



Solar energy training
page 12 >>



Maths whizz heads to
Oxford page 8 >>



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athletic record
page 16 >>

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Premier set on raising border wall

DOREEN PREMDEV

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Nomusa Dube-Ncube said she is dead set on raising the concrete barrier wall along the South Africa and Mozambique border to curb the theft of vehicles and movement of illicit goods.

The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Provincial Government has requested the Department of Transport to fast-track the raising of a concrete barrier wall along the border of the two countries.

Premier Dube-Ncube, conducted an oversight visit to the border between Mozambique and South Africa in Manguzi, in the Umkhanyakude District Municipality, under the auspices of Operation Siyahlola, to assess progress on the construction of jersey barrier walls.

The project, which covers about 25km of the vulnerable border line, was initiated by the KZN government in 2018 as part of a basket of interventions to fight crime in the area.

The project was mainly conceived to prevent an easy trans-

portation for stolen vehicles and livestock and is being implemented in three phases.

Speaking during the site inspection last week, Ms Dube-Ncube noted good progress in the construction of the phase that cuts through Gate 6 – one of the hotspot segments of the border line.

“The concrete slab foundation to conclude this phase has been laid and we are confident that the construction will move quicker. We have directed the Department of Transport to fast track the raising of the walls,” Ms Dube-Ncube said.

The Premier was accompanied by Umkhanyakude District Municipality Mayor Siphile Mdaka, as well as police and senior government officials.

She said the provincial government is working with its social partners to break the back of criminal syndicates that terrorise the communities along the borderline.



■ The KZN Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube inspects the concrete barrier wall between the South African and Mozambique border. The KZN government say they are focused on fighting crime in the area, especially the movement of illicit goods and the theft of vehicles from South Africa to Mozambique.

Continued on page 3

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Domestic dispute ends in tragedy



■ The scene where a 10-year-old girl watched her father shoot her mother in the head during an argument.

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DOREEN PREMDEV

A 10-year-old girl watched her father shoot her mother dead last Wednesday evening, March 20, in Belvedere, Tongaat.

Her father then shot himself and later died in hospital.

The incident happened at Saunders Circle in Belvedere, Tongaat, north of Durban.

Prem Balram, spokesman for the Reaction Unit South Africa (RUSA), said the RUSA Tongaat Operations Centre received multiple calls from the public reporting the incident. Reaction officers were immediately dispatched and arrived on scene at approximately 5.58pm on Wednesday.

"The reaction officers noted that paramedics from a private ambulance service were in the process of providing emergency medical care to a male who sustained a gunshot to his head. The body of a female with a gunshot wound to her head was discovered on the driveway. She showed no signs of life and was pronounced deceased," said Mr Balram.

He said that it was established that the man and the female were married but separated.

The husband was employed as an Armed Response Officer (ARO)

for a national company.

That evening he arrived at his wife's house, dressed in uniform, driving a branded company vehicle. He was to fetch his 10-year-old daughter when an argument ensued between him and his estranged wife.

Mr Balram said the father then drew his company issued firearm and shot the mother before turning the gun on himself – four spent 9mm cartridges were recovered at the scene.

"The critically injured male was stabilised on scene before being expedited to hospital in a serious condition. The child was visibly traumatised but was not injured. The motive for the shooting has not been established. It was later noted that the father died in hospital, leaving the little girl orphaned."

KZN police spokesperson Nqobile Gwala said the police are investigating a case of murder.

He added that the circumstances surrounding the incident were under investigation.

"A woman was allegedly shot after a domestic dispute. The suspect also sustained a gunshot wound and was taken to hospital for medical attention where he succumbed to his injuries," said Mr Gwala.

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Life sentence for family decapitation

DOREEN PREMDEV

Elias Delisani Mkhize was sentenced on Wednesday, March 20, at the Pietermaritzburg High Court to two terms of life and 10-years imprisonment after he pleaded guilty to the murder of his biological mother and sister in December 2023, in the Mid-Illovo area.

Mkhize, 54, lived in the same area as his mother, Mathithi Mkhize, and his sister, Celiwe Mkhize.

He also pleaded guilty to the possession of an unlicensed firearm.

Regional spokesperson for the National Prosecuting Authority, Natasha Ramkisson-Kara said prior to the incidents, Mkhize suspected his mother and sister of bewitching him and he decided to kill them.

"On December 20, 2023, he armed himself with his unlicensed firearm and proceeded to their home, which was a short distance away. He shot them both and then used a bush knife to decapitate them. He disposed of their heads in a nearby pit toilet. He was arrested a few hours later," said Ms Ramkisson-Kara.

In aggravation of sentence, prosecutor Melumzi Gula handed in a Victim Impact Statement compiled by Mathithi Mkhize's son (Celiwe's brother) and facilitated by the court preparation manager, Xolile Mzobe.

In his statement, the man said his life changed on the day he received the call to say that his mother and sister were dead.

He said he could not understand why his brother would kill his family members in such a brutal way.

He added that the images he saw following the murders would remain with him for a long time.

"Elias Mkhize was sentenced to life imprisonment for each of the murders and 10 years imprisonment for the possession of an unlicensed firearm.

