



POWER OUTAGE FORCES TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF HIGH COURT

MOTSOALEDI: SOUTH AFRICA SHARES LIMITED HEALTH RESOURCES



EDUCATION SECTOR GETS BIGGEST SLICE OF THE PIE IN MPUMALANGA

Limpopo Tables R95.856 Billion Budget Focused On Infrastructure, Jobs And Service Delivery



Kgabo Mahoi delivers the 2026 Limpopo Provincial Budget at the Legislature in Lebowakgomo, outlining government's R90.4 billion spending plan focused on infrastructure development, economic growth and improved service. Picture Credit: Timeless News

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LIBERTY COAL SUCCESSFULLY RECOMMISSIONS DRAGLINE FOLLOWING MAJOR REFURBISHMENT



Liberty Coal Team from left to right: Mpumelelo Mashifane (Head of Communications); Emmanuel Gwata (GM Technical); Mike Elliot (General Manager); Sihle Ntuli (Business Development); Christiaan Joubert (CEO Liberty Mining); Delmaine Spies (CFO Liberty Coal); Ulrich Bester (Director: Capital Projects); Hlayiseka Chauke (CEO Liberty Coal); Peter Nordin (COO Liberty Coal) Picture Credit: Supplied

By Thulane Madalane

Middelburg – Liberty Coal has successfully recommissioned a key dragline at its Optimum Colliery following the completion of a comprehensive refurbishment and technical restoration programme valued at nearly R500 million.

The Marion 8200 dragline, one of the largest of its kind in the world, features a boom measuring just over 100 metres and can excavate coal to depths of nearly 80 metres, lifting approximately 135 tonnes of material in a single scoop. The refurbishment included the installation of a state-of-the-art operator's cab, integrated offsite camera systems, and advanced performance and engine monitoring technology.

The recommissioning marks a significant operational milestone in Liberty Coal's efforts to restore and strengthen mining operations at Optimum Colliery.

"This is a huge milestone in Liberty Coal's plan to achieve full operational capacity of 1 million tons per month at Optimum Colliery. The increase in production rates will directly translate into the creation of more jobs at the mine," said Hlayiseka Chauke the CEO Liberty Coal.

As part of the refurbishment programme, structural integrity assessments and non-destructive testing (NDT) were conducted on major load-bearing components to verify compliance with design specifications and operational safety standards.

The dragline's bucket system, rigging components, and fairlead assemblies were also inspected and refurbished to ensure optimal digging performance and reduce wear during high-volume overburden removal.

In addition, the project included servicing of the walking mechanism, slew system, and associated lubrication systems to restore full operational reliability.

Recommissioning activities were carried out in accordance with Liberty Coal's

engineering standards and mine safety protocols, including comprehensive functional testing of the hoist, drag, and swing systems before returning the machine to service.

The dragline will play a central role in Liberty Coal's planned surface mining operations, enabling large-scale overburden stripping to expose underlying coal seams. Following its return to operation after years of neglect and vandalism, Liberty Coal expects significantly improved stripping ratios and efficiencies in overburden removal cycles, supporting increased run-of-mine (ROM) coal production once fully deployed.

"The project required careful engineering oversight, specialist technical expertise, and close coordination between maintenance, engineering, and operations teams. Returning this asset to service strengthens our stripping capacity and supports long-term production objectives," said Peter Nordin, Chief Operating Officer at Liberty Coal.

The refurbishment programme was executed through collaboration between Liberty Coal's in-house engineering and maintenance teams and specialist contractors with expertise in large-scale mining equipment. All work was completed under strict safety and quality assurance procedures.

"Our goal is to mine efficiently to ensure the business is sustainable and that the jobs created at the mine are also sustainable. The refurbishment of the dragline demonstrates Liberty Coal's commitment to investing in the mine and in the future," Chauke said.

Liberty Coal continues to invest in sustaining capital projects and asset reliability initiatives to ensure its mining fleet operates at optimal performance while maintaining the highest safety and environmental standards.

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LIBERTY COAL FINALISES STAKEHOLDER FORUM ELECTIONS



Liberty Coal Management and its key partners concludes a successful election of Stakeholder Forum. Picture Credit: Supplied

By Thulane Madalane

Middelburg – Owner and operator of Optimum Colliery, Liberty Coal (Pty) Ltd (Liberty Coal), is proud to announce the formal establishment of its Stakeholder Forum, in line with the mining charter and its commitment to conduct its operations in an environmentally and socially sustainable way. Following a period of significant change within the company, as Liberty Coal advances its plans to recapitalise and re-operationalise the Optimum Colliery, the company recognised the importance of establishing a fully representative Stakeholder Forum. The forum is designed to ensure meaningful community participation and broad engagement with all of Liberty Coal's stakeholders. These include our host communities, traditional councils, NGO's and other interest groups such as people with disabilities.

