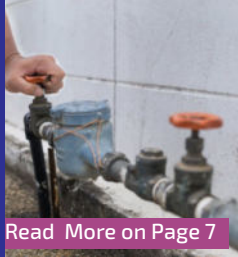


First with the People, First with the News

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10 YEARS ON, STILL THE VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS



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Celebrating **10 Years** of telling our communities' stories

ISSUE: 371 • 29 MAY 2026

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MPUMALANGA INTENSIFIES FIGHT AGAINST GBVF AS LEADERS PUSH FOR ACTION BEYOND PROMISES

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Mpumalanga intensifies fight against GBVF as leaders push for action beyond promises

NODICAH FUNDAMA AND
SHARON CHILOANE

EMALAHLENI — Mpumalanga Premier Mandla Ndlovu has called for stronger accountability and improved victim support services in the fight against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), warning that violence against women and children remains one of the province's greatest challenges.

Ndlovu was speaking during the Provincial Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Council meeting held at The Ridge Hotel in eMalahleni on 26 May 2026, where government leaders, law enforcement agencies, traditional leaders, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), civil society organisations and other stakeholders assessed progress and identified critical gaps requiring urgent intervention.

“As leaders, we cannot normalise this violence. We cannot become comfortable with statistics while our people continue to live in fear. Every victim represents a life interrupted, a dream shattered and a family traumatised,” said Ndlovu.

He stressed the importance of educating young people about consent, gender equality and healthy relationships to prevent violence across generations.

Speaking to the *Highveld Chronicle* after the meeting, Ndlovu acknowledged that while progress had been made since the establishment of the Provincial GBVF Council, the province was still far from achieving its goals.

“It will be very difficult for me to say yes or no because the only time we will say we are doing our work is when we win the fight against GBVF in the province and the country,” he said.

“While we continue to witness women and girls being killed by relatives, fathers, stepfathers, uncles and intimate partners, it remains a serious concern for us.”

The meeting also reviewed the implementation of resolutions adopted during the previous council sitting in November.

Progress reports on the Provincial Strategic Plan on GBVF showed that only 35 of 60 government indicators were achieved, resulting in an implementation rate of 58%.

Although awareness initiatives and school safety programmes exceeded expectations, several targets were not achieved due to resource limitations and funding constraints.

“We don't think that 58% is enough. There is room for improvement. Some of our targets were ambitious because we wanted to deal with this scourge urgently, but we can say that we are trying and there are signs that we may win this war,” said Ndlovu.

A presentation by the South African Police Service (SAPS), delivered by Acting Provincial Head of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Unit Penuel

Smith, revealed that Mpumalanga recorded 552 GBVF-related cases between January and March 2026, resulting in 277 arrests.

During the same period, courts handed down three life sentences, while other offenders received substantial prison terms, including 115 years for offences attracting sentences above 20 years, 216 years for cases carrying 10-year sentences, and 43 years for offences resulting in sentences between one and nine years.

Smith said the FCS Unit operates through 15 specialised units across Mpumalanga's three district municipalities, with about 200 personnel dedicated to GBVF-related matters.

He added that specialised investigative divisions use DNA technology to identify repeat offenders and connect unresolved cases.

Police also acknowledged challenges, including under-reporting of crimes, delayed reporting by victims, social stigma and victim-blaming attitudes that discourage survivors from seeking assistance.

Ndlovu expressed concern over the arrest statistics.

“I was not comfortable that out of more than 550 reported cases, only about 51% resulted in arrests,” he said.

“These criminals are living among us. Communities must provide information to the police because if they are not arrested, it means we are not safe. These people belong behind bars.”

Mokgadi Makata from the NPA's Sexual Offences and Community Affairs (SOCA) Unit said Mpumalanga currently has six Thuthuzela Care Centres located in Kabokweni, Tonga, Rob Ferreira, Witbank, Secunda and Ermelo.

The centres provide counselling, medical support, statement-taking and forensic services under one roof to minimise further trauma for survivors.

Makata said additional centres are planned for Bushbuckridge, Mkhondo and Middelburg to improve accessibility.

Civil society organisations, represented by Phumzile Ngodela, criticised the gap between awareness campaigns and implementation.

Ngodela said frontline organisations continue operating with limited

financial and institutional support despite assisting victims and communities directly.

She highlighted delayed service delivery, fragmented referral systems, shortages of social workers and counsellors, and insufficient support for community-based initiatives.

Ngodela also raised concerns that men, boys and street-involved youth are often excluded from support programmes.

“Communities are tired of awareness without implementation. Communities are tired of reporting without receiving support. Communities are tired of promises without accountability,” she said.

Ndlovu acknowledged concerns about shortages of forensic social workers, nurses and counsellors.

“If we are saying we want to reduce GBVF in the province, we must appoint more nurses, more counsellors and more social workers. We are going to pay special attention to that,” he said.

“We cannot convene meetings, adopt resolutions and then fail to implement them.”

Several resolutions were adopted to strengthen the province's response to GBVF, including establishing functional referral pathways between police, healthcare institutions and social services to ensure survivors receive coordinated support.

Stakeholders also called for inclusive psychosocial support programmes for men, boys and vulnerable youth, improved funding models for grassroots organisations, strengthened Rapid Response Teams across municipalities, and increased investment in shelters and survivor support services.

Ndlovu announced plans for intensified awareness campaigns and community outreach programmes aimed at encouraging the reporting of GBVF cases.

