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WORLD CUP FEVER HITS MBOMBELA

JUBILANT pupils from Lekazi Primary School and community members from KaNyamazane came running to witness the 2010 FIFA World Cup bus.

NEWS HEADLINES

EDUCATION GETS BIGGEST BUDGET

Mpumalanga's ailing department of education survived the 2009/2010 financial year through handouts of almost R140-million that were contributed by other departments.

Page 4

14 YEARS OF MBOMBELA LAND CLAIM

It has been 14 years since the Mbombela claimants, who were removed from Nelspruit to KaNyamazane in 1970, made their claim to be reimbursed for giving up their ancestral land.

- Page 5

WE ARE READY: Both the LOC CEO Danny Jordan and FIFA Secretary General, Jérôme Valcke expressed their confidence over Mpumalanga's state of readiness to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

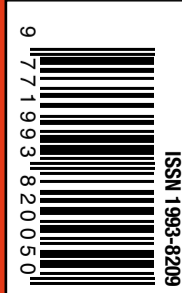


HIT LIST



ENTER THE HAWKS

SEE PAGE 3





By Comrade Phinda Mzala

Meet the people we wish were not associated with the hit list

Just as we thought the list saga was disappearing, it re-emerged this past week, and this time two not-so-new players joined the fray.

The name of James Nkambule, former provincial secretary of the ANC Youth League and now a leader of the break-away faction, Congress of the People (COPE) also seems to be a magnet of controversy.

Nkambule once implicated Mathews Phosa, Tokyo Sexwale and Cyril Ramaphosa of plotting to kill Thabo Mbeki, but later apologised to the nation.

He got extremely sick, such that his enemies were already writing his obituary. We all welcome his recovery, but very few people will welcome his public utterances.

Nkambule believes that his sickness was caused through poisoning. The same allegation was published in national papers a few weeks earlier.

While the newspapers did mention that the same person is responsible for the high profile assassinations in the province, they fail to mention the alleged conspirator.

This has, regrettably pit comrades against comrades.

It was good enough for Nkambule to distance himself from the articles that were published in the Sowetan about him being the author of a Hit List, and we also advise him to request the paper to put the record straight.

We however, cannot condone his decision to entangle himself in



James Nkambule

the hit list issues because it will be difficult for the public to forgive him again.

While we cannot prevent him from listening to people who allege that they were responsible for allegedly poisoning him, he is committing a grave mistake by becoming the expert of the hit list.

The second name that many activists in the province did not want to hear being linked to the hit list debate is that of Sibusiso Sgudla.

Sgudla is currently a leader of the ANC in Gert Sibande region. He was also forgiven, after his link with the feared Inkatha-linked Black Cats vigilante group that was terrorising the people of Ermelo and Piet-Retief in the early 1990s.

He was even appointed as former Ndaweni Mahlangu's Personal

Assistant and regrettably had to leave under a cloud of controversy.

Sgudla told baffled radio listeners earlier this week that "Josh", the alleged assassin who killed former Mbombela Speaker, Jimmy Mohlala was not telling the truth about the murder of a former employee of the Govan Mbeki municipality, Joshua Ntshuhle, who had disappeared after he had instituted investigations against certain individuals in the municipality.

Not only was the official's office burnt down mysteriously, but he also disappeared from the face of the earth and his vehicle was recovered in Malawi.

According to "Josh" he was buried in a farm in Mpumalanga and his vehicle driven to Malawi where it was abandoned.

Until recently the police have failed the people of the province by failing to apprehend anybody after so many murders have occurred.

The National Police Commissioner, Bheki Cele, announced the appointment of the Head of the Hawks in Mpumalanga, and the Office of the Premier has acknowledged that he will be expected to resolve all the unsolved "political" murders.

In the meantime, those who have something to say about the hit list should at all times avoid politicising it and should please leave the ANC out of it, because these activities are very criminal and are informed by some people's desire to plunder the resources that should be given to the poor.

Mpumalanga police ask ID owners to come forward

MASHISHING

By Thobile Mlangeni

Mpumalanga police are looking for the rightful owners of five ID books and a passport that were found with robbery suspects in November last year.

According to Captain Leonard Hlathi, spokesperson of the organised crime unit, five robbers - two men and three women - targeted women at hiking spots, robbing them of their personal belongings.

The IDs are those of Victoria

Viki Monani of Acornhoek, Phangisile Gladness Nhlapho of Bethlehem, Mamokae Hermina Tsolela of Jouberton, Prudence Nompumelelo Mashaba of Matsulu, and Boitshoko Brenda Modise of Boitekong.

The passport belongs to a Mozambican national called Elisa Cambulane.

"We suspect that the owners of these IDs might have fallen victim to the suspects, and we therefore ask them to come forward and give us their statements," said Hlathi.

On Monday, the five suspects

appeared in the Lydenburg Regional Court on charges of robbery and their case was postponed to March 26.

Hlathi said all of them were remanded in custody.

"They gave us false names but we managed to trace their real identities. This proves that they were planning to abscond if given bail," he said.

The owners of the IDs can contact Detective Inspector Thomas Motau on 082 6833 794 or Hlathi on 082 462 0804.



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MPUMALANGA HAWKS BOSS TO PROBE POLITICAL MURDERS

BY TSHWARELO ESENG MOGAKANE

NELSPRUIT

Safety and security authorities in Mpumalanga hope that the newly appointment provincial head of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, Simon Mapyane, can crack the whip on crime in the province, including the unsolved political murder cases.

Mabutho Sithole, spokesperson for premier David Mabuza, said the Hawks were expected to tackle all the unsolved political murder cases, such as that of Saul Shabangu, Hebron Maisela, Sydney De Lange, Thandi Mtsweni, Jimmy Mohlala and Sammy Mpatlanyane.

The province's organised crime unit has been unable to make any headway with these cases, despite offering rewards for information leading to the killers' arrest. "The Hawks are expected to take the lead in the matter by investigating and subsequently apprehending the people



National Commissioner of police, Bheki Cele announced appointment of Hawks Head in Mpumalanga

behind these senseless killings," said Sithole.

He said the same must apply to "the war against corruption".

Mapyane's appointment to head the

unit, better known as the Hawks, in Mpumalanga was announced by Police National Commissioner Bheki Cele last week.

"No stone will be left unturned even if a member [of the police] is involved [in crime]," said Joseph Mabuza, spokesperson in the office of safety, security and liaison MEC Sibongile Manana.

Mabuza was responding to questions sent by African Eye News Service regarding Mapyane's expected role in the province, which has become notorious for cash and drugs worth millions disappearing from police evidence rooms.

In August last year, confiscated drugs worth R3.7-million disappeared from a police station storeroom in Nelspruit.

At the time, Manana publically condemned corrupt police behaviour and instructed former acting police provincial commissioner Rex Machabi to disband the organised crime unit in the city.

In November last year, R559 000 also disappeared from the unit's Middelburg branch.

"It is expected of the Hawks to ensure that thorough investigations are done to crack those cases as the government views crime and corruption very seriously, regardless of the person involved," said Mabuza.

He said the Hawks would focus on investigating corruption and serious crimes, including drug trafficking and organised crime, as well as the unsolved murders dating back to the early '90s, which have been linked to political feuds.

Provincial police spokesperson Senior Superintendent Sibongile Nkosi could not confirm when Mapyane would report for duty in Mpumalanga.

"We can confirm that a provincial head of the Hawks has been appointed but we are not sure when he will resume duty. That information will be released in due time," said Nkosi.

Mpumalanga ANC distances itself from hit list

BY SYDNEY MASINGA & ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT

The so-called hit list targeting whistleblowers in Mpumalanga is portraying the province as "most corrupt and crime infested", the provincial ANC has said in a statement released on Tuesday.