"The court ordered that the sentences run concurrently, resulting in the effective sentence of life imprisonment.

"He was also declared unfit to possess a firearm," said Ms Ramkisson-Kara.

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Wall part of crime-fighting measures

From page 1

"As we announced during the State of the Province Address, government is also pursuing diplomatic channels to coordinate strategic efforts to fight cross border crime. We are working closely with the newly established Border Management Authority, the SAPS (South African Police Service), Specialized KZN Stabilising Team, Amakhosi and other crime fighting structures to address issues of criminality in the area."

Ms Dube-Ncube said interventions are already yielding positive results as several high-profile criminals have been arrested and are facing prosecution.

"Already several cars have been found stuck and abandoned, some hanging on the jersey barriers because syndicates could not take them across to Mozambique because of the high border walls," Ms Dube-Ncube added.



■ The KZN Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube inspects the concrete barrier wall between the South African and Mozambique border. The KZN government say they are focused on fighting crime in the area, especially the movement of illicit goods and the theft of vehicles from South Africa to Mozambique.

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No arrests following attack on 70-year-old

STAFF REPORTER

A 70-year-old grandmother, who attempted to fight off her attacker in a home invasion in Verulam, narrowly escaped serious harm.

Prem Balram from Reaction Unit South Africa (RUSA) said they arrived on scene at Valley View Drive in Redcliffe, Verulam, just after midday, to find the woman bleeding from a laceration to her right hand.

"According to the victim, a suspect had confronted her when she opened her security gate. He produced a knife and wrestled her to the ground, demanding her cellphone and cash. She then attempted to fight off the attacker. During the struggle, she managed to disarm him but the suspect began to suffocate her. He then retrieved the knife and threatened to stab her. Fearing for her life, she handed over her cellphone and the suspect fled on foot. At some point during the scuffle, the woman sustained the wound to her hand," said Mr Balram.

He said the RUSA 44 helicopter



■ The RUSA 44 helicopter that was conducting routine aerial patrols in Verulam was re-routed to assist in finding the suspect who attacked a Verulam grandmother.

that was already conducting aerial patrols over Verulam was routed to assist in the search for the suspect but no arrests were made.

The victim as treated for her injuries on scene.

Police investigations continue.

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STEM MentHER continues to flourish

DOREEN PREMDEV

Women in science is being spearheaded by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

The university started the STEM MentHER programme last year, which has established itself as a beacon of empowerment for young women interested in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Since the launch of the UKZN Chapter in 2023, the programme has continued to flourish, providing invaluable mentorship and support to aspiring female students.

The origin of STEM MentHER at UKZN can be traced back to Dr Cerene Rathilal, a lecturer in the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science.

Collaborating with the National Institute for Theoretical and Computational Sciences (NiTheCS) and UKZN's College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science, Dr Rathilal, along with her colleagues, Dr Yas-eera Ismail and Dr Chevarra Hansraj, launched the UKZN chapter of this national STEM outreach programme at the

beginning of 2023.

"STEM MentHER is designed to address gender disparity in STEM fields by offering mentorship and guidance to young female learners aspiring to pursue careers in these domains," said Dr Rathilal.

"By pairing mentees with experienced female academics and postgraduate students during their final year of high school, the programme aims to empower them by providing career and study guidance and nurturing their academic and professional growth."

With the release of the 2023 matric results, STEM MentHER hosted a celebratory event to honour the achievements of its inaugural Grade 12 pupil cohort.

At the occasion, Dr Rathilal congratulated the students on their excellent matric results and expressed her gratitude to the mentors whose unwavering support has been instrumental in the programme's success.

Mentees included Maia Lucie Klijnsma, Zaahira Khan, Akeesha Maharaj and Rejenté Dorasamy.

They shared heartfelt testimonials, acknowledging their

mentors' profound impact on their academic journey so far. These students, who achieved a host of A symbols between them, have all registered for STEM degrees at UKZN, while some of their fellow mentees have opted to pursue their studies at other tertiary institutions.

While some students have chosen to study at other universities, they will continue to be mentored by their chosen UKZN mentors as they embark on their individual study choices.

"Through mentorship, these young women not only excelled academically but also gained confidence and inspiration to pursue their dreams," said Dr Rathilal.

"As STEM MentHER enters its second year at UKZN, a call has gone out for 2024 applicants. We encouraged teachers and principals to nominate deserving Grade 12 female students who exhibit passion and potential in STEM disciplines. Successful candidates will benefit from expert mentorship, tailored programmes and membership of a vibrant community of aspiring female scientists and engineers."



■ UKZN's STEM MentHER Programme started early last year and is aimed at female students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The students have received expert guidance from their mentors who are based at the university. The mentors have assisted them to reach goals in their field of study.



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KZN maths whizz off to Oxford University

DOREEN PREMDEV

Life is one big mathematical equation for Aaron Naidu, and he's counting on his mathematical mind to ace his Master's when he heads off to Oxford University in the United Kingdom in October.

Mr Naidu, who completed his Honours in Statistics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) last year, has secured a place at Oxford University to complete his Master of Science Degree in Statistical Science.

Mr Naidu, respected by his peers and professors as "one of the dudes in data" is a talented mathematics student and has won several awards at a national and international level. He is also the only student to win the Tertiary Mathematics Olympiad outright while still in high school.

