

MENINGITIS VACCINE TEST

Aid agencies say Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali will pioneer testing of a new vaccine against the deadliest form of meningitis. The World Health Organisation said yesterday about 10 000 health workers in Burkina Faso would give 12m people the vaccine by the end of 2010. – Sapa-AP



PALIN, KATE GO CAMPING

Reality TV mum Kate Gosselin and her eight kids appeared on Sarah Palin's Alaska on a camping trip with the politician and family. "How would you like to go camping with Kate and her kids?" Sarah Palin asks her daughter, Piper, at the start of the latest episode. – Sapa-AP

ARVs are killing funeral parlours

Zinhle Mapumulo

ANTIRETROVIRAL drugs are killing small funeral businesses in South Africa.

The number of people succumbing to Aids-related illnesses has declined in recent times owing to the growing use of ARV treatments.

It is estimated that in the past two years about 20% of the funeral parlours that were operating during the peak of the pandemic in this country in 2005 have closed down. The number of people who died of HIV/Aids related illnesses in 2006 was 607 000, while last year it dramatically decreased by half to 310 000.

Though the South African Funeral Practitioners Association (Safpa) would not link the decline in business to the growing use of ARVs, it admits that the funeral industry has been hit by bad times.

"A number of businesses have closed down but I cannot say it is because of the ARV programme. There could be a number of reasons including financial problems and a lack of delivering quality service," said Safpa secretary general Makhaya Mguda.

However, owners of two of the biggest funeral parlours in KwaZulu-Natal, Celani and Central differed with Mguda. They said availability of ARV drugs in the public sector was the reason why most of their counterparts had to close down.

Siyabonga Dumisa, managing director for Celani Funeral Services, said if things continued this way small funeral parlours would not survive.

"Business has been very slow in the past few years. I strongly believe that putting more people on ARVs is causing this decline. We all know that once a person starts taking treatment they get better and that equals to living longer," he said.

Dumisa said, the Celani Funeral Services, which has six branches, was burying about 30 people a week in 2006.

But now, he says, the Umlazi branch, which was the busiest, buries fewer than four a week.

Central echoed the same sentiments, only for them it was worse because they were forced to close two branches in the province as they were operating at a loss.

"I would be lying if I said the ARV programme has not affected us. People are no longer dying and that means that we are losing money," said Arnold Surayya, a funeral parlour owner.

South Africa has the largest ARV programme in the world with more than 1.2m people accessing ARV drugs.

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Molefe tipped to be Transnet CEO

Speculations rife that Mafika and Don Mkhwanazi will be appointed to the board

Xolani Mbanjwa and Thokozani Mtshali

FORMER Public Investment Corporation (PIC) chief executive officer Brian Molefe is set to take over as Transnet boss.

Molefe resigned as CEO of the PIC in March this year after a seven year stint at the state-owned investment arm, the largest financial management company in the country, responsible for the management of about R850bn.

The Department of Public Enterprises is expected to announce the Transnet board tomorrow.

Those expected to be appointed to the board include Mafika Mkhwanazi, a member of the state-owned enterprises review committee and Don Mkhwanazi, a staunch ally of President Jacob Zuma. Others are Ellen Tshabalala, Zuma's advisor on black economic empowerment and Mike Fannuchi, an economic consultant.

The New Age has it on good authority that Molefe will be appointed CEO by the board.

Molefe was among the first of former Finance Minister Trevor Manuel's recruits to Treasury in 1996 as deputy director-general of liability management.

At the time, he was working for First National Bank.

Molefe was not a favourite to some within the tripartite alliance as he was perceived to be too close to former President Thabo Mbeki.

Molefe's departure from the PIC was welcomed by some in the South African Communist Party, Cosatu and the ANC.

His detractors had accused him of funding BEE deals which involved people in Mbeki's inner circle, a charge he denied.

One of the deals which were questioned by his opponents was the Elephant consortium and Telkom empowerment deal which involved former ruling party member Smuts



WAITING IN THE WINGS: Brian Molefe is likely to be announced as the new CEO of state-owned Transnet.

Picture: GALLO IMAGES

Ngonyama now a Cope leader.

While some had written Molefe off after President Jacob Zuma was inaugurated last year, others said Molefe, with his experience, still had a lot to offer.

Public Enterprises spokesperson Ayanda Shezi said it was too early to

speculate on the Transnet boss.

"We are in the process of appointing a board and chairperson for Transnet. This will be finalised soon and the necessary announcements will be made," said Shezi.

The Board would then undertake the recruitment process for a CEO,

and make the necessary recommendations to the minister. It's therefore premature at this stage to be speculating on the candidate for CEO," said Shezi.

Contacted for comment, Molefe said: "I haven't been informed. I don't know anything about it."



TORCHED: Cars were set alight during taxi violence on Tsamaya Road in Mamelodi.

Picture: FATI MOALLUSI

Taxi violence erupts in Mamelodi

Abram Mashego

THREE suspects were arrested yesterday in Mamelodi for setting fire to two vehicles after route tensions over routes between rival taxi operators, flared.

Gauteng police spokesperson Captain Pinky Tshwane said the suspects, aged between 35 and 37, were pointed out by one of the drivers whose vehicle was burned.

"We also recovered two unlicensed firearms with their serial numbers filled off from two of the suspects. They are both members of

Mamelodi taxi organisations and will appear before the magistrate on charges of malicious damage to property and possession of unlicensed firearm," she said.

Tshwane said the three allegedly set alight a Toyota Venture and a Conquest believed to be carrying passengers. She said the Tshwane Metro police, members of community safety and the police were monitoring the situation.