Mpumalanga ANC spokesperson Paul Mbenyane said the people who circulated the hit list wanted to disrupt stability in the province.

"[They] have divided the people of the province and also portrayed Mpumalanga as the most corrupt and crime-infested province where there is no rule of law and morality at all."

Mbenyane said the ANC had no knowledge of any hit lists except what has been reported in the media.

"We therefore distance ourselves from such a list, if it ever existed. We call upon anyone who has any tangible information to come forward and

assist law enforcement. Murder is murder and should be condemned in the strongest terms possible, no matter whether the victim is a member of the ANC or not. Law enforcement should do whatever it takes to bring to book the people who are involved in the senseless killings of people in the province."

Mbenyane also denied that people in the ANC were behind the hit list, as has been suggested.

"Any person who can be found to be involved in any criminal activities like murder, such person can not be a member of the ANC no matter what position they can be holding," he said.

Opposition parties in the province have challenged premier David Mabuza to speak out about the hit list.

"Media reports tacitly implicate the premier in knowing about the hit list, so he should break his silence and tell the people of the province what he knows about it," said Zale



Paul Mbenyane - ANC spokesperson

Prudence Madonsela, COPE's leader in Mpumalanga.

During a 2010 Fifa World Cup media

briefing that was held at the Mbombela Stadium on Sunday, Mabuza told journalists that he was not in a position to comment.

"We are not [the] best [people] to comment on that. We have police and intelligence [officials] who are busy investigating the hit list," said Mabuza.

The DA's leader in the province, Anthony Benadie, said the party would write a letter to the auditor-general to request an investigation into all the tenders awarded in the province since Mabuza became premier.

In response, ANC spokesperson Jackson Mthembu said Luthuli House had already deployed a task team to investigate the hit list and accusations of corruption.

"The task team is already in the province looking at the allegations," he said.

Robbers blow up ATMs near Badplaas

BY THOBILE MLANGENI

ELUKWATINI

Robbers have stolen an undisclosed amount of money after bombing two ATM's at Nhlazatshe shopping complex near Badplaas.

The suspects used an unknown substance to bomb two First National Bank ATMs at about 3am on

Wednesday.

By midday on Wednesday, the police were still busy on the scene.

Mumcy Shiba, the acting spokesperson of the Elukwatini police station, said the police were alerted about the robbery as it was taking place and responded to the scene.

A shootout between the robbers and the police ensued.

"Two cars belonging to the SAPS were damaged by bullets from the suspects, who managed to escape in two cars - an Opel Corsa and a Mazda 3 series," she said.

No one was injured and no arrests have been made.

"Police are still investigating the matter," Shiba said.

An official from the bank, who wanted

to remain anonymous, said the ATMs were completely destroyed.

"Our customers will have to use the other ATM at Pick n Pay or other banks' machines," she said.

Anyone with information about the robbery can contact Captain Sithole on 017 8830 050.

'Farming grants should be monitored'

BY SIPHIWE NYATHI

NELSPRUIT

The allocation of money for agricultural grants as set out in Mpumalanga's new budget has drawn cautious optimism from emerging farmers in Mpumalanga.

Tabling her R26-billion budget in Nelspruit on Tuesday, finance MEC Pinky Phosa said her department would give money to the agricultural support programme, the land care programme, and the Ilima/Letsema (farming) projects.

All the grants are aimed at boosting agricultural production, but farmers say this will only happen if the department of agriculture, rural development and land administration monitors the funds effectively.

"It is useless to have such impressive amounts spent on grants if they end up with people who are not interested in farming," said the chairperson of the Nkomazi Agricultural Development Organisation (NADO), Pitrus Sithole.

"Some of the criteria that are used when handing over these grants are questionable and vulnerable to corruption," he added.

Sithole said grants for the comprehensive agricultural support programme, which will get R81.947-million in 2010/2011 and is aimed at providing support for newly established and emerging farmers, often did not reach "deserving" farmers.

"The department must assist those who progress in farming instead of giving grants to those who have good business plans but little to show in action," he said.

The agricultural support programme grant includes the extension recovery programme, which focuses on improving extension services through training programmes and better resources for extension officers.

It has been allocated R81.947-million in 2010/2011, R95.691-million in 2011/2012, and R100.475-million in 2012/2013.

The grant also targets farm infrastructure and provides support for



MEC for Finance Pinky Phosa

dipping, fencing and the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes. The land care

programme, which focuses on poverty relief and infrastructure development, is aimed at optimising productivity and the sustainable use of natural resources such as vegetation. It has been allocated relatively little money with R4.904-million in 2010/2011, R5.198-million in 2011/2012, and R5.458-million in 2012/2013.

The Ilima/Letsema projects grant, which is intended to boost food production by assisting previously disadvantaged South African farming communities with agricultural starter packs such as seeds, fertilisers and ploughing equipment, will receive R20-million in 2010/2-11, R40-million in 2011/2012, and R42-million in 2012/2013.

The finance department's contribution towards the comprehensive rural development programme will amount to R107-million in 2010/2011 in conditional grants. Phosa said the department of agriculture, rural development and land administration would receive a total amount of R737.936-million in grants.

Education gets biggest slice of Mpumalanga budget

BY TSHWARELO ESENG MOGAKANE

NELSPRUIT

Mpumalanga's ailing department of education survived the 2009/2010 financial year through handouts of almost R140-million that were contributed by other departments.

According to the MEC for finance, Pinkie Phosa, all the departments in the province had to raid their own budgets to assist the department of education.

"Through a reprioritisation process, departments ... contributed R139-million towards pressures in the education department," said Phosa during the tabling of the Mpumalanga appropriation bill on Tuesday.

Phosa announced that the provincial treasury would allocate R11.5-billion to the department, almost half of the R26.1-billion budget allocated to the

province for the 2010/2011 financial year.

"Education has clearly been a government priority during the past 15 years. However, the educational outcomes have not matched the investment," said Phosa.

"This is illustrated by learner performance, which has been measured in various national and regional evaluations that included matric exams, systematic evaluations which looked at learner performance and literacy, and management, among other things," she said.

In reaction, provincial DA leader Anthony Benadie blamed corruption for the mess in the department.

"We have seen, evident in the numerous corruption scandals, a total perversion of power abuse within this department. We have experienced the

syndicated exploitation of education resources, with millions of rands stolen and extorted from the coffers of this department – literally driving it to the point of bankruptcy."

He said the DA had been alarmed to learn that the department was so broke that it could not afford to print 15 000 matric certificates because it owed money to quality assurance body Umalusi.

Umalusi spokesperson Mike Khuboni confirmed that the department only paid for the printing of certificates in February, but refused to divulge the amount that had been owed.

"The department paid all the outstanding fees on 11 February 2010, [however,] it is not Umalusi policy to disclose [amounts] to third parties," said Khuboni.

Benadie said the financial

mismanagement in the department had also resulted in a number of schools not receiving textbooks in 2010.

He said Mhaule's claim that the department could only deliver textbooks during the second school term because of changes to the syllabus was untrue.

"The truth of this matter is that the department, drastically short of cash, is unable to pay service providers for the textbooks and are waiting for the new budget of the next financial year," he said.

But Mhaule's spokesperson, Jasper Zwane, dismissed Benadie's claims.

"It is not true that we are misleading the public. Textbooks will be delivered in the next term due to the reasons the MEC provided," he said.

Traditional healers ask MEC Manana for protection

BY TSHWARELO ESENG MOGAKANE

MAYFLOWER

Community members of Mayflower next to the Swaziland border in Mpumalanga live in fear of witchcraft - and they take it out on traditional healers.

The situation is so bad that the traditional healers living in the area have asked safety, security and liaison MEC Sibongile Manana to protect them from brutal witch hunts.