After being placed first in KwaZulu-Natal and second in South Africa in his matric examinations in 2019, he enrolled for a BSc in Data Science at UKZN. He completed his degree

summa cum laude in 2022 and was placed in the top 3% of every module, even after adding six modules to his study programme. During his honours studies, Mr Naidu was invited to present at the 2023 South African Statistics Association Conference and received the Zac Yacoob Scholarship for the best honours student at UKZN across all Colleges and Disciplines.

His intellectual prowess will now take him to the UK for a 12-month taught master's pro-

gramme that includes a research dissertation.

"This is really exciting for me. While awaiting the start of my master's course, I will be completing actuarial science board exams and, in July, I will participate in a 10-week long quantitative trading internship with Jane Street Capital in the UK before proceeding to university," said Mr Naidu.

"My aim is to do my PhD and then enter the workforce as a statistician, data scientist, or quantitative trader."

Mr Naidu thanked his lecturers at UKZN for their instruction, particularly Emeritus Professor Poobalan Pillay for nurturing his love of mathematics during high school and Professor Delia North for developing his interest in data science.

"We are so proud of this amazing young man," said Professor North.

"Not only is he a top achiever, but he has participated in statistics outreach projects such as Women in



■ Maths whiz Aaron Naidoo is off to Oxford University in the United Kingdom to do his Master of Science in Statistical Science later this year.

Analytics and Dudes in Data every year and has been a wonderful role model to the next group of undergraduate students."

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Record number of voters registered

DOREEN PREMDEV

This is the first election since the dawn of democracy in South Africa that more than 27 million people have registered to vote. In 1994, just over 19 million people registered to vote in the first democratic elections and the Independent Electoral Commission says more than 27.79 million voters are eligible to cast their votes in this year's national and provincial elections.

According to the Commission, the voters' roll will be certified by the Chief Electoral Officer Sy Mamabolo, this week. The voters' roll will be published by making it available at the Commission's head office, each of the nine provincial offices of the Commission and at each municipal office of the Commission, Mr Mamabolo said.

"The certification follows the finalisation of objections by the Commission on the provisional voters' roll that was published for inspection on February 26. Certification signals confirmation of those citizens who are eligible to vote in the elections," he said.

Mr Mamabolo added that the electronic copies of the voters' roll, which contain the redacted identity numbers of voters, in compliance with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act will be provided to all political parties and



Over 27.79 million voters are eligible to cast their votes in this year's election.

independent candidates who have qualified to contest the elections.

"Since the voters' roll was compiled for the first time ahead of the 1999 National and Provincial Elections (over 18 million registered voters), it has shown steady growth of over 35% and contains the highest number of registered voters - recording an increase of 9.6 million voters since the 1999 general elections," said Mr Mamabolo.

"The provincial breakdown of the registered voters indicate that Gauteng remains the biggest voting block, followed by the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, respectively. The highlight of the certified roll is the increase in the rate of representation by persons in the age cohort 18 to 39 years. This age band accounts for 42% (or 11.7 million) voters on the voters'

roll." Mr Mamabolo said of the 27.79 million voters, 15 million are women, representing over 55% of the voters. The introduction of the online self-service voter registration system has contributed to the increased rate of registration by younger voters in the country, as well as by citizens who live outside of the Republic of South Africa.

He added that compliance verification of the candidate nomination submissions is under way. In terms of the law, a party submission must contain a list of candidates accompanied by payment of the applicable deposit for it to be compliant. In respect of unrepresented parties, the submission must in addition, be accompanied by proof that the requisite number of signatures have been uploaded on the nomination portal, said Mr Mamabolo.

The requirements for independent candidates are that a prescribed nomination form must be submitted by the cut-off time, accompanied by the prescribed form confirming that the candidate has submitted the requisite number of signatures and payment of the relevant deposit.

Failure by a party or independent candidate to comply with any of these foundation nomination requirements cannot be remedied and will result in the disqualification of the party or independent candi-

date, said Mr Mamabolo.

Last month, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced May 29 as the National and Provincial Election day.

"The 2024 elections coincide with South Africa's celebration of 30 years

of freedom and democracy. President Ramaphosa has called on all eligible voters to fully participate in this important and historic milestone of the democratic calendar," said Mr Mamabolo.

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Residents and administrators at the Issy Geshen old age home with the vehicle that needs to be replaced.



Lamontville seniors' home needs minibus

NIYANTA SINGH

The Issy Geshen Lamont Home for the Aged in Lamontville is appealing to members of the public to assist them with replacing their minibus – an essential mode of transport for its residents to medical appointments, medication pick-ups and other activities.

The vehicle has broken down several times and the already limited funds available have been used to repair and service it – but issues persist with the vehicle, thus enabling it to only make short trips with a forecast three months left.

The haven offers a safe home to 68 frail elders who depend on a state pension and cannot afford independent living.

It provides a comprehensive care system encompassing nutritious meals, medication, professional nursing care, hospital visits, and rehabilitative services, ensuring the well-being of its residents.

The home's commitment extends to psycho-social support for the elderly and their families, highlighting the importance of addressing mental and emotional health alongside physical care.