Liberty Coal's Community Outreach Programme attended a total of eight community engagement meetings hosted over a period of two weeks in community halls all over the Steve Tshwete region. This direct community contact allowed our Stakeholder Management department to engage directly with community facing stakeholder issues as they relate to each individual host community in order to better understand our host communities' needs. Liberty Coal CEO, Hlayiseka Chauke, described the Community Outreach Programme as "an earnest effort to establish and entrench our relationship with the people of Steve Tshwete". "Liberty Coal's approach to mining is different, we want to work directly with our communities so that we structure our social

plans based on their needs, not through third parties and the like. We intend to make social investments that directly change the lives of the people who make our operations sustainable" said Chauke. The Stakeholder Forum has been established to create a platform for the mine and the community to engage on issues affecting the community, the environment, social responsibility and social

investment. Following the filing of its Social and Labour Plan for the period 2025 -2029, Liberty Coal undertook to appropriately and democratically reconstitute its Stakeholder Forum. The forum serves as an important mechanism to support the company's unique ownership structure, which includes a 5% shareholding in Liberty Coal held by the Liberty Coal Optimum Colliery Community Development Trust.

"This structure is a direct bridge between the mine and the community" Chauke added.

Following its election, the Stakeholder Forum held its first meeting on Friday 06 March 2026, wherein members constituted themselves into various committees, including employment, skills development and enterprise development. The Forum also adopted its terms of reference and tabled its schedule of meetings for the coming year.

"We are optimistic that the establishment and finalisation of the new Stakeholder Forum will contribute to social stability in our area of operations and foster a spirit of partnership and inclusivity in and around the broader Steve Tshwete region" said Chauke.

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POWER OUTAGE FORCES TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF GAUTENG HIGH COURT IN PRETORIA

By Aisha Zardad

Pretoria – The Gauteng High Court in Pretoria temporarily halted operations on Monday due to a power outage affecting the court building and surrounding areas in the central business district. Members of the legal fraternity and members of the public arrived at the court in the morning to find the building in complete darkness, with the doors closed. Security personnel stationed at the entrance informed those gathered outside that it was unclear when electricity would be restored. The Office of the Chief Justice (OCJ) later confirmed the temporary closure, saying the power failure had disrupted operations at the Pretoria division of the High Court. The OCJ said parties affected by the closure would be contacted regarding alternative

arrangements for matters scheduled on the court roll for the day. Court officials have been in contact with the City of Tshwane, and efforts to restore power are currently underway. Although the court building has a generator, it was not operational at the time of the outage. A court official waiting outside the building indicated that the generator had reportedly not been working for several years. When asked about the issue, the OCJ said no further comment would be provided. Members of the legal fraternity waited outside the court for more than an hour in the hope that the City of Tshwane would resolve the power problem quickly. Some indicated they had managed to postpone their matters through the court registrar, while others opted to return on Tuesday to address their cases.

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LIMPOPO TABLES R95.856 BILLION BUDGET FOCUSED ON INFRASTRUCTURE, JOBS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

By Ndivhuwo Mukwevho and Aisha Zardad

Limpopo – The Limpopo Provincial Government has tabled a R95.856 billion provincial budget for the 2026/27 financial year, outlining plans to rebuild infrastructure, stimulate economic growth, and improve service delivery across the province. Presenting the provincial budget at the Limpopo Legislature in Lebowakgomo on Tuesday, MEC for Finance Kgabo Mahoai said the budget seeks to convert commitments made during the State of the Province Address into funded programmes. He acknowledged that residents often question how government will finance its plans. He acknowledged that residents often question how government will finance its plans. “These pronouncements are good... but where will the money to fund them come from? So... how much money do we actually have?” Mahoai explained that the provincial budget represents the point where policy promises must align with available resources. “This budget... is where vision meets reality, and where we should make sure that the promises made to the people of Limpopo are fully funded and kept.” The budget follows the priorities set out by Limpopo Premier Dr. Phophi Ramathuba, which include economic development, job creation, infrastructure upgrades, and recovery from recent flood damage. The R95.856 billion provincial budget will fund the delivery of services across all departments, while balancing rising service delivery demands and constrained public finances. Mahoai noted that provincial departments often compete for larger allocations, but limited resources require careful distribution. He referred to an African proverb to illustrate the challenge of sharing limited funds across competing needs. “Bana ba motho ba ngwathelana hlogwana ya tsie... meaning as children of the same parent we can share as little as a locust’s head.” “It is our collective responsibility to ensure these funds are directed towards maximum positive impact, driving progress and prosperity for all our communities. This budget reflects challenges but responsible choices,” said Mahoai. The MEC said the provincial treasury must ensure that the budget supports government’s priorities while

