

SABC to dominate the uncensored news

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The SABC is likely to continue to dominate headlines this week as protests against the public broadcaster's recent controversial decisions are set to continue.



Journalists and civil groups have criticised controversial chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng's decision to ban coverage of violent protests, and the purging of staff at the national broadcaster.

Last week, criticism against Motsoeneng's leadership came to a head after he suspended three senior journalists at the SABC who had objected to Motsoeneng's protest ban.

The broadcaster's acting CEO Jimi Matthews also resigned, saying that he could no longer be part of what was happening at the SABC. Further details surrounding his decision to resign emerged over the weekend with Matthews describing Motsoeneng's power grab and the climate of fear at the public broadcaster.

On Monday, civil society groups the Right2Know Campaign and the SOS Coalition are to have a meeting with other organisations to co-ordinate further protest action against the SABC.

Meanwhile, the Independent Communications Authority of SA (Icasa) will deliver its ruling on the SABC's ban on coverage of violent protests on Thursday.

The complaint to Icasa was made by lobby groups Media Monitoring Africa, the SOS Coalition and the Freedom of Expression Institute. They argued that the decision to ban coverage was in violation of the broadcaster's role.

The SACP is also due to picket outside the offices of both the SABC and Gupta-owned ANN7 on a date that is to be announced this week. The party said that it would be doing so in support of staff who had been dismissed or suspended at both organisations.

Monday also marks the day when the Electoral Commission of SA (IEC) will start printing ballot papers for the forthcoming August 3 local elections.

It is unclear what whether the National Freedom Party (NFP) will be able to contest the elections, as it awaits the outcome of the Electoral Court application to have its disqualification set aside.

Last Friday the party appeared at the Electoral Court to appeal the IEC's decision to disqualify it from contesting in the elections after it failed to pay the required deposit for the registration of parties contesting in the elections by the due deadline. The court has reserved judgment on the matter, leaving the party in limbo.

On Tuesday the High Court in Pretoria will hear arguments from the City of Tshwane and business rights group AfriBusiness in the unfolding electricity meter saga.

The electricity meter debacle has become the albatross of current mayor Kgosietsi "Sputla" Ramakgopa's tenure.

The controversial smart meter contract has added financial pressure on the metro that could result in a credit rating downgrade by Moody's. A credit opinion released by the agency has flagged the city's high debt levels, cash-flow pressure and costs associated with the smart meter contract as credit risks.

On Thursday, the inquiry into the M1 bridge collapse is scheduled to resume with testimony from construction firm Murray & Roberts expected.

The labour department launched the inquiry after the collapse of a temporary pedestrian and cyclist bridge over the M1 freeway north of Johannesburg in October 2015 that resulted in the deaths of two people and injury to 19 others.

The Section 32 hearing was set up in terms of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to probe instances of negligence.

Source: Business Day

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