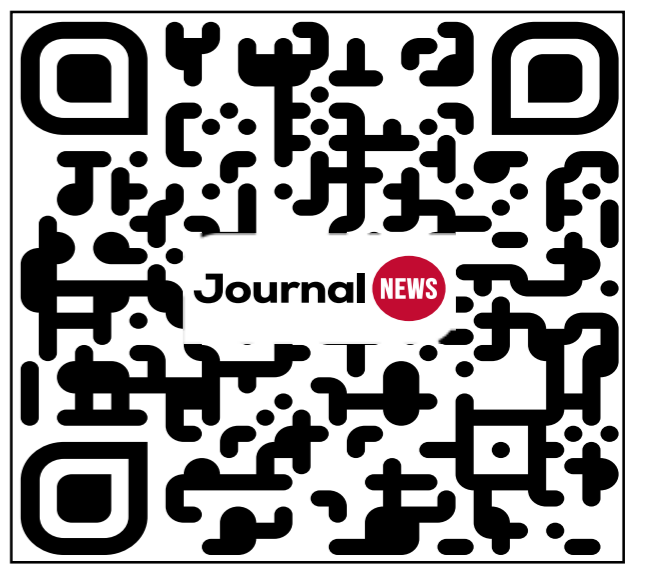


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INSIDE ANC MANGAUNG LOBBYING SCUFFLE

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- Dark-horse emerges from the fold as factions regroup and lobbying gains momentum
- Nullified conference blocks Setjhaba Machakela's unopposed rise to treasurer

SCOPA HOT SEAT EXPOSES MANGAUNG CORRUPTION

By Refilwe Mochoari

The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality is entangled in a scandal with the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) this week that revealed damning evidence of financial mismanagement while the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) uncovered corruption allegations within the metro police and the Integrated Public Transport Network (IPTN), dating back to 2017.

What was once touted as a "rescue plan" has now spiraled into criminal probes, exposing the torrid situation probing further scrutiny over per-

sistent service delivery failures, and exhibiting a city on the brink of collapse.

On Tuesday 5 May, Mayor Gregory Nthatsi, City Manager Sello Moroe, and Chief Financial Officer Zuziwe Thekiso appeared before Parliament's Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) to defend the municipality from the findings of the AG and the SIU investigations.

The municipality is under fire for spending 113% of its budget while only 50% of its service delivery targets were met.

Mangaung has been under provincial intervention since January 2020 and was escalated to na-

tional intervention in April 2022. A financial recovery plan (FRP) was approved in September 2023 to stabilize finances and restore governance.

According to AGSA, the municipality spent R1.3 billion on unauthorized expenditure, R324 million on irregular expenditures, R67 million on fruitless and wasteful expenditure, R192 million on under-spending on conditional grants, and as a result the National Treasury withheld R140 million in funding due to slow project implementation which impacted infrastructure projects.

The report states that only 26% of a water project valued at over R106 million is complete.

It also states that Mangaung owes R642 million for bulk water, while losing nearly half of its water supply through leaks, burst pipes, and illegal connections amounting to R495 million.

This is a bleak picture of what the municipality's financial management and performance looks like.

The AG says it could not verify critical information such as water revenue, overtime payments, and whether some goods and services paid for were delivered.

Based on the hearings that were raised, SCOPA raised concerns regarding the mismanagement of finances and poor service **Continues on Page 2**



Premier Soccer League Race Down to the Wire

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Katlego Lebogang shines in 'Law, Love & Betrayal'

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Mbalula Entrusted to Lead Province

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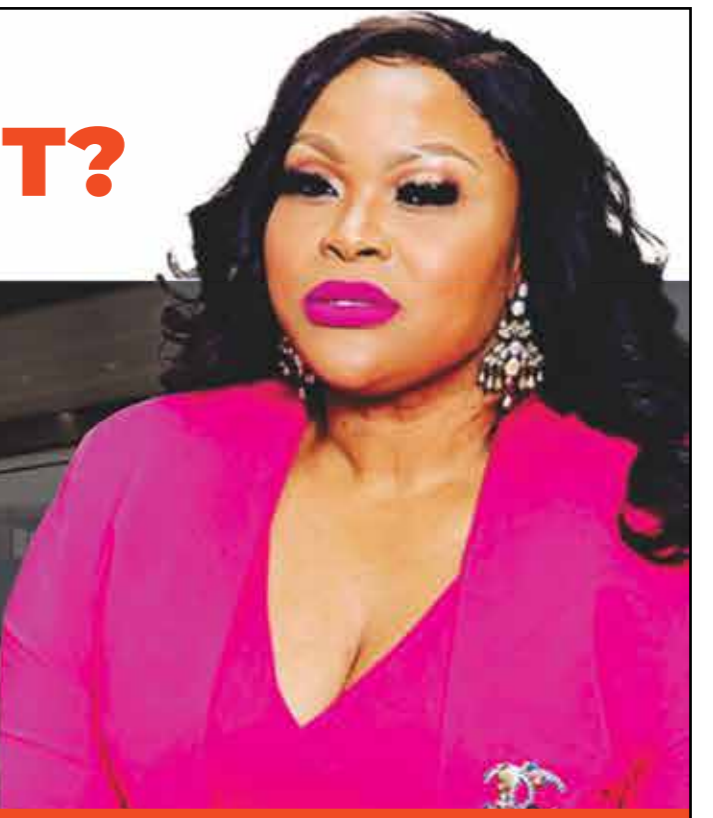
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Farmer training to bolster livestock value chain



By Phemelo Manankong

The commodity's member, Sehularo Sehularo, highlighted that the commodity attended the event as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with industry stakeholders and expand opportunities for farmer development.

Sehularo stated that attending such a workshop is critical, as it equips farmers with valuable information for improved livestock production.

"Farmers were made aware that Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) might take five to ten years before it can be certain that it has been thoroughly dealt with. The movement of animals must therefore be strictly adhered to said Sehularo.

"The Beef and Mutton Commodity aims to strengthen its position within the production value chain and produce quality products for the market. They have entered into a contract with Beefmaster Group to sell cattle directly to the company, creating new marketing opportunities for local farmers.

He says the commodity also seeks to specialise across the broader food value chain, including livestock, poultry, crops, and vegetable commodities.

The workshop was attended by various livestock farmers, veterinarians, and key stakeholders within the beef industry.

Sehularo says part of the workshop also focused on stock theft, which continues to cripple the sector and force farmers out of business, and they JN_Faarners were encouraged to report incidents of stock theft.

"The commodity has secured a meeting with Ser-nick Management within the next two weeks to deliberate on how they can assist in terms of training and other related matters.

"They have made it clear that they require continued support and guidance, he said.

- **Dark-horse emerges from the fold as factions regroup and lobbying gains momentum**
- **Nullified conference blocks Setjhaba Machakela's unopposed rise to treasurer**

By JN Reporter

With the ANC Mangaung regional conference hanging in the balance following its dramatic collapse over the weekend, intense behind-the-scenes lobbying has shifted into overdrive as factions scramble to reconfigure their slates — and an unexpected dark horse has emerged as a serious contender for the influential position of regional secretary.

Multiple party insiders told Journal News — this week — that negotiations have intensified among branch delegates and power brokers since the conference was nullified, with alliances being reshaped amid uncertainty over when the gathering will reconvene.

While frontrunners had dominated discussions ahead of the aborted conference, a lesser-expected candidate has arisen from the plenary flow during the nomination process on Saturday and is now gaining momentum as some delegates push for a compromise figure capable of uniting fractured blocs within the region.

With about 30 voting delegates backing him ahead of the conference, former provincial and regional secretary, Paseka Nompondo, shifted the dynamics and tightened the contest between the two factions, with deputy chairperson, Vusi Soqaga, was poised to topple incumbent chairperson, Lawrence Mathae, for the region's top position.



Elected unopposed in the nullified conference, Setjhaba Machakela (Left) and former provincial secretary, Paseka Nompondo (right). Pictures: Supplied

Inside ANC Mangaung lobbying scuffle

Backed for his "experience and love for the organisation," according to party insiders, Nompondo is said to have leveraged his support base to bolster Soqaga's faction while effectively ending regional spokesperson Ncamile Nxangisa's bid for the regional secretary position.

"It was interesting to see how comrade Nompondo manoeuvred his way onto the Soqaga slate using his

numbers. He quickly moved from being a dark horse to a compromise frontrunner for the position in just one late-night meeting.

A decision had to be made within a split second to make way for him and withdraw comrade Nxangisa from contesting against incumbent regional secretary Sabelo Pitso," said a party insider.

She expressed confidence that while discussions

over other positions continue ahead of the rerun conference, reportedly set for next week, the names of Nompondo and Setjhaba Machakela remain dominant in internal conversations.

However, according to another source close to the developments, questions are emerging over Machakela's sudden rise, as he would have been elected unopposed for the position of regional treasurer, had the conference not collapsed.

"It is difficult at this stage to say with certainty whether comrade Machakela will return when the conference is reconvened. But things are not looking good for him as lobbying intensifies," the source said.

As lobbying intensified and shifts were made within the Soqaga faction, a series of consultation meetings followed, prompting the Mathae grouping to level the playing field by removing Lulama Titi-Odili from the chairperson race and repositioning her as a candidate for deputy regional secretary against Deli-we Mei.

Titi-Odili previously held the same position in the last Regional Executive Committee (REC), whose term has since expired and was replaced by the current Regional Task Team (RTT).

"It was then realised that the Mathae slate was on the verge of losing the conference by about five votes or a few more and needed to consolidate the support bases of both Mathae and Titi-Odili.

That ultimately gave their slate the upper hand during the nomination process ... it was a very tight lead," said another source.

During the nomination process in plenary, conducted through a show of hands, delegates also nominated Vumile Nikelo, to deputise Mathae, while Manthuse Letawana was put forward by the Soqaga faction for the deputy chairperson position.

ANC provincial spokesperson, Thabo Meeko, says the PEC is awaiting the green light from national leadership to reconvene the regional conference.

"The PWC, followed by the PEC, met on Monday and received reports from deployees at the conference, which indicated that no foul play was committed during the conference. As a result, we are now awaiting national leadership to give the go-ahead to reconvene the conference," said Meeko.

Fuel hike hits Free State taxis as commuters ditch rides for cheaper alternatives



Fuel Hike Hits Free State Transport Hard as Taxi Operators Face Passenger Shift. Picture: Bernell Simons

By Bernell Simons

A steep fuel price hike is squeezing Free State taxi operators from both ends — forcing fare increases while driving cash-strapped commuters toward cheaper transport alternatives.

With diesel rising by R6.19 per litre and petrol by R3.27, operators across Bloemfontein, Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu and Excelsior say they are already losing passengers to buses and informal "four-plus-one" taxis as households cut back on transport costs amid mounting financial pressure.

Taxi fares on some routes have already increased from R15 to R18, a move the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTAXI) says was unavoidable as operators battle rising fuel, maintenance and insurance costs. According to Heidedal Route 031 chairperson Solly Julius, taxi owners have absorbed fuel increases for years, often keeping fares unchanged for up to four years despite fluctuating prices.

"We've reached a point where it is no longer sustainable," the association said, describing the latest fare adjustments as the result of years of mounting operational pressure rather than a once-off response.

