



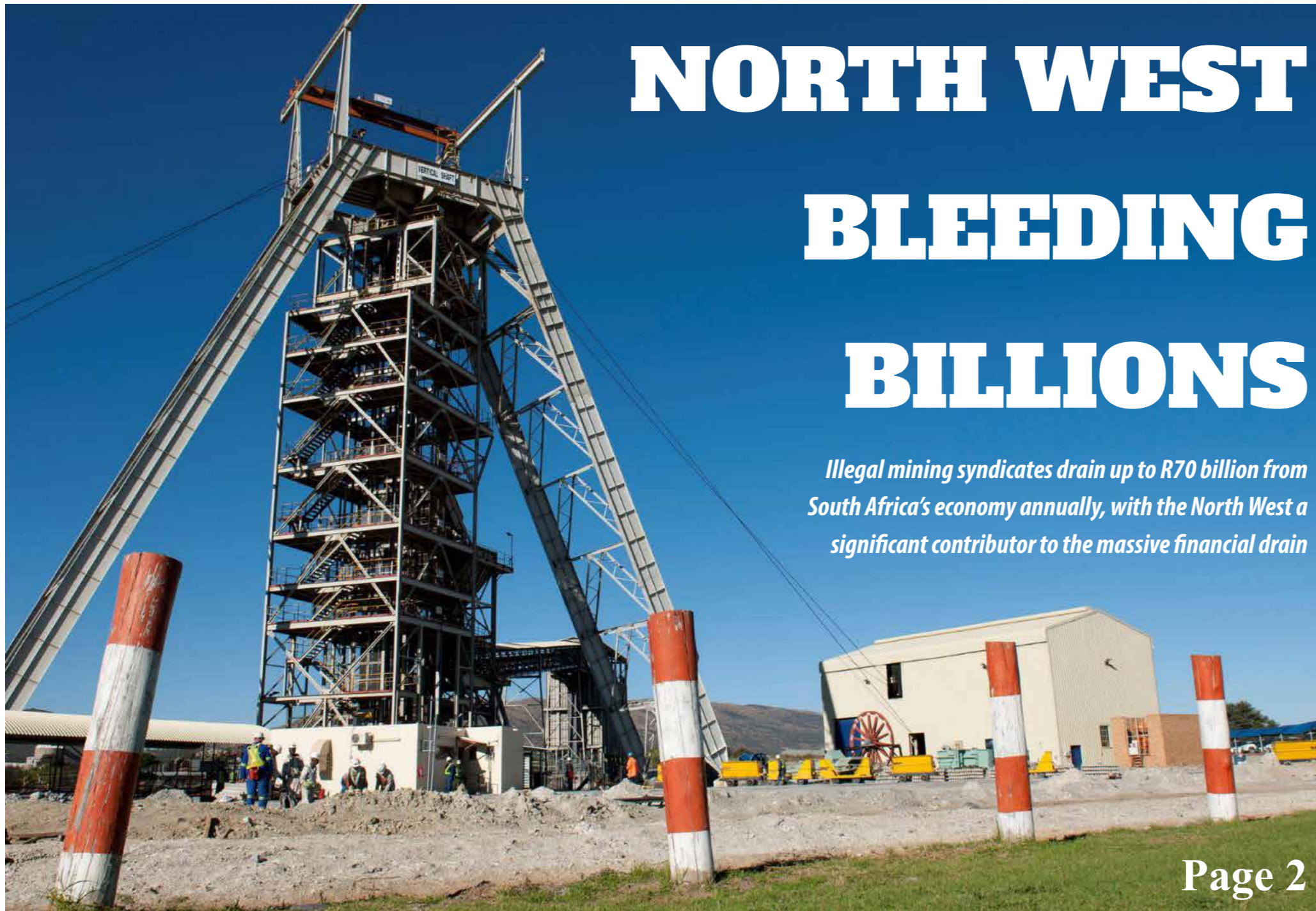
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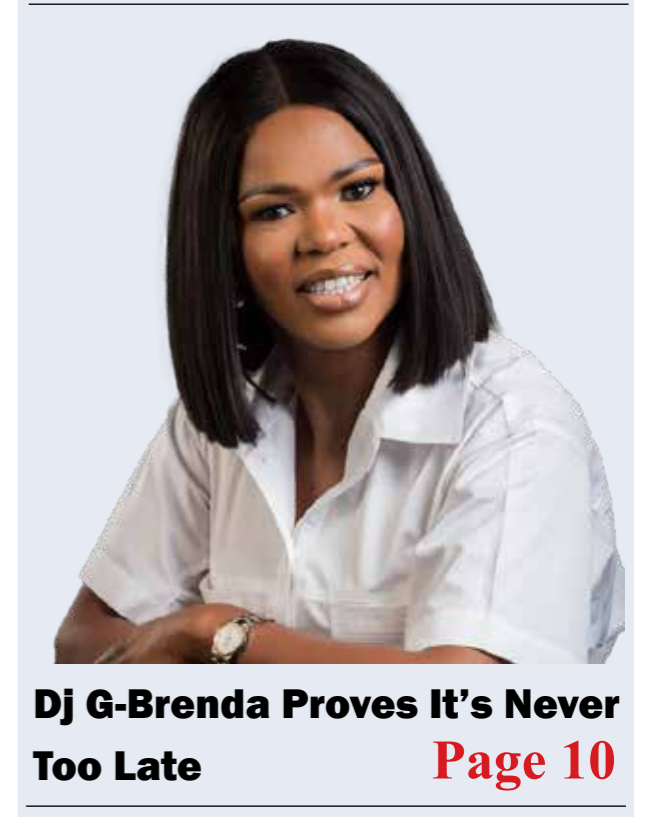
NORTH WEST BLEEDING BILLIONS

Illegal mining syndicates drain up to R70 billion from South Africa's economy annually, with the North West a significant contributor to the massive financial drain

Page 2



Bafana Bruised, But Not Out Page 12



Dj G-Brenda Proves It's Never Too Late Page 10

PUBLIC ANGER BOILS OVER AS ROAD RAGE ASSAULT CASE HEADS TO COURT

Marchers in Bloemfontein have vowed to stand with the victim, saying the attack highlights the ongoing scourge of violence against women

By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

Public anger is reaching a boiling point in Mangaung as residents prepare to descend on the Batho Magistrate's Court this morning,

demanding justice for a 21-year-old student teacher who was allegedly assaulted in a shocking road rage incident that has sparked nationwide outrage.

A 22-year-old man is expected to appear before the court in connection with the attack, which was captured on video and went viral on social media. The footage, showing the young woman being verbally and physically assaulted by members of a family, has reignited debate around gender-based violence (GBV) and the treatment of women in South Africa.

The growing public outrage was evident on Thursday when activists, survivors, and civil society

organisations marched through Rocklands, Bloemfontein, in a demonstration against GBV. While the march formed part of ongoing efforts to raise awareness about violence against women, participants said the attack on the student teacher had intensified calls for action.

According to police spokesperson Sergeant Mahlomola Kareli, the alleged perpetrator was briefly detained before being released with a warning to appear in court on June 12.

"He was briefly detained and released with a warning to appear in court on June 12. The law does not allow police to arrest anyone for common

assault unless it is related to domestic violence," Kareli explained.

Community activist and march organiser Donny Ntai said many residents were angered by the decision to release the suspect.

"The march today is about raising awareness of gender-based violence for our women. Everyone was upset about the video circulating yesterday of the assault on Masego. This is a peaceful march to highlight that no man should lay his hands on a woman," said Ntai.

The incident has triggered widespread discussion about the safety of women, **Continues on Page 2**



New MAP Mayor on Mission to Restore Dignity Page 5

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Public Anger Boils Over as Road Rage Assault Case Heads to Court

Continues from Page 1

particularly students and young professionals, and renewed concerns about violence in public spaces. GBV ambassador for the Free State, Rozane Hugo, said the attack highlighted the persistent challenges facing women.

"As GBV ambassadors, we stand against the abuse of females. The fact that a man was the perpetrator and other men watched the girl being abused without intervening illustrates that GBV and femicide remain significant problems in our city and country," she said.

Hugo added that the march was also intended to amplify calls for justice in unresolved GBV cases. Thoko Nogabe of Buang Basadi stressed that peaceful demonstrations remain a powerful tool for demanding accountability.

"We must remain non-violent during these marches; otherwise, we risk mirroring the perpetrators. We refuse to let our girls live in fear of being attacked. We are saying down with GBV, we demand justice for Masego," she said.

Social worker and GBV ambassador Zandile Shezi said the march was also aimed at encouraging victims to report abuse and assuring communities that justice can be achieved.

Political leaders have also condemned the incident.

Free State Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae described the attack as barbaric and said it was a stark reminder that the fight against GBV remains far from won.

"I join the people of our province in condemning this barbaric attack on a defenseless woman by a violent man. There is absolutely no justification for such violence. We appeal to our law enforcement agencies to bring the perpetrators to justice and impose severe sentences on them," she said.

MEC for Community Safety, Roads and Transport Jabu Mbalula also condemned the assault, expressing concern that women were among those involved in the attack instead of protecting the victim.

He called on the police to ensure that all those responsible are held accountable.

As the court appearance approaches, community organisations say they will continue to mobilise residents, insisting that the case must serve as a clear message that violence against women will not be tolerated.

North West Bleeding Billions

Illegal mining syndicates drain up to R70 billion from South Africa's economy annually, with the North West a significant contributor to the massive financial drain

By Bernell Simons

Criminal syndicates and unauthorised chrome wash plants are draining an estimated R60 billion to R70 billion from South Africa's economy every single year. This staggering multi-billion-rand financial drain directly undermines the North West provincial government's massive efforts to stimulate legitimate economic growth and job creation.

The scale of this catastrophic loss was laid bare during recent deliberations before the North West Provincial Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism.

Lawmakers warned that vast public investments are being completely neutralised by highly sophisticated illicit networks exploiting regulatory loopholes.

The provincial government, however, continues to pour billions into mining infrastructure, including an allocation of more than R1 billion to the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT).

Furthermore, Public Works and Infrastructure received R4.2 billion to improve transport networks, while major private players like Harmony Gold and Valterra Platinum have committed R1.5 billion and R17.8 billion respectively.

Yet, every truck carrying illegally mined chrome out of the province represents revenue that never reaches government coffers through unpaid taxes and vanished royalties.

For the North West, which sits on some of the world's richest chrome and platinum deposits, the economic and social implications of this theft are se-



A shocking 43% of chrome wash plants inspected during the current financial year were found operating without any environmental authorisations. Pictures: Supplied

vere. The committee heard that out of 70 chrome wash plants inspected during the current financial year, a shocking 30 facilities were found operating without any environmental authorisations. Despite these blatant violations, only seven criminal cases have been opened, exposing a severe crisis in enforcement capacity.

What has further alarmed lawmakers is that only three environmental compliance inspectors are currently responsible for monitoring activities across the entire Bojanala District. This overstretched workforce is expected to police dozens of wash plants and massive mining operations spread across South Africa's busiest mining hub.

The damage also extends far beyond lost revenue,

with residents reporting extensive river pollution, illegal waste discharges, and severe land degradation. Taxpayers are ultimately left to foot the multi-million-rand bill for treating contaminated municipal water and repairing roads broken by heavy illicit mining vehicles.

Departments responsible for mining regulation, environmental protection, water management, labour compliance, policing, and immigration frequently operate independently.

This fractured, uncoordinated approach between state agencies creates massive gaps that organised crime syndicates easily exploit to traffic resources.

Portfolio Committee Chairperson, Mpho Khunou, warned that local communities continue to bear the devastating environmental and safety costs while

seeing absolutely zero economic benefits.

The committee has now demanded a comprehensive audit of all mining and chrome wash plant activities across the province.

"Communities are suffering environmental damage, water pollution and unsafe mining activities while the province is not benefiting economically from these operations," Khunou said.

Unless enforcement improves dramatically and state agencies unite, experts warn that taxpayers will continue funding ever-growing cleanup costs while syndicates profit from the province's mineral riches.

The urgent question confronting authorities is how much longer the country can afford to lose tens of billions annually to the very networks undermining its economy.

Home Affairs confirms repatriation of 268 Nigerian nationals from South Africa



The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has confirmed that 268 Nigerian nationals have been flown out of the country, with a second flight scheduled for next Monday to transport the remaining individuals from the group of 586 processed for repatriation.

This comes amid ongoing protests targeting undocumented foreign nationals.

"The Department of Home Affairs confirms that it has processed 586 Nigerian nationals for repatriation after they were found to be residing in the Republic of South Africa illegally."

Home Affairs spokesperson Thulani Mavuso, spokesperson said the first repatriation flight departed on the morning of June 11, 2026, carrying 268 passengers.

"All individuals processed for repatriation were issued with Emergency Travel Documents by the Nigerian High Commission, enabling their exit from South Africa and return to Nigeria."

"In accordance with the Immigration Act, all affected individuals have been declared undesirable persons and are consequently prohibited from re-entering South Africa for a period of five years."

Mavuso said the department wishes to acknowledge the cooperation and assistance provided by the Nigerian High Commission throughout the documentation and repatriation process.

"A second flight, which will transport the remaining individuals from the group of 586 processed for repatriation, is scheduled to depart on Monday, June 15, 2026."

