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■ The heavy rains and fires that wreaked havoc in KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape in the recent weeks has called for a “new system” to deal with natural disasters in SA, CoGTA Minister Velenkosini Hlabisa said on Tuesday July 16. He proposed a new system for disaster management and fire services by reorganising administrative structures and financing models to better respond to growing disaster risks.

Natural disasters becoming a norm

DOREEN PREMDEV

Heavy rains leading to flooding, veld fires and natural disasters are becoming a norm in South Africa. Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) Minister Velenkosini Hlabisa says South Africa is at an increased risk of natural disasters and needs a “new system” to manage these challenges more effectively.

He conveyed his condolences

to the loved ones of those who have tragically lost their lives in the recent weeks.

“We also acknowledge work undertaken to rebuild our societies and we urge all government structures to increase the speed of responding to the plight of communities,” Minister Hlabisa said on Tuesday during his Budget Vote Speech.

He recognised the vital role played by the department following the floods and fires currently

affecting communities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the Western Cape.

“We have learned with heavy hearts of the passing of 14 people who died in the veld fires in KZN. Among the 14, six were firefighters, some volunteers. These brave men and women paid the ultimate price to save communities. We convey our heartfelt condolences to the loved ones of all the victims. May their souls find eternal rest,” the minister said.

Minister Hlabisa tabled the CoGTA 2024/25 budget, at R395.7 billion, with a significant portion 95.9% (R379.61 billion) to be transferred to municipalities and affiliated entities.

A total of R379.6 billion of the department’s total budget over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period will primarily cover the local government equitable share, disaster relief grant and the municipal infrastructure grant.

Minister Hlabisa said that it was through the department’s urgent interventions that lives and livelihoods were saved and thanked all those who are collaborating with government to assist distressed communities.

The minister and his team are expected to visit the affected areas in KZN to assess the situation and provide support.

Continued on page 3

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Councillor's killer gets life sentence

DOREEN PREMDEV

The Dundee Regional Court sentenced Sihle Acute Dlamini to life imprisonment for the murder of a ward councillor in the Matshematshe area of Pomeroy, south-south east of Dundee.

National Freedom Party (NFP) councillor Nompumelelo Zondi, 45, who served in the Nhlanhleni area, was shot and killed in her vehicle outside her home in March 2016.

Dlamini, 37, who fired the shot, fled the scene, and was arrested some time in 2023.

His fingerprints (found on the scene) linked him to the shooting. Upon his arrest Dlamini had made a confession, which he later retracted, said Natasha Ramkisson-Kara, regional spokesperson for the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA).

"In the state's case Advocate Elvis Gcweka led the testimonies of 10 witnesses including a fellow

party member of Ms Zondi's, as well as SAPS members who visited the crime scene and took the fingerprints.

"Mr Gcweka also led evidence that Zondi was killed due to tensions within the party in that area. In aggravation of sentence, Mr Gcweka led the evidence of one of Ms Zondi's family members who testified that Ms Zondi was the breadwinner for the entire family.

She also paid for the tertiary education for younger family members

who have had to drop out of university due to lack of funds, following her death," said Ms Ramkisson-Kara.

In addition to the life sentence Dlamini was also declared unfit to possess a firearm. Ms Ramkisson-Kara said the NPA is satisfied with the outcome of the sentence, and they commend the successful partnership between the prosecution, the Political Killings Task Team in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and other stakeholders.

Truck theft kingpin arrested

DOREEN PREMDEV

A Zimbabwean national, believed to be the kingpin of a truck theft syndicate operating within South Africa, was arrested in an operation by private security company officers last Wednesday morning, July 17.

Spokesman for Reaction Unit South Africa (RUSA), Prem Balram said reaction officers were approached by a businessman from Shakaskraal for assistance after his truck was stolen by his employee.

"The businessman made inquiries and realised that the suspect had sought employment at various trucking companies in several provinces.

"However, after a few weeks he would disappear with the load and the mechanical horse and trailers. The suspect would allegedly then change jobs at trucking companies in other provinces to evade law enforcement," said Mr Balram.

He added that the reaction officers worked on information and gathered that the suspect was working with several foreign nationals living in South Africa.

Information received that the suspect was 34-years-old and is originally from the capital city of Harare in north east Zimbabwe, said Mr Balram. "The suspect fled after stealing an FAW truck in



■ An alleged kingpin involved in a truck theft syndicate operating in the country, was arrested in Shakaskraal.

June 2024 in KwaZulu-Natal and was working in the Free State after relocating.

Reaction officers lured the man back to KZN and used plain clothed officers in unmarked vehicles to track him.

He was observed for several hours on Wednesday morning while waiting for positive identification. When positively identified the suspect was restrained and placed under arrest without incident," said Mr Balram.



■ The 34-year-old man's modus operandi is to find work as a truck driver and after a few weeks of working he would disappear with the load and the truck. He often changed jobs and moved around the country to evade the police.

PICTURES: RUSA

Sudoku No 82;

Level: 3 Tricky

How to play: Fill every column, row and 3x3 box so they contain every number between 1 and 9.

Solution on page 7

			2			4		
8	5	9			7		1	
			9	1			8	
	8	5						1
		6				5		
7						4	3	
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Shaping new generation of environmental champions

NIYANTA SINGH

A new initiative, the Youth Environmental Reporters and Advocates (YERA) programme, is set to empower young South Africans to investigate, document, and communicate environmental issues in their communities.

Led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) South Africa and the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, the programme aims to build climate literacy and environmental knowledge among pupils. It also seeks to enhance their communication and reporting skills on local environmental issues.

Saron Gidiso, a Grade 10 pupil at Marklands Secondary in Chatsworth, said she was excited to raise awareness.

