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Est. 2008 329th Edition Friday 17 March 2023 083 679 3632

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# Groblersdal police members arrested for common robbery

The Limpopo Anti-Corruption Unit has on Tuesday 14 March arrested four police officers in connection with a common robbery incident that happened last week in the Motetema Policing area.

Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo, Limpopo Provincial Police Spokesperson, said their arrests emanates from a common robbery incident that occurred on Wednesday 8 March.

The four suspects were on duty using a marked police minibus, when they reportedly spotted three men withdrawing money from the ATM at the Mall in Groblersdal and apparently suspected them to be undocumented foreign nationals. "The police members allegedly approached them and demanded passports. They thereafter arrested them when they failed to produce passports and put them into their motor vehicle. While driving along the road, the police members allegedly stopped the minibus and forcefully took an amount of R5000-00 from the victims and gave them R60-00 to take a taxi ride home," said Mojapelo. He said the victims managed to get assistance and immediately went to Motetema Police Station to report the incident. "A Task Team was established to prove the incident and to locate the police members responsible. The matter was later handed over to the Limpopo Provincial Anti-Corruption Team for further investigations and a warrant of arrest was subsequently issued against the police members," explained Mojapelo.

He added that a joint operation to execute the warrant was conducted on Tuesday 14 March and the four police members were arrested while on duty at Sekhukhune District offices in Groblersdal Town. "The suspects, aged between 31 and 36, will appear before the Groblersdal Magistrate's Court soon facing charges of common robbery," said

Mojapelo. The Provincial Commissioner of the Police in Limpopo, Lieutenant General Thembi Hadebe, has welcomed the arrests.

"The arrest of these police members should send a clear message that the SAPS in this

province does not tolerate any form of criminality, regardless of who is the perpetrator.

The majority of police members in this province are loyal, dedicated and passionate about their policing services and those who go astray, decisive steps are taken," said Hadebe.

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# Motetema crash victims laid to rest

Thirteen of the sixteen people who died in a horrific accident that occurred on road R579 at the Leeuwfontein crossing outside Motetema, were laid to rest in a mass funeral in Tafelkop on 11 March. The victims died on the morning of 3 March around 7:00 when a minibus taxi collided head-on with a truck and another minibus taxi after allegedly overtaking on the barrier line. Law enforcement officers who attended the scene cited reckless driving as a possible cause of the crash that killed both the taxi drivers and the majority of scholars who were on their way to school in Groblersdal. Both taxis were coming from Tafelkop Village. Four passengers sustained serious injuries and were transported to Groblersdal Hospital for medical attention. Speaking during the funeral service held at Tafelkop Stadium, Deputy Chairperson of Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Boleu Rammupudu II, said the accident has left the Tafelkop community and the entire South African nation shattered. "It is unfortunate because parents were expecting their children to go to school and come back home. We know it will take them time to heal from this tragedy and we are hopeful that an intervention by the Social Development Department will help them to cope with their loss," he said. Delivering a keynote address on behalf of Premier Stanley Mathabatha, MEC for Budget and Treasury, Seaparo Sekoati, said ever since the accident occurred, government has been supporting the affected families and people through its local government and the Social Development service. "We will all continue to live with this ordeal and I would urge families, friends, loved ones and community members at large to approach our social welfare service for psycho-social support," he said. Limpopo MEC for Transport and Community Safety, Florence Radzilani has sent condolences to the bereaved families and expressed serious concern about the number of fatalities that the province had already recorded, at this time of the year. "These accidents are an indication that something is very wrong when it comes to driver behaviour, as these crashes are caused by reckless driving in most instances. We continue to plead with motorists to obey

the rules of the road at all times and ensure that their vehicles are in a roadworthy condition before they can embark on their trips," said Radzilani.



The wreckage of the minibus taxis that involved in a crash near Motetema and claim lives of 16 people including scholars.

## Endless struggle of sewer spillage in Ephraim Mogale

Following the lengthy unaddressed problem of sewer spillage in Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality, the Democratic Alliance (DA) in Limpopo says it is going to write to the National Commissioner of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Professor Bongani Majola, to request an urgent meeting on the lack of water and ongoing sewage leaks in the local municipality.