The government also plans to strengthen collaboration with municipalities, political structures and communities through awareness drives and door-to-door campaigns.

“We want a situation where a girl child can go to school, study late and return home safely,” he said.

Stakeholders agreed that meaningful progress against GBVF would require stronger coordination, sustainable funding, community participation and accountable implementation.

“the path of the righteous winds upwards to flee from hell beneath us” Prov 15:24



In God's Service

By Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Then the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, “See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.” (Isaiah 6:6-7)

This is a major part of the process as the Lord opens our eyes to His world program we call “Missions.” He shows us Himself first, not the starving millions, not the heathen in gross darkness. No, He begins with a one-on-one. He uses certain painful circumstances to make us look up, then He reveals some things about His character (theologians refer to these as God's “attributes”) to make us see our need for Him. Did you catch the sharp contrast?

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts” (6:3)

“I am ruined! . . . I am a man of unclean lips” (6:5)

Suddenly Isaiah is no longer viewing a vision from a safe distance, removed and out of touch. The whole scene literally comes to life as one of those seraphs steps out of the vision and flies toward our frightened friend. Without announcement, the winged creature

sweeps into the prophet's presence and does something most unusual. “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs. And he touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven’” (6:6-7).

The flying angel touches Isaiah with a hot coal. Did you notice where he touched the prophet? On his lips. I suggest there is significance in that act. Isaiah had just admitted he was “a foul-mouthed sinner” (TLB). It shouldn't shock us, therefore, to take his confession literally. He no doubt struggled with profanity. And that is probably what the young man was using as an excuse to disqualify himself from God's service.

We have such excuses:

“I'm not physically well. I'm sickly—not strong enough.”

“I've got this temper problem.”

“I can't speak very well in public.”

“I don't have a lot of education.”

“My past is too raunchy. If only you knew!”

“I have a prison record.” And on and on and on. It's the old bird-with-the-broken-pinion routine. But God is bigger than any of those reasons.

He specializes in taking bruised, soiled, broken, guilty, and miserable vessels and making them whole, forgiven, and useful again



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Mpumalanga businesses secure share of R1.1 million at Bamebelela Business Awards

● NODICAH FUNDAMA

MBOMBELA — Emerging businesses from across Mpumalanga walked away with a share of more than R1.1 million in prize money during the Bamebelela Business Awards pitching session hosted by the Hollywood Foundation at Mbombela Stadium on Friday, 29 May.

A total of 76 businesses from various sectors took to the stage on Thursday, 28 May, pitching their business ideas to judges in just 90 seconds. Some entrepreneurs went beyond presentations, showcasing live demonstrations of their products and services in a bid to impress the judges.

Now in its fourth year in Mpumalanga

and with 16 instalments hosted nationally, the Bamebelela Business Awards continue to recognise and support emerging entrepreneurs. Farming enterprises emerged as the biggest winners on the night.

Speaking to the *Highveld Chronicle*, Hollywood Foundation Portfolio Manager for Business Impact, Simo Vilakazi, said the awards are about recognising excellence while encouraging entrepreneurs to continue pursuing their dreams.

“The Bamebelela Business Awards are about recognising excellence and providing encouragement to entrepreneurs across the country.

In Mpumalanga, we have seen great enthusiasm from businesses that displayed tremendous effort when pitching their ideas,” said Vilakazi.

He congratulated the winners and encouraged those who did not make the top 20 to remain committed to their entrepreneurial journeys.

“Congratulations to all the winners. You now form part of the more than 300 small businesses supported through this programme. To those who did not make the top 20, we want to say ‘Bamebelela’ – hold on, your dreams are valid and one day it will all work out,” he said.

Vilakazi also thanked key stakeholders, including the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDA), the Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER), SANParks and the City of Mbombela for contributing to the success of the initiative.

A total of 20 businesses received awards. Seventeen businesses each received R45 000, while the top two winners secured prizes exceeding R100 000. Third place received R85 000, second place R115 000 and first place R145 000.

Additional prizes were awarded in special categories, including Best Exhibition Stand, Social Media Competition and the Early Bird

Award. The Early Bird Award went to Fannastars Construction Society, whose owner arrived at Mbombela Stadium at 2am, setting a national record and earning a cash prize of R6 250.

Ahead of the pitching session, entrepreneurs participated in coaching and mentorship workshops designed to help them prepare for the competition. The sessions focused on what judges look for and how entrepreneurs can best market and position their businesses.

The overall winner was Khanyisile Matshiga, founder of Ezimnandi Poultry Farming Enterprise in eMalahleni, who was participating in the competition for the second time.

“I am very excited that we made it to number one. I would like to thank the Bamebelela Business Awards for this opportunity. It will really help improve my business,” said Matshiga.

Matshiga walked away with a total investment of more than R150 000 after winning first prize worth R145 000 and the Best Exhibition Stand Award worth R6 250.

Second place went to another farming business, MPT Farming from Ermelo, owned by Zinhle Skhosana, who also entered the competition for a second time.

“There is life in farming. It is not only for older people or uneducated people,” said Skhosana, encouraging

more young people to enter the agricultural sector.

Skhosana received a total of R127 500, including R115 000 for second place and R12 500 for winning the Social Media Branding Award.

National resident judge Dr Thabo Pitse shared words of encouragement with business owners.