"The Department further reminds all foreign nationals residing in South Africa that they are required to be in possession of valid visas or other authorisations that entitle them to remain in the Republic lawfully."

He said foreign nationals must ensure that their immigration status remains compliant with South

African immigration laws at all times and regularise their stay.

Home Affairs minister Dr Leon Schreiber said, "Home Affairs is irrevocably committed to enforcing South Africa's immigration laws and restoring the rule of law. Our ongoing orderly and lawful deportations and repatriations, which have increased by 46% over the past two years, is clear evidence of this."

"Our reform agenda as recently affirmed by President Cyril Ramaphosa, including the ongoing scale-up of the Electronic Travel Authorisation to record biometrics for every foreigner entering our country, the replacement of the fraud-prone Green ID Book with Smart ID cards through our digital partnership with the banks, and the introduction of a cutting-edge Digital Identity system, are systematically enhancing our capacity to enforce immigration laws. In this context of ongoing progress, the public is again urged to never engage in violence or take the law into their own hands."

The repatriations come amid growing protests in parts of the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, where groups have targeted undocumented migrants.

Anti-migrant group March and March has called for undocumented foreign nationals to leave South Africa by June 30.

The controversial movement has demanded tighter immigration enforcement and employer accountability.

Ramaphosa addressed the nation on June 7, outlining measures to deal with undocumented migration.

These include intensified arrests and deportations, stricter border controls, reforms to immigration and labour laws, and increased cooperation with African countries to address the root causes of migration. -IOL

CRIME REPORTS



Swift Police Action Nets Two Armed Robbery Suspects

Two men were arrested after a swift response by members of the Bloemfontein Diving Unit led to the recovery of stolen property and the apprehension of suspects linked to an armed robbery in the Pieter Swarts area near Meadows Road on Wednesday.

Police spokesperson Sgt Mahlomola Peter Kareli said the incident occurred at about 14:00 when a 29-year-old man was allegedly robbed at knifepoint by a group of six suspects.

"The Bloemfontein Diving Unit received a distress call from the victim. Upon arrival at the scene, he reported that he had been cornered and robbed by six unknown African males, three of whom were armed with knives," said Kareli.

The suspects allegedly threatened the victim before stealing his personal belongings, including a pair of tekkies, a black backpack and a long-sleeved top.

Kareli said members of the Diving Unit immediately launched a manhunt for the suspects.

"Thanks to their swift response, two suspects, aged 29 and 38, were spotted and successfully apprehended. During the arrest, police recovered the victim's stolen property. One of the suspects was also found in possession of a homemade knife," he said.

The suspects have been charged with robbery with aggravating circumstances and possession of a dangerous weapon. They are expected to appear in the Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court soon.

Jealous Boyfriend sentenced to 15 Years in Prison

A Harrismith man who stabbed his girlfriend multiple times and left her permanently paralysed has been sentenced to 15 years' direct imprisonment for attempted murder.

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), 26-year-old Sunday Skhosana was convicted in the Harrismith Regional Court for the violent attack on 20-year-old Sibongile Radebe in October 2025. The court heard that Radebe was at Skhosana's room on 15 October when she told him she wanted to leave. He refused and an argument erupted. When Radebe managed to escape, Skhosana chased her into the street and repeatedly stabbed her before leaving her unconscious.

A passer-by who tried to intervene was also attacked and forced to flee. Community members later came to Radebe's rescue, restraining the suspect and ensuring she received urgent medical treatment.

Radebe spent nearly three weeks in hospital recovering from her injuries. The attack left her wheelchair-bound, permanently altering the course of her life. Following an investigation led by Harrismith detective Sergeant Lorraine Zimu, Skhosana was found guilty on 8 June and sentenced on 9 June.

Police welcomed the sentence, saying it sends a strong message against gender-based violence and underscores the devastating consequences of abusive relationships.

Free State SAPS Athletes Set Sights on Comrades Glory

A team of 21 Free State police officers has been officially sent off to represent the province in the 2026 Comrades Marathon, one of the world's toughest ultramarathon events.

The send-off ceremony was held at Mountains View Inn in Harrismith, where SAPS leadership, athletes, sponsors and representatives from the Free State Marathon Association gathered to celebrate the runners' achievement and wish them well ahead of the prestigious race between Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

Free State Provincial Commissioner Lieutenant General Thabang Lesia praised the officers for balancing the demands of policing with the rigorous training required to complete the gruelling 89km race. He encouraged them to wear the SAPS badge

with pride and serve as ambassadors for both the police service and the province.

Deputy Provincial Commissioner for Support Services, Major General Len Singh, highlighted the importance of sport in promoting physical fitness, mental strength and teamwork among police officers. SAPS spokesperson Colonel Siphe Tyu said the athletes exemplify the discipline, dedication and perseverance expected of police officials. He added that their commitment to a healthy lifestyle and excellence both on and off duty serves as an inspiration to others.

The runners also received support and gifts from sponsors as they prepare for race day, backed by SAPS management, their families and communities across the Free State.

Police Probe Mystery Death of Unidentified Woman

Police have launched an investigation after the body of an unidentified woman was discovered in an open field near a stream in Ippong, Bloemfontein.

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), officers from Kagisanong Police Station responded to a complaint shortly before 10:00 on Tuesday, 9 June. Upon arrival, they found the body of an African woman lying in the veld. Emergency medical personnel declared her dead at the scene.

An inquest docket has been opened to determine the circumstances surrounding her death. Police said no visible injuries were found on the body during

preliminary examinations. However, the exact cause of death will only be established once a post-mortem examination has been completed.

At the time of her discovery, the woman was wearing a white T-shirt with blue floral patterns and black boots.

SAPS spokesperson Sergeant Mahlomola Peter Kareli appealed to the public for assistance in identifying the deceased. He urged anyone who recognises the description or has information about her movements before her death to come forward, saying even the smallest detail could assist investigators and help bring answers to her family.

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Taxi Strike Paralyzes Bloem CBD

Operators accuse metro officer of harassment as dispute over passenger drop-off points sparks two-day protest



Taxi operators in Bloemfontein strike over unfair vehicle impoundments. Picture: Gomolemo Winkel

By Gomolemo Winkel

Large parts of Bloemfontein's central business district ground to a halt this week as taxi operators staged a two-day shutdown, demanding action against a Mangaung Metro law enforcement officer they accuse of harassment and unfair vehicle impoundments.

The protest disrupted traffic and public transport services, highlighting growing tensions between the taxi industry and municipal authorities over long-standing passenger drop-off points.

Taxi operators downed tools on Tuesday and Wednesday, insisting that their concerns have repeatedly been ignored despite engagements with the municipality.

Members of the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTATA) said tensions escalated after municipal officials warned during a radio interview that taxis dropping passengers at locations such as Fairways and Central Park could face impoundment.

According to the association, several taxis were impounded on Monday, prompting drivers

to embark on the shutdown. Taxi operator Shawn Meyers said drivers were frustrated by what they viewed as ongoing harassment by a municipal law enforcement officer, Masithela Phandliwe, better known as 'City'.

"We, as Bloemfontein taxi drivers, decided that we are tired of being harassed. He is impounding vehicles for no reason. When passengers want to be dropped at Fourways, he does not allow taxis to stop there. The same applies to other traditional drop-off points," said Meyers.

He argued that the current system enables commuters to access connecting routes and destinations more conveniently and that forcing all passengers to disembark at the Jansen taxi rank is impractical.

"We transport elderly people, sick people and persons living with disabilities. It does not make sense to expect them to walk long distances back to where they need to catch another taxi," he said.

Taxi operators further claimed that the impoundment of vehicles at long-established passenger drop-off points has resulted in costly fines and disruptions to their businesses. They

maintain that these locations have been used for decades and should remain operational until suitable alternatives are provided.

In response, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality condemned threats and inflammatory remarks directed at the traffic officer following recent law enforcement operations.

In a statement, the municipality said it respected residents' constitutional right to express their views but warned that threats, intimidation and incitement to violence against municipal officials would not be tolerated.

"Municipal traffic officers are mandated to enforce road traffic legislation and municipal by-laws in the interest of public safety," the municipality said.

Following discussions between the municipality and the GBTATA, both parties agreed to establish a committee comprising municipal officials, taxi association representatives and other stakeholders to assess routes and passenger drop-off arrangements.

For now, the status quo will remain in place, allowing taxis to continue using their traditional drop-off points while negotiations continue.

Matjhabeng Moves to End Sewer Crisis



Representatives from DWS, Matjhabeng LM and Checkers doing a site visit on the work currently underway to eradicate sewage spills in the area of St Helena in Welkom. Picture: Supplied

By Matshidiso Sebeleng

Matjhabeng Local Municipality has intensified efforts to tackle persistent raw sewage spillages in Welkom, responding to long-standing complaints from residents about deteriorating sanitation infrastructure.

On Tuesday, municipal officials, together with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), conducted an inspection of ongoing intervention projects, including a major sewer repair at the corner of Blesbok and Anderson streets in St Helena.

The area has been severely affected by sewage overflows, posing health and environmental risks to nearby businesses, schools, shopping centres and residents.

Executive Mayor Thanduxolo Khalipha said the intervention follows a request by the municipality for national government support after assessments revealed widespread

damage to sanitation infrastructure.

According to Khalipha, more than 54 pump stations and 11 wastewater treatment plants were found to be dysfunctional, prompting the municipality to seek assistance from DWS. The department has appointed contractors to replace a collapsed section of sewer pipeline caused by an ageing sanitation network.

Municipal officials reported that the project is already 40% complete, with excavations undertaken and parts of the pipeline replaced.

The repair work is expected to be completed by August 2026, a milestone that officials believe will permanently eliminate sewer spillages in the affected area.

DWS also urged residents to avoid flushing foreign objects such as rags, newspapers and hairpieces down toilets, warning that blockages contribute significantly to overflowing manholes and place additional strain on municipal resources.

Mangaung Youth Lead the Way in SA's First Security Skills Pilot



MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure, Dibolelo Mance addresses EPWP trainees. Picture: Baagedi Setlhora

By Bernell Simons

Thirty-four young people from Mangaung have been given a rare opportunity to break into the job market through South Africa's first-ever National Youth Service and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Security Skills Programme, a pioneering initiative that combines accredited training, practical work experience and a pathway to long-term employment.

The participants were formally introduced to Free State MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure, Dibolelo Kathleen Mance, on Tuesday after being selected from a pool of 100 applicants. The programme forms part of government's ongoing efforts to combat unemployment and poverty while equipping young people with valuable workplace skills.

The Free State Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is the first province in South Africa to roll out the pilot Security Skills Programme under the National Youth Service and EPWP framework. Officials hope the initiative will become a model for future skills development programmes across the country.

Training began on 15 March 2026 and will run until 31 March 2027. Upon successful completion, participants will obtain a National Certificate: General Security Practices (NQF Level 3), a nationally recognised qualification that could significantly improve their employment prospects in the security sector.

The programme blends classroom learning with practical workplace experience, ensuring participants gain both theoretical

knowledge and hands-on skills. Trainees receive a monthly stipend of R3 500 and work approximately 22 days per month.

Of the 34 recruits, 17 are women, highlighting government's commitment to advancing gender equality in training and employment opportunities. The department acknowledged challenges in recruiting people living with disabilities and indicated that dedicated interventions would be developed to improve inclusion in future intakes.

Addressing the trainees, MEC Mance said the programme represented much more than an orientation process.

"Today is not just a mere orientation or administration process. It is about empowering our people with knowledge, responsibility, opportunity and hope. This workshop marks the beginning of a journey for many individuals who have been seeking a meaningful opportunity to improve their lives and support their families," she said.

Mance stressed that the programme was intentionally designed to tackle unemployment and poverty, particularly among young people.

"We did this programme intentionally because we understand the challenges of unemployment and poverty in our communities. As a department, we want to contribute towards reducing unemployment and creating opportunities for young people," she said.

Training focuses on three specialised areas: Patrol Officer Grade E, Access Control Grade D, and Asset and Reaction Officer Grade C. Beyond preparing participants for future careers, the programme is expected to strengthen security services at

government buildings and public facilities throughout the province.

"We want to improve security capacity in our government buildings," Mance said. She added that the initiative would also help address future staffing needs as experienced security personnel retire or leave the public service, ensuring a steady pipeline of trained professionals.

The MEC further highlighted the scale of unemployment facing young people in the province, noting that previous departmental programmes had attracted thousands of applicants, including graduates with honours and master's degrees.

To ensure opportunities are not lost, the department has established a database of applicants who can be considered for future programmes as additional placements become available.

Acting Head of Department S. Mtole commended Mance's commitment to youth empowerment, education and skills development, describing her as a leader dedicated to expanding opportunities for young people.

For the 34 trainees, the programme represents more than a temporary job opportunity. It offers a chance to gain practical experience, earn an income, secure a recognised qualification and improve their prospects of finding sustainable employment.

As the first intake of what could become a province-wide initiative, they are helping to shape a programme that government hopes will contribute meaningfully to reducing unemployment, strengthening service delivery and building a skilled workforce for the future.

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- A valid Driver's license.
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- 2- 3 years' relevant experience in internal audit required.