But the increases are already changing commuter behaviour. For many workers and students who rely on public transport daily, even a R3 increase per trip can add more than R100 to monthly travel expenses — pushing them to seek cheaper alternatives.

Taxi owner Tom Klassen said the impact is already visible. "People are looking for cheaper ways to trav-

el now," Klassen said. "If buses or four-plus-one taxis are more affordable, commuters will choose them. That directly affects our business."

Bus operators are among those seeing increased demand. Interstate Bus Lines (IBL), which services routes between Bloemfontein, Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu, offers commuter packages ranging from about R155.50 weekly to roughly R684 monthly — making buses a more predictable and often cheaper option for regular passengers.

Interstate Bus Lines chief executive officer George Mokgothu said commuters tend to reassess their transport choices when costs rise.

"When transport costs increase, commuters naturally begin looking at more affordable options," he said. "Bus services offer stability because passengers know what they will pay over a week or month."

He added that fuel hikes often trigger immediate shifts in commuter patterns.

"We usually see an increase in demand for bus services during sharp fuel price hikes. It shows how quickly commuters respond when costs rise."

Meanwhile, informal "four-plus-one" operators are also attracting commuters by offering flexible fares that often undercut traditional taxi routes.

For taxi operators, that growing competition presents a difficult balancing act — raise fares and risk losing more commuters, or absorb rising costs and operate at a loss.

Molefi Edward Goai, a taxi operator on the Thaba Nchu-Excelsior route, said the pressure is becoming unsustainable.

"It is going to have a negative impact because we'll be forced to increase fares, and we know our customers are already struggling," he said.

Goai said some operators may soon be forced to prioritise only their most profitable routes.

"We are now going to focus on routes that can sustain the business so we can maintain our vehicles. We are already spending a lot fixing taxis because of poor road conditions."

He added that regulatory compliance is another financial burden. "We have to take taxis for roadworthiness tests every six months, and minibuses every year. That also costs money."

The GBTA has warned that failing to increase fares could push some operators out of business entirely, reducing transport options and threatening jobs across the sector.

The ripple effects are also being felt beyond transport. In the Free State's agricultural sector, where diesel powers machinery, irrigation systems and logistics, farmers warn that higher fuel costs could soon translate into rising food prices.

Economist Dr Thabang Ndlovu from the University of the Witwatersrand said the increase reflects a broader cost-push inflation problem.

"When diesel rises this sharply, those costs move through supply chains and eventually reach consumers," he said.

With the Free State heavily dependent on road transport, the impact is expected to spread quickly — from commuting costs to grocery bills — leaving households to absorb yet another financial blow.

SCOPA Hot Seat Exposes Mangaung Corruption



Continues from Page 2

delivery at Mangaung.

However in his presentation before SCOPA, Nthathi said the period under review by the AG, accounts for 2021/22, 2022/23, and mainly 2023/24.

"Now without any excuse, we came into the municipality, effectively from October 2023 when budgets and all processes were run

SCOPA Committee Chairperson Songezo Zibi says the AG findings and SIU ongoing investigations at Mangaung show what can happen in just a short period of five years in a municipality.

"There is a level of financial recklessness that we often see in local government that we do not often see elsewhere.

"Politicians in local government cannot make the right call on how to spend money correctly.

"What we see in these municipalities is that the officials make poor financial decisions, and this is often the result of political incompetence.

"We find that mostly the decisions are not malicious, but they are just terrible decision-making from politicians, said Zibi.

Zibi also says however the current problems in Mangaung largely emanate from the previous administration.

"I am not saying that the current leadership is innocent, but if we have to be honest, the current leadership has only been there for three years most of these crimes were committed way before they took office at the municipality," he said.

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Hundreds displaced as floods batter three provinces



By Matshidiso Selebeleng

Torrential rains have left a trail of devastation across the Free State, North West, and Northern Cape, displacing hundreds of families, damaging homes and infrastructure, and forcing children out of school as floodwaters continue to rise in several communities.

The severe weather follows a Level 6 warning issued by the South African Weather Service on April 27 for disruptive rainfall, which triggered widespread flooding in parts of the country.

According to a situational report compiled by South African Red Cross Society official Claudia Mini, at least 115 households in Bloemfontein were affected by flooding, with homes submerged and informal settlements suffering extensive damage. Areas hardest hit include Bergman Square, Peterswart, Phomolong informal settlement, and MK Square.

In Welkom, the impact was even more severe, with 212 households evacuated to places of safety on May 1 after heavy rains and overflowing water systems worsened flooding conditions in Wards 16 and 25.

The floods have also dealt a blow to local agriculture, with two soya bean farms reporting significant crop losses due to inundation. Relief efforts in the area are being coordinated through the Lejweleputswa Municipality Disaster Centre, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and the Department of Social Development.

In the Northern Cape, wards 13, 14, and 15 in Joe Morolong Local Municipality were among the hardest hit, with villages such as Heiso, Dikhing, Bojelaopotsane, and Skerma affected by rising floodwaters.

An early childhood development centre was damaged, while some residents were left stranded as floodwaters cut off access routes and surrounded homes. Authorities also reported eroded roads and damage to a bridge in the area.

Response teams have faced challenges reaching some communities because floodwaters have made several roads inaccessible, delaying damage assessments.

In the North West, homes in Ramochana and Seraleng were damaged, while at least 33 houses were destroyed in Mamerotse village.

Further storm-related destruction was reported in Matlosana, where strong winds damaged homes in Khuma by ripping roofs off both formal and RDP houses. Hailstorms also shattered windows and damaged walls in Verdwaal and Mahikeng.

While no fatalities have been reported in the three provinces, hundreds of residents have had to be evacuated as authorities continue monitoring conditions.

The South African Red Cross Society has warned of serious health risks in the aftermath of the floods, particularly due to sewage contamination and disrupted sanitation systems.

The organisation said communities could face outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, and typhoid as contaminated floodwaters seep into water supplies. Cases of leptospirosis and hepatitis A could also increase in areas where stagnant water remains.

Secretary General of the South African Red Cross Society, Molefi Takalo, said ahead of World Red Cross Day that the organisation remains committed to supporting affected communities.

"Our teams and volunteers remain on the ground, working with government and local partners to conduct assessments, provide psychosocial support, and distribute relief items to affected families during this difficult period," said Takalo.

He also appealed for donations of essential supplies and financial support to help expand emergency relief operations as the scale of devastation continues to grow.

The South African Red Cross Society said assessments are ongoing as rainfall persists and communities brace for further flooding.

PUBLIC NOTICE



MANGAUNG METRO MUNICIPALITY ROAD MASTER PLAN

The Mangaung Metro Municipality invites all residents, stakeholders, community representatives, developers, and professionals to attend a public participation meeting on the municipality's draft Road Master Plan.

Ongoing development within the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, including numerous rezoning and township establishment applications, anticipated future land use changes, and continuous updates to the Mangaung Spatial Development Framework (SDF), has necessitated the preparation of a comprehensive Road Master Plan. The Road Master Plan will provide strategic guidance on current and future road network requirements and will form a critical component of the Municipality's Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan (CITP).

As part of the Mangaung Road Master Plan Project, a public participation meeting is scheduled in accordance with the prescribed governance and stakeholder engagement processes. The purpose of the meeting is to present the draft plan, and afford stakeholders and members of the public an opportunity to provide input.

The public participation meeting will take place as follows:

Date: Thursday, 14 May 2026
Venue: Indaba Auditorium, Bram Fischer Building
Time: 10h00 – 12h00

The draft Road Master Plan document is available from **28 April 2026**, in Room 1022, 10th floor, Bram Fischer Building.

For more information and enquiries kindly contact Gert Potgieter: 083 260 9825; email: gert.potgieter@mangaung.co.za

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Mbalula Entrusted to Lead Province

MEC's second stint as Acting Premier comes amid infrastructure and employment milestones, writes Mpho Sekharume



Free State Community Safety, Roads and Transport MEC, Jabu Mbalula, has been appointed to serve as the Acting Premier of the Free State, assuming the province's highest executive responsibilities in the absence of Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae.

This appointment, effective from early May 2026, sees the experienced administrator steering provincial governance while the incumbent fulfils official duties abroad.

The decision to entrust Mbalula with the acting premiership comes at a time when his department has demonstrated a rare ability to exceed government-mandated targets, which have positioned his department as a leading force in the battle against unemployment through aggressive infrastructure development and inclusive transport policies.

During the 2025/2026 financial year, Mbalula's department created thousands of work opportunities - significantly outperforming the department's initial target.

"When we first came in as the seventh adminis-

tration, we made a commitment to our people that through our infrastructure programme, we will create a total number of 3 500 work opportunities, and we have in 2025/26 created 4 115 work opportunities," he revealed during his recent 2026 Departmental Budget Vote at the Bluegumbosch Multipurpose Hall in QwaQwa.

This achievement provides a critical buffer for the province, which recently saw its official unemployment rate climb to 37.2% according to the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey.

By prioritising labour-intensive projects, Mbalula's administration has managed to direct economic relief toward 2 291 women, 1 977 youth and 24 people with disabilities - proving that strategic infrastructure spending can yield immediate positive results even in a volatile economic climate.

The department's impact extends beyond job statistics and into the physical transformation of the province's logistics network. Under Mbalula's oversight, several key provincial routes have reached completion, including the Viljoenskroon to Orkney road as well as the Kroonstad to Hennenman and Virginia roads.

These projects, alongside the construction of 13 rural bridges through the Welisizwe Rural Bridge Programme, have dismantled barriers to economic participation for isolated communities.

Such strides in road maintenance and fleet modernisation, which included the procurement of 298 new government vehicles, contributed to the Free State being recognised as the second best-performing province in South Africa for road safety during the re-

cent festive season.

Mbalula's approach to governance is increasingly defined by social inclusivity, particularly for marginalised commuters. His department notably championed the launch of standardised transport hand signs for the deaf community in June 2025 - a landmark move that integrated accessibility into the provincial transport framework.

Having served as South Africa's Ambassador to Romania from 2017 to 2021, where he managed high-level bilateral relations before returning to provincial politics, Mbalula's administrative prowess and leadership capacity leaves little room for doubt in his abilities to steer the province.

This current tenure as Acting Premier is not a new frontier for Mbalula, as he has consistently been viewed as a reliable hand for executive continuity.

He previously served in the same acting capacity on a month-long stint that started on 14 November 2025, during which he managed the province's year-end administrative transitions.

Mbalula's repeated elevation to this position, therefore, reflects a high degree of confidence in his ability to harmonise departmental performance with broader provincial oversight. His temporary leadership provides a period of stability, underscored by a proven track record of converting provincial budgets into tangible infrastructure and realised employment opportunities.

Potch Families Cry Foul Over Delayed Housing Promises



Baieping Ext 11 calls on the JB Marks local municipality to keep their promises. Picture: Supplied

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

For nearly a decade, residents of Baieping Extension 11 in Potchefstroom have been waiting for land and housing they say were promised to them in 2016 — and now they want answers from the JB Marks Local Municipality after years of delays, confusion and what they describe as empty promises.