maintaining financial discipline. Most of the province’s funding continues to come from transfers from national government, particularly through the equitable share allocation of R78.951 billion, conditional grants amounting to R13.810 billion, and provincial own revenue expected to generate R2.240 billion. Infrastructure development and maintenance remain a major priority in the provincial budget, with a total infrastructure allocation of R216 billion for the 2026/27 financial year, forming part of an MTEF infrastructure plan of R70.3 billion. Government plans to focus particularly on repairing roads, bridges, and other infrastructure damaged by floods earlier this year, especially in areas such as Vhembe and Mopani districts. Funding allocations have been set aside to support reconstruction efforts as well as longer-term infrastructure improvements across the province. Infrastructure spending will also support broader economic activity by improving transport networks and enabling easier movement of goods and services. A significant portion of the funding will go toward road maintenance and upgrades, with R3.020 billion earmarked for roads maintenance, R2.040 billion for infrastructure upgrades, and R2.496 billion for capital transfers, mainly supporting housing projects. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure will receive R4.809 billion for infrastructure delivery and maintenance, while education infrastructure will receive R1.914 billion, health infrastructure R1.009 billion, and CoGHSTA R1.043 billion. “With regards to CoGHSTA funds have been strategically reprioritised from the human settlements development grant to bolster the informal settlements upgrading partnership grant, with the aim of improving living conditions in informal settlements,” he said. Provincial authorities believe improved infrastructure will play a key role in attracting investment and supporting economic growth. The social cluster, which includes education, health, and social development, continues to receive the largest portion of the provincial budget. The Department of Education will receive R38.7 billion, supporting schools, teachers, and learner programmes. The Department of Health is allocated R26.4 billion, with an

additional R90.911 million linked to performance incentives. The Department of Social Development will receive R2.476 billion to support vulnerable communities, including children, older persons, and people with disabilities. Funding will support infrastructure, learning materials, healthcare services, social welfare programmes, and initiatives aimed at improving outcomes and creating job opportunities. The Infrastructure Cluster, led by the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, will receive R7.5 billion in total. These funds will support: * Maintenance and upgrading of provincial roads * Rebuilding flood-damaged infrastructure Development of public facilities such as government buildings * Broader infrastructure investment aimed at supporting economic growth A large portion of the funding will go toward road maintenance and rehabilitation projects to improve connectivity between rural communities and economic centres. The department will also receive disaster-related funding to help restore infrastructure damaged by recent severe weather events. The economic cluster, including departments responsible for economic development, agriculture, tourism, and transport, will receive several billion rand to strengthen Limpopo’s productive sectors. The Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism will receive R2.2 billion to support programmes aimed at attracting investment, promoting tourism, and supporting small businesses. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is allocated R2.3 billion, funding agricultural support programmes, farmer development initiatives, and projects aimed at strengthening food security. The Department of Transport and Community Safety will receive R2.5 billion, aimed at road safety programmes, traffic law enforcement, and transport infrastructure initiatives. Government plans to support economic growth through programmes that encourage business development, investment promotion, and tourism expansion, with continued support for small businesses and emerging entrepreneurs. Agriculture remains a strategic sector for

Limpopo’s economy, particularly in rural areas where farming supports livelihoods and food security. The provincial government has allocated R2.3 billion to strengthen farmers’ programmes, procure equipment such as tractors, and increase agricultural productivity while supporting job creation. Government also plans to strengthen partnerships with national departments and agricultural organisations to improve support for emerging farmers and expand access to markets. The provincial government will continue supporting municipalities, with the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs receiving R3.6 billion to support housing programmes and municipal development initiatives. Support will focus on infrastructure planning, financial management, service delivery programmes, and improving municipal capacity. The budget also provides funding to strengthen governance, financial management and oversight across provincial departments. The Provincial Treasury will receive R485 million to support financial oversight, budgeting processes, and improved fiscal management across government departments. Government institutions, including entities and oversight bodies, will also receive funding to improve service delivery and ensure efficient use of public funds. Other departments receiving notable allocations include the Office of the Premier with R1.4 billion and Sport, Arts and Culture with R676 million. Mahoai emphasised that the budget is designed to implement the policy direction outlined during the State of the Province Address. The provincial government aims to ensure that economic growth, service delivery improvements, and infrastructure development translate into real benefits for communities. “This budget reflects discipline without abandoning development. It protects education and health, drives infrastructure investment, strengthens agriculture and enterprise development and enforces governance reform,” said Mahoai. He said government remains committed to ensuring that the limited resources available are used effectively to improve the lives of Limpopo residents. “This budget is where vision meets reality.”

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LIMPOPO BUDGET SPEECH IN PICTURES



FOUR MEN SENTENCED TO DOUBLE LIFE FOR NORTH WEST TAVERN MURDERS

By Aisha Zardad

Taung – A night out at a tavern in Taung, North West, ended in a brutal rampage that claimed the lives of two young men. On March 10, the Taung Regional Court handed down double life sentences to four men convicted of the killings. The convicted, Tlotlego Ntshaeng (26), Vincent Gaanabo (28), Gofaone Thari (24), and Oratile Modisamongwe (22), will serve their life sentences concurrently. The court heard that the tragic events unfolded on March 17, 2024, when the four men went drinking at a local tavern with a friend who later became a state witness. The violence erupted inside the tavern after they encountered 22-year-old Tumelo Gaehose. "They met Gaehose, attacked and stabbed him to death," said Sivenathi Gunya, spokesperson for the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). The violence continued outside. After leaving the tavern, the men came across 20-year-old Kutlo Mogapi

and his friends. What began as an attempted robbery quickly escalated into another deadly attack. Despite the state witness attempting to intervene, Mogapi was fatally stabbed and died en route to the hospital.