Lettie Shandu, a resident and fund-raiser, said not having a vehicle presented many challenges for them.

"This vehicle is our lifeline. It

is essential for transporting the elderly to medical appointments, medication pick-ups, and recreational activities but it has broken down several times, leaving us in a dire situation.

"With limited funds, the on-going repair of the vehicle is challenging but necessary. We have been told that the vehicle can now only make short trips and will only last us for three more months," said Ms Shandu.

Sifiso Ngidi, the home's administrator, appealed for assistance from the community, highlighting their role.

"We are reaching out to the public for support in replacing our minibus.

"It's more than just a mode of transport; it's a critical component of our care for the elderly. Every donation helps to ensure that our elders can live with the safety and dignity they deserve. This is a call to action for the community to come together in support of those who have spent their lives contributing to society, emphasising that compassion and collective effort can make a significant difference in the lives of the elderly," said Mr Ngidi.

For those interested in supporting the Issy Geshen Lamont Home, donations can be made directly to the home.

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Transnet to invest more than R200m in port road repairs

DOREEN PREMDEV

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) is committing to making Durban Port roads an economic gateway to the South African economy.

TNPA said it would invest R233 million in the comprehensive rehabilitation of the Durban Port roads and that the project was expected to be implemented over a two-year period, with a traffic management plan in place to redirect traffic flow.

TNPA Port Manager for the Port of Durban, Nkumbuzi Ben-Mazwi, said they were undertaking this road rehabilitation to ensure that they deliver on their mandate of providing port infrastructure and enabling the port's efficient functioning as the economic gateway to the South African economy.

Mr Ben-Mazwi explained that this comes on the back of the intensified pressure posed by an influx of trucks on the Port of Durban's road infrastructure.

"The Port of Durban is a crucial

contributor to the South African economy. It handles approximately 60% of the country's total container volumes," he said.

"Most of the container volumes handled are moved through the Southern Road Network of the port and over the years, the influx of trucks entering the port has substantially increased. The intensified surge has led to the deterioration of the overall road infrastructure," said Mr Ben-Mazwi.

"The improved condition of port roads will positively impact

on port operational efficiencies and the smooth flow of traffic in the targeted precincts."

The Maydon Wharf will take precedence, with 16 roads set for repairs, followed by Island View with three roads and two on Bayhead Road. In addition to repairing the structural defects, the restoration of functional defects – such as surface drainage issues due to damaged manholes and inlets caused by heavy vehicles, is included in the project scope, said Mr Ben-Mazwi.



■ Transnet Ports manager, Nkumbuzi Ben-Mazwi Transnet National Ports Authority.

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Problem buildings in the spotlight

DOREEN PREMDEV

The eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality has intensified its collaboration with property owners in a bid to eradicate unsafe buildings within the inner city.

This comes after the establishment of a new unit, the Problem Buildings Division, which is dedicated to tackling unsafe buildings.

Problem buildings, the municipality said, is defined as derelict, abandoned, hijacked, structurally unsound and unlawfully erected, among other things.

Through the Problem Buildings Division, the city's vision is to create a vibrant inner city, underpinned by well-managed buildings.

The division encourages property owners, whose buildings have been deemed unsafe for occupation, to contact them or face future closure.

Deputy City Manager of Economic Development, Lihle Phewa, said these buildings present social issues including homelessness, crime and drugs, which are often found in such buildings. Mr Phewa said the division has already identified approximately 40 buildings within the city and has started the process to serve relevant notices. This is done in accordance with the National Building Regulations and Standards Act, and the Problem Building by-laws, he added.

"If there is non-compliance by the property owner after the notice period has expired, the municipality will

approach the High Court to carry out remedial work, apply for a demolition order, request for the appointment of a judicial administrator, request for a sale in execution, or expropriate the property and building," said Mr Phewa.

"All costs incurred will be to the owner's account. Owners can however, partner with the municipality to put together an action plan with time frames on how to turn the problem building around."

Mr Phewa highlighted the recent eviction of illegal occupants from Crieff Place Building, South Beach, as among the division's successes.

Following a court process, the owner of the property was able to evict the illegal occupants and proceeded to demolish the vacant building, he added.

However, the owner left a portion of the superstructure and did not fully secure the property.

The owner had also left rubble from the demolition process on site to ensure that the site was not occupied again, but the sheltered portion of the remaining superstructure was occupied shortly after.

"The Problem Building Division engaged unsuccessfully with the owner to secure the property. The division took the decision to remedy the works on site by removing the rubble, repairing, and closing all the openings to the site, and installing barbed wire to the tops of the boundary wall to prevent any person from occupying the site," Mr Phewa said.



■ A new partnership aims to create employment for 6 000 youth in solar energy.

Youth get powered up by eThekwini municipality

DOREEN PREMDEV

Powering up the youth, the eThekwini Municipality has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the KwaZulu-Natal Education Development Trust to get youth involved in the Youth for Energy Transition Programme (YETP).

This strategic partnership will see approximately 6 000 unemployed youth from the municipality receive training to become solar technicians, said eThekwini Municipality Mayor Mxolisi Kaunda.

