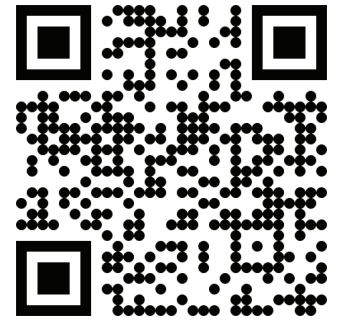


Vuk'uzenzele



Produced by: Government Communication & Information System (GCIS)

JUNE EDITION 1 - 2026

Dinokeng Game Reserve at the centre of job creation and ecotourism



Photo: More Matshediso

Sally Pale a nature guide at the Dinokeng Game Reserve.

More Matshediso

Dinokeng Game Reserve – Gauteng's first and only free-roaming Big Five reserve – is not just about conservation. It is economic participation, land use innovation and a practical example of how tourism can be shared more broadly, helping to create jobs for residents.

Located in the north eastern reaches of Tshwane, it offers an

unexpectedly immersive safari experience, one that feels worlds away from the city despite its proximity.

Vuk'uzenzele was recently among delegates who attended the Meeting Dinokeng Showcase, a two-day event hosted by the Gauteng Department of Environment, in partnership with the City of Tshwane and other stakeholders.

The showcase brought together delegates from over 40 countries,

including representatives from Peru, China, Lithuania, Ghana, Japan, Malaysia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia.

The delegates were divided into two groups. One set off to explore nearby attractions such as the scenic Roodeplaats Dam and the historic Cullinan Diamond Mine. *Vuk'uzenzele* was with the group

Cont. on page 2

Page 2

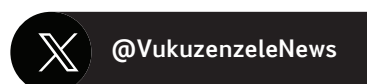
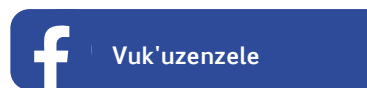
R179.6 million approved for support to support South African-owned spaza shops.

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Electoral Commission has officially launched the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGE)



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From page 1

eager to immerse themselves in the raw beauty of the reserve and encounter, firsthand, what nature had to offer.

After driving a group of delegates through the bush, one of the only four women among the reserve's 20 nature guides, Sally Pale (30) of Kekana Gardens in Hammanskraal shared a story of how the game reserve changed her life.

"In 2023, I was one of the two individuals trained by the game reserve to become qualified tour guides. The training included an examination administered by the Field Guide Association of Southern Africa. I passed the examination and I now hold a globally recognised qualification in wildlife and ecotourism," she explained.

She immediately started working as one of the guides at the game reserve, and she loves connecting visitors to nature and seeing them leave the game drive



Photos: Supplied by Dinokeng Game Reserve

with more knowledge and wonderful experiences.

"It was an absolute honour being part of the group that hosted the ambassadors, government officials and the media. The celebrations also reminded us who we are and provided me with another opportunity to teach international guests about South African wildlife, our diverse cultures and heritage. Dinokeng Game Reserve plays a big role in creating job opportunities for locals,

especially the youth like me," she said.

Gauteng's Flagship Eco-Tourism Project

Dinokeng Game Reserve is also dubbed one of Gauteng's flagship eco-tourism projects. It was established in 2011 through a public-private partnership

For more information visit:
www.dinokengreserve.co.za

between the Gauteng Provincial Government and private landowners.

While the reserve is responsible for wildlife conservation and environmental management, private landowners provide a diverse range of accommodation options.

Dinokeng has made a meaningful socio-economic

impact, creating more than 700 direct jobs and thousands more indirectly. It spans roughly 22 000 hectares and is home to more than 80 lodges and tented camps.

It forms part of the broader Dinokeng-Roodeplaat-Cullinan tourism hub, an initiative designed to diversify Gauteng's tourism offering beyond its traditional focus on business travel and retail experiences.

The Roodeplaat Dam offers a different kind of attraction. Situated just north of Pretoria, it has earned international recognition as a high-performance training site for canoeing and water sports. Perched at an altitude of 1 200 metres, it continues to draw elite athletes from around the world.

Further east lies the historic Cullinan Diamond Mine, a cornerstone of South Africa's mineral heritage. It is here that the legendary 3 106-carat Cullinan Diamond, still the largest gem-quality

diamond ever discovered, was unearthed.

Addressing delegates at the Meeting Dinokeng Showcase, Gauteng MEC for Environment Ewan Botha said beyond tourism, the place is about positioning a working model of partnership.

"In the 2024/25 financial year, 108 314 visitors came through this reserve, generating R16 million in tourism revenue. Our vision is to double that number by 2030 so that we can create more job opportunities. We are in the process of expanding the reserve from 22 000 hectares to 40 000 hectares," said MEC Botha.