All four men were arrested the same day and denied bail during the legal proceedings. They pleaded not guilty, but prosecutors argued that the sheer brutality of the crimes warranted the harshest punishment.

The court described the murders as "senseless, gruesome and heartless," and ruled that the four are unfit to possess firearms under the Firearms Control Act.

North West Director of Public Prosecutions, Rachel Makhari, praised the outcome, commending law enforcement and prosecutors for ensuring justice. "The NPA remains steadfast in ensuring accountability. Violent crimes will not be tolerated, and perpetrators will face the full might of the law," Makhari said.

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Four men have been sentenced to double life imprisonment for the murders of two young men in a North West tavern, highlighting the court's stance against violent crime. Picture Credit: X

MOTHER AND TODDLER KILLED IN MPUMALANGA DOMESTIC SHOOTING

By Aisha Zardad

Mpumalanga – A domestic violence incident in Verena, Mpumalanga, has left a 43-year-old woman and her three-year-old son dead after the child's father allegedly opened fire during a dispute before later taking his own life. Police said the shooting occurred at around 11pm on Tuesday, when officers were called to a reported domestic violence situation at a home in the area. Provincial police spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jabu Ndubane said officers were met by a neighbour who reported hearing a heated argument between the couple shortly before the shooting. According to police, the man allegedly drew a firearm during the dispute and shot his wife and their young son. Investigators later found the woman lying outside the house with multiple gunshot wounds. Paramedics declared her dead at the scene. The three-year-old boy was discovered inside the house with a gunshot wound and was also declared dead. Police said several other people were caught in the shooting. The victim's sister and her uncle were wounded and rushed

to hospital for treatment.

The suspect's six-year-old daughter was also injured during the incident but managed to escape and seek help from her grandmother. She was later taken to hospital and is reported to be in a stable condition.

Ndubane said the suspect fled the scene after the shooting, prompting police to search for him. Officers later went to the suspect's parents' home in another section of Verena, where they found him inside his vehicle with a gunshot wound. He was declared dead at the scene.

Police believe the firearm used in the attack belonged to the suspect. The weapon has since been seized as part of the investigation.

Authorities are now investigating two counts of murder, four counts of attempted murder, and an inquest. The motive for the shooting remains under investigation. The Acting Provincial Commissioner of the South African Police Service in Mpumalanga, Major General Dr Zeph Mkhwanazi, condemned the killings, describing the incident as tragic and senseless.

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Police in Mpumalanga are investigating a fatal domestic shooting in Verena that left a woman and her three-year-old son dead. The suspected gunman was later found dead in his vehicle. Picture Credit: Communitypsychology

FOUR APPEAR IN COURT OVER R1.2M ABALONE BUST IN CAPE TOWN



Authorities seized 3,699 abalone valued at about R1.2 million during a raid on an illegal drying facility in Table View, Cape Town. Picture Credit: Go! & Express

By Aisha Zardad

Cape Town - Four men accused of operating an illegal abalone drying facility in Table View appeared briefly in the Cape Town Magistrate's Court on Thursday following their arrest earlier this week.

The suspects — Mike Banda (45), Nkosinathi Cele (39), Abongile Sonela (37) and Mthandazo Skhosana (35) — are facing charges linked to the alleged operation.

Hawks spokesperson Siyabulela Vukubi said the suspects were arrested on March 10 during a joint operation led by the Hawks' Economic Protected Resources (EPR) unit.

The operation was carried out in

collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), the Local Criminal Record Centre (LCRC) and Table View SAPS. According to Vukubi, authorities acted on intelligence about an alleged abalone drying facility operating in Table View. "When members arrived at the premises at about 11.30am, they found the four suspects processing abalone," he said. A total of 3,699 abalone were seized during the operation, with an estimated value of R1.2 million.

The case was postponed to March 19 for bail information, and all four accused remain in custody until their next court appearance.

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MOTSOLEDI: SOUTH AFRICA SHARES LIMITED HEALTH RESOURCES WITH FOREIGN PATIENTS

By Aisha Zardad

South Africa – Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi has acknowledged the strain on South Africa’s healthcare system as hospitals and clinics continue to treat patients from other provinces and neighbouring countries despite limited resources. Responding to questions in Parliament on Wednesday, Motsoaledi said the Department of Health assists foreign nationals within the constraints of its budget, noting that the country’s constitutional protections require that emergency medical treatment be provided regardless of nationality or ability to pay. He explained that patients generally enter the system through two channels. Some are officially referred from another province or from neighbouring countries. In these cases, the receiving hospital invoices the referring authority for the treatment provided, whether the case is an emergency or a scheduled admission. Others arrive independently at healthcare facilities. These patients are assessed

using the Uniform Patient Fee Schedule (UPFS), a means-testing system used to determine whether they should pay for services and how much they are required to contribute. “This is a very tricky situation, because many patients who come on their own from neighbouring countries, the countries argue that they never sent anybody, and so you can’t hold them liable because they are not even aware that the person has crossed the border. “The patients themselves must settle the bill, but you also have Section 27(3) of the Constitution. That says no one may be refused emergency medical treatment. And it’s only a doctor who can determine whether the person is an emergency or not. And if they determine that it’s not an emergency, the patient must pay,” Motsoaledi said. He noted that in practice, recovering these costs is often difficult. “Unfortunately, this is just theoretical because most of the time, they give the wrong names. They give wrong addresses; they can never be traced. “And the problem is exacerbated by the fact that, unfortunately, the truth is that many people from our neighbouring