“Business is about people, processes and profit. Every business must strive to make a profit while understanding that success starts with people — yourself, your employees and your customers. A win with people is a win in business,” he said.

SANParks, which is commemorating 100 years since its establishment in 1926, was among the event's stakeholders.

Dr Paul Mpye, Senior Manager for Enterprise and Supplier Development at SANParks, said supporting small businesses remains critical in addressing unemployment.

“We are passionate about developing SMMEs because we know they are a vehicle that can help curb unemployment in our country,” he said.

Hosted by the Hollywood Foundation, the Bamebelela Business Awards celebrate and invest in small and medium enterprises (SMMEs) and township entrepreneurs who are creating jobs, driving innovation and uplifting local communities.



FROM LEFT: Thando Lamula-Shirinda, MER Chairperson; Department of Economic Development and Tourism HOD Immy Serakalala; and Hollywood Foundation Portfolio Manager Simo Vilakazi pose with the overall winners, the Ezimnandi Poultry Farming team

Two men appear in court over 2023 Delmas murder

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS — Xolani Boy Masuku and Samuel Mthokozisi Mabethe appeared before the Delmas Magistrate's Court on Monday, 25 May, in connection with the 2023 murder of Sibongiseni Sithole.

The two accused face charges of murder, imputing witchcraft and defeating the ends of justice.

During proceedings, the court heard that both accused appeared without legal representation and indicated their intention to apply for Legal Aid assistance. The matter was postponed to 02 June 2026 to allow them time to secure legal representation.

The court also heard that the accused are expected to formally apply for bail once their legal representatives have been appointed.

Outside court, community members, friends, relatives and members of the Traditional Healers Organisation gathered in support of the Sithole family. Supporters picketed outside the courthouse carrying placards reading “Justice for Sibongiseni ‘Lavish’ Sithole”, while singing struggle songs and calling for justice.

According to a media statement previously issued by the Office of the Provincial Commissioner of Police in Mpumalanga, police launched a search for the two suspects after warrants of arrest were issued.

Police alleged that Sithole was at the home of the two accused on 11 June 2023 when he was allegedly stabbed. His body was later found dumped a few metres from the house. The body was reportedly discovered by a passer-by, who alerted the family.

The statement further indicated that Masuku and Mabethe were initially arrested following the incident, but the matter was not enrolled at the time due to insufficient evidence.

Police said the case was later re-investigated, with additional evidence and witness statements collected before the docket was resubmitted to court. Following the issuing of the warrants of arrest, police appealed to members of the public for assistance in tracing the suspects, alleging that they had gone into hiding.

In an update issued by police on 22 May 2026, the South African Police Service (SAPS) confirmed that Masuku was arrested in Tweefontein after community members provided information, while Mabethe later handed himself over to police in Delmas.

Acting Provincial Commissioner of SAPS in Mpumalanga, Major General (Dr) Zeph Mkhwanazi, welcomed the arrests and praised community cooperation in assisting police investigations.

Speaking after the court proceedings, the mother of the late Sibongiseni Sithole said she was relieved that the matter was finally before court.

“I am very happy that justice is finally coming through for my son. I believe the court will make the right decision,” she said.

Masuku and Mabethe remain in custody pending their next court appearance.

As the matter is before court, the allegations against the accused have not yet been tested and they are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Six suspects arrested after police chase ends in head-on collision near Delmas

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS — Sundra and Delmas SAPS have been praised by community members following the arrest of six suspects linked to an alleged grocery theft syndicate after a dramatic police chase that ended in a head-on collision near Delmas.

According to information available at this stage, Sundra police responded to a tip-off on Wednesday, 27 May, regarding the alleged offloading of stolen groceries from a truck in Sundra.

Police swiftly responded to the scene and arrested one suspect. However, several others fled in a white Volkswagen Polo.

A high-speed chase ensued as the suspects drove towards Delmas.

Delmas SAPS members were called in to assist with intercepting the vehicle.

The pursuit ended on the R555 road, just outside Delmas, when the suspects' vehicle was involved in a head-on collision with a police van.

A total of six suspects were arrested during the operation — one in Sundra and five near Delmas. Three of the suspects sustained injuries and were transported to hospital for medical treatment.

The collision also left four police officers injured. Two officers sustained serious injuries, while two others suffered minor injuries.

Police investigations are continuing and authorities are yet to release full details regarding the circumstances

surrounding the arrests and the alleged theft syndicate.

Meanwhile, members of the public have commended police for their swift response and successful operation.

“Thank you Bulldogs, you are the best! Thank you SAPS. You responded swiftly. Well done,” said one community member.

“What a fantastic job. The community is proud of our police,” another resident commented.

Others wished the injured officers a speedy recovery, praising their efforts in bringing the suspects to justice.



A VW Polo allegedly used by suspects to flee from Sundra where they were found offloading groceries from a truck is pictured after colliding head-on with a police van during a police chase near Delmas.

Nkangala TVET College Witbank Campus celebrates academic excellence

● SHARON CHILOANE AND
NODICAH FUNDAMA

EMALAHLENI — Nkangala TVET College recognised its top-performing students during the 2025 Academic Awards Ceremony held at the Civic Theatre in eMalahleni on Tuesday, 26 May.

The ceremony celebrated outstanding students across various NCV and Nated programmes, including Engineering Studies, Business Studies, Hospitality, Information Technology, Finance, Economics and Accounting, Process Instrumentation, Transport and Logistics, and Electrical Infrastructure Construction.

