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PREMIER SUES THE MEDIA

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Mzala returns in our next edition



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RULE BY FEAR

Whoever is advising the Premier of Mpumalanga is taking a gamble. While everyone was expecting that the Premier would be celebrating his first year in office by telling us his achievements and challenges, he instead went for the media.

Mabuza invited the media and a large contingent responded to the invitation, with the hope that the Premier of the Province was going to break the silence on a number of issues which were giving the province a negative image.

But Alas! Little did the media people know that they were going to be victims of his wrath. Contrary to the SMS invitation that had been sent by his spokesperson the night before, the Premier told the journalists that he was going to sue a number of media houses.

The atmosphere became so tense at the news conference after that, with journalists licking wounds like hounds after the Premier had delivered his lawsuit blow.

It will be a miracle to see any article in the media about the Premier anytime soon. Good or bad! Unless there is some serious relations building exercise being implemented by his spin doctors. That is if any journalist honours such an invitation.

There is something called solidarity within the media circles. If you tell someone something, they will share it with everybody.

The humiliation that was meted upon the media people is unimaginable. When the Premier uttered any word, it would be greeted by giggles from a crowd which "had come to see the Premier" according to his Spokesperson.

Whether they had been invited or not, they were not supposed to be there. That was a government media conference, not a political rally for God's sake!

What was more shocking is that the cheerleaders who were there were even shaking the Premier's hands as though he had won a war against an enemy.

But the media is not your enemy, but you can create an enemy through actions such as these, and once that happens, it will be difficult to mend the relations ever again.

It is possible that some of us may have gone overboard, however, the legal route is definitely not the way to go.

If there is someone who is still listening at Building Number 2, please do yourself a favour and withdraw the lawsuits and focus on what you should - lead the province. There will always be detractors as is the case

everywhere.

The media does not initiate stories, but it is transmitting them. I wonder if the Premier's spin doctors and media crew has ever called the relevant media to try and correct the stories or the perceptions that they had created.

Yesterday, we launched the province's first Media Club. Incidentally, one of the first people who was going to be asked to address the club was the Premier himself. I hold my head in shame, because I was the one of those who have been preaching the gospel that the media must not see government as the enemy?

I still believe, though, there are some good politicians out there, even in the Provincial government, who see the media differently than those who advised the Premier about this action.

Many politicians will tell you that you will never win any fight against the media. This, not just in our own shores, but the world over.

All I can advise is that the courts cannot fix what can be fixed through dialogue and the various structures such as the Press Council and the press ombudsman.

Mr Premier, yes, you scared all of us on that fateful Tuesday, however, as you well know that no one can rule through instilling fear. It can only work for a short while, but once people overcome it, that's when your problems begin.

The media will never forget you, even if you are no longer at the helm of government.

Another leader would be asking him or herself, What are the Communications people that get their salary every month doing when there are negative articles about the Premier almost everyday?

Any reputation, whether good or bad, you earn it. If our Premier thinks that he has earned a good reputation, he should be asking himself if his communications people are doing their jobs.

Let's all swallow our pride, while there is still time. Drop the lawsuit and engage with the media.

Phinda Mzala

Tribute to Bomber Ntshangase

The Congress of South African Trade Unions is deeply shocked at the news of the brutal murder on Wednesday of Comrade Bomber Ntshangase, a long-serving member of the SACP in Mpumalanga. He served in the party's Provincial Executive Committee and District Executive Committee.

We send our condolences to his family, friends, neighbours and comrades.

The SACP have lost a fearless

fighter for the working class and the poor. As they say, "his track-record of consistent activism in the Party leaves us with no doubt that he was a committed communist".

It seems that he is yet another victim of the 'tenderpreneurs' in the province who have been assassinating anyone who stands in the way of their greed to accumulate wealth. This makes us all the more determined to wage war

on corruption and save our movement from this alien culture.

Workers and communists will continue to draw inspiration from comrade Bomber Ntshangase, whose martyrdom will encourage us never to be intimidated from fighting crime and corruption.

Ntshangase was buried on Sunday at Phongola in KwaZulu-Natal.



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PREMIER SUES THE MEDIA

Premier David "DD" Mabuza chose his first year anniversary as the head of Mpumalanga Provincial Government to break his silence about the negative media publicity that has been dogging the province since he took over the province's highest post last year.

Mabuza's silence over the assassination of leading personalities and politicians had recently become a subject of public perturbation and the opposition parties also expressed their outrage at the Premier's right to remain speechless attitude.

On Tuesday, however, Mabuza decided that enough was enough. He came face-to-face with what was probably the strongest media contingent that the province had ever witnessed.

The press conference was started by his spokesperson, Mabutho Sithole, who acknowledged the presence of some of the media institutions that were present, and given the large number of media that were attended, I cannot blame him for leaving Ziwapathi out of his acknowledgements.

While this was the biggest media contingent ever seen in a press conference in the province, with the exception of general elections, on the day, the media was outnumbered by the Premier's entourage which included the MECs for Culture, Sports and Recreation Co-operative and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Vusi Shongwe and Norman Mokoena, respectively.

But then there was another bigger contingent of Mabuza's loyalists, which included his most vocal supporter, SANCO's Raymond Makamu, business people, members of the ANC's Ehlanzeni Regional Committee, who recently called for the removal of Mbombela Executive Mayor, Lassy Chiwayo and a host of other people who were making freakish remarks against journalists.

This was clearly not just another rent-a-crowd, but everyone who was there had a purpose. Some of the business people came there just to see the Premier, others have probably intercepted the media invitation from their journalists friends.

But one young man caught my attention. At first I thought he was a journalist because he had a camera, but later I discovered that he had no notepad or any recording device. He did not even once take a single picture of the Premier – the newsmaker, but his was taking photographs of journalists instead.

When he was not busy taking photographs of black journalists, he was cheering or laughing loudly each time the Premier made fun of the journalists.

If you were a journalist and claim that you were not intimidated, you'd be lying, or at least, you knew that Mabuza was still going deliver his killer punch!