countries believe everything is free in South Africa at all levels of care at every hospital, perhaps except in private.” Motsoaledi added that clinics operate differently because primary healthcare services are free, meaning patients are not subject to a means test when they arrive. On how the department supports people from neighbouring countries seeking treatment, he said the health system attempts to assist as many patients as possible within existing constraints. “We accommodate them with the little we have because the Health Department cannot increase its own budget... But we tend to deal with what we have to help everybody. Whatever we have, whatever amount of medicines we have, we share with them in the way we can,” he said. The minister also pointed to challenges related to documentation, saying some patients arrive without proper identification or use incorrect details. “Our solution to this problem is a new system which has been designed for the past eight years by the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research, which is called the Health Patient Record Registration System, which

is linked to Home Affairs, which is going to register all of you. Every South African, as I am speaking, millions are already registered on that,” Motsoaledi said. When asked whether foreign nationals receiving treatment should be handed over to immigration authorities, the minister said it was not the responsibility of healthcare workers to determine a person’s legal status. “You can’t hand over a person and say this one is illegal. This one is not. It’s not our job. It’s not the job of health workers because where will human beings go when they’re in trouble?” he said. Motsoaledi also addressed concerns about the use of Section 27(3) of the Constitution, which guarantees emergency medical care. “No doctor can do that, and in fact, before you even find out who they are, you would’ve helped them,” he said. “Anybody who has an emergency, we will help them, and you ask the questions later. I think that is what ubuntu is all about. It’s not necessarily the Constitution. It is ubuntu. That a human being who’s dying needs help.”

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EDUCATION SECTOR GETS THE BIGGEST SLICE OF THE PIE AS MPUMALANGA TABLES ITS BUDGET

By Ndivhuwo Mukwevho

Mbombela – While delivering his 2026/27 budget speech this week Mpumalanga Province finance MEC, Bonakele Majuba stated that he is banking on agriculture, finance, transport, communication and construction industries to anchor the provincial growth into the future. According to Majuba, Mpumalanga provincial government is expected to spend over R216 billion in the 2026 medium term expenditure framework, while R70, 3 billion is allocated for the 2026/27 fiscal year. “The government is committing over R4 billion in economic and social infrastructure such as new roads, schools, hospitals and private sector driven energy projects that will open opportunities for local business and empower communities,” said Majuba. As the province was recently negatively affected by heavy rains this year, Majuba emphasised, that the province has to be always prepared for natural disasters. “We may not predict the exact moment of a disaster, but through risk management approach we can prepare for it. Our budgeted instruments remain the key to turning this foresight into readiness. The province has successfully built some reserves to enable us to respond to natural disasters that befall our communities,” said Majuba. He said that R250 million will be allocated to enable responses to any unforeseen challenges. According to him, the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs will be allocated over R1 billion to drive food security, sustainable land use, and national imperatives such as climate resilience and biodiversity protection. Majuba stated that the Education sector will receive the biggest share of the 2026/7 budget. “The department of education receives 43, 4 per cent of the total provincial budget or R30 billion, 619 million, 440 thousands,” said Majuba. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport has been allocated over R6 billion to foster youth empowerment in the province. “R15 million to equip youth with industry relevant knowledge and practical competencies within the property sector training in partnership with the property practitioners regulatory authority and services

SETA as announced in the State of the Province Address,” said Majuba. To strengthen the provision of health services in Mpumalanga, Majuba has allocated the health department an amount of R21 billion, 193 million, 365 thousand. “The department will continue to expand its fleet of ambulances and response vehicles with the previously earmarked funding of R15, 6 million and finalize construction of other clinics as committed in the State of the Province Address,” he said. “The department of social development, has been allocated over, R2 billion. “In total, R2 billion 25 million 372 thousand is allocated to the department of social development to provide care, protection and opportunities that promote dignity and build an inclusive society,” stated Majuba. Majuba further indicated that the provincial treasury will continue to provide support to strengthen budgeting, reporting and governance structures across all provincial public sector institutions. The office of the premier in the province has been allocated R505 million and R959 thousand to coordinate and oversee the machinery of government and ensure that policy priorities are implemented. “The budget includes funding to support the work of the Mpumalanga Aids Council (MPCA) through the rollout of campaigns such as ZAZI which targets learners in school and society in general,” said Majuba. He also stated that the office of the premier will also undertake a feasibility study to establish a provincial data centre for a comprehensive, secure information hub repository of the province. Majuba has also allocated R584 million to the provincial legislature to strengthen its oversight of the executive and to ensure that public participation reaches every corner of the province. The provincial treasury has been allocated R729 million and co-operative governance, human settlements and traditional affairs has been allocated R2 billion to support local government and provide integrated housing and basic services to communities. “This allocation includes amongst others, additional R8.2 million to sustain support for the House of the traditional and Khoi San leadership,” added Majuba.