They said it started in June 2021 to request SAHRC to investigate the lack of access to water and contaminated water in Ephraim Mogale without any success. During a subsequent public hearing on water and sanitation in the province, DA Political Head for Ephraim Mogale, Lindy Wilson MP, testified about the plight of the residents and reiterated their call for intervention. "Since 2021, the situation has deteriorated, and during the past weekend, due to a blocked manhole in Vilet Street in Marble Hall, raw effluent spewed out of every surrounding drain," said DA Caucus Leader in Ephraim Mogale Flip Jacobs. He said the unhygienic situation has affected the AGS Church which could not gather for a holy communion on Sundays as the grounds were filled with raw effluent. "The right to religious freedom includes being able to practice religion, this right has now been infringed upon because the Sekhukhune District Municipality seems untouchable," he said. According to Jacobs, in November 2022, following the careless approach by the SAHRC, the DA laid criminal charges against officials of the district municipality, but until date, no arrests have been made. "We are further concerned about elderly

residents whose houses are surrounded by raw effluent. One elderly gentleman who suffers from a rare blood condition is particularly vulnerable as unhygienic surroundings can be fatal," informed Jacobs. Jacobs furthered a multi-party delegation visited the area led by Ephraim Mogale Mayor, Given Moimana, who undertook to liaise with Sekhukhune District Municipality to urgently clear up the spill and repair the infrastructure. "We are not holding our breath. The DA is now insistent that the SAHRC execute its mandate, which includes investigating and reporting on the observance of human rights, taking steps and securing appropriate redress where human rights have been violated. The people of Ephraim Mogale's rights have been disrespected long enough," concluded Jacobs.



The sewer spillage has prevented AGS congregants to attend church services due to unbearable stench and health hazards.



Accident victims' coffins taken to the cemetery during the mass funeral held at Tafelkop Stadium.

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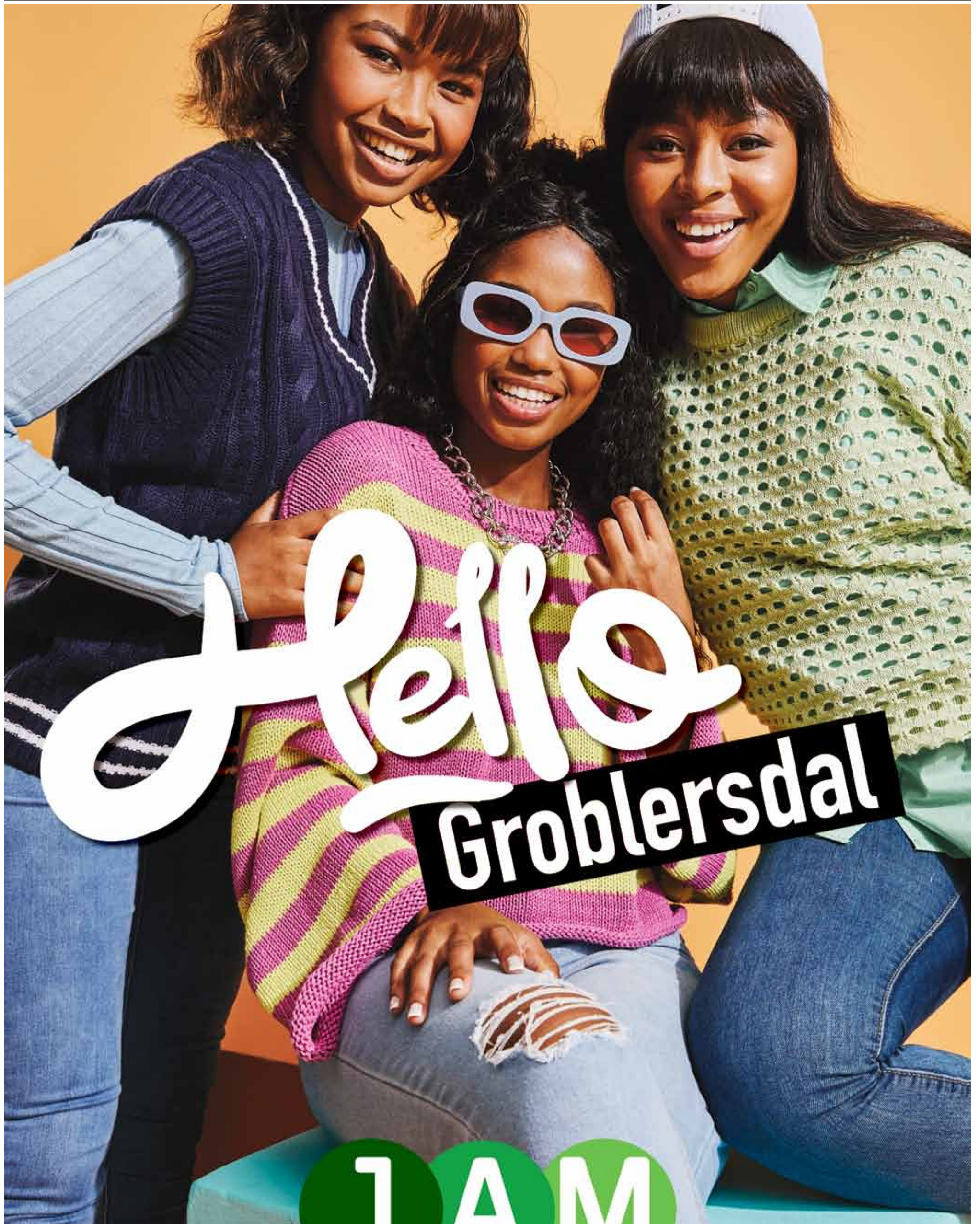
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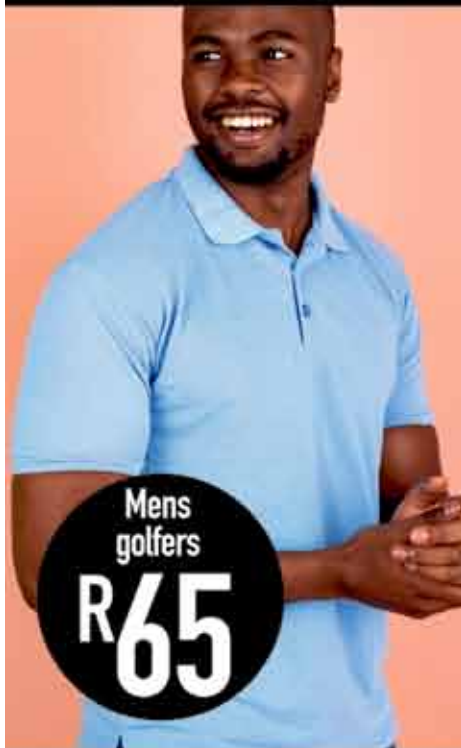
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## Learner arrested for faked kidnapping