"I am excited to learn how to raise my voice to create more awareness about the pressing environmental issues in our school and community," said Saron.

Imithle Mkhize, another Grade 10 pupil from Glenhaven Secondary in Tongaat, highlighted the urgency of taking action.

"If we don't speak about it as the youth, then who will? These are things that affect us in our daily lives. We see it. We might turn our heads when we see a piece of paper and ignore it, but it affects us in the long run," she said.

The YERA programme will be implemented over the next eight months across four provinces—Kwa-Zulu-Natal, Western Cape, Northern Cape, and Eastern Cape—targeting 40 schools and involving 400 young reporters.

"The YERA programme embodies our commitment to environmental and social justice," said Cindy Cloete, WESSA CEO. "By empowering young people, we are shaping a new generation of environmental champions who will lead the fight against climate change and advocate for sustainable solutions. We are thrilled to partner with UNICEF on this critical initiative and look forward to its transformative impact."

A recent UNICEF South Africa report titled "Climate, Energy, and Environment Landscape Analysis for Children in South Africa", highlighted the need for greater visibility of young people in the climate and environment agenda to ensure policies and actions address their specific needs. "Empowering learners and young people, particularly girls, through education and nurturing their skills will build on their local knowledge to help raise their voices and strengthen action on local climate and environmental challenges," said Christine Muhigana, UNICEF South Africa Representative.

The YERA programme will provide training in investigative journalism, environmental science, and advocacy skills. The workshops will

use WESSA's Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) methodology. One key output will be journalistic works produced by participating schools for distribution across various media platforms.

"This programme is an important step forward in further nurturing environmental awareness among learners in South Africa and we hope the programme can be expanded in the coming months and years to benefit more South African schools," said Lazi Mtwla, acting Chief Education Specialist, KZN Department of Basic Education.

The programme is funded by UNICEF Canada National Committee.



■ Saron Gidiso, a Grade 10 pupil at Marklands Secondary in Chatsworth, and Imithle Mkhize, a Grade 10 pupil from Glenhaven Secondary in Tongaat.

Minister proposes new system to deal with disasters

From page 1

In Cape Town, over 33 000 households have been affected across the metropole in both formal and informal settings following the floods, affecting some 95 000 people.

"We recognise that the challenges we face in disaster management are largely because South Africa has experienced not only an increase in the number of disasters – such as droughts, floods, Covid-19, and severe weather – but also an increase in their magnitude, severity, and impact," the minister said. "These events have occurred either simultaneously or in rapid succession, straining our resources and systems."

However, Minister Hlabisa said he believed that the challenges faced in disaster management are primarily due to deficiencies in regulatory legislation, which are not designed to adapt to the ever-changing risk environment. He added that the systemic and structural design of disaster management delivery, as guided by current laws, results in issues with timing and bureaucracy. Key elements of the disaster management function were assigned to municipalities through legislation, but without funding. He said this created a contradiction between the Disaster Management Act and the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) which requires sufficient funding and capacity for assigned functions. Adding that municipalities lack the necessary funding and capacity.

He admitted that government's response has struggled with agility, efficiency, and effectiveness in risk analysis, prevention, mitigation, emergency preparedness, early warning systems, and recovery services.

He said the fire and rescue services also face significant hurdles and

that in 2022, Cabinet mandated the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) to review and overhaul the disaster management system, including fire services.








"In response to this, we are proposing a new system for disaster management and fire services. This system aims to improve governance by reorganising administrative structures and financing models to better respond to growing disaster risks," Minister Hlabisa said. "We have since developed a new model based on best practices from New Zealand, Russia, Brazil, Mozambique, California, and Australia. The new model emphasises risk reduction and integrates disaster management into all levels of government planning, ensuring adequate funding and focus on resilience."

He said the NDMC undertook extensive consultations with all stakeholders through existing disaster management structures and across the three spheres of government and that inputs were received and used to refine the proposed model.

"We look forward to working with all stakeholders in the management of disasters, including rolling out training to Houses of Traditional Leadership, particularly those in disaster-prone areas, on disaster management," he said. "This will enable them to work closely with all spheres of government and stakeholders on the ground to assist in disasters. An implementation plan has been developed in this regard for effective implementation of this training."

This year, the department also signed a Memorandum of Collaboration with the Department of Defence that will see the Community Work Programme (CWP) participants playing a role in disaster preparedness and community development.

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■ The snake eggs that were found on the construction site and safely removed by snake catcher Nick Evans.



Snake catcher shares egg rescue tale

NIYANTA SINGH

In honour of World Snake Day on Tuesday, July 16, renowned Upper Highway snake catcher Nick Evans shared how he was called to the N2/N3 Spaghetti Junction construction site after workers discovered a clutch of snake eggs.



■ The eggs hatched into brown house snakes.

Back in March, the construction team sent Evans a photograph of the eggs. The eggs, that were stuck together in a lump — a characteristic typical of snake eggs — immediately caught Evans' attention.

"They looked like brown house snake eggs to me. They were laid in a safe spot, under a pipe, just beneath the surface," said Evans on Facebook.

Without delay, Evans carefully transferred the eggs into a small box filled with the sand in which they were found. He then placed the box in a warm cupboard, ensuring the eggs were in an optimal environment for hatching. Evans was particularly amazed by the journey the female snake must have undertaken to lay her eggs in such an unusual location.

"Although house snakes are nocturnal, maybe the snake crossed at night when the roads are quieter. Or perhaps there are a few living there, breeding. I haven't had any calls from the construction team about actual snakes, so perhaps not. It was a tiny patch to live in," he said.

