

Making Headlines

Probe into performance bonuses in KwaZulu-Natal

A probe is being launched into municipal performance bonuses in KwaZulu-Natal. Local Government MEC Mike Mabuyakahulu told reporters that municipal managers and senior staff who received bonuses while heading dysfunctional municipalities could lose their performance bonuses.

He said the province has called on all 61 of its municipalities to provide information and performance contracts for every bonus paid to senior officials and municipal managers. Up to 42 of 61 municipal managers in KwaZulu-Natal alone were awarded more than R4.1 million in bonuses for the 2003 and 2004 financial years. The figures for 2005 are not yet available.



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Ethekwini municipality discloses affordable accommodation plan

Ethekwini municipality announced plans to offer massive discounts on council flats for the benefit of poor people. Executive mayor Obed Mlaba said:

“Prospective buyers will be given a massive discount of up to R31,929 on the selling price of their homes, thus allowing the poor the opportunity to become proud homeowners after decades of paying rent.”

The programme will target those whose total household income is less than R5,000 a month. This decision was made after the mayor’s executive committee endorsed the national housing department’s decision to promote home ownership in the cities as part of government’s strategy to create mixed-income communities.

Matatiele challenges border change in the Constitutional Court

The Matatiele community of about 25,000 people challenged a recent boundary change in the Constitutional Court following the promulgation of the Constitution 12th Amendment Act and the Cross-Boundary Municipalities Laws Repeal and Related Matters Act 2005. They argued that the municipality was not a cross-boundary one and had been wholly within KwaZulu-Natal.

“Only the Municipal Demarcation Board has the power to re-determine boundaries. This power does not reside with the executive (neither national nor provincial), nor Parliament, nor the provincial legislature,” their affidavit said. Matatiele Mayor, Cedric Canham, said the municipality had stated its preference for remaining in KwaZulu-Natal.

RSC levy to disappear

A national treasury paper last month proposed doing away with regional services council (RSC) levies, a tax that businesses and employers pay to the district and metropolitan councils in which they operate.

The Treasury proposes to replace them with an alternative system of taxes that will be administered by the South African Revenue Service. The Treasury stated that the structure of levy payments makes collection difficult. The proposed system, according to the Treasury, will make the process more efficient and reduce corruption. RSC levies raised about R5,5bn in the 2003-2004 financial year, or 9% of local government revenue.

Meanwhile, R7 billion has been allocated from the national revenue fund this financial year to compensate local municipalities for any lost revenue.

Loans to staff members

Many municipalities in the Province of KwaKulu-Natal provided loans to staff members totaling thousand of rands. One of these was the Kokstad municipality, which is said to be struggling to recover money owed by staff. Local Government MEC Mike Mabuyakahulu said that his department would ensure all the money owed was recovered, either by withholding their pensions or taking their properties. He also indicated that he held municipal managers and the chief financial officers accountable to ensure that the money was paid back.