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Chief Alpheus Mabena's legacy defined by unity, selfless leadership and his role as a champion of culture

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS – The Victor Khanye Local Municipality community and surrounding areas came together on Thursday, 26 February 2026, to pay tribute to Chief Alpheus Basa Mabena, leader of the Manala-Ndayi Traditional Authority. The memorial service, held in Botlennng, Delmas, drew large numbers of community members, political leaders, faith-based organisations, and traditional leaders from across Nkangala and beyond. Ikosana Mabena (63), who assumed leadership in 2007 and led for nearly two decades, was remembered as a unifier, a devoted family man, and a champion of culture. His leadership was described as steady, selfless, and rooted in the preservation of Ndebele

heritage.

Speaking during an interview with the *Highveld Chronicle* at the memorial service, Mavula Mabena, spokesperson of King Makhosoke II of amaNdebele, reflected on the late Chief's dedication to unity. "He led from the forefront when the time of ingoma came, he protected the culture of Ndebele people and also for other tribes among AmaNdebele. He worked closely with the municipality for the development of the community in Victor Khanye Municipality, he was a selfless leader," he said. He further highlighted the significance of the loss as the Ndebele nation prepares for the

40th celebration of King Makhosonke II's reign. "As we head to KoMjekeke we know Ikosana Mabena was going to come with his people and leadership council," he added.

Speaking on behalf of the family, the younger brother of the late Chief, Ikosana Levy Mabena, described him as a pillar of strength and wisdom. "As a family we looked up to him when facing difficulties, as a chief myself I will reach out to him for any troubles I encounter, I will invite him for a visit to draw from his wisdom and he would come," he shared.

Victor Khanye Local Municipality Executive Mayor Vusi Buda also reflected on the life and leadership of Chief Mabena, describing him as a visionary traditional leader and a pillar of stability within the municipality.

"Chief Mabena was more than a

traditional leader; he was a bridge between our rich history and our shared future. His leadership was characterised by wisdom, dignity and an unwavering commitment to the welfare of his people," said Buda.

He further described the late Chief as a champion of culture and a committed partner in development. "He served as a steadfast guardian of the customs and traditions of the Amandebele ka Manala. At the same time, he was a vital partner to the Victor Khanye Local Municipality, always striving to ensure that the voices of his community were heard in the halls of governance," he said.

Buda added that Chief Mabena symbolised unity and stability. "During times of challenge, his calm guidance provided a sense of security and continuity for the Manala tribe. He planted seeds of leadership and unity that will continue to guide future generations."

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



Hope for Survival

By Pastor Chuck Swindoll

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. (Acts 4:32)

A certain fascinating social phenomenon occurred in American history. Understand, I wasn't living back then, but from what I read, this actually happened. It occurred when "Go west, young man!" was the challenge of America . . . when squatter's rights seemed the most advantageous way to pry families loose and dare them to brave the elements via the covered wagon.

Out they came, exchanging the crowded, soot-choked industrial cities back East for the open plains, clear skies, and fertile, albeit rugged, farmland of the West.

Predictably, those early settlers built their cabins or sod huts smack dab in the middle of their homestead, acres (often miles) from the nearest family. Strong, sturdy fences marked property lines as pride of ownership became the badge of courage. Words like independence and private property were common table talk as the young were taught how to fight for survival.

But as time passed all that began to change. As it was put to the test, isolationism proved to be a far cry from ideal. When photographers returned from those lonely houses, they showed pictures of wild-eyed women, stooped, gaunt, prematurely old men, and haunted-looking children. Life was hard making it on their own, especially through bitter winters and fighting off disease and starvation.

More and more settlers learned that they had a better chance of making it if they would build their houses near each other, in the corner of their property rather than in the center. Four families could survive much easier if they loosened their grip on independence, built a gate in their fence, and relinquished their overstated emphasis on privacy. Enduring winter's blast or a lengthy illness wasn't nearly so frightful if you had three other families within walking distance. It proved to be much more fun coming together instead of living lonely, separate, touch-me-not lives of isolation.

From all this emerged a proverb: "Shared joy is a double joy, shared sorrow is half a sorrow."

Seasons of the year became more colorful, more hopeful. Farming, harvesting, canning, and slaughtering became group projects. Weddings and worship, gains and losses, births and deaths became shared experiences as mere existence was exchanged for real living . . . entering into each other's joys as well as sorrows, neighbors becoming friends (then relatives!) . . . sharers in the many-faceted jewel called "living."

Those old settlers learned what we seem to have forgotten today: pulling closer together is better than existing so far apart. Sharing is still to be preferred to staying aloof. The risks and periodic hassles notwithstanding, four in a corner are better than one in the middle. I'm confident that's the whole point of Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12 (MSG):

It's better to have a partner than go it alone.
Share the work, share the wealth.
And if one falls down, the other helps,
But if there's no one to help, tough! . . .

By yourself you're unprotected.
With a friend you can face the worst.
Can you round up a third?
A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.

A lot of us Western folk come from pioneering stock. The myth of "rugged individualism" dies a hard and bitter death. Our credo says:

"I can handle it."
"I'll tough it out somehow."
"I don't need to lean on anyone."
"I'll just hole up and lick my wounds; no one really cares anyway."

That may be good Western mythology, but it's rotten biblical theology. Chase the phrase "one another" through the last half of your New Testament and you'll see what I mean. We really do need each other. More profoundly, more desperately than we even begin to realize. As a matter of fact, we were given to one another by the Lord of the Body—because each one of us has a unique something to contribute—a piece of the divine puzzle no one else on earth can supply (see Ephesians 4).

