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Fired Moqhaka Municipal Manager Portia Tshabalala. Picture: Facebook

MOQHAKA AXES MUNICIPAL MANAGER

*SIU recommends prosecution after
R221m security contract scandal
rocks municipality*

*Mayor, Speaker, and Chief Whip
Submit Resignations Following
ANC PEC's last year Resolution*

Page 2

MATLOSANA CFO DISMISSED

• Municipality confirms
Phetla's sacking

• Court barred her
from office

By Abigail Visagie

The Mahikeng High Court has suspended the Matlosana Local Municipality council's decision to reinstate its dismissed Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Mercy Phetla.

The ruling follows an urgent application brought before the court last week. Judge Andre Peterson ordered that the council resolution adopted on 4 February — which sought to reinstate Phetla — be set aside pending the final determination of the matter.

The court further ruled that Phetla may not report for duty or perform any functions as CFO until the case is finalised.

Journal News previously reported that Phetla faces two separate criminal cases involving allega-

tions of corruption, fraud and money laundering. She is also the subject of a completed disciplinary process that resulted in a recommendation for her dismissal.

Municipal spokesperson Kel-ebogile Moleko confirmed that Phetla's dismissal letter has been issued.

"The sanctions calling for the CFO, Ms Phetla's dismissal, have been implemented in terms of the Disciplinary Regulations for Senior Managers in Local Government, specifically referencing Section 57A of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, which governs disciplinary procedures for senior officials," said Moleko.



The municipality further confirmed that a report compiled by Advocate S. Sethene, dated 30 December 2025, recommended Phetla's dismissal.

Earlier this year, a council sitting convened to deliberate on the disciplinary report descended into political tension. The meeting failed to proceed after ANC councillors walked out, resulting in a lack of quorum.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) accused Executive Mayor and Speaker Stella Mondlane-Ngwenya of withholding the original disciplinary report from the council agenda. Mondlane-Ngwenya maintained that the postponement was

necessary because the CFO was not present and legal representatives needed to present the findings.

Speculation emerged that the walkout was intended to shield Phetla from accountability. The development drew attention given previous remarks by ANC provincial chairperson Nono Maloyi, who had stated that councillors must adhere strictly to constitutional and legislative processes in resolving municipal matters.

Maloyi previously warned that any attempt to bypass due process could undermine local governance.

According to the disciplinary findings, Phetla was charged with gross misconduct, dishonesty and dereliction of duty. Although she pleaded not guilty to five charges, she was found guilty on all counts.

Among the findings was **Continues on Page 2**



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Matlasana CFO Dismissed



Continues from Page 1

an unauthorised payment of R2.9 million to Varigated (Pty) Ltd for electrical materials that were reportedly never delivered. The report stated that the payment exceeded delegated authority limits. It was noted that a municipal manager may authorise expenditure up to R1.5 million, yet the payment of R2.9 million was approved.

Phetla was also found responsible for irregular and wasteful expenditure amounting to R528 000.

In addition, the inquiry found that she received gratification in the form of a Volkswagen Amarok valued at approximately R1.4 million from GMHM Construction and Projects, a municipal service provider.

This was deemed to have brought the municipality into disrepute.

Phetla has maintained that she purchased the vehicle herself; however, the disciplinary report indicated that no supporting evidence was provided. It has further been alleged that her bail was paid by the son of a director at GMHM.

She has also been linked to other luxury vehicles, including a Porsche, Range Rover and Maserati. The Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU) has obtained preservation orders on certain assets pending the outcome of legal proceedings. Phetla has denied ownership of the vehicles.

The matter now remains before the courts, with the municipality's decision to dismiss her standing pending final judicial determination.

Moqhaka Axes Municipal Manager

... SIU recommends prosecution after R221m security contract scandal rocks municipality

... Mayor, Speaker, and Chief Whip Submit Resignations Following ANC PEC's last year Resolution

By JN Reporter

Following months of investigation into financial misconduct involving more than R221 million — and mounting anticipation of a possible arrest — the Moqhaka Local Municipality has officially dismissed its Municipal Manager, Portia Tshabalala.

Her removal was confirmed during a special council meeting held on 29 January 2026.

Tshabalala was found guilty of financial misconduct linked to the unlawful payment of over R221 million to Isidingo Security Services, a KwaZulu-Natal-based company that allegedly did not qualify for the tender. She is also facing potential criminal charges after the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) reportedly completed its probe and submitted its report to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) last year, recommending prosecution.

Municipal spokesperson Dika Kheswa said council deemed the dismissal lawful and appropriate.

"The municipality wishes to assure residents, employees and stakeholders that this transition will not disrupt service delivery," said Kheswa, adding that council remains committed to upholding the rule of law and strengthening institutional integrity.

In October 2025, Journal News reported that it was in possession of a confidential referral affidavit dated September 2025, containing the full SIU report and its recommendation for criminal prosecution.

According to the report, Tshabalala unlawfully ap-



Fired Moqhaka Municipal Manager Portia Tshabalala. Picture: Facebook

pointed Isidingo Security Services on 17 January 2020. The company allegedly failed to deliver the required armed security services, yet the municipality paid more than R221 million over three years for a contract originally valued at R87 million.

The expenditure exceeded the original contract value by 66% — far above the 15% variation threshold permitted under the municipality's 2018/2019

Supply Chain Management Policy.

The SIU flagged multiple irregularities in the procurement and management of the contract. At the time of appointment, Isidingo's firearm licence had reportedly expired, meaning it could not legally provide armed security services.

As a Durban-based company, it also did not meet locality preference requirements.

The report further identified a conflict of interest. On 17 October 2019, Tshabalala — then serving on the Bid Adjudication Committee (BAC) — recommended Isidingo as the preferred bidder. She later appointed the same company in 2020 while acting as Municipal Manager.

Although she declared her prior involvement, the SIU found this constituted a conflict of interest under the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000).

Additionally, Tshabalala allegedly failed to obtain council approval for a contract extension that ran for more than nine months and continued renewing the agreement until 28 February 2023.

Meanwhile, Free State MEC for Cooperative Governance, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements, Saki Mokoena, has seconded T Ngesi as Acting Municipal Manager with effect from 10 February 2026.

In a letter dated 9 February 2026, seen by this publication, Mokoena confirmed that the secondment will last for three months.

"The MEC accedes to the request from Council to second an official to act as Municipal Manager..."

This is done to assist in stabilising and strengthening the administration of the municipality," the letter states.

Ngesi will be required to conclude a secondment agreement and performance agreement with the Executive Mayor to regulate the terms and conditions of his appointment.

In a related development, Journal News has been reliably informed that Mayor Motloheloa Mokatsane, Speaker Selloane Khiba and Chief Whip Mamajeremane Semakale have recently resigned.

The trio formed part of seven municipal troikas — comprising mayors, speakers and chief whips — dismissed by the ANC Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) in August last year, citing poor performance and failure to safeguard service delivery.

However, ANC provincial spokesperson Thabo Meeko said he could neither confirm nor deny the municipal troika's reported resignations when contacted on Thursday.

Triple Killing Sparks Fear in Bloem

Premier condemns killings amid rising GBV fears

By Bernell Simons

A wave of fear has gripped Bloemfontein after three women were shot dead in separate incidents over a violent weekend, leaving communities traumatised and police scrambling to contain rising tensions.

A 34-year-old Lesotho national, Maliehe Maliehe, appeared in the Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court on Tuesday, 10 February, facing two counts of murder, illegal possession of a firearm and illegal immigration. The State opposed bail and the matter was postponed to 17 February for a formal bail application. Four additional suspects face charges related to illegal immigration.

Police allege that Maliehe left a local tavern with two women before allegedly shooting them execution-style. Their bodies were later discovered in pools of blood. Investigators are continuing a manhunt for additional suspects believed to be linked to the Meadows Road killing.

The first murder occurred on Saturday, 7 February, when the body of a woman believed to be in

her mid-thirties was found along Meadows Road in Bloemfontein with a fatal gunshot wound to the head. Her identity has not yet been confirmed.

Less than 24 hours later, violence struck again. At around 01:50 on Sunday, Bloemfontein Crime Prevention officers responding to reports in Namibia Square discovered two women, believed to be in their late twenties, each shot in the back of the head. Both were declared dead at the scene, heightening fears of targeted violence against women in the city.

An intelligence-driven operation by the Provincial Tracking and Tracing Team, supported by the Parkweg Tactical Response Team, later intercepted a white Toyota Quantum carrying five foreign nationals on the same street where the killings occurred. Police recovered an unlicensed 9mm pistol loaded with six rounds of live ammunition, believed to be central to the investigation.

Police spokesperson Sgt Mahlomola Kareli appealed to residents to come forward with information.

"The safety of our communities remains our top priority. Anyone with information must contact De-



tective Sergeant Machalotsa or call the SAPS Crime Stop line," Kareli said.

Free State Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, accompanied by Deputy Provincial Police Commissioner Maj Gen Solly Lesia, visited the Namibia Square crime scene on Sunday, condemning the killings as senseless and inhumane.

"These killings are a painful reminder that the fight

against gender-based violence and femicide remains far from over," she said, urging residents to strengthen community policing efforts and work closely with law enforcement.

Police have since increased patrols in affected areas as investigations continue. Meanwhile, shaken residents are demanding swift justice, fearing further violence in their neighbourhoods.

Is FS Facing a 'Trigger-Happy' Pandemic?



By Bernell Simons

The COVID-19 pandemic left a devastating scar on South Africa, spreading rapidly and claiming countless lives. Now, the Free State may be confronting a different kind of epidemic — one driven not by a virus, but by illegal and unlicensed firearms.

According to Professor Mpho Matlala, a law enforcement and crime expert at UNISA, the Free State's geographic position makes it particularly vulnerable to the illegal flow of firearms. Its proximity to Lesotho has effectively turned the province into a key transit corridor for weapons moving across the country.

Matlala warns that weak border management, chronic staff shortages and what he describes as a

"deeply entrenched culture of corruption" create conditions that allow illegal firearms to pass through checkpoints with relative ease.

He clarified that firearm amnesty measures are designed to encourage individuals to voluntarily surrender unlicensed weapons.

"People need to remember that the Amnesty Act exists to reduce the number of illegal firearms in circulation by offering immunity for unlawful possession — provided the firearm has not been used in serious crimes such as murder," he said.

However, he cautioned that without strong oversight and accountability within law enforcement and government structures, amnesty initiatives risk falling short.

Instead of curbing violence, corruption and poor enforcement may inadvertently fuel the very crisis

authorities are trying to contain.

In just two weeks, five people have been killed in the province due to gun violence — a figure that underscores the growing intensity of the crisis. Safety experts warn that the Free State is facing what they describe as a "trigger-happy pandemic," where the spread of illegal weapons mirrors the rapid contagion of a public health emergency.

A gun violence survivor, who asked to remain anonymous for safety reasons, described how easily illegal firearms can be obtained and the reckless danger they pose.

"I was involved in a shooting where both of us were armed," he said.

"We ran from each other while drawing our guns and just started firing, without thinking about who else could get hurt. Looking back now, I realise how dangerous and irresponsible that was — especially for people who had nothing to do with our conflict. What shocked me most was how easy it was to get the gun. It was almost as simple as withdrawing cash from an ATM."