Evans was also surprised by the timing of the eggs, noting that most house snakes would have hatched by March. He speculated that it could have been a late clutch laid in January or possibly a second clutch from a well-fed female, given the healthy rat population in Durban that supports their diet. "I think it was the latter," said Evans.

To Evans' delight, the eggs eventually hatched, revealing they were indeed brown house snakes. "They were cute, pretty little snakes, which I

released. At their size, they'll mostly feed on lizards," Evans said.

He expressed his gratitude towards the construction team for their concern and efforts to ensure the eggs were safely removed.

"A big thank you to the construction team for caring enough to call to have the eggs removed safely. I'm extremely grateful to them," he said.

Yellow-bellied snakes released out at sea

NIYANTA SINGH

Two adult yellow-bellied sea snakes that have spent the past two weeks in the care of the uShaka Sea World herpetologists were released out at sea this month.

The highly venomous snakes were released 20 nautical miles out at sea after they were deemed to have recovered sufficiently.

The snakes were originally stranded on beaches in the Western Cape at Natures Valley and Lookout Beach. They were initially cared for by local snake rescuer Tiago Rebelo before being flown to uShaka Sea World.

uShaka Sea World senior herpetologist, Carl Schloms said yellow-bellied sea snakes spend their lives drifting on the surface of the water, feeding on surface pelagic fish and drifter fish, that are usually found in association with floating objects.

"Although we are not certain why these incredibly beautiful snakes washed up on the beach, it is possible that the rough weather conditions in the area around the time of their stranding would have played a role," he said.

"The yellow-bellied sea snake is one of the most widely distributed snakes in the world, occurring in every ocean except the Atlantic. Their distribution does, however, favour warmer waters. The best second chance we could give these two fortunate sea snakes was to release them into the warm Agulhas



■ uShaka Sea World Senior Herpetologist, Carl Schloms, releases the snakes.

current off Durban.

"If you come across a sea snake, it is important that you do not attempt to put it back in the sea, but rather contact wildlife authorities or snake experts as they are highly venomous. You will notice (in the picture) I was wearing bite proof gloves when I released the snakes," said uShaka Sea World Senior Herpetologist, Carl Schloms.

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Premier's office warns of fake job vacancies

NIYANTA SINGH

The KwaZulu-Natal Premier's Office has issued a warning to the public regarding fraudulent job vacancies circulating on social media.

In a recent media statement, the office said some references in these bogus advertisements were taken from a previous, legitimate recruitment drive.

"These job advertisements, upon close examination, mirror the references and appearance of those originally issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government in August 2023 under

the Sthesha Waya-Waya Provincial recruitment drive. Those advertisements have closed, and the recruitment processes have been concluded. They are not being re-advertised," the statement clarified.

The Premier's Office said all authentic and approved provincial government vacancies are only advertised through the official provincial government e-recruitment system or on the respective department's websites. They cautioned the public to be vigilant and avoid interacting with these fraudulent posts.

"At this juncture, the Office

of the Premier categorically states that these social media advertisements are not sanctioned by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government and are the work of unscrupulous and mischievous individuals seeking to exploit the aspirations of honest South Africans who are diligently searching for employment or considering career changes," the statement continued.

The statement said "the warning comes in light of a surge in deceptive job postings designed to lure unsuspecting job seekers".

The Premier's Office has urged citizens to exercise extreme cau-

tion and discernment when applying for any vacancies. They advised that all job seekers should verify the legitimacy of job advertisements by consulting the official provincial government e-recruitment system or departmental websites.

The office also reminded the public that the Sthesha Waya-Waya Provincial recruitment drive, which took place in August 2023, had already concluded. Any job advertisements referencing this drive were outdated and should be disregarded.

As part of their efforts to combat these fraudulent activities, the

Premier's Office is working closely with social media platforms and other relevant authorities to identify and remove fake job posts. They are also exploring legal avenues to hold those responsible for these scams accountable.

The Premier's Office reiterated its commitment to transparent and fair recruitment processes and reassured the public that genuine job opportunities would always be communicated through official channels. They urged anyone who encountered suspicious job advertisements to report them to the relevant authorities immediately.

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Sudoku solution

No 82

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Tricky

Puzzle on page 2



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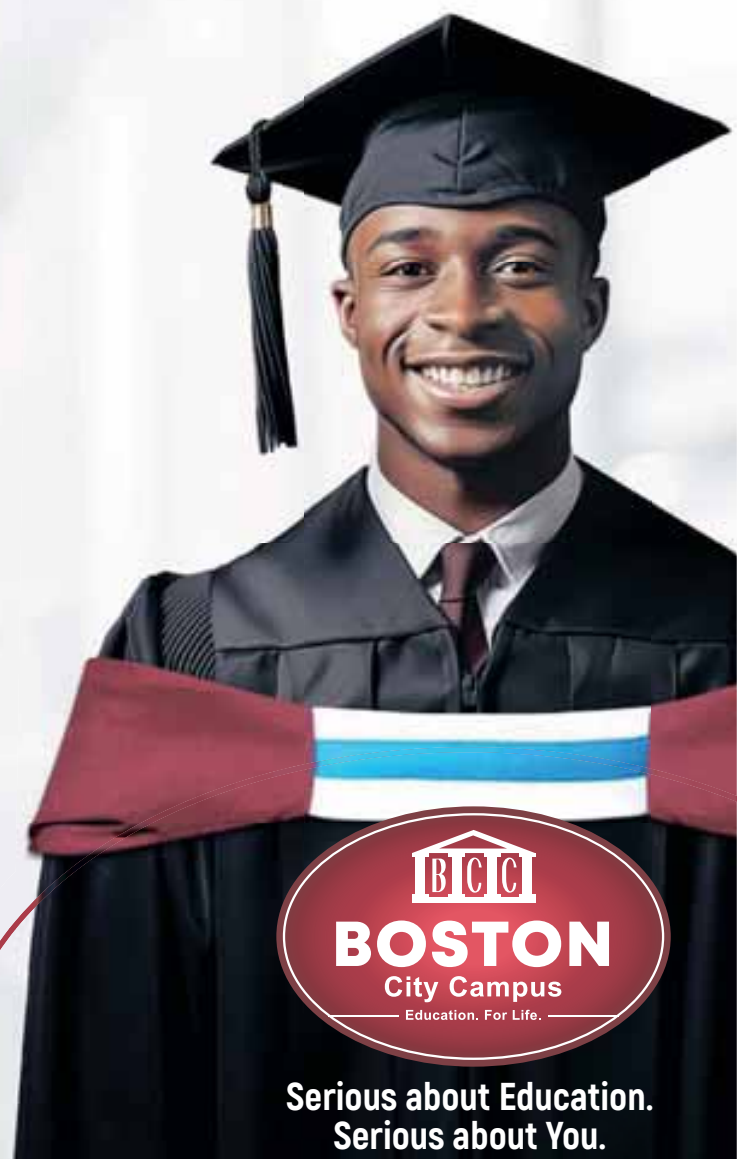
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Dr Mkhwanazi graduates as top surgery registrar