"People were waiting for me to speak one day and respond to all the damning media articles about me as the leader



Premier DD Mabuza is suing media houses, nationally and locally

of government and the ANC [African National Congress]. In the main all the reports sought to undermine me. I kept cool and exercised leadership patience," Mabuza said.

He was clearly in control of the media conference, but he also made it a point that the media people were aware that he also was still in charge of government.

"I am in government, fully in command. I know what is happening in government and out, right or wrong. People of the province are content with the leadership of the ANC. They are aware who is the Premier. No one can explain me! I was born and bred in this province. In all spheres – in all walks of the province I am known," he said.

After a long preamble, Mabuza moved to the main subject of the media conference, namely, why negative media articles about him.

"The problem, why me? I have contested for a chairpersonship and I have won. Probably that may have hurt people. There is this effort to paint and assassinate my person (sic)," he said without mentioning any name.

"There is quite a handful of us in the province who have positioned themselves. I am aware of those individuals. I followed them (sic). I understand what is at play. I followed the articles and the trend is that they are meant to assassinate my person as a leader. We tried to communicate the truth, but were denied the space. I have finally decided to approach the court to adjudicate so that they can finally take responsibility of what they write," Mabuza said.

By this time the hotel room, where the media conference was held, was as silent as the grave, except for few whispers that were coming from some of Mabuza's contingent. Some of them were flaunting half-baked smiles.

Mabuza's bombshell, undoubtedly immobilized the journalists that were at the media conference. It became clear that some of the journalists were asking questions merely because they had attended the media conference, and this time their questions were carefully chosen to avoid further lawsuits.

One journalist asked, "Will you be suing any of the people that have been saying things about you, like the opposition?"

"No," was his answer.

At the time, he declined to name the newspapers that would be sued, but mentioned some of the articles that were published recently by the Mail and Guardian among those he'll be focussing on.

Almost every statement that Mabuza made was greeted with applause and giggles from his supporters, which at times drowned some of his responses.

Those who have been waiting for Mabuza to break his months and months of silence finally heard him speak, and his message? I am going to sue the media.

Mabuza was inaugurated at a ceremony that was held last year at KaNyamazane Township near Nelspruit on the 11th May 2009, after the ANC won the country's general elections for the fourth consecutive term.

A year earlier, Mabuza had emerged as the winner to claim the position of the ANC's Provincial Chairperson in a fiercely contested election against Mbombela Local Municipality Executive Mayor, Lassy Chiwayo. This, the Premier believes, is the reason why he is targeted in all the negative media articles against him. Chiwayo was not available for comment.

Sithole could not confirm the amount that the Premier will be suing for, or who whether he will be using state money to wage pay for the lawsuit. He

did, however, give a hint that the lawsuit may be paid from government coffers.

"These things were said against him in his official capacity as the Premier," he said.

If he wins, who will take the money? I asked.

"I guess he will sit down, and as you know that there are many poor students that he helping with their education, I guess the money will go towards their education," said Sithole.

Mabuza's lawyer, known as Davis Mchulu of Mchulu Inc. Attorneys, told Ziwapathi that they will be suing the Sunday Times and Sunday World for R1,2 million each for the story about the alleged disappearance of R14 million from the Premier's farm house.

"He [Premier] is suing the Sunday Times for R10 million for the story on Josh, [an alleged Mozambican assassin who claim to be responsible for the killing of prominent politicians and business people].

The Sunday times will also be sued for R1 million for the article that alleges that the Premier's firearm had been used in a robbery.

"The Mail and Guardian and the local newspaper, Lowvelder will receive their letters of demand soon," Mchulu said.

Mchulu said that the Premier is suing the media in his private capacity.

Sithole distanced the Office of the Premier from the activities of the people who were making remarks against the media and said that they were not invited to the media conference, but had merely come because they may have heard that the Premier would be addressing a media conference

Untraceable beneficiaries to be removed from RDP house list

BY SYDNEY MASINGA

NELSPRUIT

The Mpumalanga government will deregister 3 360 beneficiaries from the RDP house list because they are untraceable.

Tabling the R1.1-billion provincial Department of Human Settlements budget in the legislature in Nelspruit on Tuesday, MEC Madala Masuku said the “missing” beneficiaries had to be removed and would be replaced by new applicants.

“We have untraceable beneficiaries who create a challenge of unoccupied houses all over the province, resulting in illegal occupants who sometimes engage in illegal activities,” said Masuku.

“We used local municipalities, local radio stations and newspapers in the last year trying to trace these beneficiaries, with no luck, so we have no choice but to give these houses to other people.”

Masuku also announced that his department would demolish and rebuild 600 houses that had been built before 1994.

“We assessed these houses and found that they were unsafe to live in. We will also continue to fix 925 houses with structural defects, which were built between 1994 and 2002 and which have already been assessed. They will be rectified in this financial year,” he said.

In addition, the department will complete 910 houses that were meant to



MEC for Human Settlements, Madala Masuku

have been built in the previous financial year.

“But the majority of our budget will be used on bringing to reality integrated human settlements in the province. We will partner with financial institutions and developers to deliver them in Thaba Chweu, Emalahleni and Dipaliseng municipalities.”

The integrated human settlements will feature services such as water, electricity and business site infrastructure, and will accommodate a total of 2 500 households in bonded upmarket houses, middle-income houses, fully subsidised houses and apartments.

“These are huge three-year projects that, after completion, will deliver

infrastructure able to accommodate just more than 20 000 households in the three identified municipalities. The social cluster has agreed that other amenities like schools, sports centres, health and social service facilities will be provided in these areas, developed to the norms and standards required,” Masuku announced.

‘Treat patients with respect,’ health MEC tells nurses

BY SYDNEY MASINGA

NELSPRUIT

Mpumalanga MEC for health and social development Dikeledi Mahlangu says patients visiting health facilities in the province should not be made to feel as if getting treatment is a favour to them.