He added that in 2024 alone, Gauteng received 3.8 million international visitors generating R41.3 billion in tourism revenue for the province. Gauteng captured 42.6% of every international visitor who set foot in South Africa in the same year, and Dinokeng played a role in that. ☺

Government urges spaza shops to apply as R179.6 million approved for support

Nosihle Shelembe

Government has approved R179.6 million to support South African-owned spaza shops across all nine provinces, despite ongoing compliance challenges among applicants to the R500 million Spaza Shop Support Fund.

The fund, launched last year by the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), aims to increase the participation of South African-owned spaza shops in township and rural retail economies.

The Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDA) have approved 1,316 applications valued at R79.6 million, while the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) has approved 1,053 enterprises valued at R99.9 million. In total, 2,369 businesses have been approved for support through the Fund, which is implemented through SEDA and the NEF.

"Since implementation, the Fund has continued to



Department of Small Business Development Director-General Thulisile Manzini.

gain traction, reflecting the scale of demand for the fund. To date, 4,522 complete applications have been received nationally, of which 4,240 have been assessed," Department of Small Business Development Director-General Thulisile Manzini said on recently at a media briefing in Pretoria.

However, Manzini said compliance remains a major obstacle. Only 58% of applicants are linked to valid business licences or temporary permits issued by municipalities.

"As a result, a significant number of applications remain unable to progress until licensing and compliance requirements have been addressed.

"As part of ensuring the integrity of the programme, site visits and verification processes have identified 354 applications that could not proceed due to non-compliance, including non-existent businesses, ownership discrepancies, and inconsistencies between applicants and operators," she said.

Manzini stressed that

qualifying applications that complete the process are fully supported.

"For applications that have completed the verification and compliance process and meet all programme requirements, approval rates remain at 100%, demonstrating

government's commitment to supporting qualifying South African-owned spaza shops," she said.

Approved support includes stock purchases, point-of-sale devices, infrastructure upgrades, inventory and other business improvements, as well as non-financial support to improve sustainability and competitiveness.

"The Fund has also contributed meaningfully towards government's transformation objectives, with 43% of approved enterprises being women-owned businesses, 18% youth-owned businesses, and 2% businesses owned by persons with disabilities.

"This demonstrates the Fund's contribution towards broadening economic participation and supporting greater inclusion within township and rural economies," Manzini said. ☺

HOW TO APPLY:

South African-owned spaza shop owners are encouraged to apply online at www.spazashopfund.co.za or through the National Empowerment Fund at www.nefcorp.co.za/products-services/spaza-shop-support-fund/. Applicants must ensure their businesses are compliant and have valid trading permits or licences.



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Bafana Bafana inspire us to hope and to strive



In just under two weeks' time, Bafana Bafana will participate in the opening match in this year's FIFA World Cup against Mexico.

They carry with them the best wishes of more than 62 million South Africans who will be cheering them on at every stage of the tournament. Bafana Bafana are taking part in the World Cup for the first time since we hosted the event in 2010.

At a send-off dinner hosted by the Presidency last week, we congratulated the team going to the World Cup. Football is defined by camaraderie, teamwork and sportsmanship. The efforts of all the players in qualifying for the tournament deserve credit and recognition.

I call on all South Africans to rally behind our team and show their support. Let us wear the

team colours and fly the flag.

It has been a long and difficult journey to transform the fortunes of Bafana Bafana. Credit must go to the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, the South African Football Association, the leagues, clubs and sponsors for their commitment to developing local football over many years. The coach and the players deserve our collective recognition.

Efforts are ongoing to professionalise the sport, develop new talent and promote football as a recreational activity for youth in communities across the country.

Bafana Bafana will be ambassadors for our country and what we stand for. The diversity of the squad and technical team is a reminder to the world that we are a united nation

of many races, languages and cultures.

We are a land of opportunity where a young person born into difficult circumstances is able to represent their country at the highest level of international sport. The transformation of sport in South Africa is a reflection of the values of respect, tolerance, fairness and inclusivity that underpin our constitutional order.

As we know from experience, sport has a tremendous capacity to unite people across the barriers of geography, race, gender and class. We remember the iconic moment at the 1995 Rugby World Cup final when President Nelson Mandela walked onto the field wearing a Springbok jersey to congratulate the *Bokke*.

That moment has been immortalised in writings, memoirs and film. It

“I call on all South Africans to rally behind our team and show their support. Let us wear the team colours and fly the flag.”

captured the spirit of the times, when South Africa's democracy was barely a year old. The country was energised by the team's victory, but more so by what it represented to a new nation that was emerging from a deeply divided past.

As I told the Bafana Bafana squad last week, the people of South Africa expect them to bring the trophy home. Yet regardless of how Bafana Bafana fare in the tournament, their participation is as rich with meaning as the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

Much like the national squad, the country has emerged from a prolonged period of difficulty and now looks to the future with hope.

Our democracy has matured and is flourishing, our Constitution has been the supreme law of the land for three decades, and we have embarked on a National Dialogue to chart a new course for our country. We are seeing the signs of an economic recovery and growing confidence in our economic prospects.

So as we cheer our team on from the stands, at fan

zones and in our homes, we should also cheer ourselves on as a country. We should celebrate how far we have come in building a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa.

