

City fights to stop meeting chaos

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Fewer budget forums each day will allow for boosted security – Mettler

FOLLOWING continuous disruptions and even violent attacks on councillors at public participation meetings last week, the municipality has revised its schedule to have fewer meetings and added security.

City manager Johann Mettler said the revised schedule for public meetings to discuss the metro's plans for the upcoming financial year now allows for only two meetings a day as opposed to up to five taking place simultaneously.

This is to ensure there is adequate municipal security deployed to the venues following a spate of disruptions last week. At least four meetings were disrupted. They were at the Babs Madlakane Hall and Allanridge Hall in Uitenhage as well as the Motherwell and Colchester meetings.

The Colchester meeting on Thursday

became so volatile that the vehicles of councillors and municipal officials were stoned and petrol-bombed while they were prevented from leaving the hall.

Asked about the intelligence networks on the ground and if they had established who was behind the disruptions, Mettler said: "I am not James Bond."

"It is very difficult to speculate because it is not clear why these meetings are disrupted. It really is very difficult to say as a matter of who and what is the reason behind it."

"[Previously] we have received information that there might be disruptions to some of the IDP meetings but we could not cancel those meetings."

"Based on that we are currently rearranging our schedule so that we don't have more than two meetings so that we can deploy security to those meetings."

Human settlements portfolio head Nqaba Bhanga said he believed the disruptions

were orchestrated by the ANC in the Bay.

"It's very clear that it is the ANC who is causing these disruptions because everybody who goes there is wearing ANC T-shirts, some leaders who are there are branch leaders of the ANC that we know and ANC youth league leaders."

"The proof is very clear, the photos of ANC people, it's very clear that it is an organised ANC issue because they have lost the motion of no confidence now they are trying to destabilise," Bhanga said.

The motion against mayor Athol Trollip was not debated or voted on in council as the last two special council sittings were adjourned when they became chaotic.

Bhanga said the ANC needed to accept that it was not governing the city.

"They are trying to do everything to destabilise and break the city down," he said.

"We do not need to investigate, we have to look and see black, green and gold in a

T-shirt and a doek – the ANC just needs to man up and take decisions," Bhanga said.

He said the disruptions at the meetings were orchestrated by the same people who were encouraging people to occupy vacant municipal land.

Bhanga claimed the residents were encouraged by both the EFF and the ANC.

Meanwhile, on Friday the Inqzwa Hill Local Municipality mayor, Patrick Mdingi, was arrested on contempt of court charges after the municipality failed to provide emergency shelter for residents who had been evicted.

The courts had earlier ruled that the 150 residents from Lusikisiki be given shelter within 72 hours, but the municipality failed to uphold the order.

After a lengthy battle to vary the ruling, the Grahamstown High Court dismissed the application.

Mettler said the judgment did not have

any bearing on the Bay municipality.

"It sounds to me as if there were evictions, they were contested and the court said the evictions were unlawful and the municipality was ordered by the court to provide shelter and because the municipality failed the mayor was held responsible."

"If we were in a similar position, we would have to adhere to the court order; it is not a general rule," Mettler said.

Mettler said the municipality was demolishing structures erected on municipal land rather than evicting residents.

EFF leader Zilindile Vena refuted the claims.

"They can't attribute the disruptions in the IDP meetings or the issue of evictions to the EFF," Vena said.

"There has always been a land invasions problem in Nelson Mandela Bay but now Bhanga is realising that they will not be able to identify land for people as per the

council decision of January. Bhanga knows that they will not be able to reach the deadline we gave them and now they are targeting weak people who can't defend themselves because they are not employed.

"We have said that if they believe the EFF is behind any of this they can take us to court," Vena said.

ANC provincial spokesman Gift Ngqondi said: "The ANC has never taken a decision to say the IDP meetings must be disrupted – the meetings are disrupted by people who are unhappy."

Ngqondi said the DA should consider convening ward-based meetings rather than cluster meetings as the process was not effective.

"We reject the disruptions at meeting, it can't be right, we can't support violence and the stoning of people's cars – that is anarchy," Ngqondi said.

"The ANC is also not behind land invasions, it is people who are taking land by force because they are frustrated."

Gupta compound raid linked to R250m Estina dairy probe

Mzilikazi Wa Afrika, Nico Gous and Kyle Cowan

A PORSCHE Cayenne, a Lamborghini Gallardo, two Ford Rangers, three Mercedes-Benzes, a BMW 5 Series, and a Volkswagen Polo Vivo.

Oh, and a helicopter.

These are just some of the "moveable assets" the police were searching for during a raid at the Gupta family compound in Saxonwold in Johannesburg yesterday. Other locations, including Lanseria Airport, were also set to be raided, sources said.

Law-enforcement agencies descended on the compound shortly before 2pm.

