harness these avenues if they want to speak directly to the electorate. There is an enormous, untapped youth vote in South Africa, people who have not bothered to get out to the polls in the past.

If the candidates want to grow their support, they will have to hit both the real streets and the social media streets to campaign. **By MANDY WIENER**

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

Daily Decisions That Affect A Leader’s Success

Decisions. Choices. Selections. Whatever word you want to use, a leader’s day is filled with opportunities to go one way or another; to create this or that; to push forward or pull back.

And that’s just the easy stuff.

The earlier you make those right decisions and the longer you manage them, the more successful you will become. Neglect to make or manage those decisions, and you’ll look back on your life with regret.

In one of my mentors books he dives into the 12 decisions that you need to make and manage but let me share a few here. To be successful, you must make right decisions about your:

- Attitude
- Priorities
- Health
- Family
- Thinking
- Finances

And that’s only half the list!

The other half are just as important, just as critical to your success. I recently shared with EMI ministry team the four of those 12 decisions that have shaped my life the most:

Personal Growth—my choice to intentionally grow every day to develop my potential.

Partnerships—my choice to first help others get what they need.

Relationships—my choice to make sure that those closest to me love and respect me the most.

Leadership—my choice to add value to leaders who multiply value to others.

None of those decisions were made lightly, and each one has shifted over time. My decision to make personal growth a daily commitment has meant paying attention to where growth was most needed. Likewise, my commitment to my health requires accountability from others, because it’s not a natural area of strength for me.

Over time, as I’ve practiced managing these decisions, I’ve come to appreciate just how much they affect my daily life, not just as stand-alone decisions, but as a collection of choices that create smart boundaries for me.

My decision to grow personally feeds into the partnerships I choose, which impacts the work I do, which impacts the leaders I develop, which

in turn determines the type of leader I am—and that’s who my family evaluates and appreciates (or corrects).

One decision flows into the next.

While I can’t tell you what decisions to make in your life, I can tell you that the areas I’ve highlighted are the decisions all leaders face. What you decide to do is up to you, but your choices will determine who you become as a result. That’s why choosing well is so important.

When it comes to making decisions, let me give you five things that help make your decisions beneficial:

1. Action—a choice means nothing without action behind it. Whatever you decide to do, do it. 2. Timing—making the right choice at the right time increases your odds of success; don’t wait to do something you know you need to do.

3. Management—revisit your decisions and make sure you’re living up to them.

4. Acceptance—this comes down to three things: ownership, authenticity, and accountability; be responsible for your choices, invite others to speak into them, and keep the commitments public to ensure you stay on track.

5. Leadership—there’s the old saying, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” but then there’s the Kareli version, “If it ain’t broke, break it and make it better, because nothing stays good forever.” Adjustment is the price of relevance.

I believe that good leaders have a bias for action, but I also know that you can learn to make good decisions and take good actions. It’s not something you have to be born with—it’s a skill you can learn.

That’s why my team created “The MBK Guide to Decision Making”, an audio collection of some of my best teaching on the topic of decisions.

And for a limited time, it’s being offered in a bundle with “The MB Kareli’s Guide to Everyday Challenges,” because nothing tests a leader’s ability to make decisions quite like a challenge!

Whatever challenges you may face, or whatever decisions you might need to make, your ability to choose wisely and take action greatly impacts your ability to see a successful outcome. Remember, successful people make and manage the right decisions daily.

And it makes all the difference.

BLUE LIGHTS AND SMALL IDEAS:

A NECESSARY CONVERSATION ON THE CONSOLIDATION OF YOUTH POWER



I was recently insulted by some young lads in a WhatsApp group and my crime was daring to disagree with what has now become a wholesale obsession among sections of young people with blue lights and the trappings of power without so much as a footnote to a coherent political programme.

Now, I could have responded. I could have descended into the mud, ready to prove a point to strangers whose thumbs move faster than their thoughts. But I decided to ignore the young lads. Not out of weakness, but out of principle. Because, truth be told, not every person who can afford a smartphone and data is intellectually deserving of a serious conversation.

Well, at least age has taught us that access to social media is no qualification for decent and sound political discourse. Having 2GB of data does not automatically upgrade one into a revolutionary thinker. Some of our people enjoy typing things longer than their understanding of basic issues. You will find a young man, sitting comfortably in his mother’s house, typing “we deserve cabinet positions” while his biggest leadership responsibility is deciding what to watch on DSTV after supper.

And yet, beneath the noise and the insults, we must acknowledge that calls by the African National Congress Youth League for representation in Cabinet are not, in themselves, misplaced. In fact, they are correct.

Young people are the majority in this country. They are the ones who will live the longest with the consequences of the decisions we take today. When our government fails, it is the youth who inherit that failure in the form of unemployment, inequality, substance abuse and hopelessness. When the government succeeds, it is the youth who must carry that success forward. So, when they demand representation, they are not asking for a favour; they actually are asserting a democratic truth.

But here is where the real problem begins, proper representation cannot be reduced to a birth certificate. You are not progressive simply because you are young, nor are you reactionary simply because you are old.

This binary thinking is both foolish and deeply reactionary. It is the kind of thinking that believes

wearing skinny jeans automatically qualifies one to run a department and that knowing the latest amapiano track somehow translates into an understanding of macroeconomic policy. Life does not work like that.

History teaches us something far more serious. When the youth of 1944, led by Anton Lembede, Ashby Peter Mda and Nelson Mandela, confronted the leadership of the African National Congress, they did so because they had a solid political programme. They were dissatisfied with polite appeals to a violent apartheid regime, and they proposed mass action, defiance and a more militant political direction.

Their youth was not their argument; their ideas were.

In the democratic reality, when Julius Malema was re-elected in 2011, the rallying cry of “economic freedom in our lifetime” gave young people something to organise around. You may question the messengers, you may question their real intentions, but you cannot deny that there was at least a political programme anchoring that moment.

Today, what do we have?

A generation that wants blue lights for their own sake. We have young people who find the sound of a siren more attractive than the content of a policy document. Young people who think governance is a photoshoot; you arrive, adjust the suit, take pictures and leave the hard thinking to someone else.

