

R15m, guns stolen in Mahikeng

ELFAS TORERAI

CASH amounting to R15m was robbed from the offices of a security company in Mahikeng on Wednesday evening.

Three firearms belonging to security guards at the company's premises are also said to have been taken during the incident.

Police spokesperson Brig Sabata Mokgwabone said a case of robbery had been opened.

"At this stage, no one has been arrested and investigations are under way," he said.

The daring robbery occurred at 8pm when armed men stormed the premises of G4S security company in Mahikeng's industrial area.

While the number of robbers could not be ascertained, police said nine armed men were part of the attack.

"Five suspects climbed over the wall from the back of the premises and four vehicles were seen driving in through the main entrance. All the men were wearing balaclavas and the registration numbers of the vehicles are not known," police said.

What the police have managed to ascertain is that a black Mercedes-Benz, a green double cab Ford Ranger and two Toyota double cab vehicles were used.

"The suspects were armed with handguns and rifles.

"The guards on duty at the offices were held in one room and their firearms, three 9mm handguns, were taken.

"The firearms are a Vector BDH 240 with one magazine and 10 live rounds, a Norinco with no magazine or ammunition and a Girson with one magazine and 15 live rounds," the police said.

However, no guns in the security company's safe were taken during the robbery.

"During the attack, a guard was ordered to open the box room and an amount of R15m was taken and loaded in the suspects' vehicles before they drove away," police said.

One guard was assaulted with a firearm on the head but no shots were fired during the incident.

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Murder suspect appears

NORTH West police arrested a 36-year-old man for the murder of his ex-girlfriend's 9-year-old son in Robega, near Rustenburg yesterday.

Sergeant Gabaiphiwe Kgatlha said the man handed himself over to the police in Motswedi near Zeerust on Wednesday. He allegedly killed Ofentse Simakuhle on Tuesday. The boy was found in a pool of blood in the man's shack.

"The victim, who was still wearing his school uniform, also had an open wound on the forehead. The motive of the incident is still unknown and investigation into the matter continues," Kgatlha said.

The suspect was expected to appear in the Bafokeng Magistrate's Court in Tlhabane today. - ANA

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Copper cable thieves in court

ZODIDI MHLANA

THREE men who were found in possession of copper cable will appear in the Bafokeng Magistrate's Court today.

The suspects aged from 25 to 29 years face charges of illegal possession of copper cable.

Their appearance comes after they were arrested yesterday morning by police officers.

Police said the copper cable found was estimated to be worth R20 000 with a weight of 175.9kg.

Police also discovered stolen property in the boot of the vehicle.

A report released in 2013 found that more than R7bn is lost to copper cable theft each year in South Africa.

With the high demand for copper in Asian nations such as China and India, state owned companies

including Eskom, Telkom, Transnet and municipalities are often targeted.

Power utility Eskom said it spent R2bn a year to replace stolen copper cables.

Telkom also said it lost more than R2bn in less than four years due to the problem.

Two years ago, President Jacob Zuma signed into legislation the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

Under this law, the theft of ferrous and non-ferrous metals is classified as infrastructure crime and carries a minimum sentence of three years.

Several people have been convicted for copper theft this year alone particularly in the Free State and Kwa-Zulu-Natal.

Two months ago, a Mpumalanga man was given a three-year sentence for copper cable theft.

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Murder suspects in court

By DULILE SOWAGA and OTSILE TLAPE

TWO men accused of murdering a teacher appeared in the Mmabatho Magistrates Court yesterday.

The two were arrested in Joburg on Monday.

Teacher Thulisile Ngwenya's decomposing body was found by a shepherd last Wednesday. She disappeared last Saturday after she left her car at a local carwash and went to the bank.

Ngwenya was a teacher at Lekoko Primary School in Mahikeng, North West.

Yesterday, the two accused, Headboy Njokweni (51) and Sfiso Ndawande (50), abandoned their bail application.

Magistrate Ditiro Goliath did not ask the alleged killers to plead.

They will make their next court appearance on 19 January.

Police spokeswoman Captain

Yvonne Maqoboza said: "Their arrest in Joburg follows an in-depth investigation by the police team that managed to recover her cellphone."



Teacher Thulisile Ngwenya's body was found last Wednesday.

Provincial police commissioner Lieutenant-General Baile Motswenyane applauded the cops who worked tirelessly to find the suspects.

The suspects are facing charges of kidnapping and murder.

Meanwhile, North West cops said 16 suspects, aged between 25 and 60, will appear in the Klerksdorp Magistrates Court today for the murder of a 34-year-old man.

The suspects were arrested last Thursday in Kanana and are accused of kidnapping two men, aged 34 and 50, from their homes and assaulting them.

They are facing charges of murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and defeating the ends of justice.

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New taxi operating licences welcomed

OBAKENG MAJE

MORE than 200 taxi owners across the North West welcomed the newly amended taxi operating licences.

The issuing of licences was stopped after some taxi owners duplicated licences, which led to taxi violence.

Community safety and transport management MEC Mpho Motlhabane handed over amended operating licences on Friday at Mmabana Taung. He further said newly amended licences would bring peace, harmony and stability within the taxi industry.

"We are all aware that the taxi industry is the heartbeat of the South African economy," Motlhabane said.

"The multibillion-rand minibus taxi industry carries more than 60% of South African commuters. So, we believe that newly amended operating licences will create tranquillity within the sector and end taxi violence.

"Each taxi driver will know where, how and when to load or offload passengers now. Our traffic officers will be on high alert to ensure that no one disobeys the rules. The department is also indebted that there is a good working relationship between our taxi industry and us."

Motlhabane further said those who would orchestrate corruption by dupli-



HARMONY: MEC Mpho Motlhabane and some of the taxi operators present at the issuing of new licences.

cating amended operating licences would face the long arm of the law. He said his department was also addressing the hitch-hiking matter.

"Most minibus taxi owners alleged that motorists picked up hitch-hikers illegally and that affected their business. We want to warn motorists who pickup hitch-hikers without permits. What they are doing is unlawful and even though any person has the right to choose what transport mode to use, we

urge them to do that lawfully.

"Hitch-hiking is dangerous because many people were robbed by some motorists. We urge them to go to taxi ranks to avoid unforeseen injuries or deaths.

"However, I also want to applaud our traffic officers because we have experienced a decrease in hitch-hiking. We are in talks with the taxi council regarding a subsidy."

Motlhabane further said they had not

reached any agreement with the taxi sector regarding the subsidy issue. He said the government was faced with economic upheavals and the matter would continue to be under discussion.

North West taxi council provincial chairperson Thomas Matsemela said: "We highly appreciate the sterling job done by our government thus far. The newly amended taxi operating licences will curb taxi violence. Each driver will know how their route goes." - Newsnote