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BMA DISMISSES 50 OFFICERS, DISCIPLINES 38 MORE IN ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE



The BMA has dismissed 50 officers and disciplined 38 more as part of a major anti-corruption initiative at South Africa’s ports of entry. Picture Credit: Facebook

By Aisha Zardad

South Africa – The Border Management Authority (BMA) has launched a decisive crackdown on corruption at South Africa’s ports of entry, dismissing 50 immigration officers and placing a further 38 officials under disciplinary action. The measures were announced during an awareness campaign at the Maseru Bridge Port of Entry on Tuesday, part of the ongoing efforts of the Border Management and Immigration Anti-Corruption Forum (BMIACF). Addressing officials, BMA Commissioner and CEO Dr Michael Masiapato sent a clear warning that unethical conduct would not be tolerated. “Fifty immigration officers who were performing duties at ports of entry have already been dismissed,” Masiapato said. “At this moment, another thirty-eight officials are undergoing disciplinary processes after being implicated in corrupt activities, and most of them are likely to be dismissed.” He urged remaining officials to uphold integrity, warning: “If you are not part of the fifty who have already lost their jobs or the thirty-eight currently facing disciplinary action, make sure you never become part of that statistic.” Masiapato highlighted the broader impact of corruption, noting that it erodes public

trust and undermines the integrity of South Africa’s border security. The awareness campaign also emphasised the role of the BMIACF as a collaborative platform bringing together law enforcement, civil society, and business stakeholders to confront systemic corruption. Key agencies include the Department of Home Affairs, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI/Hawks). Acting SIU head Leonard Gaoretelelwe Lekgetho also addressed the campaign, outlining proactive measures introduced by the Special Investigating Unit to prevent corruption. These include lifestyle audits, employee vetting, and advanced data analytics to identify irregularities early. “Corruption undermines the integrity of our ports of entry and weakens public trust in the institutions responsible for safeguarding the country,” Masiapato said. The BMA said the campaign is part of a wider strategy to ensure all officials perform their duties with honesty, professionalism, and accountability, without fear, favour, or compromise. “The message is clear: safeguarding the country’s ports requires ethical leadership, personal responsibility, and zero tolerance for corruption,” Masiapato concluded.

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RESIDENTS PROTEST OVER ONGOING WATER AND POWER OUTAGES



Disruptions in electricity and water supply prompted residents across eThekweni to protest, highlighting the urgent need for infrastructure repairs and improved service delivery. Picture Credit: East Coast Radio

By Aisha Zardad

eThekweni – Frustrated residents staged multiple protests across eThekweni this week in response to persistent water and electricity disruptions. On Tuesday night, a power outage near the N2 Chesterville area led to chaos on the freeway, where protesters blocked access roads with rubble and burning tyres. Some motorists reported that their vehicles were stoned, while others tried to remove the centre median barrier to escape the traffic. Many turned to WhatsApp groups to reach emergency services for assistance. The eThekweni Municipality said the outage affected Chesterville and surrounding areas after a medium-voltage cable fault occurred between the Bramcote Distributor Substation and the Mayville High Voltage substation on Monday, March 9. “However, a failure occurred on the feeder cable connecting the Ridgeview Substation to the Kaledon Distributor Substation, which resulted in a loss of supply to Chesterville and surrounding areas,” the municipality stated. Teams have repaired the fault at the Bramcote Distributor Substation, restoring power to some customers, while work continues on the remaining cable to ensure full electricity restoration. Reservoir Hills water protest: Water disruptions also triggered protests in Reservoir Hills, where residents of the Umgudulu informal settlement blocked the M19 freeway from 6am to 10am on Wednesday. The demonstration caused widespread traffic congestion across surrounding suburbs. Alicia Kissoon, eThekweni DA Ward 23 councillor, said the settlement has been without reliable water since December

2025 due to ongoing water pressure failures. “The humanitarian impact of this neglect cannot be overstated because, in this section of the settlement, a single standpipe is forced to serve over 500 residents. When the water pressure fails, hundreds of people are left without water for drinking, and the communal toilets cease to function,” Kissoon explained. Since January 2026, the area spanning Umgudulu, Varsity Drive, and surrounding roads has averaged one major pipe burst per week. Kissoon added that residents’ patience had reached its limit after years of repeated outages affecting both the settlement and surrounding suburbs. “The community acknowledged the ongoing work I have done to fight for these repairs. We cannot continue to manage this city through crisis response. We need the department to prioritise the repairs already on the books for several years,” she said. Verulam placard protest: Water issues also sparked a placard protest on the R102 in Ottawa on Wednesday. Rory Macpherson, eThekweni Ward 102 DA councillor, said the Mount Edgecombe, Parkgate, Verulam, and oThongathi areas were all affected. “I visited a family who did not have a water supply for a month. There is no accountability for the water crisis. Watershedding is alive and well. The city officials will not admit it,” Macpherson said. The eThekweni Municipality said interventions are underway in areas experiencing intermittent water supply. It added that growing urbanisation is driving demand, which currently outpaces available resources.