A community member who survived a gun attack in Heidedal, Bloemfontein, last week also raised concerns about the growing accessibility of illegal firearms and how quickly disputes escalate into deadly encounters.

The disturbing reality is that firearms have become a daily threat in communities, claiming the lives of innocent men, women and children. Law enforcement and community organisations are sounding the alarm, stressing that urgent intervention is needed to stem the tide of violence.

Nationally, South Africa continues to battle mounting gun violence, with an average of 33 people shot and killed daily. According to Gun Free South Africa (GfSA), firearms were used in 2,886 murders over just three months.

Recent police statistics show that between October and December 2024, 1,952 suspects were arrest-

ed for illegal possession of firearms and 1,380 for illegal possession of ammunition. During the same period, SAPS recorded 411,600 serious and violent crimes nationwide.

GfSA director Adele Kirsten said firearms remain the weapon of choice for criminals and called for stronger regulation and accountability from private gun owners and security companies. She welcomed President Cyril Ramaphosa's pledge to curb illegal guns and recover weapons from communities.

Major General Thulare Sekhukhune reported a 5% drop in serious crime overall, although incidents of mob justice and alcohol-fueled violence have risen, particularly in the Free State.

Efforts to address the crisis have faced setbacks. In 2017, government announced a six-month firearms amnesty from 1 April to 30 September, allowing people to surrender illegal guns without prosecution. However, the programme never took effect due to incomplete parliamentary approval and the absence of a Government Gazette notice. Later amnesties in 2019 and 2020 proved more successful, but the failed 2017 initiative left thousands of illegal firearms in circulation.

In the Free State alone, 12,727 deaths were recorded in 2017, while 356 individuals were declared unfit to possess firearms due to illegal activity.

Authorities maintain that voluntary surrender programmes remain vital to removing weapons from communities and protecting families nationwide.

The key question now is whether authorities can contain this crisis before it escalates further. Without sustained policing, community interventions and strict enforcement of firearm regulations, the province risks seeing gun violence spread unchecked.

As the Free State grapples with this deadly trend, the need for a coordinated response — from law enforcement, government and community leaders — has never been more urgent. The stakes are high, and the time to act is now.

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Rockman Leads 150-Tree Greening Initiative



Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs, Elzabe Rockman plant trees in Letsemeng Picture: Supplied

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

As part of the 1 Million Tree Campaign under the Presidential Ten Million Trees Flagship Programme, Free State MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs, Elzabe Rockman, planted approximately 150 indigenous trees at eight Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Bohlokong, Letsemeng Local Municipality, on Saturday.

Rockman was accompanied by the Chief Director of Environmental Quality and Protection, Nozi Nkoe, among other officials.

Through the National Greening Programme, South Africa has committed to planting five million trees over a five-year period as part of broader efforts to combat climate change and promote environmental sustainability.

Rockman urged the centres and surrounding communities to refrain from cutting down trees, stressing the long-term environmental consequences.

"Planting trees marks a significant step towards educating young children about environmental

stewardship and sustainable agricultural practices in the Letsemeng Local Municipality," she said.

She warned that deforestation could worsen climate conditions and undermine efforts to build resilient communities.

Nkoe echoed these sentiments, highlighting the vital role trees play in human existence — from producing oxygen and preventing soil erosion to shielding homes from strong winds.

In addition to the tree-planting initiative, Rockman handed over gardening tools to beneficiaries of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), including vegetable seeds, wheelbarrows and organic fertiliser pellets.

Forty EPWP contracts were also awarded to local residents.

She said the recruitment process was aimed at ensuring inclusivity, particularly for youth, women and persons with disabilities.

"We must ensure that these temporary jobs contribute to reducing the cost of living and equip participants with the necessary skills required by the sector, so that service delivery benefits both the community and the local environment," she said.

High Court Intervenes as Family Accused of Hiding Patient

By Bernell Simons

The North West High Court has moved decisively to protect a vulnerable young man with severe brain injuries, ordering his family to disclose his whereabouts within five days after finding their conduct had obstructed medical care, legal oversight, and social services intervention.

Acting Judge President Andre Petersen issued the order amid mounting concern that the man — now in his 20s and identified in court papers only as "the patient" to safeguard his identity — had been deliberately concealed from authorities responsible for ensuring his safety and wellbeing.

The ruling follows an urgent application by court-appointed curator Ewan Carter Smith, previously tasked with managing the patient's financial and legal affairs after medical experts confirmed the extent of his cognitive impairment. Smith told the court that repeated efforts to assess and meet the patient had been frustrated by family members who allegedly refused to disclose his location and denied professionals access to him.

The patient suffered severe brain damage in 2010 at the age of five following a motor vehicle accident. Since then, medical specialists have expressed ongoing concern about his behavioural deterioration and the capacity of his caregivers to provide adequate supervision.

Reports from social workers and occupational therapists indicate that since 2019 the patient has displayed escalating aggression, including incidents at school where he allegedly threatened fellow learners with a knife. Medical professionals recommended his transfer to Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital for specialised treatment and monitoring, but the family reportedly rejected the proposal.

Attempts by experts to visit the patient at a rural residence were unsuccessful after family members allegedly refused entry. In another instance, a social worker was presented with an individual said to be the patient at a special school, but no identification was produced to verify his identity. Officials were later informed that he had been expelled due to behavioural issues.

Judge Petersen described the evidence as "alarming", pointing to what he termed "active obstruction" rather than mere non-cooperation. The court heard



that threats were allegedly made against professionals attempting to locate the patient, including an email warning that anyone sent near him "will not come back". The judge found such statements constituted a serious threat to the safety of curators, legal representatives and medical personnel.

In addition to ordering the family to reveal the patient's location, the court appointed a second curator to oversee his personal affairs and authorised officials to seek police assistance should further access be denied. The judge stressed that professional supervision was essential given the patient's history of violent outbursts and the potential risk to the public.

The family sought to halt proceedings while challenging the appointment of court experts, but the court dismissed the request, emphasising that the patient's welfare must remain paramount.

Legal analysts say the matter highlights the delicate balance between family autonomy and the state's duty to intervene when vulnerable individuals may be at risk. Child and mental-health advocates have likewise underscored the importance of court oversight in cases where severe cognitive impairment leaves a person unable to manage their own affairs.

Authorities have not disclosed further details regarding the patient's condition or location, citing privacy protections. However, the court warned that continued obstruction could attract further legal consequences.

The ruling reinforces the judiciary's willingness to intervene where vulnerable persons are believed to be shielded from professional care, affirming that safeguarding human dignity and public safety remains both a legal and moral imperative.

Centlec Offers 60-Day Amnesty to Tackle Power Theft



By Bernell Simons

Mangaung Electricity Utility, CENTLEC (SOC) Ltd, has launched a 60-day General Amnesty to curb electricity theft, meter tampering and

unauthorised meter relocations across the Mangaung Metro Municipality.

The initiative gives households and businesses an opportunity to legalise their electricity usage without facing prosecution, fines or backdated billing penal-

ties. The amnesty aims to encourage compliance, improve billing accuracy and promote safer electricity use, while allowing residents to resolve past violations without fear of legal consequences.

Acting Centlec spokesperson Tshediso Liba said consumers who voluntarily disclose tampered meters, illegal connections or relocated meter boxes during the amnesty period will qualify for a full waiver of fines and penalties.

"The entity will normalise the connection, seal the meter and grant immunity from criminal prosecution for past electricity theft, provided participants acknowledge their future electricity debt in writing," said Liba.

Residents wishing to participate must submit proof of residence (preferably a title deed), a valid identity document and a copy or quotation of their electricity bill.

Liba added that in cases involving tampered meters, a five-day waiting period will apply before power is re-

stored to allow for safety inspections.

He said electricity theft continues to strain municipal networks, resulting in revenue losses that affect maintenance, infrastructure investment and service delivery. Illegal connections also overload the grid, increasing the risk of outages, equipment damage and hazardous electrical incidents.

Energy policy expert Dr Thabo Mokoena from the University of the Free State said the programme could succeed if paired with consistent enforcement and public education.

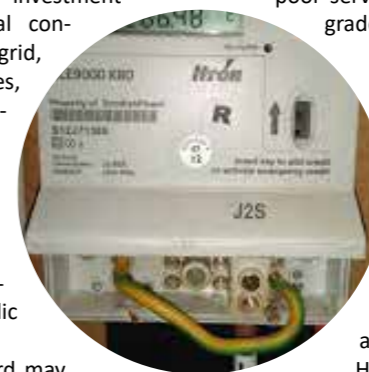
"People who come forward may correct their status, but many may continue illegal practices if there is no consistent monitoring or consequences once the amnesty ends," Mokoena said.

He noted that long-term success would depend on sustained enforcement, awareness campaigns and addressing root causes such as affordability challenges, poor service delivery and delayed infrastructure upgrades.

"Without tackling these underlying issues, some residents may revert to illegal connections once the amnesty closes," he warned.

Liba confirmed that inspections and enforcement operations will intensify after the 60-day period, with offenders facing fines, disconnections or prosecution. "This amnesty is about restoring fairness, protecting infrastructure and encouraging responsible electricity use," he said.

He added that illegal connections are not victimless crimes, as they endanger lives and damage critical infrastructure. CENTLEC has previously welcomed the arrest of suspects linked to electricity theft and vandalism.



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METRO ZEROES IN ON SERVICES

CITY COMMITS TO TACKLING LONG-STANDING LAND AND RELOCATION CHALLENGES

Mountain View Settlement: Formalisation Plans Underway

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Homelessness and illegal land occupation remain pressing challenges in Mangaung, but Executive Mayor Gregory Nthatsi says the municipality is taking a proactive approach.

Addressing the media, Nthatsi outlined plans to manage illegal land occupation by accelerating housing development and formalising settlements before encroachment becomes unmanageable.

Central to this plan is the formalisation of the Mountain View settlement

in Louer Park, Bloemfontein, and the expansion of lawful land occupation in the area.

During the State of the City Address and the tabling of the 2025/26 budget, Nthatsi confirmed allocations under the Urban Settlement Development Grant: R541.28 million for 2025/26, R566.01 million for 2026/27, and R591.62 million for 2027/28.

"The grant is meant for the creation of sustainable and integrated human settlements that enable improved quality of household life," Nthatsi said.

The Mayor noted that allowing illegal occupation of land reserved for clinics, schools, and housing projects could hinder development and affect community well-being.

Mangaung currently has 79,000

residents waiting for housing: 35,000 in Bloemfontein, 18,000 in Botshabelo, 12,000 in Thaba Nchu, with the remainder spread across smaller towns including Dewetsdorp, Soutpan, Van Stadensrus and Wepener.

"We are asking our communities to be patient. Between now and June, we aim to relocate a significant number of residents to habitable, permanent accommodation," Nthatsi said.

"We will consult stakeholders and residential organisations to ensure the process is fair and collaborative."

Nthatsi emphasised that clearing illegally occupied land is not an end in itself, but a step toward sustainable housing delivery and improved service provision for residents across the Metro.

No More Living in Flood Zones – Nthatsi

By Bernell Simons

"We cannot allow people to remain in dangerous flood-risk zones," says Executive Mayor Gregory Nthatsi.