Officials from the National Prosecuting Authority's Asset Forfeiture Unit, the SAPS, SA Revenue Service and Civil Aviation Authority were among those present. About 20 vehicles were parked outside the compound,

some marked. Depending on when the Saxonwold raid ended, Lanseria was the next location.

Documents seen by TimesLIVE reporters showed not just the vehicles targeted by the agencies, but also immovable properties they wanted to pounce on. These included properties and farms in

The order is a result of ongoing investigations by the Hawks

Mpumalanga, the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

In total, more than 30 properties across the country were in the crosshairs.

This comes after the NPA obtained a restraint order for R250-million against those charged in relation to the Estina dairy project in Vrede in the Free State.

Among those targeted in the order are Gupta-owned Oakbay Investments, Islandsite Investments 180, Confidants Concept and Sahara Computers.

NPA spokeswoman Bulelwa Makeke confirmed yesterday's raids on the Gupta compound were linked to this court order.

The authority said the order was obtained on April 11 in the Bloemfontein High Court. The R250-million is linked to alleged theft, fraud and money laundering. This is a provisional amount pending the criminal trial and convictions.

"The said order is a result of ongoing criminal investigations by the Hawks (DPCI) which led to the arrest and institution of criminal prosecution against the aforesaid entities and individuals," the NPA said in a statement.

"The AFU will apply for a confiscation order for the recovery of the said amount and/or any related amounts." – TimesLIVE



DOCTOR TURNS PORTER: Provincial Hospital haematology department head Dr Neil Littleton takes clean linen up the stairs to his unit
Pictures: ESTELLE ELLIS

Cry for help to carry load as hospital lift remains broken

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WITH medical waste piling up in wards, Provincial Hospital doctors were seen carrying fresh linen up seven flights of stairs, assisting patients and helping with food and medicine delivery yesterday as the lift in M-Block remained broken for an eighth day.

Cancer patients seeking treatment at the hospital have had to climb between three and seven flights of stairs to reach the clinic over the last week.

The Igazi Foundation, a non-government organisation supporting the haematology ward on the seventh floor, made an urgent call for volunteers to report to the ward to assist patients and staff in carrying linen, medicine and food up the stairs.

Igazi spokesman Cole Cameron said volunteers can report to the ward and ask for Sister Sharon Jantjies.

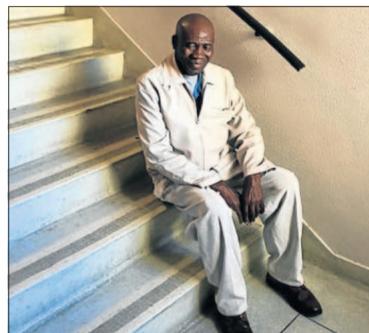
He and the head of the department of haematology Dr Neil Littleton were seen by The Herald carrying bags of linen up and down stairs yesterday.

Patients struggling to get to their doctors were also seen resting between flights of stairs yesterday. One of the patients sat on the stairs on the sixth floor.

"I am just taking a rest," he said.

Next to the broken lift was a sign asking patients to see if they could get up the stairs or otherwise phone to reschedule their appointments.

Early yesterday morning, doctors found a child with an amputated leg on the stairs trying to make his way up to see his doctor.



LONG CLIMB: A patient takes a rest after reaching the sixth floor yesterday. He needed to climb to the seventh floor to see his doctor

Eastern Cape health department spokesman Sizwe Kupelo said earlier the lift was meant to have been operational by Friday last week.

The two lifts at the M-Block have been in a sad state for years, with one condemned ages ago, and the second one packing up recently.

The Department of Health has said the hospital would finally be getting two new lifts this year.

Hospital management did not respond to queries yesterday afternoon.

Baby born after dad's murder 'real blessing'

Tanya Steenkamp

A BABY born just after his father was murdered is helping his family cope as the alleged culprits – a group of friends and neighbours from Krugersdorp on Gauteng's West Rand – go on trial for a four-year killing spree.

The trial, set down for two months, was meant to get under way yesterday but has been postponed to May 2. It is understood two of the five accused are negotiating plea bargains. A sixth has already been convicted.

Juanette McAlpine, the mother of 29-year-old insurance broker Kevin McAlpine, who was killed in 2016, three days after celebrating his first wedding anniversary, said after the court adjourned: "We really thought the case would start today."

She said Kevin's wife, Kezia, was coping but they would be able to start their lives anew when the case was finalised. "We just want it to be over."

Her grandson was born just after

Kevin was murdered and is now two years old. "He's been a blessing beyond all of this," she said.

Ella du Toit, Juanette's friend and appointed spokeswoman for the families, said: "It will be a traumatic eight weeks, or however long this will take."

The accused are Cecilia Steyn, her friend Marinda Steyn and her two children, Marcel and Leroux Steyn, and Zak Valentine.