Awards were presented to the best-performing students in each programme, as well as the overall top achievers at the Witbank Campus.

Acting Campus Manager Pfarelo Munyai praised the students for their dedication and commitment to academic excellence.

“Words truly cannot capture the immense pride we feel for our award recipients. When our students stand on that stage, they are carrying the flag of Witbank Campus,” said Munyai.

He said the achievements reflected the quality of education and vocational training offered at the campus.

“These achievements are a direct reflection of the high calibre of education and vocational training taking place right here at Witbank Campus. It proves that we are cultivating real-world competence and employable skills,” he said.

Local Students' Representative Council (LSRC) Chairperson Tumisho Tshehla also addressed students during the programme, encouraging them to remain focused on their studies and continue striving for excellence.

Former student and motivational speaker Maria Maredi inspired students by sharing her educational journey at the college. Maredi studied Management Assistant from N4 to N6 at Nkangala TVET College before

completing her internship at Witbank Hospital and later furthering her studies at Tshwane University of Technology.

Today, she serves as a lecturer and credited the college with laying the foundation for her success.

“I did not start as a lecturer. I started as an ordinary student with dreams, fears, challenges and uncertainties about the future,” said Maredi.

“Education has the power to change your life, just as it changed mine. From being a student to an intern, a tutor and today a lecturer, my journey is proof that determination and education open doors.”

Maredi encouraged students not to allow failure, poverty or fear to define their future and urged them to remain disciplined and committed to their studies.

One of the award recipients, Khulekani Ntuli, who is currently studying Level 4 Fitting and Turning, said receiving recognition motivated him to work even harder.

“Receiving the award made me feel that my hard work had been recognised and motivated me to push even further,” said Ntuli.

Ntuli, who received an award as the best student on campus while in Level 2, said he later achieved six distinctions out of seven subjects in Level 3.

“I have always been the son of a single parent, so I have always dreamed of making my mother proud and achieving my goals so that her dream of seeing me succeed could also become a reality,” he said.

The event highlighted the institution's commitment to rewarding hard work, academic excellence and student development, while inspiring other students to pursue success in their studies.



Questions mount as communities brace for major water interruptions in Nkangala District

● EMMANUEL MTHIMUNYE AND
RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

NKANGALA — Communities across parts of Mpumalanga are bracing for possible water shortages as a large-scale maintenance programme involving Rand Water, Eskom and municipalities within the Nkangala District gets underway.

The maintenance programme, scheduled between 29 May and 17 July 2026, will affect critical water infrastructure within the Palmiet and Zuikerbosch systems, which supply several municipalities, including Thembisile Hani, Dr JS Moroka and Victor Khanye local municipalities.

According to Rand Water, the maintenance programme is aimed at improving operational reliability, reducing the risk of equipment failures and strengthening long-term water supply sustainability.

“The planned maintenance activities are necessary to improve pump availability and standby capacity. They also enhance operational flexibility across key Rand Water systems, reduce the risk of plant trips and equipment failures,” Rand Water said in a statement.

The utility added that the maintenance had been strategically scheduled during winter, traditionally regarded as a low water-demand period, to minimise disruption to consumers.

Victor Khanye Local Municipality also issued a public notice warning residents and businesses about significant water supply interruptions expected during the maintenance period.

In a notice issued on 29 May 2026, the municipality warned that supply reservoirs could run empty while Rand Water conducts maintenance work at the Mapleton Water Pump Station. The municipality said the interruptions could potentially affect the entire Victor Khanye area during the estimated 12-hour shutdown.

Residents were urged to use water sparingly and store sufficient water for domestic use ahead of the maintenance programme. The municipality also encouraged residents to implement water-saving measures such as taking shorter showers and avoiding unnecessary water usage.

Despite assurances from authorities, the announcement has sparked growing concern among residents already grappling with recurring water shortages and service delivery challenges.

Thembisile Hani Local Municipality Executive Mayor Lesetja Dikgale previously assured residents that contingency plans were in place, including phased shutdowns and the deployment of municipal water tankers.

“We know that water is life, and this is why we are ensuring that our people get purified clean water,” said Dikgale, adding that water supply interruptions would be managed in stages to avoid a total shutdown across all communities.

Rand Water also confirmed that municipalities and direct customers had been issued with a 21-day notice ahead of the maintenance programme to allow sufficient time for contingency planning and public communication.

“Rand Water has indeed issued a 21-day notice to all affected municipalities, industries and direct customers. This notification is intended to provide customers with sufficient time to implement contingency measures and minimise potential water supply disruptions to consumers,” the entity said.

The utility added that municipalities had agreed to communicate directly with residents about emergency measures and planned water supply arrangements.

Despite these assurances, concerns remain about whether municipalities are adequately prepared to deal with

the impact of prolonged water interruptions.

The *Highveld Chronicle* submitted a series of questions to Victor Khanye Local Municipality seeking clarity on emergency response plans, water tanker deployment, protection of vulnerable communities and measures to prevent corruption during water distribution.

Among the questions posed were when the municipality received formal notice from Rand Water, how many water tankers had been secured, which areas would receive priority access to water, whether schools and clinics were adequately prepared, and how updates would reach residents in rural communities with limited internet access.

Additional questions focused on whether leaking infrastructure had been repaired ahead of the maintenance period, what emergency budget had been allocated for water relief, and whether municipal leadership would take responsibility should communities remain without water for extended periods.