For years, residents of informal settlements built on environmentally vulnerable land have lived with uncertainty — facing seasonal flooding, unstable soil, unsafe electricity connections and limited access to clean water and sanitation.

That reality is now shifting as the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality begins relocating families from hazardous areas to safer, fully serviced sites.

The relocation project targets settlements situated on floodplains and other high-risk zones. Municipal officials say the initiative is driven not only by safety concerns, but by the need to restore dignity and improve living conditions.

"Many of our residents have been living in conditions that are unsafe and unsustainable," Nthatsi said. "By moving them to areas with proper infrastructure, we are not only protecting them from immediate dangers, but also giving them the opportunity to thrive in a community that supports their wellbeing."

The newly developed sites are equipped with clean water, reliable electricity and functioning sewage systems — services that were largely absent in the informal settlements. The municipality has also committed to providing transportation assistance and community integration support to help families adjust.

Residents have expressed mixed emotions about leaving areas they have long called home, but many

acknowledge the benefits of improved services.

"It's hard to leave the place where we grew up," said one resident who asked to remain anonymous. "But having water, electricity and proper sanitation is a big relief. Our children can now grow up healthier and safer."

The affected settlements are home to both South African and non-South African residents living in makeshift dwellings. According to the municipality's housing policy, priority is given to South African citizens for state-supported housing, while non-citizens are expected to seek alternative accommodation through private rental arrangements or other means.

Nthatsi stressed that the relocation process will be carried out within the framework of the law.

"We cannot allow people to remain in a dangerous flood-risk zone. The area must be cleared, and we must act within the law," he said. "We love and care about the people living there, and we want to ensure they are moved to safer environments."

However, housing activists and some community members have raised concerns that relocating residents far from economic hubs could disrupt access to employment, schools and essential services, potentially increasing transport costs for vulnerable households.

Municipal authorities maintain that transparent planning and meaningful consultation will guide the process. Construction and expansion of the new housing areas are ongoing, with additional relocations expected in the coming months.

For many families, the move represents cautious hope — a chance to build a future free from flooding, fires and unsafe living conditions.

Nthatsi Cautions Inept Municipal Officials

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Executive Mayor Gregory Nthatsi has fired a stern warning at underperforming municipal officials, making it clear that poor service delivery, collusion with community members in the allocation of houses, and administrative complacency will no longer be tolerated under his watch.

Speaking during a media briefing this week, Nthatsi emphasised that accountability is not optional and that officials entrusted with public resources must produce measurable results.

He said communities are growing increasingly impatient with delays and recurring service breakdowns, adding that the municipality cannot afford a culture of mediocrity at a time when residents are demanding tangible change.

"Consequence management is in place. We are bound by law to act against such individuals, and when we have identified those responsible for these shenanigans, we will come back and say these are the culprits," said Nthatsi.

He maintained that service delivery remains the cornerstone of the municipality's mandate, acknowledging ongoing operational challenges. These include fleet breakdowns and employer-employee disputes that at times result in strike action, disrupting services across Mangaung. However, he assured residents that these matters are being addressed and brought under control.

Nthatsi further stated that systems governing housing allocation and service delivery are designed to benefit local communities, warning that any attempt to manipulate processes for personal gain would be dealt with decisively. The mayor reiterated his administration's commitment to restoring public confidence through stricter oversight, improved efficiency and firm consequence management, signalling a tougher stance on officials who fail to meet their responsibilities.

Metro Targets Well-Located Housing Amid Commuter Strain

Nthatsi says development must bring residents closer to jobs and service to reverse decades of exclusionary planning.

By Bernell Simons

For many Botshabelo residents, earning a living in the city comes at a heavy price: hours lost in transit and salaries eroded by transport costs.

Workers often rely on multiple buses or shared taxis to reach their jobs, with some journeys taking up to three hours each way. By month's end, a significant portion of their income has gone to commuting.

"I leave home at 5am and get back after 8pm," said Thato Snikele, a factory worker. "By the time I pay for buses and taxis, there's hardly anything left for rent or food. It feels like I'm working just to travel."

The strain is not only financial. Long commutes are increasingly linked to fatigue, stress and reduced family time — factors that undermine both productivity and quality of life.

On Monday, 9 February 2026, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality Executive Mayor Cllr Gregory Nthatsi briefed the media on key service delivery challenges, placing the ongoing housing crisis at the centre of the discussion.

Nthatsi said access to well-located, affordable

housing remains one of the metro's most urgent priorities. He stressed the need for integrated development that brings communities closer to economic hubs, schools and essential services, rather than reinforcing spatial patterns that push residents to the periphery.

"Unjust spatial planning traps families in a cycle where most of their income is spent on transport instead of building better lives," he said. "Housing is not only about shelter — it's about dignity, justice and economic freedom."

He criticised development patterns that force workers to rely on multiple modes of transport simply to reach employment, arguing that such conditions amount to "modern-day exclusion".

"Our people cannot continue to wake up before sunrise and take two or three buses just to earn a living. That is not development," Nthatsi said.

As housing costs rise and cities expand, the challenge of balancing affordable living with access to opportunity has become increasingly urgent. For families in Botshabelo and other outlying communities, the daily grind of long-distance commuting remains a stark reminder of the enduring legacy of spatial inequality.

Minister Hands Over 58 Title Deeds, Restoring Dignity in Bethlehem

By Lerato Mutlanyane

The dignity of 58 farm dwellers in Bethlehem, in the Eastern Free State, was restored this week as they received title deeds securing ownership of the land they live and work on.

Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development Mzwanele Nkhontso, Free State MEC for Agriculture Elzabe Rockman, and Deputy Minister in the Presidency Noncena Mhlauli jointly handed over the title deeds to beneficiaries under the state land transfer programme and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act.

The initiative aims to secure tenure for farm dwellers and emerging farmers, providing legal ownership and greater economic opportunity.

Speaking during the handover, Rockman said a title deed should represent more than legal documenta-

tion.

"The title deed must not just be a document, but the work you put into the ground," she said.

"We need people with passion for the land and the commitment to produce. The allocation of land must also be better explained to our people."

In his keynote address, Nkhontso described the handover as a step towards ending poverty among local farmers.

"Programmes such as Strategic Land Acquisition and Land Development Support have been moving very slowly. This title deed is about restoring our people's dignity. We are not just looking at land ownership, but production," he said.

Nkhontso assured beneficiaries of continued government support and stressed the importance of productivity and job creation.



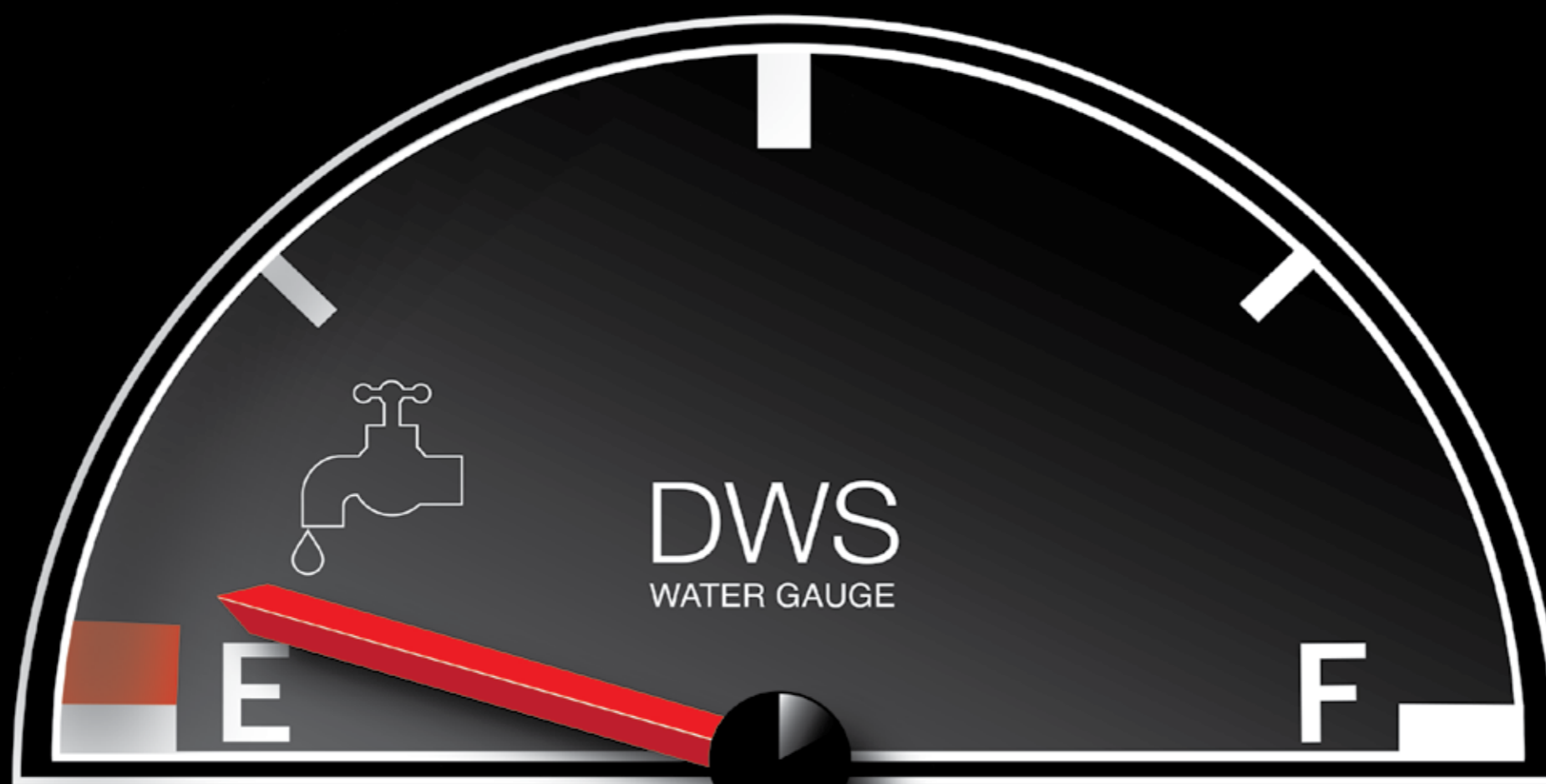
"Our farmers must be productive, create jobs and grow the economy. Corruption is one of the challenges hampering service delivery. Your time is up — I have started consulting with the SIU to begin investigations," he added.

Closing the event, Mhlauli encouraged beneficiaries to use the land as a platform for generational progress. "The land you receive today is a foundation for progress. Use it productively. Build from it. Grow from it. Pass on a legacy of own-

ership and opportunity to future generations," he said.

He called for continued collaboration to ensure land reform drives inclusive growth, rural development and shared prosperity.

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Tensions Escalate Over Lourierpark Development

... High Court halts Metro's land preparation
... Mangaung accuses opposition party of blocking people access to land



Land grabbers erected shacks in Lourierpark last year. Picture: Ofm

By JN Reporter

Tensions surrounding the Lourierpark development have intensified after the Free State High Court issued an order temporarily halting Mangaung Metro's land preparation activities. The ruling has triggered a political storm, with the municipality accusing an opposition party of deliberately frustrating efforts to provide residents with access to land.