Community members say they were issued documents in January 2016 containing stand numbers for plots where their houses were expected to be built. At the time, they were allegedly told that only the installation of water and sewage infrastructure remained before construction could begin. Ten years later, they say nothing has happened.

Residents claim they later discovered that new documents had been issued, but they were never informed that their original paperwork needed to be renewed and are now being told those documents are no longer valid.

"They keep calling meetings and promise that they will come and resolve the issue, but nothing of that nature ever happens. All we want to know is what happened to those portions that were promised to us because all of a sudden there are new papers that we know

nothing about," said community member Mathabiso Sekano.

Their frustration has been compounded by overcrowding in their current settlement, which they say was originally meant to accommodate 105 households.

According to residents, 96 families were initially relocated there from Roma, but the population has since grown, leaving the area severely overcrowded.

"When we go to the council, they keep telling us about overflow and that there is no vacant space for it," residents said.

Community members say they feel ignored by the municipality despite repeatedly raising the issue since 2016. They argue that the process has been dragged out unnecessarily while their living conditions continue to deteriorate.

They also dispute the municipality's claims that there is no available land, alleging that vacant spaces are regularly sold or used for other developments.

Another source of frustration is confusion over ward boundaries. Residents say they were initially under Ward 27 but later heard they had been moved to Ward 18 — without any formal communication.

"That is also what is giving us problems be-

cause we don't know who we should talk to. What if the Ward 18 councillor is unable to help, because we were given those papers while we were under Ward 27? What makes things worse is that we hear about these changes through rumours and have never received formal communication," residents said.

For many families, the delays are deeply personal.

"This is painful because I have four children and we live with my father in a tiny two-bedroom shack, so we are overcrowded," said Sekano.

Another resident, who asked to remain anonymous, said their living situation is even more difficult due to the size of their home and the number of people living there.

"All we ask is for them to give us those portions so that we are able to build proper houses — even if it's just a bigger shack that can accommodate our families," the resident said.

Residents said municipal officials last visited the community earlier this year and promised to send surveyors to assess the area, but months later they are still waiting.

The JB Marks Local Municipality had not responded to requests for comment by the time of publication.

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Community frustrated as clinic battles month-long electricity outage



Mmabana local clinic in the second month without electricity. Picture: Thembisile Mlangeni

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

For more than a month, residents of Phahameng and surrounding communities have been forced to endure long queues, delayed treatment and hours of frustration as Mmabana Clinic continues operating without electricity — leaving patients and staff scrambling to cope in the dark.

Community members say the outage has slowed services to a crawl, with nurses forced to retrieve patient files manually because computers are offline.

Patients often arrive before sunrise in hopes of being helped quickly and returning home, but many say they spend most of the day waiting for assistance.

One frustrated resident, Mantoa Moloi, who visits the clinic regularly for chronic medication, said the situation has become unbearable — especially as winter approaches and temperatures continue to drop.

“We queue for a very long time because they still have to go look for our files manually, as they cannot use the computer because of this very issue.

“This has been our reality since March, and what is frustrating is that no one is saying anything to us; we are just left in the

dark,” she said.

Moloi said patients are often made to wait for hours despite arriving early, adding that services usually run smoothly when electricity is available.

Another patient, who asked to remain anonymous, said she was shocked to find the clinic without power and little explanation from officials.

“We don’t know what is happening. One day we came here and found the clinic dark. After that, we were just told the computers were off — nothing more.

“We bring our young and sick children here, but sometimes you wait until knock-off time hoping to get assistance,” she said.

She questioned why the clinic does not have backup generators to ease disruptions during outages.

“They would make things easier because it is not nice camping here the whole day while sick or with a sick child, like you are going to work.”

Another resident, identified only as Pulane, said the outage has also affected medical processes at the facility.

“This has made things hard for everyone, including the nurses, because it slows everything down. Sometimes we are not able to get results for tests done here, and they are always blaming the electricity,” she

said.

Pulane also alleged that some patients have complained about missing files.

Free State Department of Health spokesperson Mondli Mvambi confirmed that officials are aware of the issue, saying it emerged at the end of the financial year.

“The interruption in electricity supply is due to the electricity DB board that burned inside the clinic. This affected the whole wiring and, hence, the electricity supply interruptions. The procurement process to restore electricity is in the final stages,” he said.

Mvambi said despite the outage, all primary healthcare services have continued.

Meanwhile, Free State Health MEC Menyatsa Mahlatsi recently announced a major infrastructure drive during the department’s budget vote, highlighting plans to improve healthcare facilities across the province.

“In 2026/27, we will fund 138 projects with a total budget of R647.9 million, primarily supported by the Health Facility Revitalisation Grant and Infrastructure Enhancement Allocation,” Mahlatsi said.

The programme includes upgrades to clinics, hospitals, EMS infrastructure, mortuaries, nursing schools, health technology and maintenance contracts.



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Murder of Mahikeng business couple sparks crime debate in legislature



By Bernell Simons

The brutal murder of a Mahikeng business couple during a robbery has reignited concerns over violent crime in North West, with lawmakers across party lines calling for tougher policing, stronger crime prevention measures and urgent intervention to restore public confidence in safety.

Concerns over violent crime and policing capacity dominated Tuesday’s North West Legislature sitting after Honourable Sonakile tabled a motion highlighting the murder of Manuel and Maria Gomez, who were killed during a robbery at their business premises in Golfview, Mahikeng, on 24 April 2026. “The shocking brutality of this incident and the broader climate of violent crime affecting communities and small businesses across the North West province cannot be ignored,” Sonakile told the House.

He called for intensified crime prevention strategies and greater protection for vulnerable communities, while noting the arrest of five suspects linked to the case.

“Justice must prevail and our communities must be made safe again,” he said.

The motion drew support across party lines.

ANC member Honourable Ndise urged police to remain vigilant and ensure investigators are protected after reports that a police officer linked to the case was allegedly followed to her home.

“We urge the South African Police Service to follow through and ensure that criminals do not intimidate those investigating the case,” Ndise said.

EFF representative Honourable Mwema also backed the motion, extending condolences to the

Gomez family and calling for accountability.

“We wish to see justice being done and ensure that none of these criminals enjoy impunity,” Mwema said.

Earlier in the sitting, the ANC also highlighted policing interventions aimed at curbing crime in the province.

Honourable Dyle praised the South African Police Service for introducing drone technology under Acting Commissioner Major General Ray Naidoo, describing it as a step toward proactive policing.

“The deployment of drone technology will enhance real-time aerial surveillance, improve situational awareness, and enable law enforcement to shift from reactive to proactive policing strategies,” he said.

He added that the technology could help improve policing in rural areas where vast distances and limited resources often pose challenges.

The ANC also welcomed Operation Shanela 2, a high-intensity police operation in Rustenburg targeting illegal firearms, drug trafficking and undocumented individuals, which resulted in arrests and increased police visibility.

While several motions were debated during the sitting, rising crime remained a recurring concern.

Legislators repeatedly called for intelligence-driven policing, stronger cooperation between communities and law enforcement, and increased police visibility in high-risk areas and township business hubs.

The sitting ended with broad agreement that while recent interventions are a step in the right direction, sustained action will be needed to tackle crime and rebuild public trust in safety across the province.

Public Works MEC Budget Highlights Department success

By Refilwe Mochuari

Last week, at the Kopanong Indoor Sports Centre in Welkom, the MEC for Free State Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dibolelo Manche, tabled her departmental budget speech to strengthen infrastructure and service delivery in the province.

The department’s 2026/27 financial year budget allocation is sitting at R2.3 billion.

Manche reaffirmed her commitment to building the provinces commitment to rebuilding and safeguarding public assets while enhancing service delivery.

She while this allocation reflects governments commitment to infrastructure and service delivery, it also lays bare the fiscal constraints facing the province.

She also said that the increase in the budget is driven largely by the escalating cost of municipal services, property rates, and the maintenance of an ageing asset portfolio.

“In real terms, this represents a 1.21% decrease from the previous year, a decrease that will further exacerbate our ability to meet the huge backlog in maintenance, nor the rising cost of utilities and property rates,” she said.

Some of the commitments that were made by Manche during her budget speech are, in administration.

She announced that the department has made significant progress in its administrative capacity.

She said they have exceeded the training target, and delivered 44 training interventions against a target of 24, achieving 176% performance.

“These programmes enhanced technical administrative and leadership capacity across the department.

“We surpassed our recruitment target, filling 37 posts against a target of 30 (123%) contributing to improved operational stability and service delivery,



she said.

On public works and maintenance, Manche said the department has completed the refurbishment of Lady Brand House, which is now fully utilised by the Department of Agriculture.

She said the department has installed solar energy solutions at MPL Village and prestige houses, advancing energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

“The switchgear upgrade at Fidel Castro Building was successfully completed improving safety and reliability.

“We procured and initiated installation of a fire lift at OR Tambo House to enhance safety compliance, she said.

On Education and Health Infrastructure, Manche emphasized that construction of six schools hostels and three primary healthcare facilities are underway and almost complete with most of them being over 50% complete.

She said to continue to strengthen management of the provincial property portfolio, the immovable asset register now stands at 4882 properties, worth

R13 billion.

“We identified 29 unused properties for disposal, unqualified value through competitive processes.

“We successfully hosted the property investment summit in November 2025, showcasing 16 properties to potential investors.

“Over the past seven years, 19 state owned building have been refurbished and repurposed reducing leasing costs, she said.

Manche also said the department had paid R697 million to municipalities for services and R562 million for property rates.

“We are at an advanced stage of implementing integrated property management systems to modernize asset management, she added.

On Extended Public Works Programme she said the artisan development programme produced 45 qualified artisans and strengthened maintenance capacity across municipalities.

She announced that the provincial EPWP performance offered 48399 total work opportunities, and they secured a budget of R49.9 million for 2026/27 financial year.

SALGA urges stronger accountability and partnerships to drive municipal economic revival



By Bernell Simons

South African Local Government Association (SALGA) President Bheke Stofile has warned that weak governance and declining accountability in municipalities continue to choke service delivery and stall local economic growth, calling for urgent ethical leadership and stronger collaboration to reverse the trend.

Opening the National Summit on Local Economic Development in Gauteng, Stofile said municipalities must prioritise creating an enabling environment that attracts investment, strengthens partnerships and drives inclusive long-term growth.

He stressed that Local Economic Development (LED) cannot succeed in silos, but depends on coordinated action between government, the private sector and communities to unlock opportunities and improve service delivery outcomes.

A key concern in his address was the erosion of trust in local government, which he said can only be restored through ethical leadership, sound financial management and improved accountability systems.

"Ethical leadership, good governance and financial discipline are essential to restore confidence in local government," he said.

Stofile also highlighted infrastructure develop-

ment and better resource mobilisation as critical levers for stimulating growth, particularly in rural and underserved areas where development gaps remain wide.

He further pointed to skills shortages within municipalities as a major constraint, warning that limited capacity continues to undermine the implementation of effective development programmes and economic initiatives.

While acknowledging the role of informal traders in sustaining livelihoods, Stofile cautioned that LED extends beyond the informal sector, encompassing formal business development, investment promotion and infrastructure expansion.