DOREEN PREMDEV

Dr Nsizwenye Mkhwanazi has made history by graduating as the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa's (CMSA) top surgery registrar (specialist in training) as well as becoming the first black African candidate to receive the Douglas Award for Fellowship of the College of Surgeons of South Africa (CS CMSA).

The former president of the Medical School Student Representative Council (MSRC) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Dr Mkhwanazi has made his dream of a becoming a doctor a reality.

The CMSA fellowship involves being part of a professional body dedicated to promoting the highest degree of skill and efficiency in medical practice and cultivating the highest ethical standards and professional conduct, not for financial gain but for the betterment of humanity, said Dr Mkhwanazi.

"This goes down as one of the proudest moments of my life. I am especially grateful to all my teachers, especially CS CMSA president, Professor Zach Koto," he said.

Dr Mkhwanazi said he was the first medical doctor in his family. He was born into a disadvantaged family in the Mpumalanga province. He chose to overcome poverty by studying to become a doctor with a mission to save the lives of others.

"In medicine, you get to directly impact people's lives. You have an opportunity to not only touch the physical being but also the soul," he said. "If God allows, the decisions we make echo into eternity. We ease the pain; we prevent catastrophe and I find that quite fulfilling."



■ Dr Nsizwenye Mkhwanazi, a former Medical School Student Representative Council president, graduated as top surgery registrar at UKZN recently. He is the first doctor in his family.

Dr Mkhwanazi said he fell in love with surgery while doing his internship and instantaneously wanted to be excellent at it. He said he realised that he needed to become the very best at what he does, and that required him putting in the hard work. He said he has been inspired by many of his colleagues and mentors who saw potential in him and always encouraged him to work hard.

Dr Mkhwanazi is currently working at Cape Town's Groote Schuur Hospital, where he is doing his fellowship (subspecialisation) in colorectal surgery which entails a wide range of surgical procedures to

counteract conditions affecting the lower digestive tract. His ongoing Master of Medicine degree focuses on peripheral arterial disease for which he is being supervised by Sefako Makgatho and Health Sciences university vascular surgeon, Dr Siphumelele Ngema, where Dr Mkhwanazi served as a registrar.

"I am pursuing colorectal surgery as a speciality because the disease is a significant burden in the country which needs to be better understood. I am interested in minimally-invasive techniques in colorectal cancer treatment and also can't wait to see where the tide of genomics, personalised cancer care and targeted therapies lead us," said Dr Mkhwanazi.

He added that being involved in student leadership influenced his future path. There was a lot of naivety entering into it but he said he grew up so fast through that experience. Adding that he was quite passionate about improving the lives of the students on campus.

Dr Mkhwanazi and his peers founded the MSRC book loan scheme with the help of UKZN's former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, Professor Renuka Vithal.

"Being elected MSRC president at 19 years old, while in my third year, was scary but definitely one of my Medical School highlights. Holding insightful conversations with UKZN leadership cultivated my

confidence going into practice and becoming a registrar," he said.

When he's not studying or working, Dr Mkhwanazi said he loves going to church regularly, it helps reset his spiritual compass. He also loves being in nature, he said it gets his mind thinking at a different level.

"My mom has always been my inspiration while my dad supported me as a young pupil in high school and through varsity. My wife has been my rock - she encourages me to take time off and think about things outside of work. They have been my driving force and my encouragement for achieving all I have achieved in my life so far," he said.

Cash boost for youth-owned businesses

DOREEN PREMDEV

The youth in eThekweni are being encouraged to start up their own businesses and create job opportunities.

Twenty small and medium youth-owned businesses in the municipality have received financial aid to enable them to grow and increase productivity.

The businesses received R10 000 each through the Youth in Business Programme, which aims to inject financial aid into the emerging businesses.

eThekweni Municipality's Governance and Human Capital Committee chairperson, Nkosenhle Madlala, who leads the programme, congratulated

the recipients of the funding, and assured them that the Mayoral Youth Development Office will continue to aid emerging businesses and encourage entrepreneurship.

"The municipality's Youth Development Policy is more than just a directive, but a promise to nurture the aspirations of young people and to provide them with the tools they need to succeed," said Mr Madlala.

"The establishment of a youth fund remains a cornerstone of our youth development policy. This fund is not only a financial reservoir but a beacon of our unwavering support and belief in the youth's potential."