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- Monitor and ensure compliance with MFMA, and any other applicable legislation.
- Apply the principles of audit standards and technique
- Communicate all Audit findings to Internal Audit Manager.
- Participate in various meetings and provide comments/opinions.
- Regularly update Internal Audit Manager on functional progress and /or outcomes for submission to the Audit Performance & Risk Committee.
- Maintain records of working progress, notices and correspondence and update file and retrieve information for reference.
- Prepare audit file for review by the Internal Audit Manager.
- Follow up on Auditor General and Internal Auditor action plan and provide feedback.
- Perform other related duties incidental to the work description.

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13th Cheque
Annual Leave

KEY COMPETENCIES

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- Thorough knowledge of supply chain management and information systems.
- Detailed knowledge of municipal policies and procedures and Treasury regulations.
- Ability to work independently. Attention to detail. Good investigative, research, analysis techniques.
- Assertiveness in dealing with audit report findings.

NB: All applications must be on the official application form. Enquiries may be directed to: The Municipal Manager, Me. MRE Mogopodi on 051 924 0654 or Mr MN Makwetla on 051 924 0654 during office hours. Street address: 38 Joubert Street, Ladybrand, 9745.

Applications on the prescribed official application form, with a comprehensive CV, and certified qualifications should be submitted to: The Municipal Manager, Me MRE Mogopodi, PO Box 64, Ladybrand, 9745 or couriered to 38 Joubert Street Ladybrand or walk-in hand delivery by the switchboard office.

PLEASE NOTE: Application forms are available from the municipal official website; www.mantsopa.gov.za and from the switchboard office. No faxed or e-mailed applications will be accepted. Certified copies of academic qualifications and a copy of your curriculum vitae must accompany all application forms.

If not contacted within three (3) months after the closing date, applicants should regard their applications as having been unsuccessful. The municipality reserves the right not to make any appointments, fraudulent qualifications / documentation / driver's license, will immediately disqualify any applicant. A candidate who canvasses any Councillor for preference will be disqualified from the selection process or from appointment.

CLOSING DATE: 26 June 2026 at 12:00 pm

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MUNICIPAL MANAGER.
MANTSOPA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.
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Ladybrand
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03 June 2026

Platfontein Families Receive Lifeline ... as Aquaponics Project Takes Root



By Phemelo Manankong

Forty vulnerable households in Platfontein, Northern Cape, received much-needed clothing and essential household supplies during a community outreach programme aimed at providing immediate relief while introducing residents to a sustainable agricultural initiative that could transform local livelihoods.

The initiative, which combined humanitarian support with community development, sought to introduce local residents to the Aquaponics Project while providing assistance to vulnerable households facing socio-economic challenges in Platfontein, Northern Cape.

One family caring for 12 beneficiaries received a special support package comprising non-perishable food items, detergents and clothing. Household essentials, including bath soap and toilet paper, were

also distributed to heads of households as part of the relief effort.

The outreach programme was designed to raise awareness about the Aquaponics Project and the opportunities it presents for local residents.

The project is expected to promote sustainable food production, create livelihood opportunities and encourage greater community participation in agricultural development.

Adding to the day's support efforts, Palms for Life donated blankets to 50 elderly residents, helping to provide warmth and comfort during the cold winter months.

Speaking at the event, Tsholofelo Tongwane-Qwelane from the Department of Agriculture said the initiative was aimed at addressing both immediate and long-term community needs.

"The primary objective of the initiative was not only to provide relief and support to vulnerable households but also to create awareness about the

Aquaponics Project and the opportunities it offers to the community," she said.

Tongwane-Qwelane explained that the project has the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable livelihoods by equipping residents with agricultural skills and encouraging participation in food production initiatives.

She added that empowering communities through projects such as aquaponics can help strengthen food security while creating opportunities for economic development and self-sufficiency.

Community members welcomed the donations and information-sharing sessions, expressing appreciation for the support extended to struggling families and elderly residents.

The department said programmes of this nature form part of broader efforts to improve the quality of life in rural communities, strengthen food security and promote sustainable development across the Northern Cape.

SASCO Drives Youth Vote Push Across Free State

Student movement launches online registration campaign to boost voter participation and democratic engagement among young people



By Nonkululeko Ngubeni

The South African Students Congress (SASCO) in the Free State has intensified its campaign to get more young people to the polls, launching an online voter registration drive aimed at empowering students to participate actively in South Africa's democratic processes.

According to SASCO Free State Provincial Working Committee (PWC) Media Liaison Officer Gomolemo Raqashile, the initiative seeks not only to assist students with voter registration and verification but also to strengthen political awareness and civic responsibility among the youth.

"The primary objective of the campaign is to encourage and assist students and young people to register to vote, while ensuring they understand the importance of exercising their constitutional right to vote," said Raqashile.

The campaign is primarily focused on students at the Central University of Technology (CUT), particularly those living in student accommodation across the province. First-time voters, unregistered youth and students needing to update or verify their voter details also form part of the target audience.

Raqashile said SASCO plans to expand the programme to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in the coming weeks.

He explained that the online registration model was chosen for its convenience and accessibility, allowing students to register or update their information from anywhere using smartphones and inter-

net-enabled devices.

"Online registration allows students to register or update their information from any location while receiving guidance from campaign volunteers," he said.

Volunteers assist participants with navigating the Electoral Commission's online platform, creating or accessing profiles, selecting voting districts and verifying registration details. Students are required to have a valid South African identity document, contact details and, where necessary, proof of residence.

To protect personal information, all registration data is processed through secure Electoral Commission systems, with volunteers not retaining any personal information.

SASCO reported encouraging participation levels, particularly among first-time voters residing near the CUT Welkom Campus. The campaign combines residence visits, peer-to-peer engagement, voter education sessions, social media outreach and on-site registration support.

Despite positive momentum, challenges such as misinformation, limited access in some communities and political apathy among sections of the youth remain obstacles.

CUT student Zandile Makhoba said the campaign helped her better understand the registration process while encouraging leadership and civic participation.

Another student described the initiative as informative and accessible, urging more young people to register and make their voices count through the ballot box.



MATJHABENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

PUBLIC NOTICE

Adopted Final Integrated Development Plan 2026/2027 financial year

Notice is hereby given in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000, as amended, and the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, No. 56 of 2003, as amended, that the Final Integrated Development Plan 2026/2027 has been adopted by Council on 03 June 2026.

Copies of the Final IDP can be viewed at the following municipal offices:

1. Head Office- Matjhabeng Local Municipality-main building
2. Odendaalsrus unit office
3. Hennenman unit office
4. Virginia unit office
5. All libraries within Matjhabeng Local Municipality
6. Municipal website: matjhabengmunicipality.co.za

Enquiries on the above notice may be directed to the IDP Senior Manager: Mr. Sello Naniso during office hours at 057 391 3438 or Acting IDP Senior Administrative Officer: Me. Xoliswa Sejane during office hours at 057 492 0573.

Kind Regard

VUYO ADONIS
ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER

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New MAP Mayor on Mission to Restore Dignity

Thebe unveils R2.743bn budget focused on jobs, infrastructure and basic services

By JN Reporter

The newly elected Mayor of Maluti-A-Phofung Municipality, Tumelo Thebe, has wasted no time in setting the tone for his administration, unveiling an ambitious plan to restore dignity, improve service delivery, and rebuild public confidence in a municipality that has struggled with governance and infrastructure challenges for years.

Tabling the municipality's R2.743 billion budget for the 2026/27 financial year on Wednesday, Thebe outlined a people-centred vision aimed at addressing long-standing concerns around water, electricity, roads, housing, and economic development.

The mayor said the priorities contained in the budget are intended to deliver tangible improvements in the lives of residents and ensure that local government becomes more responsive to community needs.

"Our priorities should highlight our accountability to the Maluti-A-Phofung residents, business community, religious community, and all stakeholders," said Thebe.

"I believe we can still do better on our public participation processes to promote inclusiveness. Our priorities should reflect a high sense of responsiveness to the challenges facing our people."

For more than a decade, residents across QwaQwa and surrounding areas have voiced frustration over unreliable water and

electricity supply, deteriorating roads, and inadequate municipal services. Businesses have also repeatedly raised concerns over the impact of poor infrastructure on investment and economic growth.

Thebe acknowledged these challenges and pledged that his administration would move decisively to address them.

"It cannot be business as usual when parts of QwaQwa do not have water and electricity. We must provide water and electricity," he said.

"It cannot be business as usual when the whole of Tlholong is flooded when it rains. We must fix the water channels. It cannot be business as usual when roads and streets in Tshiame and Makgolokeng are inaccessible. We must fix the roads.

"It cannot be business as usual when our young men and women share a shack with their elderly parents. We must allocate sites."

Creating Jobs and Reviving Industry
Economic growth and youth employment emerged as key priorities in the mayor's address.

Thebe strongly condemned the ongoing theft of electrical infrastructure and vandalism of water pipelines supplying industrial areas in Phuthaditjhaba and Tshiame, warning that these criminal activities continue to undermine economic development and discourage investment.

He called on residents to work with law enforcement agencies to identify and report those responsible.

"Some among us in the community know the perpetrators of these acts. I urge you all to report them to the authorities and help stop this crime as it contributes to investors leaving our areas and in-

creasing unemployment," he said.

According to figures from the Free State Development Corporation (FDC), the industrial areas of Phuthaditjhaba and Tshiame currently contain 360 factory units, of which 212 stand vacant. At least 21 of these factories have been destroyed by fire or vandalism.

The mayor described the situation as unacceptable, saying vacant industrial facilities represent lost opportunities for economic growth and job creation.

"We cannot accept a situation where factories that could be used to create new industries and employment opportunities for our young people remain empty and neglected," he said.

Despite these challenges, Thebe pointed to significant investment opportunities on the horizon. He revealed that discussions are underway with 10 potential investors interested in establishing operations within the Maluti-A-Phofung Special Economic Zone in Tshiame.

The proposed investments are expected to exceed R3.4 billion and could create as many as 2,200 jobs if successfully implemented.

The development is being viewed as a major boost for a municipality grappling with high unemployment levels, particularly among young people.

Roads and Infrastructure Take Centre Stage
Improving road infrastructure has also been identified as a cornerstone of the municipality's dignity restoration programme.

Thebe said several maintenance and rehabilitation projects are already underway to improve accessibility in villages, townships, and rural communities.

"These include pothole repairs, cleaning of stormwater drains, rehabilitation of base and surface layers, pavement realignment, cutting of trees, and minor spot graveling on various roads," he explained.

In addition to routine maintenance, the municipality is collaborating with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and the Free State Department of Roads on several major infrastructure projects.

Among these are the construction of footbridges in Monontsha, the paving of roads and installation of stormwater drainage systems in Makwane and Qoqolosing, and the first phase of a 3km paved road project in Tsheseng/Fika Patso.

The municipality is also participating in the Weliszwe Rural Bridges Programme, which will see 19 bridges constructed in communities including Tseki, Makong, Phazama, Mphokojoane, Paballong and Makoane.

The projects are expected to improve mobility, reduce travel risks and strengthen access to schools, healthcare facilities and economic opportunities.

Strengthening Water and Electricity Supply
Addressing ongoing electricity challenges remains a priority for the municipality.

Thebe announced that key electricity infrastructure, including the Elizabeth Ross Substation and the Moteka Substation, will be upgraded during the coming financial year.

The Moteka facility is particularly significant as it supplies electricity to more than 30 villages across the QwaQwa region.

The municipality also plans to purchase additional transformers to reduce outages and improve network reliability.

"We are going to purchase new transformers to assist with ongoing power outages," said Thebe.

At the same time, he appealed to residents to support municipal revenue collection efforts by purchasing electricity and paying for services.

The mayor stressed that sustainable service delivery depends on the municipality's ability to generate revenue needed to maintain and upgrade infrastructure.

With a multi-billion-rand budget now in place and ambitious plans on the table, Thebe has positioned his administration around a simple but powerful promise: restoring dignity through service delivery, economic growth and responsive governance. Whether that vision translates into meaningful change for residents will be closely watched in the months ahead.

Maluti-A-Phofung Executive Mayor, Tumelo Thebe Pictures: Supplied



Traditional Leadership Vital to Province's Progress - Saul



By Bernell Simons

Traditional and Khoisan leaders have been positioned as key partners in driving development, preserving cultural heritage and strengthening governance in the Northern Cape, following a strong call by Premier Dr Zamani Saul for greater collaboration between government and traditional institutions.

Addressing the opening of the Fourth Session of the Fourth House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders, Saul said the province's future growth and social progress would depend on partnerships that combine modern governance with the wisdom, influence and leadership of traditional structures.

The gathering, chaired by Kgosi Pelonomi Toto, brought together traditional and Khoisan leaders from across the province to assess progress on community programmes and set priorities for the year ahead. The session comes at a time when the Northern Cape is advancing major investments in infrastructure, renewable energy, healthcare and water security, while continuing efforts to address unemployment, poverty and service delivery challenges in rural communities.

Saul stressed that traditional leaders remain vital custodians of culture, history and indigenous knowledge, while also playing an important role in promoting social cohesion and community development. He said their involvement is critical in ensuring government initiatives reach communities effectively and respond to local needs.

Among the key issues discussed were rural development, cultural preservation, social cohesion and programmes aimed at improving living conditions in traditional and Khoisan communities. Leaders are also expected to deliberate on strengthening traditional institutions and enhancing their contribution to governance.