"The training will enable the youth to participate in the city's energy transition initiatives and take advantage of job opportunities from the private sector and other government energy infrastruc-

ture projects," said Mayor Kaunda.

"After completing their training, the youth will also participate in the city's Social Energy Infrastructure Programme which works towards modernising and restoring energy security in key community facilities such as public schools, hospitals, clinics, and in townships."

During a round table session held on Friday (March 15) at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre (Durban ICC) with various energy stakeholders, Mayor Kaunda said the city recognises the importance of empowering the youth with necessary skills and knowledge, especially as the country is facing an energy crisis.

He said for the country to

adequately address the energy crisis, it was vital to harness the skills and talents of young people who are the future.

"We are delighted that we have signed a MoU with the KwaZulu-Natal Education Development Trust for the YETP which will create opportunities for 6 000 youth in the city", said Mayor Kaunda.

"The first phase of the programme will see the installation of solar panels and biogas digesters in public schools while the second phase will see the installation of solar panels in hospitals and clinics.

"The third phase will be the installation of high-mast lights across rural and township communities to reduce crime, particularly during load shedding."



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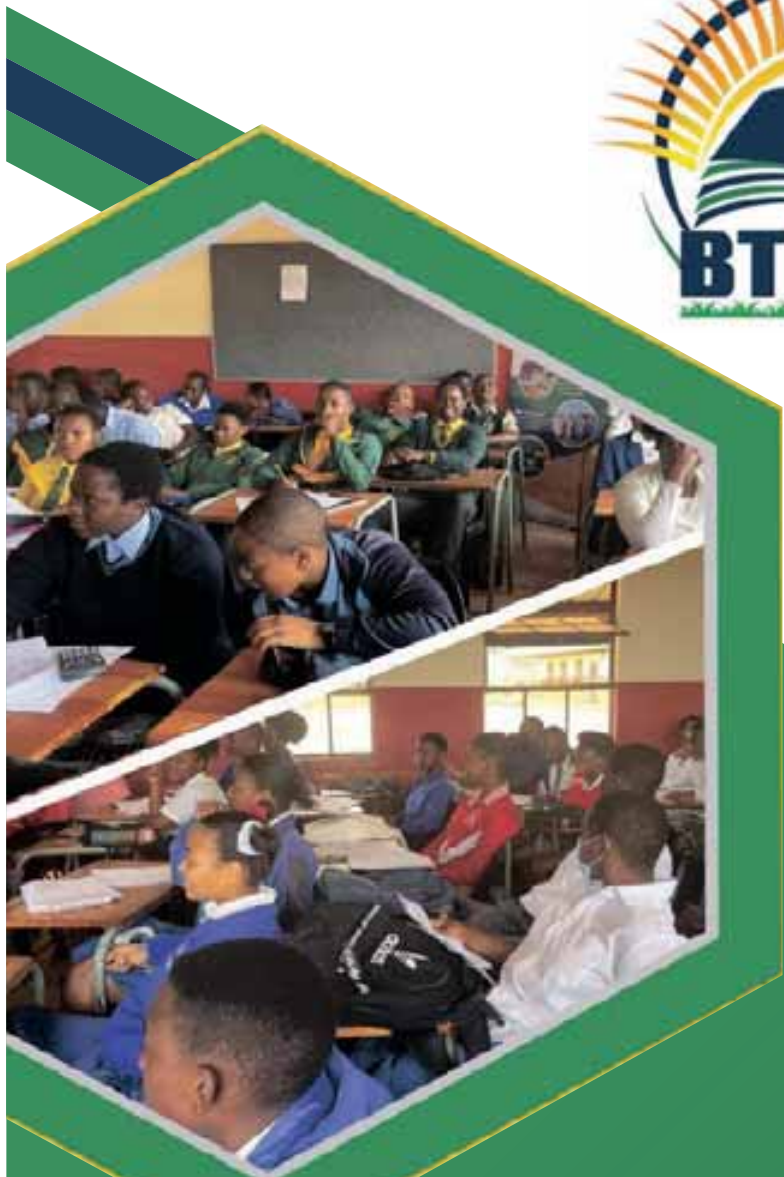
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Pianist bags music award Be part of live podcast recording

NIYANTA SINGH

Durban-based pianist, composer, and researcher Sibusiso Mash Mashiloane was recently awarded the prestigious HSS Award for Music Composition.

The award celebrates artistic merit and cultural depth showcased in his album *Music from My People*.

Presented by the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) Awards, the award honours significant contributions in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) fields.

"This award is deeply meaningful," says Mashiloane.

"It not only validates my work, but also serves as a powerful reminder to our people, particularly the younger generation, of the importance of tradition and cultural music – the very foundation of our musical identity."

Mashiloane's work transcends mere entertainment, embedding itself deeply within the cultural fabric of South African music tradition.

"Receiving this award is a profound honour. It reaffirms the value of our musical heritage and emphasises the importance of preserving our cultural identity for future generations," Mashiloane said.

His celebrated album is a masterful blend of African music traditions and jazz, creating a sound that is at once familiar and innovative.

The NIHSS jury praised *Music from My People* for its exceptional production quality and the sophisticated composition reflective of Mashiloane's rich musical experience.