He added that the youth

fund also helps the municipality set the agenda for the coming year and ensures that, "we continue to align our efforts with your evolving needs and aspirations".

Mayoral Youth Development Office manager, Nokuthula Hlophe, said the office will continue to forge and strengthen relations with sister cities to promote youth development.

Funding recipient, Sandile Mhlanga, expressed his appreciation for the cash injection into his business.

"We appreciate what the municipality has done for our businesses. As business owners, we wish the programme well and that it grows to greater heights," Mr Mhlanga said.

Young women in STEM conference

NIYANTA SINGH

A young women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) conference will take place at the Durban ICC on Thursday August 1.

The conference is geared towards Grade 10 and 11 girl pupils from Science2Go and Model C schools.

Nominees will be selected based on their performance in physical or life sciences and their demonstrated leadership

qualities.

The conference line-up includes keynote speakers hailing from diverse industries such as ICT, art/design, engineering and automotive, and the medical sectors who will share insights drawn from their personal journeys, offering guidance to the next generation of STEM professionals.

Interactive workshops and exhibitions will provide hands-on experiences and showcase cutting-edge

advancements in STEM careers.

A highlight of the event will be a panel discussion featuring expert advice on university applications, CV writing, and social media etiquette.

Radio presenter and motivational speaker Keri Miller will be the MC.

For more information about nominations or details of the conference, contact Ayanda Phakathi on ayand@take-note.co.za or 072 014 7409.

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DUT lecturer flies SA flag at culture and tourism seminar in China

DOREEN PREMDEV

Flying the South African flag in China, Durban University of Technology (DUT) lecturer Raeesah Khan recently represented South Africa at a seminar on the integrated development of culture and tourism for developing countries.

Ms Khan, a lecturer at the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at DUT, spent two weeks at the seminar organised by the Guangxi International Business Vocational College and the People's Republic of China and initiated by the Chinese Embassy.

Focused on sharing industry and academic expertise in the development of culture and tourism, the seminar featured participants from 11 countries who were welcomed during a grand opening ceremony attended by the president of the college, Wang Guohang.

Ms Khan said she was honoured to receive confirmation that she had been selected to represent the country after seeing the call that was forwarded to all staff by the faculty research co-ordinator,

Professor Dumsile Hlengwa.

Ms Khan's PhD study, being closely aligned with the seminar, was a huge contributing factor in her selection by the Chinese Embassy, she said.

She said she enjoyed engaging in various activities that took place during the seminar, which consisted of a combination of theory lectures by academic staff and industry professionals, as well as various site visits.

"One of the most memorable experiences was a two-day stay in the Sanjiang County with the ethnic Dong minority people who welcomed delegates with song and dance and their ethnic delicacies.

"I also visited the bustling city of Guangzhou to experience urban tourism. The highlight on my trip was the Canton Tower, the tallest tower in China, which offers breathtaking panoramic views of the sprawling metropolis below," said Ms Khan.

She added that another notable activity she engaged in was visiting the Happy Journey Healthcare Centre, a subsidiary

of the Guangxi Tourism Development Group that offers state-of-the-art frail care for senior citizens at a fraction of the usual cost. This she said demonstrated the positive impact of tourism development on social sustainability.

Ms Khan described her experience during the trip as enriching in terms of the knowledge she had gained, the people she met and the beautiful cities she had the opportunity to visit.

"In line with the decolonisation of the curriculum, I have learned the importance of embracing cultural tourism and leveraging our ethnic cuisines as a significant economic contributor. I hope to collaborate with other departments in our faculty and pursue student-led projects that may benefit the industry in this area," she said.

Ms Khan said her involvement in the seminar has made a significant contribution to her professional development. She added that she will engage in such initiatives in future and is eager to share the knowledge and insights that she has gained during this seminar.



■ DUT lecturer Raeesah Khan is pictured at a seminar at Guangxi International Business Vocational College in China. She said her experience in China was an eye-opener for her and has made a significant contribution to her professional development.

Orient Islamic pupil wins national school quiz

NIYANTA SINGH

Grade 11 pupil Mohammed Sayfullah Khan of Orient Islamic School emerged victorious at the IIE's Varsity College's 9th annual National High Schools Quiz on Saturday at the institution's Durban North campus.

This year's contest, with close to 300 Grade 9 to 11 pupils from across South Africa, saw Mohammed eventually outshine seven finalists, earning him bragging rights as the smartest pupil in the land.

Facing some 300 complex questions in three rounds across six categories – current affairs, history, geography, science and nature, sport, and entertainment – Mohammed demonstrated not only an exceptional grasp of academic material but also a remarkable general knowledge and ability to perform well under pressure.

He walked away with a R10 000 cash prize as well as R10 000 for his school, and a further R5 000 for his proud teacher and coach, Rashida Asmal.

"I made sure to watch Al Jazeera News and *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* to gain important current affairs knowledge. I relied on Wikipedia for my interests in world history, science, and geography. Additionally, I actively sought out trivia questions and quizzes online to enhance my general knowledge in preparation for the quiz," said Mohammed.

He plans on saving his winnings until he identifies a good cause to spend it on.

Grade 10 pupil Blessing Nyatsanza from Walmer High School in Port Elizabeth took second place honours. He was excited to fly on a plane for the first time, visit Durban, and experience his first hotel stay, in addition to his academic success.

Grade 11 pupil Johara Naidoo from Ashton International College in Ballito claimed the third spot.

All finalists, including the top three, received Samsung tablets and R2 500.