He called for a more inclusive and coordinated approach to economic development that supports both emerging entrepreneurs and established businesses, ensuring broad-based job creation and economic resilience.

Stofile urged all stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and align development strategies, warning that fragmented efforts would continue to delay meaningful progress.

He concluded that sustainable local economic growth depends on well-governed, financially stable municipalities capable of working with communities and the private sector to deliver tangible results.

NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT



"Occupational tenants" government pushes tenure

By Bernell Simons

For generations, many rural families have lived on the same land — farming it, raising children on it and depending on it for survival — yet legally owning none of it.

Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Zolile Burns-Ncamashe says that contradiction lies at the heart of persistent rural poverty in South Africa.

Speaking during a national rural development en-

gagement, Burns-Ncamashe warned that the country's land ownership system continues to lock rural communities out of economic opportunities by denying them secure land tenure.

Without formal ownership or legally recognised rights, many households remain unable to build wealth, access financing or use land as an economic asset.

He described the current system as one that reproduces inequality across rural communities where families have occupied land for decades — and in some

cases generations — without formal ownership recognition.

"The current architecture of land ownership patterns is such that it creates generational poverty," he said, adding that many rural residents remain little more than "de facto occupational tenants" on land they rely on for survival.

Burns-Ncamashe argued that secure tenure could be a turning point for rural households by transforming land from a place of survival into a source of economic mobility.

Heinmann calls for overhaul of rural development system to unlock investment

By Bernell Simons

Bureaucratic delays, fragmented coordination and unresolved land administration challenges are continuing to hold back rural development and discourage investment in South Africa's rural communities, according to Acting Director-General for Land Reform and Rural Development Clinton Heinmann.

Speaking at the National Rural Development Indaba, Heinmann said the gathering was aimed at identifying practical, integrated solutions to long-standing barriers, including infrastructure shortages, land access constraints, agricultural underdevelopment and limited economic inclusion.

He said rural development must shift away from fragmented interventions towards a "holistic development" approach driven by coordinated planning, stronger institutional partnerships and measurable outcomes.

"There is clearly an issue in the international world where governments often assume positions without driving real economic growth," Heinmann said, adding that the indaba was designed to confront challenges directly rather than avoid difficult policy realities.

A key concern raised was the continued centralisation of land administration processes, which he said creates delays that undermine development efforts in rural areas.

He explained that communities and traditional leaders often struggle to secure approvals for projects due to overly bureaucratic systems that are disconnected from local conditions.

"If you want to establish a proper project in a ru-



ral community, you still have to go through lengthy approval processes," he said, warning that such delays frustrate investors and slow economic activity in communal areas.

Heinmann stressed that land reform should not only focus on redistribution, but must actively support productive use of land, including agricultural expansion, infrastructure development and rural industrialisation.

He said the department is developing an integrated rural development framework that prioritises infrastructure, agriculture, forestry, industrial mobilisation and climate resilience, as rural communities increasingly face risks from floods, droughts and fires.

He also emphasised the need to broaden participation in rural development programmes, particular-

ly for women, young people and persons with disabilities.

According to Heinmann, the outcomes of the indaba will feed into a wider rural development policy aimed at improving coordination between government departments and strengthening implementation capacity.

"We must identify constraints and assist in identifying reforms, partnerships and funding approaches required to improve the impact of rural development," he said.

The National Rural Development Indaba brought together government leaders, traditional authorities, development practitioners and community stakeholders to explore strategies to improve land governance, expand economic participation and raise living standards in rural areas across the country.

Rural development "not a solo act"

By Bernell Simons

Weak coordination between government departments, poor communication and fragmented planning are continuing to undermine service delivery in rural communities, KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Thembeni KaMadlopha-Mthethwa has warned.

Addressing a rural development engagement, KaMadlopha-Mthethwa said rural challenges such as water infrastructure, land utilisation, sanitation, electricity provision and agricultural productivity must be treated as an integrated national priority rather than isolated departmental mandates.

She stressed that progress in rural development can only be achieved through joint action between government, the private sector and civil society.

"The issue of water development is not a departmental issue, but an issue of all departments and all sectors within the country," she said.

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa raised concern over persistent service delivery gaps in rural areas, noting that many households still lack reliable access to basic services despite progress since 1994.

She pointed to available statistics showing that a significant number of households, particularly those headed by women, continue to face unemployment and limited access to essential services.

The MEC also highlighted ongoing inequalities in infrastructure distribution, saying rural communities remain disadvantaged despite national development programmes.

She warned that poor coordination in water-related projects is leading to duplication, inefficiencies and wasted resources.

"We need to know which projects each depart-



ment is running so that we can avoid duplication while other areas receive nothing," she said.

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa also raised concern about land reform implementation, arguing that redistributed land must be actively utilised to support food security and rural livelihoods.

"Land without production does not help our people," she said, calling for stronger support systems to ensure that agricultural land is productively used.

She further criticised weak coordination between government structures, saying clearer communication between departments, provincial leadership and implementing agencies is urgently needed to avoid delays and administrative bottlenecks.

DEVELOPMENT INDABA



ts on their own land”: re reform for rural growth

“Once there is security of tenure, it means people own assets,” he said. “It immediately migrates households from a state of indigence to a state of asset ownership.” But he stressed that land reform cannot end with redistribution alone. Government, he said, must ensure that land becomes productive — particularly in rural and communal areas where agricultural potential remains largely untapped. Referencing Section 25 of South Africa’s Constitution, Burns-Ncamashe said government must move

with urgency in implementing tenure reform as part of broader rural development efforts. He also called for stronger coordination between departments responsible for agriculture, infrastructure, transport and local government, arguing that rural development cannot succeed through fragmented programmes. Officials at the engagement said traditional leaders, municipalities and District Development Model structures are increasingly being used to align development priorities and improve implementation at local

level. Burns-Ncamashe said rural communities themselves must remain at the centre of those decisions. “Without their participation, developmental planning in rural areas will remain incomplete,” he said. His remarks come amid growing national pressure to tackle rural poverty, unemployment, inequality and infrastructure backlogs — with land ownership increasingly viewed as one of the biggest fault lines in South Africa’s development story.



ct”, says KZN MEC



The MEC also called for greater inclusion of traditional leadership in development processes, saying they must be recognised as active partners rather than symbolic participants. “Traditional leaders must be respected as partners in development, not only in ceremonial roles,” she said. KaMadlopha-Mthethwa emphasised that rural development must be a collective national effort focused on food security, job creation and restoring dignity in rural communities. She urged all stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and ensure that development plans translate into real improvements in people’s daily lives.

Rural funding model must be overhauled or poverty will persist, warns Sambatha

By Bernell Simons

North West MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Madoda Sambatha has called for a sweeping overhaul of South Africa’s rural development funding model, warning that without a radical shift in resource allocation, rural communities will remain locked in poverty and underdevelopment. Speaking at the National Rural Development Indaba in Mangaung, Sambatha delivered a sharp critique of persistent structural inequalities affecting rural areas more than three decades into democracy. “We gather here not merely for discussions but for direction,” Sambatha told delegates. “What you came with must be deliberated in commissions and give us a different path forward.” Addressing the indaba under the theme Policy, Investment and Community Action for Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Development, Sambatha said rural development cannot succeed through fragmented or isolated interventions. “Rural development cannot be achieved in fragments. It cannot be pursued in isolation. It must be built through integration, coordination and shared purpose,” he said. While acknowledging gains made since 1994, Sambatha said deep inequalities rooted in apartheid spatial planning and years of systemic neglect continue to define life in many rural villages, farming communities and small towns. “Millions of our people continue to live with the



persistent legacy of centuries of systematic underdevelopment,” he said. He also introduced what he termed “budgetary forced removals”, arguing that the current division of revenue model continues to disadvantage rural municipalities. “If the division of revenue does not change, rural areas will never be developed,” he warned.

Sambatha said existing funding formulas appear to favour urban centres, leaving rural municipalities under-resourced and unable to adequately address infrastructure backlogs, unemployment and service delivery challenges. His remarks added to growing national concern over uneven development patterns and the widening gap between urban economies and struggling

rural regions. Sambatha further stressed that rural development must be placed at the centre of national planning, arguing that every South African is, by origin, rooted in rural communities. “Everyone born is from a rural area by default,” he said, urging a shift away from treating rural economies as secondary to urban development.

Opinion

Dr Remeredzayi Gudyanga,
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Education, University of the Free State



Why learners can spend hours on TikTok but struggle to read a book, and what schools must do

There is growing frustration in South African classrooms and elsewhere. Many learners no longer sustain reading the way previous generations did. Ask them to work through a long passage, and many lose focus within minutes. Yet the same learners can spend hours on TikTok, scroll endlessly on Instagram, or remain fully absorbed in a game on a PSS.

This is not simply a discipline problem, but a deeper shift in how attention is formed and maintained

What appears in classrooms reflects a broader global shift. Reading persists, but its form has changed. Long-term studies in the US and Europe show that the proportion of adolescents who read for pleasure daily has declined sharply, from about 35% in the 1980s to roughly 14% today. Fewer learners now engage with long-form texts, and sustained reading is increasingly replaced by shorter, fragmented digital content.

It is important to distinguish between different aspects of reading. Basic reading ability, the capacity to decode words, remains relatively stable in many systems, despite recent declines. What is eroding more clearly are reading for pleasure and reading comprehension. Reading for pleasure supports vocabulary growth and long-term academic success. Reading comprehension involves following arguments, interpreting meaning, and engaging critically with texts. It is this deeper form of reading that is under pressure globally.

In South Africa, the situation is more severe. The issue is not only that learners read less for pleasure, but that many struggle with reading itself. Around 80% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning, even when they can recognise words. This places South Africa among the lowest-performing countries globally in reading literacy.

Here, the distinction between reading and com-

prehension is critical. Many learners can decode text but cannot extract meaning, follow ideas, or engage with written arguments. Without this, reading does not function as a tool for learning. It becomes a barrier.

Reading remains central to the business of learning, but the conditions that once supported it are no longer stable, and emerging forms of engagement do not fully replicate its role in developing sustained attention and deep understanding.

Digital environments are evolving faster than schools can respond, shaping learners' habits and expectations from an early age. The result is a growing disconnect between the world learners live in and the one they are taught in. Education is no longer leading learning. It is chasing it.

This shift is driven by two forces: the move from books to digital platforms, and the design of those platforms to capture and hold attention through constant stimulation.

Generational differences help to explain part of this shift. Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964) and Generation X (1965–1980) grew up in print-dominated environments that trained patience and sustained focus. Millennials (1981–1996) are caught up in between transitions, having grown up with books, but came of age alongside the rise of the internet. Generation Z (1997–2012) and especially Generation Alpha (born after 2012) are born in constant connectivity, where short videos, notifications, and gaming dominate and shape attention. Reading is no longer the primary way of accessing knowledge. It competes with faster, more stimulating alternatives such as TikTok videos and YouTube reels.