And like Bafana Bafana, we should keep working and striving until we have achieved a country in which all our people can thrive.

For 90 minutes, as they play for our country, we will not be divided by language, race, province, club or circumstance. For 90 minutes, as they play, we will simply be South Africans standing together behind our national team and behind our flag.

One Team. One Nation. Behind Bafana. Behind South Africa. United by our Flag, inspired by our Team. 62 million cheering voices. One Dream. ©

How to protect your home investment from rogue builders



Tamlyn Bouwer is the Acting Chief Executive Officer for the NHBRC.

Tamlyn Bouwer

Buying or building a home is one of the biggest investments many South Africans will ever make. Unfortunately, some homeowners experience poor workmanship, unfinished houses, leaking roofs and cracked walls, or deal with builders who disappear after receiving payment. Across South Africa, complaints about unregistered and negligent builders continue to affect many families and communities.

To combat this, the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) was established to protect housing consumers and improve standards in the home-building industry.

One of its key responsibilities is to ensure that home builders comply with the law and deliver homes that meet approved building standards.

The problem of poor workmanship

Shoddy workmanship remains a serious challenge in the housing sector. In many cases, homeowners only discover building defects after moving into their homes. Some builders cut corners by using poor-quality materials, ignoring approved building plans, or failing to follow proper construction standards.

Another major concern

is the use of unregistered builders. Some consumers unknowingly appoint builders who are not registered with the NHBRC. This places homeowners at significant risk because unregistered builders operate outside the protections provided by the law.

The NHBRC continues to urge South Africans to verify builders before any construction work begins.

What the NHBRC is doing

The NHBRC is taking stronger action against builders who fail to comply with the law. In terms of the NHBRC Act, builders who contravene the Act may face disciplinary action by the NHBRC Disciplinary Committee.

Penalties may include:

- A formal warning
- A fine of up to R25 000 per charge
- Deregistration of the builder

When a builder is deregistered, the NHBRC publishes the builder's details in the Government Gazette. This promotes transparency and helps protect the public from dishonest or negligent contractors.

Once deregistration is approved, the builder's profile is immediately blocked on the NHBRC system. This means the builder can no longer renew registration or

enrol homes with the NHBRC.

To improve public awareness and consumer protection, the NHBRC also publishes information on deregistered builders through several platforms, including:

- The NHBRC website - www.nhbrc.org.za
- The Builder Verification Portal - <https://www.eservices.nhbrc.org.za/Home/Certificate-Verification>
- NHBRC internal communication platforms
- NHBRC information screens and awareness campaigns

Know your rights as a homeowner

Homeowners have important rights when building a new home.

Before appointing a builder, consumers should always:

- Confirm that the builder is registered with the NHBRC
- Ensure the home is enrolled with the NHBRC before construction starts
- Request proof of enrolment and registration
- Keep copies of all agreements and payment records

Consumers are also encouraged to report suspicious or illegal building activities to the

NHBRC.

Did you know?

The NHBRC is strengthening its consumer education and stakeholder engagement programmes to ensure more South Africans understand their housing rights.

Current initiatives include:

- Increased awareness campaigns on homeowner rights
- Improved access to builder information through the Builder Verification Portal
- Quarterly publication of deregistered builders
- Stronger collaboration with municipalities and human settlements stakeholders
- Enhanced monitoring of builder compliance and construction quality

The NHBRC remains committed to building public confidence in the home-building industry and ensuring that South Africans receive safe, quality homes.

The NHBRC can be reached at call 0800 200 824. South Africans can use this number to lodge complaints too.

Letter

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for featuring my work in *Vuk'uzenzele* in the article titled, "Vonnie Baloyi finds gold in agro-waste". This recognition strengthens the visibility of rural innovation and women-led enterprises, while encouraging us to continue driving meaningful impact in our communities.

Vonnie Projects remains deeply committed to scaling our Tokosickle™ feed, ensuring full compliance with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, and developing our low-carbon emission Dungbrix briquettes. Through these initiatives, we aim to expand sustainable opportunities for women and youth in rural areas.

I welcome continued collaboration with government stakeholders to further amplify this impact, and I thank you once again for highlighting our journey.

Warm regards,

Vonnie Baloyi

Founder, Vonnie Projects

Vonnie Baloyi finds gold in agro-waste

Shirley Manda

Vonnie Baloyi's journey into clean-tech innovation began not in a laboratory or lecture hall, but in a dream of harvesting "peanuts," she said. "The moment I decided to grow peanuts in the following season, I looked at the yields. I realized I wasn't going to make any profit from just selling peanuts. That's when I saw the opportunity in agro-waste."

Self-taught

Her quest started what followed. Growing up in long distances to collect high costs of energy. That was how I came up with these two ideas."

Her products address both challenges at once.