By the time of publication, Victor Khanye Local Municipality had not responded to the media inquiry.

Questions were also sent to Eskom regarding the planned maintenance and anticipated impact on communities. Although Eskom acknowledged receipt of the inquiry, no response had been received at the time of publication.

Meanwhile, some residents have expressed frustration and concern over the possible disruptions.

One Delmas resident, who requested anonymity, said communities already experiencing inconsistent water supply could suffer the most during the maintenance process.

“Our municipality here in Delmas will suffer with water because our municipality might not assist. Even now there are communities that do not receive water at all. Now it's going to be worse,” the resident said.

Others have called for calm, saying communities can cope if contingency measures are implemented properly.

Mbali Masondo, a resident from Extension 4, said water bowsers would help residents cope during the shutdown period.

“As long as the municipality has a plan to supply water through bowsers, it's okay. We can survive with that,” she said.

With maintenance now underway, many residents across Nkangala District will be watching closely to see whether municipalities can effectively manage the interruptions and avoid a deeper water crisis.



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Thembisile Hani Local Municipality outlines service delivery priorities at IDP and Budget Indaba

● EMMANUEL N MTHIMUNYE

KWAMHLANGA — Residents, government stakeholders and traditional leaders gathered at the Old Legislature Government Complex in KwaMhlanga on Monday, 25 May 2026, for Thembisile Hani Local Municipality's 2026/2027 Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Budget Indaba. The indaba focused on the municipality's development priorities, infrastructure projects and strategies aimed at improving service delivery across communities. Stakeholders in attendance included representatives from the Departments of Education, Public Works, Health and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), as well as Eskom. Traditional leaders from the Manala Mbongo and Ndzundza Mabhoko royal houses were also present.

Executive Mayor Lesetja Dikgale said the municipality remains committed to addressing residents' needs through improved service delivery and infrastructure development.

"The vision of turning Thembisile Hani into a smart city is alive, and we will work tirelessly to make that dream a reality," said Dikgale.

He said the municipality is also working towards reducing unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure by 75%.

Dikgale added that the municipality is addressing water supply challenges through the Loskop Dam Project, which aims to provide communities with 20 megalitres of water per day.

He further said infrastructure projects such as the Entokozweni Booster Pump Station, Vezubuhle Community Clinic and Tidimalo School are underway and have created local job opportunities while improving service delivery.

The Executive Mayor added that the municipality allocates R5 million annually to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including youth, women and persons with

disabilities. However, residents raised concerns about ongoing challenges such as crime, unemployment, substance abuse and undocumented migration in their communities. Community member Moses Sebogwane from Phumula C said residents are facing serious challenges linked to crime and drug abuse in areas such as Sun City, Vezubuhle and Kwaggafontein.

"We appreciate that the municipality aims to improve our living standards, but we face daily challenges. There are issues with gangsters and drugs affecting our children," he said.

He called for stronger cooperation between the municipality and law enforcement agencies to address crime and drug-related issues.

Sebogwane also raised concerns about undocumented migration and alleged failures by key government departments and stakeholders, calling for urgent engagement between authorities to find solutions.

Nkangala District Municipality Community Development Manager Vusumuzi Mahlangu said the district continues to engage communities and work towards improving service delivery across local municipalities.

Traditional leaders welcomed the municipality's plans and committed to working closely with the municipality to improve living conditions. They also encouraged

residents to pay for municipal services to ensure continued service delivery. This year's IDP and Budget Indaba focused on strengthening

infrastructure, improving service delivery and promoting greater community participation in local governance.



Thembisile Hani Executive Mayor Lesetja Dikgale

New dawn for Siyathuthuka as KJM takes over stalled housing project

● LUCAS SHONGWE

BELFAST — A long-delayed housing project in Siyathuthuka Extensions 7 and 13, commonly known as "ema 11", has received a fresh boost after Emakhaseni Local Municipality officially handed the project over to a new contractor to complete the remaining 203 low-cost houses.

On Tuesday, 26 May 2026, the municipality officially transferred the site to KJM Business Enterprises, owned by Casric Stars FC chairman Bucks Mthombeni.

The Department of Co-operative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA) appointed KJM to continue the R37.2 million Integrated Residential Development Programme after the previous contractor was removed due to poor performance and workmanship.

Only 42 of the original 245 housing units were completed, with many of them reportedly affected by defects.

KJM, which was introduced to the municipality on 19 May, has until 31 March 2028 to complete the project.

The scope of work includes the construction of bulk and internal infrastructure, as well as the completion of the housing units. Local subcontracting and labour opportunities are expected to create more than 30 jobs.

Council Speaker Cllr Seun Mthimunye said the appointment of subcontractors would be finalised once construction begins.

Speaking on behalf of local subcontractors, Aaron Maredi raised concerns about challenges experienced during the previous phase of the project.

He said he was owed money and treated unfairly, and urged KJM to ensure prompt payments and fair treatment of local businesses.

With an estimated housing backlog of 4,700 units across Dullstroom, Entokozweni, Belfast and Emgwenya, the project forms part of Emakhaseni Local Municipality's efforts to improve living conditions.

"The municipality, together with CoGHSTA, has already delivered 602 low-cost houses. These 203 houses will further reduce the backlog," said Mthimunye.

Executive Mayor Nobuhle Mashale acknowledged community frustrations over delays in completing the project.

