

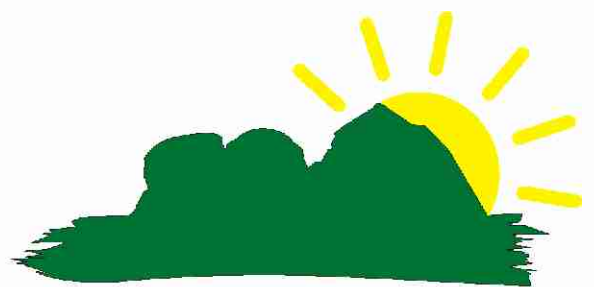


education

DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

News Brief

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MPUMALANGA
A Pioneering Spirit



"A perfect job well done," says Ms Regina Mhaule to Mr Joe Manonga.

Matriculants left in limbo

Josta Sekgotla writes:

As we tumbled into the new year, I was startled by Umalusi's news that Mpumalanga's grade 12 examination results would be withheld yet again. To say I was furious would be an understatement. The Mpumalanga education department has over the years proved beyond reasonable doubt that it cannot offer our future leaders their constitutional right of education. However, what infuriates me more, is the fact that no one seems to care. The department has placed the future of nearly 60 000 matriculants in limbo. I cannot even begin to imagine the frustration of the poor students who are in dire need of these results

to apply for bursaries at tertiary institutions. The fact that Mpumalanga doesn't have a university just adds fuel to the fire; these poor students still need to travel to other provinces to jostle for space (that's if they get their results in time). Following the minister of basic education's intervention, Umalusi might be forced to do a rushed job on verification and quality checks in order to speed up the process. I refuse to believe that the bank of service delivery is bankrupt, I refuse to succumb to the scourge that there are insufficient funds in the vaults of capacity. The province should be stripped of its authority and the national department or another province should manage Mpumalanga's examinations.

MEC chuffed with projects

Walter ka Nkosi

MATAFFIN - Provincial MEC for education Ms Regina Mhaule has commended the contractors who are engaged in the construction of the state-of-the-art John Mdluli (JM) Primary and Cyril Clarke (CC) High in Mataffin, for their impressive work on site since they took up the project early last month.

Clear Choice Builders, a company which is co-owned by Mr Joe Manonga, South Africa's 1994 builder of the year, received the most accolades from Mhaule - it was obviously going to meet the March 31 deadline set out by public works for the completion of the project's phase one, which comprises the classrooms, administration blocks and toilets.

JM's phase one is 85 per cent complete while phase two, which included the laboratories, sport facilities and parking space, and which Manonga was supposed to have start building *after* the Fifa World Cup, currently stood at a more-than-impressive 65 per cent.

"The work progress is far beyond what we were promised by the contractors before the projects began, more especially at John Mdluli which is already in its completion stage," Mhaule explained when interviewed by journalists after her inspection of the site.

Manonga, too, has told journalists that his project would have been history before the World Cup, if it were not for delays he

currently encountered from project consultants in as far as approval of phase two's structural engineering processes was concerned.

He cited the affected areas as being the hall and the soccer and netball fields.

CC's phase one, which is being built by Pfumelelo Business, is 40 per cent complete while its phase two levels also stand at the same percentage, according to the contractor, Ms Suzan Nyathi.

Meanwhile, the stunned Mhaule could not contain her joy at what she observed during her site visit. "I am encouraged by what I

see here, this is work in progress and if the construction continues at this pace we will meet our deadlines." She committed the department to continuing to monitor the project

closely to ensure that it progressed in line with the plan.

She told the media that the department had procured mobile classrooms to mitigate challenges at schools that had been damaged by storms last year. "The first set of mobile classes was delivered to Amersfoort Primary School last week, and it is expected that the rest will arrive in due course, to be distributed to all four regions. As per the relevant challenge, an allocation of R7 million was set aside for this project," she said.

Nelspruit's circuit manager, Mr Musi Likwati, accompanied the MEC's

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STUDENTS END STRIKE

Khulekani Mazibuko

REGISTRATION is back to normal at the troubled Durban University of Technology after striking students decided to suspend their protest action.

Yesterday university authorities called for a heavy deployment of police contingent following two days of mass action and clashes between campus guards and protesters.

On Tuesday three students were injured after being hit by rubber bullets for allegedly damaging university property and invading registration venues.

Last Thursday 10 students were injured in a similar clash with campus security personnel.

University spokesperson Ngabomzi Gawe said management at DUT would meet with the student representative council today to finalise outstanding issues.

"The SRC has requested additional time to study management's proposals.

"Management has given the students' concerns increased attention during talks with the SRC over the last week, and hopes to reach a settlement in order to put this matter to rest," Gawe said.

"Management is hopeful that negotiations will be concluded soon.

