

De Beers donates solar plants and boreholes

DOVHANI NENGOVHELA

FOUR schools recently received solar plants and one received a borehole to provide water for learners by Ponahalo De Beers Trust (PDT).

Schools under the Musina municipal and Blouberg area benefitted from the donation and official handover on February 4 at Musina.

The schools who benefitted are Mathipa Makgato High School, Ratanang Special School, Alldays High School and Musina High School which received solar plants while Rixile Primary School from Musina received a borehole.

The solar plants are to replace Eskom power and boreholes with solar panels in an attempt to reduce electricity costs. High electricity bills, coupled with load-shedding, have prompted PDT to rope in solar energy to ease the strain on the local schools and the scourge of drought continues to ravage the province, with many parts without a drop of water, the school has not been immune.

Jolene Shaw, general manager of Knowledge Pele, said the main reason for donating a project was because of the escalating cost of electricity.

"It has become unaffordable. The PDT Legacy Project not only addresses the energy, water, sanitation and IT infrastructure needs of schools, but importantly, seeks to create local

skills for the long-term maintenance of this infrastructure. She said that PDT saw it as an opportunity to contribute to needy learners.

"Access to water is a basic human right. We felt it was important to empower the learners with a reliable source of renewable energy to improve their daily lives and allow them to sustainably operate their agricultural businesses into the future," said Shaw.

The principal of Rixile Primary School, Moses Chauke, said they were excited about the donation.

"This is a great relief to us as a school and we wholeheartedly thank our sponsor for this generous donation. Water is life and without water we cannot progress. This donation will go a long way in improving the lives of learners and teachers at the school," he said.

The circuit manager of Soutpansberg East, Ntavahanyeni Phaswana said they believe the development of a nation goes hand-in-hand with the availability of proper facilities.

"Solar technology comes in handy because we don't have to connect to the grid. We cannot be left behind because we are in the rural schools only the people who are in the cities are moving ahead with the fourth industrial revolution. The ultimate goal is to make these schools become smart as well, like we have smart cities."



Traditional leaders from Malamulele with Vhembe Mayor Dowelani Nenguda, the Deputy Minister of Transport, Sindisiwe Chikunga, Collins Chabane Mayor, Shadrack Maluleke and Shirilele Secondary School principal, Magezi Kubayi during the handover of the bicycles.

Learners encouraged to take up careers in aviation

Silas Nduvheni

THE Deputy Minister of Transport, Sindisiwe Chikunga encouraged Gr 12 learners from schools in and around Vhembe to consider undertaking studies in transport-related qualifications such as aviation, maritime, rail, roads and public transport as the department was offering bursaries through the Transport Seta.

"There are wide career choices in the transport sector which learners could choose from.

I have especially requested officials in our department to ensure that farm and rural learners also get opportunities to apply for such available funding and programmes such as Shova Kalula are multifaceted to include skills development and training, whose aim it is to exhibit available careers in the transport sector," said Chikunga.

Chikunga, who promised to this year donate a science laboratory to Shirelele

Secondary School, encouraged learners to apply earlier for funding in her department to avoid disappointment.

She was joined by Vhembe Mayor, Dowelani Nenguda, Collins Chabane Mayor, Shadrack Maluleke and Thulamela Mayor, Sarah Rammuda on February 6 at the Worship Tabernacle Christian Church in Malamulele where her department's Shova Kalula project started with the donation of 257 bicycles to deserving learners at Shirelele and Hlulukweni secondary schools.

According to Chikunga, the department aims to provide a fleet of one million bicycles to learners countrywide who have to walk to school for further than 3km.

She warned learners about the dangers of abusing liquor, drugs and bullying and said schools should be places of learning and teaching.

Magezi Kubayi, the principal of Shirilele Secondary School appreciated the donation.



During the hand over of the borehole. Moses Chauke principal of Rixile Primary School, Dr Ntavahanyeni Phaswana and Eladson Banda.

'More schools in new financial year'

KOKETSO SEKHWELA

THE Department of Education has confirmed that the construction of more schools in the city has been prioritised for the 2023/24 financial year.

Last Thursday, Education MEC Mavhungu Lerule-Ramakhanya and Polokwane Mayor John Mpe held an enclosed meeting to discuss the possibility to increase the number of schools in the city to meet the ratio of a growing population.

Departmental media liaison officer, Mike Maringa confirmed that the meeting was held to relay their plans for the 2023/24 financial year, so that the municipality prepares adequately the provision of water, electricity, road infrastructure and other related logistics.

Maringa could not confirm the number of schools expected to be built or their geographic locations, as it would be formally announced during the State of the Province Address by Premier Chupu Mathabatha within the coming weeks.

The next financial year starts on April 1, and an undisclosed budget has already been allocated to the department, by the national department of Basic Education, to commence with infrastructure development.

Meanwhile, during a media briefing

held by Mpe over the state of water provision in the city, a day before his meeting with Lerule-Ramakhanya; he related his wish to CV about increasing the number of schools by at least two.

"We previously announced that we wished to assist in the facilitation of more schools. We are designated to discuss land use, planning, budget timeously for water and electricity services among others are well adjusted," he said.

The department has been in the spotlight since January 10 as learners await space in local schools - mainly because of feeder zone issues.

A feeder zone is the area from which a school accepts its core intake. Some parents even took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction over the non-placement of learners, saying they had a right to take their children to a school which they saw fit.

This, after the department communicated that the only available schools where their children could still be placed were Westenburg Secondary School and Good Hope Primary School.

Even so, the city's public schools have made it apparent that classes are overpopulated, placing pressure on the department to prioritise infrastructure development.

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