"We've worked tirelessly with CoGHSTA to resuscitate this project. The new service provider has two years to complete it, and we remain committed to monitoring every stage to ensure delivery," she said.



THEMBISILE HANI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



PUBLIC NOTICE – AMENDMENT OF CONTRACT

In compliance with Section 116(3) of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) No. 56 of 2003, Thembisile Hani Local Municipality (THLM) intends to amend the following contract as per **Council Resolution TH-NDC 595/05/2026** of the 26th of May 2026, by amending the duration and cost of the following service (project):

1. Project Number = THLM/SCM15/2022-2023/BTO01.
2. Project Description = Appointment of a Service Provider for the Provision of Banking Services for Thembisile Hani Local Municipality for a Period of 36 Months.
3. Service Provider = Nedbank Group Limited.
4. Reasons for Amendment = Ensuring continuity of uninterrupted services following the non-compliance of tender submission during the recently implemented procurement process of the service that necessitates a tender re-advertisement, and to ensure that our banking services align fully with our financial reporting mechanism and/ or system.
5. Amendment Duration = Twelve (12) months, spanning from 01 July 2026 to 30 June 2027.

Members of the local community wishing to submit comments, inputs or representations may do so in writing to: The Municipal Manager, Thembisile Hani Local Municipality, Private Bag X4041, Empumalanga, 0458, and deposit these in the tender box at our Mthombomuhle (Kwaggafontein C) Offices not later than 12h00 on the 18th of June 2026. Alternatively, representations can be submitted via email to madimetsar@thembisilehanilm.gov.za, while telephonic enquiries can be directed to 013 986 9233.

D.J.D Mahlangu
Municipal Manager

ISIKO LETHU

Our Story

WITH SIPHO MAHAMBA

ILIZWI

Ukuhlonipha imingcwabo esifundeni seMpumalanga

Esikhathini esinengi imingcwabo ihlanganisa imindeni, abomakhelwama kanye nemiphakathi ndawonye ukuhlonipha ipilo yomuntu ohlongakeleko nokusekela laba abalimeleko. Esikhathini esidlulileko, abantu bakade bebayihlonipha khulu

imingcwabo. Abomma bebambatha ngendlela ehloniphekileko, ngaphandle kokuveza izitho zabo ezifihlakeleko. Abobaba bebasebenzisana koke lapha kufuneka khona izandla, amalunga wemiphakathi bekarhelebha ngaphandle kokulindela okuthileko, abentwana abancani bebangasiwa lapha kuvele khona

isifo. Koke lokhu bekungenye yeendlela ezivikela igugu kanye namasiko wethu njengabantu abanzima. Esikhathini sanamhlanjani, abantu babonakala sele balahlekelwa magugu kanye namasiko wokuhlonipha imingcwabo. Abantu sele bafanisa imingcwabo njengeminyanya yokuzithabisa. Lokhu kulahla isithunzi semingcwabo. Kwangathi abantu bangafunda iindlela zokuziphatha ebantwini bakade lokha nakunomngcwabo. Kufanele bona sivikele begodu sihloniphe amasiko wethu esifundeni seMpumalanga.

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ABOUT EMALAHLENI FM
Established in 2010, eMalahleni FM is a trusted community radio station broadcasting 24/7 on 98.7 MHz across Mpumalanga's key economic hubs. With over 96,000 listeners and a strong digital presence, we connect brands directly to an engaged and loyal audience. Our dynamic mix of 60% talk and 40% music — including local news, current affairs, and diverse genres — caters to all age groups and LSM 0-8 markets. Broadcasting in four languages, we ensure inclusive, relevant communication.

Partner with eMalahleni FM — The Best Companion in the City — and grow your brand where it matters most.

VISION & MISSION

VISION
To have a continuous interaction with our listeners and clients.

MISSION
Deliver a professional, community-centred and financially sustainable broadcasting service that informs, educates and entertains the community.

KEY STATISTICS

Frequency 98.7 MHz	Listenership 96,000+	Broadcast 24/7
LSM Profile 0-8	Social Media 110 000+	Reach 50km Radius

Languages:
English 20% | Sepedi 30% | IsiZulu 30% | IsiNdebele 20%

Content mix: 60% Talk | 40% Music

OUR REACH & FOOTPRINT

Primary Areas: Emalahleni, Middleburg, Ogies, Kriel
Extended Reach: Arnot, Rietspruit, Thubelihle, Bronkhorstpruit, Belfast, Machadodorp

PROGRAMMING EXCELLENCE

Diverse Music
We play a diverse mix of music, including House, Kwaito, Hip Hop, traditional wedding songs, Afro-pop, R&B, Gospel, Bubblegum, Reggae, and Jazz.

Trusted News - 60% Local
One hour of unpacking top trending stories live on air with relevant officials in our current affairs show.

Best Content for ALL
We broadcast 24/7 with 20 shows catering to all age groups — from children and teenagers to adults, students, professionals, businesses, and the unemployed.

OUR FACILITIES

Recording Studio | Studio A - On-Air | Studio B - Production

DIGITAL PRESENCE
eMalahleni FM boasts a combined Facebook following of over **164,000** followers and maintains a strong presence across its social media platforms, giving brands extended digital reach and meaningful audience engagement beyond the airwaves.

STATION ADDRESS:
5546 Hectorway Lynnville Municipality Offices Kwa-guqa Emalahleni 1039

CONTACT US:
Marketing: 087 150 2353
Studioline: 071 175 1528
WhatsApp: 071 175 1528

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PepsiCo's Kgodiso Development Fund injects R600 million into agriculture and education

A contribution By: Mologadi Kekana

JOHANNESBURG — The Kgodiso Development Fund (KDF) launched its first Integrated Report at a business breakfast in Johannesburg on 25 May 2026, marking four years of investment in agriculture, education and small business development following PepsiCo's acquisition of Pioneer Foods.

The fund's R600 million commitment has become a major driver of socio-economic development, supporting 1,512 jobs across the country. The investment is divided into three pillars — agriculture (R300 million), SME support (R100 million) and education (R200 million) — targeting initiatives ranging from emerging farmer commercialisation to university bursaries and research partnerships with the University of the Free State, the University of Limpopo and North-West University. KDF Chairperson Setlakalane Molepo said the fund's success is built on "fiduciary discipline", highlighting a landmark board decision to ensure that 100% of the R400 million development capital goes directly to farmers, with operational costs covered through investment returns.

Molepo added that the fund must act as a catalytic institution by helping farmers

navigate climate shocks through flexible loan terms.

"The seed that we planted through KDF will continue producing the harvest that we desire," he said.

Success stories from the ground demonstrate the impact of the investment. Mzimasi Jalisa, 31, co-director of Jay Jay Farming in the Eastern Cape, started farming at the age of 24 with no land to his name after completing his honours degree. He has since grown a cabbage project into a 1,006-hectare operation producing maize and soya. "The Kgodiso Fund did not just bring money — they brought relationships and advice that turned our plans into reliable production," said Jalisa.

A major challenge he faced was the lack of a title deed, a structural barrier that excludes many black farmers from accessing formal financing. "It is difficult for financial institutions to fund black-owned businesses when there is no title deed. Kgodiso was one of the stakeholders willing to invest in us, and we were able to pay it back," he added.

According to the KDF Integrated Report, Mpumalanga farmer Simphiwe Mabuza, 31, secured R4.4 million to expand his 553-hectare grain farming operation. The report identifies Mabuza as part of a new generation of black commercial farmers entering an industry where the average producer is 62 years old.

The fund's support extends across all nine provinces. In KwaZulu-Natal, Zuvuyo Ngejane of Mbali Rural Developers in Kokstad is building a mixed crop and livestock enterprise. In the Northern Cape, Clinton Visagie has developed a raisin and lucerne operation supporting 17 local jobs in Kai !Garib, while Petrus

Coetzee uses the funding to manage 23 hectares of vineyards, creating seasonal employment for 50 workers during pruning and harvesting.

In the North West, producers such as Bothlahle Tshabalala are embracing cooperative cluster models to pool resources and strengthen their market position. Gauteng-based Nolundi Msengana was also among the KDF-funded producers represented at the launch. Mncedisi Madolo, Chief Director at the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural

Development, added weight to the launch, saying partnerships such as the KDF are critical to farmer commercialisation and rural job creation. However, the report acknowledges that significant challenges remain. Black producers continue to face barriers such as limited access to water rights and the absence of land title deeds, preventing many from using their land as collateral for commercial bank loans. The report also highlights the need for more flexible loan terms to help

farmers withstand increasing climate-related shocks. The Kgodiso Development Fund concludes its first reporting cycle in a strong financial position, having achieved three consecutive clean audits. With a loan collection rate of 73% and R98 million already repaid by beneficiaries, the fund has demonstrated that investing in emerging black-owned enterprises is both a viable commercial strategy and a significant developmental success.



KDF management and board officials present the fund's first Integrated Report during the launch event in Johannesburg.



KDF beneficiary Mzimasi Jalisa (31) of Jay Jay Farming in the Eastern Cape, who started farming at 24 without owning land, has built a 1,006-hectare maize and soya farming enterprise

'I am a man of God': Joe 'Ferrari' Sibanyoni and co-accused granted R70 000 bail in extortion case

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS — Mpumalanga businessman and taxi boss Joe "Ferrari" Sibanyoni and his co-accused have been granted bail of R70 000 each in an extortion and money laundering case involving alleged protection fee payments amounting to more than R2,2 million.

Sibanyoni, 60, appeared before the Delmas Magistrate's Court on Thursday, 28 May 2026, alongside Phillimon Makhaya Msiza Mvimba, Daniel Masilela, Oupa Sindane and company M&J Sons after the matter was re-enrolled and transferred from the Kwaggafontein Magistrate's Court to Delmas due to safety and security concerns.

According to the State, the accused allegedly extorted more than R2,2 million from a complainant between 2022 and 2025 by demanding protection fees and threatening to shut down the complainant's businesses should he fail to comply. Prosecutors further allege that

payments made by the complainant were channelled through M&J Sons, an entity allegedly linked to Sibanyoni.

As part of their bail conditions, the accused are required to attend all court proceedings until the matter is finalised, refrain from interfering with witnesses, report to a police station every week and avoid committing any offence while out on bail.

The case was postponed to allow the State to disclose the contents of the docket to the defence, while the matter is expected to return to court on 01 September 2026.

National Prosecuting Authority spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago said in an interview with the *Highveld Chronicle*: "We are comfortable with not opposing bail because bail is not a punishment, but a mechanism to ensure accused persons return to court."