"The response from schools across the country to this year's quiz has been phenomenal. The IIE's Varsity College National High Schools Quiz has achieved great success, with intense and exhilarating rounds culminating in the selection of only eight exceptional individuals. This initiative not only encourages learners to improve their general knowledge skills, which boosts confidence and improves academic performance but also ensures more productive and valuable screen time. It was an inspiring display of talent and determination, reminding us once again of the incredible potential of the nation's youth," said IIE's Varsity College head of communications, Sarnelia Mandapalli.



■ Grade 11 pupil Mohammed Sayfullah Khan of Orient Islamic School who scooped first place, left, with Grade 10 pupil Blessing Nyatsanza from Walmer High School in Port Elizabeth, who took second place honours, and Grade 11 pupil Johara Naidoo from Ashton International College in Ballito, who claimed the third spot.



■ Grade 11 pupil Mohammed Sayfullah Khan of Orient Islamic School who scooped first place.

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Composer goes back to musical roots

DOREEN PREMDEV

Renowned South African pianist and composer Sibusiso Mashiloane embarks on a journey to his artistic musical roots with a special *Izibongo* concert in Durban.

The performance will take place on Wednesday July 31 at the Centre for Jazz at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). It reunites Mashiloane with the very band that brought his critically acclaimed album, *Izibongo*, to life.

Mashiloane is recognised as an authority on South African music, specifically jazz. He is a prolific artist and has released an album every year since 2016, garnering numerous awards and nominations.

His collaborations with top South African musicians span a decade, and his performances have captivated audiences worldwide, including getting the recent honour to compose a suite titled *Isigqi* for Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra.

Mashiloane will also be performing at the upcoming prestigious Joy of Jazz festival

in September 2024. He said 2024 has been a landmark year for him, with the completion of his PhD research and a prestigious Humanities and Social Sciences award win for his album *Music From My People*.

Izibongo, which translates to "praises" in Zulu, has enjoyed a global success and Mashiloane says he is eager to share his music with the Durban community who have nurtured him throughout his career.

"Durban has always been a source of immense support," he said. "This concert is a chance to express my deepest gratitude and share the music of *Izibongo* with the people who have inspired me."

Izibongo is a powerful exploration that seamlessly blends traditional South African instruments with piano, saxophone, double bass, percussion, and drums.

Drawing on his cultural roots and the wisdom of his ancestors, Mashiloane creates a tapestry of sound that celebrates African musical traditions. The album's title is derived from the instructive Bantu verb "bonga," which

signifies giving thanks, Mashiloane said.

Mashiloane's band features Sisonke Xonti on tenor saxophone, Kagiso Ramela on alto saxophone, Dalisu Ndlazi on double bass, Tlale Makhene on percussion, and Siphelelo Mazibuko on drums.

"My compositional choices for *Izibongo* were informed by traditional teachings that emphasise the use of music to convey symbolic and cultural meanings. The extended musical pieces, such as the 15-minute *Ntate Mashiloane*, eschew traditional genres and embrace a 'prayer mode' of improvisation, filled with honest and transcendent spiritual experiences. *Izibongo* is a testament to the power of music as a generational, shared experience, fostering a sense of communication, belonging, and appreciation for the geographical essence of music," Mashiloane said.

The performance will be on Wednesday July 31 at the Centre for Jazz and Popular Music at UKZN. Tickets cost R120 or R90 for pensioners, and R60 for students.

Book through Webtickets.



■ Composer and pianist Sibusiso Mashiloane will perform *Izibongo*, which is a celebration of his gratitude and musical roots. The concert will be held at UKZN on Wednesday July 31.



■ The Kearsney College choir in performance in Germany.

Kearsney College choir performs across Europe

NIYANTA SINGH

The Kearsney College choir, renowned globally for its musical prowess, is currently enchanting audiences throughout Europe with their electrifying performances. Embarking on a tour that has taken them to prestigious venues in Germany and Spain, these talented young voices are leaving a lasting impression wherever they go.

Recently, the choir captivated a sold-out audience at Hamburg's iconic Elbe Philharmonic Hall, where their performance earned them standing ovations and enthusiastic applause.

Dr Horst Köhler, former President of Germany and patron

of the choir in his country, expressed admiration for their superb performance.

From Lüneburg to Bremen, Hagen to Hannover, the choir has graced renowned concert halls, delivering a repertoire that spans classical pieces to modern interpretations, including notable works like ABBA's *Does Your Mother Know?* Their versatility shines through in their ability to seamlessly blend genres and languages, with performances ranging from poignant reflections on global issues to celebratory expressions of cultural heritage.

Currently, the choir is in Spain, participating in the prestigious Golden Voices of Barcelona competition. This international

event showcases their talent in categories such as Youth Choirs of Equal Voices and Folklore, allowing them to shine amidst the stunning backdrop of Barcelona's architectural wonders, including the famed Sagrada Familia.

Under the direction of Bernard Krüger, the choir's programme includes new compositions inspired by the wisdom of Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko, alongside heartfelt interpretations of global hits and indigenous melodies. Their dedication to musical excellence and cultural exchange continues to earn them accolades, adding to their impressive collection of 15 gold and seven silver medals from the World Choir Games.

Book review

Crooked Seeds
Karen Jennings
Karavan Press
Review: Karen Watkins

We learn from an early age to be considerate to people with disabilities, however, when it comes to the heroine in this novel, it's challenging.

Deidre van Deventer is a revolting character: a middle-aged, single, childless, bitter woman. She uses people wherever she can: a cigarette here, a drink or two there, even the kindness of her neighbour.

