

JUDGE DISMISSES APPLICATION WITH COSTS

Transport Dept's media gag bid fails

ZELDA VENTER
Pretoria

TRANSPORT Minister Jeff Radebe has failed in his attempt to gag the media on reporting on the security problems regarding the controversial new eNaTIS vehicle licensing system.

Yesterday, Pretoria High Court judge Dion Basson dismissed with costs an application by the minister to interdict the Afrikaans daily *Beeld* from divulging the content of the management report on the NaTIS (the previous system) and the eNaTIS system.

Basson said the right of the public to know about the possible security problems outweighed the concerns of the minister over the confidentiality of the report.

Basson said the media could not be prohibited from reporting this information. He said there was, in any event, nothing in the report to suggest that reporting on it would constitute a breach of national security, and that it mainly reflected failures of management.

Counsel for the minister Pat Ellis SC said that this was a draft report and that it contained information of a classified nature. He said that, if the information was to be published, it would place the

security gaps in the old and the new systems in the public domain. Department of Transport Director-General Mpumi Mpufo said that this information could be misused by criminals involved in illegally dealing in motor vehicles.

"The thrust of the applicant's contention is that information relating to weaknesses in the NaTIS security systems, in the hands of criminal elements, will lead to unauthorised persons being able to access the system and compromise the integrity of the system," she said.

Newsworthy

Mpufo admitted that the "eNaTIS controversy was, generally speaking, newsworthy". However, she said that the confidential information contained in it about "security shortcomings" was not newsworthy.

She also admitted that R408 million had been spent on the system, but said that this was the result of increasing importation costs, exchange control fluctuations and consumer price index adjustments, and was "all provided for in the contract".

Sias Reyneke SC, arguing on behalf of *Beeld*, said that the media should not be blamed for blowing the whistle on the mal-

administration and poor governance. He said the department had known about the security problems which had led to the security gaps in the old and the new systems since at least February this year, when the report was released, and that nothing had been done to address these problems, in spite of it having been urged to do so.

Reyneke said the main reason the minister had for gagging the newspaper was "that the department is actually embarrassed to have the mal-administration publicised".

"It is not a system failure, it is a management failure," Reyneke said, adding that the media would be denied its role as the eyes and the ears of the public if it could only report on officially tabled reports.

Reyneke said the minister missed the true implications of the report - which *Beeld* was entitled to report on - that the department had been warned of the failures and had done nothing to rectify or avoid them.

"These failures have already caused substantial losses to the public and continue to do so, and it remains the obligation of the press to expose this mal-administration and poor governance," he said.

Mpufo said the ruling was a "minor setback" for the department, and that it would be studying the judgment.



CONSTABLES Andre Swanepoel and Ferooz Waljee, of the SAPS Provincial Task Team, arrest members of a five-man gang involved in an armed robbery in Cato Ridge yesterday afternoon. The arrests followed after a long car chase

Employee chases armed robbers, alerts police

NTOKOZO MFUSI

A COURAGEOUS employee in Cato Ridge chased a gang of armed robbers who had robbed the factory he works in.

As a result, police captured five of the men.

Ashok Persad, of Blaze Braai Products in Cato Ridge, pursued two armed robbers after they had robbed the factory and stolen two laptop computers and a large sum of money.

"There were about nine of them," he said. "I was in the shed. I saw two guys going up the stairs; my boss and his sister were in the office."

"They held the manager at

gunpoint and one of them told me to move to the place where we make briquettes," Persad said.

He said it had all happened in less than 10 minutes and that the robbers had made a getaway in two cars.

Persad gave chase along the M13 in his Nissan bakkie after the robbers' two vehicles, a Toyota Cressida and what he thought was a Nissan Langley.

"They were about 4m to 5m away from me... I chased them all the way along the highway and they took the Shongweni off-ramp. There I saw Metro Police and shouted for help."

The Metro Police took up the chase and called the Provincial Task Team for back-up. Persad said the two cars had split up as they reached Field's Hill. The police managed to stay behind the Cressida.

Fled

Police spokeswoman Debbie O'Brien said: "Const Michael Hill, from the Metro Police, and the Provincial Task Team took over the chase after they had been alerted by Persad."

"The suspects started firing at them. The robbers' vehicle stopped at Cowie's Hill and five suspects got out and fled but

were immediately arrested by the police." A 9mm pistol, which had been stolen in 1998, two laptop computers and a cellphone were recovered.

Meanwhile, Westville crime prevention constables Steven Clark and Mark Morris saw a red Honda Ballade driving recklessly. It crashed into another vehicle and then sped away. They gave chase until the suspects stopped outside Sarnia Primary School and fired at them. The police returned fire and then arrested four men. Nobody was wounded in the shootout. A Z88 firearm was found on the suspects.

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KZN game lodge honoured

SUREN NAIDOO

THERE were mixed fortunes for KwaZulu-Natal at the World Travel Awards' Middle East and Africa chapter gala ceremony in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday night.