His albums *Izibongo* and *Ihubo Labomdabu* also received recognition, further establishing his prowess in the music industry.

Mashiloane is renowned for his exquisite piano skills, marked



■ Durban-based pianist, composer, and researcher Sibusiso Mash Mashiloane was recently awarded the prestigious HSS Award for Music Composition.

by an impressive blend of technical precision and heartfelt expression.

Music from My People features a series of collaborations with other musicians, each track offering a glimpse into the diverse cultural heritage of South Africa.

The album's success is a testament to Mashiloane's ability to create music that resonates on a deeply per-

sonal level, while also appealing to a broader audience.

His academic research, particularly his PhD studies focusing on "the sounds of home"; plays a crucial role in his creative process. This approach has not only enriched his compositions but has also contributed to a broader understanding of music's role in cultural expression.

With a career that boasts six awards and nominations from prestigious entities such as the SAMAs and the AFRIMA Awards, Mashiloane is a pivotal figure in the South African jazz scene.

His role as a lecturer and researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal underscores his commitment to exploring and teaching the nuances of musical heritage.

As Mashiloane continues to explore the intersections of music, culture, and academic research, his influence extends beyond national borders, making him a celebrated artist on the global stage.

His dedication to understanding and sharing "the sounds of home"; promises a future rich with innovative and culturally resonant music.

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Stanky DeeJay, one half of the popular amapiano duo, Kweyama Brothers, will headline The Live One Man Concert at Durban Exhibition Centre at the end of the month.

Stanky DeeJay will also record his music podcast, Pianocast, at the event.

An excited Stanky DeeJay, whose real name is Siza Kweyama, said: "When One Man Concert Productions and I sat down for our first meeting I thought this is a crazy idea, but I think of how insanely popular Pianocast has grown as a brand for the last two years."

"The local and international love is testament to how the culture and movement of the genre is growing rapidly and organically."

He added that he was humbled to be part of an internationally celebrated and authentic South African music genre.

"This concert is a celebration not only for Pianocast but all the underground producers, the hit makers in the shadows who are yet to be known and get their time to shine, it's for the guys who've made it and are making huge strides for upcoming talent as well."

Stanky deeJay will be joined on stage by, among others, Kabza de Small, Young Stunna, Benny Maverick, Zee Nxumalo, and DJ Tira. Stanky deeJay will close off the concert, on Saturday March 30, with a two-hour set. Tickets are available on Webtickets.



■ Stanky DeeJay, whose real name is Siza Kweyama

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WHILE STOCKS LAST!

Spooky Durban story gets traction abroad

LAUREN O'CONNOR-MAY
LAUREN.OCONNOR-MAY@ACM.
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It took Durban author Shubnum Khan eight years to write *The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil* because she let the eccentric mix of characters lead the story.

"I just wrote the strong characters and put them in the house and then I'm like 'you lead me where you want to lead me, you open which doors you want to open'."

The result was a book with a love story at its core but which also has elements of horror and magic realism and has been widely well-received since its release in January.

"I always wanted to write a kind of love story but I realised, you can't tell a love story without telling a life story. I was going to have a young person talking to an older person in a block of flats but that idea kept growing and growing to encompass all the things that I love, which are horror, tragedy, mystery and magic realism."

The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil is Shubnum's third book and second novel. Her first novel, *Onion Tears*, was published in 2011 and was shortlisted for the Penguin Prize for African Writing.

"I didn't write for a long time. Then in 2021 I wrote a travel memoir called *How I Acci-*

dentally Became a Global Stock Photo. That was my first non-fiction book and then this year, I published this book *The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil*, which is my second novel and that took about eight years to write, so I took a big break between my novels."

In between Shubnum also lectured in media studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and freelanced as an artist, journalist and copywriter before picking up her novelist's pen again. This time around, she found the writing experience vastly different.

"*Onion Tears* was for my master's in creative writing at the University of KwaZulu-Natal," she said. "For my first novel I had a mentor. Kobus Moolman, who was a poet at the University of the Western Cape, was my supervisor and he was pushing me and so it was a different experience. Writing *The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil* was basically just me, on my own, floundering in the ocean, trying to figure it out how to make this story work."

The novel tells the story of a sweet romance between Meena Begum and Akbar Ali Khan, who marry despite their differences in class and religion, and the hatred of Akbar's family. The love and betrayal which afflict the couple in the 1920s, take place in a sentient mansion, the titular Akbar Manzil, on



■ Author Shubnum Khan with the South African version of her book *The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil*.

the Durban coastline. The story plays out along two timelines with a cast of kooky characters.

"I went out of my way to write very strange characters, like I've never met anyone who speaks in the third person and Pinky speaks in the third person all the time," Shubnum said, referring to the oddball maid who lives in the pantry and is obsessed with Bollywood.

Shubnum says her favourite characters to write were Sana, a curious 16-year-old girl, who explores the house and unlocks the long-hidden mysteries of the past, and Zuleikha, an elderly, flamboyant music teacher.

"I like Sana because she reminds me of a young girl waiting for the world, and you don't know what to expect from the future, and I like Zuleikha because she doesn't give a damn about anyone and she's just herself and that's a very rare thing to see in a woman."