Speaking in the Mpumalanga legislature on Tuesday when she presented the department’s R6.4-billion budget speech, Mahlangu warned health workers that negative attitudes towards patients could lead to service delivery protests.

“The people’s patience is not elastic, and sooner or later they will revolt against the inferior health service they get from public health facilities in the province. Many people who use our health facilities have no choice but to use them, and if they had an alternative they would not go to our facilities,” said Mahlangu.

Although she berated what she called the “disappointing attitude” of some health workers, she admitted that the department realised they were facing



MEC for Health and Social Development, Dikeledi Mahlangu

challenges such as drug and staff shortages.

Provincial shop steward of the Democratic Nurses’ Organisation of South Africa Siphon Dlamini, who

attended the session, said afterwards that he was saddened by the attitude of nurses “humiliating” patients.

“What has gone wrong, really? Have we forgotten the pledge we made when

we joined the nursing profession? The first line in the nursing pledge is that ‘I solemnly pledge my self to the service of humanity and will endeavour to practice my profession with conscience and with dignity.’ Some nurses are unfortunately doing the opposite.”

Dlamini said nurses should remember that patients were human beings with a constitutional right to be treated with dignity and respect.

“As nurses, we are also human beings and we are not immune to stress. But let us avoid venting our anger and frustrations on innocent patients. We must seek professional advice whenever the need arises.”

The DA’s chief whip in the legislature, Veli Manzini, said the ill-treatment of patients and the shortage of medication in health facilities were unacceptable and should be addressed urgently.

“Thousands of people in the province with serious medical ailments are being showed away from our health facilities as a result of these institutions being continuously out of stock of most medication. This can no longer be accepted,” said Manzini.

R271m to get more people on ARVs

BY SYDNEY MASINGA

NELSPRUIT

The Mpumalanga government has set aside R271-million to increase the number of people on antiretroviral treatment (ARV) during this financial year from 70 064 to 102 855.

Presenting the department of health's R6.4-billion budget speech in the Mpumalanga legislature on Tuesday, health MEC Dikeledi Mahlangu said people would be enrolled for ARV treatment at a much earlier stage in the disease. She added that "almost all health

facilities" would be able to provide the treatment.

"In our drive to support and provide treatment to people infected with HIV, we will increase our roll-out sites from 34 to 114 in this financial year."

Mahlangu admitted that Mpumalanga's HIV prevalence rate continued to be "worryingly high" and that it had increased on a year-to-year basis since 2006.

"We are currently standing at 35.5%, and we remain the province with the second-highest rate after Kwazulu-Natal. Gert Sibande is one district that requires a concerted effort before it reaches disastrous levels. The rate there

is 40.5%, followed by Ehlanzeni at 35% and Nkangala at 31.9%," she said.

Towns such as Secunda, Ermelo, Standerton and Piet Retief fall in the Gert Sibande district.

Mahlangu said home-based care remained a critical element in the care and support of HIV-positive patients, especially in rural areas.

"We will fund 150 home-based care organisations in this financial year and have budgeted R51-million for that." – She also praised premier David Mabuza for his political leadership in the fight against HIV/Aids.

"I must commend the exemplary leadership of our premier David

Mabuza and some of my colleagues in the executive council, who publicly tested during the launch of the Know Your Status campaign in our province in Lekwa municipality on April 30," she said.

The province aims to test 1.1 million people by June next year, but Mahlangu revealed that the campaign had got off to a slow start.

"During our provincial launch, 742 people registered for testing - 246 males and 496 females. More than 590 attended counselling and 566 were tested," added Mahlangu.

Policy and Budget Speech



MEC: Dr Clifford Mkasi

**Mpumalanga MEC for Public Works,
Roads and Transport, Dr Clifford Mkasi
will table the 2010/2011 Policy and Budget Speech
on 20 May 2010 at 14:00 in the
Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Nelspruit.**

Guests to be seated by 13:00

**If you want to know how the department will be creating jobs
through the EPWP programme, the state of readiness on
safety and public transport during the 2010 Soccer
World Cup and the improved
public infrastructures.**



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Department:
Public Works, Roads and Transport
MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

"SIVUYO UMLILO"



World Cup will loom large in MEC's budget speech

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT

Mpumalanga MEC for culture, sport and recreation Vusi Shongwe will inform the public about the province's state of readiness for the World Cup in Nelspruit on Friday.

Shongwe will also use the tabling of his second policy and budget speech to provide information about Mpumalanga's geographic names committee, sports development, school sports, archives, libraries and information services.



"He is expected to use the opportunity to inform the public about the World Cup games in Nelspruit as well as other pertinent issues in the culture, sport and recreation sectors," said department spokesperson Sibongile Nkosi.

The policy and budget speech will reveal the department's plans for Mpumalanga citizens in the next 10 months.

"Mpumalanga citizens can expect the department to double its efforts to ensure that it delivers on its mandate," Nkosi said.

"The department will continue improving the quality of life in Mpumalanga by maintaining healthy minds and bodies through active participation in cultural, sport and recreational activities that are planned for the 2010/2011 financial year."

Mataffin pupils threaten violence

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT,

Mpumalanga's Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport refuses to say when it plans to hand over two schools near Nelspruit to a community that has been waiting for them for almost four years.

Now the pupils of Mataffin, next to the Mbombela Stadium, have threatened to disrupt activities at the stadium and burn down government properties.

Public works, roads and transport MEC Clifford Mkasi and education MEC Reginah Mhaule were expected to hand over Cyril Clarke Secondary and John Mdluli Primary to the community in March but postponed the event. It was again postponed twice in April.

"Now the community is outraged," said Mataffin community spokesperson Wanda Phiri. "Why were the schools not handed over as promised?"

The pupils were removed from their schools in late 2006 to make way for the construction of the stadium and have been housed in prefabricated classrooms ever since.

After increasing pressure and violent protests late last year, a tender for building the schools was finally issued and awarded to construction company Clear Choice Builders for the primary school, and Mpumelelo Business Enterprise for the high school.

