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26 February - 5 March 2026

# Rising Star on the Wing: Bohlale Ngwato's Journey to the Big Stage



Rising star Bohlale Ngwato

professional football, showing maturity and confidence beyond his years. Ngwato currently plays for Siwelele FC, featuring in both the reserve side and pushing into the first team setup. He is best known for his blistering pace, fearless attacking style, and rare ability to use both feet comfortably.

His ambidextrous skill makes him unpredictable for defenders, while his strong one-on-one ability allows him to take on opponents with confidence. The young winger first caught the attention of many football followers in the DStv Diski Challenge. In September 2025, he delivered a standout performance against Stellenbosch, scoring two goals and providing one assist in a single match.

That display confirmed his high football IQ and attacking awareness in the final third. Ngwato made his professional debut in the 2026 Nedbank Cup in a dramatic encounter against Richards Bay. Although Siwelele suffered a heartbreaking 6-7 penalty shootout loss, the match marked an important milestone in his young career. Stepping onto such a big stage showed the trust the technical team has in his ability.

With his speed, direct play, and growing confidence, Bohlale Ngwato represents the future of Siwelele FC. If he continues to develop and work hard, he could soon become a key player not only for his club but also for South African football.

By Rorisang Rampheteng

most exciting young talents to watch in South African football. Born in 2006, the talented right winger has already taken bold steps into

Bohlale Ngwato is fast becoming one of the



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## Knights Beat Eastern Cape linyathi by 47 Runs After Posting 229/8



By Rorisang Rampheteng

Bloemfontein

The Free State Knights secured a 47-run victory over Eastern Cape linyathi today, after posting a total of 229 for 8 and defending it successfully in their domestic cricket match. According to the official match result, the Knights completed

their innings at 229/8. Eastern Cape linyathi were unable to reach the target, falling 47 runs short, resulting in a win for the Knights.

The Free State Knights represent the central region of South Africa in domestic professional cricket competitions. The franchise is based in Bloemfontein and traditionally competes in formats including First Class, List A, and T20

tournaments under Cricket South Africa's domestic structure.

Over the years, the Knights have been known for nurturing talent from the Free State and Northern Cape regions, with many players progressing to higher levels of competition. The team plays its home fixtures at Mangaung Oval in Bloemfontein, a venue that has hosted both domestic and international cricket matches. Eastern Cape linyathi is one of the teams participating in South Africa's domestic competitions.

The squad draws players from the Eastern Cape region, an area with a strong grassroots cricket culture and a history of producing notable cricketers. The presence of teams from the Eastern Cape in national competitions reflects South Africa's broader efforts to develop cricket across all provinces and expand opportunities for players outside traditional strongholds.

Today's match result adds to the ongoing competition between regional teams in South Africa's domestic season. The Free State Knights' victory by 47 runs confirms their ability to defend a target in the middle of the season, while Eastern Cape linyathi's performance contributes to their continued participation in domestic tournaments.

No additional individual statistics or performance details were available at the time of reporting.

## Provincial Library Services Capacity Building Programme 2026



Free State MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation Ntombizanele Sifuba

MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation in the Free State, Ms Ntombizanele Sifuba, delivered a keynote address at the Free State Provincial Library Services Provincial Capacity Building Programme 2026, held under the theme: "Digital Transformation in Public Libraries."

The three-day conference brings together library representatives from all five districts across the province, creating a collaborative platform to strengthen and modernise public

library services.

The programme, which is currently being held at Bon Hotel in Mangaung, is attended by key stakeholders, including Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), University of the Free State (UFS), Central University of Technology (CUT), Sizom, and UKS.

The engagement aims to capacitate libraries and officials to enhance service delivery and ensure that public libraries remain responsive to

the evolving needs of communities in a digital era. In her address, MEC Sifuba emphasised that digital transformation is no longer optional but essential for inclusive access to information and knowledge. She highlighted that all 186 public libraries across the province are equipped with internet services, Wi-Fi and broadband connectivity, significantly expanding access to digital resources for communities.

She further noted that identified libraries, including some school libraries, are equipped with digitisation tools and assistive technologies to support visually impaired patrons, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital transition. MEC Sifuba stated; Our vision is to build an inclusive, socially cohesive and empowered Free State through sport, arts, culture and recreation. Our mission is to provide accessible and transformed services that promote participation, redress and sustainable development.