The Premier further highlighted plans for a Commission of Inquiry into the legitimacy of certain chieftaincies, a process intended to resolve longstanding leadership disputes and reinforce confidence in traditional governance structures.

As the province pursues economic growth and development, Saul maintained that meaningful progress can only be achieved through strong partnerships between government, communities and traditional leadership, ensuring that no community is left behind.

NOTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION APPLICATION FOR A PROSPECTING RIGHT

DMPRRFNO: NW30/5/1/1/2/15109PR

Notice of a Basic Assessment Process in terms of section 19, Chapter 6 of the 2014 EIA Regulation, and National Water Act 36 of 1998, for an EA associated with the prospecting right application in terms of section 16 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resource Development Act 28 of 2008), as amended.

You are invited to register as an interested and affected party and comment on the prospecting application without bulk sampling to prospect for Sand (general), Sand (manufactured from hardrock), Silica Sand (Silica), Silica Sand (general).

RINALEBIKO TRADING (PTY) LTD (the applicant) has appointed Thevha Sustainable Services (Pty) Ltd (TSS) as an Independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP) to undertake the application for an EA, together with the associated Public Participation Process (PPP).

Location: The proposed prospecting area is situated approximately 21km Southwest of Bela-Bela and 26 km North of Makapanstad town.

The project triggers: Listing Notice 1 (GN R. 327) of the EIA Regulations 2014 as amended in April 2017. Section 21 activities and additional activities may be identified during the process.

Opportunity to participate: Interested and Affected parties are invited to register and provide written comments using ref number **NW15109PR**, your email address and contact details to the contact person indicated below within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

The Basic Assessment Report and Environmental Management Programme for the above-mentioned project will be made available electronically, the electronic copy may be requested from TSS in the following ways:

Contact: Ms Siima D | Ms A. Mavuso.
Cell no: +27689562850 (calls and Whatsapp only)
Email: admin@thevhasustainableservices.co.za | dineo@thevhasustainableservices.co.za

Land and Funding Top Concerns at Free State Youth Farmers Day



By Bernell Simons

Land access, funding and inadequate farming infrastructure emerged as the biggest concerns raised by young farmers during the Free State Provincial Youth Farmers Day held at Meadows Farm outside Bloemfontein on Thursday.

Hosted by the Free State Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs as part of the 50th anniversary of Youth Month commemorations, the event brought together young farmers, government leaders, agricultural stakeholders and industry experts under the theme "RESET@50 – The Future Calls."

The gathering served as a platform for young farmers from across the province to share challenges, explore opportunities and engage directly with government officials on issues affecting the agricultural sector. Discussions focused on food security, economic growth, job creation and the role of youth in shaping the future of agriculture in the province.

A recurring concern raised by participants was the difficulty of accessing land and financial support, which many said continues to limit their ability to expand their farming operations and transition into commercial agriculture.

Addressing the gathering, MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs, Elzabe Rockman, acknowledged the frustrations but clarified that the department does not own agricultural land.

"We don't own land. We don't own farms," she said.

Rockman explained that one of the main sources of land available to emerging farmers is municipal commonage land, which remains plagued by numerous challenges. She said poor management, overcrowding and a lack of basic infrastructure have made it difficult for many aspiring farmers to establish sustainable operations.

"There is a huge problem with commonage management. We have government officials on commonages competing with farmers, competing with youth and competing with everyone," she said.

She further highlighted the lack of essential infrastructure such as water supply, fencing and biosecurity measures on many commonages. According to Rockman, the department is engaging municipalities to restore order and improve management systems to ensure that young farmers can benefit from these resources.

She added that commonages were originally in-

tended to serve as training grounds where emerging farmers could gain experience before progressing to their own farms and eventually becoming commercial producers. However, historical land acquisition challenges and barriers to accessing finance have left many older farmers unable to move beyond commonage farming, creating additional pressure on limited land resources.

The host farmer, Tumelo Pedi, shared his own journey in agriculture, encouraging young farmers not to lose hope despite the challenges.

"Standing here, I can relate to commonage farmers, subsistence farmers, smallholders and commercial farmers because that is exactly where I started," he said.

Pedi told participants that success in agriculture requires discipline, perseverance and strong relationships. He encouraged aspiring farmers to remain committed to their goals, saying it is possible to grow from farming on commonages to managing thousands of hectares.

The Provincial Youth Farmers Day programme is expected to continue across the Free State throughout June, providing further opportunities for young farmers to engage with government and industry stakeholders on the future of agriculture.

Murders Surge As North West Battles Rising Violent Crime



By Matshidiso Selebeleng

The North West Province recorded a sharp increase in violent crime during the fourth quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, with murders, attempted murders and serious assaults all on the rise.

Presenting the province's January to March 2026 crime statistics on Tuesday, North West MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Wessels Morweng, described the figures as a stark reminder that violence continues to threaten communities across the province.

According to Morweng, the province recorded 271 murders during the period under review, representing an 18.3% increase compared to the same quarter last year. Attempted murder cases rose by 17.4%, while assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm (GBH) increased by 3%.

"These figures remind us that violence continues to undermine the safety and well-being of our communities," said Morweng.

Common assault cases also increased slightly, rising from 3,083 incidents between January and March 2025 to 3,091 during the same period this year.

While rape cases declined by 9.1%, the province recorded increases in sexual assault and attempted sexual offences, highlighting ongoing concerns around gender-based violence.

Morweng said violent crime is driven by a range of factors beyond alcohol abuse, domestic violence and substance abuse. He pointed to illegal mining, vigilantism and the proliferation of illegal firearms as significant contributors to violent offences.

Of particular concern were the 1,936 domestic violence-related incidents recorded during the quarter. "This highlights the urgent need to strengthen prevention, protection and support mechanisms for victims," he said.

Morweng reaffirmed the department's commitment to strengthening civilian oversight and working closely with SAPS to combat crime. He said oversight visits, monitoring programmes and accountability sessions would continue at provincial, district and station levels, particularly in high-crime areas.

The department will also intensify monitoring of compliance with the Domestic Violence Act, focusing on the management of cases, victim support services and record-keeping at police stations.

Among the top 20 police stations contributing to community-reported crime over the past five years, Rustenburg Police Station in the Bojanala District remained the highest contributor despite recording an 8.4% decline in reported cases. The station registered 1,433 cases between January and March 2026, down from 1,681 during the same period in 2022.

At the other end of the list, Lehurutshe Police Station in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District recorded a worrying increase, with reported cases rising from 241 in 2022 to 417 this year — a 61% jump.

Morweng stressed that crime cannot be tackled by law enforcement alone and called for stronger collaboration between government departments, municipalities, SAPS, civil society organisations, traditional leaders and the private sector through the Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy (ICVPS).

"We must address not only crime itself, but also the underlying social conditions that fuel it," he said.

TVET pathways key to youth employment and professional inclusion

Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Mmapaseka Steve Letsike, says Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates represent the bridge South Africa needs to connect skills development with economic opportunity.

Addressing young built-environment professionals at the Institute of Building Inspectors Youth Sector Business Breakfast on Thursday, Letsike said TVET graduates are critical to addressing skills shortages, youth unemployment and transformation within the construction and infrastructure sectors.

"They represent the bridge that South Africa desperately needs – the bridge between artisan knowledge and professional recognition, between technical skill and regulatory authority, between township and college pathways and formal professional status," the Deputy Minister said.

Letsike's remarks come against the backdrop of persistently high youth unemployment, with many graduates struggling to secure workplace experience and professional registration, despite completing their studies.

She argued that South Africa must stop treating TVET education as a secondary option and instead position it as a credible pathway into professional careers and leadership positions.

"If we are serious about youth development, we must stop treating TVET education as a second-class pathway."

The Deputy Minister highlighted the success of the Gauteng-funded Youth Building Inspector Programme, which has provided workplace learning opportunities for unemployed graduates through partnerships involving municipalities, higher education institutions, and industry stakeholders.

The programme has placed 248 unemployed built-environment graduates in workplace learning opportunities, while supporting 51 young women on their journey towards professional registration.

According to Letsike, the programme demon-

strates that South Africa does not lack talent but often falls short in providing the support systems needed to help young people transition from education into employment.

"Transformation fails when support systems are absent," she said.

She noted that many of the programme participants possess TVET and technical qualifications in fields such as electrical engineering, plumbing, civil construction, building, and construction management.

Letsike said young people will only embrace TVET pathways if they can clearly see opportunities for career progression and professional advancement.

"A young woman who studies electrical engineering at a TVET college must be able to imagine herself not only as an assistant on site, but as a registered inspector, a compliance professional, an entrepreneur, a municipal official, a project manager and a leader in the built environment."

The Deputy Minister also called on government departments, municipalities, professional councils, the private sector, and educational institutions to work together to create seamless pathways from training to employment.

She said young professionals should be able to move from recruitment and training to workplace learning, mentorship, professional registration, employment, and entrepreneurship without facing unnecessary barriers.

"Candidate categories must become bridges, not traps," Letsike said, urging professional bodies to make registration processes more accessible while maintaining high standards.

Investing in meaningful workplace opportunities The Deputy Minister also challenged private companies to invest in mentorship, internships and workplace opportunities that lead to meaningful careers rather than temporary placements.

South Africa's infrastructure development ambitions, she said, will depend on the country's ability to



attract, train, and retain a new generation of skilled professionals.

"The developmental state must behave like one state. Young people should not be left to navigate fragmented systems alone," Letsike said.

She added that empowering TVET graduates and young professionals would not only strengthen the built-environment sector, but also contribute to economic growth, improved municipal capacity and more inclusive development.

"The youth of this generation are fighting against an economy that too often produces exclusion. Different battlefield, same demand: dignity, opportunity, recognition, and freedom," she said. — **SAnews.gov.za**

Moqhaka Strengthens Ties with SANDF for Future Service Delivery Partnerships



By JN Reporter

Moqhaka Local Municipality is exploring opportunities for stronger collaboration with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) following a high-level stakeholder engagement between municipal leadership and the SANDF School of Engineers.

Led by Executive Mayor Cllr Ramasimong Tau, the meeting formed part of the municipality's ongoing efforts to build strategic relationships that can contribute to improved service delivery and community development.

The engagement focused on strengthening institutional relations and identifying areas of mutual interest that could pave the way for future partnerships. Discussions also explored how the municipality and

the SANDF could work together on initiatives aimed at addressing service delivery challenges and enhancing support to local communities.

The meeting was attended by SANDF School of Engineers Officer Commanding Colonel Shabangu, alongside key members of the municipal leadership. These included MMC for Public Safety Cllr Morena Thebe, MMC for Human Settlements and Spatial Planning Cllr Thabo Mofokeng, MMC for Technical Services Cllr Itumeleng Sesing, and Acting Municipal Manager Ms Lizzy Ntsepe.

Mayor Tau described stakeholder engagement as a critical component of the municipality's development agenda, noting that partnerships with strategic institutions such as the SANDF can unlock expertise, resources and innovative solutions that benefit residents across the Moqhaka municipal area.

YOUTH DAY

YOUTH DAY COMMEMORATION 2026

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DR. ZAMANI SAUL

Premier of the Northern Cape

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Opinion

Prof Hester Klopper
UFS Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Leading purposefully - Reflections on My First Year as UFS Vice-Chancellor and Principal

The first year of any leadership journey invites reflection. For me, that journey began on 9 June 2025 when I was inaugurated as the 15th Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Free State (UFS) – the first woman to hold this office in the 122-year history of the university. As I reflect on the year that followed, I do so with deep gratitude, humility, and a renewed sense of purpose.

From the outset, I spoke about the importance of ‘walking with purpose’. For me, this was never intended as a slogan. It was a commitment to deliberate leadership, thoughtful decision-making, and ensuring that every strategic choice contributes to building a university that remains relevant, impactful, and responsive to the society it serves.

Refining our strategic direction

Perhaps the most consequential work of the past year has been the strategic refinement of our institutional direction. Through consultation across the university community, we undertook a mid-term review of our Strategic Plan, not simply to assess progress, but to ensure that the University of the Free State is in sync with the geopolitical shifts we are seeing in the multipolar world. It became clear that the rapidly evolving higher education landscape required not only reflection, but recalibration.

This process resulted in a renewed vision for the university as an innovative research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged institution contributing meaningfully to responsible societal futures. More importantly, it sharpened our focus around five strategic priorities: advancing academic excellence and research impact; building institutional agility and responsiveness; nurturing a transformational institutional culture; strengthening long-term sustainability; and accelerating collaborative innovation and global integration.

To support these priorities, we identified several strategic themes that now guide our investment decisions and institutional planning. These include academic renewal, the development of an innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem, comprehensive internationalisation, systemic sustainability, and the optimisation of our multi-campus model. Together, these themes provide a framework for ensuring that every initiative, partnership, and investment contributes to long-term impact and institutional excellence.

This strategic refinement has provided greater clarity of purpose across the institution. It has enabled us to move beyond incremental change and to position the UFS to lead confidently in an era defined by technological disruption, societal complexity, and rapidly evolving expectations of higher education.

This strategic direction has also informed the strengthening of our leadership team and the continued alignment of our institutional priorities. Together, we are building a university that is innovative, research-led, student-centred, and deeply engaged with the region, continent, and world around us.