Where is your sod hut? Out in the middle of some lonely, windswept acres? How long has it been since you've had some significant, openhearted, fences-down interaction with folks in a local Body? Too long? Maybe it's time you moved your hut to the corner of your field. Maybe it's time you installed a gate in that high, forbidding fence. It could make a big difference in your life.

For some of you, it may even mean survival.



The late Chief Alpheus Mabena, leader of the Manala-Ndayi Traditional Authority

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Editor

Magnificent Mndebele

064 785 9746

Advertising

081 303 7023

info@highveldchronicle.co.za

Journalist

Lucas Shongwe

071 499 8950

Simphiwe Jennifer Motau

072 802 8592

Rodney Hlatshwayo

076 691 6658

Nelisiwe Skhosana

076 567 0552

PUBLISHER,

Layout & Design

HIGHVELD CHRONICLE

info@highveldchronicle.co.za

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'SAVE THE BOY CHILD, SAVE THE FUTURE'

Phupholethu targets GBV through boys' mentorship

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS — In a proactive effort to combat gender-based violence (GBV), substance abuse and youth crime, the Phupholethu Community Organisation in Delmas has rolled out a structured mentorship and life-skills programme aimed at grooming teenage boys into responsible young men.

As part of its preventative strategy, Phupholethu conducted awareness programmes at Swartklip Combined School on 20 February 2026, covering topics such as GBV, adolescence, crime and substance abuse, and facilitated an educational visit to Modderbee Correctional Services, exposing learners to the real-life consequences of crime.

Due to a lack of transport to accommodate all learners, seven learners each from Phaphamani Secondary School, Botleng Secondary School and Mafa Max Secondary School participated in the correctional

services visit, which formed part of a youth crime prevention drive. The visit gave learners first-hand insight into the consequences of poor life choices.

Based in Delmas, the organisation focuses on mentoring and grooming boys through structured development programmes. It believes sustainable community change begins with shaping responsible young men early in life.

Chairperson Richard Skosana said the organisation was founded to address a critical gap in youth development.

"The aim of the Phupholethu Community Organisation is to empower teenage boys through grooming and mentorship, addressing the often overlooked needs of the boy child," he said.

He further explained that while many social programmes focus on empowering girls, fewer

structured platforms exist to guide boys through adolescence. "Our purpose is to equip future leaders with essential life skills, fostering informed and responsible young men who can positively contribute to their communities. If we save the boy child, we save the future of our communities," he added.

Through its outreach programmes, Phupholethu addresses issues including gender-based violence, drug abuse, behavioural challenges and criminal activity among young people. Awareness sessions are interactive, encouraging boys to speak openly about peer pressure, masculinity, emotional struggles and societal expectations.

Phupholethu works with several stakeholders, including the

Department of Social Development (DSD), Victor Khanye Local Municipality, Vusithemba Victim Support Centre, Transversal Office, South African Police Service (SAPS), Philabole' Collection and the Department of Health.

These partnerships aim to ensure a holistic approach that combines social support, law enforcement guidance, victim empowerment and community-based resources. Beyond awareness campaigns, the

organisation emphasises personal grooming, discipline and mentorship as foundational pillars of its programme.

In a community facing ongoing social and economic challenges, the organisation says its focus remains on preventative empowerment rather than reactive intervention.

"When you invest in a boy's character, you invest in a safer, stronger community," Skosana said.



Liberty Coal launches stakeholder forum to strengthen community engagement

● SIMPHIWE JENNIFER MOTAU

MIDDELBURG — Liberty Coal has launched a stakeholder forum aimed at prioritising jobs for host communities during a community engagement meeting held on 23 February 2026 at the Eric Jiyane Community Hall, where community members from Ward 12 to Ward 29 voted for their preferred representatives. Several other meetings were held from 16 February 2026 across the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality to ensure representation of all communities where Liberty Coal mines.

The initiative follows the company's decision to consolidate its mining activities at Optimum Colliery and increase production.

The newly formed Liberty Coal Stakeholder Forum is intended to serve as a structured platform through which communities can regularly engage the company on development matters.

Speaking at the meeting, Liberty Coal representative Nelisiwe Mabaso said the forum seeks to eliminate informal community structures that allegedly exploit job seekers.

"The aim of the stakeholder forum is to get rid of the community structures that promise people jobs but end up giving those opportunities to their relatives," said Mabaso.

She explained that the company will now communicate directly with communities through the elected forum members and prioritise employment for host communities.

"From now on, whenever there are job opportunities, they will be given to the mine host communities instead of using structures that bring in their relatives from outside the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality while locals remain unemployed," she said.

Mabaso further announced plans to install hub containers in each ward to improve access to resources and opportunities. The hubs will be managed by locally hired personnel and will provide free Wi-Fi for residents.

"Community members will use these hubs to apply for jobs, register their businesses on our database, and even unemployed residents will be registered so that when opportunities arise at Liberty, we select from that database," she said.

She added that the company will implement strict verification processes to ensure that local communities benefit. Mabaso also committed the company to responding more effectively to community concerns.

"From now on, Liberty is going to

respond to communities' grievances instead of just listening. This is what often leads to protests because people feel unheard," she said.

The company also plans to roll out corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and support viable community business ideas that can create employment.

"We want the community to know about employment opportunities at every stage of mining operations, from exploration to closure, and we will hire from unskilled to skilled, from uneducated to educated. We will also create practical internships for graduates who need experience," Mabaso said.