Through our strategic objectives, we are committed to strengthening library and information services, advancing digital access, preserving our heritage, and ensuring that every community — urban and rural alike — benefits from modern, well-resourced and responsive public libraries."

She concluded by reaffirming the Department's commitment to innovation, skills development and partnerships that will position public libraries as dynamic centres of learning, digital access and community development across the province.

# Eskom generation recovery continues



energy being sent into the grid at a cost of R14.89 million, equating to a 0.433% load factor".

"The use of diesel resulted from the dispatching of the independent power producers [IPP] Open Cycle Gas Turbine [OCGT] units in line with existing take-or-pay contractual obligations with the two IPPs. "These agreements were concluded during a period of severe supply constraints to secure guaranteed minimum average usage levels every six months. Under these contracts, Eskom is required to pay for the committed capacity whether it is utilised or not. Accordingly, diesel usage over the next few weeks, may primarily reflect the fulfilment of these contractual obligations.

Eskom has recorded some 280 days without the implementation of load shedding, continuing the power utility's generation recovery.

foundation for economic activity and growth," the power utility said. Last week, average unplanned outages measured at some 9980MW – an improvement of 2784MW from the same period last year. "Over the same period, the Unplanned Capacity Loss Factor [UCLF], reflecting unplanned outages, was at 20.77%, representing a reduction of 4.53% compared to the 25.30% recorded during the same period last year.

"As system performance continues to improve and the EAF strengthens, Eskom's operational focus remains on utilising the most cost-effective primary energy sources, while responsibly managing legacy contractual commitments and maintaining grid stability," Eskom explained. Despite this, year to date expenditure on diesel remains low – coming in below budget. "Year-to-date (1 April 2025 until 19 February 2026), total diesel expenditure is now R5.49 billion lower than at the same time last year, reflecting substantial cost savings and continued improvements in operational performance driven by Eskom's turnaround initiatives," the power utility said.

At the same time, the Energy Availability Factor (EAF) continues to hold steady, rising to some 65.11% for the financial year to date. "Eskom's generation performance continues to show steady and measurable improvement, reinforcing the reliability of South Africa's power system and supporting confidence in the wider economy. Improvements in plant availability, together with reduced unplanned outages, have strengthened the stability of the national grid. "These gains, enabled by the Generation Recovery Plan, are contributing to long-term energy security and helping sustain uninterrupted supply, an essential

"During the same period, Eskom's Planned Capacity Loss Factor [PCLF] – reflecting planned maintenance – was at an average of 10.49%, down from 15.71% in the previous financial year. "In addition, 9 897MW is currently in cold reserve due to excess capacity," Eskom said. The power utility noted that diesel usage last week saw "2.48GWh of

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## NGONGOREHO YA BOTHATA BA LEFU LA TLHAKO – LE - MOLOMO (FMD) POLASING

### MATSHWAO A BONAHALANG: MATHE A ROTHANG HAHOLO, HO HLOTSA LE MATSWABADI A HLAHANG LELEMENG LE DITLHAKONG

#### 1. EMISA HANGHANG

Emisa motsamao ohle wa diphoofole, dipalangwang le batho. Kwala diheke tsa hao.

#### 2. TSEBISA BAMOLAO

Letsetsa Dingaka tsa Diphoofole tsa Mmuso le tsa Praefete hanghang. Ho hloleha ho etsa jwalo ke tiolo ya molao.

#### 3. TLHOKOMEDISO HO BAAHISANE

Tsebisa baahisane ba sebakeng sa Dikilomitara tse 10.

#### 4. KWALLA SEHLOPHA

Kwallela diphoofole le badisa ba belaelwang. O se ke wa feta hara mohlape o moholo.

#### 5. POKELLETSO YA DISAMPOLE

Ngaka ya Diphoofole ya mmuso e tla nka disampolebakeng la ditlhahlobo tsa PCR (diphetho difumaneha nakong ya dihora tse 48 – 72)

#### 6. BOLAYA DIKOKWANAHLOKO "HLWEKISA"

Theha seteishene sa ho bolaya dikokwanahloko sebakeng saho tswa, bakeng la dingaka tsa Diphoofole le basebetsi ba bohlokwa.

#### 7. HO EMELA DIPHETHO

O se ke wa etsa "thekiso ya tshabo" kapa wa tsamaisa diphoofole. Ha tshwaetso e le teng, polasi etla kwalwa molemong wa ho kwallela diphoofole (quarantine).