A valuable lesson

One of the most valuable lessons I have learned during this first year is the importance of listening. Through engagements with students, staff, alumni, government, industry partners, donors, and community stakeholders, I have gained an even deeper appreciation of the role the University of the Free State plays in shaping lives, communities, and futures. These engagements have reinforced my belief that our greatest strength is our people – our students, staff, alumni, partners, and supporters. It is their talent, resilience, and commitment that enable us to achieve excellence, drive innovation, and make a meaningful contribution to society.

Student success and investing in people

Our commitment to student success remains at the centre of our academic enterprise. Universities exist because of students, and their success remains our most important measure of impact. I highlighted in my inauguration speech that one of the questions that keeps me up at night is, ‘How do we further unlock the potential that lies dormant in our own university?’

During the past year, we introduced several interventions aimed at strengthening student support, improving access to financial assistance, and reducing barriers that often compromise academic success. The launch of the VC-ISRC Imbewu Legacy Fund stands as one of the clearest expressions of this commitment. Developed in partnership with student leaders, the fund reflects our shared belief that no deserving student should be denied the opportunity to succeed because of financial hardship.

More than a funding initiative, Imbewu embodies our conviction that investing in students is an investment in the future. It challenges us to think differently, act boldly, and walk with purpose in building a university where opportunity, belonging, and success are accessible to all. Guided by the principle that every seed counts and every student matters, the fund serves as a powerful reminder that even the smallest contribution can help transform a life and unlock potential.

At the same time, we have focused on building a more agile and future-ready institution through the alignment and optimisation of professional and support services, the renewal of our academic programme portfolio and structures, and the development of a Strategic People Development Strategy. Central to this effort is the UFS Training Academy, which will be the home of staff learning and development, reinforcing our commitment to investing in our people as the foundation of our long-term success.

Turning vision into action

A defining principle of my first year has been that strategy only has value when it is translated into action. Many of the commitments outlined during my inauguration have since evolved into concrete institutional initiatives that are shaping the future trajectory of the University of the Free State.

Internationalisation has remained a strategic priority throughout the year, strengthening our global

profile and extending our contribution to responsible societal futures. Against this backdrop, we are performing well in major international rankings, with the Times Higher Education (THE) Africa Rankings placing us ninth on the African continent, and the inaugural QS World University rankings for Sub-Saharan Africa placing us eighth, based on our research and discovery, learning experience, and global engagement.

Through an Africa-first approach – complemented by carefully cultivated international partnerships – we have expanded opportunities for student and staff mobility, diversified our global collaborations, and strengthened networks that advance research, innovation, and mutual learning. Equally important, we have ensured that the university is represented in influential international forums where the future of higher education is being shaped. These efforts continue to position the UFS as a globally engaged, regionally relevant institution that contributes meaningfully to scholarship, leadership, and societal impact at both continental and international levels.

Building a sustainable future

While there is much to celebrate, leadership also requires honesty about the challenges we face. The higher education sector continues to operate within a demanding financial environment, and our university is not immune to these realities. Addressing long-term sustainability remains one of our most important responsibilities. Throughout the year, we have taken deliberate steps to strengthen institutional resilience while ensuring that our core academic mission remains protected.

As I look ahead, I do so with optimism and conviction. The past year has been one of listening, learning, building relationships, and refining our collective direction.

Together, we have established a stronger strategic foundation, anchored in academic excellence, innovation, sustainability, transformation, and societal impact. The future will demand courage, innovation, and adaptability from universities everywhere. I am confident that the University of the Free State is ready for that future. We have a clear direction, a committed community, and a shared belief that higher education can be a force for societal progress. As we enter our next year, we do so with purpose, conviction, and an unwavering commitment to shaping responsible societal futures.



Youth 2026 VS Youth 1976



Refilwe Mochoari
Editor-in-Chief

Fifty years later young people are still marching against inequality.

If there is anything that I learned from the youth of 1976, it is that freedom is never a finished project.

And my question to the youth of 1976 who are the country's leaders today is whether they will finally listen to young people or whether history will repeat itself where children have to save the nation.

It is that time of the year again when we are reminded of the good work that was done by the youth of 1976.

16 June 1976, the streets of Soweto were buzzing with defiance of school children who were brave enough to confront the Apartheid government over the introduction of Afrikaans “the language of the oppressor” as the medium of instruction in black schools.

About 20 000 of them took to the streets chanting, “Down with Afrikaans” “Viva Azania” “If we must do Afrikaans, Vorster must do Zulu”

There was so much police brutality and amongst the first students to be killed were 12-year-old Hector Pieterse and 15-year-old Hastings Ndlovu.

On that day, 176 learners died and by the end of February the following year over 500 school children were killed by the Apartheid police across the country.

As a result, June 16 is celebrated in remembrance of the fallen young people who fought a good fight for their country and for the black people.

These were the kind of marches young South Africans embarked on.

A march for the dignity of people. A march against the oppression of black people.

Such marches today are the reason why many South Africans have decent homes, decent jobs, and the reason why we are enjoying democracy.

Today black people are free, because of the bravery that was demonstrated by the youth of 1976.

Hi everyone, my name is Refilwe Mochoari, let's talk about 16 June 2026.

The irony is that the young people of 1976 who fought so hard for the freedom of black people are the government leaders of today.

Many of the students who survived the Soweto Uprising in 1976, the Sharville Massacre in 1960, and the 1956 Women's march are the politicians who are running the country today.

Most of them belong to the organisation (ANC) that fought very hard during the Apartheid era.

These are the people of an organisation that people were proud of on 27 April 1994.

Young people in 1994 were proud to belong to the ANC, they were proud to be associated with the ANC.

But this time, the youth of 2026, are not impressed with their leadership.

Young people today do not want to be associated with the ANC of today, their social media hashtags are evident.

Today the chants of young people during marches are #VoteANC

The enemy is no longer the legislation, it is crime, poverty, and corruption.

Being youth in 2026 means, marching against Gender Based Violence, crime, unemployment, and xenophobia.

According to the latest Stats SA statistics, South Africa's working-age (15 - 64) population stands at 42.2 million.

Of the 42.2 million people in the working age group, 21.0 million are youth.

Of the youth, 4.7 million are unemployed while 10.6 million are outside the labour force, these numbers include unemployed graduates.

But as usual on Tuesday we will be seeing people in their school uniforms celebrating the freedom that the class of 1976 died and fought for.

The same people who fought against the apartheid government are the people whom the youth of today feel betrayed by.

The youth of 2026 are fighting the youth of 1976.

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

The Power of Self-Knowledge

One of the greatest journeys a person can undertake is the journey of self-discovery. While many spend their lives seeking to understand the world around them, true transformation begins when a person gains a clear understanding of who they are. Self-knowledge is the ability to recognize and understand one's strengths, weaknesses, values, purpose, motivations, and potential. It is the foundation upon which personal growth, leadership effectiveness, and lasting success are built. Throughout history, great leaders, thinkers, and visionaries have emphasized the importance of self-knowledge. Before one can effectively lead others, influence society, or fulfill a divine assignment, one must first understand oneself.

What is Self-Knowledge?

Self-knowledge is more than simply knowing your name, profession, or background. It is a deep awareness of your identity, capabilities, limitations, emotions, beliefs, and purpose. It answers critical questions such as:

- Who am I?
- What am I called to do?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- What values guide my decisions?
- What impact am I meant to make in the world?
- When these questions are answered honestly, an individual gains clarity and direction in life.

Self-Knowledge Creates Confidence

Many people struggle with insecurity because they compare themselves to others. However, when a person understands who they are, comparison loses its power. Self-knowledge produces confidence because it enables individuals to embrace

their uniqueness and appreciate their God-given gifts. The Bible demonstrates this principle through David. Before becoming king, David understood his abilities and experiences. When facing Goliath, he did not rely on Saul's armor but on the skills and confidence developed through his experiences as a shepherd. “But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep... The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.’” (1 Samuel 17:34-37)

David's confidence came from knowing who he was and what God had already done through him.

Self-Knowledge Improves Decision-Making

People who lack self-awareness often make decisions based on pressure, trends, or the expectations of others. In contrast, individuals who know themselves make decisions that align with their purpose and values.

Self-knowledge helps people distinguish between opportunities that advance their calling and distractions that lead them away from it. It provides clarity during difficult moments and prevents unnecessary detours in life.

Self-Knowledge Strengthens Leadership

Leadership begins with self-leadership. A leader who does not understand himself or herself will struggle to lead others effectively. Great leaders recognize their strengths and maximize them while acknowledging their weaknesses and seeking support where necessary. They understand their emotional triggers, communication style, and influence on others. The Apostle Paul demonstrated remarkable self-awareness when he wrote:

“By the grace of God I am what I am, and His

grace to me was not without effect.” (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Paul understood both his past and his purpose. This awareness enabled him to lead with conviction and humility.

Self-Knowledge Reveals Purpose

Purpose is often discovered through understanding one's gifts, passions, experiences, and calling. Many people spend years searching for purpose externally when the answers are often found within. God has uniquely designed every individual with specific talents and assignments. Self-knowledge helps uncover these divine deposits and aligns a person with their intended destiny. The prophet Jeremiah received this revelation from God:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

Understanding who you are helps you understand why you are here.

Self-Knowledge Promotes Emotional Maturity

Emotionally mature individuals understand their feelings, reactions, and behavioral patterns. They are less controlled by anger, fear, jealousy, or insecurity because they recognize these emotions and manage them effectively. Self-awareness enables people to take responsibility for their actions, learn from mistakes, and continuously improve themselves. It strengthens relationships because individuals become better communicators and more empathetic toward others.

The Danger of Ignorance About Self

- A lack of self-knowledge often leads to:
- Poor decisions
- Identity crises

- Unhealthy relationships
- Low self-esteem
- Misplaced priorities
- Unfulfilled potential

Many gifted individuals never maximize their potential because they spend their lives trying to become someone else instead of discovering who they truly are.

How to Develop Self-Knowledge

- Spend Time in Reflection: Regularly evaluate your thoughts, actions, and decisions.
- Seek God's Perspective: Prayer and studying Scripture reveal God's purpose and design for your life.

- Welcome Constructive Feedback: Trusted mentors, leaders, and friends can help identify blind spots.

- Learn from Experience: Successes and failures both provide valuable insights about yourself.

- Understand Your Gifts and Strengths: Focus on areas where you naturally excel and seek opportunities to develop them further.

Self-knowledge is one of the most powerful assets a person can possess. It provides confidence, clarity, purpose, emotional maturity, and leadership effectiveness. The better you understand yourself, the better equipped you become to fulfill your calling and impact the lives of others.

The journey to greatness begins not with discovering the world, but with discovering yourself. When you know who you are, you can confidently pursue where you are going.

As the ancient wisdom suggests, “Know yourself, and you will unlock the potential to change your world.”

Business

Markets and Indicators

Rand/Dollar	16.48	0.27%	▲
Rand/Pound	21.99	0.48%	▲
Rand/Euro	18.99	0.42%	▲
Platinum	1 680.00	1.19%	▲
Brent Crude	93.48	-0.95%	▼
Gold	4 088.85	0.42%	▲
Ethereum	1 641.39	2.08%	▲
Bitcoin	62 612.1	2.29%	▲

SA models of Kia Sonet and GWM Jolion score low in safety tests

AA CEO says if consumers increasingly buy safer vehicles, it will force other manufacturers to improve the safety in their vehicle models



The difference between two airbags and six airbags – or between having and not having curtain airbags – can be life-saving in a serious crash. Picture: Moneyweb

Two more entry-level vehicles available on the South African market have been found to have substandard safety features.

Recent #SaferCarsForAfrica crash tests have revealed that the Kia Sonet received a one-star rating for adult protection, while the GWM Haval Jolion was awarded a two-star rating in tests conducted as part of the Global New Car Assessment Programme (GNCAP).

The #SaferCarsForAfrica campaign, launched in 2017, represents a partnership between GNCAP and the Automobile Association (AA).

It independently assesses the safety performance of popular, entry-level vehicles sold in African markets against internationally recognised Global NCAP standards.

AA CEO Bobby Ramagwede said on Wednesday that the Jolion and the Sonet are serious players in the monthly Naamsa scorecard, with the Jolion's sales ranging about 1 200 units a month this year and the Sonet's a significant 800 units a month.

OEM apathy

Ramagwede stressed that consumers hold the power because vehicle dealerships want their money. He said that if consumers increasingly buy safer vehicles, it will force other original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to improve the safety of their models.

"The apathy being shown by local OEMs regarding the remedying of past test results is also quite telling. "We are awaiting meaningful actions to a range of vehicles tested recently, be these in the announcement of additional safety added to the spec of the entry-level vehicle, the discontinuation of the entry-level model in the wake of the safer next-up model in the range, or in the case of major structural flaws, the consumer being availed of options that exist within other model ranges," he said.

However, Ramagwede said the AA welcomes feedback from Hyundai on the Grand i10, Toyota on the Starlet and Corolla Cross, and Chery on the Tiggo 7 Pro.

Ramagwede said the Volkswagen Polo Vivo was tested, and Volkswagen thereafter volunteered an upgraded model that was retested through the voluntary testing programme and went from two to three stars.

But Ramagwede said the caveat is that Volkswagen only offers those additional airbags as an optional extra at an affordable R2 800.

Ramagwede said changes were made to the Toyota Starlet not because it was tested, but because Toyota realised it would be tested and fail dismally, and upgraded it from two to six airbags.