"The izinyanga (traditional healers) told the MEC that the community was ridden with fear and anger towards

them. They call them witches and just attack them without any justifiable reason," said Manana's spokesperson, Joseph Mabuza.

"The izinyanga have pleaded with the MEC to protect them from community members who accuse them of witchcraft, because they end up assaulting or killing them." Mabuza said the healers approached Manana during a community safety imbizo held in the area on Monday.

"They said their only hope was to speak to the MEC," he added.

Manana responded by pleading with the community to respect traditional healers because people relied on their

services for various needs.

"We should not accuse or kill them. If you suspect any wrongdoing by the traditional healers, report them to the police and let the law take its course," said Manana.

The community also asked Manana to build them a police station because the nearest one was 65km away and serviced 82 000 people from 11 different villages.

"Stock theft seems to be the most serious and leading crime in the area because most people complained that their cattle and goats were stolen and sold at a local market place," Manana said.

She advised community members to brand their livestock to make it easier for police to identify them during raids or investigations.

Provincial police commissioner Thulani Ntobela said the community could expect a police station in the 2011/2012 financial year.

"In the meantime, we have purchased three vehicles for the current police station. We want to recruit local people to join the police service so that we can increase police visibility for the community of Mayflower," said Ntobela.

He added that areas with a high crime rate in the province would receive priority in terms of resources.

MBOMBELA LAND CLAIM: 14 years later the community still waits

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT

It has been 14 years since the Mbombela claimants, who were removed from Nelspruit to KaNyamazane in 1970, made their claim to be reimbursed for giving up their ancestral land.

Now the group, which has been reduced from an original 6 000 to about 2 200 claimants, is demanding that their money, amounting to more than R64.2-million, be paid out.

According to an agreement reached with the claimants, each verified owner of land is entitled to R57 000, while tenants will get R31 929 each.

So far, only 400 individuals have been paid a total of R7.2 million, in 2003 and

2004.

During the last meeting with the Mbombela Claimants Committee and Regional Land Claims Commission officials on November 19 last year, the commission promised to forward payments to the approved claimants on February 27.

“But three days before the due date, I received a call from the RLCC to say there were no funds available,” said Bernard Mashego, spokesperson for the claimants.

Most recently, during a meeting with the claimants in KaNyamazane on Sunday, acting chief land claims commissioner Andrew Mphela told them that the Regional Land Claims Commission payments were delayed by illegitimate claims by people who did

not qualify.

“Payment to the outstanding accepted claims shall take place during April,” he promised the claimants.

Mphela said the verification process was taking long because of “non-compliance with the internal control system, missing claim files, collusion, corruption and misrepresentation of information by RLCC officials and claimants.

But Mashego said the RLCC was to blame and not the claimants.

“The community presented their claims in accordance with their stand numbers and the places where tenants lived in the former Mbombela village. It is the RLCC officials who created faults and irregularities by throwing away some of the files. Why has it taken the RLCC

almost 14 years to verify the claims?” he asked.

He said allegations that some RLCC officials were demanding money from the claimants to fast-track their claims had led to the appointment of a forensic audit team.

“We asked for the investigation after we received complaints from claimants who were asked to pay bribes. The investigation started on September 7 last year and was completed in December, but we are still waiting for the results,” said Mashego.

Mphela said that the forensic audit had been completed but could not be released yet.

“The final report is awaiting signature by the director-general of the department,” he said.

Mkhondo Municipality fired all senior managers - MEC

BY MUNTU SIYAYA

The MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs in Mpumalanga Province, Norman Mokoena, says that all the senior managers at Mkhondo Municipality have been fired and that the communities that were engulfed in service delivery protests are satisfied with the performance of the administrators who took over the management of certain troubled municipalities.

Mokoena was responding to questions from Member of the Provincial Legislature, SPD Skhosana during the Legislature Sitting on Tuesday.

“The satisfaction of the communities can be measured against the number of unrests situations which occurred after the intervention. The decline of the unrests in Mkhondo and Thaba Chweu municipalities is an indication of the level of satisfaction within communities on the performance of the Administrators,” he said.



MEC for Local Governance and Traditional Affairs, Norman Mokoena

Mkhondo and Thaba Chweu municipalities experienced some of the

most violent community protests ever witnessed since the 1994 democratic breakthrough, where government property such as clinics and libraries were burnt down during the protests. Several people also lost their lives during clashes with the police.

Premier David Mbuza and Mokoena spent almost the better half of last year visiting emotionally charged communities in an effort to quell violent protests. At one point, Mbuza was forced to dismiss all councilors in front of thousands of angry residents at a Mkhondo municipality stadium.

Mokoena told the Legislature that both the Municipal Manager and Chief Financial Officer at Mkhondo Municipality have resigned.

“As a result of the dismissal of all senior management and resignation of the Municipal Manager, the Administrator was requested to assist with the appointment process of these officials,” Mokoena said.

Mokoena also said that the interaction

between the municipality and the community has improved and that service delivery has also been enhanced.

“[The Municipality has] managed to stabilise the environment, especially in terms of dealing with the community; 273 families were allocated houses as part of the 100 days Premier Project; cleared more than 6000 households VIP toilets and established a ground water protocol for Mkhondo,” he said.

Mokoena warned, however, that the both Mkhondo and Thaba Chweu municipalities were “under financial pressure”.

“A balance should be found between the demands made by the community and the financial ability of the municipality to address these demands. Communities tend not always to understand the reprioritisation during an intervention which might create a situation where not all members of the communities are fully satisfied with the progress made,” he said.

Mpumalanga airport gets more flights before World Cup

BY TSHWARELO ESENG MOGAKANE

NELSPRUIT

The number of domestic flights to the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport in Nelspruit will be increased a month ahead of the 2010 Fifa World Cup kickoff in June.

The flights form part of a new deal signed between the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) and Comair Limited, which operates local and regional British Airways flights in South Africa.

“From May 4, British Airways will commence with six flights a week

between Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport and OR Tambo International [in Johannesburg],” said Comair executive manager of sales and route development Stuart Cochrane.

He said Comair was very excited about the partnership with the MTPA because it created an opportunity to bring more international and local travellers to the region.

“Comair’s increased capacity will allow travellers easy access to Mpumalanga while at the same time raising the profile of the province, which has so many beautiful experiences to offer,” Cochrane said.

The short flight, in a Boeing 737-



Charles Ndabeni - Chief Executive Officer of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Authority (MTPA)

300, takes 40 minutes and will depart from OR Tambo at 10:40am, allowing the international inbound market to connect.

The return flight will depart from Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport at 12pm.

“This partnership will deliver much-needed competition and additional capacity on the route between Mpumalanga and Gauteng, and both business and leisure travellers are expected to benefit from the new scheduled service,” said MTPA chief executive Charles Ndabeni.

British Airways and Airlink are the only carriers servicing the airport.

Councillor accuses mayor of planning service delivery protest

SILAS NDUVHENI

KWAGGAFONTEIN

By Silas Nduvheni

A ward councillor in Thembisile Hani Local Municipality in KwaMhlanga, Mpumalanga, has accused the executive mayor of arranging a service delivery protest in a bid to oust him from his job.

