

The Independent Voice of the Free State!

Pelonomi Tertiary Hospital Received New Modernised lifts

'NOT IN MY NAME": PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA LEADS POWERFUL CALL FOR MEN TO STAND UP AGAINST GBV IN THE FREE STATE



Pictured: President Cyril Ramaphosa on stage with Premier Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae and MEC Toto Makume, MEC Zanele Sifuba

His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa President of the Republic of South Africa

By Lebohang Maloka

Under the bright Bloemfontein sun and the watchful eyes of thousands gathered at Lemo Green Park, President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered one of his most urgent and heartfelt addresses of the year-calling men across South Africa to rise, lead, and help end the country's GBVF pandemic.

The "Not in My Name" Provincial Men's Indaba arrived at a deeply symbolic moment as South Africa commemorates 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children, a global and national campaign that runs annually from 25 November to 10 December. Holding this Indaba during the 16 Days was intentional and a clear message that the Free State refuses to only talk about GBVF once a year.

The day began with a powerful milestone: the official opening of the new Sexual Offences Court in Botshabelo. This court represents more than just infrastructure, it is a lifeline for survivors who often wait years for justice. Its opening signalled the province's commitment to faster case processing, specialised victim support, and restoring dignity to those who have endured sexual violence. It set the tone for the entire Indaba: justice can no longer be delayed.

A key voice in the programme was Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi, who delivered a focused and powerful address. She emphasised that the opening of the Botshabelo Sexual Offences Court is not symbolic, it marks a structural shift in how the justice system responds to sexual violence. The Minister highlighted that the court is equipped with specialised prosecutors, trained support staff, and private victim rooms to minimise secondary trauma.

Minister Kubayi further committed her department to strengthening the justice chain by upgrading Victim-Friendly Rooms in SAPS stations, training detectives and court personnel, reducing case backlogs, and expanding Thuthuzela Care Centres across the

province. Her message was firm: justice must not only be done, it must be felt. Every survivor deserves a system that stands with them, not against them.

President Ramaphosa's keynote address called on men - fathers, uncles, brothers, teachers, pastors, and leaders - to take their place at the forefront of the fight against GBVF. He reminded the nation that this responsibility cannot rest on women alone. He applauded Premier Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae for her honesty and courage in confronting the province's painful realities.

The Premier, in her address, presented sobering trends: rape cases remain high, sexual assault fluctuates with no consistent decline, and attempted sexual offences surged in 2025. These figures, paired with the heartbreaking stories of Katleho and Onkarabetse Leeuw, a woman set alight by a former partner, and the rape of a disabled girl in Rouxville, underscored the urgency of the Indaba.

Nationally, the picture remains just as

grim: over 35% of South African women have endured physical or sexual violence, more than 10,000 rapes were reported in just three months of 2024, and nearly 1,000 women were murdered in that same period.

The Indaba echoed this year's 16 Days theme - "Letsema: Men, Women, Boys and Girls working together to end GBVF." Voices from the LGBTQIA+ sector, faith leaders, artists, sports representatives, survivors and the men's sector came together with one message: this fight belongs to all of us.

As Makwane Secondary School's orchestra closed the programme, one truth was made clear: we are no longer bystanders. We are builders of a safer Free State. And with the President's message still echoing, one united declaration rose above all:

"Not in my name. Not in our province. Not in our country."

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0800 222 777

referral.
Free State Social Development
Crisis Line:
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Komiti ya Tshebetso ho tsa Basadi, Batjha, Bana le Batho ba sa Itekanelang e mema ditho tsa setjhaba le mekgatlo ho thonya bonkgetheng ba tshwanelehang bakeng sa ho hirwa ho sebetsa Komishineng ya Tekano ya Bong e le Dikomishenara tse laetsweng ke Molao wa Komishene ya Tekano ya Bong wa 2013. Bakopi/Bathonngwa bohle ba tla koptjwa hore ba tlatse kopo ya inthaneteng, (https://forms.gle/PY6GQQVjZDNsRh1u9) ho websaete ya palamente le/kapa ho romela ka imeili (CGE-Application@parliament.gov.za and PDF Download link) kapa ho di isa ka letsoho mane Parliamentary Visitors Centre, 100 Plein Street, Cape Town City Centre, 8000. Bakopi le bathonngwa bohle ba koptjwa ho romela Nalane ya Thuto le Mesebetsi e felletseng, dikhopi tse nnetefaditsweng (tse sa feteng dikgwedi tse 3) tsa Ditokomane tsa bona tsa Boitsebiso le mangolo a thuto.