**Tlhokomediso: Tataiso e akaretsang. Latela ditaello tse hlakileng tsa Dingaka tsa Diphoofole kamehla. Mme o arolelane le basebetsi ba polasing le dihwai tse ahisaneng le wena.**



Department of Agriculture and Rural Development



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# Godongwana Announces Debt Stabilisation, Grant Increases in 2026 Budget

economic growth by accelerating public investment and improving the efficiency of public spending," he said.

## Tax relief and adjustments announced

Government has withdrawn previously proposed tax increases due to stronger-than-expected revenue collection. "The improving fiscal position allows us enough room to withdraw the proposed tax increases, without putting fiscal sustainability or economic activity at risk," Godongwana said. Personal income tax brackets and rebates will be adjusted in line with inflation to ease pressure on households. To encourage savings, the tax-free investment limit will increase from R36 000 to R46 000 per year. Small businesses will also benefit from an increase in the compulsory VAT registration threshold from R1 million to R2.3 million. "In this budget the compulsory VAT registration threshold increases from R1 million to R2.3 million," he said. However, excise duties on alcohol, tobacco and fuel will increase in line with inflation.

## Infrastructure investment prioritised

Government plans to spend more than R1 trillion on infrastructure over the medium term to support economic growth and job creation. Godongwana said infrastructure investment is critical to improving service delivery and strengthening the economy. "Infrastructure investment remains the foundation upon which long-term economic growth, improved service delivery and job creation are built," he said. Investment will focus on improving transport systems, electricity supply and water infrastructure, while encouraging private sector participation.

## Commitment to fiscal discipline

Godongwana said government remains committed to responsible spending and improving efficiency. "We have kept that promise through our commitment to finding savings from unproductive expenditure, closing leakages, and rooting out inefficiencies," he said.

He added that restoring fiscal stability will strengthen South Africa's economic independence and growth prospects. "With the health of our public finances comes a greater degree of economic freedom and sovereignty," Godongwana said. He said the budget reflects government's commitment to improving the lives of South Africans. "This Budget reflects our shared journey and the belief that together we can build a more equal, more prosperous economy," he said.

The budget will now be debated and considered by Parliament before implementation.

Godongwana announced that the old age, disability and care dependency grants will increase by R80 to R2 400 in April 2026. The child support grant will increase by R20 to R580, while the foster care grant will increase to R1 300 later in the year. "Government spending remains highly redistributive. The social wage accounts for more than 60 percent of non-interest spending," he said. The social wage includes spending on healthcare, education and social protection, benefiting millions of citizens. "These allocations support 13.6 million school children, healthcare services to 84 percent of the population and social grants to 26.5 million beneficiaries," he said.

## Economic outlook improving

Godongwana said South Africa's economic growth is projected to reach 1.6 percent in 2026, up from 1.4 percent in 2025. "Our growth outlook is steadily improving," he said. Growth is expected to increase to 2 percent by 2028 as government implements structural reforms and infrastructure investment. The budget deficit is projected to decline from 4.5 percent of GDP in 2025/26 to 3.1 percent in 2027/28. Government debt is expected to stabilise at 78.9 percent of GDP before gradually declining.

Godongwana said government's fiscal strategy focuses on stabilising debt, improving spending efficiency and supporting economic growth. "Our fiscal strategy involves supporting



By Rorisang Rampheteng

Cape Town

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana announced increases in social grants, major infrastructure investment, and the stabilisation of public debt when he delivered the 2026 Budget Speech at the National Assembly of South Africa yesterday.

Godongwana told Parliament the country had reached a critical point in managing its finances after years of economic and fiscal pressure. "Honourable Members, we have reached an important turning point in the management of our public finances," he said. He confirmed that government debt will stabilise for the first time in nearly two decades. "For the first time in 17 years, debt will stabilise and it will continue to fall in the coming years," Godongwana said.

The minister added that the country's improving fiscal position reflects growing economic stability. "These are signals of restored credibility, of renewed resilience, and of a nation regaining its footing," he said.

## Social grants increased

Government has allocated R292.8 billion to social grants for the 2026/27 financial year to support millions of vulnerable South Africans.

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# Siwelele Defiant as Heroic Stop Stuns TS Galaxy

Heading into the fixture, TS Galaxy sits 8th on the table with 24 points from 18 matches. Siwelele occupies 11th position with 18 points from 17 games, having recorded four wins, six draws and seven defeats so far this season. A victory for the home side would reduce the six-point gap between the teams and boost their push toward the top eight.