Baloyi is a self-taught entrepreneur and farmer. She built her innovation on hands-on knowledge, not formal scientific training. "I have a mechanical background and farming experiences. I had to ask a question: rather than be a problem? Farmers are struggling with the high costs of livestock feed and households are holding

Both are manufactured through a community-controlled model that also generates income. We have a community buy-

back model where farmers and households sell their waste to Vonnie Projects, which, in turn, manufactures the two products. We create income streams for communities while also reducing waste," she explains.

Business award

The results have not gone unnoticed. As the overall winner of the South African leg of the Global CleanTech Innovation Programme, she received R200 000 to scale her innovation and expand its reach.

The programme, run through a partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, supports small, medium and micro enterprises that address climate and environmental challenges.

Baloyi met the award during South African Innovation Week, organised by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation and TIA.

For more information, email Vonnie on vonnie.vb@gmail.com. The Technology Innovation Agency can be reached at www.tia.org.za

vonnie Baloyi ventured into renewable energy through her business Vonnie Projects.

South African Innovation Week

Global CleanTech Innovation Programme

Technology Innovation Agency

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

Department of Science, Technology and Innovation

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Department of Science,

Get Up, Show Up, Vote: IEC Launches 2026 Local Government Elections Campaign



Chief Electoral Officer Sy Mamabolo speaking during the launch of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

Edwin Tshivhidzo

The Electoral Commission has officially launched the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGE), kicking off a mass awareness campaign ahead of Election Day on 4 November 2026, as announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The launch, held in Midrand near Johannesburg, set the stage for political parties and voters to begin preparations for the polls.

Speaking at the launch, the Commission's Chief Electoral Officer Sy Mamabolo said the 2026 elections represent a significant moment in South Africa's democratic journey.

"As the 6th instalment, the 2026 Local Government Elections take place amid notable changes in domestic and global

political landscapes. The announcement of the election date has provided the Electoral Commission and all stakeholders with clarity and certainty for planning," he said.

On 1 April 2026, the Commission unveiled its elections logo and campaign tagline, "Get Up, Show Up, Vote", a call to action aimed at motivating all eligible voters, particularly young people, to actively participate in the electoral process.

The launch also marks the beginning of intensified public awareness ahead of the national voter registration weekend on 20 and 21 June 2026. Just under 24 000 registration stations across 4 488 municipal wards will open over the two days, enabling citizens to register, verify their personal details and confirm their registration.

The Commission has already made significant

inroads. More than 62 336 community events have been held nationwide since the beginning of 2026, and a door-to-door voter communication and registration campaign has been completed across 99% of municipalities.

The Tertiary Institutions Campaign has reached 97 894 students across all nine provinces, with 45 757 successfully registered. The Schools Democracy Programme, run in partnership with the Department of Basic Education, continues to encourage eligible learners aged 16 and older to pre-register.

Over 800 Municipal Outreach Coordinators, including persons with disabilities, have been deployed across the country to drive voter education and ensure inclusive participation. ©

HOW TO REGISTER:
 Register or verify your details online at registertovote.elections.org.za
 Find your nearest voting station at maps.elections.org.za/vsfinder
 Visit your local Electoral Commission offices on weekdays between 8am and 5pm

Clear vision: How one optometrist is changing lives in Mahikeng



Lesetja Romeo Chokwe the owner of Cee Optometrist (Pty) Ltd.

More Matshediso

When Lesetja Romeo Chokwe completed his Honours Degree in Optometry at the University of Limpopo, he had the qualifications but not the opportunities.

Originally from Seshogo in Limpopo, he relocated to Mahikeng in the North West, where he spent years working for various establishments, including a local optometry practice, often underpaid and unable to save enough to build something of his own.

"It was not easy for me to establish my own practice or to secure a job in government," he told Vuk'uzenzele.

According to Chokwe, many optometry graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds face the same double bind: there are not enough posts in public hospitals, and the cost of

equipment and stock places private practice out of reach for most.

"Because I was underpaid at the beginning of my career, I could not save any money to buy equipment or stock to start my own practice," Chokwe explained.

The turning point came in 2023, when the Mahikeng practice closed its doors.

Rather than seeing it as a setback, Chokwe saw it as an opening.

He registered Cee Optometrist (Pty) Ltd, even though he did not yet have the funds to begin operating fully.

In those early days, his only equipment was a trial case and a diagnostic set he had kept from his university years. His clients, however, kept him going.

"I had already built a clientele with the locals who welcomed me in their community," he said.

"They motivated me to keep going, and I never looked back."

Where SEDFA made the difference

In 2024, Cee Optometrist received R247 500 through the Asset Assist Programme, then administered by the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA), along with business development training.

The funding allowed Chokwe to purchase the optometry equipment he needed, improving both the efficiency and reliability of his services.

The Asset Assist Programme is now managed by the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD).

It supports micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with funding for machinery, equipment, working capital and raw materials, with a maximum grant of R250 000.

Affordable Eye Care and Community Giving

Cee Optometrist offers a full range of eye care services, including comprehensive eye examinations, diagnosis and management of ocular diseases, spectacles, and both cosmetic and corrective contact lenses amongst other services.