Lenane le kgutsufaditsweng la bonkgetheng le Dinalane tsa Thuto le Mesebetsi tsa bona di tla phatlalatswa websaeteng ya Palamente ho dumella maikutlo a ditho tsa setjhaba ho ka tshwaela mabapi le ho tshwaneleha ha bonkgetheng. Ho tsebahatsa dintlha tsa botho tsa bonkgetheng ho ipapisitswe le tlhoko e molaong. Bonkgetheng bohle ba thathamisitsweng ba tla hlahlojwa pele ho mosebetsi ke Setsi sa Tshireletso ya Naha le netefatso ya mangolo a thuto ke Tlhokomelo ya Basebetsi ya Palamente. Dikopo tsohle di tla tsamaellana le Molao wa Tshireletso ya Tlhahisolesedi ya Motho wa 4 wa 2013, le Molao wa Tekano Mosebetsing wa 55 wa 1998.

Mopresidente, ka dikgothaletso tsa Palamente, o tla hira setho ho ba ho Komishene bakeng sa nako e sa feteng dilemo tse hlano. Maloko a Komishene a ka hirwa e le ba nako e tletseng kapa ba nakwana. Batho bafe kapa bafe, bao nako ya bona ya ho sebetsa jwalo ka setho sa Komishene e fedileng, ba ka thonngwa hape bakeng sa nako ya sehla se le seng hape.

Bonkgetheng ba tlameha ho ba baahi ba Afrika Borwa ba tshwanelehang le batho ba tshwanelehang bakeng sa ho hirwa ho Komishene mme e le baemedi ba setjhaba sa Afrika Borwa ka bophara, ba nang le rekoto ya boitlamo ba ho phahamisa tekano ya bong le ho ba le tsebo le boiphihlelo ditabeng tse amanang le sepheo sa Komishene.

Dithonyo di tlameha ho ba le lebitso le felletseng, aterese/aterese ya imeili le dintlha tsa ho iteanya tsa motho kapa mokgatlo o etsang thonyo, kamohelo e saennweng ya thonyo ke mothonngwa ho kenyeletswa le motho ya thontsheng.

Letsatsi la ho kwalwa bakeng sa dikopo ke ka kgitla ya la 01 Hlakola 2026

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LEGAL CORNER

ConCourt Revolutionises Parental Leave: Four Months for All Parents to Share

By Advocate Sephiri Moshodi Executive Director: Justice Equality Foundation

The South African Constitutional Court opened a new chapter in the development of parental rights and employment law on October 3, 2025, with a historic ruling. The Court upheld the unconstitutionality of South Africa's current parental leave policy in Van Wyk and Others v. Minister of Employment and Labour [2025] ZACC 20, concluding that it unjustly discriminated against certain parent groups and perpetuated antiquated gender norms.

The ruling represents a significant change in the direction of a more inclusive and egalitarian view of family life, one that acknowledges that all parents share equal responsibility for providing care, not only mothers.

Prior to the Constitutional Court's decision, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (the BCEA) contained the majority of South Africa's parental leave provisions in sections 25, 25A, 25B, and 25C. These sections were reinforced by comparable provisions in the Unemployment Insurance Act 63 of 2001.

The legislative framework has a strong gender bias. While the "other parent," who was typically a man, was only given ten days of parental leave, birth women were granted four straight months of maternity leave. Only if the adopted child was younger than two years old may adoptive parents take ten weeks of leave; the other adoptive parent could only take ten days. Similar rights were granted to commissioning parents in a surrogacy arrangement: ten weeks for one parent and ten days for the other.