This will be the second meeting between the two clubs this campaign. In their previous encounter on 26 August 2025, TS Galaxy claimed a 2-0 win. Siwelele has shown resilience at home, relying on a disciplined defensive structure and confident goalkeeping.

The byline battle is expected to be decisive, with the home side determined to frustrate Galaxy's attack and protect their unbeaten home ambitions.



By: Rorisang Rampheteng

Toyota Stadium, Bloemfontein

Siwelele FC will host TS Galaxy in a crucial

Betway Premiership clash on Saturday, 28 February 2026, at Toyota Stadium. Kick-off is scheduled for 18:00 as both sides aim to strengthen their positions in the league standings.



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# Indaba places fire risk crisis under the spotlight

Communities: Collaborative Strategies for Fire Risk Reduction".

The event is hosted in partnership with the Free State Department of COGTA and the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. The two-day event will provide a dynamic platform for collaboration, innovation and knowledge-sharing, with discussions set to focus on critical vulnerabilities, emerging risks, and the evolving future of fire and disaster risk management in South Africa.

In a statement, the department said the Indaba supports a decisive shift from reactive fire response to a proactive, prevention-led, and predictive approach to fire risk reduction. "This shift is anchored in the White Paper on Fire Services and aligned to the priorities of the National Development Plan (NDP), particularly those related to building safer communities, strengthening state capability, and improving disaster resilience," the department said.

Key focus areas for the 2026 Indaba include:

- Enhancing intergovernmental coordination and mutual aid agreements.
- Improving fire risk profiling, early warning systems, and data-driven planning.
- Addressing fire risks in informal settlements and high-density areas.
- Advancing training standards, professionalisation, and compliance with national norms and standards.

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South Africa faces a complex and worsening fire risk environment, driven by rapid urbanisation, the rapid growth of informal settlements, expansion of the wildland-urban interface, climate variability, and uneven municipal capacity.

According to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) fire incidents continue to result in devastating human, economic and infrastructural losses. Year after year, South Africa records financial losses that exceed into billions of rands, a figure that excludes uninsured incidents and the long-term social impact on affected communities.

Against this backdrop, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), under the COGTA, will this week host the annual National Fire Services Indaba, which will bring together key players in the fire and disaster management sector to discuss challenges and solutions for reducing fire risks in the country.

Convened annually by the NDMC, the Indaba seeks to strengthen coordination, policy alignment, and implementation across national, provincial, and municipal fire services. The 2026 Indaba will take place at the President Hotel in Bloemfontein, Free State, from 26 to 27 February under the theme: "Building Resilient

## Free State water levels over 100% capacity



The weekly status of dam levels report released by the Department of Water and Sanitation in the Free State province has revealed that the provincial water storage has recorded 101.3% this week, an increase compared to 80.6% capacity recorded at this time last year.

Gariiep Dam has spiked from 80.5% last year to 105.1% this week, a huge improvement. Vanderkloof Dam standing at high levels, currently sitting at 105.5% this week compared to last year lower levels of 68.6%. Fika-Patso Dam has increased from 66.7% last year to 98.7% this week same time.

Krugersdrift Dam has increased from 58.7% last year to 87.8% this year same time.

Sterkfontein Dam has remained slightly unchanged this week at 99.7%. The dam was 98.4% full as it is compared to last year at this time. Metsi-Matsho Dam hovered slightly lower with 102.6% this week, a decline from last year 109.2% same time. Bloemhof dam is reached capacity of 92.4% an upscale to 87.8% last year same time.

The Department calls on all water users to use water wisely, despite water levels that are satisfactory within the province.

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**Bafana to host Panama in Durban, Cape Town**



before facing the Central American country in the second game in Cape Town on Tuesday, 31 March 2026.

The matches form a critical component of head coach Hugo Broos' build-up programme ahead of the global tournament, which will be hosted by the United States of America, Canada and Mexico from 11 June to 19 July 2026. Bafana Bafana return to Durban for the first time since they were held to goalless draw by Zimbabwe in a tense 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier played at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in October 2025.

The South Africans threw everything they had at the Zimbabweans, but luck was not on their side as the ball was cleared off the line and then the goalposts kept it out of the back of the net on two occasions. They picked themselves up and wrapped up qualification after they beat Rwanda 3-0 in an exhilarating match in Mbombela.