The Chery Tiggo 7 Pro was awarded a two-star rating, but Ramagwede said Chery made a commitment that from June this year onwards, all Chery vehicles will be fitted with at least six airbags.

"That was their commitment. The proof is in the pudding on that one," he said.

Ramagwede said vehicles with a three-star and above safety rating are acceptable. He said the first three stars speak to passive safety of the vehicle – structure, complementary airbags and electronic stability control.

Ramagwede said this is what makes a vehicle safe, and stars four and five speak to technologies that aid and prevent accidents, such as Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) and assisted braking and lane-keeping assistance.

"Just because a car scores three stars does not make it unsafe. It means it's safe but doesn't have these other technical features," he said.

Ramagwede said about 32 vehicles have been tested since the #SaferCarsForAfrica crash test programme was launched, but only eight vehicles have been rated three stars or higher.

He said the Mahindra XUV300 is the only vehicle to date to have been awarded five stars, while the Honda Amaze, Toyota Avanza, Toyota Etios and Mazda 2 were awarded four stars in the first test.

But Ramagwede said an ever-growing concern, highlighted in the crash tests, is that all of these vehicles come out with "the rock bottom number of two airbags".

Jolion and Sonet test results

The Haval Jolion was tested with four airbags – driver and passenger front and side body airbags – but no airbags for head protection were present, although the model is fitted with Electronic Stability Control (ESC) as standard.

The vehicle's crash test results revealed:

- The frontal impact showed good protection to the head, neck and chest. Knee protection was marginal.
- The side movable barrier test showed good protection.
- The side pole test was not conducted because side head protection airbags are not fitted as standard.
- ESC is fitted as standard and meets Global NCAP requirements.
- Child Occupant Protection: Both child dummies received full protection in the dynamic test, but the lack of proper markings and a passenger airbag disabling switch resulted in a 3-star rating.

The Kia Sonet was awarded one star for adult protection and three stars for child protection.

It is fitted with ESC as standard, but has only two airbags, and the test of this model also highlighted significant structural concerns, including:

- The footwell area and bodysell were unstable and unable to withstand further loading.
- In the side-impact test, poor chest protection limited the adult protection rating to 1 star, while abdominal protection was rated adequate.

- The side pole test was not conducted because side head protection airbags are not fitted as standard.
- Child Occupant Protection: Both child dummies received full protection in the dynamic test, but the absence of 3-point belts in all seating positions, the lack of a passenger airbag disabling switch, and a low child restraint system (CRS) installation score resulted in a 3-star rating.

Kia's response

Kia South Africa said on Wednesday the one-star rating for adult occupant protection in the Kia Sonet LS model is specifically attributed to the absence of standard side curtain airbag protection in the entry-level specification of the model tested.

The company highlighted that the Sonet range meets all applicable South African legislative safety requirements as stipulated by the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS).

It said customers seeking enhanced occupant protection will find the Sonet EX+ and SX derivatives equipped with six airbags as standard.

Kia South Africa confirmed the Sonet LS+ will be introduced to the local line-up in the third quarter of this year, expanding the range with an additional derivative that offers six airbags as standard.

"Kia South Africa recognises the #SaferCarsForAfrica campaign's role in raising safety standards across the continent and, furthermore, welcomes independent assessment as a mechanism for accountability and continuous improvement across the industry," said Kia South Africa CEO Paul Turnbull.

European vs African safety standards

Ramagwede said South African motorists should exercise extreme caution when purchasing a new or used entry-level vehicle, as recent crash tests have shown a worrying trend: entry-level models on sale in South Africa often lack adequate crash safety.

He added that it is perhaps more worrying that very few of the vehicles tested offer safety ratings similar to those of the same models on sale abroad.

Global NCAP CEO Richard Woods said it is unacceptable that global manufacturers continue to sell cars in Africa with safety standards they would never offer in markets like Europe.

"Side head protection airbags should be standard on every new car, in every market. African motorists deserve the same life-saving protection as drivers in the rest of the world," he said.

Ramagwede added that the tests also show the significant difference that basic safety features such as side-impact airbags and electronic stability control can make.

"These features offer a major safety boost to any vehicle and, in most cases, can be added with only a marginal increase in vehicle price," he said.

Mantashe punts 60-day SA oil reserve policy

In a bid to respond to future shocks in the global oil markets.



Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, Gwede Mantashe, has punted a policy proposal to ramp up the country's strategic petroleum reserves to the equivalent of 60 days of net imports in both crude oil and refined products.

This is at least three times what the law currently mandates, at 21 days (or about 10 million barrels of crude oil). The law is partly designed to account for the time it takes for imports to land on South African shores.

The proposal comes as the disruption of global energy supply chains contributes to increased volatility in international fuel markets, placing pressure on fuel-importing countries, like South Africa.

In response, government developed the draft Strategic Petroleum Stocks Policy, which it says is now ready for cabinet consideration prior to publication for public comment.

The policy proposes a mixed stockholding model, under which the South African National Petroleum Company (SANPC) will maintain strategic reserves equivalent to 60 days.

Geopolitical tensions, including the effects of the war in Iran have exposed the risks associated with excessive dependence on imported refined petroleum products.

"The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has once again reminded us that energy security cannot be taken for granted," Mantashe told delegates attending the Fuels Industry Imbizo in Sandton on Wednesday.

"Events occurring thousands of kilometres away continue to affect fuel prices, supply chains, investment decisions, and economic stability across the globe."

He says South Africa has maintained fuel supply stability, but there are still areas on concern. This includes operators who increased fuel prices ahead of official price adjustments.

"While these actions were limited to a minority of participants, they undermined public confidence and tarnished the reputation of the broader industry," Mantashe warned, using the forum to talk frankly about the future of the industry, its competitiveness and sustainability.

The shocks to the oil markets have left South African consumers paying record prices for petrol, diesel and paraffin.

In 2024, Mantashe's department commissioned a comprehensive vulnerability assessment of South Africa's strategic petroleum stocks.

The study identified several areas requiring urgent attention, including the need to strengthen stockholding arrangements and increase domestic refining capacity.

The latest announcement is a continuation of this work. Mantashe says it represents a major step towards strengthening South Africa's resilience against future supply disruptions.

"South Africa cannot indefinitely remain a price taker in global energy markets. We must position ourselves to become producers where commercially viable resources exist," he added.

While the SANPC Bill is currently before Parliament, the company is already operational and actively participating in the sector.

Low strategic stock

Between December 2015 and January 2016, the state-owned Strategic Fuel Fund sold about 10 million barrels of strategic crude oil to commodity traders, in what's now been dubbed the "Oilgate". The transaction later became the subject of litigation, with the Western Cape High Court ruling the deal had been conducted unlawfully and without proper approval or oversight.

It also raised questions about South Africa's emergency reserves and governance around it.

At the last count, it seems that South Africa currently holds only about 7.7 million to 8 million barrels in its reserves.

According to a report by Wits University, the 8 million barrels would last only about 13 days against total liquid-fuels demand of around 600 000 barrels a day, or about 18 days if output from Sasol's coal-based output of 150 000 barrels a day was taken into account.

The report also raises concerns about the country's lack of inland storage capacity for refined products. Mantashe believes the policy proposals in the pipelines will address the outstanding issues in the process. **Moneyweb**

Tax practitioners call for compliance ahead of filing season



Tax practitioners have encouraged South Africans to avoid unnecessary delays and penalties as tax season approaches. They say people need to familiarise themselves with the tax system and understand their rights and responsibilities.

Many tax filing challenges arise from late submissions, inaccurate information and a lack of awareness about tax obligations.

Durban-based chartered accountant, Professor Dilip Garach says, "The tax season is upon us. I

mean, most people stress about tax purely because they don't organise themselves. So, I think it's most important to organize your tax records, and that can be done through a dedicated folder, either physical, or some people prefer doing it digitally."

"It's for the 2026 tax year. So, what do you mean by the 2026 tax year? This tax year commences on the 1st of March 2025, and it continues till the 28th of February 2026. So, that is the period upon which we are now reporting to the South African Revenue Service," explains Garach. **SABCNews**

Dj G-Brenda Proves It's Never Too Late To Follow Your Passion



By Bernell Simons

At 55 years old, Glynnis Brenda Lebitsa is breaking stereotypes, turning up the volume on life and proving that dreams have no expiry date.

Known behind the decks as DJ G-Brenda, this Heidedal-born nurse practitioner has spent nearly three decades caring for people through health-care and now she is bringing healing of a different kind to dance floors and gatherings across Bloemfontein through the power of music.

Lebitsa learned resilience, faith and the importance of family values.

She is a proud Christian and devoted wife, she describes herself as easy-going, fun-loving and someone who is always ready with a smile.

Professionally, Lebitsa is highly accomplished.

She qualified as a nurse in 1996 and went on to obtain several advanced qualifications through the University of the Free State. Today, she runs a successful private nursing practice specialising in Primary Healthcare and Occupational Healthcare, with a particular passion for sexual and reproductive health and child healthcare.

But music has always been her first love.

Long before she became a qualified DJ, she was the woman who always had music playing in the background. Her husband of 34 years quickly discovered her obsession with rhythm and dance when they first met.

"He would find me playing cassettes all day long and later CDs. When we went clubbing, I never wanted to leave the dance floor," she laughs.

Two years ago, she decided to take her passion seriously and enrolled in a DJ course at Bloem Beat Records. After completing the three-month programme, her husband surprised her with her first professional DJ set as a Mother's Day gift.

"Music is part of my soul. It heals me, calms me, relieves stress and brings back beautiful memories. I can listen to music every day, all day. I don't need a party or company. Music itself makes me happy, she said.

Her sets are a reflection of her diverse musical taste, blending Gospel, Old School Classics, R&B and Soul, Kwaito, Amapiano and Deep House. She believes great music has the ability to unite people regardless of age, race or background.

Like many local artists, Lebitsa has faced challenges in breaking into the industry. Competition is fierce and opportunities can be limited, particularly for emerging female DJs. Yet she refuses to be discouraged.

Over the next five years, she hopes to become a familiar name at weddings, house parties, corporate functions, sports events, birthday celebrations and family gatherings across the Free State

SAMA's Return to North West

By Katlego Mashwabi

Excitement and emotions are at an all-time high as South African Music Awards (SAMAs) return to the North West for their 32nd edition, which is South Africa's biggest music celebration.

This thrilling announcement was made by the North West MEC for the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture Galebekwe Tlthapi in a press statement.

Tlthapi expressed pride in the province's ability to host the SAMAs once again.

"It feels like just yesterday when we hosted the 28th instalment of the SAMAs here in the North West. This province has always been a proud and capable host, and we are ready once again to welcome the nation," she stated.

"The SAMAs were last held in the North West in 2022 and the return of the event will provide a significant financial boost for businesses in the tourism, entertainment, and hospitality sectors, she said.

A spokesperson for the Recording Industry of South Africa (RISA), Unati Gwija, says preparations are already underway and that stakeholder consultations are taking place behind the scenes.

"We have begun extensive stakeholder consultations in preparation for the SAMAs. There is a strong sense of excitement and unity as we return to the North West, a province that has proven itself to be an exceptional host," said Gwija.



Gwija says it is worth noting that the 31st SAMAs were held at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand, Johannesburg.

"The event returned to Gauteng for three years after being hosted in the North West for eight consecutive years.

"This has led to an ongoing tug of war over the location since the SAMAs were inaugurated in July 1995 at The Theatre on the Track in Midrand, Gwija said.

Mzansi Youth Choir shares what it was really like performing with Tyla at the Fifa World Cup opening ceremony

By Katlego Mashwabi

For a few unforgettable minutes before South Africa's Fifa World Cup opener against Mexico, the eyes of the world were on Tyla and the Mzansi Youth Choir.

As the South African National Anthem echoed around the packed stadium, millions of viewers watched as some of the country's brightest young performers stood proudly alongside the Grammy-winning star on one of sport's biggest stages.

Speaking to "Independent Media Lifestyle", members of the Mzansi Youth Choir said that the opportunity to perform alongside Tyla at the Fifa World Cup opening ceremony was a moment years in the making.

The excitement started long before they stepped onto the field. Zoliswa Gulwa recalled the moment that the choir learned that they would be performing with Tyla. "When we got the news, we actually had to guess who the artist was," she said with a laugh. "They only told us when we were on the way to the airport. It was such an amazing feeling. When we met Tyla on the first day, it felt like we had known her for a long time."

Performing at a Fifa World Cup opening ceremony was something many choir members never imagined would happen.

"It is such an honour," said Gulwa.

"For Fifa and Tyla's team to invite us to sing a prayer for our country and to stand united as South Africans means so much. We never thought we could achieve something like this. It shows that we are doing something right."

For choir member Linda Mlimi, the reality of the occasion only truly sank in when the group walked onto the field.

"I was thinking, this is the moment. It's finally here," said Mlimi.

"Walking onto that field knowing we were going to sing the national anthem before a World Cup match was incredible. We were praying for Bafana Bafana to win, but most importantly, we were there for our country."



The atmosphere inside the stadium is a memory that will last a lifetime.

"It felt amazing. The stadium was packed. It was a fun experience and such a privilege."

Beyond the performance itself, the trip to Mexico delivered plenty of memorable moments.

For Keneilwe Melato, nothing could top seeing Bafana Bafana up close before the match.

