

ROMITA HANUMAN

## New buses for Durban fleet

REMANT Alton, the privately-owned consortium which runs the municipality's privatised bus service, is spending about R200-million on new buses.

Remant Operations Manager Paul Rush said they expected to have acquired at least 49 buses from Mer-

cedes-Benz by the end of this month.

By the new year, this would bring the total number of Remant buses running on eThekweni routes to 175.

The buses will replace the 59 that were gutted in a

mysterious fire at the Umlazi depot in April last year.

The loss of the buses has harmed Remant's reputation as a reliable service provider and had "put a serious dent in the cash-flow of the company," said Rush.

Remant has had to continue paying off the burnt buses while an insurance claim is the subject of a legal dispute, he said.

Earlier this year, Department of Transport officials found a large proportion of Remant

Alton's buses were unroad-worthy and suspended them. Rush said: "We want to improve the level of service, because at Remant, we want more reliable vehicles."

Meanwhile, the company has started an initiative to improve customer service. Drivers are to be taught the Batho Pele (People First) principles.

## IN BRIEF

### Magubane exhibition

A PHOTOGRAPHIC exhibition by Peter Magubane, entitled Women of South Africa, is on show at the Gateway shopping centre until Monday.

Hosted by Transnet port terminals, it tells the story of women's empowerment in our country through striking black and white photographs, dating back to the day of 9 August 1956 when women marched to protest the carrying of passes.

After the formalities, you will have the opportunity to interview both Dr Magubane and Mr Morwe and to view the exhibition.

### Trauma centre for Phoenix

THE Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital Thuthuzela Care Centre for trauma victims was officially opened on 3 August by the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Neliswa Nkonyeni.

Sibaya casino donated R2.2-million to build and equip the facility in Phoenix.

The centre's trained staff will help people who have been victims of crime, rape and other abuse.

Set aside from the main buildings of the hospital, the centre will give people in need of dedicated support, counselling and treatment a more intimate experience with health-workers.

### Ladies Night concert back

THE Ladies Night concert rolls into town again this weekend as part of the city's Women's Month celebrations.

The concert is to be held at the Westridge Tennis stadium on Saturday.

As a treat for the ladies the organisers have invited only male artists, including US duo K-CI & Jojo, Keith Sweat, Ginuwine and local heart-throb Ntando.

Also on Saturday at the Playhouse will be a gospel concert to officially end a Women's Month conference that had been held at this venue.

Among the expected performers are Hlengiwe Mhlaba and Deborah Frasier.

### Art event at the Pavilion

THE Pavilion is hosting an Art in the Mall event this weekend to raise funds for the Sunflower Fund, a bone marrow registry to aid leukemia sufferers in South Africa. Artists, including school pupils, are invited to enter a competition, which will see them spending Saturday in the shopping centre, creating a work of art that captures "life in the Pav". Prizes for the competition total R12 000.

# New pipes will cost city R550m

KEN MCHUNU

WORK is to begin soon in Phoenix, Umlazi, Woodlands, Alverstone and Tongaat on the first phase of a R550-million project to replace the ageing water system across eThekweni.

The project is expected to save the city R64-million a year in water that is being lost because of leaking pipes.

The Water and Sanitation Department project was initially expected to be completed by 2012. However, efforts are being made to complete it two years earlier.

The project involves replacing concealed water mains and pipes that have reached the end of their economic life.

Alan Kee, Project Executive, said the new system would be strong, flexible and long-lasting. This, he said, would mean less water interruptions and leaks from burst pipes.

Leaks account for 8% of eThekweni's water use.

The project would reduce maintenance costs, and result in less damage to property and fewer traffic disruptions from burst water pipes and other problems, Kee said.

About 20 000 job opportunities would be created and small companies would be trained and mentored by the main contractors.

New technology would be used to keep disruptions to a minimum.

Kee said: "Total water outages are only likely in certain areas when we switch to a new system from an existing one after work is completed."

Once work is completed in the first five areas, Kwa-Mashu, Chatsworth, Wentworth, Mobeni, Emoyeni Grange and Jan Roz would follow.