This is not just a generational difference, but a shift in the conditions under which attention develops

Digital platforms such as TikTok videos and YouTube reels are designed to hold attention. One piece

of content leads to the next, each slightly more compelling than the last. Gaming environments follow a similar logic, offering immediate rewards and continuous feedback. These systems draw on dopamine-mediated reward cycles, where repeated stimuli reinforce behaviour and encourage return. Over time, this creates powerful feedback loops that condition attention to expect speed, novelty, and instant gratification. While not addiction in a clinical sense, these patterns share features of addictive behaviour, with users repeatedly drawn back into the cycle. When learners move from these high-stimulation screen-based environments into classrooms, they often struggle to sustain concentration in the absence of constant feedback. Outside, they engage with fast, responsive systems. Inside, they are expected to slow down and work through extended texts. The contrast is sharp. The forms of attention shaped outside the classroom do not match what is required inside it. Even older generations, once shaped by print-based habits, increasingly find it difficult to complete reading books, not because texts have changed, but because the conditions that support attention have.

This is not simply distraction, but a reconfiguration of attention itself, shaped by repeated exposure to dopamine-driven cycles.

Reading requires sustained focus, patience, and the ability to hold ideas over time without immediate reward. Where these capacities are underdeveloped, comprehension suffers. Learners may follow words on a page but struggle to build meaning across longer passages.

Yet learners are not incapable of focus. Many sustain intense concentration in digital environments. The difference lies in how that attention is structured. In digital spaces, focus is externally driven and continuously reinforced through reward. Reading a book, by contrast, depends on internally

sustained focus. In slower tasks, attention therefore feels effortful and less engaging. What is emerging is a shift from deep, self-directed concentration to more distributed, stimulus-responsive forms, suited to environments that reward speed, interaction, and immediacy. What feels natural outside school becomes effortful inside it.

This raises an important question. Should education adapt to learners' current patterns of attention, shaped by digital environments, or maintain traditional expectations?

The answer lies in holding both positions in tension

The answer lies in holding both positions in tension. Education must respond to how learners' attention is shaped, but it cannot be confined by it. Its role is to extend learners' capacity for sustained focus and deep engagement. This means helping learners understand their own attention, why fast-moving content feels effortless and reading feels demanding, and how to stay with complex ideas. Restricting devices may help at the margins, but it does not address the underlying issue. Even when devices are removed, the expectation of rapid stimulation remains. Parents have a role to play in regulating screen-time, but responsibility cannot rest there alone. Governments and social media companies are increasingly being called to account, particularly in contexts such as the US. Protecting learners in a digital age requires broader accountability.

What is required is more deliberate work within education itself. The cultivation of sustained attention must be reinforced with some renewed urgency. In a world of constant stimulation and instant gratification, education must ensure that learners can sustain attention across both digital and print environments, to read with focus, and to think beyond the surface.

Electioneering or Genuine Reform? #FeesMustFall #MissingMiddle #NSFASinICU



Refilwe Mochoari
Editor-in-Chief

Before 1994, when South Africa transitioned into democracy from the Apartheid government, the promises made amongst others included free healthcare, free housing, and free education. – “A better life for all

Thirty-two years later, tertiary education remains one of the most expensive undertakings in the country.

Tuition fees for an undergrad student at the University of Free State range between R50 000 and R80 000 per annum with an upfront fee of R6000.

At the Sol Plaatje University, registration is about R8000 and at the University of North West, tuition fees can climb up to R80 000 per annum, these exclude textbooks and accommodation fees.

The costs are crippling for students who come from a middle-income household earning between R350 000 and R600 00.

Hi everyone, my name is Refilwe Mochoari, let's talk about access to higher education for the middle class in South Africa.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is in a Crisis

On Workers Day, Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavani announced that the government is reviewing the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to enable students who come from middle-income households to access tertiary education, but the situation at the NSFAS is so dire that the Minister of Higher Education Buti Manamela on Monday informed the public that NSFAS is under extreme financial crisis and has therefore been placed under administration.

This is the third time in eight years that the NSFAS has been dissolved for persistent financial irregularities and the inability to manage student allowances.

The NSFAS is currently drowning in a debt of R45 billion debt and so far the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) has recovered R1.7 billion in misallocated funds, exposing issues such as ghost billing and corruption, yet thousands of accredited student accommodation providers are unpaid, and millions of students who rely on NSFAS are stranded and are now at risk of eviction.

FeesMustFall

In 2015 the #FeesMustFall movement, a student-led protest that was born out of desperation over rising tuition fees.

This movement was a call to government demanding free tertiary education for students.

This movement started at the University of Witwatersrand and spread to Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape and the University of Cape Town leading to intense protests and a shutdown of universities.

In early 2016, this movement prompted the government to move with a zero-percent fee increase and additional funding for the children who are economically disadvantaged.

Missing Middle

Ten years later, this call has fallen on deaf ears and the most affected are children of teachers, admin clerks, nurses, and police officers – The Missing Middle

Too poor to put their children through tertiary but too rich to access NSFAS

Many millennials can relate to this experience.

And as a result, many of these young people are denied their right to education not because of the lack of ambition but because they are excluded from the system.

Is this the political Elections 2026 strategy to win the Votes of young people?

This week President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the Local Government will take place on 4 November 2026.

The placing of NSFAS under administration and the promises to include the missing middle come at a very convenient time.

This raises suspicions

Is this a strategy to attract young people for votes? The timing – the months before the elections raises suspicions.

Is this a genuine reform or a political strategy to win the youth vote?

Either way, the promise of free education remains unfulfilled

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

10 Learnings That Changed How I Think About Emotions



1. I used to use the terms stress and overwhelm interchangeably, but that does not serve us well. The growing field of neurolinguistics is teaching us that language doesn't just communicate emotion, it shapes how and what we're feeling.

2. Labeling emotions is core to regulating them and moving through them. I don't want to create overwhelm when what I'm actually feeling is stress. For me, stress is barely managing the Whac-A-Mole game at the carnival, and overwhelm is leaving the carnival in tears. And, not being able to find my car.

3. We feel stressed when we evaluate environmental demand as beyond our ability to cope successfully. This includes elements of unpredictability, uncontrollability, and feeling overloaded.

4. Stressful situations affect our mind, body, and emotions. However, regardless of how strongly our body responds to stress, our emotional reaction is more tied to our "thinking" assessment of whether we can cope with the situation than to how our body is reacting. I always assumed that my emotions responded to my body freaking out. But really, my emotions are responding to my "thinking" assessment of how well I can handle something.

5. The definition of overwhelm that I could FEEL the moment I read it is from Jon Kabat-Zinn: Overwhelm is the all-too-common feeling that "our lives are somehow unfolding faster than the human nervous system and psyche are able to manage well." Our bodies and minds are experiencing that quicksand feeling.

6. In overwhelm, it's hard to respond when people ask "How can I help?" or "What needs to be

done?" Responding with organized thoughts feels impossible. This is also when I can get really crapy and think to myself, if I had the wherewithal to figure out what comes next and how we need to approach all of this, I wouldn't be walking around in circles crying and talking to myself.

7. There is growing evidence that the antidote to overwhelm appears to be nothingness or "non-doing" time as Kabat-Zinn describes it. Now, I've trained myself to couple the terms "overwhelm" and "do-nothing." When I am actually feeling overwhelmed, I say, "I'm overwhelmed, and I need 10–15 minutes of non-doing." I normally walk the parking lot at work or go outside at home.

8. Non-doing is important because there's a growing body of research that indicates that we don't process other emotional information accurately when we feel overwhelmed, and this can result in poor decision making.

9. Researcher Carol Gohm used the term "overwhelmed" to describe an experience where our emotions are intense, our focus on them is moderate, and our clarity about exactly what we're feeling is low enough that we get confused when trying to identify or describe the emotions. In other words: On a scale of 1 to 10, I'm feeling my emotions at about 10, I'm paying attention to them at about 5, and I understand them at about 2.

10. The big learning here is that feeling both stressed and overwhelmed is about our narrative of emotional and mental depletion — there's just too much going on to manage effectively. Naming the emotion helps us understand how to move through it.

UP EXPERT OPINION: Water rights without implementation is failing millions

The availability of safe drinking water is key to understanding Africa's water crisis. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme found that just 39% of Africans used safely managed drinking water in 2020, highlighting a huge disparity between Africa and better-served regions. The issue goes beyond rainfall and physical deprivation: weak infrastructure, poor service delivery, government problems and entrenched inequality decide who receives water, when and at what cost.

This situation must be framed within human rights law – water is a legal right under international law. According to the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights General Comment No.15, everyone has the right to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and cheap water for personal and home use. In Resolution 64/292, the UN General Assembly recognised safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is vital to life and all human rights.

Regional norms and interpretation support the right to water in Africa. While the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights does not explicitly state a right to water, the African Commission's Guidelines on the Right to Water in Africa link it to life, dignity, health, development and a good environment. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the Maputo Protocol, explicitly protect children and women from unsafe drinking water. This makes Africa's water dilemma a crisis of water justice. It's not just a question of whether water exists, but whether safe water is accessible to all.

The unsettling reality is that the right to water is acknowledged more frequently in the legal system than in everyday life. The repercussions are not abstract. They are the painful experiences of many, as reflected in the cholera outbreak in Hammanskraal in 2023. According to the government's statement, the outbreak was attributed to polluted water sources and protracted failures at the Rooiwal wastewater works upstream, while investigations conducted by the Water Research Commission focused attention on treatment and sanitation failures in the region. The availability of safe water became a matter of life and death.

Hammanskraal is not an isolated case. For years, residents of Makhanda have been subjected to recurring water shortages, sewage leaks and deteriorating municipal systems. Currently, Johannesburg is experiencing the same situation. The pattern of occurrence and reporting surrounding the crisis is not unusual in several regions of Africa: rights are acknowledged, but existing infrastructure isn't properly maintained, accountability is inadequate, and communities are faced with the consequences of state failure.

The issue isn't restricted to South Africa. A human rights assessment conducted in Kenya's informal settlements, endorsed by the UN, revealed persistent inequality in the availability of safe and affordable water, particularly in Nairobi and other urban areas. For a significant number of residents, especially in rural areas and mostly women, water is exclusively accessible through hazardous, irregular or expensive channels. That is not solely a service delivery failure; it is a disparity in justice.

Some may contend that these are primarily technical issues that are the result of urban de-

velopment, climate change, drought or outdated infrastructure. Those contentions are genuine and significant. However, the explanation is inadequate. The fundamental questions are: who is safeguarded or better protected, who is neglected, and whose burden is considered ordinary? Poor communities are expected to survive on emergency measures while others enjoy continuous supply, and water injustice thrives in areas where governance is weak, maintenance is delayed and budgets are poorly managed. It thrives in environments where wastewater contamination is tolerated, tanker systems serve as permanent substitutes for properly functioning infrastructure and communities are seldom involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Nevertheless, there are genuine opportunities to improve access to water on the continent. Firstly, Africa is characterised by robust legal and normative frameworks, and this is true of a country like South Africa. Several states have constitutional, statutory or policy commitments that can be leveraged to demand improved performance and greater accountability. Secondly, the recent crises have rendered it impossible to maintain the illusion that water is a secondary concern. Access to potable water has implications for health, education, dignity, food systems, livelihoods and public trust in government. Thirdly, there is increasing acknowledgement that decentralised, community-responsive, well-monitored water systems can be more effective for underserved communities than those that are top-down and never materialise. The challenge is not only the establishment or existence of systems, but also their maintenance, honest governance and accountability to the people they serve.