While the exclusive five-star Thanda Private Game Reserve in Zululand scooped the award for Africa's leading luxury lodge, Durban's International Convention Centre lost the coveted title of Africa's leading conference centre this year.

The ICC has won has won the award for six consecutive years since 2001, but lost out to the Cape Town International Convention Centre in this year's awards.

The awards have been described by the *Wall Street Journal* as the "Oscars of the travel industry" - and South Africa again dominated, notching up 20 out of the 28 awards for the Africa region. The Middle East and Africa winners will go into the main invitation-only award ceremony in the Caribbean in December.

Thanda's win has put KwaZulu-Natal in the global spotlight.

Zimbali Lodge & Country Club near Ballito also came to the party, winning the title of South Africa's leading golf resort, won last year by the Cape's Fancourt Hotel & Country Club.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal spokeswoman Phindile Makwakwa said Thanda's and Zimbali's wins, as well as the other KZN nominations, showed that the province was being recognised worldwide.

"At the end of the day this is an awards campaign and we must not be disillusioned with the fact that the ICC (Durban) did not get the 2007 award. The ICC has always been and will continue to be a leading convention centre globally."

Durban drivers viewed as most cautious

DURBAN motorists saw themselves as the most cautious drivers, a recent study found.

About 54% of the 1 986 drivers from Durban, Gauteng and Cape Town polled by Synovate, the market research arm of the Aegis Group, claimed to have been on the receiving end of

aggressive or threatening driving behaviour during the past 12 months.

According to the study, drivers from Gauteng experienced more road rage than drivers in other metropolitan areas.

About 57% claimed to have experienced aggressive or

threatening driving behaviour and 59% had been subjected to rude gestures or verbal insults.

At least 39% of the respondents described themselves as slow and cautious drivers. Durban motorists saw themselves as the most cautious out of all areas surveyed. - *Sapa*

Films Amendment Bill modified to rumbles of discontent

JANINE STEPHEN
POLITICAL BUREAU

THE controversial Bill that media experts were afraid could severely threaten press freedom was adopted by the National Assembly's home affairs committee yesterday.

The Films and Publications Amendment Bill's adoption raised, if not roars of disapproval, certainly rumbles of discontent.

Steve Swart of the African Christian Democratic Party slipped in yet another amendment aimed at protecting the press from the criminal provisions of the re-drafted Bill at the 11th hour.

He was afraid that, as it stood, the press could be charged for failing to classify material, and the committee agreed to the change.

Although some political parties still had concerns about certain provisions in the Bill, they all

agreed it had come a long way. Kobus van Rooyen, a councillor for the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, said last night that it seemed that a "full attempt" had been made to exempt newspapers and broadcasters from both pre- and post-publication censorship.

The Democratic Alliance objected to a provision in the Bill that it still believed could amount to pre-publication censorship.

The DA also believed references to hate speech were too wide and exceeded the definition as it stood in the constitution.

William Bird, Director of the Media Monitoring Project, said he believed that while the amendments appeared to address some of the core constitutional concerns, in actual fact, loopholes remained through which media freedom could be severely restricted.

Patrick Chauke, the chairman

of the committee, reiterated that "was not the intention of this government to bring in media censorship", but was pleased that the issues raised during public hearings had contributed to the press beefing up their self-regulation bodies.

The Bill is expected to be debated and voted on in the National Assembly on June 12 and will then be sent to the National Council of Provinces for concurrence.

Make a noise, Bafana fans urged

BRONWYN GERRETSEN

THERE may only be 11 Bafana Bafana players running onto the field tomorrow when the team takes on Chad in an African Cup of Nations qualifier, but the thousands of supporters that are expected to fill the stadium stands will be the 12th "player" pushing the team to victory.

The 52 000-seater Absa Stadium in Durban is expected to be filled to capacity come 3.15pm tomorrow, and supporters are urged to pressure their opponents by cheering Bafana on from the first minute to the last.

South African Football Federation spokesman Morio Fanyane said the match would be a tough one, because both teams desper-

ately needed the three points to be gained by a win.

Fanyane said Carlos Albertos Parreira had promised that Bafana would not be complacent because of their good result the last time they played Chad. He

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ZUMA PROMISES TO SCORE
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said the coach had warned that the team would be on all-out attack, and would not be defending. Fanyane added that the atmosphere would be beautiful, with entertainment galore.

While asked to be on their best behaviour, supporters are urged to dress in Bafana colours and to

"make as much noise as possible". Spectators are also advised to arrive early. Gates open at noon.

Fanyane said there would be a rush of people buying tickets today. Ticket prices are R30 for all grandstand seating, and R20 for adults and R10 for children sitting in the open stands.

Tourism KZN spokeswoman Phindile Makwakwa said the game was very important for the country, and even more so for KwaZulu-Natal and Durban.

"It offers us an opportunity to showcase our capabilities in hosting soccer events, and to show that we are well on the road to being ready to host the world cup in 2010," she said.

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