There are also a few ghosts, though you may not guess this from the colourful South African version of the cover. Internationally, however, the clue is in the title. The UK and US versions have been released as the *The Djinn Waits a Hundred Years*.

"You know immediately there is going to be a ghost," Shubnum says of the international version. "I think maybe in South Africa it's a bit harder to tell that there are going to be ghosts in it."

Internationally the book has also been billed as a horror.

"It's not a horror," Shubnum said. "But it does have elements of horror in it."

Despite the book's eccentricities,

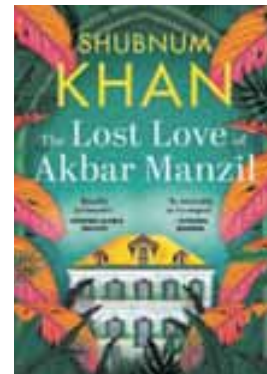
the characters may resonate with South African readers because Shubnum says they are amalgamations of people she's met and characters she has read.

"I come from a family of Indian women so I know what it is like to have aunties talking all the time, and fighting, and making low comments to each other but I can't say I based anything on anyone I know. They certainly must be an amalgamation of characters that I've read, of people that I have met on the street, especially in Durban. Like, if you are buying vegetables and are at a shop and you hear people talking about their aches and pains, their bodily problems. They are interesting characters."

The novel is also getting good traction overseas, and this has surprised Shubnum.

"I didn't think the US would be interested in a community story about Indian people living in South Africa but the New York Times wrote a really good review about the novel. But in South Africa too, people have been enjoying it. I've been getting good feedback. I can see from reader reviews, not critical reviews, that it is either a book you hate or you love and I like that. I want it to be that kind of book."

Reviews



Reviews: Lauren O'Connor-May

All these books have a few things in common: romance and living houses.

The Magic All Around
Jennifer Moorman
HarperCollins

In this story, Mattie Russel goes back to her magical family home after the death of her mother.

The house and her unacknowledged magical abilities lead Mattie on a path of discovery, which includes two second-chance romances, finding her father, and solving the mystery of the house's best-kept secret – the number of the mysterious landline phone which will reveal the destiny of the person who answers it, if it ever rings.

This book is a sweet slow burn full of charm.

The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil
Shubnum Khan
Pan MacMillan

If you like your romance with a dash of weird and a pinch of horror then you will enjoy this unique book.

Here the living house is the titular mansion on a hill on the Durban coast. This house, however, is somewhat malicious and is guarded about its dark secrets, so when the newest tenant, 16-year-old Sana, starts poking around in places it's tried to bury, she awakens a few ghosts and uncovers an old mystery.

This slow-paced story is told across two timelines and is full of eccentric characters and entertaining side stories.

The lyrical writing is worth savouring and I think this novel may be a contender for the most interesting and unusual book of the year.

Ruthless Vows
Rebecca Ross
HarperCollins

The living houses play a very minor role in this romantasy but they exist in the story because they've been strategically built on ley lines, which is a major plot point in this conclusion of the *Letters of Enchantment* duology.

This story picks up from *Divine Rivals* after Iris is tragically separated from Roman, who is missing. The war between gods has reached the town where the recently married couple are working as war correspondents and Roman, who is captured by the cruel god Dacre, has no memory of Iris.

Iris tries to use their magical typewriters, which connect the couple across any distance, to help Roman to remember their love, so that he can return to her.

I immediately liked this young adult story because I don't think I've read any other fantasy romances where the romantic leads are rival journalists.

It also has other selling points though; the story will tug at your emotions and the writing is expressive and lilting.

CONTENT MARKETING



MUSGRAVE CENTRE'S REDEVELOPMENT: A Catalyst for Economic Growth and Job Creation

Musgrave Centre, a beloved icon in Durban's retail landscape, is currently undergoing a multi-million-rand redevelopment. The ambitious initiatives to energize the centre with exciting new offerings commenced in February 2021 with the inclusion of Food Lover's Market and Dis-Chem. The current phase of the upgrade sees a continuation of this theme and the entire fourth floor that housed the Ster-Kinekor cinemas will make way for a new trade floor with premium national offerings, anchored by a Checkers Fresh X store. Checkers Fresh X is a unique, upmarket grocery brand concept that prioritizes nourishing and fresh food, with an interactive shopping experience. This leading giant retailer will also bring a Liquor and a Pet Store to the centre.

"The redevelopment will provide more choice, value and convenience for our consumers and stakeholders, strengthening Musgrave Shopping Centre's position as the

top-of-mind retail node for the Berea," said Centre Manager Natasha Quarrie. "Through this strategic investment, we will be making a significant and sustained impact on the economy and rejuvenation of the precinct. Thus far, the construction has provided direct employment for over 100 local people. We are proud to announce that Musgrave Centre will also create around 160 permanent jobs through the retailers, further strengthening our ties with the local community," she added.

Musgrave continues on its growth trajectory that has recently seen the introduction of new national brands in the food and health care category, in keeping with consumer demand. The current project is progressing on schedule, with the new stores expected to open mid-year. Musgrave Centre remains dedicated to ensuring a safe and enjoyable shopping environment during the upgrade. All health and safety protocols will continue to be strictly observed, prioritizing the well-being of visitors and staff.

