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Injuries bite, but
Springboks count on depth



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commissioner's interdict

RACISM STOPS WITH ME

Mchunu faces backlash over task team

KZN SAPS Commissioner criticises minister's controversial decision during inquiry

RAPULA MOATSHE
rapula.moatshe@inl.co.za

THE Minister of Police, Senzo Mchunu, faced criticism on the first day of the Madlanga Judicial Commission of Inquiry for ordering the disbandment of the political killings task team and halting the filling of crime intelligence posts.

KwaZulu-Natal SAPS Commissioner Lieutenant-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi, who is the first witness to testify, told the commission yesterday that Mchunu's decision was "misplaced".

The commission, established by President Cyril Ramaphosa, is probing allegations of corruption, political interference, and infiltration by criminal syndicates within South Africa's law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

This followed Mkhwanazi's explosive public statements on July 6, during a media briefing, alleging political interference in the criminal justice system.

It came to light that a letter penned by Mchunu, dated January 2, 2025, pointed out that the task team "was not adding value to the policing work".

Mkhwanazi said: "The minister's conclusion that the team does not add any value to policing in South Africa was misplaced."

He stated that whoever advised Mchunu to disband the political killings task team likely did so because they mistakenly believed the team was responsible for investigating organised crime in Gauteng, which involved senior police officers, politicians, and their associates.

According to him, the minister's letter interfered with the operational work of the SAPS, which fell outside the minister's policy-making and directive role. Mkhwanazi said the filling of crime intelligence posts was the responsibility of the divisional commissioner and the national SAPS commissioner, not the minister.

"The impact of this is severe. We have already been trying to put some reforms within crime intelligence in order to respond to the growing crime level in the country," he said.

The commission will scrutinise 121

dockets related to political murders in KwaZulu-Natal, involving councillors, office bearers, and traditional leaders.

Although the commission has received copies of the dockets, the original files will remain with the KwaZulu-Natal political killings task team.

Mkhwanazi's testimony highlighted the murder of Vereeniging engineer Armand Swart, who was shot outside his workplace on April 17, 2024.

The murder exposed an alleged corruption scandal linked to multimillion-rand Transnet contracts, implicating organised crime elements, police officers, and a magistrate.

Following the shooting, three suspects were arrested, including a police officer, Michael Pule Tau, along with Musa Kekana and Floyd Mabusela. They faced charges of murder, attempted murder, conspiracy, possession of stolen property, and possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition.

Mkhwanazi said the investigation team faced significant challenges, including threats to their lives and allegations of bribery against the magistrate.

"Through forensic analysis, those firearms were linked with multiple other murders, other than the one that (of) Mr Swart," Mkhwanazi said.

He said a forensic investigation revealed the accused's involvement in broader incidents, with significant financial backing and substantial payments made for their services. According to him, Tau was later granted R10 000 bail, citing health reasons, after the SAPS' opposition to his bail was unsuccessful.

"This sparked great concern among the investigators; they started fearing for their lives, and threats to their lives started escalating. The threats were coming verbally and others physically; others were being followed around," he said.

He testified that a senior National Prosecuting Authority prosecutor expressed concerns about threats faced by the investigating team and the accused in the Swart murder case and requested protection for two team members.

Mkhwanazi referred to the prosecu-



KWAZULU-NATAL Police Commissioner Lieutenant General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi testified yesterday at the Madlanga Commission of Inquiry in Pretoria. | OUPA MOKOENA Independent Newspapers

tor's letter, which stated that the investigation into Swart's murder revealed a link to whistle-blowing on a Transnet hotline about corrupt activities worth millions of rand.

He stated that the firearm used in the assassination and found in the suspects' possession was linked to multiple assassinations and serious violent crimes. Additionally, cellphone data revealed connections to high-profile organised crime and meticulous crime scene planning.

"The investigation has proved that all three accused are involved in a serious

organised crime incident, of which a million rand was offered for the assassination in this regard," Mkhwanazi said.

The prosecutor's letter noted that the magistrate, for some bizarre and unexplainable reason, decided to grant Tau bail of R10 000 and place him under house arrest.

Advocate Mahlape Sello SC, leading Mkhwanazi's evidence, stated that she could not identify potential witnesses to corroborate Mkhwanazi's information at that time.

"The witness makes the point that the

bulk of information that informs the commission relies on ongoing investigation and, therefore, that would not be discussed publicly, as that would adversely affect the investigation," she said.

Sello said Mkhwanazi assured the commission that full disclosure of all relevant facts would be made during a subsequent in-camera session, where a corroborating witness would also testify.

The commission will continue to investigate these allegations, with Mkhwanazi's testimony set to resume this morning.