### Priority

Kee said it was likely other municipalities would also start pipe replacement projects, once eThekweni had proven the scheme's worth.

Derek Naidoo, Deputy City Manager of the Procurement and Infrastructure cluster, said the project was starting in areas which were reservoir zones, which had been identified as first priority.

Naidoo said local labour was being used as required by Council policy for all developmental projects.

"The project will create opportunities for local companies and small, medium and micro enterprises.

"We have finalised selection criteria for emerging companies that will be part of the construction process and we are ready to start," he said.



**FIRM FOUNDATION:** Trainees Sandile Ndlovu and Themba Gumede demonstrate their new-found skills while Thoko Xulu (centre), of the city's Health Department, keeps a watchful eye  
Picture: DERRICK DLAMINI

## Lads build skills, find jobs

GABI KHUMALO and DERRICK DLAMINI

THIRTEEN lucky lads graduated this week from a building skills training programme.

They received the training free of charge from Group Five and the Social Development Division of the city's Health Department, and already it has given the young men a break in life.

The group, most of who were from the Ohlange orphanage, which has since closed, were taught bricklaying, shuttering, and scaffolding.

And in addition to the 20-day building skills course, which started on 16 July, the

13 were taught basic life skills.

The training was part of the department's outreach programme to vulnerable youth.

The city's Health Committee Chairwoman, Cllr Nomvuzo Shabalala, said it was a wonderful initiative as it provided vulnerable young people with skills that would help them find work.

"We would like to thank I Care, a non-profit organisation which helped fund the transportation of the boys to training, and Sakhithemba in Amanzimtoti's YMCA, for accommodating them," said Shabalala.

Social Development Division Manager, Thoko Xulu

said after the training, the boys would be integrated into their own communities.

"This is the beginning, we'll maintain this partnership with Group Five," said Xulu.

One of the trainees, Siyabonga Cele said the course, which is accredited by the construction industry Sector Education and Training Authority, had given them hope.

"It has helped our integration into a society, some of us might have wronged one way or the other," said Cele.

At the graduation ceremony on Monday, Group Five announced it would be employing all 13 trainees at the Moses Mabhida Stadium site.

# Umlazi residents welcome service centre



**BATHO PELE:** Bongani Makhanya, a customer, gets help from Thokozani Mnomiya, a Revenue Department cashier, at the new Sizakala Customer Service Centre at the Umlazi Mega City  
Picture: SOHANA SINGH

DERRICK DLAMINI and SOHANA SINGH

IT HAS been open for only a few days but already the new Sizakala Customer Service Centre at the Umlazi Mega City is proving to be a revelation.

Scores of residents have been flocking to use this long-awaited one-stop municipal services shop.

On offer are municipal departments including Electricity, Water, Metro Police, Revenue, and cashiers where residents can pay their municipal bills.

Welcoming the Sizakala staff to the Umlazi Mega City, the Head of Regional Centres, Gerard Strydom, reminded staff that excellent customer service should be their goal.

"We need to treat and acknowledge each customer

as an individual. By doing this, we change negative perceptions about the Council's customer service.

"This centre is part of the municipality's efforts to bring services closer to the people," said Strydom.

He said staff should ensure customers "leave the centre with happy faces".

The Deputy Head of Regional Centres, Mina Lesoma, said: "As a government institution, we should ensure we provide equal and unbiased service to all our citizens regardless of their race, religion or political background. We are here for the people and we should make them feel like part of the family."

Joy Ngcobo, Customer Service supervisor at the centre, said it had been a fulfilling to be part of an initiative to im-

prove service delivery.

"Seeing community members, young and old, expressing delight at our centre is marvellous. Most of them say this is long overdue. They are relieved they will no longer have to travel far to pay their municipal bills," she said.

Vusumuzi Biyela, a long-time resident of Umlazi, was among the customers who couldn't wait for the official opening of the centre.

He said: "Words can't describe my enthusiasm about this facility. It's a state-of-the-art centre of a kind we used to see in the city only. Today, we proudly have it here. No more long walks," said the old man.

Zandile Maphanga, of the Electricity Department, said: "We will ensure we reciprocate the faith people have shown by dishing out excellent customer service."