Liberty Coal urged residents to make proper use of the elected forum representatives.

One of the newly elected forum members, Tshepo Mlangeni from Ward 25, welcomed the development.

"I am very grateful to be chosen by my ward. We have been waiting for change in our local areas, and now it is time to work to make that change," said Mlangeni. "These opportunities are for the Steve Tshwete communities, not people from outside. We will unite as a forum and as a community to make sure no one is left behind."

Community members also expressed optimism about the initiative. Resident Phindile Ntuli said the forum brings renewed hope to job seekers.

"I am very happy about what Liberty Coal is doing. It has been a long time since we have been looking for jobs while some structures take our little money every month promising opportunities but end up hiring their relatives," she said.

"What Liberty is doing is a good initiative and we hope everyone will benefit."

Another resident, Sipho Mgabele, echoed similar sentiments.

"I am also happy about this and hope these issues with some structures will come to an end because we do not benefit from them," he said. With heated moments at the community hall in Mhluzi, with police closely monitoring the situation, disagreements between certain community members and questions about the proposed structure of representation, the forum was successfully elected.



Ms Makhosazane Christine Masilela
Speaker

SOPA 2026

State of the Province Address

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STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS 2026 – 05 MARCH 2026**

The Speaker of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Ms Makhosazane Christine Masilela has the pleasure of announcing the Official Opening of the 3rd Session of the 7th Mpumalanga Legislature and the delivery of the State of the Province Address (SOPA) by Premier, Mr Mandla Padney Ndlovu. The event is scheduled to take place as follows:

Date : Thursday, 05 March 2026
Time : 10:00 (Invited guests are expected to be seated by 09:00)
Venue : Riverside Government Complex: Baobab Building, Legislature Chamber

The Proceedings will be live on Legislature's Facebook page and YouTube Channel, Ligwalagwala FM, Ikwewezi FM, Rise FM, Parliamentary channel 408 and on several Community Radio Stations in the Province.

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DA complaint triggers public protector probe into alleged unlawful mining in Victor Khanye

Municipality rejects inaction claims and points to financial constraints in pursuing legal action while public protector evaluates evidence

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS - A political and governance storm is brewing in Mpumalanga after the Democratic Alliance (DA) escalated allegations of unlawful mining and land-use violations in Victor Khanye Local Municipality to Public Protector South Africa (PPSA), prompting a formal investigation.

The complaint raises serious questions about zoning compliance, environmental oversight and the enforcement of planning legislation in an area traditionally associated with agricultural activity. At the heart of the dispute are claims that mining operations, including active collieries, are operating on land not zoned for extractive use.

In a statement issued on 17 February 2026, DA MPL Tersia Marshall, spokesperson for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, said the complaint is based on:

“Credible evidence that multiple mining undertakings, including active collieries, have been conducting extractive operations on land that remains zoned 'Agriculture' or otherwise classified as rural or residential, without the requisite rezoning or consent-use approvals required under applicable planning legislation.”

Marshall said provincial and municipal authorities were alerted as early as June 2025, yet no effective supervisory intervention followed.

“This raises serious constitutional concerns of deliberate decisions to monetise illegality, instead of enforcing compliance,” Marshall said. “This also undermines the rule of law and erodes public confidence in governance.”

The DA has requested the Public Protector to investigate several individuals and entities, including:

- Speedy Mashilo, MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs
- Khethiwe Moeketsi, MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs
- Jesta Sidell, MEC for Economic Development
- Vusi Buda, Mayor of Victor Khanye Local Municipality
- The Mpumalanga regional office of the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE)

Marshall described the alleged erosion of agricultural land as “not merely a planning failure, but a governance crisis,” warning of long-term implications for food security, rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

The Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development and Tourism has denied any involvement in or knowledge of illegal mining activities in the municipality.

Spokesperson Silence Mhlaba told the *Highveld Chronicle*:

“The Department of Economic Development and Tourism in Mpumalanga did not facilitate, promote nor support any of the mining operations in the Victor Khanye Local Municipality.”

Responding to whether economic development objectives were prioritised over land-use compliance, the department stated:

“The Department operates within the established legal framework and it will never engage in any activity that seeks to undermine the very same laws. To answer your question directly, we are not aware of any illegal mining activities in that area of the province.”

The department added that it was not aware of any incentives, grants or approvals granted in relation to the operations and confirmed it was not involved.

In a written response, the Office of Mayor Vusi Buda said the municipality acknowledges the complaint and remains committed to accountable governance.

“The Victor Khanye Local Municipality is aware of the proliferation of extractive activities within its jurisdiction,” the statement read. “The Municipality maintains a Land Use Management Scheme; however, the enforcement of mining rights is a concurrent function involving the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE).”

On the use of fines, the municipality said: “The Municipal Systems Act and relevant land-use by-laws provide for a stepped enforcement approach. Fines serve as an initial legal instrument to penalise contraventions. However, fines do not preclude further legal action.”

The municipality confirmed that persistent contraventions have been escalated to its Legal Services Unit for court proceedings, but cited financial constraints, noting it is operating under an unfunded budget requiring strict prioritisation of resources.

The municipality rejected allegations of inaction and welcomed the Public Protector's intervention.

Public Protector Confirms Investigation

The Public Protector confirmed to the *Highveld Chronicle* that the matter is under active investigation.