During a sod-turning ceremony on December 3, Mkasi promised that both



READY BUT EMPTY: The site agent for Clear Choice Builders, Andries Mkhethwa, on the grounds of the completed John Mdluli Primary School. Pupils cannot move in because there is no water yet

schools would be delivered by March 31.

"I have committed myself to delivering these facilities. I don't have a choice in the matter. Deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe and premier David Mabuza are on my neck. There's no resting until the projects are complete," he said at the time.

Construction logistics officer for Clear Choice Builders Percy Mkhabela said her company completed the primary school exactly on time.

"Building went smooth and we completed the first phase on March 31. The extension of two classrooms and the hall was finished on April 14. Even the soccer and netball fields are finished. Electricity is fine and all that's left is for the water to be switched on," she said.

Her counterpart at Mpumelelo Business Enterprise, Imaan Milandzi, said the company also finished phase one of the high school as was agreed, although it could not complete phase two as it had hoped to do.

"Although we promised we would try to complete phase two as well, we only completed the classrooms and administration blocks as per phase one. We have not yet started with phase two - the hall, kitchen, laboratory, library and computer centre, and that will now happen in August, as per our original agreement," he said.

Department of public works spokesperson Dumisane Malamule said that the water at the schools would be switched on by "the end of May".

He refused to say what had caused the water delay and when his department would hand over the schools to the education department so that the pupils can move in.

And, according to spokesperson for the Department of Education Jasper Zwane, the official opening of the schools can only take place once this has happened.

"I must indicate the department is satisfied with the progress made by the service providers. They were able to deliver the first phase as per the stipulations of the agreement. They went to the extent of building structures that were supposed to be constructed only in August this year. The only thing that has caused the delay was the installation of the water system, which needed the public works department to fast-track the processing of payments for this to commence," he said.

Nelspruit workers join country-wide Satawu strike

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT

About 3 000 striking members of the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union marched outside Transnet's offices in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, on Tuesday to demand a better wage increase.

With this action they joined hands with thousands of union members countrywide who have been on strike since Monday.

A shop steward for Transnet in Nelspruit, Kenneth Khoza, said the workers disagreed with their employer's offer of an 11% increase.

"At first, Transnet agreed to offer workers 8%, which was an insult to many hard workers. After they had talks with the union officials, they raised it to 11%, which is still far too little," he said.

"We demand a 15% wage increase as well as a 15% increase in all our benefits, including medical aid and housing subsidy. We also want maternity leave to be extended from three to six months. If the employer is not prepared to agree, as he seems to be, we won't stop our strike until he is



Some of the Transnet employees who protested outside the company's offices in Nelspruit on Tuesday

ready to meet our demands."

Khoza said the union would ask President Jacob Zuma to intervene to "get rid of the skeletons" within Transnet who refused to comply with

workers' demands.

"Our workers are frustrated and we want an urgent response before people start losing their lives," he warned.

"We will also deal with the Reds

[Transnet workers not taking part in the strike] as the strike continues."

Transnet in Nelspruit refused to comment on the strike or its impact on local operations.

Mpumalanga shines at Tourism Indaba

BY MBEKEZELI MBULI

DURBAN - This province made its presence felt at the annual celebrated Tourism Indaba held at the ICC in Durban last week.

Mpumalanga was represented by more than ten tourism operators and exhibitors from all around the province.

The province showcased its diverse cultural uniqueness by displaying different tourism packages.

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) stole the limelight by launching their new Visitor's Guide which includes the seven key pillars of the province, namely the African Wild Life, Rich and Diverse Culture and Friendly and Peaceful people and others.

"Our province is a truly friendly and peaceful city and I am certain that our visitors during the World Cup and beyond will have a great time here experiencing the true African life and adventures," said the Mbombela Mayor Lassy Chiwayo during the launch.



Charles Ndabeni, CEO of MTPA relaxes in one of the British Airways lounges at OR Tambo International Airport

The launch was attended by dignitaries from Swaziland and Mozambique. This included the Swaziland Tourism Minister Macford Sibandze, the Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Jabu Mahlangu and

Charles Ndabeni, the CEO for Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency.

Another local Colleen Sibuyi, a tour guide won himself and the province an

award in the Tourist Guide of the year category.

The lost for words Sibuyi, said he was happy that his efforts to improve the tourism industry were finally recognised.

"I don't know where to begin, I am over the moon about this achievement and this award goes to the people of the province," he said.

This year's episode of the Tourism Indaba hosted 13 000 guests, surpassing last year's 12 000. The event, which is owned by the South African Tourism and organised by Kagiso Exhibitors and Events, has won the World Travel Award for Africa's best Travel and Tourism show for two consecutive years.

This year's event was also blessed with the presence of President Jacob Zuma, LOC CEO Danny Jordan, FIFA Secretary Jerome Valcke and SA Tourism CEO, Thandiwe January-MacLean.

'We've launched war against poverty and unemployment' minister

BY SIPHIWE NYATHI

BUSHBUCKRIDGE

Minister of public works Geoff Doidge visited Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga on Monday to launch the non-state sector as a key new component of the expanded public works programme (EPWP).

Addressing delegates from government, business, media and hundreds of community members, Doidge said the launch of the non-state sector was a "clarion call" to all community-based organisations and NGOs to work in partnership with the government to expand work creation under the banner of the programme.

"This sector involves maximising the potential of community-based organisations to create employment opportunities while working in partnership with the government. Bushbuckridge was chosen for the launch of this sector because of the strides already made in implementing the programme in the area," explained Doidge.

Accompanied by Mpumalanga MEC of public works, roads and transport Clifford Mkasi, the minister visited several existing community-based projects and was clearly delighted by what he saw.