Tickets to the two matches between Bafana Bafana and Panama will open from R80.00 for adults and R50.00 for children under 12 years old. The tickets will be available from Thursday, 26 February 2026.

Durban's Moses Mabhida Stadium and DHL Cape Town Stadium will host Bafana Bafana's two international friendly matches against

Panama next month. The South African senior men's national team host the first match at Moses Mabhida Stadium on Friday 27 March

## Sasol Banyana have an almost full complement of players in camp



Sasol Banyana Banyana have an almost full complement of players in camp following the arrival of six more at their current training base in Polokwane in Limpopo.

Thembi Kgatlana, Amogelang Motau (both Mexico-based), Linda Motlhalo (Scotland), Bongeka Gamede (Denmark), Jessica Wade (Finland) and Lebo Ramalepe have all arrived at

the hotel where the 2022 African Champions are camping while participating in the COSAFA Women's Championship. None of these players have been registered for the regional women's tournament.

"We are excited to have these players in camp as they bring more experience, and I believe this is an exciting time for the youngsters in the squad

as they get to mix with their heroes. We have been saying this is an alignment camp for both the COSAFA and the WAFCON, so the arrival of these players helps us take our preparations a notch higher," said Banyana Banyana Head Coach Dr Desiree Ellis.

"What is also pleasing is that the trio of Linda, Thembi and Amo all scored in their last games at their respective clubs before joining camp, and they come here in good form, which is very encouraging. But we are very excited to have them around so we can look to finalize our team for WAFCON." Hildah Magaia is the only player still to arrive. "Hildah has just signed for a new team in Spain, and following a long wait for her documentation, she only just joined them now. We are working together with the club to see what's best for them, for Hildah and for Sasol Banyana Banyana, but she will be joining us soon," added Dr Ellis.

Banyana Banyana will face Zimbabwe in the semi-final of the COSAFA Women's Championship 2025 on Friday, 27 February 2026 at the New Peter Mokaba Stadium. Kickoff is at 3pm.

In the final, scheduled for Sunday, the winners will meet with either Namibia or Zambia, who will contest the other semi-final. Dr Ellis is expected to announce her final WAFCON 2026 squad in the next coming days once the COSAFA tournament has concluded.

## Ellis looking for improved performance against Zimbabwe in the COSAFA semifinal



Sasol Banyana Banyana coach Dr Desiree Ellis says they are looking for an improved performance in the semi-final of the 2025 COSAFA Women's Championship.

The call comes after the host nation was held to a 1-1 draw by Lesotho in the final group stages match of the tournament on Tuesday. Dr Ellis had made seven changes to the team that defeated Angola in the previous fixture – with Dineo Magagula, Unathi Simayile, Spongakonke Mzobe and Bonolo Mokoma all retaining their places, while Antonia Maponya,

Khutso Pila, Asanda Hadebe, Thorisho Mphelo, Gugu Dhlamini, as well as debutants Zoe October and Fiona Namanyana were introduced against the side from the Mountain Kingdom.

But South Africa was stunned in the 30th minute by a Makhotsa Moalusi strike as Lesotho scored their first goal of the tournament after three matches. Banyana Banyana responded almost immediately through Thorisho Mphelo eight minutes later – her first goal for the senior women's national team in only her second

appearance.

"I thought we didn't start well and they (Lesotho) were very aggressive, they came to play, and we just couldn't get going. When they scored it was a wakeup call, and we scored a few minutes later. We played better in the second half and had a lot of opportunities after we made changes. We will go back and look at things and how we can do better because I felt we could have played a little better. Disappointed with the result as well as the performance," said Dr Ellis.

South Africa looked better in the second half with the introduction of Bongiwwe Thusi, Isabella Ludwig, Gabriela Moodaly-Salgado, Hadebe, Regina Mogolola for Namanyana, Simayile, Mphelo, Mzobe and Dhlamini. "We changed the team a lot, we only had four players from the previous game and obviously now we are going to the semifinals – we have to improve on certain things to be better. We did say when we came here that we wanted to play five games, now we get the opportunity to do that because the game gives you match fitness. We will look back at what we've done, what we could have done better in the game against Lesotho, what worked, what didn't work and then we will prepare for the semifinal," added Dr Ellis.

Despite the draw against Lesotho, Banyana Banyana ended top of Group A following two wins and a draw, leaving them on seven points – five goals scored and one conceded. Lesotho will return home with just one point after two defeats and a draw.

South Africa take on Zimbabwe in the semifinals on Friday at the New Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane.