

'Hostage' mayor safe

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MAYOR of Ditsobotla, Daniel Buthelezi, is resting at a safe place after he was held hostage, Community Safety MEC Dr Mpho Motlhabane said yesterday.

Furious residents of Boikhutso, also known as Phola, near Lichtenburg held the mayor hostage on Wednesday and torched a portion of the municipality.

"The issue here is not about service delivery as being portrayed."

Motlhabane appealed for calm and condemned the incident. North West police earlier said 32 people were arrested after the mayor was held hostage. - ANA

Mayor held on to his faith during capture

SOWETAN | Pg 2, POSITIVE | NW SAYS, 26/05/17

Buthelezi was kept hostage for eight hours

By **Boitumelo Tshehle**
North West Correspondent

The North West mayor who was held hostage for eight hours on Wednesday night says his belief in God kept his spirits high during his ordeal at the hands of his captors.

Mayor Daniel Buthelezi of Ditsobotla local municipality was held by a group of residents in the municipal buildings in Lichtenburg.

His capture was the climax of a series of protests, often violent, residents have been waging against lack of development in Boikhutso township and other locations in the area. A block of municipal building was torched.

The mayor, however, insisted the group was not violent or aggressive towards him. He said he had been allowed to call his wife whom he assured his life was not in danger.

Residents wanted Buthelezi to explain why there were unfinished roads between Boikhutso and Lichtenburg town.

Speaking to Sowetan from his Burgersdorp suburb home in Lichtenburg, a physically drained Buthelezi in his pyjamas said by surviving the drama he had proved to be a "good leader who knew how to negotiate and talk to people".

"I trusted in God because there are some of the things that you cannot fight on your own. The situation was unusual for me but because I have a good working relationship with people, I managed to calm



Ditsobotla mayor Daniel Buthelezi at his home a day after he was held hostage by protesting residents from Boikhutso township in Lichtenburg. / TIRO RAMATLHATSE

them down," Buthelezi said.

The mayor said he spoke to the group of residents whom he described as "people with an agenda" who told him that they were going to burn other parts of the municipal building.

"I ended up managing the situation by myself and just being there at the time, I take it it saved the institution a lot. The damage that could have been there if I was not around could

have been massive."

Buthelezi's municipality is facing financial difficulties but he said he had plans to make sure that there were developments in the area.

He said compared to other townships, Boikhutso residents were fortunate.

"We need to share whatever cake that we have, and how we share it it's upon us as councillors. I want to see every ward being developed but it's a question of budget.

"But what is also critical is that we need also to develop strategies and other things of ensuring that I do improve other situation and how to take initiatives in terms of getting other resources to improve the municipality."

He said there were issues that were raised robustly in council about the services in Boikhutso.

"It's not always that whatever

that you want you will always get it," he added.

Buthelezi said his municipality was at point of making impact in people's lives.

"There are other things that we are trying to correct and its unfortunate that some people do not want to exercise patience.

"They want me to look as if I cannot run the municipality, I have never failed as a leader.

"I led many organisations," he said.

North West police have arrested 32 people in connection with Buthelezi's hostage and the act of arson on the municipal building.

Police spokesman Brigadier Sabata Mokgwabone said the arrested people were charged with attempted murder, kidnapping and arson.

The suspects are expected to appear before the Ditsobotla Magistrate's Court soon.

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I have a good working relationship with the people

26/05/17 TMA Pg 1
Six die in fire
NWSAPS Meg
ELFAS TORERAI

SIX members of a family died in a fire that partially burnt down their one-roomed house in Ganyesa near Vryburg on Wednesday night.

The incident happened in Phohung Section about 10pm.

Some of the victims were burnt to death while others are believed to have died due to smoke inhalation.

North West police spokesperson, Lt-Col Pelonomi Makau said: "A 75-year-old father, his 35-year-old daughter, children between the ages of three and nine who were sleeping in their one-roomed house, died after a bed in which the daughter and the four children were sleeping caught fire."

Makau said the grandfather possibly died of smoke inhalation because he did not get burnt like the other victims.