Minister of public works Geoff Doidge during his visit to the South African Active Disabled People's Association in Bisonto village in Bushbuckridge

Nhlengelo Community Home-Based Care, which brings community leaders and faith-based organisations together in the fight against poverty and other social challenges including HIV/Aids, has created 40 full-time jobs for locals. The South African Active Disabled People's Association is teaching people with disabilities creative skills such as

sculpting, wood carving, beading and sewing, as well as artisan skills such as welding. The New Forest agricultural project inspired the minister with its greenhouses filled with patty pans, baby marrows, green peppers and baby gem squash, produced by 62 permanent workers, while Artherstone Pre-School, where volunteers care for 195 children -

many of whom are orphans - reminded him of the value of early childhood education, he said.

"The projects I visited here reflect best practices in the implementation of the EPWP because they are forged on partnerships of solidarity between communities, the government, ward committees and community development workers. This is our constitutionally enshrined cooperative governance in practice," said Doidge.

"I was so impressed by the projects I saw here. However, there is potential for more projects like these ones. As we talk about the work opportunities we are creating, we come to the painful realisation that the majority of our people are still unemployed and living in dire poverty," Doidge added.

The non-state sector of the EPWP aims to create 640 000 work opportunities in the next five years as part of the broader target of creating 4.5 million work opportunities through the programme by 2014.

"The non-state sector is your churches, non-governmental organisations and private businesses, which have to work together with the government to create work. With these work opportunities, we have launched a concerted war against poverty and unemployment," Doidge said.

Ermelo residents adopt potholes

ERMELO

By Thobile Mlangeni

Business owners and residents in Ermelo on the Mpumalanga Highveld have decided to tackle the myriad of potholes in the area themselves.

They plan to fix more than 1 000 potholes before the Fifa World Cup kick-off in June.

"These repairs will be done in an attempt to improve the general appearance of the town and its roads before the World Cup starts," said Athol Stark, chief coordinator of Highveld Tourism.

"The aim is to bring an end to the pothole embarrassment."

He said Andrew Currie of KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) came up with the idea of running a "pothole event" to raise funds to fix the problem.

"He approached us to help with its implementation. Basically, individuals or businesses can buy a ticket for R75 that enters them into three Kick for Goal competitions in which they can

win various prizes, including holidays, shopping vouchers and soccer balls. The funds raised via the ticket sales will be used to repair the potholes," he said.

People can also "buy" a specific pothole or even a street, while corporate companies can get involved by sponsoring tickets and prizes for the competitions.

All potholes filled via this venture will get a smiley face painted over them with the name of the sponsor as well.

"This is an event where locals can directly influence the state of affairs in their town and at the same time get to win some really nice prizes," said Stark.

"We have made R137 000 so far, but there's more tickets available at the Highveld Visitor Centre in Ermelo."

A company called Roadfix has supplied the organisers with a cold-mixed CSIR-approved asphalt product that makes it both quick and easy to fill potholes, with long sustainability of the mixture.

"Test potholes were filled in some of the busiest streets in the town, especially



POTHOLE PARADISE NO MORE: Athol Stark of Highveld Tourism, right, and Paul Buckley of Tutuka Transport fill potholes in Ermelo.

on the truck route, and to date the product has withstood the heavy traffic extremely well," said Stark.

He added that the organisers had

consulted with the Msukaligwa Local Municipality, which had given its blessing for the project.

Mpumalanga murder suspect 'killed Osama bin Laden'

BY THOBILE MLANGENI

HAZYVIEW

Mpumalanga police have found the family of an Indian national who was killed by a man claiming the victim was Osama bin Laden.

Ismein Mohamed-Quresisi (38) of Hazyview was allegedly stabbed to death by 33-year-old Solomon Kebedi, an Ethiopian who lives in Mariti Trust near Hazyview.

His family has now identified his body.

It is alleged that Kebedi dragged the victim from a shopping complex in Hazyview on March 8. He forced him to an open field nearby, where he attacked him with a panga and two knives.

Mohamed-Quresisi was wounded in the face and back and died on the scene. He had also lost two fingers in the attack, said Constable Sifiso Nyakane of the White River police.

The police were called and found Kebedi hiding in a nearby bush.

After his arrest, he told the police that he had killed Mohamed-Quresisi because he looked like Osama bin Laden. He said he thought he was killing the Al-Qaeda leader, according to Nyakane.

Kebedi was not asked to plead when he appeared in the White River Magistrate's Court on Monday. He will appear again in court on May 20 to apply for bail.

R15m fraud case withdrawn after bail bungling

BY THOBILE MLANGENI

KWAMHLANGA

The case against eleven people arrested in connection with stealing millions of rands from the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture was provisionally withdrawn in the KwaMhlanga Magistrate's Court on Thursday.

Three department officials, Dingiswayo Daniel Matshika (48), Vuyo Ngele (34) and Lebo Msiza (36) and their eight co-accused appeared on charges of defrauding the department of R15-million.

"The magistrate provisionally withdrew the case just after 3pm because the correct procedures were not followed during the arrests of the suspects," said a court official who wanted to remain anonymous.

He said the suspects' bail money,

totalling R170 000, was also returned.

Mpumalanga police spokesperson Captain Leonard Hlathi confirmed that the case had been withdrawn provisionally but said it was the prosecutor's fault.

"According to the magistrate, the prosecutor made a mistake by allowing them to apply for bail after hours because this is a serious case. The suspects were supposed to be sent back to the cells after their initial appearance in court on Wednesday to appear in court the following day for a formal bail application," said Hlathi.

"We will soon serve them with summons to appear before court," he added. "This case has to continue - we hope and believe that the justice department will come to the rescue."

Asked if the police were monitoring the suspects' movements, Hlathi said they had not been instructed to do so by the court.

Rape suspect denied bail

BY MANDLA KHOZA

TONGA,

A 41-year-old man has been denied bail in the Tonga Magistrate's Court on Thursday after he was charged with raping a three-year-old toddler.

The man was asked by the victim's mother, his neighbour, to look after her spaza shop in Block C last Thursday while she had to do an errand elsewhere. He agreed and she also left the little girl with him.

