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Thursday August 19 2010

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COSATU DISTANCES ITSELF FROM VIOLENCE

Mob attacks matric pupils

SINEGUGU NDLOVU & WENDY JASSON DA COSTA

A TEENAGER is nursing a broken collar bone after a mob wearing Cosatu T-shirts beat up matric pupils in Scottburgh with knobkerries.

Scottburgh High School had closed last Thursday because of the intimidation accompanying the nationwide public servants' strike. Yesterday, 107 pupils and four teachers were studying at the local country club when a gang invaded the property, demanding to know what the pupils were doing.

Pupil Johan Naude saw two fellow matrics brutally attacked. "They grabbed two girls by the hair, threw them on the floor and started kicking them. I saw one of the girls hit on the head with a knobkerrie and I was also hit when I tried to help them," he said.

School governing body spokesman Henry Mulcahy said the attackers were part of a larger group of workers who had been picketing at GJ Crookes Hospital. They were apparently tipped off that pupils were studying at the country club and attacked.

Mulcahy said while pupils in lower grades remained at home - with tasks to ensure they did not fall behind the academic schedule - it was decided yesterday that matrics would resume classes at the country club for safety reasons.

A spokesman for the country club said the attackers came rushing across the field, shouting: "What are the kids doing here?"

"We closed the doors. They went around the property and started pulling the front door off its hinges and beat the kids up. We were all terrified."

Police Lieutenant-Colonel Zandra Wiid said five pupils had opened public violence cases.

Cosatu leader Zet Luzipho distanced the organisation from the incident and advised the victims to report the matter to the police.

"Anyone can wear a Cosatu T-shirt. If anyone feels their rights have been violated, they have a right to recourse," he said.

Despite attacks on pupils, the provincial Education Department yesterday urged all matrics to "be in class, studying during this period".

Spokeswoman Mbali Thusi said they were concerned about the

year-end results as matrics had not performed well in the first and second quarters. She called on school governing bodies and parents to help monitor pupils and keep order at schools.

In the meantime, the ANC-aligned Congress of SA Students (Cosas) called for matric exams to be delayed because of the strike.

In 2008, KZN achieved a 57.8 per cent matric pass rate, and 61.1 per cent last year.

Renuka Vithal, deputy vice-chancellor of teaching at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said it was unlikely that the statistics would improve, given the long June holiday to accommodate the World Cup and now the indefinite strike. She said based on the limited amount of "contact teaching time", it was hard to envisage an improvement. Poor pupils would suffer more because they could not afford extra tuition.

Reginald Chilizha, of the National Association of School Governing Bodies, said the body was considering taking legal action.

"Our children's right to education has been violated," he said.

Basic Education Department spokesman Granville Whittle said the department would institute a recovery plan, which would include extra classes. He added that Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga was willing to meet Cosas to discuss its concerns. She also expressed concern about the violence and intimidation at KZN and Gauteng schools.

The Public Servants Association is also expected to begin striking today, meaning another 200 000 government workers, including 41 000 in KZN, could down tools.

The sick are also paying the costs of failed wage negotiations because staff at several hospitals have been forcibly removed from their workstations.

Health MEC Sibongiseni Dhlomo visited King Edward VIII Hospital yesterday and found the casualty department deserted. At some hospitals, strikers prevented emergency services workers from entering and leaving hospitals.

"Even under apartheid, while we supported the struggle against the unjust system, some remained in service to ensure that people received health care," said Dhlomo.

He said the SA Military Health Service had been asked for assistance. "Where there is fairly good attendance and minimal disruption, we are keeping such institutions running. We have also suspended elective surgeries until the situation returns to normal."

Sibusiso Mboti reports that sjambok-wielding strikers attacked public servants at several government department buildings in Pietermaritzburg yesterday.

The strikers went to schools in Imbali and Edendale, forcing staff and pupils to leave, before moving to town. Police confirmed cases of malicious damage to property and intimidation had been laid.

In one instance, staff were forced out of the Education Department's premises. In another, a Statistics SA official was forced to join a mob.