Acting spokesperson Ndili Msoki said:

“The Public Protector South Africa (PPSA) confirms that it is investigating the matter. Our investigation process includes evaluating evidence and applying the appropriate legal framework before any findings can be finalised.”

Msoki explained that where there are preliminary adverse findings, a notice in terms of section 7(9) of the Public Protector Act 23 of 1994 will be delivered to affected and implicated persons to allow them to respond. Where there is insufficient evidence, a Discretionary Notice will be issued.

“At this stage, we are not in a position to provide a definitive timeline for completion. The PPSA will communicate the findings once the investigation is concluded,” she said.

Msoki further emphasised confidentiality provisions:

“Section 7(2) of the Public Protector Act 23 of 1994 prohibits the disclosure, by any

person, of the contents of any document or record of any evidence given before the Public Protector or Deputy Public Protector during an investigation.”

The Mpumalanga Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (CoGHSTA) has responded to the *Highveld Chronicle* regarding alleged unlawful mining in Victor Khanye Local Municipality.

The department said the Office of the MEC did not receive the alleged June 2025 correspondence alerting it to illegal mining activities.

“The correspondence was never received by the Office of the MEC and therefore, no further action can be taken.”

CoGHSTA stated that the MEC conducts oversight through programmes such as Taking Legislation to the People (TLP) and Executive Council outreach initiatives. During the 2025/26 financial year, three oversight visits were conducted in Victor Khanye, focusing on boreholes, subsidised housing and the Delmas Wastewater Treatment Works.

On constitutional oversight under Section 139, the department emphasised that land use management is implemented by municipalities in terms of Spatial Planning and Land-Use Management (SPLUMA), while mining applications are regulated under additional legislation administered by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy and other relevant departments.

Regarding the municipality's alleged decision to issue fines instead of halting unlawful land use, CoGHSTA said municipalities are autonomous institutions guided by legal prescripts.

The department added that illegal mining is receiving urgent attention at national and provincial level, including interventions announced during the February 2026 State of the Nation Address.

The response was issued by CoGHSTA's Communications Directorate, Freddy Ngobe.

The publication sent detailed questions to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) and the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs for a right of reply.

At the time of publication, no responses had been received from these departments.

With the investigation now formally underway, the findings of the Public Protector are expected to determine whether municipal and provincial authorities acted within the law or whether failures in oversight and enforcement enabled alleged unlawful mining activities to persist in Victor Khanye.

The outcome could have far-reaching implications not only for governance in Victor Khanye, but for how land-use compliance and mining regulation are monitored across Mpumalanga.

38 individuals charged with defrauding Mpumalanga Education Department granted bail of R1,6 million

● LUCAS SHONGWE

MPUMALANGA — A total of 38 accused, including senior officials and service providers, have been released on bail totalling R1,625,000 after being charged with allegedly defrauding the Mpumalanga Department of Education of R114 million.

They were arrested by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) on Sunday, 22 February 2026, and Monday, 23 February 2026. They appeared in the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court between 23 and 25 February 2026 on charges of fraud, corruption and money laundering.

Thirty-one (31) of the accused were granted bail of R50,000 each, one was granted R30,000 bail, three others were granted R20,000 each, and three were released on R5,000 bail each.

The accused include senior department officials and service providers, including two pastors and private citizens.

An investigation has uncovered that the department awarded tender projects amounting to R114 million. It appears that certain service providers may have been selectively chosen without adhering to the appropriate protocols.

Allegations have surfaced that these providers delivered services of inferior quality, some even received payment for services that were never performed, and others were reportedly compensated multiple times for the same work.

The funds misappropriated from the department were transferred from the accounts of the service providers to various other accounts before ultimately reaching government officials.

Additionally, police disclosed that two additional suspects have yet to

come forward and are anticipated to surrender to law enforcement as coordinated with their legal counsel.

All the accused are expected to return to court for their second appearance on 26 March 2026.

This is not the first scandal to rock the Mpumalanga Department of Education. In December 2024, the department spent R2 million on 22 laptops and a printer, with each laptop costing R91,482.50 — almost twice what they are worth on the market.

As a result, the Head of Department (HOD), Lucy Moyane, was suspended and eight officials faced disciplinary measures. Mpumalanga Premier Mandla Ndlovu pledged to recover the misappropriated funds and hold those responsible accountable.

The investigation uncovered serious misconduct, revealing that officials sidestepped procurement regulations, tampered with product specifications and accepted inferior laptops, with some allegedly pocketing kickbacks. The service provider is set to be blacklisted.

In response to the recent arrests, Premier Ndlovu said these actions are in line with the commitments made during the President's recent State of the Nation Address (SONA).

“It is worth noting that the arrests complement the President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa's firm commitment to fight corruption and crime as outlined in the SONA. In addition, building a capable, ethical and developmental state, as one of the three priorities of the 7th Administration, requires a high level of commitment to act in cases where risks are identified to obstruct the realisation of this aspiration,” he said in a statement released on Tuesday, 24 February.



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Can the Service Delivery Party turn 'results' into real political reform?

Can they move from activism into real decision-making power and deliver measurable change inside municipal councils, not just outside them?

● RODNEY HLATSHWAYO

DELMAS - Politics in Mpumalanga is changing. Coalitions are unstable, service delivery problems continue, and many voters are tired of dominant political parties. This situation has created space for new political parties to emerge. The newly formed Service Delivery Party (SDP) in Delmas is trying to enter that space, focusing not on ideology, but on "results." 2026 is a local government election year. Many political parties are expected to emerge, while opposition parties are positioning themselves to garner more support and place themselves in control of municipalities. Many will be watching closely as contestation for power gains momentum. But what results exactly? And how different is this party from others?