The Dennilton Police have on Saturday 11 March arrested a 20-year-old learner for allegedly faking his own kidnapping and demanding a ransom of money from his parents for his release. The suspect was nabbed together with his 24-year-old friend who was helping him to orchestrate the fake kidnapping while demanding R7000-00 from the learner's father. Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo, Limpopo Provincial Police Spokesperson, said on Friday 10 March, the learner left his home at Luska Village in Dennilton going to school which is about 3kms away. "His mother became worried when he did not return home as usual and informed her husband when he returned from work. The husband was also surprised as he was claiming that he received several messages from his son's contact number, indicating that he must call him, however, he did not pick up his calls," said Mojapelo. He said the couple started to enquire about their son's whereabouts from his classmates who confirmed that he did not attend classes on Friday and they never saw him. "Later in the evening at about 20:15, an unknown person called the family using the supposed victim's number and demanded R7000-00, threatening to kill the victim if they failed to comply. The matter was immediately reported to the police and a case of kidnapping was opened. Immediate action was taken by deploying a special team that included the SAPS hostage negotiators, for thorough investigation and possible arrest of the culprits. Investigation revealed that the victim was in Tafelkop under Motetema policing area," explained Mojapelo. He added that the police team made observations at various homesteads in Tafelkop and the supposed suspect arrived at the scene and he led them to where the victim was. "The victim was taken along with his 24-year-old accomplice for questioning. The duo was arrested after they confessed to have conspired and faked the kidnapping in order to get the money from the family," he said. Mojapelo said the duo is expected to appear before the Mdtjana Magistrate's Court in Siyabuswa soon facing a charge of conspiracy to commit fraud and uttery. Lieutenant General Thembi Hadebe, Provincial Commissioner of the Police in Limpopo, had strongly condemned the incident. "We are at times receiving reports of kidnapping and are obliged to act immediately by mobilizing resources as the safety of victims could be at stake. False reports put a lot of strain on police resources which could have been directed to deal with real incidents of crime and to victims who desperately needed police assistance," she said.

## Lack of ambulances marred Saaiplaas EMS

The Democratic Alliance (DA) in Limpopo said it has written to Limpopo Health Department MEC, Dr Phophi Ramathuba, seeking her intervention to address lack of ambulances at the Saaiplaas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Station, which has been a problem facing residents for about a year.