The reasoning behind this approach was that dads and non-birthing parents had only supporting roles in a child's early care, whereas maternity leave was primarily intended to allow birth moms to recuperate physiologically. Despite being widespread in the past, this strategy has grown more at odds with contemporary family structures, constitutional ideals, and the realities of South African homes. Fathers, adoptive parents, commissioning parents, and same-sex couples were consequently left with insufficient leave benefits and minimal legal acknowledgement of their caring obligations.

Court Ruling:

Werner and Ika van Wyk, a married couple, filed the lawsuit. They had decided that since Mrs. van Wyk was self-employed and managed two businesses, Mr. van Wyk would be the primary carer for their newborn. Mr. van Wyk's request for four months of parental leave was turned down by his company since maternity leave was only available to women who had given birth. According to section 25A of the BCEA, the employer informed him that he was only entitled to ten days of leave. Mr. van Wyk's finances and career prospects were severely impacted as a result of having to take a six-month unpaid leave

of absence.

The Van Wyks, with the help of Sonke Gender Justice and the Commission for Gender Equality, contested the BCEA and the UIF Act on the grounds that its provisions unjustly discriminated against adopted children based on their age, gender, and family status. They contended that the statutory regime forced on families a state-approved parenting model that was incompatible with the Constitution and denied them the autonomy to choose who would take on primary caregiving duties.

The High Court concurred, ruling that the contested clauses were unlawful. The Constitutional Court was subsequently asked to confirm the invalidity order. The Court upheld the High Court's conclusions in a majority ruling, concluding that the provisions infringed upon the Constitution's sections 9 (the right to equality) and 10 (the right to human dignity). Although the Court acknowledged that birth mothers have particular physiological demands both before and after childbirth, it concluded that the BCEA's differentiation went much beyond what was required to safeguard those needs. By viewing males as secondary carers and women as natural carers, it reinforced negative stereotypes. Fathers, same-sex partners, and parents who became carers through adoption or surrogacy were all marginalised in the process.

In the end, the Court determined that the distinction between different types of parents did not withstand constitutional scrutiny and that the current framework established an unreasonable hierarchy of parenthood.

The Constitutional Court deferred its ruling of invalidity for 36 months in order to give Parliament time to revise the BCEA and UIF Act, realising that quick reform would necessitate parliamentary involvement. However, the Court introduced temporary remedies that went into force right away to stop prejudice at this time.

All parents (biological, adoptive, or commissioning) are entitled to a total of four months and ten days of consecutive parental leave under this new interim system, which they may divide however they see fit. If both parents have jobs, they can decide to take the leave in any combination that works for them, such as concurrently or consecutively. The leave must be split as equitably as feasible if they are unable to come to a consensus. One parent is entitled to the entire four months and ten days if only one parent works.

Employees who are pregnant are allowed to start their leave up to four weeks before to the anticipated date of delivery, or sooner if medically required. They are also prohibited from working for six weeks following the birth unless they are deemed fit to do so. The total The ruling has immediate and significant ramifications for South African employers. Employers had to assess and, if necessary, revise their employment contracts, workplace regulations, and HR procedures as soon as the interim framework was delivered in order to

parental leave entitlement includes these times.

interim framework was delivered in order to guarantee compliance. The gender-neutral phrase "parental leave" should be used in place of any mention of "maternity leave" and "paternity leave" in corporate policy. It is no longer legal for policies to restrict fathers, partners, or non-birthing parents to 10 days of leave.

Practically speaking, employers must think about how to handle shared parental leave in cases where both parents work, sometimes for separate companies. It will be necessary to create protocols for proving that an employee is eligible as a parent under the Children's Act, preventing abuse, and verifying the distribution of leave. For the interim regime to be implemented consistently and equitably, human resources staff will require clear direction and training.

The ruling immediately expands the rights available to employees. Now, parents are free to choose who will be the primary carer, how long each will take time off, and whether they want to take time off jointly or separately. This adaptability recognises the diversity of contemporary families and the fact that caregiving duties can and need to be divided whichever best promotes the child's welfare.

