



# It's just not a cash cow

Mbombela stadium is R2.42m in the red, but hosts important community-driven events

LESLEY TSHAMANO

DESPITE hosting 249 events including the MTN8 football cup final, the Springbok Test against Scotland and the Afcon qualifying match between Bafana Bafana and Mauritania this year, Mbombela stadium still could not turn a profit.

The 43500-seat stadium generated an income of R11.5m, falling short by R2.42m to meet its operating costs.

Stadium manager Roelf Kotze said the stadium had not generated sufficient net profit to cover the maintenance and operational costs and there is still a shortfall.

As with several other stadiums built for the 2010 World Cup, the R1.3bn stadium has been running at a loss for a number of years. Last year it suffered an operating loss of R12.5m, after it made a turnover of R3m while operating costs came to R15.5m. In 2014, the stadium reported a loss of R12m to R14m.

This means that ratepayers have been footing the bill to keep the stadium afloat.

However, Kotze said the city regards the stadium as a community facility and in many instances important events are hosted with no profit in mind.

"If profit was the only motive, many events that have a strong community focus would not have taken place at the stadium.

"A strong balance is maintained between profit and community interest. The stadium has become one of the busiest in the country and there are a number of initiatives being planned to increase income," Kotze said.

The stadium hosted 225 non-sporting events and the pricing of the events differed from R5 000 for a small meeting to R350 000 for a three-day church conference.

"The amount we charge for the events differ. It depends on the size of the



WHITE ELEPHANT: Although it played host to 249 events, Mbombela Stadium has fallen short of meeting its operating costs. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES

event," kotze said

The stadium also hosted 10 rugby matches and 14 football matches. Kotze said they charge between R90 000 and R110 000.

"The cost to host a match varies depending on the number of spectators but the average cost for a small match is between R90 000 and R110 000. Income from larger matches are utilised to subsidise the losses on the small matches."

However, Kotze said tenant clubs of the facility do not have to pay to use the stadium.

"A resident club does not have to pay to use the stadium. Income from ticket sales is used to cover the costs," Kotze said.

Steval Pumas continue to be a tenant and until recently Mpumalanga Black Aces used the stadium as their home venue. Super Sport United has since taken over the stadium as their second home. The spokesperson for Mbombela municipality, Joseph Ngala, said the stadium was not a financial liability.

"After the world cup the stadium has continued to host a number of inter-

national matches that involve national rugby and football teams.

"The stadium has also hosted high-profile PSL matches, including three cup finals. On November 26, Mbombela Stadium was home to the Telkom semi-final match between Orlando Pirates and Super Sport United.

"Apart from football and rugby-related activities, the stadium continue to attract other events like rallies and conferences for churches and other organisations."

provinces@thenewage.co.za

# Man in court for rape of girl, 7

FRANCE NYAKA

A PENSIONER was not asked to plead in the Mkhulu Magistrate's Court near Bushbuckridge on Monday when he appeared for allegedly raping a seven-year-old girl.

The 76-year-old suspect was remanded in custody until next Monday when he will apply for bail. He was arrested at his house in Lillydale near Bushbuckridge on Friday last week.

Police said their preliminary investigation revealed the old man had been raping the girl and bribing her with R2.

Provincial police communications head Brig Leonard Hlathi said the victim told the police she was raped by the suspect who further instructed her to keep it a secret between them.

Hlathi said the police did not hesi-

tate to arrest the suspect after the guardians of the victim noticed her strange behaviour. They then alerted the police.

"The victim indicated that she was raped by the suspect who gave her a R2 coin thereafter," Hlathi said.

"He further instructed her not to tell anyone of what had happened. The matter was reported to the police and the suspect was arrested on the same day.

"The police in Mpumalanga condemn in the strongest possible terms such incidents wherein young children are made to face horrible acts from people who are supposed to protect them.

"They vowed that perpetrators of such violent acts will face the full might of the law," Hlathi said.

francen@thenewage.co.za



TRIAL AND ERROR: A pensioner will appear in court after he allegedly raped a seven-year-old girl. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES



# Contrite Sfiso's shock death

MONTSHO MATLALA

WHEN a visibly tired looking gospel star Sfiso Ncwane left the stage at the Laërskool Burgersfort after a few minutes' appearance on stage before midnight on Saturday, he contritely asked for forgiveness from the promoters and fans for his late arrival.

This scenario was confirmed by the organiser of the Praise and Worship gospel festival, Bruce Kgapanne.

"Sfiso arrived late at night and we had to negotiate with pastor Solly Mahlangu who was already on stage to offer him about 15 minutes of his slot to perform. It was already after 11pm but Sfiso did excite fans despite having told them that he was feeling unwell," Ziyapenduka Marketing and Events Logistics CEO Kgapanne said.