According to Tonga police spokesperson Sergeant Mzwandile Nyambi, the mother realised that the child was in agony when she bathed her that night. She reported the matter to the police, who arrested the suspect.

Nyambi warned parents not to entrust their children to anyone. "Parents must take their children with them when leaving their houses. Cases of rape are on the rise and with most of them the suspects are people known to the victims," said Nyambi.

New-look skills academy launched in Standerton

BY SIPHIWE NYATHI

STANDERTON

Unemployed young people from Standerton and surrounding areas are expected to benefit from a newly refurbished skills academy that will be launched officially on Thursday.

The academy, an initiative of the Gert Sibande FET College, is situated at the Wool Textile Centre in Secunda.

"The skills academy is an extended learning unit of the college and focuses on equipping people with both soft and comprehensive skills, including welding and plumbing, bricklaying and painting," said college spokesperson Jabulile Mhlabane, adding that the academy will target unemployed youths who are neither studying nor in training.

Since its inception in 2008, the academy has operated from the premises of the college's central office in Standerton.

Monica Swart, the Wool Textile Centre's manager, said the new venue had ample space to accommodate workshops for conducting on-the-job training.

Apart from the budget it gets from the college, the academy is also supported by private companies and government structures, including the Lekwa local municipality.

Representatives from the provincial and national departments of education and various businesses are expected to attend the event, which starts at 9am.

Policy and Budget Speech 2010/2011

The Speaker of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Hon. SW Lubisi will be delivering his annual Policy and Budget Speech.



Scheduled as follows:

Date: 18 May 2010

Time: 14:15

Venue: Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature Chamber

Theme: “Intensify oversight to foster service delivery to the people”

Mandate: Law-making, Oversight, Public Participation & Involvement



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Trustees up in arms against Chief

BY MANDLA KHOZA

KAPMAIDEN – Libuyile land claim trustees are up in arms and have removed the chairperson of the board of trustees, Musa Khumalo.

The different trustees from all over the Nkomazi region, Matsulu, and Kapmaiden sang struggle songs baying for Khumalo's head if he resists moving out of the farm.

Khumalo's ordeal unfolded last Sunday at Libuyile farms, next to the N4 near Kaapmuiden.

Police were called to calm the situation as the impatient claimants were demanding his eviction.

This came after the Libuyile land claimants were not pleased the way Khumalo is handling the business affairs of their land. The community successfully claimed their land which was taken from their forefathers from a number of white farmers and sugar producing company Tsb Sugar.

The beneficiaries that consist of more than 1000 trustees were surprised to learn that only 13 members, which are the board of trustees, were legible as claimants and beneficiaries of the Libuyile.

They also said that they were surprised that Khumalo was telling people that he's the chief of the Libuyile community. It is also alleged that he went to local farmers and demanded money for his tribal authority.

All the Khumalos, whom he claim he is their chiefs, are disputing his chieftaincy and claim that he was never sworn as a chief but that has sworn



(Left) Principal claimant Samuel Khumalo reasoning with the police while Chief Khumalo (right) listens attentively

himself in.

According to Samuel Sibusiso Khumalo, who's the principal claimant of the land, Musa Khumalo with his board drafted a constitution that prohibits the other hundreds of beneficiaries to have access to the land.

Musa Khumalo asked the community to bear with him and not to evict him from the house he is living in from the farm.

"Yes I can step down as the chairperson of the board, but I can't be forced to move out of the house" said Khumalo.

"What I know is that I'm a chief of this community and nobody can force me to move," claimed Khumalo.

Amongst other things that are raising eyebrows to the beneficiaries, since the claim was won in 2005 and Musa was voted the chairman of the board, they have not had any reports from his board.

Matters came to a boil, after one of the board members who was Khumalo's deputy, Zulu Chirwa, came forward to the community and voiced every scheme that the board was engaging in.

The Libuyile farm is specializing in sugarcane farming, mango, and vegetables and the community alleges that Khumalo is pocketing all the profits from the sales of the farm produce.

Amongst other things that were publicized were that Khumalo's wife is selling vegetables to big super markets in the country and is said to be keeping the money.

After Khumalo's resistance to move, the mob then decided to apply for an eviction order as that can be valid this weekend.

Khumalo told Ziwaphi that he has not been evicted from the farm, but confirmed that there was an unrest incident.

"I was not evicted, and these allegations against me and my family are unfair, uninformed and orchestrated by dangerous forces."

He, however, confirmed that a small portion of land had been allocated to him and that was approved by board the Libuyile Community Trust

"We have set aside hectares of land to plant vegetables for people at home. The farm produce is used for subsistence purposes and to give people food, such as visitors and mainly for community meetings and other engagements of the tribal council," he said.

"There are other portions of land, 10 ha that were set aside for communities vegetable gardens. It is not just one narrow allocation of land to the tribal council. As I speak, now, people are busy planting on those fields."

"These allegations are spread by people behind have a counter-revolutionary agenda," Khumalo said.

'No malaria by 2015'

NELSPRUIT

By Sydney Masinga

Mpumalanga's Department of Health and Social wants to eliminate malaria transmission by 2015.

According to MEC Dikeledi Mahlangu, malaria elimination is a "high priority" in the province.

"All strategies must be intensified in the fight against malaria. Local malaria transmission must be reduced to zero by 2015, and we will also focus on malaria case management and awareness to ensure that the malaria death rate is reduced. We have already done extensive work in this area, especially in our preparations for the Fifa Soccer World Cup," said Mahlangu.

She said it was fortunate that the World Cup games would be played during the malaria off-season.

"Nonetheless, we have not rested and to date we have sprayed more than 18 000 rooms in lodges and guest houses in the high-risk areas of Bushbuckridge, Nkomazi, Umjindi and Mbombela," she said.

South Africa is using the controversial DDT (dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane) spray against malaria-carrying mosquitoes in

homes in both Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

Mahlangu said her department had increased its spray coverage rate to 92% in the last financial year.