Quite honestly, a VIP convoy does not solve unemployment and fix service delivery. And blue lights, no matter how bright, cannot illuminate an empty mind.

This is not an argument against youth representation. On the contrary, it is an argument for a better, more serious form of it. We need well-crafted young people in government. Young people who have read, who have thought, who have engaged with the complexities of our society. Young people who can enter Cabinet not as passengers, but as drivers of a clear and transformative agenda.

The fact of leading a structure, on its own, does not qualify anyone to lead society. Leadership is not candyfloss; it is rather a burden of ideas and responsibility.

The youth must demand space, but they must also prepare themselves to fill that space with substance. Otherwise, we will produce a generation of leaders who are very good at switching on blue lights, but completely incapable of switching on the economy. And that, comrades, would be the real tragedy.

Let us do better, we can do better.

***Thediso Mangope is an ANC member in Mangau and writes in his personal capacity...**

**** The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of this publication (Journal News).**

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.35	0.32%	▲
Rand/Pound	21.95	0.19%	▲
Rand/Euro	19.12	0.11%	▲
Platinum	2 119.70	3.74%	▲
Brent Crude	96.24	2.25%	▲
Gold	4 766.53	0.97%	▲
Ethereum	2 207.84	-0.24%	▼
Bitcoin	72 222.26	0.96%	▲

Northern Cape Poised as Africa's Next Industrial Powerhouse

Inaugural Investment and Jobs Summit in Kimberley to unlock mining, green energy, agriculture, and infrastructure opportunities, driving growth and sustainable employment across the province



Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul. Picture: NC/Facebook

By JN Reporter

It is all systems go for the Northern Cape's inaugural Investment and Jobs Summit, taking place from 13 to 15 April at the Mittah Serepere International Convention Centre in Kimberley. Themed "Unlocking Investment for Jobs through Industrialisation," the summit will bring together government, business, investors, and key stakeholders to discuss opportunities and partnerships that can accelerate industrial development and job creation across the province.

According to Premier spokesperson Naledi Gaosekwe, the conference aims to translate strategy into tangible economic commitments.

"The conference is designed to align government, investors, and industry around bankable projects. Our focus is on unlocking large-scale investment, accelerating industrialisation, and ensuring that growth translates into jobs and opportunities for communities across the province," Gaosekwe said.

She added that the Northern Cape's approach ensures that economic expansion is inclusive, with benefits reaching local economies through infrastructure development, supplier opportunities, and skills creation.

"We want to make sure that growth is not just concentrated in a few areas but reaches communities throughout the province. Investment in local infrastructure, skills development, and supply chains is at the heart of this strategy," she said.

Unlocking Strategic Opportunities

Northern Cape Premier Zamani Saul emphasised that the summit is a strategic platform to showcase the province's investment potential and foster sustainable partnerships. Mining remains a cornerstone of the Northern Cape's industrialisation plan, forming one of six key pillars alongside infrastructure, transport corridors, agriculture, industrialisation, and tourism.

"The Northern Cape is one of South Africa's most under-explored and underutilised regions, yet it has enormous potential. We invite business and investors to reimagine the province not as a periphery of the economy, but as a future-facing, globally competitive industrial hub," Saul said.

He pointed out four factors that make the Northern Cape attractive for global investment: abundant green energy, proximity to natural resources, a trained skills base, and access to markets through reliable infrastructure.

"These advantages are drawing global value chains back to resource-rich regions. The Northern Cape offers a scale of opportunities in energy, mining, agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, and tourism that few regions in the world can match," he said.

The Premier also highlighted the province's globally significant mineral deposits, including manganese, copper, zinc, and other strategic minerals, which are in rising demand worldwide.

"The Northern Cape holds globally significant deposits of these minerals and is well positioned to become a dependable, long-term supplier to global manufacturing value chains. We are moving up the value chain

with greener smelting capacity for zinc, manganese, iron ore, copper, and lime. Key investors are already deeply invested in the province," Saul said.

Mining and Beneficiation Potential

Acting Chief Economist at the Minerals Council of South Africa, Bongani Motsa, emphasised that the Northern Cape could emerge as the country's next major mining hub and a centre for mineral beneficiation.

"The province has significant reserves of manganese and rare earth minerals, which could catalyse economic growth in the Northern Cape and across South Africa. However, to realise this potential, there must be a deliberate strategy to extract value, and planning must start now," Motsa said.

He stressed the need for investment in local beneficiation initiatives, which would ensure that South Africa can meet its own industrial needs while adding value to exported minerals.

Six Pillars of Opportunity

Premier Saul outlined six key sectors driving investment to the Northern Cape: green energy, minerals and mining, agriculture, industrialisation, infrastructure and logistics, and tourism.

- **Mining:** The province is home to the world's largest known manganese resource and is a leading exporter of diamonds, iron ore, and zinc. With new greener smelting capacity for key minerals, it is moving up the value chain, attracting significant investment from local and international stakeholders.

- **Agriculture:** The Northern Cape serves as a local and regional food basket for SADC countries and Europe during the northern hemisphere winter. Irrigation schemes along the Vaal and Orange Rivers underpin high-quality food production, including beef, mutton, venison, specialty crops like tea, dates, pecans, and raisins, and increasingly competitive wines, gins, and brandies with growing export footprints.

- **Green Energy:** With solar capacity factors of around 26% and wind at 37%, the province has enormous potential for renewable energy, including large-scale green hydrogen projects. Estimates suggest potential outputs of 11,400GW from solar and 846GW from wind, making the Northern Cape an attractive destination for independent power producers (IPPs) and energy investors worldwide.

- **Industrialisation & Infrastructure:** Expanding transport corridors and industrial hubs connect the Northern Cape to regional and international markets, supporting cross-border value chains and creating a platform for sustainable industrial growth.

- **Tourism:** Leveraging unique landscapes and cultural heritage, the province offers untapped opportunities for domestic and international tourism, complementing industrial and agricultural growth.

- **Skills Development & Local Economy:** Central to the Northern Cape's strategy is ensuring that economic growth filters down to communities through skills training, supplier networks, and infrastructure investment.