What actions should therefore be implemented? Governments should treat water failures as a violation of human rights rather than as minor problems. This would entail the allocation of resources to maintenance, wastewater treatment, water quality monitoring and transparent budgeting, in addition to the construction of new infrastructure. It includes the dissemination of transparent service delivery data. Communities must be included in planning and supervising the various processes of ensuring access to water. It entails guaranteeing that genuine intervention is necessary in response to local government failures, rather than an unending stream of justifications. Responsibility is also incumbent upon the private sector. Businesses that pollute water sources, profit from exclusionary water arrangements or affect community access to water must adhere to human rights standards. Regional institutions, civil society, researchers and the media must advocate and lobby states to transition from hollow declarations to effective actions.

Water is not merely a technical resource; it is not solely a development objective or a service delivery concern. It is a matter of human rights with implications for dignity, equality, health and democratic accountability. There is no need for additional assurances regarding the right to water in Africa. What is needed is effective implementation grounded in substantive equality, with particular attention to access for those who have been disadvantaged and have been waiting the longest.

By postdoctoral fellow Olayinka Adeniyi and Prof Ebenezer Durojaye of the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.33	0.29%	▲
Rand/Pound	22.25	-0.09%	▼
Rand/Euro	19.23	0.02%	▲
Platinum	2 059.64	-0.14%	▼
Brent Crude	98.01	-3.73%	▼
Gold	4 745.71	1.16%	▲
Ethereum	2 296	-2.38%	▼
Bitcoin	79 973.49	-1.86%	▼

Free State unveils major healthcare overhaul



MEC for health Monyatso Mahlatsi. Picture: Supplied

By Bernell Simons

The Free State government is betting R647 million on an ambitious bid to rescue its crumbling public health system, rolling out 138 construction, refurbishment and modernisation projects aimed at fixing deteriorating hospitals, overcrowded clinics and failing emergency facilities across the province. The sweeping intervention comes as healthcare institutions battle broken lifts, water leaks, vandalism, unsafe psychiatric conditions and mounting patient backlogs that have pushed already strained services closer to breaking point.

The Free State Department of Health says the infrastructure drive will target hospitals, clinics, emergency medical services bases, mortuaries and nursing colleges that have steadily deteriorated under years of financial strain, poor maintenance and delayed upgrades.

Presenting the provincial Health Budget Vote in Bethulie, Free State MEC for Health Monyatso Mahlatsi acknowledged that ageing infrastructure and operational failures have directly affected patient care, staff morale and service delivery across the province.

At the centre of the department's recovery strategy is the long-delayed maternity expansion project at Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital, where patient volumes have

exceeded available space for years.

Government says the construction of new maternity and neonatal wards, together with three specialised obstetrics and gynaecology theatres, is expected to be completed by October 2026. The expansion is expected to ease severe overcrowding while strengthening maternal healthcare services in one of the province's busiest tertiary hospitals.

The project also forms part of broader efforts to reduce escalating medico-legal claims linked to childbirth complications, delayed emergency interventions and alleged failures in maternal care. The department's total medico-legal liability is currently estimated at R7.1 billion.

Pressure on Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital intensified further after the 2023 fire at National District Hospital forced patient redirection, increasing strain on tertiary services already operating beyond capacity.

Mental healthcare infrastructure has also emerged as a major concern. Psychiatric patients are currently being accommodated inside emergency units at Pelonomi due to the absence of dedicated 72-hour observation facilities. Government says a specialised mental health holding facility should be completed by the end of July.

Security failures across clinics and hospitals have

meanwhile contributed to repeated vandalism, theft and disruptions to healthcare services. The department now plans to strengthen perimeter fencing, introduce electronic surveillance systems and tighten security at high-risk facilities.

Among the clearest signs of infrastructure collapse has been the failure of hospital lifts across major healthcare institutions. Government has allocated R48 million towards a lift recapitalisation programme that includes the installation of seven new lifts and the modernisation of 20 others at facilities including Universitas Academic Hospital, Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital and Mofumahadi Manapo Mopeli Hospital.

The department also admitted that deteriorating infrastructure continues to undermine services at facilities such as Rheederpark Clinic, Bophelong Community Health Centre and JD Newberry Hospital.

While the opening of the new Borwa Clinic has been cited as progress, officials conceded that contractor disputes, delayed payments, weak implementation capacity and persistent cash-flow problems continue to slow infrastructure delivery across the province.

Government insists the 138-project programme is not simply about construction, but about restoring confidence in a healthcare system many residents say has been neglected for far too long.

Maboya allocates R784m to special needs education amid growing demand



MEC for education Mantlhahe Maboya. Picture: Supplied

By Bernell Simons

The Free State education system is under growing pressure to accommodate learners with special needs, despite a dedicated R784.391 million allocation for Public Special School Education in the 2026/27 financial year.

Delivering the department's budget vote, Free State Education MEC Mantlhahe Maboya said inclusive education remains central to government's mandate, describing it as part of the province's constitutional obligation to ensure "equity, dignity and access for all learners."

The funding forms part of the province's broader R20.06 billion education budget under the 2026-2029 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and is intended to support specialised teaching, resources and institutional capacity for learners requiring tailored educational support.

However, public special needs schooling in the

province remains limited. The Free State has only about 21 government special schools within a system of nearly 1,000 public schools — exposing a significant gap between general and specialised education provision.

Most of these schools are concentrated in urban centres such as Bloemfontein and Welkom, leaving many rural communities with limited access. This has placed existing schools under sustained pressure, with demand for placement continuing to outstrip available capacity.

At the same time, the province has seen a steady rise in private special needs schools, which have emerged to meet demand not fully accommodated in the public system. But access remains tied to affordability, with fees often beyond the reach of many families.

The rest of the story flows well — this revision mainly tightens repetition and brings the pressure/access issue to the top earlier for stronger impact.

Santaco worried latest taxi fare hikes might drive commuters away

The South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) says it is worried that the latest fuel price increases will chase commuters away from using their services. Santaco has increased transport fares for local and long-distance travel from the beginning of this month.

This was informed by the April fuel price hike.

Despite temporary government levy relief, the country is facing yet another significant fuel price hike from midnight.

Petrol will rise by R3,27 per litre and diesel by R6,19 cents per litre.

Many sectors will be impacted including the taxi industry. Santaco's National Spokesperson, Rebecca Phala, says: "We already did communicate throughout April that we will be increasing our prices. As we speak in the beginning of May, we've already started with the increases. So, the local trips are being increased between R2 and R6. It is the ultimate prerogative of individual taxi associations. And then at a long distance level, I should rather say, we are increasing by between R10 and R30. So, this other increase is coming as a shock then because it means that it's going to frustrate us even



further. We could lose commuters and not just to buses. We could lose commuters also to lift clubs as well as other modes of transport, which obviously is concerning." **SABCNews**

Moody's says SA on track to stabilise debt this year

The agency saw South Africa's debt peaking at 86.8% of gross domestic product in the fiscal year ending March 2026, above National Treasury's 78.9% forecast, before easing to 84.9% by 2028.

South African government debt is still on track to have peaked despite the Iran war, Moody's Ratings said in a new report that endorsed the nation's focus on reform and prudent public finances.

"Improving fiscal performance and steady reform momentum support our view that government debt will stabilise this year before gradually declining," the ratings agency said in a note on Wednesday. "This credit-positive shift is supported by stronger revenue, greater spending restraint and improving funding costs."

Investors warmed to South African assets following better-than-expected news from its February budget and after it won an upgrade from S&P Global Ratings, which lifted its credit assessment for the first time in two decades to BB with a positive outlook.

Moody's rates South Africa at Ba2 with a stable outlook, which it is expected to review later this month.

The agency saw South Africa's debt peaking at 86.8% of gross domestic product in the fiscal year ending March 2026, above National Treasury's 78.9% forecast, before easing to 84.9% by 2028.

It also sees the consolidated budget deficit narrowing to 4.3% in the current fiscal year from 4.5%, helped by rising primary surpluses, which exclude debt-service costs.

"The 2026 budget confirmed South Africa's improving fiscal position and the authorities' commitment to



consolidation," Moody's said.

Still, the agency cautioned that faster debt reduction will depend on stronger economic growth, which faces a near-term threat from the fallout over the conflict in the Middle East.

Even so, it expects fiscal and monetary authorities to respond to the economic impact of the war in a "measured and proportionate" way, estimating the drag on growth at about 20 to 50 basis points in 2026 and 2027 if inflation averages close to 4% this year.

The country's forthcoming electoral cycle also poses risks. South Africa will hold municipal elections on November 4, a key test of support for the African National

Congress after it lost its parliamentary majority in 2024 and began governing in a coalition as the largest party.

How the ANC fares in the ballot could influence internal party dynamics and support for the government's current policies. Moody's viewed the risk of a sharp policy reversal as low and said that it expects the so-called Government of National Unity to hold together for the rest of its term. The next national elections will be held in 2029.

Still, "the durability of reform momentum will be tested if there is a new administration which is less committed to progressing reforms and tackling vested interests." - Moneyweb

Government spends R800m a year on suspended officials: PSC



The Public Service Commission has raised concerns over what it describes as the misuse of public funds.

The Commission has revealed that the government spends approximately R800-million annually on suspended public servants.

There are currently 674 suspended officials across the national and provincial governments, with more than 500 suspended for longer than the legally prescribed 60-day period.

The Commission's Chairperson, Somadoda Fik-

eni, says, "When I arrived at the Public Service Commission, I was told there was a person who had been on suspension with full pay for 12 years. And another one was placed on special leave, I think it had gone on for seven years. And yet the public sector regulation says you can only suspend a person for 60 days. Anything beyond that, it should be the chair of a disciplinary committee who simply asked for the extension within a reasonable time. But what we had seen is just the abuse of the system." **SABCNews**

DJ Zeelow Spins Purpose Into Passion



By Bernell Simons

There's something almost poetic about the way DJ Zeelow found his calling — not in a club, not in a crowd, but in the quiet rhythm of home.

Raised in the small Free State town of Bethulie, in a household where music was more than background noise, where his father's collection spun stories of its own, Charlton Peterson's journey began long before he even touched a deck.

By the time he reached high school in the mid-2000s, curiosity had evolved into passion, and passion had become purpose.

What started on Virtual DJ in 2006 soon revealed itself as something deeper.

Music was not just a hobby, it was a language. Determined to refine his voice, Peterson enrolled at the Soul Candi Institute of Music in Cape Town graduating in the top five of his class, a defining moment that sharpened both his skill and identity as an artist.

Today, those privileged enough to find themselves on his dancefloor don't just hear music they feel it.

Known for his deep and soulful sound, he treats every set like a conversation, a story unfolding in beats and basslines.

His calm demeanour behind the decks contrasts beautifully with the emotional intensity of his selections, creating a space where rhythm meets reflection.

Over the years, Peterson's versatility has grown, blending genres seamlessly while maintaining a signature sound that lingers long after the last track fades.

He studies music, plans his sets, and most importantly, reads the room.

For him, being a DJ is not about playing tracks, it's about creating moments.

"People want to feel something. They want to be happy, he said.