The DA said the issue came to their attention after they receive numerous reports and complaints that the Saaiplaas EMS Station currently has no functioning ambulances to service the people in the area and surrounding villages. The Saaiplaas EMS Station is meant to service a large area that includes villages such as Saaiplaas, Mathula Stand, Sehlakwane, Donkey Stop, Holnek, Sovolo, Keerom and Masoing. "This issue came to light after the DA received complaints from community members who required emergency services and were informed that there are no ambulances available. The party is deeply concerned and has written to MEC Ramathuba, requesting that she takes immediate action to remedy the shortage of ambulances in Saaiplaas and other nearby areas in Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality," said DA Spokesperson for Health Department in Limpopo, Risham Maharaj.

He added during an oversight visit carried out by DA Councillor in Elias Motsoaledi, Sipho Mmaboko, the party discovered that the station has three ambulances and all of them are damaged. "The first ambulance was damaged in February 2022, the second one was damaged in March 2022 and the third one was involved in an accident in May 2022," explained Maharaj. "Since the problem started, people are informed to make use of their own private cars or to call private ambulance services," he said. According to Maharaj, the situation brings into question how many people in need of emergency medical attention have been left unattended. "The Limpopo Department of Health needs to ensure that the EMS services in different municipalities across the province have well-run maintenance plans for ambulances, to ensure there are always some vehicles available and that areas with severe shortages are prioritised for the new vehicles," cited Maharaj.

He said the party is striving and believes that everyone has the right to have access to quality health care services, including properly equipped emergency medical services. "We call on Ramathuba to intervene with immediate effect," said Maharaj.

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## Mchunu monitors Loskop Bulk Water Supply Project

The Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senzo Mchunu, accompanied by his Deputy Ministers, David Mahlobo and Dikeledi Magadzi, have on Friday 3 March officially launched the National Water Month in Loskop, while conducting inspection at the Loskop Bulk Water Supply Project and engaging with members of the community in the area. The Loskop Bulk Water Supply Project is a cross-boundary project that will benefit communities in both Thembisile Hani Local Municipality in Mpumalanga and Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality in Limpopo. The National Water Month is celebrated annually by the Department of Water and Sanitation from 1 to 31 March, which is an expansion from the United Nations (UNs) annual World Water Day on 22 March. This year's National Water Month was observed under the theme, "Accelerating change", as declared by the UN and calls on governments of the world, the water sector and society at large to work together to accelerate change to solve water challenges. Mchunu started his day with an engagement at the project construction site in Loskop outside Groblersdal with key stakeholders that included councillors and officials from Sekhukhune District Municipality, Nkangala District Municipality, Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality and Thembisile Hani Local Municipality. The minister outlined that the water scheme project entails three work packages of laying pipelines from Loskop Dam to a Water Treatment Works in Verena. The project packages are implemented simultaneously to accelerate the project. Following the site inspection visits, Mchunu engaged with community members at Ntwane Village and at the Philadelphia Sports Grounds to provide feedback on the progress made on the water supply project thus far. Residents were given a platform to raise their concerns which included among others the delay of the Moutse Draught Relief Projects that started since 2020 and were never completed. At the time, then Minister of Water and Sanitation, Lindiwe Sisulu, set aside R143 Million for the commission of the projects to address shortage of water in the area. Lepelle Northern Water was appointed as an implementing agent for the Moutse Draught Relief Projects. Mchunu said



Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senzo Mchunu, said he will set up a team to investigate tender irregularities in relations to water projects in Moutse.

he has set up a team to investigate a report presented Lepelle Northern Water stating that 30 boreholes were drilled and refurbished, with 20 of them operational. The report further states that 1800 water storage tanks were installed with 20 tanker trucks procured to deliver water to communities. However, community members disputed the report and voiced a number of concerns ranging from corruption and non-functionality of water infrastructure. The minister assured the community that his office will work tirelessly to investigate the Moutse Draught Relief Projects issues and will also ensure that the current Loskop Bulk water Supply Project is not infiltrated by maladministration and corruption.

## Fatal accident claims seven lives in Dennilton

*The Toyota Avanza and Polo hatchback up in flames after a colliding and instantly killing seven people who burned beyond recognition.*



Seven people were killed when a Toyota Avanza collided with a polo hatchback on the D1399 Loskop Road near Maranata Lodge in Dennilton recently.