"Approximately 60% of South Africa's independent power producers are based in the Northern Cape, giving the province a critical role in transforming the

national grid under the new integrated resource and transmission development plan," Saul said.

Global Shifts Favor the Northern Cape

Saul highlighted three global trends that position the Northern Cape for industrial growth:

1. **Supply Chain Redesign:** Global companies and countries are seeking secure, diversified routes to transport raw materials and finished goods. The Northern Cape's strategic location makes it a natural logistics and export hub for the African continent.

2. **Energy Transition:** The global push for decarbonisation and net-zero commitments is accelerating renewable energy development. The Northern Cape's world-class solar and wind resources provide a cost and environmental advantage, positioning it as a renewable energy leader.

3. **Rising Demand for Critical Minerals:** The global surge in demand for manganese, copper, zinc, and other strategic minerals positions the Northern Cape as a reliable long-term supplier to international manufacturing value chains.

"Across the globe, industrial advantage is shifting to regions that combine natural resources, skills, energy, and infrastructure. The Northern Cape ticks all these boxes, making it Africa's next industrial powerhouse," Saul said.

A Vision for Inclusive Growth

The Northern Cape's development strategy goes beyond economic growth to ensure broad-based benefits for its residents. By combining industrial expansion with agriculture, renewable energy, logistics, and tourism, the province seeks to create a sustainable, diversified economy that delivers jobs, infrastructure, and community opportunities.

"Our focus is not just on investment numbers but on outcomes for people. We want economic growth to translate into tangible jobs, improved livelihoods, and stronger local economies across the province," said Gaosekwe. With strong public-private collaboration, the Northern Cape is positioning itself as a globally competitive industrial hub that can meet both domestic and international demand while leveraging its unique advantages in minerals, energy, and agriculture.

Looking Ahead

The inaugural Investment and Jobs Summit marks a critical moment in the province's journey toward industrialisation and inclusive economic growth. By convening government, industry leaders, investors, and key stakeholders, the Northern Cape aims to accelerate industrial projects, strengthen partnerships, and create sustainable employment opportunities.

"The Northern Cape offers scale, resources, and opportunity. We are sending a clear message to investors: now is the time to partner with us in shaping the province's industrial future," Premier Saul concluded.

As South Africa and the world navigate changing global supply chains, rising energy demands, and a shift toward greener industrialisation, the Northern Cape stands ready to become a powerhouse of investment, innovation, and economic growth — proving that the province's potential is no longer on the periphery but at the heart of Africa's industrial future.

FS Taps India for Jobs, Skills, and Growth Surge



Indian Consulate General, Niteen Subhash, paid a visit to Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae. Picture: OTF

By Lerato Mutlanyane

When the Free State-India partnership was launched, it wasn't just about diplomacy—it was about jobs, investment, and building cultural bridges amid rising unemployment and economic challenges.

On Wednesday, 8 April 2026, Niteen Subhash, Indian Consulate General, visited the Free State for a courtesy call with Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae. The meeting aimed to strengthen ties between the province and India.

Premier Mathae highlighted India's rapidly growing economy, technological advancement, and the long-standing, progressive partnership with the Free State. She stressed the urgent need for investment-driven initiatives.

"These initiatives must have a direct and measurable impact on economic growth and job creation within the province," she

said. Both sides agreed on the importance of skills development to meet evolving economic demands. The collaboration will facilitate training for young people and government officials in key areas including Information Technology (IT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and cybersecurity.

Women's cooperatives will also benefit from specialised training in textile production, equipping them with practical skills to actively participate in the industrial economy.

Premier Mathae emphasised revitalising local industries as a central pillar of the partnership, noting that human capital development has already benefited provincial communicators, youth, and the healthcare sector.

With clean energy agreements underway, the partnership is set to move from planning to tangible economic impact, promising a boost in jobs, skills, and sustainable growth for the Free State.

Petrol price on course for R4.70 hike in May, diesel projected to rise by R13



Early forecasts from the Central Energy Fund point to a steeper hike than in April.

As tensions in the Middle East continue, South African motorists are likely to face another significant fuel price hike in May.

On the eve of the April fuel price adjustment, the National Treasury introduced a temporary R3/litre reduction in the general fuel levy to reduce pressure on consumers.

The cost of petrol increased by R3, while diesel saw a sharper increase of R7.06.

The latest early projections from the Central Energy Fund suggest that May increases may surpass those for April. As of 6 April, the CEF projects that petrol could increase by about R4.70, while diesel

continues to face significant pressure, with an increase of about R13.07.

The price of petrol 93 currently sits at R23.25 inland and R22.46 coastal, while 95 is at R23.36 inland and R22.53 coastal.

The wholesale price of diesel is around R25.90 to R26.11 inland and R25.07 to R25.35 coastal.

Illuminating paraffin, which rose R11.67 in April to R24.21, may see a further R10.70 hike.

CEF said that Brent crude oil prices continue to push above \$100 per barrel, while uncertainty remains around shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz.

A weaker rand has also significantly increased the cost of importing fuel into South Africa. *EWN*

GET TO KNOW YOUR DJ

Midnight Grooves: DJ Lekoeneha Spins Sound Into Experience



By Lerato Mutlanyane

An instant crackle of vinyl at the drop of the beat, followed by a Rhodes piano chord that lingers like cigarette smoke. By the second beat, you're no longer in your living room—you're at a rooftop party at 3 a.m.

Six years into the industry, 27-year-old Lefu Justice Lekoeneha, originally from Lesotho and now based in the Free State, is carving out a name as an all-round creative. He describes his sound as refined yet rebellious—a fusion where mash-ups, lounge textures and mature grooves meet streetwear sensibilities and sharp visual storytelling.

More than just a DJ, authenticity defines him. "I've always been drawn to unique things—stuff that not your regular individual is into. Whether it was fashion or my music taste, everything always stood out," Lekoeneha shared.

For him, DJing is far from random. It's a craft. "People don't treat DJing with the same amount of respect and honour as other art forms. Mixing, song selection, crowd reading, timing—all of those are a combination of art," he said.

His distinct sound—a blend of lounge and soulful instrumentation—came to him almost by accident.