The court's intervention follows an urgent application brought this week by the Democratic Alliance (DA), which alleges "unlawful preparation" of land for occupation in and around Lourierpark.

In its order, the court directed the Metro to immediately cease any further land preparation or settlement activities pending the finalisation of the matter.

However, in a statement released on Thursday, executive mayoral spokesperson Themba Vryman said the land preparation forms part of the Metro's efforts to address the city's growing housing backlog.

He accused the DA of obstructing the municipality from developing its own land for the benefit of Mangaung residents.

"How long shall we keep our people waiting? The city is currently sitting with more than 77 000 peo-

ple registered on the NHNR with reference numbers waiting for placement opportunities. It has been more than a year of waiting for land allocation and proper service delivery," Vryman said.

"It is deeply regrettable in our democratic dispensation that, in a constitutional democracy founded on the principles of dignity, equality and redress, a political party has chosen to obstruct a municipality from developing its own land for the benefit of the people of Mangaung."

Vryman further claimed the DA's court application is "not about governance, but desperation for political control."

The DA has argued that currently prepared land is not serviced and currently has no bulk water supply, electricity, or waterborne sewerage infrastructure and view the planned occupation as unlawful and place both residents and surrounding communities at risk.

"In terms of municipal by-laws and planning legislation, land may not be allocated or occupied unless township establishment conditions are met, services are installed, and the required engineering certificates are issued. Any occupation without these processes would be unlawful and place both residents and surrounding communities at risk," said DA councillor Greg van Noord.

The matter has been postponed to 5 March 2026.

Saul: ANC Ready to Cross 50% Mark in Local Polls

By Abigail Visagie

The African National Congress (ANC) marked its annual January 8 Statement celebrations in Colesberg, Northern Cape, drawing thousands of supporters and political leaders, including National Executive Committee (NEC) member Dakota Legoete, to the small Karoo town.

The historic gathering, which commemorates the founding of Africa's oldest liberation movement, served not only as a reflection on the party's 114-year journey but also as a platform to outline its political priorities and organisational renewal ahead of the crucial Local Government Elections (LGE) set to take place later this year.

Journal News caught up with Northern Cape Premier Dr Zamani Saul in his capacity as provincial ANC chairperson. He expressed excitement over the strong community turnout.

"We witnessed 10,000 people attending the celebrations in Colesberg, which is a massive turnout," said Saul. He described the attendance as a positive sign ahead of the LGE. "We've gathered here to ensure that the community of Colesberg participates in the upcoming elections. The ANC remains dominant in the Northern Cape."

Saul said the provincial branch is aiming to secure more than 50% of the vote in the elections. He noted that in 2022 the party secured 55%, while in 2024 it increased its support to 60%.

"Given the ANC's strong presence in the Northern Cape, we are looking forward to an overwhelming majority in this province," he said.

Service delivery remains a top priority, according to Saul. "We have done exceptionally well in service delivery and will continue to do so because of our residents' preference, faith and belief in the ANC," he added.

Saul also confirmed that the province is prepared and enthusiastic about hosting the national January 8 celebrations next year. "We are working hard to ensure that ANC members will be warmly welcomed to the Northern Cape for the national celebrations," he said.


NEC member Dakota Legoete echoed Saul's confidence, saying the province is poised to reclaim most municipalities during the LGE.

"We are confident that the ANC will dominate the



Northern Cape, and we are going to ensure that we win all municipalities," said Legoete.

He added that the party's growing support reflects public confidence in its leadership. "We have so much faith in the ANC that even former Northern Cape DA leader Andrew Louw realised that the ANC is the only party that makes a difference and genuinely cares about the people," Legoete concluded.



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Opinion

Sizwe Alhajra Zingitwa

PEC member of the ANC Youth League FS



ANCYL FS Marks a Year of Reconstruction

Yesterday marked one year since the election of the 11th Provincial Executive Committee of the ANC Youth League in the Free State on 12 February 2025. In the life of a liberation movement, a year is a short passage of time. In the life of an organisation in crisis, it is decisive.

This reflection does not substitute for the formal accounting that will be undertaken at Provincial Congress. It is a political assessment of the first year of leadership, the conditions we confronted, and the concrete direction we imposed upon the organisation. The central fact is this: the ANC Youth League in the Free State is more coherent, more disciplined, more intellectually grounded, and more interventionist than it was twelve months ago.

We inherited an organisation weakened by fragmentation, declining ideological depth, uneven discipline, and eroded confidence in constitutional authority. Structures functioned inconsistently. Branches were uneven in vitality. Political education had receded into occasional rhetoric. Internal contestation had displaced outward intervention.

Simultaneously, the socioeconomic conditions of the province had deteriorated to intolerable levels. Youth unemployment exceeded sixty percent. More than 442 000 young people were not in employment, education, or training. Over 11 000 graduates were unemployed. Economic growth stagnated below one percent. Infrastructure grants were under spent while communities endured collapsing water systems, deteriorating sanitation, impassable roads, and shrinking economic opportunity.

The Youth League confronted a dual responsibility: organisational reconstruction and economic intervention. We resolved that these tasks were inseparable. On 30 June 2025, the ANC Youth League led a Provincial Youth March to the Office of the Premier. This was a deliberate act of mass political mobilisation, anchored in structured analysis and a comprehensive economic programme. We advanced a clear position: youth unemployment in the Free State constitutes a structural emergency demanding decisive state intervention.

We placed forward a detailed programme of action.

We called for the redirection of no less than R3 billion toward labour intensive infrastructure, youth cooperatives, and employment linked skills development. We advanced the establishment of a coordinated public employment authority with a defined

target of creating 150 000 youth jobs by 2027. We proposed a multi billion rand industrialisation initiative focused on agro processing, manufacturing, and regional reconstruction in Botshabelo, QwaQwa, and Sasolburg. We demanded that at least 40 percent of provincial procurement be allocated to youth owned enterprises, supported by transparent reporting and measurable targets. We called for income support mechanisms for unemployed youth as an instrument of economic stabilisation and dignity.

These were not abstract proposals. They were fiscally grounded and institutionally implementable. To underscore readiness and seriousness, we submitted 30 000 CVs of unemployed youth from across all five regions of the province. We transformed the discourse from lamentation to organised capacity.

Beyond mobilisation, the PEC intervened directly in the architecture of governance. We asserted that youth development must be a central function of provincial administration. It cannot remain peripheral or confined to a single department.

We advanced the establishment of youth development directorates across all provincial departments, beginning with the Office of the Premier, to embed youth priorities in planning, budgeting, and procurement. We called for the institutionalisation of a Youth Advisory Panel with defined authority and direct access to executive decision making. We proposed the creation of a R1 billion Youth Development Fund with explicit redistributive orientation, prioritising young women, rural youth, and those structurally excluded from capital and markets.

We insisted that procurement set asides be treated as instruments of redistribution rather than procedural compliance. Public expenditure must be consciously directed toward youth enterprises, with transparent monitoring and political oversight.

In September 2025, the Provincial General Council convened in Koffiefontein marked a decisive ideological consolidation of this direction. The Declaration adopted there articulated an unapologetic programme of industrialisation, beneficiation, expansion of manufacturing capacity, redefinition of monetary policy to include employment, mobilisation of idle public resources for development, introduction of a universal income grant, and progressive taxation to confront extreme wealth concentration.

The PGC did not merely pass resolutions. It restored ideological seriousness. It reaffirmed that

economic transformation is not an adjunct to political liberation but its material foundation. It re-established the language of state intervention, redistribution, and productive reconstruction within the Youth League. Internally, the PEC reasserted constitutional authority. Meetings regained regularity and substance. Communication across regions improved. Decisions of structures are implemented with greater consistency. Political education has been revived as a continuous and structured programme. Branch stabilisation is being pursued methodically, recognising that provincial strength is inseparable from grassroots vitality.

Discipline is applied with greater consistency. Accountability is no longer negotiable. Leadership is treated as collective responsibility rather than personal entitlement.

The qualitative shift is evident.

The ANC Youth League in the Free State now intervenes directly in economic discourse. It has articulated a coherent youth centred development agenda. It has re-established structured engagement with provincial leadership. It has reconnected organisational work with the material struggles of unemployed youth, informal traders, rural communities, and graduates excluded from the labour market.

This does not mean that the crisis has been resolved. Youth unemployment remains devastating. Economic stagnation persists. Structural constraints endure. But the organisation is no longer adrift. It has direction. It has programme. It has coherence.

The organisation we inherited was uncertain and internally preoccupied. The organisation we lead today is outward facing, politically sharper, and organisationally firmer. It has marched. It has formulated policy. It has adopted binding resolutions. It has demanded institutional restructuring. It has repositioned itself as a serious political actor within the province.

One year is not a culmination. It is a foundation.

As Provincial Congress approaches, delegates will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of our stewardship. That is their constitutional right and duty. What can already be stated with clarity is that the 11th PEC has re-established seriousness, restored ideological confidence, and placed the economic exclusion of youth at the centre of provincial political discourse.

The path ahead requires deeper consolidation,

broader mobilisation, and firmer intervention. But the direction has been set. The Youth League in the Free State is no longer defined by drift. It is defined by conscious political movement.

In the Final Analysis

The structural contradictions of the provincial economy remain. Youth unemployment remains above 60 percent. Growth is insufficient to absorb labour. The reserve army of labour persists. These realities confront us without illusion.

What has changed is the internal condition of the movement.

The organisation is beginning to recover. Recovery does not mean the absence of weaknesses. It means that decay has been halted and reversal has begun. Discipline is being restored. Constitutional authority is being respected. Leadership is increasingly understood as responsibility, not entitlement.

We are beginning to reorient comrades around the twin tasks of the ANC Youth League.

The first task is to mobilise and rally the youth behind the banner and vision of the African National Congress. This requires ideological clarity, disciplined organisation, and sustained political education. It means building branches that are active in communities, embedding comrades among young people, and ensuring that the youth see the ANC not as a distant institution but as the political instrument of their liberation.

The second task is to champion the general interests and aspirations of the youth. This demands concrete intervention in the material conditions of young people: unemployment, access to land, education, industrial development, and economic inclusion. It requires policy engagement, oversight, organised campaigns, and a relentless focus on shifting the balance of forces in favour of the youth majority. Advocacy must translate into programme and measurable impact.

By that measure, the ANC Youth League in the Free State is stronger than it was twelve months ago. The organisation is recovering. Comrades are being reoriented around its historic mission.

The struggle continues, Aluta Continua.

***Sizwe Alhajra Zingitwa is a PEC member of the ANC Youth League Free State but writes in his personal capacity.**

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

Big Mining Deals Amidst Exploited Mining-Affected Communities



Refilwe Mochoari
Editor-in-Chief

If you were not in Cape Town this week, what have you been up to?

This week, significant economic decisions were made at the largest minerals and mining event in the mother city, attracting global mining leaders, investors, engineers, and policymakers from across the world.

Yesterday marked the last day of the Investing in Africa Mining Indaba 2026, which took place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from Monday, February 9.