The show was staged in collaboration with the SABC's Thobela FM radio station.

"It is still hard for me to accept that the man who during those few minutes told the fans that had it not been for them, Thobela FM and myself, he would have not honoured his contract to perform because he was not in good health, has passed away," Kgapanne said.

The music promoter said he and colleagues joined the gospel star's family,



LAST HURRAH: Gospel song sensation Sfiso Ncwane belting it out during his last performance at the Laërskool Burgersfort before his death.

friends and musicians in prayers during this hour of bereavement and difficult times for the family.

"His last words to me when he left the stage after that brief performance on Saturday night were 'Ngiyaxolisa baba' (my apologies) for coming late to the show."

Yesterday Thobela FM station manager Moshongwa Matsena went on air during the current affairs morning slot to extend her condolences to Ncwane's

family, colleagues and friends on behalf of staff and listeners.

Ncwane's sudden death has sent shock waves throughout the entertainment world, leading to an outpouring of condolences from various quarters including the musical fraternity and the government, among others.

The 37-year-old musician died on Monday at Life Fourways Private Hospital in Johannesburg.

montshom@thenewage.co.za

# Premier cracks down on crooks

MONTSHO MATLALA

PREMIER Stan Mathabatha has warned of criminal elements taking advantage of the festive season activities to smuggle illegal goods or commit criminal activities.

He was at the launch of the safe festive season campaign ceremony at Ephraim Mogale Stadium in Modimolle.

Mathabatha said smuggling of illegal cigarettes and human trafficking were common at this time of the year.

"These criminals will try to bribe some of our best men and women in uniform. Some will be tempted, but we

will also find them and deal with them. "Both are regarded as criminals. We must stand here and warn them that Limpopo is waiting for you."

Security forces, including police, traffic officers and municipal police will join hands during the festive season to ensure that criminals did not escape.

"We will inspect vehicles for illegal goods. We will test vehicles for road worthiness and we will test drivers for alcohol drinking and drugs.

"If you can't respect our laws we will take away your freedom," the premier said.

He called on senior police manage-

ment and the NPA to make sure that those who deliberately breaks the law, spends the festive season behind bars.

The police have warned they would continue to keep a special eye on the nearby Bela-Bela town due to the alarming levels of drug and substance abuse.

"Bela-Bela has become the hot spot in South Africa for drug dealing which is affecting the entire province. As a result, the future of young people is put in danger because these young people are the ones who are involved and affected," provincial police spokesperson Brig Motlafela Mojapelo said.

montshom@thenewage.co.za

# Farm workers still suffering abuse

Farmers accused of hiring undocumented workers to exploit them

DIKELEDI RAMABOPA

THE abuse of undocumented farm workers is still rife in Limpopo - with workers getting paid between R60 and R80 a day.

Most of the workers hail from Zimbabwe and Mozambique with the hope of making a living for their families.

Thembanani Ndlovu, a father of four from Zimbabwe, said that working conditions were bad because they worked long hours and didn't get proper time to rest from their labour.

"The working conditions are bad. We work from 6am until 9pm. We also have water challenges that we face every day. It's hard to be a farm worker. You work for R50, sometimes R90 a day, under bad conditions and most times we are called k\*\*\*\*s," he said.

Ndlovu has been working since 2008 but said it's hard to apply for a passport since he doesn't have the relevant papers, which makes it easy for farmers to abuse him and other workers, knowing very well that they won't report them for fear of being deported.

Last year 80 undocumented farm workers from Zimbabwe were left stranded outside a police station in Lephalale, a coal mining town in Limpopo, after they were fired and evicted by their employer over a demand for better pay.

Their plight exposed the exploitation of thousands of illegal migrants who toiled for hours for as little as R50 a day instead of the gazetted R103 minimum daily wage.

Ndlovu claims that their employer had set his dogs on them and hurled canisters of tear gas at them.

"Six of our colleagues were hospitalised after he hit them on their heads with the butt of his gun," Ndlovu said.

Department of Labour spokesperson



SWEATING IT OUT: Undocumented farm workers in Limpopo say they don't report abuse out of fear of being deported. PICTURE: THAPFELO MOREBUDI

Lerato Makomene said the employer was allegedly paying the workers R70 a day instead of the gazetted R103.

"The courts will decide how much he will pay as he refused to reach a mutual agreement on how much he pays each of them," Makomene said.

Police spokesperson Ronel Otto confirmed the farmer and 10 accomplices

face charges of assault and kidnapping. Home Affairs spokesperson Mayihlome Tshwete said some employers were eager to take on undocumented workers to exploit them.

"We want such farmers and business people to serve jail time and not just pay fines," he said.

provinces@thenewage.co.za