"My highlight was singing the national anthem and seeing our team on the field and how focused they were. You can't trade that for anything."

Tshegofatso Madibikanye found joy in connecting with local people.

"My highlight was meeting people in Mexico. People would stop us, take pictures and interact with us. That was really special."

For Simphiwe Nkosi, one surprise stood out above the rest.

"My highlight was finding out that we would be performing with Tyla. It was very inspiring and it really feels like a privilege."

Then came a confession many travellers can relate to. "And of course, the tacos," he laughed. "The food was amazing. But most importantly, represent-

ing South Africa." Music director Sidumo Nyamezele described the performance as a moment that belonged to every young person who has been part of the choir's journey.

"To stand on the field before a Fifa World Cup match and sing our national anthem for a global audience is an extraordinary honour," said Nyamezele.

"We are proud to carry the hopes, stories and talent of South Africa onto the world stage and to share this experience alongside Tyla."

The World Cup appearance is another chapter in the remarkable journey of the Mzansi Youth Choir.

Founded in 2003, the choir has grown into one of Africa's leading vocal groups. Their performances have taken them across Europe, North America, the Middle East and the rest of Africa.

Along the way, they have shared stages with some of the biggest names in music, including Beyoncé, Coldplay, Andrea Bocelli and Jon Batiste.

Yet despite performing at world-famous venues and global events, the choir remains focused on creating opportunities for young South Africans through music.

NE-YO comes back to South Africa

By Refilwe Mochoari

South Africans can look forward to unforgettable and spectacular RnB and Hip-Hop shows in October, with three-time Grammy award-winning hitmaker, NE-YO, making his much-anticipated return to the continent.

As part of his exciting international tour, NE-YO will perform live at the Grand Arena on 17 October in Cape Town and at the SunBet Arena on 18 October in Pretoria.

With NE-YO's illustrious music catalogue which amongst others includes his latest single, 'Miss Tundra' he has generated a combined total of 23 billion streams worldwide and a strong South African fan base.

In 2005, NE-YO's 'So Sick' hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and was certified quadruple-platinum.

Since then, he has earned a collection of global hits including 'Sexy Love', 'Closer', 'Because of You', 'Miss Independent' and 'Push Back' featuring Bebe Rexha and Stefflon Don.

NE-YO has also proven to be as powerful with his pen as he is in the recording studio and on stage, penning much-loved hits like Rihanna's 'Unfaithful', 'Russian Roulette' and 'Take a Bow' along with Beyoncé's 2006 breakup anthem 'Irreplaceable' and songs for artists such as Jennifer Hudson, Usher, Carrie Underwood, Celine Dion and Mario, among others. The multi-hyphenate artist also leveraged his platform as a musician to pivot into acting.

His film and television credits include STARZ's 'BMF', NBC's 'World of Dance', Netflix's 'Dance Monsters', 'Empire', 'Stomp the Yard', 'Save the Last Dance', 'Battle: Los Angeles', George Lucas' 'Red Tails', 'The Wiz Live!', STARZ's 'Step Up:



High Water', 'Hip Hop Family Christmas Wedding' and 'The Sound of Christmas'.

Vertex Events Executive Director, Thato Segale says NE-YO is currently gearing up to explore a new musical frontier and is preparing to release his country-inspired album, 'Highway 79' on July 10th.

"Giving the audience a chance to experience a talented and respected artist such as NE-YO is a great pleasure for our team. We look forward to producing live shows of a great stature that will create end-

less talkability. "Our vision to bring timeless music to the fans will once again happen with hard work, dedication, and precision, so get your tickets now", said Segale.

Segale added that NE-YO Live In South Africa is going to bring fans together for a celebration of timeless music. Tickets will be available for purchase on Webtickets - www.webtickets.co.za and at Pick'n Pay stores nationwide, priced from 950. Gates will open at 6PM on show days.

'The Foreign Familiar' Opens at Magugu House



Magugu House Cape Town, based at the Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel, has announced the opening of its second exhibition, The Foreign Familiar.

Co-curated by Thebe Magugu and Julia Buchanan, and produced by Buchanan & Co, the exhibition will be on view at Magugu House Cape Town until 27 August 2026. Bringing together works by Mary Sibande and Wim Botha, The Foreign Familiar explores the afterlives of objects, customs and visual systems introduced through colonial encounter, exploring how inherited forms are absorbed, transformed and re-authored within Southern African cultural life.

Through sculpture, printmaking and material intervention, the exhibition considers how symbols once tied to empire – from uniforms and religious iconography to leisure traditions and textiles – evolve through repetition, adaptation and ritual into deeply personal and culturally embedded forms.

A central feature of the exhibition is a new collaborative sculpture by Thebe Magugu and Mary Sibande. The work brings together a Victorian silhouette and Basotho blanket textile to explore tensions between inheritance and reinvention, authority and self-authorship. Worn by Sibande's iconic figure Sophie, the sculpture reflects on how colonial remnants can be transformed into contemporary expressions of identity and agency.

Sibande's presentation further expands on themes of leisure, imagination and Black interiority through intimate works on paper depicting Sophie in scenes historically associated with colonial privilege and exclusion. Meanwhile, Botha's sculptural works destabilise classical European forms and symbols of authority through fragmentation, material contradiction and reinterpretation.

Coinciding with the exhibition, Magugu House will also present Thebe Magugu's new Mafeteng capsule collection within the showroom space.

Named after the Lesotho town from which the Magugu family originates, the collection draws on the Basotho blanket as both material and metaphor – reflecting on its origins as a colonial gift and its evolution into a powerful emblem of Basotho identity.

Through contemporary reinterpretation, Mafeteng explores themes of ownership, continuity and cultural transformation central to The Foreign Familiar. - Buchanan & Co

Jessica Nkosi-Dlamini's Highly Anticipated Return To TV

By Katlego Mashwabi

It has been a minute since Jessica Nkosi-Dlamini graced TV screens. The media personality has returned to host a new show on Mzansi Magic titled "Make Life Good".

On the show, which is set to air on Thursday, June 11, Nkosi-Dlamini will reportedly guide everyday heroes as they return to the schools and places that shaped them, giving back to the organisations that transformed their lives.

Now established achievers, they are said to be paying it forward in fruitful ways.

The actress and presenter took to her Instagram to announce the news.

"NEW SHOW ALERT!!! Returning to TV with a brand new show where we get to make a difference in the lives of others, changing lives and transforming spaces. Shooting this show has been so fulfilling. Catch 'Make Life Good' tomorrow...Thursday at 7pm on," she wrote. Many of her industry peers and fans flooded her comment section with excitement and congratulatory messages as they had all anticipated her return on their screens.

"Beeeeeer waiting for you to return!!!! Yess mama," @knaomin wrote. "This is so so beautiful to see Congratulations, and I cannot wait to watch," said reigning Miss SA Qhawe Mazaleni.

Before her break from TV, Nkosi-Dlamini had a busy and varied career as both a presenter and an actress. She started presenting in 2017 on BET's "A-List" and went on to work on big shows like the Channel O Music Video Awards, the MTV Africa Music Awards and V-Entertainment.

She also appeared on "Lip Sync Battle Africa" and hosted "Our Perfect Wedding". At the same time, she was a regular on scripted TV shows.

Her acting career began in 2013 as Qondisile in Mzansi Magic's "Isibaya". She then played Eve in "Aye-aye" in 2015 and starred as Thando Sebata in "The Queen" starting in 2020.

"Make Life Good" will air on Thursdays on Mzansi Magic (DStv channel 161) at 7pm.

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WEEKEND Gig Guide
ALL OVER BLOEMFONTEIN FROM 12 - 16 JUNE 2026

- GROOVY FRIDAYS (FRIDAY - 12 JUNE 2026)
- TONIQUILLE SATURDAYS (SATURDAY - 13 JUNE 2026)
- CENTRAL LIFESTYLE
- MONATE SATURDAYS (SATURDAY - 13 JUNE 2026)
- SECHABA LOUNGE
- VEGAS SATURDAY (SATURDAY - 13 JUNE 2026)
- VEGAS CLUB
- WE R 1 (MONDAY - 15 JUNE 2026)
- STREET CORNER BRAAI
- STOCKVEL MBAOLA EXPERIENCE (TUESDAY - 16 JUNE 2026)
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HEALTH

Men delaying mental health support until crisis point, psychiatrists warn

Psychiatrists are warning that many men delay seeking help for mental health conditions, often waiting until symptoms have reached crisis levels before accessing support.

According to the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP), while women are more frequently diagnosed with conditions such as depression and anxiety, men are significantly less likely to seek professional help.

Research shows that one in eight men will experience depression and one in five will experience anxiety during their lifetime. However, mental health challenges in men often go unrecognised or untreated, frequently presenting through anger, withdrawal, substance abuse, aggression or risk-taking behaviour rather than more commonly recognised symptoms.

SASOP member Dr Gagu Matsebula said men are less likely to engage with healthcare services, including mental healthcare, even when these services are available.

"Men are less likely to attend preventative healthcare visits, less likely to seek help early and more likely to present when their condition has already progressed significantly," he said.

He said this reluctance is often driven by social and cultural expectations that encourage men to appear strong, self-reliant and emotionally controlled.

According to Matsebula, many men experience what mental health professionals describe as "restrictive emotionality" – a tendency to suppress emotions because vulnerability is often viewed as incompatible with traditional ideas of masculinity.

As a result, mental health conditions may present differently in men.

"The tools traditionally used to diagnose depression and anxiety do not always account for how these conditions present in men," he said.



Symptoms may include irritability, aggression, emotional withdrawal, substance abuse, reckless behaviour, poor impulse control and excessive work habits. Untreated mental health conditions can affect relationships, work performance, parenting, physical health and overall quality of life. Men may also turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol abuse, gambling, drug use and social isolation. Globally, men account for the majority of deaths linked to homicide, road traffic injuries and suicide, while consuming almost four times more pure alcohol than women.

Matsebula said these trends are closely linked to poor emotional regulation, untreated trauma, substance abuse, chronic stress and social isolation.

The economic impact is also significant. A 2023 analysis estimated that South Africa loses about R161 billion annually due to unaddressed mental health conditions through reduced productivity, absenteeism and lower workforce participation.

"Mental health is not only a healthcare issue. It is also a workplace issue, a family issue, and an economic issue," he said.

Matsebula called for more open conversations

about emotional wellbeing and encouraged families, workplaces, schools, sports clubs, faith-based organisations and communities to help reduce stigma around men's mental health.

He advised loved ones to approach emotionally withdrawn men with empathy rather than judgment, noting that support often comes through listening, validating feelings and offering practical assistance. He stressed that seeking help should not be viewed as a sign of weakness.

"Experiencing anxiety, depression, emotional distress or burnout does not make a man less resilient, less capable or less masculine. It simply means he is human," he said.

Warning signs that may require professional support include persistent irritability, emotional withdrawal, changes in sleep or appetite, loss of interest in activities, increased substance use, hopelessness, anxiety, fatigue, difficulty concentrating and risk-taking behaviour.

Treatment options can include counselling, psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, support groups, lifestyle interventions and, where necessary, medication. SASOP is also calling for greater investment in mental healthcare, public awareness campaigns and community-based support services. South Africa currently allocates about 5% of its public health budget to mental health services, below the 10% to 15% recommended for lower- and middle-income countries.

"The message men need to hear is simple: speaking up is not weakness. Reaching out is not failure. Mental health conditions are treatable, and seeking support early can change and save lives," Matsebula said. For mental health support, contact the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) Suicide Crisis Helpline on 0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 for assistance. loL

Mozambik Spaces Invade Bloemfontein



By Katlego Mashwabi

A few months back anticipation attacked Bloemfontein when word of the famous Afro-Porto restaurant Mozambik was coming to town. Saturday came and all roads led to Emoya Estate.

Mozambik is a Portuguese cuisine restaurant by Chef Brett Michielin. The restaurant opened on 5 June at Groenvel, Emoya Estate in, Bloemfontein.

Founded nineteen years ago in Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal, Mozambik now has thirty-five franchises nationwide and seven spots internationally spread across Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, and the SADC region.

The restaurant is famous for serving Portuguese cuisine and exclusive sauces from Chef Brett's recipe book.

His signature spices and bracings have over time become the signature taste of the restaurant.

The Bloemfontein launch sparked vivid taste buds, with only a week in operation, it is ranking at number sixty-six of one hundred and forty-three restaurants in Bloemfontein on TripAdvisor. The spaces boast of beachfront feels and island décor.

Brett Michielin is a Swiss-trained chef, who graduated from the Swiss Hotel Management School. He was initially working at the Ocean Basket group and resigned to join Luis as a chef. The idea of the restaurant ignited from four friends who walked into a restaurant and had a conversation about opening a restaurant, from the conversation Michielin approached the original owner of Mozambik, Luis Ferreira to partner up and when the owner left, he went on to partner up with Ryan Steward.

"I've always loved Portuguese and Mozambican cuisine, so I asked the founder and owner Luis Ferreira if he was looking for a partner.

"He said no, but called me back two days later and said he had changed his mind," said Brett.

FASHION

What fans will really wear to the 2026 Fifa World Cup

Football fashion heading into the 2026 Fifa World Cup is sitting firmly in that sweet spot where sportswear, streetwear and lifestyle dressing blur into one very wearable aesthetic.