"More than 469 000 structures were sprayed in Nkomazi, Bushbuckridge, Kruger National Park, Mbombela and Umjindi. With the indoor residual spraying programme, malaria vector mosquitoes are killed and malaria transmission is thus reduced."

She added that it was regrettable that lives continued to be lost because of the disease. "We recorded 1 856 malaria cases in the last financial year, with 21 deaths. These deaths represent a 1.13% fatality rate, which is above the norm of 0.5%. Our investigations revealed that contributing factors were late presentation of patients to health facilities, misdiagnosis by primary healthcare facilities and delays in referrals to the next level of care," she said.

According to the national Department of Health, about 14 000 cases of malaria are reported in the country annually, mainly in the Lowveld, Limpopo and the eastern part of KwaZulu-Natal.

It is estimated that 88 million people in the SADC region live in malaria-risk areas.

INVITATION TO FREE TOURISM SERVICE EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE SEMINARS

The National Department of Tourism will conduct the Tourism Service Excellence Initiative for 2010 and beyond by hosting training seminars in all nine provinces during the months of April to June 2010.

The Tourism Sector, through its Service Excellence Initiative seeks to improve South Africa's overall customer service at all service "touch points" in the sector with a view to transforming this country into a globally competitive service economy and the world's destination of choice.

South Africa is ranked 62nd out of 124 countries by the World Travel Tourism Council on its customer service delivery standards.

KOMATIPOORT 13 MAY 2010

These seminars are one of the interventions to improve our service standards in the country.

Venue : Kopa Hall 2

Time : 10:00 am - 12:00 pm and 2pm - 4pm (two sessions daily)

Date:

NELSPRUIT - 14 MAY 2010

Venue: AFM

Time : 10am - 12pm and 2pm - 4pm (two sessions daily)

SECUNDA - 17 MAY 2010

Venue: Sasol Club

Time : 10am - 12pm and 2pm - 4pm (two sessions daily)

KWA-MHLANGA 18 May 2010

Venue : Government Complex

Time : 10 am - 12pm and 2pm - 4pm (two sessions daily)

THE SEMINARS ARE FREE AND ANYONE CAN ATTEND

Young communists pay tribute to Bomber

The YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE in Mpumalanga province has learnt with sadness the brutal and coward murder of comrade Bomber Ntshangase, we convey our sincere condolences to his family, friends, and community and to the SACP.

Comrade Bomber has been a defender of the true NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION, without any fear or favour he has been in the fore front in the fight against corruption, defending the NDR against those who are distorting it for accumulation and tenderpreneurism.

Counter revolutionaries have hijacked the progressive programme of service delivery by our government through corruption, making the dream of better life for all a nightmare for the poor.

Murderers and cowards are not going to intimidate us in the fight against corruption, we have declared a war against corruption and we will continue to expose all those counter revolutionaries who are delaying service delivery to our people through corruption.

Comrade Bomber was a true MARXIST LENNIST student, who understood DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM that corruption is the origin of underdevelopment and poverty, corruption is evil like APARTHEID and CAPITALISM.

He applied the law of the NEGATION OF THE NEGATION; he died as a hero, a true revolutionary and a communist who wanted a true freedom and service delivery for his community.

Comrade Bomber will be remembered as a champion against corruption, he joins the likes of comrade Jimmy Mohlala true defenders of the REVOLUTION. It is alleged that at his time of dead comrade Bomber was exposing corruption in the housing.

Maviyo Ndinisa - YCL Mpumalanga

Nelspruit's WC transport plans in place

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT- The Mbombela Local Municipality in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, has announced its Fifa World Cup transport plan to accommodate the influx of visitors and ease potential traffic congestion.

Nelspruit will play host to four matches between June 16 and 24.

"This system is put forward to ensure that travelling in and around Nelspruit is safe and convenient for residents and visitors," says Mbombela 2010 World Cup coordinator Differ Mogale.

"The transport system is

an additional service to the regular day-to-day public transport system already in place. It comprises a public transport hub, six park-and-ride points and one park-and-walk point, all with free and secure parking, as well as an airport pickup point. Shuttle services to the stadium, Fan Fest and public transport hub will be operational from the park-and-ride and airport pickup points."

Mogale said 600 branded buses and minibus taxis would provide the shuttle services, with a number of primary and alternative routes that had been developed to ensure the system runs smoothly and traffic congestion is kept to a

minimum.

"The transport venues will open three hours before the first match of the day and close two hours after the last match of the day. Shuttle services will run every 20 minutes, depending on demand, and will be free from June 11 to 25. Thereafter a nominal fee will be charged," he said.

The Mbombela Stadium will not provide public parking for general spectators on match days and entry will be strictly enforced by law enforcement officials. About 650 transport volunteers have received training and will be on hand to assist spectators using the transport system at all the

transport venues.

"Event-specific signage will be installed throughout the host city to guide the public to dedicated transport venues," said Mogale.

He added that detailed print and broadcast media awareness campaigns would be undertaken and detailed pamphlets made available prior to and during the World Cup.

Road users passing through Nelspruit, especially the freight industry, have been encouraged to use the N4 ring road detour route, which is fast nearing completion. Road signs will be erected on the N4 to identify the route.

We need a miracle

Ray Phiri once released an album called "Chikapa's 11years"; that album contained a song called "We need a miracle". The song spoke about the challenges we face as a nation including that of HIV and poverty. In this province it seems we need more than just a miracle to be able to hold our heads up high and be counted like our fellow citizens from other provinces.

The scourge of shady dealings and total disregard for sanity eats away at us at a rate faster than the supersonic jet. We have grown so content with these conditions to the point where everybody is talking about it but nobody is doing anything about it, "just one of those things". One of the most sickening things one watches and perhaps I too am guilty of standing aloof as if watching a horror movie, is the way our artists are degraded, disregarded and discouraged by the powers that be. From the provincial government down to the provincial department of Sport, recreation, arts and culture. From the regional radio station (Ligwalagwala FM) right down to the music promoters.