STRIKE ACTION: PAGE 4

PRIME ATTRACTION



A shark thought to be a great white, top left corner, is lured by the decomposing remains of a humpback whale, bottom right, that washed up on Boulders Beach in Ballito, north of Durban, on Saturday. Such carcasses are known to attract large sharks and the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board has advised against swimming in the area until the whale has been removed.

PICTURE: PAM LE NOURY, OCEAN VENTURES

Why Sharks haven't moved to new stadium

BRONWYN GERRETSEN, GUGU MBONAMBI & SAPA

SA RUGBY has blamed the stalemate over a possible Sharks move to the Moses Mabhida Stadium on communication failure and a relationship breakdown between city manager Michael Sutcliffe and Sharks Rugby CEO Brian van Zyl, saying that the issue can no longer be left to the two parties to resolve.

Briefing the parliamentary portfolio committee on sport this week, Saru president Oregan Hoskins said Saru were looking at a new model to host Test matches around the country, but this issue, and a similar one in Cape Town, was going to "stand in our way in a big way".

"We want to use the new stadiums. We want to take the game to the people... The parties must take huge blame for the situation we are in."

Hoskins said Saru now had a situation that was causing "major problems", and that the relationship breakdown between Van Zyl and Sutcliffe was a "large driver" behind the problems in Durban.

"We heard Sutcliffe say they are getting on in a friendly way. I am not so sure about that," he said, adding: "During the World Cup I received a call from Mike. He said he had a big problem with parking because Brian van Zyl was overcharging for parking."

"I said: 'Mike, you have not involved South African Rugby in your deliberations.' I said: 'That is the core of your problem...' I made



SA Rugby president Oregan Hoskins says a relationship breakdown is standing in the way of rugby moving to the Moses Mabhida Stadium, top, from the Absa Stadium, bottom.

it very clear to Mike that this discussion could not be limited to a forum of two people."

Hoskins also said the lack of consultation between the city and rugby authorities before the stadium had been built was a major cause of the problems.

Speaking to The Mercury yesterday, Van Zyl said the decision to build a new stadium "came out of the blue" in the form of a fax from World Cup local organising committee CEO Danny Jordaan.

"There was no discussion with us prior to the decision to build a

new stadium. We had been assisting them by staging matches prior to the World Cup."

Hoskins said the Sharks were going to have "a massive problem" moving to the Moses Mabhida Stadium because of suite configuration.

"There was no discussion, when that stadium was built, with rugby and it could have solved a lot of problems... if the suites were configured in a different way."

Van Zyl said the Moses Mabhida Stadium had 134 suites while the Absa Stadium had 350.

Diamonds man quits Mandela fund

JEREMY Ractliffe has resigned with immediate effect as a trustee of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund after revealing that he received uncut diamonds from model Naomi Campbell, the fund said yesterday.

"Mr Ractliffe regrets his omission to inform the chairperson, chief executive officer and the rest of the board of trustees of the fund of his receipt of the uncut diamonds and acknowledges that had he done so, he and the board would have found a better and lawful way to manage the situation," said children's fund board.

He received the three uncut diamonds from Campbell in 1997. Ractliffe apologised to the board for the "possible reputational risk" his conduct might have caused. The board accepted his apology and his decision to step aside.

A person found in possession of uncut diamonds, which is illegal in South Africa without a licence, faces 10 years imprisonment or a R250 000 fine or both.

Earlier this month, Ractliffe admitted that he took and kept three small uncut diamonds.

He handed the stones to the police on the same day that Campbell testified in The Hague war crimes tribunal on Sierra Leone that she was given the stones while on a visit to South Africa and assumed they were from former Liberian president Charles Taylor - Sapa

ALL YOUR WINE WEEK INFO

W Not only will it give you all you need to know about the event - leaving you free to focus on the 900 available wines - it also gives the top 10 reasons why not to miss this year's Wine Week, provides insight into wine varieties and is full of quirky facts. See Page 10 to find out how to win a case of Stables Umkhosi wine.

THE 2010 Mercury Wine Week at the Suncoast SUNstrip, on August 25 & 26, offers a tremendous selection of wines from more than 120 exhibitors. To help find your way through the exhibition, The Mercury will publish a four-page special guide tomorrow.

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