The SDP's emergence came about a month ago. It says its strength comes from practical work already done by its members. These include following up on road repairs, monitoring waste removal, helping residents with incorrect municipal bills, organising community clean-ups, and stepping in when services break down.

These actions show community involvement. However, they are not new or unique. Civic groups, ward committees and independent activists have been doing similar work for years. **The key question is whether the SDP can move from activism into real decision-making power and whether it can bring measurable change inside municipal councils, not just outside them.**

Pascaline Nqobile Mazibuko, also known as "Bullet" Mkabayi, told the *Highveld Chronicle*:

"While the party is only a month old, its members have years of political experience. Our bottom-up model allows local branches to influence municipal priorities and budgets, giving communities a direct say in governance."

The "bottom-up" approach needs closer examination. Party branches are made up of members, not the entire community. The SDP says it will consult residents, document their needs, and submit proposals through council processes. However, South African municipalities are already required by law to allow public participation during budgeting. The difference will not be consultation but whether the SDP can successfully change how budgets are allocated.

The party says it will measure its progress over the next six to 12 months using clear indicators: fewer unresolved billing disputes, better water and refuse removal services, visible service delivery projects, written responses from the municipality, and growth in party branches.

These are clear targets. But small parties in coalition governments often do not control executive positions. Without control of mayoral offices or

key committees, influence depends on negotiation power. In closely contested councils, where as few as 147 votes can win representation, according to National Coordinator Thabo Motau, small parties can become kingmakers. However, having leverage is not the same as having control.

Motau said:

"We consult traditional leaders, business owners, unemployed youth, and ordinary residents. In some Mpumalanga areas, just 147 votes can secure council representation, highlighting how local politics can be very close to citizens' needs."

But consultation alone does not make a party different. Every political party claims to consult communities. The SDP says what makes it different is internal discipline and corporate-style accountability systems.

Mazibuko said:

"Representatives who fail to meet agreed standards will face corrective measures in line with the party constitution. SDP is built on action rather than promises. Our pioneers work in communities weekly and remain accessible to residents."

The party plans to introduce public performance scorecards, signed accountability pledges, quarterly feedback meetings, and internal reviews. On paper, this looks similar to performance management systems used in companies.

However, there is a political reality: many SDP leaders have been part of other political structures before. This raises an important question: if they supported accountability before, why were those systems not implemented in their previous parties?

Mazibuko responds to this criticism directly:

"Experience should not be confused with complacency. SDP members have demonstrated integrity by speaking out against inefficiency and supporting transparency measures in previous roles. Experience becomes an advantage when combined with accountability and commitment to change. SDP brings both."

Whether voters see this as genuine reform or political repositioning will depend on proof, such as clear examples of past oversight and independence from patronage networks.

The SDP also speaks about youth development, supporting small businesses, promoting sports and culture, tackling unemployment, and addressing drug abuse. These

are common goals found in many party manifestos across South Africa. The real test will not be the promises, but the party's ability to implement them and secure funding, both of which are still at an early stage.

South Africa's political history shows that new reform parties often start with strong messages about transparency and service delivery. But many struggle with growth, internal conflict, funding problems, and coalition compromises. Small parties in councils sometimes trade influence for survival, which weakens their reform goals.

The SDP says it will avoid this by using written coalition agreements, standard governance templates, leadership training, and central oversight systems. Whether these systems will survive the pressure of coalition politics remains to be seen.

According to the SDP, what sets it apart is not simply its promises, which are common across political parties, but its deliberate move away from ideological politics. The party presents governance as a technical issue that requires measurement, monitoring, and clear consequences for failure.

The SDP maintains that if this model succeeds in even one municipality — by improving billing systems, water supply, or refuse removal — it would demonstrate that performance-based local politics can work within South Africa's coalition environment. If it fails, it may increase public frustration and confirm the belief that new party branding alone cannot fix deep municipal problems.

For now, the Service Delivery Party remains a political experiment, testing whether credibility can be built on measurable performance results rather than history, ideology or populist rhetoric.

Its future will depend not on how strongly it criticises other parties, but on whether, within 12 months after the polls, residents in Delmas and municipalities like eMalahleni, Steve Tshwete and other areas where the party is expanding can clearly identify a service that improved because of SDP involvement.

The SDP is actively mobilising on the ground — drawing relatively large crowds, facilitating voter registration in collaboration with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), keeping streets clean and engaging in other forms of active citizenry work. However, the question remains whether this will be enough, particularly as some of its leaders previously belonged to political parties in which the community has lost confidence, as reflected in the last national polls.

That evidence, not slogans, will determine whether "results-focused politics" becomes a new trend in Mpumalanga or simply another short-lived political project in the province's evolving coalition environment.

Residents raise crime concerns at eMalahleni safety hearing

● ZINHLE MASILELA

EMALAHLENI – Residents from across eMalahleni gathered at Lynnville Hall on Thursday, 19 February 2026, to confront law enforcement and government officials over escalating crime, drug activity, inadequate policing and school safety concerns during a public hearing hosted by the Portfolio Committee on Community Safety, Security and Liaison.

The hearing was convened to allow community members to raise safety concerns directly with officials and law enforcement authorities, amid growing dissatisfaction with crime prevention efforts.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee Life Monini, Pekky Shongwe, Thabile Mavimbela, MMC for Safety Sizwe Buthelezi and Teboho Sekaledi.