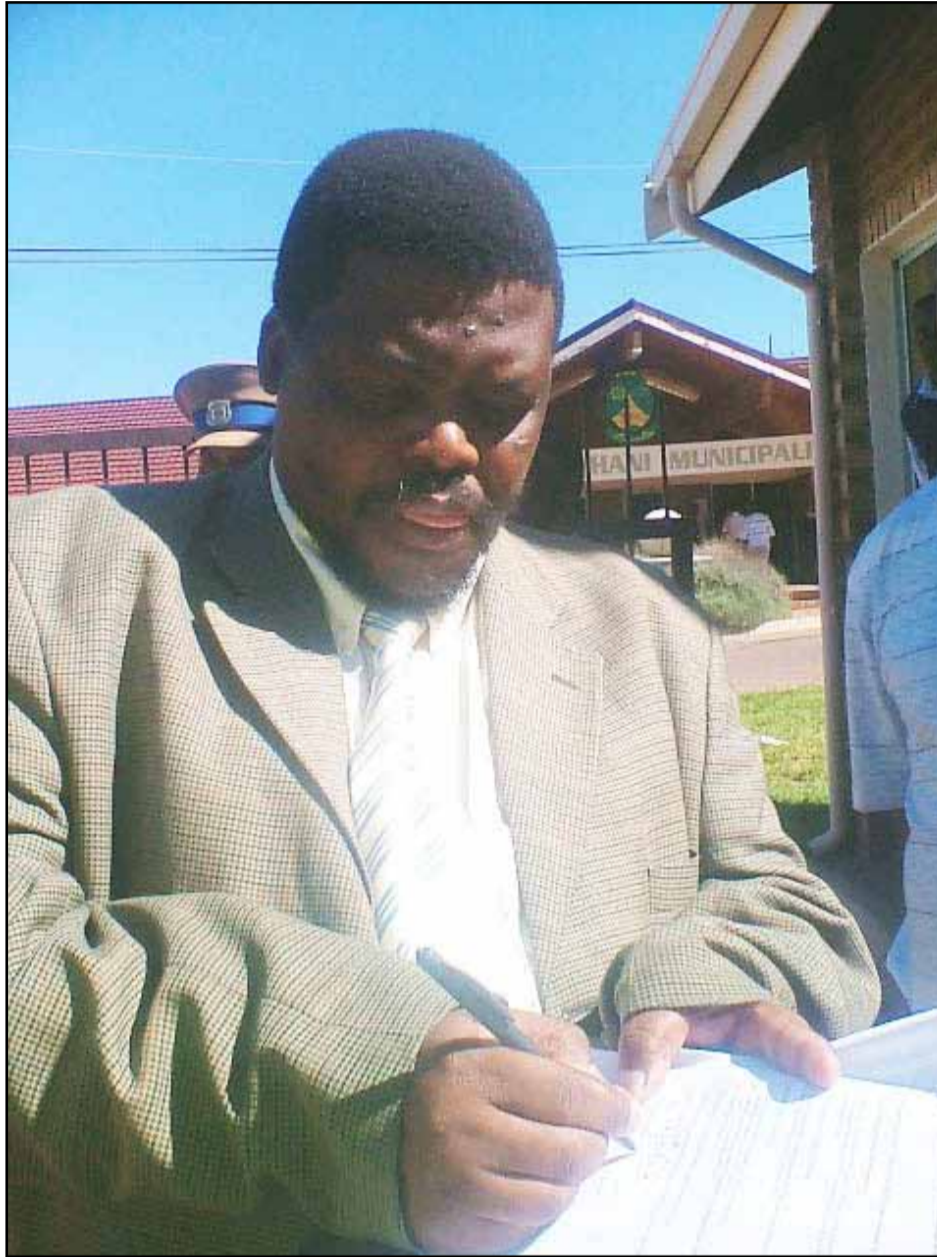
On Thursday, Peter Mokone said executive mayor Victor Velaphi Nkosi had orchestrated a protest by Moloto North villagers that took place on Monday morning this week.

“He arranged the community protest. He is trying to cover up his mess because he is a failure in service delivery. He should be leading us as our office leader instead of influencing community members,” said Mokone, who has been a ward councillor with the municipality for 10 years.

The protestors handed over a memorandum of grievances pertaining to poor service delivery and a petition for the dismissal of Mokone to the mayor.

During an interview with Ikwewezi FM on Monday afternoon, Mokone also accused Nkosi of being involved in corruption by awarding tenders worth R2.6-million for a Fifa 2010 World Cup Fan Park to companies owned by councillors and friends.

The Fan Park project was implemented without council authorisation and was later abandoned. Early last month, municipal manager William Mahlangu



DID HE STAGE-MANAGE THE MARCH? His own councillors and officials claim that the Executive Mayor of Thembisile Chris Hani Municipality, Victor Velaphi Nkosi, orchestrated the march against his own municipality

was suspended by the council for being involved in the matter and for illegally adjusting the salaries of senior personnel, including his own and that of Nkosi.

Mokone told African Eye News Service that service delivery was the responsibility of the executive mayor, who was trying to “cover up his mess” by arranging the community protest. But Moloto North village community leader Steven Thoka denied Mokone’s allegations.

“The protest was not arranged by mayor Nkosi, but by the community as stated in the memorandum. The ward councillor failed to answer our demands and should not link his boss to our protest. We need service delivery and he knows well that he is a failure. He is trying to cover up his poor performance,” Thoka said.

Municipal spokesman Themba Mtsweni said the council had recommended to cooperative governance and traditional affairs MEC Norman Mokoena that the corruption allegations against Nkosi be investigated.

“We have engaged with the office of MEC Mokoena to investigate the allegations against mayor Nkosi. The MEC is the only person with the power to suspend the mayor in the event of any corruption or misconduct. We cannot link the mayor with the community protest because we do not have any proof of it - the office of the MEC has the power to investigate such activities and to take resolutions,” said Mtsweni on Friday.

Department fiddles with teacher figures in Mpumalanga

SILAS NDUVHENI

NELSPRUIT

A war of words has erupted between the official opposition party, the trade union and the Mpumalanga education officials on the vacant teaching posts in the province. This was after the opposition claimed that almost 84 000 pupils in the province do not have teachers.

Last week, the Democratic Alliance leader in the province, Anthony Benadie, said the provincial department of education had yet to fill 2 894 teaching posts. He had received this figure from education MEC Reginah Mhaule during a reply to parliamentary questions from the DA in January.

“If you apply the teacher-per-pupil ratio norm of 1:29, these vacancies affect no less than 83 926 learners. In many cases, the amount of children in classes is in excess of the ratio norm, so the figure may be a conservative estimate,” said Benadie at the time.

On Monday, however, the department disputed the figure, saying it had already filled 2 732 of the vacant posts.

“It is misleading of the member of the opposition to be selective in his comprehension of information provided to him by suggesting that there are vacant educator posts in the province. As we speak, all the teachers I have referred to are in schools teaching,” said department spokesperson Jasper Zwane.

He said the contracts for the posts that have been filled were approved before December 2009.

But the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union says the department is lying.

“It is not true to say the posts have been filled. We are still waiting for the department to give us a management plan on how to fill those posts,” said provincial Sadtu secretary Walter Hlase, on Tuesday.

Hlase said the union had met with the department a week ago to discuss a time frame for the posts to be filled.

“The sooner the posts are filled, the better, for both teachers and learners,” he added.

A Bushbuckridge school principal, who



MEC for Basic Education, Reginah Mhaule

spoke on condition of anonymity, said he had been waiting to fill three posts at his school for “more than a year”.

“I have teachers who have been volunteering at the school for longer than that. I have been waiting for permanent posts to be advertised but nothing has happened,” he said.

He said this was frustrating for temporary teachers because their livelihood was not secure.

“These posts have to be advertised, so these teachers are not guaranteed a job because the process has to be open to all applicants. At anytime they can be replaced by permanent teachers and told to go home,” he said.

Mpumalanga Legislators honour women on International Women's Day

On the 8th of March each year, the world over celebrates International Women's Day (IWD) and when the South Africa was liberated from apartheid in 1994, the country joined the international community to commemorate this significant day in the struggle for the emancipation of women.

The United Nation's theme for this year's IWD is Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all.

The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, as a tradition, observes events that are of significance through a Snap Debate, and this week was no exception as Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPLs) shared their views on the significance of the day.