"At this stage, we do not suspect any foul play," Makau said.

She said everyone should take the necessary precautions to ensure fires are not left unattended.

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26/05/17 TMA Pg 1 **32 ARRESTED AFTER AMBUSH AT MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS WHERE MAYOR AND STAFF WERE HELD**

Mayor's hostage drama

OBAMA/MAJE

DITSOBOYI Mayor Daniel Buthezi has told of his ordeal at the hands of kidnapers during a hostage drama in the municipality this week.

He said he feared that the people who held him up would attack his family in an interview with The New Age yesterday. "The situation was tense but kept improving to God. Mostly I was terrified on behalf of my family," he said as he recounted the horror he went through. A group of residents stormed the municipal offices and held the mayor, his bodyguards and IDP manager, Isreal Mofheane hostage, on Wednesday evening.

The drama lasted until the early hours of yesterday morning when police managed to free the mayor and arrest 32 people.

My hope was that protesters would not attack. However, I managed to calm them down and engaged with them. They assured me that I was not the target, but they wanted integrated development Programme implementation, the mayor said.

During the skirmishes, the protesters rickled the chamber building. "There were some instances where they wanted to burn all of the municipal offices but I had to convince and assure them that their demands would be addressed. We want to condemn their actions because we cannot find any criminal and the law needs to be the course."

Buthezi said those who held him hostage were not community representatives. He said the protesters were a group of individuals with a political vendetta.

We will engage with those who raised concerns and come up with strategic plans to address their concerns. The municipality also urges its councillors to stop passing the buck and take a stand. We need to become good leaders because that will lead us to good and every ward being well-developed. The protesters were very understanding and they never threatened me. "How do we call for peace so that we work amicably together," he said.

Community safety officer, Mkhamsini Mofheane, who accompanied the police for concealing their roles personally in freeing the mayor and other hostages.

ANC provincial secretary, Thabisa Lapeere, said the ruling party condemned as criminal the hostage drama, the storming and burning of municipal offices by the protesters.

We condemn the criminality and urge the police to get to the bottom of this issue. Talking people hostage is a criminal act and a percentage of anger can justify that," he said. DA chief whip in the provincial legislature, Jacobus Thebe, called for powerful ways of resolving problems in communities. North West police commissioner Lt Gen Ralle Masekane said that the 32 people arrested were between 21 and 32 years old. - Newsweek



SCENE Forensic services at the Ditsobotla local municipality inspected the damage caused by a group of people who torched the building. **INSERT** Ditsobotla local municipality mayor Daniel Buthezi briefed the media about his hostage drama. **FILE PHOTO**



COMMUNITY SAFETY AND TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT MEC DR M.N. Motlhabane

BUDGET SPEECH 2017/2018 HIGHLIGHTS



The Department of Community Safety and Transport Management continues to record a notable progress in building of safer, secured, and socially cohesive communities as well as provision of affordable transport services. The Department further continues to implement the National Development Plan (NDP) linked with the Five (5) pronounced concretes of the 5th administration.

CIVILIAN SECRETARIAT

Through the Provincial Secretariat for Police, the Department recorded a notable progress relating to fighting the trio crimes, drug related crimes and crimes against women and children.

The above were achieved through intensified Crime Prevention Programme; whereby our communities were mobilised to establish Community Policing Fora (CPF), Community Safety Fora (CSF), resuscitation of Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster Departments (JPSC) and MUNIMEC Structures and other community formations.

In combating the challenge of stock theft in the Province, we trained One Hundred and Eight (108) Traffic Officers to handle stock theft in transit in the Province. Working together with the Road Traffic Management (RTMC), the Department hosted a summit with farmers and handed over livestock reflective belts and earings.

During the launch of Safety Month a dialogue with the Elderly was held to address sexual offences and abuse of the older persons. A total of sixty five (65) household safety gadgets with the value of R130 103 were installed in identified households of child headed households, victims of abuse and vulnerable groups.