"Our system has collapsed. We have lost faith and trust in our police officers," said Ezekiel Maseko, a resident in eMalahleni.

Maseko questioned the professionalism and integrity of some police officers, claiming that victims are often treated poorly when reporting cases.

He added that some officers struggle to properly record statements, resulting in poorly drafted affidavits that weaken cases in court and, in some instances, lead to matters being struck off the roll. Residents from several wards described what they called inadequate policing and limited visible intervention.

Bongani Hlophe from Ward 13 said the Vosman SAPS is overstretched and unable to effectively serve both Vosman and surrounding areas.

"As residents of the location, we don't have a police station. We've been raising this issue for a couple of years now," said Hlophe.

He further alleged that eMalahleni has become a hotspot for drug activity, claiming drug dealers operate openly without consequence. Hlophe called for increased visible policing, regular stop-and-search operations and targeted interventions in known drug-affected areas such as Schoongezicht.

Representing the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), Shaun Motsoeneng highlighted the

growing issue of burglaries at schools and increasing incidents of learner violence.

He said criminal elements target school infrastructure, stealing equipment and vandalising property, which disrupts learning and places both learners and educators at risk.

Motsoeneng called for stronger collaboration between schools, police and community structures to safeguard educational institutions.

A School Governing Body member from Phillip Ndimande High School, Anna Mashiane, urged parents to take a more active role in combating drug abuse in schools, particularly the use of 'choef'.

"As parents, let's go back to being parents because now it seems like our kids are controlling us. They are the ones in charge," said Mashiane.

Paulina Mokoena from the Community Policing Forum (CPF) in Vosman highlighted the role played by residents who knowingly purchase stolen goods.

"People who buy stolen items are part of the problem. If they are found with stolen property, they must also be arrested," she said, emphasising that community accountability is crucial in the fight against crime.

MMC for Safety Sizwe Buthelezi acknowledged the seriousness of the level of crime in the municipality and urged residents to work collaboratively with police.

"As a community, we are the ones affected the most when it comes to crime, and we need to work together with the police to ensure that crime in our communities stops," said Buthelezi.

He encouraged residents to fully utilise the presence of Legislature representatives.

"We say that the police do not hear us. Well, today they are here to listen."

The Portfolio Committee committed to consolidating the concerns raised and engaging relevant departments and law enforcement agencies on possible interventions.

Residents were encouraged to continue working with police and community safety structures to rebuild trust and strengthen crime prevention efforts in eMalahleni.



A resident addresses the Portfolio Committee during the public participation session, highlighting safety challenges affecting the community.



Service Delivery Party members

IMAGE: Facebook (Service Delivery Party)

ISIKO LETHU

Our Story

WITH SIPHO MAHAMBA

Ukukhuthalela ukuletha itjhuguluko epilwenakho

Woke umuntu ophilako uneemfiso zokwenza ngcono epilwenakhe. Abuye abaneemfiso zokuphumelela nokuphila ipilo emthokozisako nemthabisako. Sibabantu epilweni asinawo amakhono afanako, izipho ezifanako namkha ukuhlakanipha okufanako. Woke umuntu uphiwe ngendlelakehle chlukile. Yeke kusemntwini bona sakhe isiphiwo usiberegisa ngayiphi indlela.

Njengombana sesitjhwiwe bonyana woke umuntu unekghono nesiphiwo esihlukileko kunesomunye, kukuwe bona uliberegisa bunjani ikghonwelo nesiphiweso ukufezakalisa amabhudango wakho.

Abanye abantu baphiwe bonyana baberege ngeezandla, abanye baphiwe bonyana baberegise imikhumbulwabo, bacabange ngokudephileko, abanye bona baphiwe bonyana babenamhwebo, baqatjhe abanye abantu. Kanti-ke abanye baphiwe bonyana batlole iingoma, iinkondlo namkha iindatjana, abanye baphiwe amaphimbo wokuvuma, bavuselele imimmoya yabantu.

Kuqakathekile bonyana uzazi bonyana unekghono liphi ukghone ukuliberegisela ukuziphilisa. Kanti-ke kilaba abathi bona baphiwe

emikhumbulwenabo leli lithuba elihle lokobana bazitlolisele ifundo ephakemeko njengombana ukutlolisa kuvuliwe emaYunivesithi amanengi eSewula Afrika. Ezinye iinkolo zefundo ephakemeko zinamahlelo wokufunda amafitjhani, afundisana ngemiberego yezandla kilaba abaphiwe ukuberega ngeezandla. Kilaba abafuna ukuvula amahwebo bangalinga ukubawa ukusekelwa ngemali embusweni.

Ik'sasa lakho lisezandleni zakho. Kukuwe bonyana ulithole njani ikghona lakho namkha isiphiwo sakho. Kuqakathekile ukungalahli ithemba begodu ungazipheleli ihliziyo. Yoke into yenzakala ngesikhathi sayo nangendlelayo. Soke siyayilangazelela ipumelelo, ikani nje kukhuthalela ukwenza, kukhuthalela ukuletha itjhuguluko elizokweza ipilwakho ibengcono kunayizolo.

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NOTIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION APPLICATION OUTCOME AND APPEAL PROCESS

Seriti Power (Pty) Ltd: South Witbank Project

in respect of Remaining Extent, Portions 57, 66, 67, Portion of Portion 149, Portion 156 of farm Witbank 307 JS and a Portion of farm Industria 305 JS in the Magisterial District of Witbank, eMalahleli Local Municipality and Nkangala District.