To celebrate the day, Ziwaphi publishes a speech delivered by MPL Pretty Ngubeni (MPL, ANC)

"The 8th of March is a historic day and a memorable day for all women of the world.

In 1917 on this day, the Great February Revolution took place in Saint Petersburg. The Working Women of Saint Petersburg staged this revolutionary day in demand of bread, peace and universal suffrage. This resulted in the removal of the Tsar

and his associates on the 8th of March and the ultimate victory of the Great October Revolution of 1917.

On the 28th of February 1909, the socialist women of the USA organized huge demonstrations and meetings all over the USA in demand of political rights and working conditions for all women.

In 1990 at the second international conference of the Working Women, Clara Zetkin brought forward the question of organizing an International Working Women's Day. It was then decided that the International Women's Day must be celebrated every year in every country and the same day.

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as history makers. It is rooted in the countries old struggle of women to participate in the society on equal footing with men.

Hon Speaker, one of our intentions to honour this day is to reflect and think back on heroic achievements made by our mothers, sisters and daughters in their endeavour to make our lives better than ever before.

In our democratic South Africa, women have taken advantage of opportunities brought about by our new democracy to create better life for all in a country we have inherited from the dark and



MPL Pretty Ngubeni (MPL, ANC)

repressive past.

South Africa is now a model in championing women's rights in the whole world as it is seen in women representation in parliament and in government. Also men and women with the same skills or education get the same salary, which is opposed to European countries, as there is still a gender gap in wages.

For how long will we use culture as

an excuse to oppose human rights of women in South Africa? Our girls are abducted as young as 12 years of age and to be married to old men in the name of culture which you call (Ukuthwala). This is rife in the Eastern Cape around Lusikisiki. These young girls are exposed to the thread of HIV infection and other sexual transmitted diseases and usually are deprived of schooling.

Ukuthwala should be treated as a criminal offence, those involved in abduction should be charged and those having sex with minor girls should be charged with statutory rape.

For as long as our girl children and sisters are trafficked to outside countries as sex slaves, the struggle is not yet over. For as long as our sisters are still clinging to abusive partners because of poverty, the struggle is not over.

As South Africa, we have come a long way and there is still a lot to be done. It is not yet UHURU, ALUTHA CONTINUA.

As I conclude hon Speaker, I urge all women of our country to support and stand side by side with the struggling women and children of the world for their liberation and their ultimate achievement of peace and equality in their countries of birth. I thank you."

Young People, Stand Up!

The period leading to the last ANC elective Conference exposed political opportunist who could not accept fair democratic processes which smashed their ambitions to be leaders in the ANC. The people of SA confirmed what the ANC delegates in Polokwane had said, that there must be change of guard in the ANC and ultimately in government, through a ballot.

Post election, we saw violent service delivery protests all over the province. It is my honest view that, fifteen years into democracy, South Africans has demonstrated to the rest of Africa and world that change can be effected peacefully. Why is it that, while being aware of the rule of law and democracy, still we resort to violence in order to effect change.

We, the members and supporters of the ANC have democratically and peacefully changed leadership, but now are finding it difficult to change leaders in our respective wards. It should not take vandalizing and destroying properties in order to effect change. Ward councilors' are elected through peaceful, lawful and democratic processes. It does not follow that when we want to remove

them, we then resort to lawlessness, burning libraries, blockading access roads to our townships in the process losing lives.

There are laws in this country, these laws are followed to the latter when we put people into positions but when we want to remove them, we want to do it the other way. It cannot be correct. All young revolutionaries must ensure that we stop this because it is entirely not what we would like to inherit. If these trends persist, then we should brace ourselves to see military overthrowing of governments in the future.

Lets all unite our voices in condemning these violent protests we have witnessed. Democratically elected and legitimate leaders cannot be removed forcefully. I do not in anyway question the legitimacy of the protests but I am worried about the elements that seek break every rule in the book, just to change leadership. The element of bringing your own organization into disrepute, just to change leadership.

**Khulani Nhlabathi
Gert Sibande Region**

Help me – my skin is going white!

BY ORIS MNISI

BUSHBUCKRIDGE

A 26-year-old woman from Mpumalanga is desperate to find a cure for the mysterious skin disease that's turning her life into pure hell.

Jacqueline Dolorence Mhlanga, who lives in Allandale village in Bushbuckridge, says her skin started losing its pigment late in December last year.

What's worse is that she has now developed itchy sores on her legs.

"I cannot get any sleep, especially on hot days. I need at least four fans blowing on me to find some relief. I cannot go outside without an umbrella, otherwise my skin gets itchier. And when I scratch, it just gets worse," she said.

An extremely worried Mhlanga says people run away when they see what she looks like.

"My boyfriend has left me and I've had to stop selling sweets and fruit on the street because people don't want to buy from me anymore," she said.

Her appearance also makes people confused about her



Jacqueline Dolorence Mhlanga shows how her black skin is disappearing and the itchy sores on her leg

identity.

"Bank officials are reluctant to help me because my pale skin is completely different from my ID book photo," she said.

Mhlanga has already spent more than R5 000 to consult sangomas, prophets and even medical doctors, but no one has been able to help her.

"The sangomas and prophets told me that wicked hawkers have bewitched because

they are jealous of my business. Doctors at Mapulaneng Hospital insisted that I should take HIV/Aids drugs, but I have tested HIV negative on several occasions."

A traditional doctor from East Africa, Ishmael Walima Junior, said Mhlanga's skin was losing its "black pigment".

"I have tried giving her different herbs to stop the itchy wounds, but they didn't work," he said.

Another healer, Anny Ndlovu, said Mhlanga suffered from a disease called "ndlati".

"She might have inherited the disease from her family, or she was bewitched by people who want to see her suffer. They use hippo fat mixed with muti to bewitch her," said Ndlovu.

Whatever the reason, Mhlanga just wants her ordeal to end.

"Please, I'd be so grateful if there's just someone who can help me," she pleaded.

Seda reaches out to rural areas

BY TSHWARELO ESENG MOGAKANE

NELSPRUIT

Ambitious entrepreneurs who live in Mpumalanga's most far-flung rural areas will get an opportunity to access services to develop their small businesses.

From next week, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) will launch an outreach campaign themed "Seda is here to help you, let's talk business".

According to the provincial spokesperson for Seda, Busi Hlatshwayo, the campaign will assist the organisation to reach people who have never accessed its services before.

"Seda's mandate is to develop and

support small businesses in South Africa to ensure their growth and sustainability. The campaign seeks to accelerate that," said Hlatshwayo.

Seda provides information, counselling and business support services that target, in particular, micro- and small enterprises, including cooperatives from all sectors in the country.

It also assists medium-sized enterprises and emerging entrepreneurs.

"All this is aimed at encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship in South Africa," Hlatshwayo said.

Seda chief executive Hlonela Lupuwana added that the outreach campaign was part of the government's broader campaign to extend developmental services to places where there has been

minimal reach.

"Central to our focus is ensuring equitable access for small enterprises to business support services. This outreach campaign provides us with an opportunity to reach even further than we have before to promote a culture of entrepreneurship and render much-needed services," said Lupuwana.

The provincial manager of Seda, Ntokozo Majola, said a number of outlying areas that will be targeted by the campaign had been identified.

"At the end of this campaign we want to make sure that everyone in the communities that will be visited knows about the services we provide and how to access them," said Majola.

Most important is for Seda to establish

sustainable partnerships with local municipalities as well as other developmental organisations.

Majola said that this would help to speed up service delivery and ensure that services are delivered in a coordinated way.

"We invite all aspiring entrepreneurs and interested persons to attend these sessions. You don't have to pay a single cent, it's all for free," Majola said.