"I would randomly listen to music, then one day I stumbled upon this sound. I had no idea how to define it. One afternoon, while playing at a fashion market, someone suggested lounge music—and everything clicked. I realised, this is it. This is me," he said.

Looking ahead, Lekoeneha's ambitions stretch far beyond local stages.

"In five years, I see myself as an established and respected DJ, known for delivering unique and memorable sets at major events across provinces and internationally. I see myself performing on big stages, including iconic platforms like the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, sharing my sound with mature audiences," he said.

"I'm not just playing music—I'm curating experiences, building a brand, and connecting people through sound."

Through his event platform, JUST US, Lekoeneha is also making waves—hosting high-quality gatherings that spotlight cutting-edge DJs and creative culture. The platform doubles as a listening session space, bringing together a community that appreciates fresh, boundary-pushing sounds.

"Through consistency, growth and passion, I've built a name that represents authenticity and excellence in the DJ industry," he emphasised.

Something out of the ordinary—Justice doesn't just play music. He sets the tone.

Kganyago Returns to Shine as Metro FM Music Awards Hit 20-Year Milestone

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Known for her fiery presence on Metro FM's Midday Link-Up, Lerato Kganyago is set to host the 20th Metro FM Music Awards 2026 alongside award-winning actor and presenter Lawrence Maleka—marking her second time at the helm of the prestigious ceremony.

As South Africa gears up for a celebration of homegrown musical excellence, the awards will take place at the Durban International Convention Centre on Saturday, 25 April 2026. The star-studded host lineup also features Nomuzi Mabena, popularly known as Moozlie, and Siyabonga Ngwekazi (Scoop), who will keep the Green Room buzzing with winners and nominees.

Reflecting on her return, Kganyago described the moment as a full-circle journey.

"It's fantastic. The last time I was at the Metro FM Music Awards in Durban, I had just joined SABC. Now I'm back—on the black carpet and hosting. I'm very excited," she said.

A lover of fashion and luxury, Kganyago promises to bring her signature flair to the stage. "It's going to be an explosive night—absolutely amazing," she added.

This year's edition also introduces two new categories—Best Maskandi and Best Lekompo—recognising the growing global appeal of these proudly South African genres.

"As a girl from Limpopo, it's incredible to see lekomo being recognised. Music brings us together—it doesn't matter the genre, it's one language," Kganyago said.

Adding to the glamour, DJ and fashion icon Lamiez Holworthy will hold it down on the Africa Fashion International-sponsored Black Carpet, capturing the stylish arrivals of Mzansi's biggest stars. Meanwhile, Zola Mhlongo will serve as the show announcer, and Grammy Award-winning producer Zakes Bantwini steps in as music director—set to elevate the night's sonic experience.

Metro FM Business Manager Kina Nhlengethwa described the milestone event as a celebration of South Africa's musical journey.

"The host lineup reflects our mission to honour the country's music icons and its evolution over four decades," she said.

The festivities extend beyond the main stage, with the Metro FM Music Awards festival at People's Park hosted by Somizi

Mhlongo and actress Hope Mhalele, promising a high-energy after-party experience.

The awards will air live on SABC 1 and stream on SABC+ from 20:00.

South African music excellence takes centre stage—this is one show not to miss.



MaMkhize's Epic Birthday Comeback



By Lerato Mutlanyane

"God's plan is unstoppable," she declared.

Former Shauwn 'MaMkhize' Mkhize—Royal AM's ex-owner, business tycoon, philanthropist, TV personality, and socialite—marked another birthday on 6 April 2026 with a bold social media post celebrating life, faith, and resilience.

She captioned her Instagram: "Catching flights... because the journey continues. Birthday energy and Easter blessings collide as I rise fully with Jesus, walking aligned with His plan. Every step intentional, every moment orchestrated by faith because nothing happens by mistake and God's plan is unstoppable."

The post featured an AI-generated image of MaMkhize in a sleek black outfit, holding a black Birkin bag while perched on a helicopter skid, with the iconic Eiffel Tower framing the background—an unapologetic statement of luxury and ambition.

After nearly six months of Instagram silence due to ongoing legal battles, the controversial businesswoman is fighting to stop the South African Revenue Service (SARS) from selling her properties.

"I am a living testimony that with Him, nothing is impossible—every blessing, every lesson, every victory is His design. I celebrate life, purpose, and power today. My steps are steady, my heart at peace, with Jesus beside me," she added.

Fans flocked to the comments with birthday wishes, though some criticized the AI-generated image. MaMkhize didn't hold back.

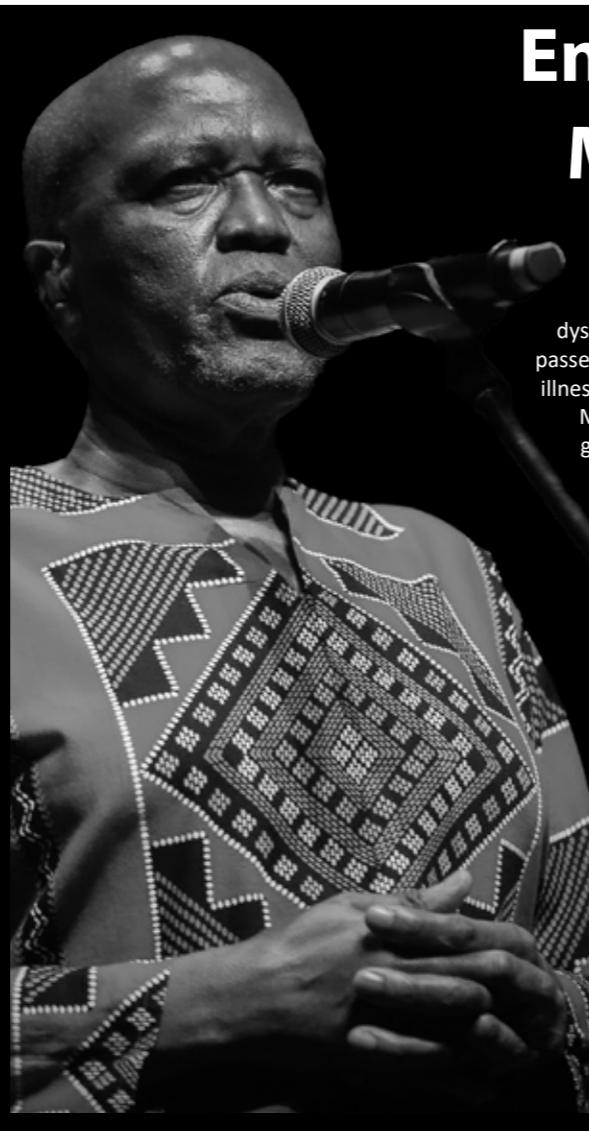
"@gugu_dlodlo_99 hmmm if you had nothing to say, was it really difficult not to comment? I just want to celebrate me today, I know you will never understand the meaning," she clapped back.