Over the years one has observed how the provincial government has dismally failed to come up with initiatives that are aimed at sustainably enhancing/empowering the local performing arts. If one draws a line of comparison between the SEJACUFE in Secunda



Nativz Squad

and MACFEST provincially, it begs an answer...how can a region facilitate an event like this so successfully while the province fails to do so with a budget far bigger than the one at regional level. How do they account for those funds spent fruitlessly and wastefully, are we as the people of this province so ignorant or helpless we will just let this situation carry on unabated while we stand aside looking. Is the ruling party at peace with the status quo, is this the mandate they were given by the electorate, is the provincial department of sport, arts and culture a training ground or a dumping site for

either "trainee MEC's" or rejected or redundant ones?

The political situation in the province is not helping either, the arts are seen as not being that important because the "leaders" have so many fires to fight they don't have time for petty issues like the performing arts. The political will to nurture the arts in the province is a big ZILCH. The music festival at the official opening of the Mbombela stadium is a classic example of this sick and unacceptable practice by these fat cats we thought were supposed to lead "all our people" towards a better life for all and their pot bellied friends whom they have rewarded with senior positions where they make selfish and ill informed decisions to the detriment of our culture and values as a people of this province.

I fail to understand how the organisers of the opening would invite all these "artists" to an event right in our back yard and leave out our own musicians in the province, when are we going to change the mindset that a rat from the streets of Johannesburg is better than a human being from Nelspruit. Where is Native Squad in the line up, where is Black Chain, Afrotraction, where is Ray Phiri and Stimela. They can justify their decisions all they want but the truth is one...WE NEED A MIRACLE FOR WE ARE LEAD BY MORONS!!!

Masotsha Mdhluli



STILL WAITING FOR THE 3010 WORLD CUP?

Between May and July, the public broadcaster (SABC) will be playing 70% South African and African music. When the visitors are gone, then they will play foreign music again.

Ziwaphi is 100% local and African and will remain so until the return of Jesus.

TO ADVERTISE - PLEASE CALL 072 181 1554 OR 082 553 4067

Mbombela makes history by hosting Bafana Bafana

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT

All eyes will be on Mbombela Stadium in Mpumalanga on Sunday when Bafana Bafana play against Thailand in an historic, international friendly game to test the stadium's readiness before the Fifa World Cup kick-off 26 days later.

The Mbombela Stadium in Nelspruit has been dubbed the "miracle stadium" after the pitch had to be removed twice to comply with Fifa's requirements.

The newly planted rye grass germinated in a matter of days in March and "miraculously" grew to a lush pitch in about two weeks.

"We are proud of what we have achieved. We strongly believe we have been able to remain truly African in the design of our stadium, with its zebra-striped seats and the orange giraffe-like pillars that hold the stadium," said Mbombela municipality executive mayor Lassie Chiwayo.

"Mbombela is ready. The people have risen to the challenge and we are looking forward to receiving the multitudes of visitors who will be gracing our city of excellence."

Along with Soccer City in Gauteng, Mbombela is one of the last two stadiums that have yet to be opened officially before the World Cup.

The launch activities will start on



Mbombela will be Africa will be the first FIFA 2010 world cup stadium to host Bafana-Bafana. Stand-in-captain Teko Modise is expected to lead Bafana. He will be facing Thai's influential player, Teeratap Winothai nicknamed "Leesaw"

Friday with a Football Friday Carnival at the Matabaffin Old Cricket Club in the stadium precinct, where more than 2 000 people are expected to party to a host of local and national DJs.

A concert featuring artists such as Teargas, Malaika, Prokid, Winnie Khumalo and Mzekezeke will be hosted on Saturday from 12pm,

followed by the friendly against Thailand on Sunday.

The game will be introduced by an opening production featuring 800 local school children, traditional drummers, horn players, marimba drummers and traditional dancers representing the three dominant cultural groups in Mpumalanga, namely Swazi, Ndebele

and Shangaan.

The showcase will be directed by internationally acclaimed South African poet, performer and creative director Napo Masheane and choreographed by renowned choreographer and artist Somizi Mhlongo, who will also be staging the 2010 World Cup Opening on June 11.

MANDELA welcomes FIFA World Cup trophy

OWN CORRESPONDENT

On 15 May 2004 the long walk to the 2010 FIFA World Cup started with Nelson Mandela lifting the FIFA World Cup in Zurich.

With tears of joy in his eyes, he proclaimed that he felt 'like a boy of 15' on the day South Africa was awarded the right to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Today (6 May 2010), nearly six years later, South Africa's first democratic President, Madiba, again laid his hands on the FIFA World Cup Trophy at Johannesburg's Nelson Mandela Foundation just 35 days before kick-off of Africa's first FIFA World Cup. For FIFA Secretary General Jérôme Valcke and Organising Committee CEO Danny Jordaan it was a very special moment to personally share this moment.

"Nelson Mandela was one of the architects of this FIFA World Cup, we



Sizwe Mkwazi

will never forget the moment when South Africa was awarded the FIFA World Cup. Madiba is the symbol of this new democratic South Africa. For us there was no way that the Trophy

would arrive in the country and not being brought first to Mandela," explained FIFA Secretary General. "Nelson Mandela expressed his wish that he would see Bafana Bafana to win

the FIFA World Cup. We really hope that he will experience together with us the special moment celebrating South Africa's achievements in the stadium".

"It was so wonderful seeing Madiba in Zurich on the day South Africa won the right to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup, so happy with tears of joy rolling down his cheeks. So, it is quite an emotional and joyful moment to be back bringing the trophy to him, a symbol of world football with a global symbol of humanity," said Danny Jordaan, CEO of the Organising Committee.

"In the spirit of Mandela Day we would like all South African's and the world to see the Trophy representing good," said Achmat Dangor, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

On Friday, 7 May, the FIFA World Cup Trophy, started in Khayelitsha on its final leg of its world tour brought by Coca Cola through 38 cities and towns across all nine provinces in the host country.