The main aim of this annual gathering is to propel the mining sector forward on the African continent.

Taking place for over 30 years now, this event is a big deal....

Hi everyone, my name is Refilwe Mochoari, and let's talk about the Africa Mining Indaba.

This year's mining indaba was themed "Stronger Together: Progress Through Partnership."

This theme underscores the importance of collaboration in advancing Africa's mining sector.

Africa holds a strategic advantage when it comes to critical minerals such as lithium. These resources are essential for renewable energy technologies, electric mobility, and digital infrastructure.

Due to the global demand for these minerals, the Department of Trade and Industry has positioned itself not only as a supplier of raw materials, but also as a key player in beneficiation, manufacturing, and strategic value chains.

According to African Finance Corporation (AFC) President Samaila Zubairu, Africa's mining economy contains \$29.5 trillion in on-site mineral value, representing 20% of the world's total mineral wealth.

He says that an AFC study revealed that the continent is under-explored—out of the \$29.5 trillion in value, \$8.6 trillion remains undeveloped.

Additionally, there is fragmented geological data and limited transparency, which elevate perceptions of risk and constrain investment.

The South African Public Investment Corporation has committed R1.35 billion to support early-stage mining projects, bridging the funding gap for advanced projects that are at least in the post-scoping study phase through bankable feasibility.

The Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources, along with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), has committed R400 million to a junior exploration fund to support junior mining efforts, enhance ore body access, and promote economic growth.

While this news is encouraging, I want to bring the Africa Mining Indaba closer to home.

In the Free State, we have Virginia and Jagersfontein, in the Northern Cape, we have Kuruman, Kimberley, and Kathu and in the North West province, we have Rustenburg.

These are just a few mining communities that I am mentioning.

Beyond the investment hype, what did the conversations in Cape Town look like for the communities who are directly affected by mining?

What constitutes a successful mining indaba when mining-affected communities are not included?

How can we deem it successful if communities live next to rehabilitated and abandoned shafts?

What does success mean when communities are unemployed and living in poverty?

What about the safety of communities that face threats from collapsing mine walls?

What does success entail if abandoned shafts are occupied by illegal miners, known as zama zamas, who commit crimes and terrorise society?

Besides building houses for mining communities, how else are these community members benefiting from their land?

There is a pressing need for change in the conversations and commissions that take place at the Indaba.

Investment discussions should shift from exploitation to collaborations.

What do industry experts say about the local communities?

Is this issue one that the summit intentionally overlooks?

If the discussions at the mining indaba revolve around inclusive growth, sustainable value creation, and a mining sector that aims to improve the economy, then it is imperative that these communities are granted ownership of their land and that they have a seat at the table during the Africa Mining Indaba discussions.

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
Part One

Ten Lessons I Learned from Peter Drucker

If you are to read one book on executive self-management, it should be this, Peter Drucker's definitive classic, *The Effective Executive*. It doesn't matter the size of your organization, or even whether you run an organization at all. Anyone who has responsibility for getting the right things done—anyone who seeks how best to self-deploy on the few priorities that will make the biggest impact—is an executive.

The most effective among us have the same number of hours as everyone else, yet they deploy them better, often much better than people with far greater raw talent. As Drucker states early in these pages: people endowed with tremendous brilliance are often "strikingly ineffectual." And if that's true for the exceptionally brilliant, what hope is there for the rest of us? Actually, there is something much better than hope: Drucker's practical disciplines.

I first read *The Effective Executive* in my early thirties, and it was a huge inflection point in my own development. Reading the text again, I'm reminded of how its lessons became deeply ingrained, almost as a set of commandments. Some of Drucker's examples and language might be dated, but the insights are timeless and modern, as helpful today as when he wrote them more than five decades ago. Here are ten lessons I learned from Peter Drucker and this book, and that I offer as a small portal of entry into the mind of the greatest management thinker of all time.

#1: First, Manage Thyself

"That one can truly manage other people is by no means adequately proven," Drucker writes, "But one can always manage oneself." How can you possibly expect others to perform at the highest levels without first expecting that of yourself? Drucker lays out a law of organized performance: the ratio of a leader's performance to those on his or her team remains constant; therefore, if you want the average performance of those around you to go up, you must first improve your own performance.

#2: Do what you're made for

One of Drucker's most arresting points is that we are all incompetent at most things. The crucial question is not how to turn incompetence into excellence, but to ask, "What can a person do uncommonly well?" This leads, inevitably, to

a conclusion: your first responsibility is to determine your own distinctive competences—what you can do uncommonly well, what you are truly made for—and then navigate your life and career in direct alignment. "To focus on weakness is not only foolish; it is irresponsible," challenges Drucker. Does Drucker's "Build on strength" imperative mean never confronting our (or others') deficiencies? Yes and no. It means that if you're made to be a distance runner, don't try to be a middle line-backer. At the same time, you must address deficiencies that directly impede full flowering of your strength. When Michael Jordan was reaching the end of his basketball career, he could no longer fly to the basket with the same height and power as when he was younger, so he began to build a strength he'd never previously had: a fade-away jumper. He eradicated a crucial weakness within his strength, turning his fade-away jumper into yet another Jordan-can-kill you-strength on the court. Do what you're made for, yes, but then get better and better; eradicate weakness, yes, but only within strength.

#3: Work how you work best (and let others do the same)

If you're a tool put here on this Earth to be useful, how does the tool best work? Some people work well at night; others work better in the morning. Some absorb information best by reading, others by listening. Some thrive in full-immersion, others work better in short bursts with variety in the day. Some are project oriented; others are process oriented.

Some need vacations; others think the best part about vacations is that they end. Some prefer teams, whereas others produce much greater impact working alone. Per Drucker, we are wired for ways of working the same way we are right-handed or left-handed. I discovered early that I cannot exchange morning creative hours for afternoon creative hours (the morning ones are always better). Drucker through his books gave me the confidence to calendar white space in the morning and to be belligerently reclusive during creative hours. No one but you can take responsibility to leverage how you best work, and the sooner you do, the more years you have to gain the cumulative effect of tens of thousands of hours well-spent. **To be continued.**

SAINTS AND SINNERS: CHALLENGES OF A BROAD CHURCH



This week I attended the Branch Biennial General Meeting in my branch. I was expecting politics, but what I found instead was unapologetic vulgarity. At some point, decency packed its bags and divorced the chamber.

A woman stood up and announced, with tall confidence, that she could stand naked on the table because she feared nothing. This was in addition to a plethora of rude things flying around.

For a moment, I wondered whether I had mistakenly walked into an ANC meeting or a late-night beerhall karaoke.

This is the curse of being a broad church. Once upon a time, being a broad church meant ideological diversity. Today, it means anything goes; no discipline, no decorum, no shame.

Nowadays, the only qualification for political participation other than paying the subscription is a willingness to embarrass the movement in public. Everyone is welcome, including political illiterates, attention seekers and professional disrupters who mistake chaos for radicalism.

Vulgarity has become a substitute for politics. If you cannot argue, shout. If you cannot reason, threaten. If you cannot persuade, remove your clothes. It seems we confuse being mass-based with being mannerless.

What makes this tragic is that all of this is done in the name of "fearlessness." But there is nothing fearless about disorder. There is nothing radical about vulgarity. Standing naked on a table is not revolutionary; it is madness.

The founding fathers of the ANC taught us that

freedom came with discipline. Oliver Tambo was very clear that "a revolutionary must be distinguished and distinguishable from a common criminal". That distinction mattered because the struggle was moral before it was political. Our conduct today teaches the young ones that our minimum political programme is about freeing freedom from discipline.

The ANC's authentic broad church produced the generation of Oliver Tambo. Today we struggle to produce a coherent sentence without insults and rudeness. The church has lost its altar, and the congregation is applauding the wrong things.

The real danger is not that the ANC is a broad church. The danger is that we have become a church without doctrine, without discipline and without self-respect.

Yesterday was not an isolated incident. It was a mirror. And what stared back at us was an organisation flirting with self-destruction. We have seen this play before, in almost all liberation movements that gained independence before us. Liberation movements are brought to heel not by enemies from without, but by scoundrels within.

We must decide whether we want to be a serious political force or a permanent stand-up situation. Reminded that history has been cruel to liberation movements and it certainly does not clap for nonsense.

***Thediso Mangope is an ANC member in Mangaung and writes in his own capacity...**

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

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	15.94	-0.50%	▼
Rand/Pound	21.71	-0.43%	▼
Rand/Euro	18.92	-0.48%	▼
Platinum	2 036.90	-5.04%	▼
Brent Crude	67.90	-2.48%	▼
Gold	4 958.59	-2.45%	▼
Etherium	1 916.88	-2.98%	▼
Bitcoin	66 285.01	-2.33%	▼

NWU vice-chancellor champions new School of Mines and Mining Engineering at Mining Indaba 2026

The vice-chancellor of the North-West University (NWU), Prof Mzibanzi Bismark Tyobeka, is representing the university at the 2026 Investing in African Mining Indaba, taking place from 9 to 12 February at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC).

As one of the most significant events on the global mining calendar, the Mining Indaba serves as a premier platform to showcase the expertise of South Africa in sustainable and innovative mining.

This event attracts international investors, policy-makers, mining executives and industry leaders, creating strategic opportunities for collaboration and investment in the sector.

Tyobeka's participation underscores the commitment of the NWU in playing a transformative role in the mining future of South Africa.

Central to this vision is the establishment of the NWU School of Mines and Mining Engineering, including a dedicated campus in Rustenburg, a region at the heart of the country's mining activity.

"It is an honour to attend the Mining Indaba, representing the North-West University as we articulate a transformative vision for mining education at a national level," said Tyobeka.

He said during this event, he is engaging with distinguished industry leaders and stakeholders to champion the establishment of the NWU School of Mines and Mining Engineering.

"This strategic initiative stands as a priority for our university and aligns seamlessly with the ambition of our nation to advance the mining sector as a fundamental driver of economic growth, he said.

The proposed School of Mines and Mining Engineering aims to bridge the gap between higher education and the mining industry by cultivating a highly skilled workforce equipped to meet the evolving demands of the sector. With sustainability, technological innovation and responsible mining practices at its core, the school will focus on cutting-edge research, industry-aligned curricula and partnerships that drive socio-economic development.

The mining sector in South Africa remains a cornerstone of the national economy.

However, it faces complex challenges, including the need for digital transformation, environmental stewardship, community engagement and the integration



Prof. Bismark Tyobeka with Patrice Motsepe, mining magnate and businessman. Picture: Supplied

of advanced technologies. The new initiative of the NWU seeks to respond directly to these challenges by producing graduates who are not only technically proficient but also socially conscious and innovation-driven.

"Cultivating a skilled workforce and promoting innovative research and development will enable us to position our country as a leader in the global mining landscape.

"Through collaboration, we have the opportunity to create sustainable pathways for our students and effect meaningful change in this vital industry, added Tyobeka.

By engaging with global stakeholders at Mining Indaba 2026, the NWU is positioning itself as a key academic partner in shaping the future of mining education in South Africa and on the continent.

Tyobeka also said that the Rustenburg Campus will

serve as a strategic hub which will strengthen ties between academia, the industry and local communities, while contributing to regional development and transformation.