His career is marked by milestones that many aspiring DJs dream of.

He has shared stages with heavyweights such as the late hip hop star, AKA, Okmalumkoolkat, Mo Flava, and Prince Kaybee.

He has performed at major events such as Macufe and the Home Brewed Urban Festival.

He has also steadily carved out his place in South Africa's music scene. But beyond the spotlight, his impact runs deeper.

Now a permanent resident of Bloemfontein, he is more than just a DJ, he is a builder of platforms and a cultivator of talent.

Through events hosted at venues like Zhane's, La Royal, and Rooftop Garden Bar, he has opened doors for up-and-coming artists, giving them a chance to be heard, to be seen, and to grow.

Like many in the industry, he speaks candidly about the struggle of unreliable promoters and delayed payments — a reality that continues to test the resilience of working DJs.

But even in the face of these obstacles, his commitment never wavers. He invests in his craft, in his music, and in himself.

For Peterson, DJing is storytelling, a powerful exchange of emotion where lyrics, rhythm, and memory collide.

Each set becomes a narrative, each transition a feeling, each drop a moment suspended in time.

Katlego Lebogang shines as Bakang Mokgotso in 'Law, Love & Betrayal' season 2



Actress Katlego Lebogang is thrilling viewers on the second season of the legal drama "Law, Love & Betrayal" with her portrayal of Bakang Mokgotso, a sharp, fearless attorney.

Katlego Lebogang is cementing her status as a household name in South Africa's film and television industry through her standout roles in various productions.

Known for her versatility, Katlego has moved effortlessly from playing an inquisitive young detective in "Spinners" to a sexually liberated and unapologetic hostess, Zinhle, in "Soft Life". Now she steps into the legal world as the daughter of a judge, who is ready to carve out her own legacy.

In an interview, the actress explained how research was key for her to be able to break down the legal jargon in the script. "These are real professions, and you want to represent them accurately. Saying something in the wrong context can take audiences out of the story," she explained.

Once Katlego got into the rhythm of the wordy script and with preparation, it became second nature. "At first, it took some adjustment, but eventually it felt like a well-oiled machine.

"I'm very big on preparation - spending time with the text and understanding where my character is in the story. You might be shooting episode four today and episode ten tomorrow, so it's important to track your character's arc from beginning to end and know exactly where she is emotionally and mentally at every stage."

Katlego also prepared for the character by watching shows "How to Get Away with Murder", "Scandal", and "Suits", drawing inspiration from Viola Davis' commanding presence and Kerry Washington's sharp, polished energy.

"I also spent time watching real court cases and listening to how attorneys speak, their tone, rhythm, and delivery. That really helped me understand the world and bring authenticity to the character." **lol**

Pam Andrews reveals why she was forbidden from showing her birth certificate



By Bernell Simons

Content creator Pam Andrews has opened up about her lived experiences and personal journey with race. In an Instagram post, she opens up about how complicated it can be when your identity does not neatly fit into one box.

"I'm half coloured and half Xhosa," Andrews says. "My mom is coloured, and my dad is Xhosa."

She goes on to explain how her identity was shaped in a household where both backgrounds were present, yet not always openly acknowledged in wider society.

"My real name is actually Pamela Sikupela," she adds.

Her story takes a more emotional turn as she reflects on childhood experiences where parts of her identity were kept quiet. She describes a time when she and her brother had to hide their mixed heritage, including not being able to openly show official documents like their birth certificates.

It is a detail that speaks to how identity can become something guarded rather than freely expressed, especially when shaped by fear of judgment or misunderstanding.

"I wanted to play netball, and I needed to show my birth certificate to join the team. So I stole my birth certificate because my mom wouldn't let me take it," she says.

"I'll never forget this day, the coach opened it, and she said, 'Who's Pamela Siku - I thought your name is Pam Andrews?' And that's how everyone found out that I was, like, half black."

This moment speaks to the tension many mixed heritage individuals face when navigating identity in environments where racial categorisation carries social weight.

In South Africa, "coloured" is a recognised identity category with its own complex history, while "black" is often used broadly to describe African heritage groups, including Xhosa identity.

Following this, she describes how whispers began circulating about her. She recalls overhearing the word "daakie," a racial slur historically used in South Africa as a derogatory term for black people, reflecting painful internalised divisions shaped by apartheid-era classifications.

Her post resonated widely, with many sharing their own reflections in the comments. One user wrote: "Damn! I didn't know the trauma in the coloured community runs deep; that's so hectic. I'm sorry you went through that."

That reaction speaks to something bigger. In South Africa, conversations around identity are still layered and emotional, especially when it comes to mixed heritage and how people are categorised. These experiences are not just personal; they are shaped by a history that still echoes today.

Another commenter responded: "You are black!! Not half black."

This statement reflects an ongoing conversation around identity in South Africa, where some argue that "black" should be understood as an inclusive political and cultural identity rather than a partial classification, especially when discussing African heritage.

What stands out in Andrews' account is how it reflects a broader South African reality. Identity is shaped by history, family and lived experience. Her story adds to the ongoing conversation about belonging, labels and how people are often seen before they are understood.

Anele Mgudlwa launches 'The Anele Podcast - Her & Now' to empower South African women

By Refilwe Mochoari

Award-winning TV and radio presenter Anele Mgudlwa née Mdoda is stepping into the world of podcasting with the launch of a new podcast inspired by First for Women.

"The Anele Podcast - Her and Now" will have eight episodes featuring phenomenal women across the country, having conversations unpacking the findings of First for Women's inaugural Her and Now: Insights into the Women of South Africa 2025 report.

In the Her and Now report, over 4000 women across South Africa revealed that women today are simultaneously more empowered and more exhausted than ever before. The podcast breathes life into these in-depth research findings, translating data and insights into real, raw, human conversations that women across the country can relate to.

"This research needs to be heard in nuggets by women every single day. There's a quiet revolution happening, and softness is the behaviour leading it," explained Mgudlwa.

"One quote that stands out for me is: 'You have to schedule the good times, because the bad times don't make an appointment.' Joy, no matter how small, is an act of power. You've got the power to make sure that you're having a good time.

"I am really excited about this podcast because I have been waiting to have these impactful and important conversations about women. It's about time. These conversations need to happen."

The series kicks off on May 7 with Episode One: The Power Paradox, featuring Lynn Forbes (known and loved as Glammy), a deeply personal exploration of vulnerability, grief, and what it means to be seen.

Also coming up in the series, Mgudlwa asks the



question that cuts close to home: can women truly afford joy, financially and emotionally?

Other guests include comedian and author Tumi Morake, Sinenjabulo Zungu, entrepreneur and CEO of AmaZulu Football Club, and Nozipho Tshabalala, global conversation strategist and moderator.

"Anele is the perfect voice for this journey," said Jill Mulligan of 1st for Women. "She is relatable and deeply connected to the lived experiences of South African women. When she read the Her and Now report, she didn't just engage with it; she felt it. "Her credibility is exactly what these conversa-

tions need to resonate, and we know that in her hands, this podcast will move people. We are proud to partner with her to take these important findings beyond the page and into the hearts of women everywhere."

The Anele Podcast - Her & Now, hosted by Anele Mgudlwa, is available on digital platforms.

Scorpion Kings live sell out FNB Stadium

Tickets for DJ Maphorisa and Kabza De Small's Scorpion Kings Live at FNB Stadium went live on Monday, May 5, 2026, and the excitement was high among fans.

As soon as the tickets went live on the website, music fans were lining up ready to purchase their tickets, creating a whole queue room with thousands waiting.

Within hours, over 50,000 tickets were already taken, matching the full capacity of last year's Scorpion Kings Live with Friends show at Loftus Versfeld Stadium.

This figure already accounted for about 60% of the expected capacity at FNB Stadium.

DJ Maphorisa addressed fans on his Instagram Live, where he highlighted the cries from fans about the tickets. He thanked fans for the support, revealing almost 500 000 people were in the queue waiting to buy tickets.

Maphorisa noted that they had a strategy that would accommodate fans who get paid on the 15th and 25th of the month.

On the live, he left the decision-making in the



hands of the fans, giving them two options: add a second date or release 40% of the remaining tickets.

Set for September 19, the show is expected to draw over 80,000 fans, making it the biggest Amapi-ano concert ever staged. **BONA MAGAZINE**

GIGGuide

Fiday 08 May 2026
Sabiro's Birthday Celebration
Sechaba Lounge
Bloemfontein

Saturday 09 May 2026
Unlocked Kasi Groove
Street Corner Braai
Bloemfontein

Saturday 09 May 2026
Saturday Vibes Unleashed
News Cafe
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Sunday 10 May 2026
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HEALTH

Why South Africans are the world's biggest homebodies according to a new global study

Behind closed doors, a quiet revolution is taking place.

What was once dismissed as antisocial is being reframed as a conscious choice for wellness and connection.

We are witnessing a profound shift in the human experience: a deeper, more emotional connection to our living spaces that prioritises the sanctuary of the home over the frantic energy of the outside world.

This isn't just about being homebodies by accident; it is a global movement toward reclaiming our private environments as the ultimate luxury.

A comprehensive new study by UK-based furniture specialists Sharps has shed light on this phenomenon, surveying over 3000 participants across 15 countries to reveal which nations are the most attached to their domestic lives.

By combining data from the Home Attachment Scale with behavioural habits, such as time spent at home, hosting frequency, and the relief felt when plans are cancelled, the study assigned each nation a score out of 100.

Leading this global charge is South Africa, which landed in first place with a staggering score of 95/100.

This result may come as a surprise to some, given the country's famous year-round climate and its deeply social culture of the braai. However, the data suggests that South Africans have mastered the art of selective socialising.

They reported the highest Emotional Attachment Score in the study (74.3), indicating that their homes are not just buildings, but essential extensions of their identity.

More than any other nation, South Africans are likely to protect their peace, 44% frequently decline invitations in favour of staying in, and nearly a third (31%) admit to feeling a genuine sense of relief when plans are cancelled.

For them, the primary motivator is simple: the desire to relax, do very little and feel entirely comfortable.

Following closely in second place is the United States with a score of 92/100. On average, US respondents spend 7 hours and 23 minutes at home during the week, a figure that climbs to 8 hours and 43 minutes on weekends, the highest duration of all countries surveyed.

Their time is increasingly filled with digital entertainment and creative pursuits, with 29% staying in to watch films or TV and 17% dedicating their evenings to hobbies like crafting or gaming.

Canada takes the third spot on the podium with a score of 91/100.

Interestingly, Canadians hold the record for the highest preference for staying in on weekends, with a nearly unanimous 89% choosing the home over the town, 12% higher than the global average.

When we look at the global average, the statistics are undeniable: staying in is winning the cultural



war.

Nearly 4 out of 5 people (77%) now say their ideal evening involves being at home in some capacity, while only 23% would prefer to go out.

The traditional big night out is being replaced by a big night in, where the activities are split between passive relaxation and active engagement.