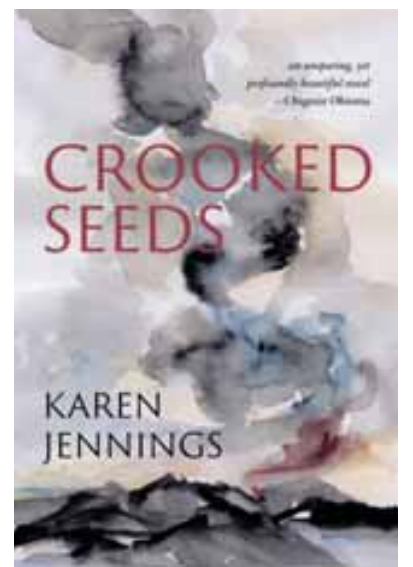
The story begins with Deidre waking up to crouch over a mixing bowl by her bed to pee. The action is painful because she only has one leg. She is aware of the smell of her three-day-old underwear. She doesn't care. All she wants is to quench her thirst. She's so thirsty she cannot fit her false teeth into her dry mouth.

The story is set in the near future and Cape Town is living under drought conditions. This is possibly why Deidre is not washing and being selfish about using money sent by her estranged daughter, not for water but for "takeaways and booze".

With no water in her dilapidated apartment, she drinks a jar of pickle brine and eats some dangerously old Vienna sausages.

Surrounded by the pain of others, her cry is: "What about me?" When challenged about her behaviour – "It's just the way I am" – and asked why she doesn't help others, her response is: "Why would I help anyone else? I'm the one that needs help. Me. Look at me. I'm the one!"

In a sense she is right.



Deidre is, in her own words, a "cripple", having lost one leg in an explosion when she was 18. How that happened is unclear.

Author Karen Jennings expertly releases information as she delves into a sub-plot where Deidre receives a call from the police. The remains of several small bodies have been unearthed from her family's former home, after decades underground.

Her other characters are fabulous. Deidre's mother, Trudy, worships Ross, the prodigal son of the family, "a dickhead" in Deidre's estimation.

Without giving away too much, this is not a feel-good book but it did make me feel good. The story does have very dark humour that surfaces with perfect timing.

It is no wonder that Jennings was deservedly long-listed for the Booker prize for *The Island* in 2021. She is a master at writing with compassion and honesty about broken people. And this book is highly recommended.

■ Max Kauffman on her way to victory at Dairy Beach.

PICTURES: DAVE LINDEMANN



Intense competition in gromsearch at Dairy Beach

NIYANTA SINGH

In a thrilling showcase of youthful talent and skill, Maxine Kauffman of Westbrook and Nate Tayler from Balito emerged as champions in the Premier under-16 division of the Rip Curl Grom-Search Dairy Beach.

The event, organised by Surfing South Africa, drew intense competition under challenging surf conditions at Dairy Beach last weekend.

"I'm so happy to have taken the win with my friends and family there to enjoy it with me," said Maxine during the awards ceremony.

The competition showcased promising talent across various age groups.

Ella van der Made triumphed in the under-12 girls' division, showcasing her

pro prowess against competitors like Brin Jarvis.

In the under-12 boys' category, Levi Vosloo secured a narrow victory over Tyler Balfour by a mere 0.04 of a point.

Meanwhile, Leah Lepront and Ben Esterhuysen stood out in the under-14 divisions.

Looking forward, the Rip Curl GromSearch series will culminate at Seal Point in Cape St Francis from September 20 to 22. This final event promises to be a test of endurance and skill, with top performers vying for coveted

spots in the Rip Curl Grom-Search International Finals in Indonesia.

Maxine and Nate have earned not only accolades but also an entry into the prestigious international finals and a travel voucher for their journey.

■ Anne Wright, vice-president of Surfing South Africa, with all the division winners from the Rip Curl GromSearch Dairy Beach.



Children's and young adult reads

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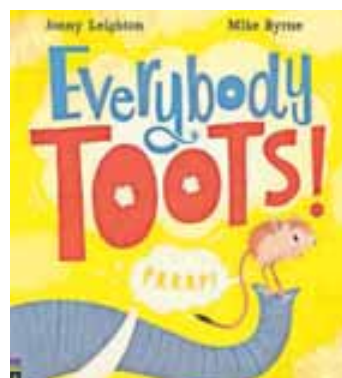
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Reviews: Lauren O'Connor-May
Everybody Toots
 Jonny Leighton, Illustrated by Mike Byrne
 Buster Books

I immediately knew that this book would be a hit in our family because as I've said before, children love stinky stories.

There are no moral lessons or educational leanings – perhaps aside from cultivating a love for reading – in this purely for-fun book but I challenge even the adults who read it not to giggle.

In the simple story, a little jerboa accidentally lets one rip. Mortified, the rodent apologises to the wilds at large but the elephant steps in and tells him that, basically, everybody poeps and then proceeds to list some hilarious, rhyming examples.

Spot it! World Atlas
 Megan McKean
 Hardie Grant

This educational board book attracted the interest of several of my children. My 10-year-old



daughter liked the map captions and sidebar fact boxes while my three-year-old liked the spot-it game and identifying the different pictures.

The book is a graphic introduction to geography for young readers. It cleverly uses images to teach about countries, borders, exports, landmarks and culture.

I thought this book's use of graphics was genius and was very happy to add it to the family collection.

Unicorn Boy
 Dave Roman
 Hodder

Billed as appropriate for ages 6-9, this book was very popular among my children and their friends. My 10-year-old daughter took it to school and reported that it had generated a lot of interest and is now in borrowing rotation in her class.

Planned as the first of a series, the graphic novel tells the story of a shy boy who suddenly grows a magical unicorn horn,

which he uses to help people.