According to Limpopo Department of Transport and Community Safety Spokesperson, Tidimalo Chuene, the accident is suspected to have happened when polo side-swiped the Avanza which was traveling to the Middleburg direction. "Both vehicles lost control, overturned and caught fire. Seven people, including the drivers of the two vehicles, were burnt beyond recognition," said Chuene. She said the only survivor of the accident was transported to a nearby health facility for treatment of serious injuries and law enforcement officers who attended the scene cite reckless driving as a possible cause of the crash. MEC for Community Safety in the province, Florence Radzilani, has sent condolences to the bereaved families. "We are saddened by the news and send heartfelt sympathies to those who have lost their loved ones in this tragic incident. May they be granted the strength to get through this difficult time. We also pray for the speedy recovery of the surviving passenger," she said. Radzilani said the loss of lives on the roads due to reckless behavior by some motorists is cause for concern. "We urge all drivers to be mindful of their actions at all times, for all to arrive alive at their respective destinations," she said. However, Bolsheviks Party of South Africa (BPSA) Leader, Seun Mogotji, said the poor state of the road is the main cause of the tragic fatal accident. "The road has not been maintained for over 15 years. We have been complaining about the state of that road and our pleas fell on deaf ears. That road needs to be upgraded and must be expanded to give more space on the sides to allow motorists space to duck in case of possible collision with oncoming traffic," he said. Mogotji said the party hopes that the responsible departments will do the right thing to avoid further loss of life on the road.

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## Truter vows to maintain Babina Noko's winning streak

Sekhukhune United Head Coach, Brandon Truter, promised to keep on producing positive results for Sekhukhune United FC. "The performance is getting better and better, I am impressed with the progress we have made so far. I am happy with the quality in terms of learning and progressing," he said. Babina Noko are among the eight teams that advanced to the Nedbank Cup challenge quarter-finals after eliminating Cape Town Spurs in the last 16 round on Friday 10 March. Asked if he thinks the FIFA World Cup break has helped him to turn the tables around, taking into consideration that the team has been struggling to attain maximum points before the break, Truter said the break has given him more time to know his players. "I needed to know them on and off the field. The relationship between players and coaches is important. The FIFA break gave us time the perfect opportunity to work on the tactical and playing style. It is not a finished product and still a work in progress," he said. In terms of players' response to his playing tactics, Truter said he is happy about the team's improvement, however, he is still concerned that his players are struggling to score more goals. "I am happy that we managed to keep a number of clean sheets which maximizes our winning chances. But if we don't score also it minimizes our winning chances," he said. Truter said he is convinced that the team will be finishing within the top 8 position of the Dstv Premiership League. "Mathematically we can still finish in the top four. Our objective is the top eight considering where we come from. We have managed to turn things around and grind up positive results that brought confidence to the team. I can see it in the team that the players want to win every game. The team is confident to make it to the top eight but we don't want to put them under pressure but a top four position is achievable," he said. Truter said Babina Noko supporters can expect a team that is growing from game to game, stating that they appreciate their growing support for attending their matches in numbers. Meanwhile Sekhukhune United has acquired the signature of former Mamelodi Sundowns Mid-fielder, Sibusiso "Villa" Vilakazi. The attacking mid-fielder said he was happy to be part of the team and promised to give the opportunity his best. "I am very grateful to have this opportunity, this is a very exciting chapter. My welcoming was heartwarming I will use the opportunity and I will use it to my best ability. I expect myself to deliver, my job is to add more to the success of the team and make history," he said.



**Sekhukhune United FC qualified for the Nedbank Cup quarter-finals to join the ranks of Kaiser Chiefs, Mamelodi Sundowns and Orlando Pirates.**

## Public servants' wage strike hits Philadelphia Hospital

Staff members at Philadelphia Hospital in Dennilton aligned with Nehawu Trade Union, have on Tuesday 14 March downed tools to join the public servants' wage strike. The union demands 10% increase and disputing the 4.7% that has been put on the table by government. Among other demands, the staff demand that housing allowance be increased from R1300 to R2500, bursary scheme for children of public servants and pay progression to be introduced beyond the last notch which was implemented in 2015. The protest started with a picketing a few years ago before the full blown strike that was enforced by Nehawu on Tuesday. The strike has hit the hospital OPD section hard, leaving chronic illness patients returning home without their medication. Patients who are admitted in the hospital were also left unattended as the striking staff members forcefully removed doctors and nurses who were attending to them during the day. A staff member who did not want to be named, told the Dispatch Newspaper that they have joined the strike to force government to reverse the injustices practices enforced by the employer. "We are striking because we want to get what is due to us from the employer. We are fighting for what is right for us, regardless threats of 'no work no pay' policy," she said. She said members who actively participated in the strike since the picketing are from Nehawu, however, other trade unions such as Denosa, PSA and Hospesa, later joined the protest action. "It is unfair that our children are not benefiting from the government's bursary schemes despite the fact that we are underpaid and robbed of some of our benefits. We will continue to protest until we are given what we deserve," she said.

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