The Mpumalanga outreach campaign will take place from March 17 to 19, and starts at Piet Retief's Campville Hall, followed by Enhlazatshe's Siphumelele Hall and Delmas's Simon Gondwe Sports Centre.

The sessions will start at 9am.

Mpumalanga's top drivers to compete internationally

BY THOBILE MLANGENI

WHITE RIVER

Four heavy-duty vehicle drivers from Mpumalanga were honoured with trophies by public works, roads and transport MEC Clifford Mkasi on Tuesday.

Their awards were given to them during a special breakfast held at the Greenway Woods Resort in White River.

The four - three bus drivers and one trucker - won places in the Best of the Best drivers competition held in Pretoria last month, when a total of 16 drivers were selected to represent the country in the International Driver of the Year competition to be held in Austria later this year.

"We are proud that our province has the highest number of drivers who will be participating in the international competition in October," said Mkasi.

Mpumalanga was followed by Gauteng with three winners, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Free State with two winners each, and the Western Cape with one.

Betty Shabangu, Siphon Gama and Job Nene from Mpumalanga will compete



ROSE AMONG THORNS: Mpumalanga's best four drivers, who will represent the country in the International Driver of the Year competition in Austria in October are, from left, Job Nene, Siphon Gama, Betty Shabangu and Ernest Ntuli.

in the male bus driver category, while Ernest Ntuli will compete in the rigid-with-four-wheel-trailer category.

"It's unfortunate that there is no female bus category in the international competition, so Miss Shabangu will participate in the male category, despite the fact that she is female," said Mkasi.

"The department will support all of you

in making sure that you are well taken care off during this time," he promised.

Shabangu (45) from Midbank Thembalethu Company in Witbank, said she was confident that she could make her mark as a woman among the men.

"I am not afraid that I will be competing with males. I am sure I will make it. I

will learn a lot and add to my driving skills, especially because we will be driving in left-hand vehicles on the wrong side of the road!" she said.

Shabangu added that she was excited about boarding a flight for the first time in her life and could not wait to explore other cultures on this, her first overseas trip.

Gama (30) said he was grateful that he would be among those competing with drivers from other countries.

"I am very honoured for this opportunity. I couldn't afford to do this with my own funds but, thanks to the department, my dreams of going abroad are coming true," said Gama.

Gama said concentration, dedication and enthusiasm were the secrets to his success.

The competition aims to improve the standard of heavy-duty vehicle drivers to prevent and reduce the number of accidents involving trucks and buses.

Drivers were required to excel in four fields, namely pre-trip inspection, theory, and a road and track test.

FET results boost Mpumalanga education score

SECUNDA

By Tshwarelo eseng Mogakane

Although Mpumalanga achieved the lowest matric pass rate in the country last year, the province has at least managed to clinch second place in the further education and training (FET) sector.

Sixty-nine percent of the 41 639 candidates who wrote their final exams in the national certificate (vocational) courses last year passed, putting the province in the second position after

the Western Cape, which produced a 70% pass rate.

"Mpumalanga is really excelling in the field of FET colleges. This means more people are getting empowered with skills that can be turned into employment and decent jobs," said Jabu Mhlabane, spokesperson for the Gert Sibande FET college, one of Mpumalanga's three FET institutions.

Mhlabane said Gert Sibande FET was the leading college in the province, with 72% of the 14 044 candidates who wrote

exams obtaining their certificates.

The college was also in the overall fifth position among the fifty FET colleges in South Africa.

"We pride ourselves on offering skills with the promise of employability. Every year we have candidates who win national awards," said Mhlabane.

The two other colleges, Ehlanzeni FET and Nkangala FET, both obtained 68% pass rates, with 11 060 and 16 535 candidates who wrote exams respectively.

Mpumalanga's matric exams have been embroiled in controversy since 1998.

Last year, minister of basic education Angie Motshekga was forced to remove the power to administer exams from the provincial department of education after exam papers were leaked in the province.

Mpumalanga only managed to obtain a 47.9% pass rate in the 2009 exams, the lowest in the country.

Mbombela is ready to host the world

BY MBEKEZELI MBULI

NELSPRUIT

Both the LOC CEO Danny Jordan and FIFA Secretary General, Jérôme Valcke expressed their confidence over Mpumalanga's state of readiness to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Jordan said during his tour to the stadium and other 2010 Soccer World Cup related projects in the province, that he was satisfied with all the work done in the province so far.

"Yes, there are a few setbacks as there were some in other host countries such as in Germany, but I am certain that those challenges will be dealt with just in time. For what we have seen here, there is no doubt in my mind that this province is more than ready," said Jordan.

Even though the FIFA's trusted man, Valcke said the province would fail if it were to host the World Cup tomorrow but still gave it a green light and declared it will be ready by the time the games start in June.

"It is clear that everything is working according to plan and schedule, except for the pitch which I am confident we will get it right this time around and by June we will have one of the best pitches of the World Cup according to



Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza, National Assembly Sports Portfolio Committee chairperson Bhutana Khompela, LOC CEO Danny Jordan and Mbombela Mayor Lassy Chiwayo

FIFA's recommendations," he said.

Meanwhile, the MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, Dr Clifford Mkasi

officially opened one of the World Cup roads situated in the R37 in Lydenburg and said that other World Cup related

roads would soon be completed to accommodate the huge volume of transport expected in the province.

Parastatals merger: Cosatu warns about job losses

BY SYDNEY MASINGA

NELSPRUIT,

A budget has been allocated for the merger of three Mpumalanga parastatals as part of a strategy to boost institutional capacity and economic development in the province.

In the 2009/2010 financial year, at least 53 000 jobs were lost in Mpumalanga as a result of the global recession.

In June last year, premier David Mabuza announced that merging the Mpumalanga Agricultural Development Corporation (MADC), Mpumalanga Housing Finance Company (MHFCO) and the Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA) "will be another way of expanding economic development in the province because resources will be integrated, which will lead to job

creation".

Tabling her R26-billion budget speech in Nelspruit on Tuesday, finance MEC Pinky Phosa said the department of economic development, environment and tourism would be given R643-million for the 2010/11 financial year to finalise, among other things, the merger of the three provincial parastatals.

"Once legislation regarding the merger is passed, the role of the provincial treasury will be to apply for the delisting of the MADC and MHFCO from the national treasury to form a new entity called MEGA," said Phosa.

But Cosatu has said it would not allow the proposed merger to go ahead if jobs are likely to be shed.

"Considering the job losses last year, the union doesn't want to see any more casualties added to the list.

Mpumalanga already has the second-highest increase in the unemployment rate in the country," said Cosatu provincial secretary Fidel Mlombo.

He added that Cosatu has never seen a merger or restructuring take place without job losses or demotions for those working at the companies involved.

Mpumalanga's economic development, environment and tourism MEC, Jabu Mahlangu, acknowledged Cosatu's concerns.

"Our commitment towards creating decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods has still not changed, so we are working with labour unions representing the workers concerned. We will ensure that no one loses their jobs," he promised.

Provincial DA leader Anthony Benadie has also expressed concern, accusing

Mabuza's government of trying to hide corruption and mismanagement within the parastatals by orchestrating the merger.

"The MHFC has been doing great all along, but merging it with MEGA and MADC will be a disaster because the officials in these two parastatals have been either involved in corruption or failed to deliver at all," said Benadie.

Independent auditors Ramathe Fivaz Inc were commissioned by the provincial government in 2008 to investigate suspected maladministration and financial irregularities within MEGA after disgruntled staff accused senior officials and former board chairman Phillip Dexter of abusing their authority. The report has not yet been made public, but Dexter was relieved of his duties in April last year.