Project DMPR REFERENCE NUMBER MP 30/5/1/2/3/2/1 (10375) EM

You are hereby notified that an Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the above-mentioned project was granted by the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DMPR) in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA), as amended, and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2014, as amended. The authorisation was granted on 13 February 2026 and received via email from the DMPR on 23 February 2026.

The EA outlines, amongst others, the decision, the activities authorised, conditions of authorisation, reasons for the decision and the appeal process in terms of the National Appeal Regulations, 2014 (as amended). In terms of regulation 4(2) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation of 2014, as amended, the applicant must within 14 days of receipt of the EA, ensure that all interested and affected parties are notified of the decision. Should you require a copy of the Environmental Authorisation, and reasons for the decision, please contact our office via email, admin@zyntha.co.za, fax (086 410 8267) or via telephone 013 243 7110.

Should you wish to appeal any aspect of the decision, you must submit a written appeal to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) within 20 days from the date of notification. The appeal should be lodged as prescribed in Chapter 2 of the National Appeal Regulations of 2014 (as amended). A copy of the lodged appeal should also be submitted to the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DMPR), Mpumalanga Regional Office. The prescribed appeal form and assistance related to the appeal process is obtainable from the office of the appeal authority. Appeals must be submitted as prescribed below:

Appeal to Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment

Attention: Directorate Appeals and Legal Review

Email: appeals@environment.gov.za

By post: Private Bag X 447, Pretoria, 0001

By hand: Environmental House, Corner of Steve Biko and Soutpansberg Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0083

Copy of Appeal to DMPR

Attention: Regional Manager: Mpumalanga Region

By facsimile: (013) 656 1474

Email: lydia.maphopha@dmpr.gov.za

By post: Private Bag X7279, Witbank, 1035

By hand: First floor Saveways Centre, Nelson Mandela Drive, Emalahleli, 1035

Date of Notice: 27 February 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE & INVITATION TO PUBLIC MEETING; WATER USE LICENCE APPLICATION – KANGALA, MPUMALANGA

Notice is hereby given in terms of Section 41(4) of the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) that a Water Use Licence Application (WULA) has been submitted to the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Applicant: Itshudu Agricultural Primary Cooperative Ltd; Project: Portion 17 of Syferfotein Farm 288 IR, Delmas 2210. DWS Reference Number: [If available]

Proposed Water Uses

The application seeks authorisation for water uses in terms of Section 21 of the National Water Act, including:

Taking water from a water resource and storing water

Public Participation

Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) are invited to register and submit written comments, questions, or concerns regarding the application.

Invitation to Public Meeting

Members of the public and stakeholders are invited to attend a public participation meeting where the project and water use licence process will be presented.

Meeting Details: Date: 25 March 2026 **Time:** 9:00 am;

Venue: Delmas library

Document Availability

Application documents will be available for review at:

Delmas library; also available on request via email

Comment Period: The public comment period is 60 days from the date of this notice.

Closing date for comments: 23 April 2026 at 18:00.

Submit Comments / Register as I&AP

Itshudu Agricultural Primary Cooperative Ltd

Contact Person: Fani Kabini

Tel: 079 720 8202

Email: kabinifj@gmail.com

Your participation is important to ensure that all potential impacts on water resources are considered.

On this page, we feature how schoolgoers experience life across different municipalities under the Nkangala District. The views expressed reflect the lived realities of the respective authors. Enjoy the read.

A Learner's Perspective: Life is fraught with challenges in Siyanqoba

KARABO MAMAILA

EMALAHLENI — My name is Karabo Mamaila. I am 14 years old and turning 15 this year. I used to live at my grandmother's house until my mother got a house in Siyanqoba in 2020. I was excited because I finally got a chance to



Karabo Mamaila (15), is a Grade 9 learner at Pine Ridge Combined School.

meet new people and socialise. When I moved to Siyanqoba, I made new friends. We would play the whole day, but we had to go back to our homes because there was no electricity. When we went grocery shopping, we would buy tinned food. One day, things changed when the municipality employees came to our homes and connected electricity. Life was better after that but I could not help but to notice that not all houses had electricity. Some people have been living there for years without electricity. We also do not have water in Siyanqoba. Since I started living there, my sister and I often fetch water from a stream. There are

water trucks that supply us with water, but they can take weeks without coming. Not everyone can afford JoJo tanks. Even when we buy them, we still need to buy water from the truck drivers. Siyanqoba was once a quiet, peaceful and refreshing place where you could go to the shops even at 9 p.m, but it is not safe anymore. The crime rate has increased, especially in my area. I remember one night when my dad was at work and I was left with my mother. That night I slept at midnight because I was studying for the next day's exam. After I fell asleep, I was suddenly woken up by my mother. I heard a sound at the kitchen door. People were trying to break in. My mother called her neighbour, and the

thieves ran away. The community has been complaining about thieves who steal furniture and cars, but there is still no solution. In Siyanqoba, my life has changed from being excited about making new friendships to facing hard realities like lack of electricity, scarce water and rising crime. The moment

electricity was installed showed me that small improvements can make a big difference. I believe that the community needs stronger support from the municipality. If these basic services are provided and crime is addressed, Siyanqoba can become a better place for everyone, giving us hope for a brighter future.

A Learner's Perspective: Apathy and ignorance is the biggest cause of social ills

KETSO PHELADI TLAKA

EMALAHLENI — Who exactly should be held accountable for the social ills affecting communities on a daily basis?