In the Financial Year 2016/17, the Department managed to fund sixty (60) Non Profit Institutions (CPFs and NPOs) to assist in the fight against crime by implementing social crime prevention programmes. These Non Profit Institutions were funded to the amount of nine hundred and twenty eight thousand (R928 000).

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS

With the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP), the Department is committed to provide a safe, affordable and quality public transport through the Village Townships and Small Dorpias (VTSD) concrete.

Learner Transport Services

This programme is meant to assist the learners in rural and farm arrears who would normally not access education easily by walking distances exceeding 5 kilometres due to minimal educational infrastructure. The assistance is reliant on the availability of financial resources. In the year under review, 37 371 learners were transported to 223 schools by 420 bus operators.

Subsidised Commuter Transport Services

In the year under review, the Department was allocated an amount of R447 million to implement subsidised commuter transport by transporting nineteen million, seven hundred and eighty eight thousand, seven hundred fifty six (19 788 756) commuters in the three districts within the Province. In addition to the above a supplementary allocation of R100 million was transferred by National Department of Transport through the Public Transport Infrastructure Grant to assist in ensuring communities are transported in safe and reliable transport to access work opportunities, promoting domestic tourism and other related services provided by government.

Promotion of Non-Motorised Transport

In the 2016/17 financial year, the Department has accelerated the pace in the delivery of bicycles to learners who walk between two (2) and

five (5) kilometres to and from school and Animal Drawn Carts to communities in rural areas. In this regard, 707 bicycles were distributed to learners and 80 Animal Drawn Carts to deserving communities.

ROAD SAFETY

The Department has been committed in intensifying road safety activities by conducting 365 days awareness campaigns throughout the Province by implementing Road Safety Education, Safety Promotions and Safety Community Engagement initiatives. These awareness campaigns are aligned to Safety, Security, Comfort, Corruption and Crime-Free Society Campaign which is fourth in the Premier's 10 Point Plan.

The Road Safety Practitioners within the Province have been interacting with community members on road safety issues during the implementation of the Setsokotsane programme, which contributed to 8% reduction of road crash fatalities.

TRANSPORT OPERATION

Infrastructure Operations

In the year under review, the Department through its airports managed to airlift 14 462 passengers using 940 flights. This is an impressive increase of 4 954 passengers and 192 flights.

Department has partnered with Roucomm Systems and Denel Aviation to establish an Aviation Technical Academy at Mafikeng Airport. The first intake of 40 students will commence with classes in July 2017.

Training of SMME in the motor industry sector The Department with the assistance of Transport Education Training Authority (TETA) intends to up-skill/train approximately 100 Backyard Mechanics and 100 Panel Beaters/Spray Painters to acquire the necessary certificates since they have the required skills and prior knowledge to actively participate in the Motor Industry economy.

The programme will also include the small business support to 30 youth and women and apprenticeship development to 29 candidates.

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AND LICENSING

In ensuring maximum collection of motor vehicle licence tax, the Department will be embarking on a revenue enhancement initiative to recoup the large amount of debt outstanding due to arrears and penalties accrued from unpaid motor vehicle licences.

The target group will be motor vehicle owners, Farmers, Mining Companies, Public Transport Operators, Businesses and Construction companies in the Bokone Bophirima Province.

In its effort to directing the resources and taking services closer to the people, the Department has identified a need for the establishment of Motor Vehicle Registration and Licensing Authorities and Driving Licence Testing Centres at Villages and Small Dorpias.

These will be at areas situated at the borders with other Provinces which the majority of the vehicle owners and community members receive these much needed services from those neighbouring Provinces as they are not available within their areas. The Department commits to launching these services at the following Villages: Kgomotso (Greater Taung Local Municipality), Tosca (Kagisano Molopo Local Municipality), Setlagole (Ratlou Local Municipality), Tweelaagte and Mokgalwane (Moses Kotane Local Municipality).



This is how municipal workers found their workplace on Thursday morning.

Ditsobotla hostage drama ends with more than 30 arrests

Obakeng Maje and
Nthusang Lefafa

The hostage situation that rocked Ditsobotla Local Municipality on Wednesday night ended with the arrest of 32 suspects in the wee hours of Thursday morning. They have been charged with kidnapping, attempted murder and arson.