As discussions at the Mining Indaba focus on sustainable investment, technological innovation and responsible resource development, the vision of the NWU for its School of Mines and Mining Engineering aligns closely with national priorities and the broader agenda of sustainable development.

Tyobeka concluded, "I eagerly anticipate sharing insights and updates as we work together towards a prosperous future for mining in our nation."

Through bold leadership and strategic partnerships, the NWU continues to advance its mission of academic excellence, societal impact and industry relevance reinforcing its role in driving the economic and developmental aspirations of South Africa.

SONA 2026: Ramaphosa Sets Out Vision for an Economically Stronger SA



By Lerato Mutlanyane

President Cyril Ramaphosa used his 2026 State of the Nation Address (SONA) to outline a vision of sustained economic recovery and inclusive growth, highlighting improvements in GDP performance over the past four quarters while acknowledging that momentum must continue to address the country's deep social and economic challenges.

The President pointed to declining interest rates, stabilised inflation and improved credit ratings as signs of economic recovery. He also noted strong performance on the stock exchange and said the country's national debt had stabilised.

"This growth reflects broader economic recovery, investor confidence and increasing interest in South African equities," Ramaphosa said.

He credited Operation Vulindlela for accelerating economic reform and opening pathways for investment and competition.

"Through Operation Vulindlela, we have made significant progress in accelerating economic reform and opening the way for investment and competition," he emphasised.

Energy, transport and logistics were identified as priority sectors. Government aims to reduce load shedding, improve port efficiency, strengthen freight rail lines and rejuvenate infrastructure, including roads, dams, and renewable energy projects such as wind and solar farms. The focus, he said, is on performance-based improvements to enhance the movement of goods and provide affordable transport for commuters.

Ramaphosa linked infrastructure investment directly to job creation, particularly for young people and women.

"We have created over 2.5 million opportunities through the Presidential Employment Stimulus, mainly for young people and women," he said.

Launched in 2020 as part of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) has created over 1.7 million jobs and livelihood opportunities since its inception in October 2020, primarily through public employment initiatives.

"As the economy grows, the rate of unemployment is starting to decline," the President added.

South Africa's removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list was also highlighted as a milestone, which Ramaphosa said strengthens the country's economic framework and investor confidence. He linked this to improved tax administration, anti-corruption measures and the continuation of the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant as part of efforts to reduce poverty.

Reflecting on the country's global standing, Ramaphosa said hosting a successful G20 Summit in 2025 showcased South Africa's strength on the international stage and reinforced investor confidence.

"The Government of National Unity has shown that it is possible for South Africans to come together from across the political spectrum to work on a common agenda for growth and progress," he said.

Despite the progress, the President acknowledged ongoing challenges, including crime, gender-based violence and corruption.

"This State of the Nation Address outlines the actions that we have taken since last year and the steps we will take this year to advance the strategic priorities of the Government of National Unity," he stressed. Government's key priorities include driving inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and the cost of living, and building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

Drawing from the model of Operation Vulindlela, Ramaphosa announced plans for a new criminal justice reform initiative aimed at strengthening accountability and combating crime.

On corruption and misconduct, he referenced commissions of inquiry, including the Madlanga Commission and an Ad Hoc Committee, noting the risks faced by whistle-blowers. He announced that

the Whistle-Blower Protection Bill will soon be introduced.

"This will criminalise retaliation and provide psychosocial, legal and financial support to whistle-blowers," he said.

Water security also featured prominently, particularly in response to challenges in Johannesburg and surrounding areas.

"We have committed more than R156 billion in public funding for water and sanitation infrastructure alone over the next three years," Ramaphosa announced.

Government is in the final stages of establishing a National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency to manage water infrastructure more effectively and mobilise funding.

Local governance will also face tighter oversight, especially municipalities that repeatedly fail to meet their obligations. A revised White Paper on Local Government is expected in the coming months.

"This will provide solutions for the functioning of an effective local government system. The White Paper will reimagine the way that local government works," he said.

Infrastructure investment remains central to government's strategy. Ramaphosa announced that more than R1 trillion has been committed over three years to build and maintain infrastructure — the largest allocation of its kind in South Africa's history.

"Through the Infrastructure Fund and new regulations for public-private partnerships, we are using innovative funding models, reducing risk and attracting investors to fast-track projects in energy, water, transport and digital infrastructure," he said.

The agricultural sector will receive R7.8 billion in funding, alongside the appointment of 10,000 new extension officers to support farmers and improve productivity. The rollout of 28 million foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccines will continue after the outbreak was declared a national disaster.

South Africa is also positioning itself in the digital economy, with more than 55 data centres planned and R55 billion in investment expected over the next three years.

The mining and tourism sectors remain key priorities, with mining linked to an estimated R40 trillion resource potential.

"To build a more inclusive economy, we are going to back those who create opportunity," Ramaphosa said. "If every small and medium business in South Africa could employ one additional person, we would create three million new jobs."

However, he acknowledged that many small and medium enterprises — particularly those owned by women and young people — struggle to access funding and markets.

The SA Youth platform and the Youth Employment Service were highlighted as initiatives that have expanded access to work experience and learning opportunities, placing over 200,000 young people in year-long work placements.

Education remains fundamental to long-term growth. Government is expanding early childhood development through the Bana Pele mass registration of ECD facilities and increased subsidies, while making Grade R compulsory.

"Above all, however, a strong economy relies on a well-educated, capable and skilled population," he said.

Ramaphosa also reaffirmed commitments across departments, including health, home affairs and international relations.

In closing, he emphasised inclusivity: "As the economy grows, it should bring into its fold those who have lived on its margins for decades. Our fight against crime should be felt in the townships and informal settlements as well as the suburbs. Our schools and hospitals should make no distinction between those arriving at their doors. In this way, we can build a stronger, more resilient and more equal society — one that stands tall among the nations of the world."

Praise and Pushback: Political Leaders Split on SONA

By Matshidiso Selebeleng

President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered the State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Thursday evening at Cape Town City Hall, drawing mixed reactions from political parties across the spectrum.

While some parties welcomed the address as a sign of progress and renewed hope for South Africa's future, others criticised it as recycled promises lacking accountability and tangible outcomes.

Democratic Alliance (DA) leader John Steenhuisen, speaking in his capacity as Minister of Agriculture, addressed the rollout of vaccines amid the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak.

"We are procuring millions of vaccines. We have three different international suppliers that are shipping vaccines. The first batch of one million is expected to arrive within the next five to seven days, and we will roll it out," he said.

Steenhuisen explained that the vaccination process would involve private veterinarians and animal health technicians.

"We do not have the internal capacity to roll it out ourselves, so it is going to be a major public-private partnership," he added.

He said vaccines would be distributed based on a scientific heat map developed by the department's task team, with a target of vaccinating 80% of the affected herds by year-end and reducing the incidence of FMD by 70%.

Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema offered a more critical response. He welcomed the deployment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to crime hotspots but described it as an indication that the South African Police Service (SAPS) has failed.

"The President is just scared to say they have lost confidence in the SAPS, hence the army. We are happy that the army is coming; we are going to restore law and order," Malema said.



Referring to testimony emerging from the Madlanga Commission and the Ad Hoc Committee, Malema argued that corruption within the police service appeared widespread and called for an independent vetting structure.

He also questioned government spending on water infrastructure.

"He spoke about billions for water. Billions have been spent on the Giyani project, and there is still no water. Uttering trillions and billions in a speech does not translate into our people having water," he said.

Malema further accused Ramaphosa of using a government platform during an election year to campaign for his political party. He said the President should have provided concrete updates on projects such as the proposed Ekurhuleni University, job creation statistics and the progress of infrastructure developments.

Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) national spokesperson Mkhuleko Hlengwa described the address as balanced.

"It is a significant acknowledgement for the President to say that under the Government of National Unity, the country is in a better position than it was a year ago," he said.

Hlengwa noted that although challenges remain, it was important to reflect on the country's decline in recent years and focus on stabilising the economy and prioritising job creation.

During his address, Ramaphosa stated that organised crime would be a key priority for government.

This comes amid ongoing testimony at the Madlanga Commission and reports of witnesses being targeted in suspected assassination attempts.

African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) leader Reverend Kenneth Meshoe said the President should be given the benefit of the doubt regarding his commitment to tackling crime.

"He mentioned that when they deal with crime, the confidence of the people in the judiciary will be restored. But it will not be restored as long as the Phala Phala matter is still hanging over him," Meshoe said.

"Something has to be done to prove to the public that we are all equal before the law. Once he does that, I believe confidence in the justice system will be restored."

Meshoe added that while concerns remain, he credits the President for highlighting several positive and encouraging initiatives.

Meanwhile, uMkhonto weSizwe Party's former Chief Whip, Mzwanele Manyi, dismissed the address as a waste of state resources.

"We have heard this before. Last year he promised economic growth of 3%, and we did not even reach 1%. Unemployment and poverty have increased. What we have now is a corruption-inspired water crisis," he said.

As political reactions continue, the address has once again exposed the sharp divides within South Africa's political landscape over the country's progress, accountability and the path toward economic recovery.

GET TO KNOW YOUR DJ

Trent DjY & Don Kabila Are Turning Up the Heat



By Lerato Mutlanyane

On the decks, Karabelo 'Trent DJY' Makoane (21) locks in the beat matching, blending tracks into one seamless groove. Beside him, Don Kabila (22) commands the drop, flipping the switch and sending the dance floor into overdrive. Together, they are the electrifying duo known as Trent DJY and Don Kabila.

Born and bred in Thaba Nchu, just outside Bloemfontein, the pair's love for music started early. They attended the same primary school, went their separate ways in high school, and reunited at university — a reunion that would spark a powerful musical partnership.

Now four years strong, the duo has built a growing fan base and a reputation for setting stages alight. But the road wasn't always smooth.

"In our first year and early 2022, we struggled to secure gigs and faced a lot of rejection," they said. "That didn't stop us. We started releasing mixtapes, built our fan base, and gained traction."

Their persistence paid off. Under Ragersclub management, they began hosting major events, making their big-stage debut in 2023 at the annual We Back Home Festival at Dr Petrus Molemela (Mangaung) Stadium. Since then, they've performed at Mangaung Open Festival, Bloem Show, SA's Most Wanted, Singles Braai, and most recently, the Fill Up Toyota Stadium event hosted by hip hop star Cassper Nyovest.

Inspired by Bloemfontein's own DJ Mbulelo 'Le-Goody' Khathaza, the duo has their sights set high.

"In five years, we see ourselves as one of the biggest Amapiano duos in the country, with our music charting nationwide," they said.

They are set to host their second annual two-man show on 4 April and will soon release their debut single.

Catch this fiery duo lighting up Sthiba Gardens and Sandy's Bar in Bloemfontein this weekend. Picture this: bass heavy, crowd loud, and the drops hitting just right.



Kay Medusa Set to Shake Bloem: Love & Hip-Hop Night at Club Vegas

By Lerato Mutlanyane

Get ready for an unforgettable night at Club Vegas in Bloemfontein on 8 March — the bass is about to hit differently.