TO ADVERTISE: CALL



Bead work feeds family of nine

BY THOBILE MLANGENI

NELSPRUIT

A mother from Mpumalanga says despite looking after eight children - two still in school and six who are unemployed - she has a stress-free life.

That's because Busi Nobunga (46), who lives in KaNyamazane outside Nelspruit, is her own boss and makes a decent living from her exceptional beadwork.

"I have worked hard for my children ever since their father left us," said Nobunga.

"I became the breadwinner of my family in 1998 after my husband turned his back on me and left me for my sister's daughter. I had no choice but to stand strong for the future of my children."

For the next 10 years, she did domestic work in Nelspruit.

"That was not good. I had to work hard yet I got paid very little in return," she said.

In 2008, Nobunga befriended Phetheni Xulu, a beading expert from KaNyamazane who taught her how to sew and decorate her clothing items.

"Beading became the answer to my prayers. These days I generate my own income, I get to spend quality time with my children and I can pay my daughters' school fees," she said.

Nobunga specialises in creating traditional clothing items. She designs and sews clothes such as beaded skirts and dresses, as well as hats, shoes, belts, necklaces and earrings.

Her daughters, Ayanda (16) and Thandeka (14), help their mother by



Busi Nobunga and her daughters show the beautiful beadwork items she makes. From left, Ayanda, Busi, Nonhlanhla and Thandeka

cleaning the house before school to give her enough time to do her work.

"We try by all means to help her, because we know that she is doing this for us," said Ayanda.

"We are proud of her - she is a strong woman who knows how to take care of her family without depending on anyone else."

Nobunga's skirts take time to make, because she cannot afford a sewing machine and must do everything by hand.

Each day, she tries to work on six skirts, either sewing or decorating them.

She sells her items on credit and also allows clients to rent them for special occasions.

"Clients put down a deposit and pay the balance in instalments," Nobunga explains.

"Renting the outfits ranges between R40 and R50 per item."

The prices for Nobunga's skirts vary according to their size, from R250 to

R500. Hats cost R250, beaded shoes R250 and traditional belts R80, while necklaces, earrings and rings sell for between R10 and R30.

Nobunga wishes she could find a sewing machine to produce skirts faster, especially for tourists who will visit the province during the Fifa World Cup.

Her biggest dream is to open her own beading centre where she can teach other women beadwork to fight poverty and unemployment.

Keeping fit helps to keeps crime at bay

NELSPRUIT

By Eric Mashaba

In Mpumalanga, Pienaar village near Nelspruit is commonly known as a crime hot spot.

But Steven Sambo (42), who has a gymnasium in the area, believes he has helped to change the mindset of youngsters to become sport professionals instead of criminals.

"Many youths get involved in crime due to the lack of sporting facilities in their areas. I started NguSambo-Lo Gymnasium in 1996 to create opportunities to boost their fitness and to help them attain a healthier lifestyle," Sambo said.

The gym is used by aspirant and professional weightlifters, school pupils, teachers, police officers, soccer players and boxers.

"I started the gym with my own money. I was a driver for a bakery and I had to save money from my earnings to buy all the equipment piece by piece," Sambo said.

With the support from his family, Sambo eventually had enough



Everyone's welcome at NguSambo-Lo Gymnasium in Daantjie. Owner Seven Sambo is on the far right

equipment to open his gym to the public.

And soon, Sambo will be going beeg! He has purchased a large site to build a new gym that will include a parking area, swimming pool and boxing ring.

"Many youngsters are interested in swimming. They asked that I include a pool so they can learn to swim," Sambo explained.

"Novice and professional boxers in our midst also want to organise fights with

other professional boxers, so the boxing ring is also a priority," he added.

Many members said they appreciated having a gym in their area, especially in a place as notorious as Pienaar.

"Sambo has improved our lifestyle. We thank him for the excellent manner in which the instructors conduct the training sessions. We learn a lot here, including self-defence skills," said Shadrack Shabangu.

The chief instructor at the gym, Obert Shakoane, said the exercises were meant to stop youngsters from roaming the streets, where they end up being recruited into crime by other criminals.

"Our main focus was to eradicate crime, improve the youths' physical fitness levels and also help them to gain competitive weightlifting and boxing skills. I'm impressed by the number of locals who frequently visit our gymnasium to get fit," said Shakoane.

The gym is situated in Mluti section in Daantjie district and operates from 5am to 9pm, Monday to Friday.

Dancer gives back to community

BY BONGEKILE MHLANGA

HOEDSPRUIT

A well-known Gauteng dancer hopes to bring positive change to the lives of children from a rural community in Mpumalanga by teaching them to dance.

Contemporary dancer Obed Shongwe (37) has set up a dance school called the Roots of Rhythm Academy in Acornhoek in Bushbuckridge, where he hopes to impart his skills to the youth of this sleepy village. He gives his classes at the Ehlanzeni FET campus free of charge.

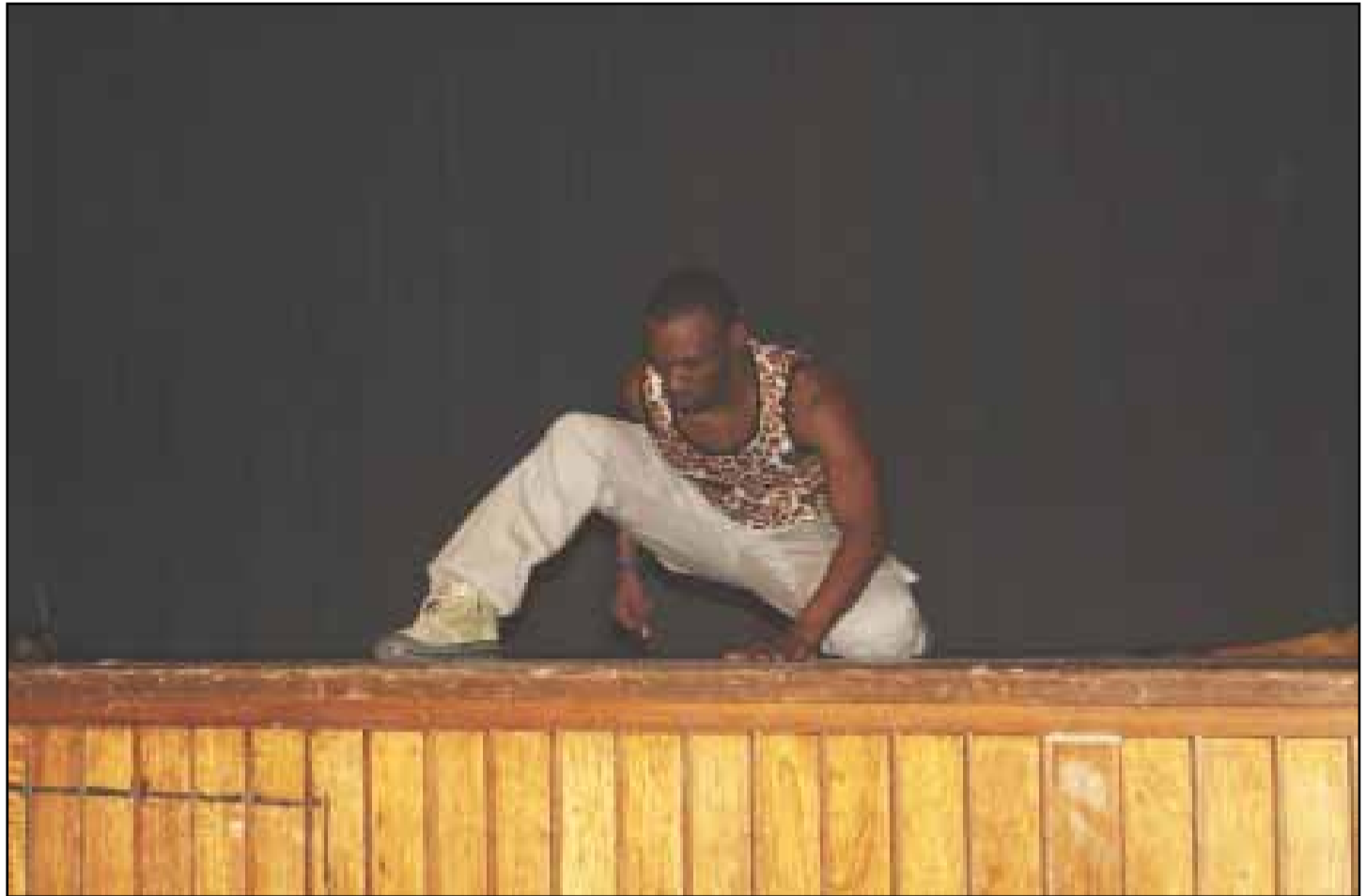
"You know, seeing a kid getting a dance move right is worth more than any gold," said Shongwe.