Birthday greetings also poured in from celebrities including Ayanda Thabethe, Nhlanihla Mafu, Nonku Williams, Khanyi Mbau, Winnie Ntshaba, Gogo Skotheni, and Phindile Gwala.

With legal hurdles behind her and a new decade ahead, MaMkhize isn't just surviving—she's thriving. And if this birthday is any indication, her best act is yet to come.

End of an Era: Ladysmith Black Mambazo Stalwart Dies at 77

By Lerato Mutlanyane



One of the founding members of the renowned, award-winning choral group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Albert Mazibuko, has passed away at the age of 77 following a short illness.

Mazibuko's death was announced by the group in a Facebook post on Monday, sending shockwaves across the entertainment and music industry.

Since the retirement of founder Joseph Shabalala in 2014, Mazibuko had become a guiding force within the group, described as "the wise elder to the younger members."

"It is with immense sadness that we tell you that our brother, Albert Mazibuko, has left us this Easter Sunday to be with his saviour in heaven... he was the best of the best," the group said in a statement.

Formed in the 1960s by Shabalala, Ladysmith Black Mambazo only found its distinctive sound and global identity after a major restructuring in 1969—led by both Shabalala and Mazibuko. From humble beginnings in local isicathamiya competitions, the group rose to international acclaim, winning multiple Grammy Awards and collaborating with global icons such as Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Emmylou Harris and Melissa Etheridge.

Tributes have continued to pour in, including from KwaZulu-Natal Premier Thami Ntuli, who extended condolences to the Mazibuko family, the group and music lovers across the country.

"Mr Mazibuko was a revered cultural icon and one of the longest-serving members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, dedicating over five decades of his life to the group since joining in 1969," Ntuli said.

He added that Mazibuko's distinctive voice and enduring presence helped shape the group's signature sound, captivating audiences both locally and internationally.

Affectionately known as "the librarian," Mazibuko was seen as a custodian of the group's history—offering wisdom, humility and guidance to fellow musicians. "His passing marks the end of an era, not only for Ladysmith Black Mambazo but for the broader South African music and cultural landscape. His contribution to preserving and promoting indigenous music on the global stage will never be forgotten," Ntuli said.

Mazibuko also played a key role in advancing the legacy of Joseph Shabalala, ensuring that the richness of isicathamiya music continues to inspire generations worldwide.

For 55 years, after being invited to join in 1969, Mazibuko remained a pillar of Ladysmith Black Mambazo—serving as Shabalala's trusted right-hand man and helping carry South African music to the world.

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Bloemfontein

Friday 10 April 2026
Feel Good Soul
Street Corner Braai
Bloemfontein

Saturday 11 April 2026
Fresh Beatmaster Birthday
News Cafe
Bloemfontein

Sunday 12 April 2026
Extended Soul Sunday
Sechaba
Bloemfontein

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Leddi G spotlights women in music and creative power at CR8TOR Week Africa 2026

Leddi G first gained attention as runner-up in the MTV Base VI Search about a decade ago alongside faces like Nomuzi Moolie Mabena and Nomzamo Mbatha.

CR8TOR Week Africa 2026, held from 24-29 March in Johannesburg, evolved from a creators' convening into one of the continent's most influential culture-led platforms. Like many events in this category, this year's gathering shifted focus from mere inspiration to building infrastructure with an emphasis on how creativity drives economic growth, ownership and long-term sustainability in Africa's creative economy.

Panels explored art, design, music and corporate strategy, while immersive experiences, including wellness activations, community runs, curated parties and thoughtful food moments blended dialogue with lived culture.

In the all-female music panel, Leddi G drew attention to the importance of visibility and power for women in entertainment. She moderated a conversation featuring voices such as Sne Mbatha, Mila Rose, Jena Dominique, Mamthug, and Fifi Laa. The Citizen spoke to the young cultural icon about her participation, the culture and her career.

She shared: "It's so important to see an all-women panel discussing industry matters. Women contribute so much to entertainment, are the faces of so much, yet hardly hold the power in the grand scheme of things. The fact that CWA spotlights female creatives operating behind and in front of the scene allows audiences to gain more knowledge and depth about their contributions, for other women to follow in their footsteps, and for everyone to take pause and consider what more can be done to support the other half. After all, it is an entire half we're talking about."

She also reflected on the broader role of events like CWA in creator sustainability.

"They provide platforms and networking opportunities for like-minded individuals to connect and express themselves. They spotlight the smaller creatives, not just the bigger stars. They keep conversations current with a focus on relevant issues and provide creatives a community to challenge, particularly outdated practices."

From MTV Base runner-up to multifaceted creative force Leddi G first gained attention as runner-up in the MTV Base VI Search about a decade ago alongside faces like Nomuzi Moolie Mabena and Nomzamo Mbatha. That early exposure paved the way for a journey marked by growth, self-awareness and authenticity.

She later joined the Viacom/Paramount Africa team, contributing to BET Africa as a presenter and host of shows such as BET Streetz, where she brought viewers closer to celebrity culture, creative spaces, and local happenings.

Looking back, she described the path as "a long road of maturing within myself." After the competition, she graduated from university, lived abroad and returned "more confident and self-aware with a greater understanding of people from all walks of life."

She tells The Citizen that this perspective helped her approach the industry naturally: "being naturally myself was the best approach."

Life after Paramount Africa
With Paramount Africa shutting down operations at the end of 2025, leading to the discontinuation of channels like BET Africa and MTV Base on DSTV from January 2026, Leddi G has embraced a new chapter of independence and diversification.