For instance, 22% of people find their perfect evening in front of a screen, while another 22% find it in hands-on hobbies. Even those who choose to stay home just to "do nothing" (16%) outnumber many traditional social activities. *lol*

FASHION

VIP Movie Night: A Celebration of The Devil Wears Prada

An evening of style, sophistication, and cinematic nostalgia unfolded as Glamour hosted an exclusive VIP Movie Night in celebration of *The Devil Wears Prada*. Set against a luxe backdrop at Hyde Park Corner, in partnership with Nu Metro, the event brought together media, influencers, and tastemakers for an immersive experience that seamlessly blended film, fashion, and premium brand storytelling.

From the moment guests arrived, the tone for the evening was set with a refined red carpet experience, complemented by a vibrant yet intimate atmosphere. The space invited guests to engage, create content, and enjoy a thoughtfully curated night out inspired by one of fashion's most iconic films.

A standout element of the evening was the seamless integration of brand partners, each contributing to the overall experience in a way that felt both natural and elevated. Guests enjoyed premium sparkling moments courtesy of Ice Tropez, while POPZ added a playful, cinema-inspired touch. Sweet indulgences were also on offer, with delights from Cadbury and Château Gâteaux, alongside fragrance moments from Dolce & Gabbana, which added a layer of sensory luxury to the evening.

Beauty and lifestyle partners further elevated the experience, with contributions from John Frieda,

Revlon, and Biome Renew, alongside experiential elements such as nail moments from Popsicle Nails and wellness-inspired touches from Motherkind. Refreshments from Liqui-Fruitednsured guests remained energised throughout the evening.

The goodie bags offered a curated extension of the experience, featuring a selection of products from these partners, from beauty must-haves to indulgent treats allowing guests to take a piece of the night home with them. The thoughtful curation reflected the premium positioning of the event while reinforcing the strength of the brand collaborations.

As guests made their way into the cinema, the anticipation for the screening of *The Devil Wears Prada* was unmistakable. The film's enduring relevance and sharp take on the fashion industry resonated with the audience, making it the perfect centerpiece for the evening. Moments of laughter and recognition filled the theatre, underscoring its continued cultural impact.

Overall, the VIP Movie Night delivered a cohesive and engaging experience, successfully bringing together premium brands, cultural nostalgia, and a keen audience. It was a celebration not only of film, but of the Glamour lifestyle where fashion, entertainment, and community intersect effortlessly. *-Glamour Magazine*



FOOD Recipes

Roasting Canned Tomatoes Is the Secret to Better Tomato Soup



This oven-roasted tomato soup is topped with homemade croutons and cheese, then broiled until the bread is extra crispy and the cheese is melted.

We all love French onion soup for its cheesy toast topper, so why not give more soups the same craveable treatment? A pot of tomato soup practically begs for it — a cap of cheesy croutons is just a reimagined grilled cheese, after all. Here, you'll make a hands-off oven-roasted tomato soup, pile on homemade croutons and grated cheese, then broil until the bread is extra crispy and the cheese is melted. It's an easy, all-in-one vegetarian meal you'll want to cozy up to all winter long.

Ingredients:

- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, preferably San Marzano
- 1 small yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme, plus leaves for garnish
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more as needed
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more as needed
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning or dried oregano
- 8 ounces crusty sourdough bread, torn into rough 1-inch pieces (about 4 cups)
- 1 (32-ounce) box low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 3 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated (about 3/4 cup), divided
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, finely grated (about 1/2 firmly packed cup freshly grated or 1/3 cup store-bought)

Method

1. Arrange 2 racks to divide the oven into thirds and heat the oven to 425°F.
2. Empty 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes and their juices into a large Dutch oven, then use your hands to gently break apart and crush the whole tomatoes. Add 1 thinly sliced small yellow onion, 4 crushed garlic cloves, and 2 tablespoons of the unsalted butter (cut into small pieces). Place 4 sprigs thyme on top. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons olive oil and season with 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, and 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes.
3. Roast on the lower rack uncovered, stirring halfway through, until the garlic is soft and the mixture is bubbling and noticeably thickened, 40 to 45 minutes total.
4. Melt the remaining 2 tablespoons unsalted butter in a large bowl. Add 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning and stir to combine. Use your hands to toss and coat 8 ounces torn sourdough bread pieces in the butter. Transfer to a baking sheet and spread into an even layer. Bake on the upper oven rack, tossing halfway through, until crisp and golden-brown at the edges, 13 to 15 minutes total.
5. When the tomatoes are ready, place the pot over medium heat. Stir the mixture to bring the thyme sprigs to the surface (be careful because the pot is hot), then discard the sprigs. Add 1 box low-sodium vegetable broth and simmer, stirring occasionally and scraping up the brown bits on the bottom and sides of the pot, until the flavors have melded, about 10 minutes.
6. Stir in 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar. Puree the soup in batches in a stand blender or with an immersion blender directly in the pot until smooth. Taste and season with more salt and pepper as needed.
7. If needed, move the upper rack to the middle of the oven so the Dutch oven fits under the broiler. Heat the broiler to HIGH. Sprinkle 1 1/2 ounces of the grated sharp cheddar cheese over the soup. Top with the croutons, arranging them in a single layer so they cover the soup. Sprinkle with the remaining 1 1/2 ounces grated cheddar and 1 ounce grated Parmesan cheese.

FASHION IS ART: Met Gala 2026 Red Carpet

With "Fashion Is Art" as the dress code, the 2026 Met Gala red carpet produced a range of direct references to art history — from classical Greek sculpture to specific paintings, movements, and cultural traditions.



SPORT



Who Will Win? ... Orlando Pirates have the opportunity to win the Betway Premiership title for the first time in 14 years after Mamelodi Sundowns midweek slip up against Kaizer Chiefs. Picture: Orlando Pirates

Tigers Triumph Over Kovsie in Freezing Clash



Cold League Clash ... Young Tigers secured maximum points against Kovsie FC in the ABC Motsepe League. Picture: KovsieFC/Facebook

By Gomolemo Winkel

A clinical 3-1 away victory against Kovsie FC on a cold Wednesday afternoon in Bloemfontein breathed life into Bloemfontein Young Tigers' ABC Motsepe League survival campaign.

Despite their precarious position in the relegation zone, the visitors capitalised on defensive lapses and sharp finishing to secure three vital points, with three goals from Andile Malaku and Matlanyane Sebatana, supplemented by a Theo Phinithi own goal.

Although Kovsie FC talisman, Omphemetse Athibeng, managed to find the net for the hosts, it served only as a mere late consolation.

The clash was played under freezing conditions that hampered both sides' ability to settle early in the match. Young Tigers head coach Mokoena lauded his squad's resilience in the harsh weather.

"It was difficult to play under such conditions. The players had to adapt quickly to the cold breeze, but overall, I am happy with the result, regardless of how we played," Mokoena said.

The victory provides a significant psychological lift for the Tigers as they fight to climb out of the bottom tier. "This win helps us a lot. It is a big boost in motivation and confidence for the boys going forward," Mokoena added.

In contrast, Kovsie FC coach, Mokete Tsotetsi, was left to rue his side's inefficiency in front of goal. Despite enjoying superior possession and controlling long periods of play, the hosts failed to convert their dominance into goals.

"It was a game of two halves. We had most of the control, but we did not take our chances. We allowed them back into the game, and they made use of the few chances they got," a frustrated Tsotetsi remarked.

The result leaves Kovsie FC searching for answers while Young Tigers carry newfound momentum into their next fixture as they battle to maintain their league status.

PSL 2025/2026				
POS	TEAMS	P	W	PTS
1	Mamelodi Sundowns	28	19	68
2	Orlando Pirates	27	19	62
3	Kaizer Chiefs	27	13	48
4	AmaZulu FC	27	12	43
5	Sekhukhune United	27	11	42
6	Polokwane City	28	9	38
7	Durban City	27	10	37
8	Golden Arrows	27	10	36
9	Siwelele FC	27	7	33
10	Stellenbosch FC	27	8	32
11	Richards Bay	27	7	32
12	TS Galaxy	27	7	27
13	Chippa United	27	5	24
14	Orbit College FC	27	6	23
15	Marumo Gallants	27	4	22
16	Magesi FC	27	4	21

Premier League 2025/2026				
CLUB	P	W	PTS	EPL
1	Arsenal	35	23	76
2	Man City	34	21	71
3	Man Utd	35	18	64
4	Liverpool	35	17	58
5	Aston Villa	35	17	58
6	Bournemouth	35	12	52
7	Brentford	35	14	51
8	Brighton	35	13	50
9	Chelsea	35	13	48
10	Everton	35	13	48
11	Fulham	35	14	48
12	Sunderland	35	12	47
13	Newcastle	35	13	45
14	Leeds	35	10	43
15	C Palace	34	11	43
16	Nottingham Forest F.C	35	11	42

League Race Down to the Wire

Masandawana stumble against Amakhosi to allow the Buccaneers to lay one hand on the Betway Premiership trophy

By Mpho Sekharume

The goal difference tally may prove to be the difference to determine who will walk away as the Betway Premiership champions between Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns as the league races down to a nail-biting finish.

Fortunes have swung dramatically in favour of Pirates following a high-stakes week that leaves the Buccaneers with one hand on the trophy, after Sundowns dropped points against Chiefs who put up a spirited performance to deny the reigning champion maximum points at Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria on Wednesday night.

A glaring error from goalkeeper Ronwen Williams allowed the visitors to snatch an early lead, while midfielder Jayden Adams compounded the Brazilians' misery by picking up a red card for simulation.

Sundowns coach, Miguel Cardoso, was visibly furious following the stalemate, directing his ire toward a congested fixture schedule and a perceived lack of protection for his players.

He bemoaned the physical toll of the campaign, noting that the combination of fatigue and

a bruising encounter left several of his key stars requiring hospital attention for serious injuries.

"We are currently losing players now, and maybe we are lucky because it could have happened earlier," Cardoso stated.

He stated that every coach depends on their best players, suggesting that even a high-quality coach can suddenly appear average if they lose their top talent.

"South Africa also needs to think a little bit about how we want teams to arrive at the end of the season because no one else played international competitions besides Sundowns.

"I would like to have Sundowns in the final of the Champions League, and other teams closer to that as well. So why not have a PSL final in a continental competition? It can happen, but for that the league must protect the teams," Cardoso added.

Despite Sundowns sitting at the summit at the moment, Pirates will clinch their first league title in 14 years if they win their remaining matches, as their superior goal difference has become the ultimate trump card in this heavyweight duel.

The permutations for the championship are

now crystal clear for both South African giants as the season reaches its boiling point.

Mamelodi Sundowns now face an uphill battle where even winning all their remaining games might not be enough to retain their domestic crown. The Brazilians must hope for a Pirates slip-up while simultaneously attempting to bridge the massive goal gap that currently separates the two contenders.

Meanwhile, Pirates coach, Abdeslam Ouadoudou, has indicated that his players will fight to the very end after securing maximum points against Stellenbosch FC on Tuesday.

"You know, in every league, in every country, if you can see the Premier League in England, Manchester City, Arsenal, they're fighting. I think it's the same fight that we see in the PSL," the Moroccan mentor said.

As the final whistle approaches for the 2025/2026 campaign, the margins have never been thinner between the hunter and the hunted as Pirates look to change the narrative in a league that has for close to a decade been ruthlessly dominated by an almost indomitable Sundowns side.

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