The improved efficiency also gave rise to something closer to Chokwe's heart. The business launched the Cee Foundation, which currently partners with Bodiri Primary School to provide free spectacles and consultations to disadvantaged children. Since December 2025, the school has been bringing at least two children per month for eye examinations.

To date, the business has created three permanent jobs and one temporary position for locals. ©

For more information:
 Cee Optometrist: 018 384 0594 / 073 112 1488
 Email: romeochokwe@gmail.com or romeo@ceeoptometrist.co.za
 Sedfa: info@sedfa.org.za
 DSBD: info@dsbd.gov.za

Mamelodi entrepreneur turns haircare challenge into business opportunity

Curly Crowns Beauty products are available via curlycrownsbeauty.com and on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp under the handle Curly Crowns_SA.



Pontso Dibakwane, founder of Curly Crowns Beauty, with her range of natural hair and skincare products.

Sihle Manda

A struggle to care for her natural hair while working in the corporate sector inspired Pontso Dibakwane to start her own beauty business.

The Mamelodi entrepreneur founded Curly Crowns Beauty in 2021. The business produces natural hair and skincare products designed to strengthen hair and keep skin moisturised.

"I left my job as a business developer at an information technology company because I wanted to build something of my own," said Dibakwane.

To build the business, Dibakwane studied cosmetic formulation through online courses and completed training funded by the Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA) at Nelson Mandela University.

"CHIETA support helped open the door for me to enter the cosmetics industry," said Dibakwane. "The training gave me the knowledge and confidence to make products that are safe for the market," she said.

Her product range includes a clarifying shampoo, hair butter, conditioner, hair spray, hair growth oil and beard oil.

"My products are for women and men who want healthier hair and who want to understand and care for their natural hair," she said.

Dibakwane currently manufactures her products at an incubator run by The Innovation Hub in Mamelodi.

The business has also received support from Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP), including equipment such as laptops and printers.

She is still awaiting funding approval for additional production equipment, including a homogeniser, filling machine, pots and heaters.

Dibakwane aims to grow her brand and supply major retailers. "More funding would help me buy equipment and increase production," she said.

The business currently employs four people in production and sales.

"I want to see these products reach more women who are embracing their natural hair and looking for products that work for them," she said. ☺

DID YOU KNOW?

The Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA) supports skills development and training within South Africa's chemical industries sector through learnerships, bursaries, internships and workplace training programmes.

For more information, contact info@chieta.org.za or +27 11 628 7000.

The GEP supports small businesses and cooperatives through funding, business support services and entrepreneurship development programmes in Gauteng. **For more information, contact gepenquiries@gep.co.za or 087 057 2000.**

Young entrepreneur grows local print business in North West

Phakama Mbonambi

At 18, Aobakwe Pheko began helping her mother design certificates on a home computer. She had no formal design training, but she had a clear vision: to build a printing business that could serve people from Mahikeng, North West and beyond.

That was in 2016. Today, she runs Mini Me Print and Tricks, which offers services that once forced local customers to travel to the city. The business produces T-shirts, caps, uniforms, bottle stickers, welcome boards, car

branding and large-format printing.

In the early years, limited equipment made growth difficult.

Pheko (28) used a small sublimation printer and a basic heat press, sometimes printing large jobs in A4 sections and assembling them by hand.

Outsourcing also created delays and added pressure.

After applying for funding from the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SE DFA), she received support to buy a solvent printing machine. That investment helped her bring more work in-house, including large-format

printing, car branding and board printing, reducing the need to outsource.

To build a loyal client base, she kept prices stable, covered mistakes out of her own pocket, and learned to calculate costs carefully as fuel and materials became more expensive.

Although her team shrank after personal setbacks and relocations, Pheko is rebuilding and hopes to create opportunities for other young women. The business currently employs four people.

She markets the business through everyday visibility, by wearing personalised



branded clothing and products that often spark conversations with potential customers. She is also working to strengthen her social media presence.

The bigger picture

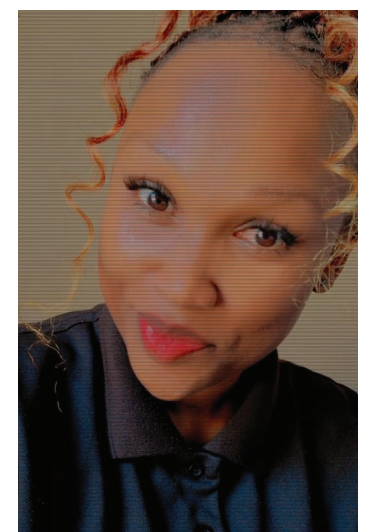
Pheko believes that success is not only found in big cities. She recently helped a customer who had travelled elsewhere for printing, unaware that the same service was available locally and at a lower cost.

"It's not always about the biggest city," she said. "It's about the bigger picture."

Her advice to young entrepreneurs is simple: "Take the first step, seek

support and do not let your location limit your ambition." From designing certificates at 18 to building a recognised local business, Pheko's journey shows what persistence and vision can achieve. ☺

Aobakwe Pheko the owner of Mini Me Print Tricks.