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EFF WARNS AGAINST PRIVATISING ID SERVICES THROUGH BANKS



The EFF has condemned the digitised Smart ID rollout through private banks, saying identity documents must remain under state control, while the Department of Home Affairs says the system improves accessibility and efficiency. Picture Credit: EngineeringNews

By Aisha Zardad

South Africa - The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has criticised a move by the Democratic Alliance (DA) to involve private banks in the rollout of South Africa’s digital Smart ID system, warning that identity documents must remain a public service. The party described the initiative as a risk to citizens’ fundamental rights, arguing that identity documentation should never be treated as a profit-driven product. “We reject the attempt by the DA to outsource Home Affairs services to private banks,” the EFF said in a statement. “Identity documentation is a fundamental right and the foundation of citizenship, not a commercial service,” the party added, emphasising that such documents represent proof of belonging to the nation. The criticism comes as the Department of Home Affairs continues to roll out digitised Smart ID applications through select bank branches. Currently, services are available

at some Capitec Bank and Standard Bank locations, with the number of participating branches expected to increase from nine to 17 by the end of the week. First National Bank (FNB) is nearing the completion of its testing phase, while other banks in the partnership are at various stages of development. The department, led by DA’s Dr Leon Schreiber, defended the initiative, saying it improves efficiency and accessibility for South Africans. “The fact that we have already reached this milestone after just 20 months in office means that we are on track to deliver on our goal to invert the principle of how government services work,” Schreiber said. “Instead of forcing people to go to Home Affairs and endure long queues and manual processes, we are leveraging technological security and efficiency to bring Home Affairs to the people, delivering access, inclusion and dignity for all.”

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THE HUMAN EDGE: SKILLS AI CAN'T REPLICATE



While AI can assist with many tasks, professions that require empathy, creativity, and human judgment remain uniquely human. Picture Credit: solvex-solutions.com

By Aisha Zardad

South Africa – Artificial intelligence is transforming workplaces at lightning speed, automating tasks that once required entire teams. From writing reports and analysing data to generating images and answering customer queries, AI seems capable of almost anything. Yet experts warn that many roles still demand a human touch— skills that AI cannot easily emulate, such as understanding emotions, generating truly original ideas, making complex decisions, and solving hands-on challenges. Care-Based Jobs: Roles in healthcare and social support—like nurses, therapists, social workers, and childcare providers—rely on emotional understanding and genuine compassion. While AI apps can assist with mental health or routine care, they cannot replace the nuanced empathy that humans provide. Skilled Trades: Electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and mechanics operate

in unpredictable, ever-changing environments. While robots perform well in controlled factory settings, navigating real-world problems demands dexterity, adaptability, and practical intuition—abilities machines still cannot match. Creative Careers: AI can generate artwork, music, and written content, but authentic creativity stems from lived experiences, emotions, and cultural context. Designers, filmmakers, journalists, and artists offer perspectives and storytelling that AI can mimic but not originate. Teaching: Teaching goes beyond delivering facts. Educators inspire, adapt to each student’s needs, and foster critical thinking—human elements that AI cannot truly automate. While AI reshapes the workplace, it cannot replace the human touch. The future belongs to collaboration, where people harness technology to enhance, not supplant, the skills machines cannot replicate.

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FAITH MATTERS

HOW TO REMAIN GRATEFUL WHEN PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED

BY - GIVEN APHANE



Beloved, today let us focus on this journey of prayer or living a life of prayer(being a prayerful person). It is a fulfilling life, a wonderful life because it uplifts your spirit and its connection we have with God. And yet at the same time can be a difficult one. Why do I say it can be difficult sometimes. It can be difficult when you live a faithful life, pray every day and do everything according to the word of God. But then it seems as if what you are praying for or prayed for God is not being answered. Nothing becomes different, it seems as if there is no light for what you prayed for. You start to question yourself if you prayed wrong or what, if God did not hear your prayers? This are usually the questions we ask ourselves when it becomes silent. And in this situation its were We start to say how am I going to remain grateful and praising God when He is not answering my prayers? How can give thanks to Him when He is silent in my prayers? And the answer is yes,we can still be grateful because we should think about the things he did for us in the past. The reason that we are still able to wake up and still have breath, all of this it is by His grace, it shows that He still loves us. In the bible we have many examples of people who prayed for long time but at the right time God answered them. We have Abraham who waited for 25 years to have a son[Isaac]. Joseph 13 years of slavery and imprisonment before becoming second in command of Egypt. Then we have Job who trusted God through terrible suffering

and loss,waiting for restoration. He was so faithful to God even in his suffering and loss he did not turn away from God. In Job 42:10 tells us that God restored Job's prosperity and gave him twice as much as he had before. So Beloved, let us pray to remain faithful and grateful even when our prayers are not answered now. We should pray for strength to remain grateful at all circumstances. In the book of 1Thessalonians 5:18 says " Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you". We should also know that God's time is not like ours as the bible teaches us that God's timing is perfect and purposeful and different from our expectations. In Isaiah 60:22 says "the Lord will make it happen in the right time ". So Beloved, scriptures like these ones should remind us that God has not forgotten about us,He might be silent but He is with us every day. His Mercies are with us every day because we can still wake up each day. Beloved, let us pray harder for strength that comes from God for us to remain faithful and grateful in every circumstances [in hard times or in unanswered prayers]. Let us remember always that God is watching over us at all times, we should sing praises unto His name for He deserve all the glory and all the praise.