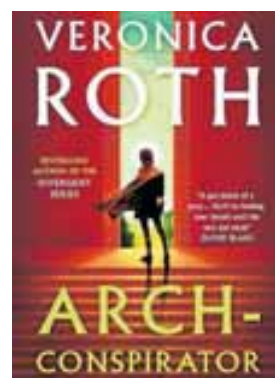
Fundamentally, the short story is about tolerance and reaching out to others.

Arch-conspirator
 Veronica Roth
 Titan Books

I was excited to see this book in the review catalogue because it combines two of my favourite genres, mythology and post-apocalyptic speculative fiction.

This book is a short and bleak young adult retelling of the tragic Antigone. In the original story Antigone, who is born of incest, incurs the wrath of her uncle, who killed her father, by defying his orders and trying to bury her murdered brother.

In this retelling, Antigone is cursed not by incest but by natural birth in a radioactive world surviving through genetic manipulation. Roth is the author of the *Divergent* series and if you are familiar with her work, you will know that she writes worlds that are stark and grim. This



book is in the same vein.

Our Cursed Love
 Julie Abe
 Pan MacMillan

This is a young adult best friends-to-lovers romantasy about university applicants Remy and Cam who lose each other while on a trip to Japan and spend the rest of the novel trying to reconnect. It is a follow-up to *The Charmed List* by the same author.

The story is charming but didn't attract my teens because: "I don't like fantasy", "It's boring" or "It took too long for the story to start".

I finished the book but wouldn't rate it among my favourites.

This is one of the few books where I preferred the chemistry between the main characters and the other corners of the love quadrangle, so I was somewhat disappointed when the friends did become lovers – but I suspect my opinion will be singular.

■ Rising cricket star Tristan Luus plans to prove his worth in the 2024/2025 season.



Luus looks to be one of SA's best bowlers

DOREEN PREMDEV

Rising cricket star Tristan Luus plans to prove his worth in the 2024/2025 season.

Luus made his professional debut for the Hollywoodbets Dolphins last season as a South African under-19 seamer.

He has received his first contract with the Dolphins and has big plans for the upcoming cricket season.

Luus was one of the stand-out players in the SA under-19 side's run to the semi-finals at the ICC Under 19 World Cup this year. His rise has been an impressive one culminating in a professional debut for the Dolphins.

Dolphins coach Imraan Khan said in his first match for the Dolphins, Luus took 2/30 against the Tuskers in the CSA T20 Challenge. He then followed that up with 1/25 against the same Tuskers side in the return match at Hollywoodbets Kingsmead Stadium.

In the current off season, Luus along with fellow Dolphins star Andile Simelane are part of the Cricket South Africa (CSA) Emerging Academy. This is another big step for Luus, 18, who continues to grow in stature.

"I'm incredibly grateful to have signed my first professional contract with the Dolphins," Luus said.

"Not just to sign a contract at such a young age, but to sign a contract with such a prestigious team like the Dolphins is a dream come true. This is an exciting step for me and it's all part of a bigger plan for me and my career."

After getting a taste of professional cricket in the 2023/2024 season, Luus is hoping to get a big chunk of the action when the Dolphins begin their new season later this year.

He said he was looking forward to the new season and making great memories on and off the field. He is especially excited to make his debut in both four-day cricket and 50-over cricket.

Luus has a busy off season with the Emerging Academy and then he heads into the pre-season with the Dolphins. He added that he wants to be playing as much cricket as possible as he continues to build his career.

"I want to gain a better understanding of my own game next season, it will help me achieve my bigger goals. Making my four-day and 50-over debuts

is also a big goal for me for the upcoming season. I want to be one of the best bowlers in South Africa. I know it's a big goal, but I am going to work hard to get there," said Luus.

Khan said he is excited to see what Luus can achieve going forward.

"Tristan is an exciting young talent. He has the potential to bowl real quick and is capable with the bat as well," Khan said.

"He's got the right mindset and is always eager to learn. He has fit in really well into the environment. We're excited to see how he progresses in his first full season with us here at the Dolphins."

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Cricket CEO, Heinrich Strydom said Luus has the makings of an exceptional cricket player.

"We've seen the impact that Tristan can have at an international level and we're looking forward to his contributions to the Dolphins next season and beyond," Strydom said.

"It's important for us at the Dolphins to get players that have the right attributes on and off the field and we believe Tristan fits into the Dolphins mould."

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■ Comrades race and operations manager, Ann Ashworth has resigned.

Comrades race and operations manager resigns

NIYANTA SINGH

The Comrades Marathon Association (CMA) has been rocked by the unexpected resignation of its race and operations manager, Ann Ashworth.

The announcement has sent shockwaves through the road running community.

Ashworth's resignation was publicly announced on her Facebook page on Thursday, prompting a flood of comments and reactions from her followers.

"My time at the CMA has come to an end. The Board feels that I lack the necessary leadership and race management abilities to continue to serve as the Race and Operations Manager," wrote Ashworth.

She said the Board had initially extended her contract but later decided to revoke the offer. She mentioned that she had previously indicated her desire not to remain in her position beyond June 30.

Ashworth shared her perspective on the situation, stating, "I had offered to resign on at least three occasions, but this offer was never accepted. I was hesitant to stay on at the CMA given what was happening in the office and behind closed doors. I was convinced to sign my offer of extension after discussing matters with my staff and Tier 1 sponsors who wished me to remain in my position."

Despite her dedication and hard work, she said, she had expressed a sense of disillusionment.

"Regardless, and in spite of all my sacrifices and the dedication I have shown to the race for yet another year, I have once again been humbled. I have taken myself to the brink, worked myself to the bone; and I have no medal to show for it. That's life," she said.

The Provincial Athletics governing body, KwaZulu-Natal Athletics (KZNA), and the CMA confirmed Ashworth's resignation.

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