Kay Medusa isn't just taking the stage; she's claiming it. After a year packed with powerful collaborations, chart-worthy tracks and high-energy performances, the razor-sharp Afrikaans lyricist is ready to turn the venue into a full-on pressure cooker.

Born Kayla Peters, the South African TikTok sensation and hip-hop artist has cemented her place as a formidable voice in the Afrikaans rap scene. Known for her bold bars and commanding presence, she frequently collaborates with Junior King and other heavy-hitters in the local music industry.

Club Vegas will come alive with booming beats, vibrant vibes, hookah and mouthwatering cuisine during the Love and Hip-Hop Night, headlined by the multi-talented Medusa.

In a recent TikTok video, she hyped fans for what promises to be an explosive night:

"Catch me on 8 March in the heart of Bloemfontein at Club Vegas, where I'll be headlining the Love and Hip-Hop Nights event alongside Clinton Viljoen, presented by Wendall Derrison.

"Secure your table bookings, grab your tickets, and tell a friend to tell a friend. Come in numbers and let's have a great time.

Hou Gou My Shot Hal!" she exclaimed.

If you're looking for big energy and bigger vibes, 8 March is locked in.

'At 21, I Had a Million': Yvonne Chaka Chaka Drops Hard Truths on Fame and Finances



By Lerato Mutlanyane

In an industry known for chewing up and spitting out young talent, Yvonne Chaka Chaka has not only survived — she has thrived and evolved.

Now, the legendary South African music icon is on a mission to school the next generation navigating the blinding lights of instant fame.

In a resurfaced clip that's making waves online, Chaka Chaka speaks candidly about wealth, fame and discipline in the music industry. "At 21, I had a million in my account," she says confidently.

The clip, reshared by content creator Takalani Molapo on TikTok, quickly gained traction, sparking widespread debate about how local artists manage — or mismanage — their finances.

Back in 2021, Chaka Chaka joined singer Zolani Mahola for the Old Mutual On The Money series at AMPD Studios. The initiative explored the intersection of music and business, equipping artists and entrepreneurs with tools to better manage and grow their wealth.

Reflecting on her early financial success, she shared: "I did a Pepsi advert with Michael Jackson and Tina Turner."

Her career opened doors to global commercial opportunities — but she stresses that discipline made the difference.

She also drew comparisons between today's mega concerts and the stadium shows she headlined decades ago.

"I look at 'Fill Up The Dome' and think of how

Brenda Fassie and I filled up Venda Stadium. People came to our shows and they paid. So it is possible to achieve those things."

While she celebrates her early milestones, Chaka Chaka is clear: money alone is not the goal.

"Money comes and goes. Money needs to be respected. Make your money work for you. Yes, be generous with your family — as Africans, we need to look out for each other — but you must make sure to invest your money," she advised.

Her debut album, I'm in Love with a DJ, released in 1985, sold over 35,000 copies within two weeks — launching a career that blended chart success with financial savvy.

For Chaka Chaka, fame may fade, but discipline is what sustains longevity.

Shebeshxt's Legal Troubles Deepen as Prohibited Items Found in Cell



By Lerato Mutlanyane

Lekompo star Lehlogonolo 'Shebeshxt' Chauke is facing more trouble behind bars after authorities discovered prohibited items in his holding cell at Polokwane Prison.

On Tuesday morning, law enforcement reportedly found a smartphone, empty sachets containing residue of an unknown substance, and a pipe believed to be used for smoking drugs in his possession. Authorities are now investigating how the items entered the cell, raising fresh questions in an already sensational case.

The discovery has sparked widespread reactions on social media, though the South African Police Service (SAPS) has yet to release a statement detailing the charges Chauke may face.

Chauke's lawyer, Lot Ramusi, confirmed he has not received instructions to represent the musician in this new matter and is not aware of any formal charges.

Despite ongoing legal controversies, Chauke remains one of Limpopo's most popular musicians, celebrated for his raw delivery, street-rooted lyrics, and unapologetic persona. His loyal fan base continues to voice support online, with some calling for his release and others expressing concern for his well-being and the potential impact on his recently expanded family.

Legal experts warn that possession of prohibited items in a holding cell is a serious matter. If allegations are confirmed, they say it could further complicate Chauke's legal situation.

This story is developing, and Chauke's management has not yet issued a comment.

GIG Guide

Sunday 15 February 2026
Socials Sunday
K-LA-K

Bloemfontein

Sunday 15 February 2026
Supreme Sunday

Vegas Club
Bloemfontein

Sunday 15 February 2026
Lovers Sunday

Sechaba Lounge
Bloemfontein

Sunday 15 February 2026
Sunday Soul Session

Cappello
Bloemfontein

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Valentine's Day: Love, Lies and Loss

By Bernell Simons

As Valentine's Day approaches, the desire for connection and companionship swells — and so too does the risk of deception. While hearts open in search of love, fraud experts warn that online romance scams are rising sharply, leaving victims not only heartbroken but financially devastated.

"These scammers are highly elaborate, psychologically engineered and technologically enabled," says Manie van Schalkwyk, CEO of the Southern African Fraud Prevention Service (SAFPS). "They target emotional vulnerability, especially during periods like Valentine's Day when people are more open to connection."

In South Africa, the true extent of romance scams is difficult to determine due to under-reporting. However, research cited by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) shows that more than R125 million was lost to online dating scams in 2022 alone. Surveys further indicate that about 21% of online daters in the country have encountered fraud attempts, often involving requests for money under various pretexts.

With online dating projected to grow to millions of local users in the coming years, experts warn that scammers will have even greater opportunity to exploit unsuspecting victims.

Fraud analyst Wendy Knowler describes a disturbing pattern: fake profiles — often using attractive photos and compelling backstories — are created on social media and dating platforms. Scammers build emotional trust through constant messaging and swift declarations of affection. Once trust is

secured, urgent and believable stories follow, ranging from medical emergencies and travel complications to family crises or lucrative investment opportunities, all designed to extract money.

Advances in technology, including AI-generated images and deepfake avatars, have made these scams increasingly convincing. Some victims are manipulated into sharing compromising images, which are later used for extortion.

Shame and embarrassment prevent many victims from reporting these crimes, making it harder to gauge the full scope of the problem. The emotional trauma can be as severe as the financial loss, with victims describing feelings of betrayal, guilt and isolation.

The SAFPSS has warned that romance scams typically spike during this period, with criminals employing increasingly sophisticated, tech-driven tactics to deceive their targets.

When Romance Turns Deadly

The dangers of online deception are not limited to financial loss. South Africans are still reeling from the infamous Thabo Bester case, as well as a recent Free State case dubbed "Bester 2.0", where victims were manipulated through personal relationships, ultimately leading to tragic deaths.

These cases serve as chilling reminders that romance scams can escalate far beyond stolen money. Van Schalkwyk cautions: "While most online scams target finances, criminals who build trust can exploit it in extreme and dangerous ways. People must remain vigilant, especially in an environment where online identities can easily be fabricated."



Valentine's Fever Boosts African Flower Sales

By Matshidiso Sebeleng

Love is in the air — and so is brisk business for African Flower as Valentine's Day approaches. The popular florist, situated at the corner of Parfitt Avenue and Park Road in Willows, Bloemfontein, is experiencing a surge in orders, with customers snapping up roses, bouquets and gift arrangements to spoil their loved ones ahead of the annual celebration of love on February 14 (tomorrow).

As the big day draws closer, African Flower owner Zuleigah Africa says her staff are working around the clock to meet growing demand and ensure every delivery makes the occasion special.

For more than three decades, the shop has been a trusted source of romance, offering bouquets and special packages to loyal customers. The family business has been passed down through generations, serving Bloemfontein residents and beyond throughout the year for every special occasion or milestone, with delivery options available.

Africa says while business can be slow during the year, Valentine's Day is a different story as sales increase significantly.

"We take Valentine's as it comes because it's one of those times of the year when we are able to make more sales. We also understand that people may want to buy something for their loved ones but have a limited budget. We negotiate and meet them halfway so we can accommodate all our customers," she said.

She added that working within customers' budgets keeps the legacy of their late great-grandmother alive — a principle she upheld when she founded the business.

Africa explained that they previously grew their own flowers, but due to the labour and time required, they now outsource to focus on operations.

"Growing your own flowers is demanding because you must manage the business and tend to the garden, which is not always conducive. We now stock roses from places like Cape Town and Johannesburg after our tunnels were dam-



African Flower owner Zuleigah Africa. Picture: Baagedi Sethora

aged by bad weather. We have been buying ever since," she said.

Like many businesses, African Flower faces challenges. The rainy season sees fewer customers, while winter brings soaring prices. Despite this, the business continues to uphold its founding values by meeting customers halfway, regardless of rising stock costs.

Among its milestones, the business has supported families and created part-time and temporary jobs.

"There is a guy we use for deliveries so he can

also earn money for his business. We could use our own transport, but we choose to support someone else so he can make a living too. We are grateful for this small structure and the support we receive," Africa shared.

She noted that Valentine's Day also requires extra hands, and trust is essential as the shop becomes exceptionally busy.

Africa emphasised that their goals for the financial year remain unchanged: to take each day as it comes and continue helping others wherever possible.

HEALTH

How long do you need to spend in the gym to get strong? Less than you think

Building strength and muscle comes with huge payoffs for health and longevity, but most Americans still don't lift weights or regularly practice any muscle-strengthening activity.

Why? People often blame a lack of time.

Exercise physiologist David Behm says often when he talks to people about resistance training they seem to think they'd need hours in the gym to get results, working through rows of machines targeting each muscle.

"They're like 'my God, I'm going to be in there for an hour and a half or longer,'" says Behm, a professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada.

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Want to start strength training? Sign up for our special email series and learn how to start a muscle-building routine, no matter what shape you're in.

The reality is much different, and it's why Behm and others in his field have started promoting the idea of a minimum dose — as in how little you can get away with and still make meaningful progress.

"We're thinking about the person who is resistance-training averse," he says. "They really don't want to be in there very long."

The evidence shows you can make real gains in strength and muscle with as little as one or two quick workouts a week — depending on the approach, you might be able to get away with as little as a half hour in the gym (or even less).

The key is focusing on what are called multi-joint exercises, or compound lifts.

These are efficient movements that recruit one or more major muscle groups simultaneously. Some examples are the squat, deadlift, bench press, row and overhead press, or alternatives that can be done on machines.

Behm and his colleagues reviewed data from studies on resistance training and concluded that a beginner could start with one workout a week for the first three months. This kind of routine would incorporate a handful of multi-joint exercises, doing one set of about 6 to 15 reps for each movement.

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"After that, if you have more time and want to get better, then work out twice a week, or move to two sets," he says.

Research does show a dose-response relationship between how many sets you do and muscle growth, meaning doing more can give you better results.

But "it's not linear, where it just goes up and up," says Brad Schoenfeld, a professor of exercise science at Lehman College in the Bronx. "You see the biggest increase in the first few sets, and then you see it leveling off."

While a minimalist strategy won't necessarily deliver maximum strength or muscle, Schoenfeld says you can make "very good gains" and see measurable health benefits with an hour to an hour and a half a week of training.

Based on his analysis, he suggests aiming for two separate workouts — each about 30-45 minutes — and a total of 4 to 6 sets per muscle group over the course of the week.