Mini Me Print and Tricks can be reached on TikTok: [minimeprintworks](https://www.tiktok.com/@minimeprintworks) WhatsApp: 078 131 6786

Contact SEDFA at www.sedfa.org.za.

Agulhas upgrades bring hope and opportunities to Overberg community

Phathu Luvhengo

A two-year temporary job opportunity involving the upgrading of the Agulhas National Park's Lighthouse Precinct in the Western Cape has renewed hope for Suzette Leonard, who worked as a construction worker at the facility.

The 49-year-old Leonard from Bredasdorp in the Western Cape, secured the temporary construction worker position in 2024 when she was struggling to get her baking business off the ground and was worried about where the next meal for her and her three children would come from.

This job opportunity became her lifeline, helping her generate income and allowing her to acquire critical skills.

"Part of my job included helping with construction work, installing paving, painting, cleaning the site, planting trees and learning horticulture. I acquired various skills that I will be able to impart to others," she said.

During the upgrades of the precinct, she also attended other skills training, including first aid, health and safety and painting courses.

She is now confident that she will be able to secure work in future should other opportunities arise because she is multi-skilled.

The infrastructure developments at the Agulhas Lighthouse Precinct are aligned with South African National Parks' (SANParks) approach to inclusive conservation, which supports co-creation with local communities to ensure their sustainability.

Leonard is one of more than 117 community members from Agulhas, Struisbaai and Bredasdorp who secured employment and training opportunities through this collaborative initiative.

While earning income from working at the construction site, Leonard saved some of her earnings and used them to kickstart her baking business when the construction project was



Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille with members of the community who received training and temporary jobs from the upgrade of the Agulhas National Park's Lighthouse Precinct in the Western Cape Photos: Supplied by Phathu Luvhengo

completed, allowing her to continue to provide for her family.

This precinct is expected to create a thriving area for SMMEs to offer crafts, food and cultural experiences.

The upgrades to the Agulhas National Park's Lighthouse Precinct are expected to create lasting opportunities for local communities.

Promoting local tourism

The upgrades to the Agulhas National Park's Lighthouse Precinct are set to drive up tourism numbers while advancing the cause of heritage and inclusive conservation in the Overberg region.

The Department of Tourism and SANParks invested R81.7 million to

build new infrastructure and enhance the aesthetics of the 178-year-old Agulhas Lighthouse.

The precinct includes a 60-seater restaurant, a fully equipped interpretation centre, visitor and bus parking facilities, new access stairways and a wheelchair ramp to improve universal access.

Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille noted during

the handover ceremony that the project serves as a clear example of how collaboration in tourism infrastructure can drive both job creation and enterprise development, ensuring that the benefits extend well beyond the construction phase. ☺

For more information visit: www.tourism.gov.za.

Young innovator develops drone to help poultry farmers



Gaoagwe Jeje, the innovator behind Kgosi BioTech.

Edwin Tshivhidzo

For many poultry farmers, disease outbreaks can spread quickly and cause major losses. North West innovator Gaoagwe Jeje is working to change that by using drone-based technology to help poultry farmers detect diseases early, reduce losses and improve food security.

His work received national recognition when he won second place in the Outstanding Youth Grassroots Innovator category at the Technology Innovation Agency's Grassroots Awards for his Kgosi BioTech drone.

The system combines a biosecurity drone with a mobile app. Using cameras, microphones and temperature and humidity sensors, the drone scans chickens and compares the information with patterns linked to healthy and unhealthy birds. When it detects a

possible risk, the system suggests steps such as vaccination or isolating infected birds.

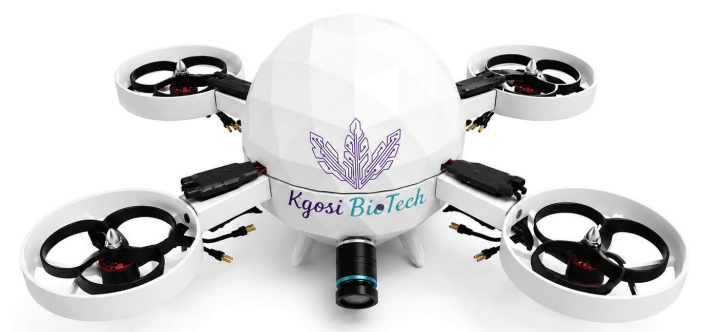
The drone is available for purchase online, while farmers can access the scanning software through a monthly subscription.

The idea for Kgosi BioTech began during a hackathon, where young innovators were challenged to come up with practical solutions for the agriculture sector.

Jeje later took part in the Grassroots Innovation Programme, an initiative by the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) that supports local innovators in developing solutions to social challenges using local resources.

Like many new technologies, the project faced setbacks during development and testing.