The interim reading-in of the BCEA provisions takes effect immediately, even though the declaration of invalidity has been stayed for 36 months. Employers are unable to postpone compliance until amended legislation is passed by Parliament. The suspension period is intended to give Parliament the chance to make long-term reforms and unify associated UIF Act provisions, not to postpone implementation.

Beyond its administrative and legal

ramifications, the Van Wyk ruling makes a significant statement about equality, decency, and the essence of contemporary fatherhood. It recognises that providing care is a human function rather than a gendered one, and that the Constitution requires an employment framework that takes this into account.

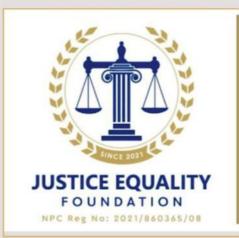
The Court has furthered the goal of transformational constitutionalism—the continuous endeavour to bring South African legislation into line with the principles of inclusion, diversity, and substantive equality—by overturning clauses that favoured biological mothers and disadvantaged other

The choice also denotes a change in culture. It encourages employers, legislators, and the general public to see parenting as a shared, adaptable duty that is not limited by conventional roles or presumptions. This will make it possible for many families to divide childcare more fairly and provide both parents a significant role in their child's early years. It upholds the constitutional idea that all parents or carers, regardless of gender or biological relationship, should actively participate in their children's best interests.

Conclusion

South Africa's conception of parental leave has changed as a result of the Constitutional Court's ruling in Van Wyk v. Minister of Employment and Labour. It substitutes a flexible, inclusive, and equality-based framework for a strict, gendered one. The Court's interim rule takes effect immediately and is legally obligatory, even if Parliament has three years to implement formal legislative amendments. Therefore, employers must take immediate action to ensure that no parent is denied an equitable opportunity to care for their kid and to align their practices with the ruling.

The writer is the Executive Director of Justice Equality Foundation.



Executive Director
Advocate Sephiri Moshodi







MATJHABENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY SEWAGE PROJECTS NEARING COMPLETION

Matjhabeng Local Municipality has been grappling with sewer spillages for a long time and the Department of Water and Sanitation intervened following a Ministerial directive to assist the municipality. The Department worked with the municipality to refurbish and upgrade Thabong and Kutlwanong Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) and the pump stations, in order to address the problem of sewer spillages.

The scope of work regarding the refurbishment projects in Matjhabeng Local Municipality area included pump station refurbishment, sewer unblocking, and wastewater treatment works refurbishment.

Nine (9) wastewater treatment works and forty two (42) non-functional sewer pump stations were refurbished and upgraded, and sewer network lines consisting of approximately 400km outfall lines and chambers with a total distance of 1543 km were unblocked.

Both Thabong and Kutlwanong WWTW's are nearing completion with both projects reaching a progress above 98%. 19 pump station including Bronville North, Bronville South, Rheederspark and Akasia have been completed and handed over to Matjhabeng LM to operate. Although the projects are almost complete, there is a problem of electricity connection to the upgraded projects. The problems are caused by vandalism of electricity infrastructure in Matjhabeng local municipality, as well as with delays of payment by the municipality to Eskom. The municipality is in consultation with Eskom and will hopefully come to an agreement that will see Matjhabeng community benefiting from the refurbished infrastructure.

The two WWTW Thabong and Kutwanong are equipped with generators however the delay in electrical connection could have detrimental delays in terms of getting the plants fully operational. Running Thabong WWTW on generators alone is estimated at a 2 Million monthly cost to the municipality. The municipality has assured the committee that competent plant operators will be hired to run the plant and security has also been ramped up to prevent vandalism especially during the contractors break.

With the contractors break beckoning and set at 15 December 2025 all stakeholders have been working relentlessly to make sure that projects reach practical completion.

By Larry Crisp, Communications Manager, Department of Water and Sanitation Free State







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REFENG KGO ME HOSTS



















Refeng Kgotso Old Age Home held a joyful year-end event made possible by generous support from Empire/OK Superstore in Welkom, which sponsored catering, branding, transport and staff to serve elderly

people.