She took a strategic hiatus to regroup and focus on personal and business priorities before accelerating into fresh opportunities. In early 2026, she began exploring acting roles, moderating and hosting events (including in Botswana), and leaning deeper into lifestyle content.

Leddi wears many hats as a TV host, MC, moderator, stylist and lifestyle content creator. She tells us that she maintains balance by curating what she shares publicly.

"My work and my personal life, while they can cross-pollinate, don't exist for each other... I always prioritise my mental health and well-being. There are no prizes for burnout."

She also values real-world connections over constant posting.

"Connecting on ground in a real and genuine way is sometimes more important than one's social media presence."

On creative sustainability, Leddi highlights the need to pivot, especially in South Africa. She has launched The Epicurean Club, a boutique experience-curation and concierge business focused on well-curated offerings in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Drawing on her entertainment connections, it handles everything from dining to dancing, particularly during peak seasons.

"Creative sustainability means having the ability to pivot... Fittingly, it's called 'The Epicurean Club', so look out for more of that in the year to come."

As a self-described epicurean and cultural purveyor, Leddi continues to weave personal journeys in food, travel, style and sensory experiences into authentic content.

"My content is based on my personal experiences, more of a 'follow along on my unique journey' approach." *Citizen*

The Rise of Moi's Ark

By Bernell Simons

Five years ago, Moira Maerman's journey did not begin with dreams of entrepreneurship or carefully crafted business plans—it began with heartbreak, responsibility, and an unshakable determination to provide for her family.

After the loss of her husband, Moira found herself carrying the full weight of her household. Suddenly, she was not only grieving but also stepping into the role of sole provider, becoming the primary caregiver to her three daughters and three grandchildren. Faced with uncertainty and emotional turmoil, she made a life-altering decision: she would not allow hardship to define her future.

Instead of waiting for opportunities to come her way, Moira chose to create her own.

Driven by the urgent need to support her family and ensure her children could continue building their futures, she turned to something deeply rooted in her nature—serving others through food, compassion, and love.

What started as a simple act of helping people by preparing meals and assisting at gatherings soon began to take shape as something more meaningful.

"We started five years ago just out of helping people... serving," Moira recalls.

That humble beginning, grounded in kindness and a strong sense of community, marked the birth of what would eventually become a thriving catering business.

With the support of her daughters and close friends, Moira transformed her passion into a growing enterprise. Initially operating under Maermans General Trading, the business would later evolve and rebrand into what is now widely known as Moi's Ark.

Born and raised in Bloemfontein, the City of Roses, Moira credits her upbringing for instilling the values that continue to guide her journey today.

"I was born and bred in Bloemfontein, and everything I am today comes from the values I was raised with—hard work, compassion, and never giving up," she says.

At 50, she proudly refers to herself as "50 years of grace," a phrase that reflects not only her faith but also the resilience that has carried her through life's most difficult moments.

For Moira, the pain of losing her husband became the very force that pushed her toward purpose.



Moira Maerman and her colleagues. Picture: Supplied

"After losing my husband, I knew I had a choice: I could let life break me, or I could rise for my children and grandchildren," she says. "My family inspires me every single day. Seeing them happy, supported, and growing keeps me going. Grace has carried me through every challenge, and at 50 years of age, I call myself 50 years of grace because that is exactly what God has given me. Moi's Ark is not just a business—it is proof that with faith, love, and determination, pain can be turned into purpose."

Starting small, Moi's Ark catered for birthday parties, family functions, company platters, and local gatherings. With each event, the business steadily built a reputation for excellence, heartfelt service, and home-style meals prepared with genuine care.

Word of mouth quickly spread, and what began as a modest operation soon grew into a trusted name within the community. Today, Moi's Ark plays a significant role in the lives of many, catering for funerals, celebrations, and major local events—offering comfort in times of sorrow and adding joy to moments of celebration.

Through every plate served, the business has become more than just a service provider—it has become part of the community's most meaningful moments.

Yet, for Moira, the true success of Moi's Ark is not measured solely by its growth or reputation, but by the impact it has had on her family. Her daughters now work alongside her, helping to expand the business that was built from the ground up through perseverance and faith. Meanwhile, her grandchildren are growing up witnessing first-hand the rewards of resilience, hard work, and entrepreneurship.

What began as a survival strategy has evolved into a powerful legacy in the making.

Moira Maerman's story is one of extraordinary strength—a woman who transformed pain into purpose, tragedy into triumph, and hardship into hope. She refused to be defined by loss. She refused to wait for life to offer her a way forward.

She created her own path.

Through five years of dedication, sacrifice, and unwavering belief, Moira has turned Moi's Ark into far more than a catering business. It stands today as a symbol of perseverance, a testament to faith, and a growing family legacy rooted in love and service.

And with every meal prepared, every gathering catered, and every life touched, Moira continues to prove that even in life's darkest moments, something beautiful can rise.

HEALTH

South Africans Redefining Social Culture

For decades, the South African social calendar has been anchored by a cold beer or a glass of Pinotage.

Whether it's a Sunday braai, a mid-week football match or the legendary "Ke Dezemba Boss" vibes, alcohol has been the default guest. But a quiet revolution is bubbling under the surface, and it's not alcoholic.

New data from 2026 shows that South Africa has unexpectedly emerged as a global leader in the sober-curious movement. We aren't just cutting back; we are doing so at double the global average.

If you've noticed more people ordering mocktails or reaching for 0.0% beers, you're seeing a massive cultural shift in real-time.

Here is how South Africa is redefining what it means to have a good time.

We're leading the pack

According to recent research by Worldpanel by Numerator, South Africans are currently the world's frontrunners in alcohol moderation. While about 17% of people globally say they plan to drink less, in South Africa, that number jumps to 30%.

The real drivers are Gen Z and Millennials. One in five South Africans under the age of 35 is now treating alcohol as an occasional indulgence rather than a social requirement.

For this group, the status symbol has shifted. It's no longer about who can stay out the latest; it's about who can wake up at 6am for a sunrise hike or a padel match without a headache.