They are charged with murdering 11 people from 2012 to 2016, robbery, aggravated assault, racketeering, possession of an unlicensed firearm, fraud and identity theft.

The killings are alleged to have started when Cecilia Steyn, a self-proclaimed child psychologist, apparently had a fallout with the pastor of the Overcomers Through Christ Church.

In July 2012, church member and lawyer Natacha Burger had her throat slit in her neighbour's home.

The neighbour, Joyce Boonzaaier, was also killed in the same way.

Police believe the killers forced Boonzaaier to lure Burger to her house so they could kill her.

The following month Pastor Reginald Bendixen was stabbed and hacked to death with an axe at his home in Hon eydew, western Johannesburg.

Valentine's wife Mikeela, 25, was killed in October 2012 in their home in Ruimsig, Roodepoort, apparently because she refused to support the alleged revenge plot carried out by her husband and other breakaway members of the church.

Police said her blood and intestines were splattered on the ceiling.

It is alleged that the four murders emboldened Valentine and his accomplices. They are alleged to have committed seven more murders in the Krugersdorp area, mostly for money.

John Barnard, a 40-year-old printmaker, got involved with the group shortly after the initial murders and joined them in the alleged killing of the seven others.

Barnard confessed last year and was sentenced to 30 years in jail, with 10 years suspended on condition he testify against the other accused. At least two other witnesses are in hiding.

Investigating officer Ben Booysen said in November 2015 Peter and Joan Meyer were targeted, allegedly for money, and stabbed.

Jarrod Jackson was also killed and his car was set alight in an attempted false life insurance claim. When the insurance company refused to pay out, suspecting foul play, the suspects allegedly changed their modus operandi.

In January 2016, members of the group went to see tax consultant Glen McGregor at his smallholding in Randfontein. He was allegedly forced to transfer money into Marinda Steyn's account and then shot.

Insurance brokers McAlpine and Anthony Scholefield and estate agent Hanlé Lategan were allegedly approached in a similar way and killed. – TimesLIVE

All eyes on Zuma's legal funding efforts

Karyn Maughan

FORMER president Jacob Zuma will oppose a court bid to cut his legal funding – in a case that could have major implications for his ability to fight the corruption charges against him.

But President Cyril Ramaphosa has yet to indicate whether he will fight the applications bought by the DA to challenge a 2006 "deal" for the state to fund Zuma's legal costs, or abide by the court decision.

The DA has also asked the court to force Zuma to pay back the estimated R32.4-million already spent on his legal campaign to avoid prosecution.

If that order is granted, it could be devastating for Zuma, who has already been ordered to personally pay the costs of his disastrous state capture cases.

Hours after Zuma appeared in the Durban High Court on corruption charges, Ramaphosa's lawyers officially withdrew his office's appeal against the state capture judgment, making it clear Zuma will have to fight the estimated R10-million personal costs order against him on his own. – TimesLIVE

Neighbour tells of farmer's axe attack trauma

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BILL Gravett, the 63-year-old farmer who was savagely attacked with an axe and a knife on his farm on the outskirts of Addo at the weekend, has moved back to East London and intends selling his farm.

This emerged yesterday after police announced that the Provincial Organised Crime Investigation Unit had taken over the case because it was classified as a farm attack – a serious crime with the same status as hijackings and gang-related crimes.

Police spokeswoman Captain Gerda Swart said the attack happened at 6:40pm on Saturday when Gravett was accosted by three men while he was outside feeding his horses.

"The suspects assaulted him with an axe and demanded the keys to his safe. They then forced the complainant into his bakkie and drove to a neighbouring farm," she said.

"The suspects then ordered the complainant to open the neighbour's house and they also ransacked the neighbour's house."

Swart said Gravett was then driven to a shack, believed to be somewhere in Motherwell, where he was tied up and kept in a room for the night.

"The suspects later drove the complainant to a service station in Kwazakhele where they released the victim and returned his bakkie."

Robbery victim Elizabeth de Villiers, a friend and neighbour of Gravett, said she had been shocked by the incident and particularly by the fact that the suspects had left their axe in her bedroom, next to her bed.

"His daughter fetched him after he was treated and has taken him back to East London, where he is originally from," De Villiers, who lost her first husband, Andre, in a brutal attack on their farm more than 10 years ago, said.

"If I had not got sick and decided to go with my husband to our farm in the Karoo, I would have been here when they came."

"We know that people were watching the farm for a few days and I had had a horrible feeling all week, so yes, it was a narrow escape."

De Villiers said Gravett, who is fluent in isiXhosa, had overheard his attackers discussing whether to kill him or not.

She said he had suffered extensive injuries and had been severely traumatised.

"But this is my home, I will not be pushed off by criminals," De Villiers said.