Special appreciation went to Mrs Carol Davidson for facilitating the sponsorship and delivering an uplifting message honouring the seniors. Guests included local

councillors, community leaders and SAPS representatives.

The event also marked the launch of the Mholo Foundation, which officially adopted the Home as its first social responsibility project.

The celebration highlighted gratitude, dignity and recognition for elderly people who continue to inspire the community.

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For good, together



SAPS Smithfield joins hands with a Faith-Based Organisation in a prayer

By Dan Xangaza

The South African Police Service in Smithfield joined forces with local faith-based organisations in a powerful and heartfelt prayer session along the busy N6 road. The gathering aimed to seek divine intervention and promote road safety, peace, and crime prevention as communities across the country enter the festive season.

a wareness and encourage responsible behaviour from motorists, pedestrians, and area residents. Station management highlighted the importance of working together as one community. Officers expressed their appreciation to the religious fraternity for standing in solidarity with SAPS and supporting the fight

The District Commissioner of Xhariep, Brigadier Mohiti Seretsi, led the prayer session.Brigadier Seretsi welcomed and thanked all members of SAPS, including those from Faith-based organisations, for their presence. Brigadier mentioned that they saw it fit to come to N6 Road to ask pastors to pray for safer Festive Season travelling on the road.He also alluded that they are also praying for Gender Based Violence and Femicide.

High traffic volumes traditionally characterise the Festive period, along with increased social activities and, unfortunately, a rise in road accidents and crime. Recognising these risks, SAPS Smithfield mobilised church leaders, pastors, congregants, community members, and various

stakeholder groups to raise responsible behaviour from motorists, pedestrians, and area residents. Station management highlighted the importance of working together as one community. Officers expressed their appreciation to the religious fraternity for standing in solidarity with SAPS and supporting the fight against crime, drunk driving, reckless behaviour, gender-based violence, and other social issues that often spike during this period. Motorists passing along the N6 also received awareness pamphlets and road safety messages. SAPS officers reminded travellers to obey traffic laws, avoid alcohol and speeding, ensure vehicle roadworthiness, and prioritise passenger safety. As the festive season unfolds, SAPS Smithfield calls upon all road users and residents to prioritise safety, report suspicious activities, and cooperate fully with law enforcement. With faith ,vigilance and collaboration, Smithfield strives to ensure that every family will enter the New Year peacefully and without tragedy.



Women's Boxing Tournament Showcases Rising Talent in Thabong

By Free State Sun Journo

Kgoitsemodimo Boxing Promotion, in partnership with the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, staged the Women in Boxing tournament at the Far East Multipurpose Centre in Thabong on 4 December 2025, with weigh- ins held the following day at the Cancer Training Centre in Welkom.

The event featured seven competitive bouts involving 14 female boxers from across South Africa and neighbouring Botswana. Dr Selepe and Dr Nhlapo provided medical cover, and ring duties were handled by announcer Sipho Mashego.

Key bouts on the card included: - Main event: Junior Lightweight (8 rounds) Raider Muleba (Limpopo) vs Abongile Lubambo (Eastern Cape) for the Free State title. - Main supporting bout: Mini Flyweight (6 rounds) — Emma Mohono (Free State) vs Zanele Masilela (Mpumalanga). - Junior Bantam (4 rounds) Lerato Malefane (Free State) vs Sonela Mbombo (Cape Town). - Junior Lightweight (4 rounds) - Dorcus Thabologo (Botswana) vs Thembesile Thwala (Free State). - Junior Flyweight (4 rounds) - Jennifer Sechi (Botswana) vs Olwethu Mkhathala (Cape Town). - Flyweight (6 rounds) — Leani Jansen van Vuuren (Gauteng) vs Asanda Mkhwanazi (KwaZulu- Natal). - Flyweight (4 rounds) Likho Nxele (Cape Town) vs Rethabile Tshepe (Klerksdorp).