The rise of the wellness drinker

Why the sudden change of heart? It turns out, it's about more than just avoiding a hangover.

- About 38% of South Africans report struggling with mental or physical health, a rate higher than the global average. This has led many to identify alcohol as a primary trigger for "hangxiety" (that post-drinking spike in anxiety) and brain fog.

- A staggering 74% of households now prioritise hydration, water, electrolyte drinks and functional sparkling infusions over alcoholic options.

- We are still spending money on ourselves, but we're moving our liquor budget toward intrinsic health. Instead of a bottle of whiskey, South Africans are buying high-quality fresh produce, gym memberships and functional supplements.

The sober-curious strategy

Being sober-curious doesn't necessarily mean "quitting" forever. It's about being mindful. South Africans are getting tactical

with how they drink, using three main methods:

- The spacer method:** This is the new gold standard for social events. You have one alcoholic drink, followed by a sophisticated non-alcoholic alternative. You keep the glass in your hand and the social vibe alive, but you stay sharp.

- The dry spell:** Participation in Sober October and Dry January has hit record highs. In fact, 58% of internet-enabled South Africans took a complete break from alcohol at some point in the last six months.

- High-value drinking:** Instead of drinking "just because it's Tuesday", consumers are saving their alcohol intake for high-value events like weddings or milestone birthdays. The casual weeknight glass of wine is increasingly being replaced by herbal teas or magnesium-infused drinks.

The economic push

If wellness is the reward drawing us toward sobriety, then the economy and new laws are the pressure forcing us there.

The 2026 Budget Speech introduced a 3.4% increase in excise duties on alcohol. For the middle class, drinking has become an expensive luxury tax that many are no longer willing to pay. Furthermore, the proposed zero-tolerance drunk driving legislation has created a significant legal risk for those considering "one for the road".

Choosing a non-alcoholic beer isn't just a health choice anymore; it's a smart financial and legal move.

The "high-dry" paradox

Despite this massive shift, South Africa remains a land of extremes. We are currently facing what experts call the high-dry paradox. On one hand, we are global leaders in quitting or cutting back. On the other hand, the South Africans who do drink are still some of the heaviest drinkers in the world, averaging 30 litres per person annually, ranking 5th globally.

This has created a polarised landscape: a deep-seated culture of binge drinking on one side, and a rapidly growing, health-conscious middle class on the other.

The market is listening

The beverage industry is pivoting fast. The non-alcoholic market in South Africa is projected to grow by 7.5% every year through 2033. Even during the last "Dezemba" season, traditionally the wettest month of the year, data showed that mocktails, alcohol-free craft beers and even tinned non-alcoholic wines became mainstream. **IoL**



Food

Recipes

Easy vegetarian chilli

Recipe by Samuel Goldsmith



Make this simple vegetable chilli for a comforting, yet nutritious dinner. This healthy bean chilli provides a great way to boost your 5-a-day. For more plant-based ideas, check out our healthy vegetarian recipes.

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 carrots finely chopped
- 2 celery sticks finely chopped
- 2 onions finely chopped
- 2 tsp dried mixed herbs
- 2 garlic cloves crushed or finely grated
- 1 red pepper sliced
- 1 green pepper sliced
- 2-3 tsp chilli powder (depending on how hot you like it)
- 2 tsp sweet smoked paprika
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 400g can red kidney beans, drained
- 400g can black beans, drained
- 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
- 400ml vegetable stock
- cooked rice grated cheddar and soured cream, to serve

Method

- step 1**
Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a low-medium heat and fry the carrots, celery, onions and mixed herbs for 10-12 mins, stirring occasionally until the veg is soft but not golden. You may need to add a splash of water if the veg starts to catch.
- step 2**
Stir in the garlic and both peppers, and cook for a further 5 mins until the peppers begin to soften. Sprinkle in the chilli powder and paprika, turn up the heat to medium, then stir and cook for 1 min. Mix in the tomato purée and cook for a further 1 min, then pour in all of the beans, the tomatoes and stock.
- step 3**
Stir well, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for 25-35 mins until the beans are tender and the sauce has thickened. Serve with rice, grated cheddar and soured cream, if you like.

FASHION

A match made in fashion



Three decades later, Anna Wintour made the cover of "Vogue".

The global editorial director of the prestigious magazine recently appeared on the magazine's cover and was joined by Meryl Streep, who played the intimidating Miranda Priestly in "The Devil Wears Prada", a ruthless fashion magazine editor widely believed to be based on Wintour.

Who would have thought that two icons would be in the same frame for an iconic magazine cover, especially with "The Devil Wears Prada 2" just around the corner?

During the interview, Wintour shared that it is an honour to be portrayed by Streep, even though the character is not exactly how she is in reality.

"First of all, I'd like to say it's such an honour to be played by Meryl, I however distant Miranda is from myself," she said.

However, Wintour admitted that she was nervous for the upcoming sequel, sharing that when she heard the news, she called Streep to confirm if it was true or not.

"When I heard rumours that this new film might be happening, I called Meryl to ask if it was true. I knew she would tell me if it was going to be all right," she shared.

The 76-year-old said that she decided to fully trust what Streep told her when she called her back and assured her that everything was going to be fine.

"She called me back and said, 'Anna, I think it's going to be all right.' She told me very little about what happens in the film, but I trusted her implicitly," she said.

Now let's talk about the fashion for the magazine shoot.

How iconic is it that both legendary women wore Prada for the shoot?

Streep channelled her inner Miranda Priestly and wore a navy blue suit with a slightly unbuttoned beige shirt, black sunglasses and black pointy heels.

While Wintour wore a stunning red pleated dress, and of course, no outfit of Wintour's would be complete without sunglasses. She paired the dress with a purple necklace and snake print open-toe heels.

Since this is the most iconic magazine cover, everyone on the internet is raving about it.

"May I say one of the best 'Vogue' covers of all time," @haileyhenderson wrote.