The situation remained tense yesterday afternoon. A Toyota Quantum, which was loading passengers in Deneboom had its tyres punctured by angry taxi operators who

ordered that none should load passengers. This was despite police promises to monitor the situation.

One of the taxi drivers, who did not want to be named, said that they were sick and tired of mini taxis, also known as four plus one, operating in the area.

Tshwane community safety spokesperson Wiliam Baloyi complained about an illegal taxi operation that is taking away their business in the area.

He said last week an illegal taxi operator was fined for operating 17 taxis in the area.

Suicide watch for parents of matrics

Lesego Masemola

"I HAD no idea. There were no signs. There was no note."

That is how Philip "Bhabha" Mkhlasibe remembers the death of his son, who hanged himself five years ago. He describes the pain as "unbearable".

Today he warns that in a few weeks from now, with the release of annual matric results around the corner, other parents could soon find themselves in a similar situation, if they miss the signs like he did.

To prevent this he has dedicated his life to Sizwe Xolani, a non-governmental organisation, named after his son, to raise awareness about suicide through workshops and counselling at schools and churches. "You (the parent) assume you know your kids but you don't. That is why I was shocked when it happened to me," he said.

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (Sadag) said 9% of all teen deaths were caused by suicide.

The fastest growing age group for suicides is young people under 35, specifically females between 15 and 19 years.

Sadag's research points out that although more females attempt suicide, more males succeed. This is due to the more violent methods males select. Girls are more likely to overdose on medication, or take chemicals, whereas boys often use firearms or hang themselves.

Days after the release of the annual matric results teen suicides make headlines. These are matric pupils that did not see their names in the newspaper, failed matric completely or partially, said Nadia Louw, an education psychologist based at Bryanston High School.

"The release of results is a stressful time. They (the students) are not entirely sure of how they will do, unsure of their future and they usually can't see any way forward without passing matric because they have no plan B," she said.

She said matrics needed to know that

Suicide facts

There is a major link between depression and suicide.

- **Key signs of depression:**
 - Loss of interest in things you like to do;
 - Sadness that won't go away;
 - Irritability or feeling angry a lot.
- **Other signs include:**
 - Thinking of dying or killing yourself;
 - Having trouble paying attention;
 - Missing a lot of school/work;
 - Eating too much or too little;
- **What causes suicide?**
 - Depression;
 - Other mental illnesses;
 - Alcohol use;
 - Other drug use.

Sadag toll free suicide crisis line 0800567567 or 0112626396 or sms 31393

they can have a second chance by rewriting or follow other paths. Louw agrees that parents have to be more supportive of their children.

"Failing matric does not make you a bad parent and parents need to let their children know this," she said.

Former school teacher turned counsellor Jenine Shamos said it should be understood that teen suicide is not something that just happens.

"It's a process. You do not wake up one day and say you want to kill yourself. From the onset, matric is stressful and too much emphasis is put on passing it," she said. She said teachers could help identifying troubled and stressed learners in class.

She said teachers should take note of pupils that no longer perform well in class, do not do homework and are withdrawn. After losing his son, Mkhlasibe says it was only after he sought counselling at Sadag that he was able to cope and started recognising signs that he had missed before.

After the funeral, Mkhlasibe found out that his son had a secret life: he had just broken up with his girlfriend and had impregnated another woman. The experts advise parents to be with their children on the day matric results are released and support them no matter what results.

Shilowa mocks 'kangaroo court'

Xolani Mbanjwa

COPE could be heading for yet another court battle after the party's deputy president Mkhazima Shilowa consulted his lawyers yesterday in a bid to quash the party's president Mosiuoa Lekota's attempts to haul him before a disciplinary hearing.

Shilowa told The New Age that he had received a letter from the party informing him to present himself at a disciplinary hearing next week, just days before the party's long-awaited elective congress begins on December 15.

Lekota has accused Shilowa of embezzling the party's parliamentary funds.

Shilowa vowed that he would

not attend the disciplinary hearing, calling it a "kangaroo court".

Should he choose to go to court, it would be the sixth court case between him and Lekota since the party's botched inaugural congress in May this year.

Shilowa said he wrote a letter to the party's acting general secretary Deidre Carter "telling her that the disciplinary hearing must not take place until there's been a Congress National Committee meeting."

"The biggest and best constituted (disciplinary hearing) is the national congress so if Terror (Lekota) has a case to place before the membership. He must take that case and place it before the congress."

NEWS SHORTS



Opposition criticises state on Ivory Coast

OPPOSITION parties yesterday criticised the government for not recognising Alassane Ouattara's victory in presidential elections in the Ivory Coast last week.

"The DA must register our disappointment with the Zuma administration's studied reticence on the matter of this disputed election," DA spokesman Kenneth Mubu said. – Sapa

Warning on libido pills

DISTRIBUTORS of herbal medicines for low libido deny their drugs contain illegal ingredients. Bang Bang Strongman, Panalt and Staminafit all have active ingredients of prescription medication such as Viagra. – Sapa

Grisly find in dam

A SUITCASE containing a woman's mutilated body had been found floating in Nigel Dam, Gauteng police said. The woman had not been identified. No arrests had been made yet and police were investigating. – Sapa

Arrests after robbery

EIGHT men were arrested minutes after an armed robbery at Orient supermarket in Lenasia South yesterday, police said. Captain Katlego Mogale said the suspects were arrested at the corner of K53 and Boundary roads, along the Golden Highway. – Sapa

MEC against shooting

KWAZULU-NATAL'S acting safety MEC Dr Spongiseni Dhlomo yesterday condemned people who fired shots during a meeting where IFP national chairwoman Zanele Magwaza-Msibi was scheduled to speak. – Sapa