"We know their addresses, we know where to find them, and they are also required to report to the police station every two weeks. We believe those conditions are sufficient. The matter is now back on track and will follow the

normal court process when it returns to court on 01 September. Investigations relating to the prosecutor are also expected to be finalised soon," said Kganyago.

He added that the NPA had granted the defence legal representatives three months to submit representations to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Mpumalanga for consideration before further proceedings.

Speaking briefly after the court proceedings, Sibanyoni declined to comment directly on the allegations against him.

When asked whether he was innocent, he responded: "I am a man of God."

He further stated that he preferred not to discuss the case publicly and instead referred to his role as a preacher of the Word of God.

The accused remain out on bail pending the continuation of court proceedings. As the matter is before court, the allegations against the accused have not yet been tested and they are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Police rescue 18 boys from alleged illegal initiation school in Vosman

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

EMALAHLENI — Police have rescued 18 minors from an alleged illegal initiation school in Vosman near eMalahleni and arrested a 51-year-old suspect linked to the facility.

The operation, conducted on 23 May 2026, followed the reported disappearance of a 16-year-old boy who was allegedly recruited into the initiation school without his parents' consent.

According to a statement issued by the Office of the Provincial Commissioner of the South African Police Service (SAPS) in Mpumalanga, the boy's mother received a call from the initiation school principal informing her that her son had already been admitted.

When she attempted to fetch him, she was allegedly instructed to provide groceries and pay fees. She subsequently opened a case at Vosman Police Station.

The Ingoma Task Team was activated and traced the initiation school to Vosman.

Upon arrival, police discovered that the 16-year-old boy had already undergone initiation. A search of the premises led to the rescue of 17 more minors, aged

between 14 and 17, who were allegedly being kept at the facility without parental consent.

All 18 minors were safely reunited with their families.

Police arrested a man believed to be the initiation school's assistant. He faces charges relating to the alleged contravention of the Customary Initiation Act and extortion.

The suspect made first appearance before the eMalahleni Magistrate's Court on Friday, 29 May 2026 and he remains in custody.

The Acting Provincial Commissioner of SAPS in Mpumalanga, Major General Dr Zeph Mkhwanazi, condemned the incident and warned initiation school operators against unlawfully recruiting or detaining minors.

"Anyone who operates outside the law and involves minors without parental consent will face the full might of the law," he said.

Police said investigations are continuing and additional charges may be added as more information becomes available.



Mpumalanga businessman and taxi boss Joe "Ferrari" Sibanyoni (left) and Oupa Sindane sit comfortably during court proceedings at the Delmas Magistrate's Court.



PJ Stars edge Zation City 1-0 to return to winning ways in VKLFA Promotional League

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS — VKLFA Promotional League side PJ Stars returned to winning ways after edging Zation City 1-0 in a tightly contested fixture played at Mafa Max Ground on Sunday, 24 May 2026. The match produced a competitive encounter between two familiar opponents, with PJ Stars doing just enough to secure all three points. The decisive moment came through Andile Madonsela, who scored the only goal of the match to seal victory for PJ Stars and spark celebrations among players and supporters. Speaking to the Highveld Chronicle after the match, PJ Stars coach Blessing Panash Ngavi praised his side's tactical awareness and ability to capitalise on their opponent's weaknesses. "We played against a team we know very well. We know their weaknesses and where they are strong, and we wanted the win since we have been struggling to get maximum points," said Ngavi. He added that the victory was important in rebuilding confidence

within the squad after a difficult run of results. "A game against Zation is always tough, and it really brought back confidence," he said.

Ngavi described Andile's winning goal as a special moment for the team, highlighting the impact of the club's young talent. "It was a special goal scored by our new player, and we celebrated it," he said. Despite dealing with several injuries following school tournaments during the week, Ngavi praised the depth and determination of his squad.

"Our defence was solid even though most of our players were injured after last week's school tournaments. The players who got a chance really grabbed the opportunity with both hands," he said.

He also singled out the performances of Samkelo Masanabo, Thembinko Mnguni and Nathi Nkohla, saying they

played a key role in maintaining control of the match until the final whistle.

However, Ngavi admitted that his side must improve in front of goal after missing several chances that could have extended their lead.

Zation City coach Moeketsi Khoetsa attributed the defeat to injuries and player unavailability, which forced

him to adjust his line-up.

"We lost because some players are injured as they are also playing for their schools during the week, and some have lost focus because it is initiation school season. We are always short of players," said Khoetsa. Despite the result, he remained positive about his team's overall performance, noting their

ability to create chances.

"The game was fantastic. We created many opportunities which we did not convert and missed the target, but overall the team played well," he said. PJ Stars will look to build on the victory as they continue their VKLFA Promotional League campaign, while Zation City will aim to bounce back in their next outing.



PJ Stars



Zation City

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TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

1	EMAKHAZENI (DULLSTROOM)	16 MAY 2026
2	THEMBISILE HANI (MTHOMBONUHLE MGWEZANI P.S.)	30 MAY 2026
3	EMALAHLENI (LYNVILLE STADIUM)	06 JUNE 2026
4	DRJS MORAKA (BONGINHLANHLA SPORT GROUNDS)	13 JUNE 2026
5	STEVE TSHWETE (NASARET STADIUM)	20 JUNE 2026
6	VICTOR KHANYE (BOTLENG N12 SPORTGROUNDS)	27 JUNE 2026

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