"Technical issues, limited funding, difficulty accessing farms for piloting, and emotional pressure were part of



For more information about the Kgosi BioTech drone, email kgosipoultry@gmail.com. The TIA can be reached at www.tia.org.za

the journey. However, the team overcame these challenges through collaboration, dedication and a focus on solutions," Jeje said.

With the product now gaining attention, the long-term goal is to commercialise the device and expand its use to poultry farms across South Africa.

The team also hopes to adapt the technology for cattle, pigs, goats and aquaculture as part of broader efforts to strengthen

disease monitoring and improve food production.

Winning second place out of more than 700 participants at the Technology Innovation Agency Grassroots Awards marked an important milestone for the team.

For Jeje, the innovation is not only about technology, but about using practical solutions to support farmers, strengthen food security and show how young South Africans are contributing to economic growth. ☺

National Orders recipients reflect on honour and lifelong impact

Dikeledi Molobela

Recipients of the 2026 National Orders described the recognition as a deeply emotional and humbling milestone, adding that the honours affirmed their lifelong contribution to South Africa's arts, culture and social development.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, Grand Patron of the National Orders, bestowed the awards on distinguished South Africans and foreign nationals who contributed to democracy and improved the lives of citizens.

Speaking at the Sefako Makgatho Presidential Guest House in Tshwane recently, recipients of the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver reflected on their journeys and what the national recognition meant to them.

Internationally acclaimed musician Jonathan Butler was honoured for his contribution to music as a jazz, R&B and gospel artist, songwriter and producer.

From humble beginnings in Athlone, Cape Town, Butler rose to international

prominence as a teen performer and built a global career spanning decades.

Speaking after receiving the award, Butler said the moment marked a personal and national milestone.

"I feel humbled and honoured in this moment. I feel in this season of my life to be recognised in my country is the greatest blessing anyone could ever ask for," he said.

Activist Andiswa Precious Gebashe was recognised for advancing South African Sign Language and advocating for greater inclusion of the Deaf community in arts, media and education.

She had been at the forefront of efforts to ensure accessibility and representation, including work in theatre productions performed in South African Sign Language.

Gebashe emphasised the importance of recognising South African Sign Language as a fully developed language rather than a disability-related tool, adding that meaningful change required collective responsibility from institutions and decision-makers.

Reflecting on the honour,



President Cyril Ramaphosa bestowed the Order of Ikhamanga in Silver on Oskido during the 2026 National Orders ceremony.

she described the recognition as surreal and said more work was needed to ensure accessibility across

all sectors.

Veteran DJ, producer and kwaito pioneer Oscar Sibonginkosi Mdlonwa

(Oskido) was also honoured for his contribution to music and for mentoring generations of South

African artists.

A key figure in the rise of kwaito and the Kalawa Jazmee legacy, Oskido played a central role in shaping South Africa's modern music industry.

He described the award as a collective achievement shared with fellow pioneers, artists, fans and the broader music community.

"This is a journey which I haven't walked alone," he said, crediting the Kalawa family, kwaito pioneers and supporters who contributed to his success.

Oskido said the recognition marked a new chapter rather than the end of his career, adding that genres such as amapiano and Afro house reflected the industry's continued growth and evolution.

Speaking before the presentation ceremony, President Ramaphosa said the recipients had become pillars of the nation through their work and activism.

"We have gathered here this morning to honour those among us who, in many diverse ways, have shaped the country that we call home," the President said. ☺

RISE '76 marks the 50th Anniversary of June 16th

The Market Theatre and Baxter Theatre have joined forces to co-produce a new play, RISE '76: The Story of June 16th, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Soweto Uprising and The Market Theatre's opening in 1976.

Written and directed by award-winning playwright and director Tiisetso Mashifane wa Noni, the production runs at the Mannie Manim Theatre from 5 to 28 June 2026, including special Youth Day performances and as part of The Market Theatre's 50th an-

niversary celebrations.

Set at the fictional Molefe Secondary School in Soweto, the historical fiction drama follows student leaders "Bafana Buthelezi" and "Kedibone Moloji" as they clash with principal "Mr Alfie Ndlovu" over the enforcement of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. The conflict escalates into tragedy, exposing the brutality of apartheid and changing the course of history.

The cast includes Alex Sono, Zilungile Mbombo, Bothale Mahlangu, Deon Lotz, Mfuneli Ntumbuka,

Sbuja Dywili and Ben Albertyn.

Since debuting at the Baxter Theatre in May, the production has received critical acclaim. Broadway World described it as "a haunting and powerfully human portrait of the Soweto uprising", while actress Thembi Mtshali-Jones praised its emotional and historical depth.

For The Market Theatre, the production reflects its longstanding role in telling South African stories rooted in resistance, resilience and justice. The theatre opened just days after the 1976

uprising and became known for bold anti-apartheid storytelling.

Artistic Director Greg Homann described the play as a deeply human and meticulously researched production that revisits the events of June 16 with compassion and honesty.

Mashifane wa Noni said the play drew from interviews, archival records and literature to focus on the overlooked personal stories surrounding the uprising. ☺

This information was supplied by The Market Theatre.



