

# Kidnapped man murdered

ELIAS TORRAL

A PAKISTANI businessman was murdered following a kidnapping incident in Setlagole village.

The businessman's decomposed body was found on Monday in the bushes near Lekaleng Section in Setlagole.

The man, 33, was said to have been hijacked and kidnapped on Thursday. Reports on Twitter said the deceased's family paid a ransom of R70 000 but that could not appease the kidnappers who had demanded R1m.

North West police are investigating a case of murder.

Lit-Oa Pelonomi Makau said the police in Setlagole found the deceased's body after days of searching.

"The victim's lifeless decomposed body was found by the police search and rescue team at Lekaleng Sec- tion in Setlagole on Monday morning," she said.

Makau further said the police were alerted after the deceased's brother called them.

"On Thursday at 8.10pm, the victim's brother received a threatening call from kidnappers who demanded money for the release of the victim, with threats that the victim would be killed if he failed to meet the demands," Makau said.

"According to the information received so far, the victim's brother managed to organise the money, but we are not sure how much the amount was and where the kidnappers ordered him to place it."

However, after waiting for the release of the kidnapped businessman for some time without any indications he would come, the brother decided to inform

the police.

Police launched a search for the busi- nessman on Friday but could only find the deceased's vehicle.

"At 10.40am on Monday, the police search team managed to find the vic- tim's body which had multiple gun wounds at Lekaleng Section.

"No arrest has been made yet at this stage and the police have requested anyone with information that will lead to the arrest of the suspects to come forward," Makau said.

She further said the body was already in a state of decomposition.

Makau said investigations into the matter continued and that they were hunting for the culprits.

In December, North West police commissioner Lt-Gen Baile Motsweyane said reported cases of kidnapping seemed to be fuelled by mon- etary gain on the part of those who committed the crime.

There were three kidnapping cases recorded last year, two of which ended with kidnappers arrested and their vic- tims freed but in one case, the victim was killed.

In one case, an Indian man was kid- napped and R5m was demanded for his return.

However, the police managed to arrest the kidnappers and free the man who rejoined his family.

"Police managed to arrest them and free the victim," Motsweyane said. "The same was done in the case of a minor where the kidnapper was known to the family and was demanding a few thousand rand.

It paints a picture that kidnapping is done for monetary gain."

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# Eight held for couple's murder

ELFAS TORERAI

THE number of people arrested in connection with the kidnapping and murder of two women from Mooinooi near Brits has risen to eight.

This follows the arrest of a woman on Sunday, adding to the six men and one woman who already in custody.

Brits police spokesperson WO Mpeile Talane said investigations are still ongoing.

"The eighth suspect appeared in court on Monday and was remanded in custody. She will join others as they appear for a formal bail application process tomorrow and Friday," Talane said.

The eight have been charged with murder, rape, robbery, kidnapping and unlawful possession of a firearm.

"For now, everyone, including the two female suspects, have been charged but further investigations may warrant a separation of the charges at some point," Talane said.

Joey van Niekerk, 32 and Gesina Sophia (Anisha) van Niekerk, 30, went missing on December 10. The two are said to have been a couple.

At the time of their disappearance, the couple were en route from Mooinooi to Pretoria driving in a white Nissan X-Trail.

Alarm bells were sounded after they



**CHARGED:** Eight people have been arrested for the murder of Joey van Niekerk and Anisha van Niekerk.

did not reach their destination, leading to the police launching a search.

Their completely burnt car was found in the Magaliesburg area after the arrest of three people in December.

However, it took until January 2 for police to find what could be the charred remains of the couple in Mooinooi.

"We are waiting for forensic test results on whether the remains belong to the two women but we are hopeful because we managed to recover some items deemed to be theirs," Talane said.

Those arrested are said to be from different areas like Mooinooi, Rustenburg and Brits.

Talane said that a breakthrough in the arrest was as a result of suspicious bank activities by the suspects.

"Police managed to track down the suspects through various transactions made using the missing persons' bank cards."

The three, said to be from Majakaneng village, were found in possession of the victims' belongings such as bank cards.

Brits cluster commander Maj-Gen Modis-agarekwe Mosimanegape lauded the investigation team for their tireless efforts that resulted in the arrests.

He said that the arrests would send a clear message that the police would not hesitate to use the resources at their disposal to apprehend the criminals.

The case has a close resemblance to an incident that happened a couple of months ago in Mahikeng where a female teacher was abducted and killed.

Two men were arrested in the Mahikeng case and face murder, kidnapping, rape and robbery charges. They will appear in court on Friday.

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# 'Be vigilant and stop fraud'

ELFAS TORERAI

NORTH West police have warned that reported incidents of fraud, especially involving transactions, are on the rise in the province and that people have to be extra careful.

Provincial police spokesperson Brig Sabata Mokgwabone said thugs had not relented with the passing of the festive season. "Although the festive season in which we experience more incidents of fraud is ending, it is important that continuous and proactive steps are taken to prevent such criminal activities.

"It has been noted that places such as Tlhabane, Rustenburg, Potchefstroom, Mmabatho, Mahikeng, Klerksdorp, Brits and Hartbeespoort dam are some of those where incidents of fraud are experienced particularly on weekends," he said. Mokgwabone said thugs are becoming innovative and are in some instances, creating devices to read unsuspecting consumers' bank cards and defraud them.

"Among other things, the suspects con victims by pretending to be assisting them with withdrawals at ATMs. In some cases, the consumers would receive calls requesting them to confirm their cellphone numbers or at least four digits thereof.

"Once that is done, they would then



**BE AWARE:** Police warn public to be observant at ATMs. PICTURE: HERBERT MATIMBA

experience problems with their cell-phones and be forced to switch them off. They would realise upon switching them on that their SIM cards had been blocked. The suspects would then do simswap without the victim's consent and access their accounts," he said.

Members of the public are advised to be on the look-out at all times so that they avoid becoming victims to these schemes.

"Always be alert for people who try to lure you with too-good-to-be true stories and products that are sold from the internet. Be careful of people who volunteer to help you at the ATM and never believe promises of easy money.

"People should also avoid using the same passwords for anything involving sensitive personal information.

"Avoid isolated ATMs and using them late at night. If you feel unsafe at an ATM or you are suspicious of individuals loitering in the vicinity of the ATM, trust your instincts, go away and use another ATM. Above all, never accept help from strangers when using an ATM," Mokgwabone said.

There are also reported cases of robberies by people pretending to be police officers. So far, a number of such cases, targeting mostly women, have been reported in the Mahikeng area.

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## Torching investigation

ELLEKIA DIRE

NORTH West police said they could not link the torching of a house and a vehicle in Rustenburg Noord to last week's unrest.

Col Sabata Mokgwabone said the police would be informed by the investigations before they could link the incidents. "No case has been opened yet. The house was burnt down and the car seats were the only things that were damaged by the fire," Mokgwabone said.

A house suspected of being used as a

brothel was set on fire on Monday night by a group of angry residents.

A vehicle was partly burnt yesterday morning but no one was injured.

It was reported that the car belonging to a foreign national was parked at a car wash and a combi full of men stopped by.

The men allegedly chased the foreign national who fled and the men returned to burn the vehicle.

Last week, eight buildings including four guest houses and a vehicle were burnt down in what is reported as a fight against drugs and human trafficking.