If anyone were to write about the social problems faced by their community and even better if the involved lived in a township like mine:

The easiest answer would be to blame or complain of crime, unemployment, poverty, teenage pregnancy, reduced access to basic needs and so on, all of which are true. But what if we were all just overlooking a problem that surpasses all those mentioned, one that might actually be the reason for all the other issues discussed, "The Mirror Problem."

The ideal understanding of the Mirror Problem is that we are people who refuse to "look in the mirror" or more specifically take responsibility. In turn this informs us that the bigger issue in our communities is not only what we claim to suffer from but our ignorance in taking responsibility for and bettering our surroundings.

For example, with the problem of unemployment, which is often linked to a lack of job opportunities; discrimination within workplaces; immigrant employment

overpopulation; all the way up to the major reason of 'failed government', how many people out of all those unemployed are seeking entrepreneurial opportunities, a means to make it for themselves?

Furthermore, we should also consider that the government we point to as the cause behind the social crisis was put to power by us civilians.

Are we still to debate whether social ignorance is not a primary social problem? And if not, what steps should community members take to overthrow the standard of living under social depravity as though it were a norm? Instinctively the first step to moving our communities out of social pressure is for civilians to choose to do something for themselves and for our community's benefit daily.



Ketso Pheladi Tlaka (17), is a Grade 11 learner at Pine Ridge Combined School

A Learner's Perspective: Challenges teenagers from Ezinambeni go through

PRAISE SKHOSANA

EMALAHLENI — Teenagers growing up in the community of eMalahleni, especially in township areas like Ezinambeni, face a range of challenges that affect their well-being, opportunities and future prospects.

These issues affect almost every teen in this community. One of the most significant challenges is unemployment and economic hardship. Many families in townships live with limited financial resources, and young people often feel discouraged.

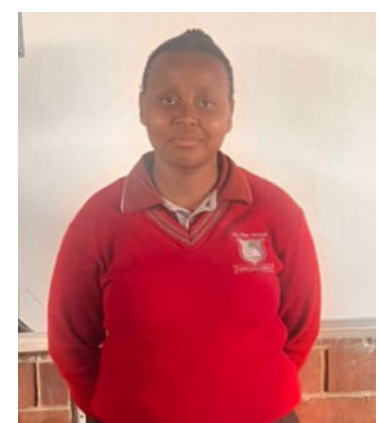
The lack of steady jobs and economic opportunities makes it difficult for teens to imagine a stable future, increasing stress and uncertainty about their goals. These economic challenges in my community contribute to issues like crime, substance use and school dropouts. Teenagers in under-resourced areas often attend schools that struggle with insufficient tools and overcrowded classrooms.

Many learners in my community face loadshedding, poor internet access, and the high cost of data or devices, which make it harder to keep up with schoolwork. These challenges make educational progress harder and can widen gaps between township youth and those in wealthier communities. In many townships, a variety of teens live under very bad conditions. Teens experiment with drugs or alcohol as a

way to cope, which can lead to many other problems. Mental health is often overlooked in my community, which is a huge challenge for teenagers.

Many adolescents experience high levels of anxiety, depression and emotional distress partly because of poverty and stress at home or school. Without easy access to counseling or mental health services, many teens struggle silently. Teens can feel overwhelmed by their inability to balance between schoolwork and home responsibilities.

Lastly, the lack of positive role models leaves many teenagers feeling lost and unmotivated, and teens have too much unstructured time, which increases their exposure to negative influences.



Praise Skhosana (15) is a Grade 9 learner at Pine Ridge Combined School.

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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

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

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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.

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'I'll sign today': Pitso Mosimane on possible Bafana return

With Hugo Broos set to step down after the FIFA World Cup, Pitso Mosimane has thrown his name into the ring for the Bafana Bafana job.

Former Mamelodi Sundowns head coach Pitso Mosimane has openly declared his interest in returning to the Bafana Bafana hot seat.

With current head coach Hugo Broos expected to step down after the upcoming FIFA World Cup, the South African Football Association (SAFA) has yet to outline succession plans for the national team.

Mosimane, who previously led South Africa between 2010 and 2012, says he would not hesitate to take the job if approached.

"Myself, I'm interested," Mosimane said when asked about the possibility of coaching Bafana again.

"That is the medal I want to close everything. That is the medal I don't have on the continent. I would love to

do that with Bafana and win AFCON, that's the one I want." Speaking on the SMWX podcast, Mosimane made it clear that lifting the Africa Cup of Nations trophy with South Africa remains unfinished business in his glittering coaching career.

Pitso Mosimane wants AFCON medal with Bafana

"I'm not complaining. SAFA will put whoever is right for the job. But if you ask me today if I'd sign the contract, I'll sign today. It means a lot to me.

I think we are at the right time with the right generation," Pitso added.

"This generation can win AFCON"

Mosimane believes the current

crop of South African players has what it takes to conquer the continent.

"Football goes in waves," he explained. "Brazil hasn't won the World Cup in many years. When France won it, they hadn't won it in some time. It's about generations."

According to Mosimane, South Africa's present squad has the quality and depth to compete for continental honours, particularly with strong contributions coming from domestic heavyweights such as Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs.

Mosimane believes Bafana can win the AFCON very soon.

"I think South Africa has the product to win AFCON," he added.

Source: thesouthafrican.com



Pitso Mosimane has been linked with Chiefs for two years.

Image: @TheRealPitso/X

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