Guarding the rights of those who Served:

How the Military Ombud Resolves Pension Injustices and Administrative Delays

Systemic delays, administrative failures, and unlawful financial deductions within military structures inflict profound hardships on former South African National Defence Force (SANDF) members and their grieving families.

Two landmark cases highlight the critical role of independent administrative oversight by the Office of the Military Ombud in holding the SANDF accountable. By protecting human dignity and enforcing policy compliance, the Ombud's oversight actively unpacks complex bureaucratic bottlenecks so as to restore justice, financial security, and peace of mind for affected members and their dependents.

A Closer Look at the First Case: Delayed Payment of Pension Following Death in Service

A complainant acting on behalf of her late husband approached the Office of the Military Ombud seeking assistance regarding the prolonged non-payment of the husband's pension benefits. The deceased had been employed as a motor vehicle fitter at the SA Air Force base and passed away in August 2023. Following his death, the complainant made repeated enquiries concerning the delay in finalising the pension, but was informed that the matter could not proceed because of outstanding inventory items allocated to the deceased, which were the subject of an ongoing investigation. Despite numerous follow-ups, no adequate explanation was provided, and approximately one year and six months had elapsed without the pension being processed.

During the investigation, it emerged that the termination of service process could not be completed because the deceased's clearing-out documentation remained incomplete, largely due to unresolved discrepancies in his Distribution Account. An additional Distribution Account from a previous base of transfer had also not been updated, as the deceased had transferred without properly reconciling the account. It was further established that the deceased had not updated his

Distribution Account annually as required, resulting in a significant accumulation of items, with the value of items recorded at one base alone estimated at approximately R3 million. The relevant command structure acknowledged that the matter had been unduly delayed and could have been handled more efficiently.

To resolve the issue, a dedicated process was initiated to reconcile the accounts, report on the losses, determine whether a write-off at State expense was appropriate, and proceed with a Board of Inquiry to finalise the termination process. Following the intervention of the Military Ombud, the complainant confirmed that the pension had eventually been paid, including interest. The matter was resolved in terms of section 6(6)(b) of the Military Ombud Act. It was further recommended that the Chief of the SANDF (C SANDF) instruct the Chief of the Air Force (C Air Force) to investigate the causes of the prolonged delay in order to prevent similar future occurrences.

This case highlights the profound hardship that can be caused to bereaved families when internal clearance and accountability processes are not managed expeditiously and underscores the need to balance asset accountability with the prompt finalisation of death benefits.

Turning to the Second Case: Incorrect Deduction from Pension Benefits

A former SANDF member lodged a complaint alleging that his pension benefits had been incorrectly calculated following his discharge from service. The complainant had been discharged in December 2017 after being convicted of misconduct by the Court of the Military Judge.

As required, the matter was automatically referred to the Court of Military Appeals for review. Pending the outcome of that review, the complainant remained in active service and continued performing his duties until August 2018, when he was formally informed that the appeal court had upheld his discharge. Notwithstand-

'The complainant was reimbursed the full amount of R218, 451.49 that had been previously deducted from his pension payout.'



ing the fact that he had continued to serve during the intervening period, the discharge was applied retrospectively to December 2017, and an amount of R218, 451.49 was deducted from his pension on the basis that it constituted salary allegedly overpaid after the retrospective date of discharge.

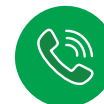
The investigation considered the applicable Department of Defence policy, which provides that a member awaiting the outcome of a Court of Military Appeals review, and who continues to render service during that period, remains entitled to remuneration and benefits. It was also noted that any alleged overpayment must be properly substantiated by appropriate records, including proof of attendance. The legal position was further reinforced by relevant case law, which confirmed that a sentence of dismissal is not final until the appeal process has been completed and the outcome communicated to the affected member. The investigation established that the complainant had indeed continued to serve actively until he was formally notified of the appeal decision, and this was corroborated by official roll-call records.

It was therefore concluded that he was lawfully entitled to remuneration and benefits for that period, and that the deduc-

tion from his pension based on an alleged overpayment was unlawful and invalid. The complaint was upheld in terms of section 6(7)(a) of the Military Ombud Act. Following the decision of the Military Ombud, the complainant was reimbursed the full amount of R218, 451.49 that had been previously deducted from his pension payout.

This case illustrates the principle that adverse financial consequences cannot lawfully be imposed based on retrospective administrative assumptions where a member remained in active service pending finalisation of the appeal process and continued to render duty.

These cases demonstrate that the Office of the Military Ombud achieves success through thorough, independent, and evidence-driven investigations. By auditing official roll-call registers, untangling complex base-to-base inventory accounts, and enforcing established legal precedents, the Ombud uncovers the exact systemic failures that cause administrative injustice. These effective investigation efforts ensure that recommendations are backed by irrefutable facts. This rigorous process forces compliance from command structures, corrects financial irregularities, and secures systemic policy changes to protect the future rights of all SANDF members.



For further enquiries, please contact the Office of the Military Ombud through the following channels:

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