Thank you Lord,

Amen.

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FNB TO ROLL OUT SMART ID CARD APPLICATIONS ACROSS MORE BRANCHES



FNB plans to expand Smart ID card application services to more than 240 branches across South Africa as part of a new partnership with the Department of Home Affairs. Picture Credit: Galleria Mall

By Aisha Zardad

South Africa – FNB says it is preparing to roll out expanded Smart ID card application services across its branch network after successfully completing testing of the system. The service will soon be available to the public as part of a broader initiative to bring Department of Home Affairs services into bank branches. While FNB has offered Home Affairs services for over a decade, the programme has previously been limited to a small number of branches where Home Affairs staff were stationed. Since the introduction of the pilot programme in 2015, the bank has issued more than 570,000 Smart ID cards and passports through seven designated branches. A new digital partnership model announced last year will now allow the bank direct access to the Department of Home Affairs' back-end systems. This is expected to improve processing speed, reliability and expand access to the service. The upgrade will allow South Africans to apply for the re-issue of Smart ID cards directly at FNB branches and, in the future, through the FNB Banking App. "We are incredibly proud to be part of this initiative and look forward to going live with this expanded capability," said Harry Kellan, CEO of FNB. "Smart ID Cards are essential for accessing vital services, securing employment and participating fully in the economy. "With the DHA's modernised technology, we can now reach millions more South Africans through our infrastructure, and that is what real help is all about." FNB said it plans to expand the service to more than 240 branches over the next year as part of a nationwide rollout.

Branches offering the service will be listed on the bank's website and app, with more locations expected to be added weekly as the rollout progresses. Minister of Home Affairs Dr Leon Schreiber said the partnership forms part of efforts to modernise the department's services. "By connecting banks directly to our digital systems, we are laying the foundation to expand access to Smart ID services through trusted institutions that people already use every day," he said. "Partnerships like this will help us modernise Home Affairs, strengthen the integrity of our national identity system, and make it easier for every South African to obtain the documents they need to participate fully in society and the economy." Standard R140 fee remains, during the initial phase of the rollout, customers will only pay the standard Home Affairs Smart ID application fee of R140, with no additional convenience or logistics charges. "Our branch network plays a vital role in reaching communities that have historically struggled to access Home Affairs services," said Zibu Nqala, CEO of FNB Points of Presence. "This expansion will allow us to bring essential identity solutions closer to our customers' doorsteps, ensuring inclusive access regardless of where they live." The bank added that the expansion will make it easier for South Africans to access key Home Affairs services while helping reduce queues, travel time and administrative delays. Customers will be able to complete their applications at selected FNB branches, with additional digital channels set to be introduced in future to further simplify the process.

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TIMELESS SPORTS

ORLANDO PIRATES SURGE BACK TO PSL SUMMIT AS OUADDOU INTENSIFIES TITLE HUNT

By Aisha Zardad

Soweto – Orlando Pirates have reclaimed the top spot in the Betway Premiership following a commanding 2-0 victory over Richards Bay FC at the Orlando Amstel Arena on Wednesday. With the win, they now sit level on points with Mamelodi Sundowns at 47 but edge ahead on goal difference (+25 compared to Sundowns' +24).

Moroccan coach Abdeslam Ouaddou, who has guided Pirates through a season of intense competition, described the match as a tough challenge. "A very difficult game. I can tell you that for me, the most consistent teams that we faced this season were Richards Bay and Siwelele, so another tough game on Saturday," he said, highlighting the demanding nature of the PSL.

With just 10 matches left, every game carries significant weight in the title race. Ouaddou stressed the level of competition: "We know that the PSL is a very strong league, with very good teams. And if you want to be champions, you have to win such difficult games."

While Sundowns hold a slight advantage in goals scored (34), Pirates' defensive

record has been outstanding, conceding only eight goals this season. Ouaddou made a heartfelt appeal to fans, promising unwavering commitment from his squad: "Everybody is dreaming to be champions, and we are fighting to be champions, of course. We are going to fight until the last minute; I can tell you that and promise you that we are going to die on the pitch and believe until the last second."

Despite the triumph, Ouaddou acknowledged areas for improvement ahead of their upcoming clash with Siwelele FC in Soweto. "We were not so efficient with the last pass in the last third and in the heart of the game. We lost some crucial balls that maybe could've been punished by the opposition in transitions," he reflected.

He concluded by commending his players' resilience and determination: "We take these three points because it's a very important result in this title race, and I want to congratulate the boys again for their character."

As the title race tightens between Pirates and Sundowns, each of the remaining fixtures carries enormous stakes in this electrifying PSL showdown.

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Orlando Pirates' coach Abdeslam Ouaddou motivates his team after their 2-0 win over Richards Bay, keeping the title race alive. Picture Credit: Youtube

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