No one was harmed in the standoff that lasted for more than eight hours. A group of residents – who called themselves protesters – forcefully entered the municipality offices armed with pangas. They torched municipal offices and held Mayor Daniel Buthelezi hostage along with his protectors and some staff members.

Despite long hours of negotiations led by the police, the hostage takers remained stubborn for hours. The police's Special Task Force had to be used to end the hostage drama.

This group, which included a ward councillor, claimed that they wanted the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) programme implemented with immediate effect.

Police tricked the suspects by agreeing to their demand for minibus taxis to take them to their homes. After getting into the taxis the suspects were escorted out of the municipal buildings and followed by a long convoy that included police, emergency services and concerned members of the public. The special task force managed to isolate them on Thabo Mbeki Drive and this is where the hostage drama ended with their arrest.

Bokone Bophirima's MEC for Community Safety and Transport, Dr Mpho Motshabane, commended the police's swift response and decisiveness in apprehending the suspects.

"We have managed to secure the mayor safely and no suspect was hurt and we want to thank the SAPS for a job well done. The department pleads with the public to calm down as everybody is safe and the situation has subsided," Motshabane said.

The MEC condemned what he termed acts of hooliganism.

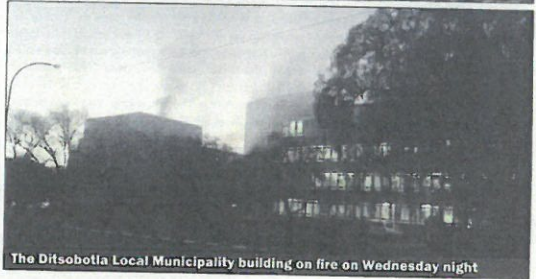
He said repairing the damage caused by the torching of the building would cost government a lot of money that should have been used for some delivery of services. The municipal chambers were completely destroyed by fire, he said.

Motshabane added that the group's demands were unreasonable because the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process is currently at a consultation stage.

Police Commissioner for Bokone Bophirima, Lieutenant General Baile Motswenyane, said the police used all of their units within the force to ensure the arrest of the suspects and the police management was happy that everyone came out safe.

"We are happy that the Mayor came out of the situation unhurt and that all suspects were arrested. Out of those arrested there were nine females and the rest were males.

"All communities in the province are urged to refrain from using force as there is an amicable way of finding solutions to problems instead of using violence and force for one to be heard," Motswenyane said.



The Ditsobotla Local Municipality building on fire on Wednesday night

The DA also condemned the hostage drama. The party's provincial Chief Whip, Jaqueline Theologo, urged community protesters to immediately cease violence and criminal activity.

"We commend the police visibility and those who negotiated the safe release of the mayor. They did that professionally without bloodshed. We cannot continue to have sheer lawless behaviour in a democratic society. The DA condemns this behaviour because violence and hostage situations will never solve service delivery breakdowns," she said.

On Thursday municipal workers stood outside the municipality's building looking sad and confused. They walked about outside a cordoned off area waiting to hear what the next step will be and what will happen to their jobs.

A municipal worker who spoke on conditions of anonymity said she was deeply saddened by the events that transpired on Wednesday night.

"I am really hurt because I do not know

where I am going to work or if next month I will receive my salary. Mayor Buthelezi is a good person with a very kind heart and it is very sad that something like this happened to him because his life was threatened at a place where he commits himself to serving the people of Ditsobotla. It is not right for anybody's life to be threatened in this manner," the municipal worker said.

Concerned Lichtenburg resident, Stephanus Botha, commended the special task force and SAPS in general for apprehending the suspects in a swift manner and restoring the public's trust in the police who often come under fire.

"The police did a good job by arresting the suspects as some people think they can do as they please. Nobody has the right to burn buildings and go on the rampage just because they have unresolved issues with their leaders. Their arrest is a very good example for other citizens in the country to say that you should follow the correct channels when you have grievances with the government."