"This is the cover we have been waiting for," @ellsm1 commented. **IoL**

Sport

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026™

GROUP STAGE

A	MEXICO SOUTH AFRICA KOREA REPUBLIC OF CANADA	G	GERMANY EGYPT IRAN NEW ZEALAND
B	CANADA SOUTH AFRICA COSTA RICA SWITZERLAND	H	SPAIN COSTA RICA SAUDI ARABIA URUGUAY
C	INDIA MEXICO HAITI SCOTLAND	I	FRANCE SOUTH AFRICA IRAQ NORWAY
D	USA NETHERLANDS AUSTRALIA YEMEN	J	ARGENTINA ALGERIA AUSTRALIA JORDAN
E	GERMANY GERMANY COTE D'IVOIRE ECUADOR	K	PORTUGAL GERMANY MEXICO COLOMBIA
F	NETHERLANDS NETHERLANDS NETHERLANDS NETHERLANDS	L	NETHERLANDS NETHERLANDS NETHERLANDS NETHERLANDS

FootGolf Rising: SA Stars Take Aim at Global Stage



By Lerato Mutlanyane

In South Africa's sports landscape, long dominated by rugby, cricket and football, a quiet revolution is gaining ground. FootGolf — a hybrid sport combining football and golf — is steadily attracting attention, with local athletes pushing it into the spotlight.

Played on a golf course using a standard size-5 football, the aim is simple: sink the ball into oversized cups in as few kicks as possible. But behind the simplicity lies a demanding mix of precision, power and mental discipline.

Among those leading the charge is Bloemfontein-born Pitsi Molebatsi, a former South African Under-23 footballer who once shared the field with stars like Itumeleng Khune and Kagiso Dikgacoi. A product of Grey College, Molebatsi boasts a silver medal from the SASOL 8 Nations Tournament and a gold with the SASSU national team at the FASU Games.

He transitioned to FootGolf in 2022, drawn by its technical depth and global opportunities. Since then, he has built an impressive resume — becoming South Africa's highest-ranked player at the 2023 FIGF World Cup, winning multiple titles, and setting an African record score of -17 in Zambia.

"My goal is to elevate FootGolf into the mainstream and create opportunities for young athletes," he says. Despite missing out on the 2026 World Cup qualifiers, Molebatsi remains focused, actively seeking sponsorship to continue competing internationally.

Also flying the flag is North West's Khutsafalo Tawana (52), a consistent performer on the FootGolf South Africa circuit. Known for her precision and composure, Tawana has represented the country internationally and continues to inspire young athletes.

"It teaches discipline and keeps young people focused," she says.

For both players, the mission is clear — grow the sport and prove FootGolf belongs on the global stage.



Kick-Off for Youth Opportunity

JN Sports Reporter

Opportunity in the Northern Cape moved from a distant promise to a tangible reality this past Easter weekend at the Thembinkosi Sports Ground in Petrusville.

Premier Zamani Saul hosted a high-impact football and netball tournament that served as a deliberate intervention for local youth.

The three-day event was designed to provide direction and visibility to talented athletes in a region where such platforms are often scarce.

Saul remained present throughout the weekend, moving beyond ceremonial roles to engage directly with coaches and players on the touchlines.

The tournament's mission was clear from the opening whistle.

"We cannot speak about unemployment only in statistics," Saul said while watching the teams warm up. "We must give young people something to hold onto. Sport is one of those tools—it gives discipline, it gives direction, and it opens doors," he added.

This sentiment was echoed by local organiser Kabelo Motsamai, who noted the high stakes for the participants.

"These boys are not just playing for trophies. They are playing to be seen. Many of them don't get this kind of platform. What the Premier has done is give them that chance," Motsamai said.

The opening day saw Thistles dominate Celebration Rovers, while Royal Eagles and Resolutions fought a tight contest.

On the netball courts, the energy was equally high as teams from Petrusville and Phillipstown competed with precision.

Netball coach Lerato Jacobs highlighted the importance of this active development.

"This is what we need more of," Jacobs said.

She continued: "Not just talk, but action. When young girls see this, they realise they also have a space, a future in sport. The Premier is not just speaking - he is doing."

Strategic intent underpinned the entire event, with Saul viewing sport as a vital form of social infrastructure.

"Sport allows us to reach young people in a way many other programmes cannot," Saul explained.

"It creates structure. It builds confidence. And importantly, it keeps them away from negative influences."

To bolster this inspiration, former professionals including Fabian McCarthy, Edelbert Dinha, and Jeanine Christian attended the finals.

Norman Smith, who rose from Kimberley to top-flight football, also lent his support.

He said: "There is so much talent here. What's been missing is exposure. What the Premier is doing is opening that door."

The presence of these legends reinforced the idea that professional success is achievable. McCarthy noted the impact of their arrival.

"When they see us here, they understand that it's possible."

We came from similar backgrounds. What they need is opportunity - and today, they have it."

Saul even joined the Masters match, a move that resonated with the spectators.

"It means something when a leader doesn't just talk, but joins you," said community member, Thabo Molefe.

As the event concluded, Saul committed to making these opportunities consistent throughout the year, ensuring that the momentum built in Petrusville continues to drive long-term change for the province's youth.

CLUBS	P	W	PTS
1 Mamelodi Sundowns	23	17	56
2 Orlando Pirates	23	17	54
3 Kaizer Chiefs	21	11	39
4 AmaZulu FC	23	11	38
5 Sekhukhune United	23	9	35
6 Durban City	23	10	35
7 Polokwane City	22	8	32
8 Golden Arrows	23	8	28
9 Stellenbosch FC	23	7	28
10 Siwelele FC	22	6	26
11 Richards Bay	23	6	26
12 TS Galaxy	23	7	25
13 Chippa United	24	5	23
14 Marumo Gallants	23	4	18
15 Orbit College FC	23	5	18
16 Magesi FC	22	3	17

TEAMS	P	W	PTS
1 Arsenal	31	21	70
2 Man City	30	18	61
3 Man Utd	31	19	55
4 Aston Villa	31	16	54
5 Liverpool	31	14	49
6 Chelsea	31	13	48
7 Brentford	31	13	46
8 Everton	31	13	46
9 Fulham	31	13	44
10 Brighton	31	11	43
11 Sunderland	31	11	43
12 Newcastle	31	12	42
13 Bournemouth	31	9	42
14 C Palace	30	10	39
15 Leeds	31	7	33
16 Nottingham Forest F.C	31	8	32

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