His move to Acornhoek came about when a choreographer was needed for an African dance show in Hoedspruit, Limpopo. He was subsequently employed to teach dancing at the town's Barefoot Dance Academy, where he still works to earn an income, commuting every day. At the time, Shongwe had an offer to go to Taiwan for six months, but he realised he wanted something more stable.

"So, my journey to the east of South Africa started there," he said. "I had to choose between stability and fame, and I chose stability. And anyway, I had been to Taiwan before."

His passion for dancing started when he was about seven years old. His mother was a sangoma and he was her drum player.

"Early in the mornings I used to wake up and beat the drums for the ancestors. I would watch my mother



Shongwe during a performance at Drakensig in Hoedspruit last year

and the trainee sangomas dancing, and it inspired me to start dancing as well. Those moves are still a large part of my choreography," said Shongwe, who turned professional at the age of 16, when he was part of a dance troupe who went to perform in Malawi.

Shongwe, who regularly performs at the Dance Umbrella festival in Johannesburg - a major showcase for dance talent - says his dances are

inspired by animal movements.

"Actually, I started with Latin-American dances like the cha cha, salsa and the rumba," said Shongwe. "But as a dancer, I look for dance movements wherever I go. Animals move majestically and I liked that, and so my movements have become inspired by them."

His students in Acornhoek feel blessed that they now have a professional dance

teacher, and that they can learn the art for free.

Thembelihle Mathebula (13) said the daily workout has made her fitter and far more flexible.

"We practice every day, and this is good for my body," said Mathebula. "All the moves I've seen dancers do on TV I am now able to do myself. It's quite easy once you put your mind to it."

Fighting poverty and the nasty flu!

NELSPRUIT

By Thobile Mlangeni

S'bongiseni Manikela's friends in Mpumalanga laughed at him when he told them he wanted to be a fruit vendor.

But Manikela (25) persisted and these days he's doing a roaring trade. As Manikela says, he's not only fighting poverty, but also helping his customers to eat healthy.

"Fruit is rich in vitamin C, which is very good for preventing colds and flu. I always tell my customers that."

Manikela, who lives in Ngodini near White River, says his stall in front of the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court attracts hundreds of buyers each day.

Among other things, he sells apples, oranges, naartjies, bananas and guavas, for between R1 and R2.50 each. A bunch of bananas cost between R2.50 and R5.00.

"Sometimes I make about R300 a day. Customers like my products because I make sure I always have fresh stock every morning," says Manikela.



FRUIT POWER: S'bongiseni Manikela (right) sells his flu-fighting fruit to customer Nelson Themba.

His regular clients call him "Strongman" because he will not give

up his dream of owning a large fruit shop one day.

Regular customer and friend Nelson Themba says Manikela is very ambitious and focused on his business.

"He knows exactly what he wants. He serves his customers with a smile and knows exactly how to treat them," says Themba.

Manikela holds a certificate in project management from the Advanced Technology Training Institute in Nelspruit but could not find a job. It was then that he decided to take over his grandmother's stall because she was getting too old to run it.

"I began the business with only R350 and the skills my grandmother taught me. She always said that making money was in my hands and that I had to use them to make ends meet," he explains.

And that's exactly what he's doing, every day, with a smile!

ADVICE FOR THOSE NASTY COLDS AND FLU

Slowly but surely, winter is coming, and so will be those sore throats and runny noses. Precious Nkosi, a nursing sister at the Luphisi Clinic near White River, says you can boost your immunity by eating lots of fruit. She advises people to eat fruit, particularly citrus like oranges, naartjies and lemons, throughout the year but especially in winter.

"We encourage all our patients to eat fruit so that they can get the vitamins they need from food, rather than taking expensive supplements. You should stock up on fruit and liquids at the first sign of a cold."

Nkosi says people suffering from colds and flu should drink lots of fluids, especially ginger tea, and eat nourishing food like chicken soup. "And use herbs and spices like pepper and curry to boost your body temperature and ward off colds."

To ease those hacking coughs, Nkosi recommends a mixture of honey and lemon taken before bedtime.

She advises against eating very cold or frozen foods in winter.

"Eating warm foods provides relief from colds and flu, so stick to them."

World Cup fever hits Mbombela

BY ERIC MASHABA

NELSPRUIT

A Fifa 2010 World Cup bus carrying a delegation from the Mbombela Local Municipality and the media received a jubilant welcome when it travelled to townships around Nelspruit on Wednesday.

The bus, which was led by traffic officials and a fire engine, left the 2010 host city early in the morning to visit KaNyamazane, Pienaar, Zwelisha, Kabokweni, White River and Mataffin.

Community members were given vuvuzelas, South African flags, special soccer T-shirts and miniature soccer balls in celebration of just 99 days left to the historical first African World Cup.

“We are very happy to see that the Mbombela municipality cares about us. These gifts mean a lot to me as I will not be able to attend matches because of financial problems,” said Portia Mathenjwa (27) of KaNyamazane, after receiving her gifts.

Another excited community member, Danisile Modau (24), said she wished she could be allowed to join the delegation in the bus.

“Welcome 2010 Fifa World Cup South Africa. Sikulindele! (we are waiting),” Modau shouted at the delegation.

When the bus reached Lekazi Primary School in KaNyamazane, pupils streamed from their classrooms towards the fence to greet the delegation and receive their commemorative gifts.

In Kabokweni, the community also came running when they heard the noise of sirens and vuvuzelas preceding the bus.

“We welcome the 2010 Fifa World Cup with warm hearts,” said school pupil Thembisile Shongwe (16).

Shongwe said attending a match would depend on whether her parents had enough money to buy her a ticket.

“If I get the money, I will not hesitate to attend a game. I know Bafana Bafana will not be playing at Mbombela Stadium, so any game is fine with me,” she said.

Mpumelelo Shabangu (30) of White River also did not miss his chance of grabbing a vuvuzela from the bus.

“I’m so happy,” he said, “but I’m not employed, so it will be hard for me to attend the games. I believe that South Africa will host one of the best World



SHOW OF STRENGTH: The 2010 Fifa World Cup bus, led by a fire engine



ZAKUMI was also there

Cup events ever.”

The Mataffin community, who lives next to the Mbombela Stadium, also received the delegation with appreciation. The stadium was built on their land, and two schools had to be closed to make way for its construction.

“Since the municipality is now fulfilling its promise of building our children proper schools, everything is fine by us. We will welcome all visitors with warm hearts and we thank the municipality for the visit, which indicate they still care,” said community member Kenneth

Mkhonto.

The municipal offices in Nelspruit, Hazyview, White River, Kanyamazane, Matsulu and Kabokweni were closed to the public after 2pm to allow employees to attend a special celebration event in Nelspruit on Wednesday afternoon.