UPROAR

Gayton McKenzie faces rising backlash over funding cuts to cultural festivals

MASHUDU SADIKE
mashudu.sadike@inl.co.za

SPORT, Arts and Culture Minister, Gayton McKenzie, is facing widespread criticism from various segments of the arts and culture industry after his department's decision to withdraw support from significant cultural festivals and the perceived reduction in funding opportunities for organisations within the sector.

The move has plunged renowned events like the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, the National Arts Festival, Suidoosterfees, KKNK, Woordfees, Innibos, Aardklop, and the Vrystaat Kunstfees into crisis, raising concerns about the future of South Africa's cultural landscape.

President of the South African Roadies Association (SARA), Freddie Nyathela, a non-profit training organisation providing technical and production skills training for youth, said they were dismayed by McKenzie's decision.

"The current affairs are dire, with a rogue minister abusing public power, bullying, and disrespecting the arts and culture sector with impunity, at the expense of youth empowerment, job creation and transformation," Nyathela said.

Nyathela further alleged that McKenzie has deliberately imposed "sector clusters" to "capture the Department" and has transformed the public purse into his "personal slush fund for selfish interests".

He accused McKenzie of "blatantly disregarding the rule of law, including the approved revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, and Section 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa".

Adding to SARA's concerns, Nyathela highlighted the Minister's alleged abuse of power to "sabotage a unique and significant Africa first project titled the 'Backstage Academy South Africa'".

He said this initiative aims to equip African youth with technical "live technology" skills essential for creative innovators and technologists within live events and wider arts and creative industries in South Africa and beyond.

Nyathela said that this further undermines youth development and innovation within the sector.

Jack Devnarain, a prominent actor and chairperson of the South African Guild of Actors (SAGA), echoed the industry's bewilderment and apprehension regarding McKenzie's decisions.

"It has come to our attention that the minister is now limiting funding opportunities and shutting down subsidies... we are concerned about this because we don't know why he is making these choices," Devnarain said.

SAGA is now calling for urgent and constant industry engagement to understand McKenzie's rationale.

"So we are calling for constant industry engagement because we need to understand his thinking," Devnarain said.

He pointed out the dire consequences for organisations reliant on government funding: "A lot of entities relying on funding from the government are not able to sustain themselves because of the shortage of these subsidies."

Devnarain conveyed the collective confusion within the industry: "We are confused as to where the minister is going with this... so to curb that confusion there has to be a structural engagement otherwise we need to start engaging portfolio committees on the matter."

The DA has also weighed in on the matter, with Leah Potgieter, the party's Spokesperson on Sports, Arts & Culture, accusing the Department of being used for "political patronage, neglecting artists, athletes, and communities".

Potgieter highlighted the precarious situation of "flagship festivals" and alleged that the Mzansi Golden Economy (MGE) Fund has been "captured by the Minister's allies".

The DA further revealed a diversion of R82 million from sports federations to fund Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology, a move they claim is "crippling grassroots sport".

CRISIS

SARS raids Royal AM training facility amid Mkhize's tax woes

BONGANI HANS
bongani.hans@inl.co.za

PLAYERS from Royal AM FC, the football team owned by Shauwn Mkhize, watched in despair as trucks, brought by the taxman, seized goods and vehicles at a training facility on a farm outside Pietermaritzburg yesterday.

The highly secretive operation was aimed at businesswoman Mkhize, who is alleged to have committed tax offences.

According to sources, the visit and attachment did not only happen at tenderpreneur Mkhize's properties, including her house in Sandton, Johannesburg, but the South African Revenue Service (Sars) also swooped at her sister's home, Nozipho Ngubo, in Nkanyezini outside Pietermaritzburg on Tuesday.

The Sars officials and police officers swarmed the club's training facility, the Royal Ranch, situated along the R56 road, which connects Pietermaritzburg and Maqongqo.

Approximately 10 trucks were involved in the removal of assets, including those that were suitable for loading furniture. Other small and heavy-duty tow trucks were brought in to tow away vehicles, including heavy construction vehicles and a number of metal shipping containers.

Mkhize did not respond to phone calls and WhatsApp messages sent to her yesterday. Ngubo's phone was answered by a man who identified himself as her husband, Mvusi Ngubo. "She is busy. I will ask her to call you later."

"Please phone her after two hours," said Mvusi, but her phone went unanswered.

It had been previously reported that Ngubo had accused her sister, Mkhize, of having used her name without Ngubo's knowledge to buy Royal AM FC.

A man who appeared to be a Sars official directed queries to the offices of the team inside the ranch for information about what was happening.

The club was thrown out of the professional ranks in April after failing to honour their Betway Premiership fixtures, sparked by mounting debts to Sars. An elderly man, apparently in charge of the players, complained that the media treats the Sars and police raid as a game.