"This will bring the campus back to normality and ensure that the registration process is concluded in time, so that the 2010 academic programme commences without any further interruptions," he added.

As students registered yes-



BACK TO NORMAL: Registration at the Durban University of Technology resumed yesterday after students suspended their protest. PHOTO: THULI DLAMINI

DUT beefs up security on campus

terday, members of the SRC were in a meeting at Cane Growers Hall, ML Sultan Campus, discussing their plan to move forward.

The SRC on Tuesday decided to halt the protest action after clashes with security guards left a female

student seriously wounded.

The students representatives said only the Minister of Higher Education and Training Blade Nzimande could intervene and help sort out the issues rapidly.

But the department only sent directors as the minister

had other commitments.

"For the safety of our students we have decided to halt the strike. We will utilise other ways of conveying our grievances to management," said SRC spokesperson Sifiso Mdakane.

The protest action has

elicited comments from different students organisations.

The Congress of the People Students Movement's national coordinator Bulali Mdontsane criticised the leadership of the ANC-aligned SRC over the protest action.

He said while they acknowledged the students grievances, they were against the timing of the protest as it angered new students and parents.

"We question the timing of the action. The strike derails the registration process and the students, especially the new ones, become frustrated by the unwelcoming environment created by the strike."



Sadtu's Mr Mission Mohlala and Ruben Makhubedu handing over the memorandum to Mr Shamba Mthembu, demanding his removal.

Education MEC seeks solution

Goodenough Mashego

BUSHBUCKRIDGE - Pleas by the MEC for education in Mpumalanga, Ms Reginah Mhaule, for all stakeholders to take collective responsibility for the appalling results in the region, fell on deaf ears... Immediately after the first session teacher unions and staff organisations were at one another's throats about who should shoulder the responsibility.

Addressing more than 300 delegates from various education and community bodies, Mhaule said the meeting was informed by her department's analysis of the 2009 grade 12 results in which Mpumalanga lagged behind in all provinces and Bushbuckridge was the worst. "We all need to take collective responsibility and come up with tangible solutions that are measurable and implementable. We must blame ourselves, starting with the MEC, and ask ourselves 'what is my contribution to this sad state of affairs?'" Mhaule said to applause.

She urged all the stakeholders to recognise that Bushbuckridge children deserved the best. "There was a company that approached us looking for learners across all study areas who had achieved at least five distinctions so that they could award bursaries to them. In Bushbuckridge we could come up with only one. This is sad," she said.

In response Mr Matlakala Moreme, secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) in Bushbuckridge said, "We agree with her that teachers must not regularly be taken from classes to attend endless meetings when they should be teaching. I think lack of departmental support is what causes all these problems." Moreme protested that their year-long battle against redeployed regional

manager Mr Shamba Mthembu and their members spending the first four months of last year campaigning for the ANC, might have had an adverse effect. "I don't remember our saying our members should go out during school hours to campaign - it was absence of monitoring that caused all these problems."

However, Professional Educators Union spokesperson Mr Dan Mashiloane put the blame squarely at Sadtu's door. "As teachers we take 100% responsibility for the state. The MEC contributed as well because she bent backward to the union's demands and removed the regional director (RD) saying it was for safety reasons while that could not be ensured. The problem was a lack of leadership and Sadtu urging its members not to cooperate with anyone from the region or district as a way of demanding the removal of the RD. Right now she is talking about strategies to turn the situation around, how does one implement them when there is no leadership? The regional manager must be returned for progress to be realised in this region," said Mashiloane.

His comments were echoed by Mr Morris Khosa of the concerned stakeholders' forum who said that anything agreed on at the meeting, could not be implemented until there was proper leadership. He added that it was about time SGBs told Sadtu what they wanted for their kids.

Bushbuckridge is the worst region at 28,2% pass rate, the worst circuit Cottondale with 15,9% and the worst school Magabotse at 3,9%. The best circuit was Mkhuhlu at 40% and the best school Chayaza High with 71,4%.

All stakeholders agreed to reverse this five-year trend, even though the turnaround strategies on which they concurred, needed a champion - right now there wasn't one.

Criminals vandalise school

Frank Maponya

A SCHOOL in Limpopo has experienced a series of burglaries that have the authorities worried.

Kgabo High School in GaMokgokong in Moletji had its windows broken on Sunday night and a computer stolen on Tuesday night.

The school has no security guards and relies on Bearco, a security company hired to monitor it at night.

Magdalene Ika, chairperson of the school's governing body, told *Sowetan* yesterday that they were concerned about the inadequate security measures at the school.

She said they wanted the department of education to provide security.

Ika said the criminals returned on Tuesday night to steal a computer and vandalise the water tank.

They also allegedly broke water taps. The school has been without water following the incident.

Department spokesperson Ndo Mangala said though the department was not responsible for security, they would urgently send a team to assess the school's needs.