Grandmother breaks barriers and race records

From page 16

Despite a hiatus from road running and cross country due to injury after four decades of participation, Tregenna quickly made her mark in the sport, breaking South African and African 10km records in November 2023 during

the Africa Championships.

Tregenna's athletic prowess extends beyond race-walking, with an illustrious career in competitive swimming spanning over three decades.

A veteran of the SA Swimming Masters, Tregenna has participated in three World Championships,

securing numerous medals and setting records along the way. Her achievements also include triumphs in the SA Biathlon Championships, clinching gold a remarkable 13 times, and earning various medals in the World Life Saving Championships.

Despite her unprecedented

success and world-record-breaking feat in race-walking, Tregenna, a retired teacher who spent much of her career at the Westville Girls' High School, remains determined to further improve her performance. As a devoted mother of two and grandmother to two grandchildren, her commitment

to excellence both on and off the track continues to inspire generations.

"I still have more to achieve and I'm aiming to better this record the next time. There's lots more to do and I know I will get there," said the determined woman.

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Blind swimmer completes her first Midmar Mile

DOREEN PREMDEV

Blind swimmer Kristy Greener competed in her first Midmar Mile this month. Greener also has idiopathic sensory-motor polyneuropathy – an illness affecting her hands and feet, but nothing could stop her from competing and getting her medal.

Greener, who works at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), said her condition causes the motor nerves of the peripheral nervous system to malfunction, with no obvious underlying cause found by medical doctors.

“Despite it all, it was awesome to complete in the Midmar Mile. But I must say it was a tough swim,” said

Greener.

“It was a delight to compete in the 51st edition of the world’s largest open-water swimming event. I finished in one hour and 14 minutes at Midmar Dam near Howick.”

Greener was able to swim by the age of four, falling in love with the sport because it exercised her whole body – and she didn’t have to fear tripping or falling. There was also no heavy lifting involved which improved her lung capacity, preventing complications from other conditions she is susceptible to, such as asthma.

Greener started training in 2019 for the Midmar Mile. She said she is grateful to her swimming partner, a teacher and sports co-ordinator at

Impact Christian Academy in Yellowwood Park, Nicola Murray. Together with her coach, Marion Barnard, they trained three times a week at Make Waves KZN, a swimming club at Queensburgh’s Escombe Primary School.

“In a pool, I swim along the lane rope. In a dam, I swim next to Nicola. We’re attached with a harness and Nicola uses this to guide me. You need dedication and discipline if you want to participate in these races. You simply must put in the time – you need to build up stamina. Swimming the Midmar Mile means you’re on the go for 1.6km non-stop in the water. There’s no time to pause for a tea break,” she joked.

Greener said she typically



■ Swimmers Kristy Greener, left, and her swimming partner Nicola Murray completed the Midmar Mile. Greener, who is blind, said she feels at home in the water and won her first medal for swimming the Midmar Mile this year.

swims 6km a week, split over three days.

Swimming is her passion and she loves the water because it exercises the muscles of her body. She completed the Capital-K open water swim in 2022 and 2023 before doing the Midmar Mile this year. Next year, she plans to improve her time in the race and raise money for a mental health charity by taking on the race’s Charity Challenge.

She thanked the College of Health Sciences Student Support Services Manager, Dr Saloschini Pillay, and her team who she said are always motivating and supportive of her work as a student counsellor within the School of Health Sciences on the Westville campus.

“Aside from swimming I am also passionate about offering free and confidential counselling to students from first-year to postgraduate level on a one-on-one basis. Here we address an array of personal issues, relationships, career-related matters as well as mental health and wellness,” said Greener.

“The team is also involved in group work where we conduct psycho-educational workshops, academic skills development workshops as well as career exploration and guidance workshops.”

When she’s not working or swimming, Greener said she loves spending time with her cat, Valentine. She also enjoys the company of her friends, family and colleagues.

Grandmother walks her way into the record books

NIYANTA SINGH

A Westville grandmother not only brought home gold in the recent SA Race Walking Championships held in Cape Town but managed to shatter the world record.

The KwaZulu-Natal race-walking delegation descended upon the Youngsfield Military Base for the highly anticipated SA Race Walking Championships recently.

Among the participants were four remarkable athletes representing Highway, with Gill Tregenna, 82, of the Westville Athletics Club leading the charge, alongside Oliver Mundell and Belinda Padbury from the Kearsney Striders Athletics Club, and Wayne Snyman from the Clyde Kinloch Club.

Tregenna’s performance was nothing short of spectacular, not only securing

gold in the fiercely contested 80–85-year-old age category for her 20km event but also demolishing the existing world record. The previous benchmark, established in 2013 at 2 hours and 42 minutes, was left in the dust as Tregenna crossed the finish line in an astonishing 2 hours and 37 minutes.

Padbury also distinguished herself at the championships, clinching victory in the women’s open 10km race with a personal best time of 00:58:30.

Expressing her delight at setting a new world record, Tregenna revealed her journey into race-walking began in August 2023 under the tutelage of coach Oliver Mundell.



■ Gill Tregenna shortly after her record breaking race with some of her supporters.

Continued on page 15

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