All of this can vary depending on your individual goals and how your body responds.

But for any minimalist approach to be effective in the long run, the research shows you do need to push yourself hard while training, says James Steele, a U.K.-based exercise scientist. The intensity of each workout is key.

"Effort is probably the more important determinant," he says. "It should feel like it's hard work to actually try and move that weight."

In resistance training, effort is usually measured by how close you are to failure, meaning the point where your muscles are so taxed they stall out and you have to stop and rest.

It doesn't seem like you need to go entirely to failure to get results, but you should be within a few reps or so.

And provided you do that, you might be able to get away with even less time in the gym. In a massive study, Steele collected close to seven years of data from nearly 15,000 people.

Sponsor Message

Their workout regimen? A handful of exercises performed on machines just once a week for about 20 minutes.

The typical participant got anywhere from 30% to 50% stronger in the first year and those gains were maintained or slightly improved upon throughout the study.

The bottom line, says Steele, is that you don't need to spend hours working out, but you do need to be regular.

"Pick a program that you enjoy, do it consistently. You still need to train hard. You can't avoid it," he says. "But other than that, you have a lot of freedom." **npr.org**



Food Recipes

DELICIOUS VALENTINE'S DAY MEAL Buttery steak and Garlicky Potatoes



For a Valentine's Day meal that's low on fuss but high on wow-factor, how about some delicious butter-basted sirloin steak with garlicky baby potatoes on the side, and a showstopping dessert of chocolate mousse s'mores pudding? Sound good? We think so too ...

Ingredients

- 600 g Woolworths Mature Thick Cut Beef Sirloin Steak
- 1 T olive oil
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 each of prepared garlic, chilli and ginger
- Woolworths Garlic Butter
- 350 g garlic and herb baby potatoes
- Woolworths Green Slaw and Candy Beetroot salad, to serve
- Instant chocolate mousse s'mores dip:
- 300 g Woolworths Chocolate Mousse
- Mini marshmallows, 2 handfuls
- Strawberries, to serve
- Biscuits of choice, to serve

Method

1. Pan-fry your steak to your liking in olive oil and seasoning until seared on both sides.

2. Just before you're ready to remove from the pan, add a knob or two of garlic butter and the chilli, garlic, ginger and allow the butter to melt over the steaks. Tilt the pan slightly and using a spoon, baste the steaks for 30 seconds to a minute with the fragrant pan juices.

3. Remove from the heat and allow the steak to rest on a board or plate topped with the pan juices.

4. Meanwhile, microwave your potatoes and dish up the salad to serve.

5. To make your chocolate mousse s'mores pudding, dish chocolate mousse into a small, shallow dish and top with lots of mini marshmallows to make a layer over the mousse. Blowtorch the marshmallows to brûlée at the table for a bit of theatre and serve with halved strawberries or mini oat digestives to dip.

- And then, of course, you need something festive (preferably sparkly) to enjoy on Valentine's Day

FASHION

Why Sbahle Mpisane prefers long dresses over traditional gym wear



Fitness influencer Sbahle Mpisane has finally addressed the curiosity around her gym wardrobe after repeatedly showing up to workouts in long, flowing dresses instead of the usual tight-fitting gym wear.

If you've scrolled through her Instagram lately, you've probably noticed it. Between leg days and strength sessions, Mpisane is lifting weights, squatting and stretching while fully covered, and people on the internet have had plenty to say about it.

Some questioned whether she was hiding a pregnancy, while others simply wanted to know why. Taking to Instagram, Mpisane decided to clear the air. "I'm often asked why I wear a dress to the gym. The answer is simple: it's a personal choice," she wrote.

She explained that her decision has nothing to do with hiding her body or proving a point. For her, comfort and confidence come first.

"My strength doesn't need to be proven by exposure. I love my body, it's tea, and this isn't about hiding a pregnancy, as assumed," she added.

Mpisane went on to explain that the dresses actually make her workouts easier. She does not have to worry about matching gym sets, sucking in her stomach or feeling self-conscious about cellulite.

The dress allows her to wear shorts underneath comfortably, move freely during

exercises and walk around the gym during recovery breaks without overthinking how her body looks.

"If I want to bend over or fully engage my butt by squeezing it while training, I don't feel restricted," she shared. "When I walk around during my one-minute recovery break, it gives me freedom to hit the runway without worrying about my body jiggling."

While she is confident posting workout videos online, Mpisane admitted that in real life she is more reserved.

"I'm not camera shy. I post and record freely, but in real life I'm a shy little girl who exposes less," she said, adding that she does not expect everyone to understand her choice.

What makes Mpisane's approach even more interesting is that it taps into a gym trend that had faded. A year ago, some women began ditching tight gym wear in favour of looser, more modest outfits, including long dresses and pinafore-style looks.

The trend took over TikTok but slowed down over time, but Mpisane brought it back, without explanation until now.

For women who prefer to be covered while working out, her stance feels validating. It reinforces the idea that fitness does not have a uniform and that strength, confidence and discipline are not defined by how much skin is on show. **lol**

Sport



Noble Hearts Target Tournament glory



By Mpho Sekharume

As the local football community gears up for the 3rd Annual Nala Mahlala Charity Cup, all eyes are on the emerging talent coming out of the Noble Hearts Football Academy, a rising force based at Calculus College. Since its founding in 2025, the Bloemfontein-based football academy is preparing to make a significant statement at this year's tournament.

The academy, which focuses on youth development from the U9 to U19 age groups, sees the upcoming competition at Wilgehof Primary School as the perfect platform to bounce back from recent heartbreak and showcase their commitment to the beautiful game.

The academy enters the 2026 edition of the cup with a clear sense of purpose following a narrow miss on silverware earlier this season.

Lebohang Pitlile, the academy's manager, remains optimistic about his young squad's chances, viewing the tournament as both a competitive challenge and a vital educational experience.

"We recently lost in the Grassroots U9 league cup finals about 3 weeks ago, thus we hope to go all the way to the semi finals of the tournament, but other than that we aim to provide our players with meaningful game experience, promote disciplined and attractive football, and compete with integrity," Pitlile explained.

For Noble Hearts, the event is about more than just the final score on the board. In an environment where the Nala Mahlala Charity Cup seeks to bridge the gap between grassroots football and professional pathways, Pitlile is focused on the holistic growth of his players.

He believes that the exposure provided by such a high-profile event is irreplaceable for young athletes in Bloemfontein.

"We are hoping our players gain exposure to different styles of play, build resilience, and strengthen their communication and teamwork. Beyond results, we value character development, sportsmanship, and learning to handle both victory and defeat in a positive and mature manner," Pitlile added.

The stakes are particularly high this year as the tournament is hosted by Socca Dream Bloemfontein, an international football development pathway with links to Italy. With global scouts and football legends like Stanton Fredericks and FIFA International Scout Aris Alibetti in attendance, the Noble Hearts youngsters have a golden opportunity to be noticed.

The ultimate prize is also a massive motivator; the top four teams will not only receive full kits produced by Max Tshabalala but will also earn an all-expenses-paid trip to Lesotho for the 2027 edition of the cup.

As one of the 16 competitive teams vying for glory, Noble Hearts will have to navigate a tough field including the likes of Mangaung Metro Football Academy and Socca Dream BFN.

However, with a disciplined approach, Pitlile and his squad are ready to turn their recent league disappointment into a triumphant run in Wilgehof.

Eagles Expect Tough Crowd in Bloem

They face a determined CUT Ixias outfit that is eager to bounce back from a humiliating defeat in Potchefstroom last year



Varsity Rugby Returns...North West Eagles expect a hostile crowd in Bloemfontein when they take on the hosts CUT Ixias in Varsity Cup opening showdown. Picture: VarsityCup

By Mpho Sekharume

The 2026 Varsity Cup will kick off with a highly competitive opening fixture, with previous seasons having delivered drama, late winners and high scores.

On Monday 16 February, the FNB NWU Eagles will take on the CUT Ixias in Bloemfontein in a clash that has become a seasonal highlight. The Eagles will face a determined CUT side eager to bounce back after their crushing 117-19 defeat at the Fanie du Toit Sports Grounds in Potchefstroom in 2025.

The CUT Ixias' home ground is a famous fortress where title ambitions die; however, history favours the visitors. The Eagles made a statement with a 33-14 victory in 2023, followed by a 53-46 triumph in 2024, thus cementing their dominance in the Free State.

Having won two matches at the CUT stadium in

recent years, the Eagles will enter this year's campaign full of confidence. However, playing an opening match on a Monday comes with a great deal of pressure. Eagles coach, Burger van der Westhuizen said that the Eagles will go to Bloemfontein and do what they have to do.

"This will be a tough encounter. CUT are extremely dangerous in the way they play. They are in top form at the moment, so we will need to be firing on all cylinders. There is no expectation of going to Bloemfontein and getting a win, but the most important thing is to be ready to compete."

CUT's physicality and distinctive style of play have turned this fixture into a blockbuster, prompting questions about the tactical adjustments needed to control the tempo of the game.

"They play a high-risk game that we need to be prepared for.

We have systems in place, and are proud of our processes; we just need them to work," Van der

Westhuizen continued.

He added: "In Bloemfontein, getting off to a good start can make the difference between controlling the game and being overwhelmed by the home crowd.

"It is crucial to start well. We need to do our best and set the pace and tempo of the game, picking it up and slowing it down as necessary. The crowd at CUT is tough; they make a lot of noise and are as important to the home team as any crowd in the Varsity Cup. We need to block them out, get into the zone, and play as if our lives depended on it," said Van der Westhuizen.

As attention turns to Monday's action-packed battle, the focus is on performance, progress and taking a decisive step forward.

"We want to leave Bloemfontein having played to the best of our ability. If we can win, it would be a huge step forward in the process we are building," concluded Van der Westhuizen.

PSL		2025/2026		
CLUBS	P	W	PTS	
1 Orlando Pirates	15	11	38	
2 Mamelodi Sundowns	15	9	32	
3 Kaizer Chiefs	15	8	30	
4 AmaZulu FC	17	9	30	
5 Sekhukhune United	17	7	29	
6 Durban City	17	7	28	
7 TS Galaxy	17	6	24	
8 Polokwane City	16	6	24	
9 Richards Bay	16	4	19	
10 Siwelele FC	16	5	17	
11 Golden Arrows	16	4	17	
12 Stellenbosch FC	15	4	15	
13 Marumo Gallants	17	3	15	
14 Orbit College FC	17	3	15	
15 Chippa United	17	4	14	
16 Magesi FC	15	2	11	

Premier League		2025/2026		
TEAMS	P	W	PTS	
1 Arsenal	25	17	56	
2 Man City	26	16	53	
3 Aston Villa	26	15	50	
4 Man Utd	26	12	45	
5 Chelsea	26	12	44	
6 Liverpool	26	12	42	
7 Brentford	25	12	39	
8 Everton	26	10	37	
9 Burnemouth	26	9	37	
10 Newcastle	26	10	36	
11 Sunderland	26	9	36	
12 Fulham	26	10	34	
13 C Palace	26	8	32	
14 Brighton	26	7	31	
15 Leeds	26	7	30	
16 Tottenham	26	7	29	

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