Edward Saunderson, president of the Free State Sports Confederation, praised organisers, the Department of Sport, Boxing South Africa and other partners for advancing women's boxing in the province. He urged increased investment from the private sector, improved retention of local talent and stronger development pathways so the Free State can produce national and international champions. Saunderson also called for greater community support for female athletes and appealed to men to protect women and children, noting the tournament took place during the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence.

Ms Zola Thamae, a tournament spokesperson, emphasised the need for proper equipment, disciplined coaching and reliable management structures to support the growth of women's boxing. Organisers said the event aims to raise the sport's profile and encourage more women to enter the ring across the province.

















Diagnosis and treatment of urinary tract

Diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Vaginitis and vulvitis management

Management of perimenopausal and

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

Bone and cardiovascular health support

INFECTION & STI MANAGEMENT

infections (UTIs)

HPV vaccination

MENOPAUSE & HORMONAL HEALTH

postmenopausal symptoms

PELVIC & UROLOGICAL GYNAECOLOGY

ONCOLOGY & SPECIALIZED CARE

cancer screening

OTHER SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

reproductive rights)

Pelvic floor dysfunction evaluation

Urinary incontinence management

Endometriosis and adenomyosis care

Chronic pelvic pain evaluation and treatment

Cervical, ovarian, endometrial, and vulvar

Pre-cancerous lesion management (LEEP,

Referral for gynaecological oncology treatment

Genetic counselling for inherited cancer risk

Psychosocial support for infertility, pregr loss, or gynaecologic illness

Health education (maternal health, safe sex,

OBSTETRIC SERVICES (PREGNANCY & CHILDBITH)

ANTENATAL & PREVENTIVE CARE

- Routine antenatal check-ups (blood pressure, weight, fundal height)
- Blood tests and urine tests (anaemia, infections, blood group, glucose)
- Ultrasound scans: dating scan, nuchal translucency, anomaly scan, growth scan
- Foetal monitoring (NST non-stress test, CTG cardiotocography)
- Maternal vaccinations (tetanus, influenza
- Nutritional counselling and supplementation
- (iron, folic acid, calcium) Genetic counselling and testing

LABOUR & DELIVERY

- Normal vaginal delivery
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- Caesarean section (elective and emergency) Pain management in labour (epidural,
- Induction and augmentation of labour



HIGH-RISK PREGNANCY MANAGEMENT

- Pre-eclampsia/eclampsia monitoring
- Gestational diabetes management
- Multiple pregnancies (twins, triplets) Cardiac or medical conditions in pregnancy
- Rh incompatibility and immunoglobulin administration

POSTNATAL CARE

- Immediate postpartum care (bleeding control, uterine involution)
- Lactation support and breastfeeding counselling
- Family planning counselling
- Postpartum depression screening and support

OTHER OBSTETRIC SERVICES

- Management of miscarriage, threatened miscarriage, or ectopic pregnancy
- Stillbirth and neonatal loss support Placental complications management (previa,
- Foetal growth restriction management Preterm birth prevention and management
- Can Ne

GYNAECOLOGICAL SERVICES (WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH)

Routine pelvic exams

PREVENTIVE & SCREENING SERVICES

- Pap smear / cervical cancer screening HPV testing
- Breast examination and breast cancer
- Bone health screening (osteoporosis in postmenopausal women)

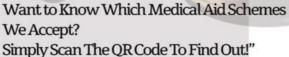
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & FERTILITY

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SPORT Bring Back the Smile Charity Run Raises Funds and Community Spirit



By Free State Sun Journo

Welkom Runners held their second annual Bring Back the Smile 5km charity run on Saturday at Virgin Active, raising funds and awareness for local causes while strengthening community ties.

The event brought together runners, volunteers and sponsors to support vulnerable groups and promote social responsibility. Organiser and runner Nkhetheni Masupa said the

run "brings diverse people together for a common goal, creating meaningful impact beyond just monetary contributions."

Organisers thanked event partners and sponsors, including Masupatsela

Pharmacy, Mbobo Legacy, Virgin Active Welkom and the Free State Sun newspaper, and encouraged continued community support and participation in future initiatives. Contributions toward the project are still welcome.





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