It is less about looking like a traditional fan and more about looking like you "just happened" to support a team while still serving as a full outfit and probably posing like you are on your way to a brand campaign.

Across stadiums and fan zones, sports-luxe and elevated athleisure are expected to dominate.

Think lightweight trackuits, relaxed-fit jerseys, technical jackets and oversized hoodies that can survive a stadium queue, a weather change and a questionable half-time decision.

Brands are continuing to push football culture straight into everyday wardrobes with retro-inspired jerseys, terrace-style track tops and archive reissues that make everyone act like they were alive in the 90s and "remember these".

Denim jeans are very

much part of stadium dressing too. In stadium settings, they lean practical, relaxed and slightly lived-in, with baggy and straight-leg fits doing most of the work.

They are the reliable middle ground between sporty and styled, usually paired with national jerseys, hoodies and sneakers like they have always belonged there.

Denim is not the only casual staple expected to make an appearance in the stands. Track pants remain a match-day favourite thanks to their comfort and versatility, while denim three-quarter pants, known as "manga" in Cape Town, continue to hold their own among fans who prefer a more relaxed look.

Paired with comfortable sneakers or sturdy lace-up boots with chunky soles, these pieces reflect the reality of World Cup dressing.

Footwear stays focused on comfort-first sneakers, while layering is minimal with light jackets or team merchandise worn as-is.

Sunglasses are present but more practical

than stylish, usually for sun protection rather than attitude.

Sweaters and layering pieces in stadium looks are kept simple.

Instead of heavy knits that belong in another lifetime, expect oversized sweatshirts, light crewnecks and knitted polos styled over jerseys or tied casually around the shoulders like you have somewhere important to be after the match.

Outside the stadium, the same pieces shift into full streetwear mode, where styling leads and football becomes the theme.

Jerseys are reworked into oversized fashion pieces, cropped tops or layered looks paired with baggy denim, mini skirts and cargo trousers.

Retro kits are worn like vintage fashion drops rather than sports merchandise.

And comfort does not mean fans are abandoning fashion. Mini skirts paired with team shirts are expected to be a popular choice, while cowboy boots continue their reign as a festival and sporting-event favourite.

In short, the 2026 Fifa World Cup fashion reality is heat-led, comfort-first and quietly self-aware.

Layers will exist, but mostly as flexible pieces in a day built around movement, weather and the constant performance of looking effortlessly put together. loL

New York mayor Zohran Mamdani reflects on living in South Africa, praises 2010 World Cup



As the countdown to the 2026 Fifa World Cup gathers pace, New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani has taken football fans on a nostalgic trip back to South Africa's historic 2010 tournament, describing it as the gold standard for everything a World Cup should be.

Speaking during events linked to New York's preparations for the World Cup, Mamdani reflected on the unforgettable atmosphere that swept across South Africa 16 years ago.

"The sound of endless vuvuzelas, the freedom of playing beach football on the sand, the smell of meat cooking on the braai..." he said.

Mamdani channelled the unforgettable energy of the 2010 South Africa World Cup to set the stage for New York's next generation of football fans.

His comments quickly attracted attention online, particularly among South Africans who still regard the tournament as one of the country's proudest moments on the world stage.

For Mamdani, the memories are far more than football highlights.

He fondly recalled the vibrant fan festivals in Durban and spending time playing beach football while soaking up the excitement surrounding the tournament.

According to the mayor, the experience left a lasting impression and helped deepen his love for the game.

Mamdani was just 18 years old when South Africa hosted the 2010 Fifa World Cup, becoming the first African nation to stage football's biggest event.

The tournament featured iconic moments, packed stadiums and an atmosphere unlike anything football had seen before. For many young fans around

the world, including Mamdani, it became a defining sporting memory.

The mayor has often spoken about how the tournament broadened his global perspective and showed the power of sport to unite people from different cultures, languages and backgrounds.

In recent remarks about New York's role as a host city for the 2026 tournament, he described South Africa's World Cup as the benchmark for global unity, fan engagement and unforgettable experiences.

Born in Kampala, Uganda, Mamdani spent much of his childhood moving between countries, South Africa being one of them, and cultures, before eventually settling in the United States. He is the son of acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair and academic Mahmood Mamdani.

He often cites his childhood in South Africa as a major influence on his worldview and political outlook.

After moving to Cape Town with his family in 1996, he attended St George's Grammar School in Mowbray and regularly worshipped at Claremont Main Road Mosque.

Living in post-apartheid South Africa exposed him to the realities of inequality at a young age, experiences that would later shape his approach to public service and social justice.

Mamdani has said that those years taught him that justice must be tangible and meaningful in people's everyday lives.

Like millions of football supporters across the globe, he witnessed South Africa showcase its culture, hospitality and passion to a worldwide audience.

FOOD Recipes



Mustard-stuffed chicken

PREPARE 10 min

COOK 20 min

SERVE Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 125g ball mozzarella torn into small pieces
- 50g strong cheddar grated
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 4 skinless boneless chicken breast fillets
- 8 smoked streaky bacon

Method

- Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6.
- Mix the cheeses and mustard together.
- Cut a slit into the side of each chicken breast, then stuff with the mustard mixture.
- Wrap each stuffed chicken breast with 2 bacon rashers – not too tightly, but enough to hold the chicken together.
- Season, place on a baking sheet and roast for 20-25 mins.

This is so good we'd be surprised if this chicken fillet recipe doesn't become a firm favourite. Save it to your My Good Food collection and enjoy.

SPORT



Chasing Redemption...South Africa now shifts focus to a crucial must-win encounter against Czechia next week Thursday. Picture: Supplied

Bafana Bruised, But Not Out

Disastrous red cards sink World Cup opener for the national side, but redemption beckons against Czechia in Atlanta

By Gomolemo Winkel

Mexico made a winning start to their 2026 FIFA World Cup campaign with a convincing 2-0 victory over South Africa in the opening Group A match at Estadio Azteca on Thursday evening.

Goals from Julian Quinones and Raul Jimenez secured all three points for the hosts, while Bafana Bafana endured a frustrating night marked by costly mistakes and two second-half red cards.

Despite the opening-night heartbreak in Mexico City, the national side retains an immediate lifeline to revive their tournament hopes. South Africa now shifts focus to a crucial must-win encounter against Czechia in Atlanta on 18 June, where redemption beckons for Hugo Broos' men.

Mexico threatened early and nearly opened the scoring in the fifth minute when Jimenez connected with a cross from the right. South African captain and goalkeeper Ronwen Williams produced an excellent low save to keep the scores level.

However, Williams was beaten just four minutes later after a catastrophic defensive lapse gifted Mexico the early lead. Midfielder, Sphophelo Sithole, lost possession on the edge of his own penalty area, allowing Quinones to pounce and fire a low shot through the goalkeeper's legs.

South Africa struggled heavily to create meaningful opportunities and only registered their first attempt on goal in the 38th minute. Lyle Foster rose to meet a cross from the left flank but directed his header wide of the target.

Mexico continued to dominate and came agonisingly close to extending their advantage before the half-time break. Williams was again called into action to deny Jimenez, while Quinones struck the base of the post after finding space inside the area.

Bafana Bafana's only effort on target in the first half came through a speculative long-range strike from defender, Mbekezile Mbokazi. Mexico goalkeeper, Raul Rangel, comfortably collected the ball to ensure the hosts took a 1-0 lead into half-time.

South Africa's hopes of a second-half comeback suffered a major setback shortly after the re-

start. Sithole's difficult evening worsened when he brought down Brian Gutierrez just outside the penalty area while acting as the last defender.

Referee Wilton Sampaio showed a straight red card for denying an obvious goalscoring opportunity, reducing Bafana Bafana to ten men. Mexico capitalised on their numerical advantage midway through the second half.

Roberto Alvarado delivered a dangerous cross into the box and Jimenez rose highest to head home Mexico's second goal. This effectively put the result beyond doubt as South Africa struggled to contain the rampant hosts.

Bafana Bafana's discipline problems escalated late in the match when substitute, Themba Zwane, was sent off following a VAR review. Zwane was dismissed for striking Alvarado in the face, reducing South Africa to nine men.

Mexico also finished the match with ten players after defender Cesar Montes received a red card during injury time. However, the hosts comfortably saw out the victory and could arguably have won by a much larger margin.

NWU Secure NFD Promotion

Noble Boys secure historic NFD promotion despite heartbreaking penalty shootout defeat in ABC Motsepe final



By Gomolemo Winkel

North-West University (NWU) have officially secured their spot in professional football after gaining automatic promotion to the Motsepe Foundation Championship, despite suffering a heartbreaking 5-4 penalty shootout defeat to Hope FC.

While the Western Cape side walked away with the tournament trophy following a 1-1 draw in Mthatha on Sunday, the university side achieved their primary objective of climbing up to the National First Division (NFD) for the 2026/27 season.

The promotional achievement marks a milestone for university sports, earning high praise from University Sports South Africa (USSA) Football.

In a statement issued by the association, USSA Football Chairperson Katleho Lechoo commended the team, affectionately known as the Noble Boys, for continuing to inspire aspiring footballers.

"He further expressed the association's pride in NWU Soccer Institute's accomplishment, highlighting the significance of the achievement for university football and the broader football community," Lechoo stated.

The final itself was a high-octane showcase of the amateur talent heading to the professional ranks, though NWU had to fight from behind. Hope FC defender Dean Solomons rose highest to power home an early first-half header from a corner kick to put the Western Cape outfit ahead.

The early setback forced the university side to show immense character as they gradually dictated the tempo and controlled midfield transitions. The Noble Boys aggressively pushed numbers forward, pinning the Western Cape outfit deep into their own half for the

majority of the second period.

NWU's attacking persistence finally rewarded them in the dying minutes of regulation time when Reatlegile Khosithebe capitalised on a costly defensive misunderstanding between the Hope FC goalkeeper and his defender. Khosithebe clinically slotted home the dramatic equaliser to send the match straight into a tense penalty shootout, though luck ultimately deserted the university side in the sudden-death rounds.

Reflecting on the match, NWU coach Nkosi Malgas expressed immense pride in the promotion while acknowledging the harsh lessons of tournament football. He noted that his young squad should have capitalised on their second-half dominance to win the tie before it even reached the lottery of spot-kicks.

"These are young kids, they will have to learn from this situation because we are not supposed to even have gone to penalties," Malgas said after the match.

"With so many opportunities we could have scored, but when it is not meant to be, it is not meant to be," he added.

The promotional achievement also earned immense praise from the opposition camp after the final whistle. Hope FC mentor Dylan Dean lauded NWU as a fantastic and exceptionally talented side that pushed his championship team to their absolute defensive limits.

"They are a fantastic team, they have got a lot of talent, and I wish them all the best for the NFD season coming up," Dean stated.

With the gruelling promotional playoffs now concluded, the Noble Boys will quickly shift their focus to the boardroom and the training pitch. The university side must now prepare the squad for the rigorous demands of life in the professional ranks next season.

North West Comrades Runners Boosted

By Gomolemo Winkel

The North West Department of Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation (ACSR) has stepped in to provide full administrative and logistical backing to 172 of the province's athletes ahead of the 2026 Comrades Marathon.

The state department will fully fund transport, accommodation, meals, and specialised medical support to ensure the provincial contingent is thoroughly prepared for the gruelling race on Sunday, 14 June.

This critical support aims to sustain the province's elite distance-running legacy at the world-renowned 90-kilometre ultra-marathon between Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Defending champion Tete Dijana leads the powerhouse regional squad as he seeks another historic victory in what is widely celebrated as the Ultimate Human Race.

ACSR spokesperson Shuping Sebolewe highlight-

ed that many of the province's most successful Comrades runners have emerged from impoverished backgrounds to achieve world-class status.

He noted that these athletes consistently overcome systemic barriers to dominate the prestigious international field.

"These athletes often come from previously disadvantaged areas, where opportunities and exposure are limited," Sebolewe said.

The investment follows a spectacular showing in the previous edition, where North West runners firmly established the province as the capital of South African ultra-marathon running.

The department expects a similarly dominant performance this year, with the bulk of the elite field returning to compete.

"In 2025 the province dominated the top finishers with 5 athletes placing in the top ten with Tete Dijana (1st), Edward Mthibeni (4th), Joseph Manyedi (5th) and Gordon Lesetedi (9th)," Sebolewe noted.

The 2026 showpiece marks a monumental double



milestone as the 99th edition of the historic race and the 50th official Up Run.

Runners will tackle the gruelling uphill route from

the coast to the interior, driven by a localised emotional rallying cry from race organisers.

"This year's route will start in Durban and finish in

Pietermaritzburg.

"Organisers have adopted the campaign slogan 'Ska Fela Moya' - a Setswana phrase meaning 'Don't Give Up,'" Sebolewe stated.

North West MEC for Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation, Virginia Tlhipi, sent a powerful send-off message to the squad, urging them to maintain the province's fierce competitive reputation.

She shattered expectations by promising that the entire provincial government stands firmly behind their journey.

"The Department is behind you 100%. We wish you the best of luck.

"Go show them what the North West Province is made of," Tlhipi said.

Originally founded in 1921 by World War I veteran Vic Clapham, the race was created to honour fallen South African soldiers.

Today, it has evolved into the world's oldest and most prestigious ultra-marathon, serving as a supreme test of human endurance and determination.