"To us, this is serious and painful because it impacts on the players' future," he said. A young man said that the buildings from which the furniture was being removed and placed into the trucks were players' living quarters for the women's team.

When asked if the players were still receiving their monthly salaries, he said, "That question is not for me to answer".

A source close to both Mkhize and Ngubo said Sars raided Ngubo's house at Nkanyezini on Tuesday.

"The situation is tense. They (Sars and the police) pounced at Sandton and took everything. They also went to the farm (the training facility) where they removed assets yesterday and today (Wednesday)."

The source said the authorities also took all the furniture from Ngubo's house. "Today (Wednesday), they are taking a few things that they left behind yesterday," the source said.

Sars spokesperson Siphithi Sibeko said the visit to the properties was not a raid, but instead he referred to it as an operation.

"Sars doesn't conduct raids," said Sibeko.

He said that Sars was carrying out an order of the Durban High Court.

"Sars acted in accordance with the court order of 21 November 2024. We act within the law and do so, without fear, favour or prejudice," said Sibeko.

MISMANAGEMENT

Government waste: R1.3 trillion lost to irregular and fruitless expenditure

THAMI MAGUBANE
thami.magubane@inl.co.za

GOVERNMENT departments, entities, and municipalities have "squandered" over R1 trillion in the past five years in unauthorised, irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure (UIFW).

Parliamentary replies show that government departments and entities have incurred hundreds of billions of rand in UIFW expenditure between 2019 and 2024.

Unauthorised and irregular expenditure refers to money spent without following proper procedures, while fruitless and wasteful expenditure refers to money spent in an improper manner.

The replies were to questions asked by ActionSA MP Alan Beesley. He stated that calculations show that over the past five years, the government has incurred R1.3 trillion on UIFW expenditure.

This figure does not include the activities of provincial government departments, as that information, according to the replies, is submitted directly to the treasuries of the different provinces.

Members of Parliament have registered their unhappiness with this issue and indicated that they are worried about the trajectory of UIFW. They noted that while it showed signs of decline over the years, it has spiked again in recent years.

The National Treasury was contacted for comment but had not responded to the request.

In his questions, Beesley requested the National Treasury to provide information on the total amount reported in terms of (a) fruitless and wasteful expenditure, (b) irregular expenditure, and (c) unauthorised expenditure by

(i) national departments and national public entities, (ii) provincial departments and provincial public entities, and (iii) municipalities and municipal public entities.

The questions covered the five-year period between the 2019 and 2024 financial years.

In the response, the summary of fruitless and wasteful expenditure by national departments and national public entities subjected to the PFMA showed that the departments incurred about R1.4 billion, while national entities incurred R7 billion.

Regarding irregular expenditure by national departments and national public entities, the departments incurred R38bn, while national entities incurred R235bn.

It was reported that unauthorised expenditure by national departments for this period was around R9.2bn.

The report indicates that municipalities and municipal entities are squandering billions in fruitless and wasteful expenditures, with R65bn lost in this manner.

The breakdown of the consolidated fruitless and wasteful expenditure per financial year shows that 2020 was the lowest, at R4bn. It spiked in 2022 to 2023, when it hit an all-time high of R19 billion, before coming down in the last financial year to R17bn.

The breakdown of the consolidated total balances of irregular expenditure shows that about R602bn was spent during this period.

"The consolidated total balances of irregular expenditure per financial year showed that the 2019-20 financial year was the lowest at R74bn, while the

highest was the last financial year of 2023-2024 at R137bn," it noted.

The breakdown of the total balances of unauthorised expenditure incurred by municipalities amounted to R419bn.

Beesley described the situation as shocking, stating, "The amount of R1.38 trillion incurred on irregular, unauthorised, and fruitless and wasteful expenditure by government departments, entities, and municipalities over the last five years is staggering and totally unacceptable."

"This shocking amount confirms what all South Africans know: good governance and accountability are simply non-existent within public departments and entities. Until public officials are held accountable for irregular, unauthorised, and fruitless and wasteful expenditure, the battle for better service delivery will not be won."

DA MP Kingsley Wakelin, a member of the Appropriations Committee, said they are aware of the matter and are extremely concerned.

He noted that trends in national government seemed to decline but have picked up again. He echoed the president's comments this week regarding municipalities.

"We want to say we are available to assist in any way in dealing with this issue. We are also calling for people to be accountable and disciplined."

"We call on accounting officers to be disciplined and for officials to be held accountable so there is not the circulation of officials who, if involved in alleged wrongdoing, leave KZN and show up in Mpumalanga."

"There should be a registrar for such officials."



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