



When it's the woman snoring... ▶ 25

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# On a wing and a prayer



Passengers had a narrow escape yesterday when the landing gear on the left wing of a British Airways Comair aircraft collapsed as it was landing at OR Tambo International Airport. The 94 passengers and six crew members disembarked safely, with no reports of any injuries. See Page 4

PICTURE ABOVE: WARREN MANN

# Water shortage warning

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## Residents urged to save the resource as dam levels dip

WATER supply levels in the Joburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni metros are standing on low, and Rand Water has cautioned residents to use water sparingly.

This is as persistent heat and severe drought take their toll on Gauteng and many other parts of the country.

Last week, the dams ran to a dangerously low level of 18 percent. And although water levels improved to between 45 percent and 47 percent over the weekend, they fell short of the required volumes to ease the

supply shortages. Normal reservoir levels should be between 60 and 90 percent now.

The persistent high temperatures in Rand Water's area of supply have placed a strain on its bulk water system, spokesman Justice Mohale said.

"The lack of rainfall has further exacerbated the situation. The high water demand is projected to cause localised problems in some parts of the City of Johannesburg, City of Tshwane and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. If their levels

drop, it becomes difficult for us to increase our own levels," Mohale said.

Rand Water's bulk supply system is concerning, yet stable. Rand Water and its municipal customers are in discussions to jointly manage the situation, while consumers are urged to use water sparingly.

Water experts said they had predicted the situation was bound to happen, adding that the country was running out of water as dam levels dropped.

The country is facing the worst

drought since 1992, and some municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal have imposed water restrictions. This has resulted in reduced maize and sugar crops.

Johannesburg Water said its systems were not under pressure.

Spokeswoman Eleanor Mavimbela said reservoir levels were satisfactory and the reticulation system was also fine, but she urged residents "to continue to save water by not watering their gardens, not leaving dripping taps and taking shorter showers".

Ekurhuleni said its systems and reticulation were fine - for now.

Spokesman Themba Gadebe said the municipality was experiencing higher consumption because of the heatwave, but it was managing its water levels.

Christine Colvin, a hydrogeologist and senior manager for the freshwater programme at the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF) South Africa, said that in some municipalities in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, dam levels have been low the entire year.

KwaZulu-Natal has introduced water restrictions, while in the Western Cape, reservoir levels were 20 percent down from last year.

"The WWF is focusing on water-scarce areas, including trying to prevent mining in them. We cannot control the rain but we can control activity on this land," Colvin said.

While the WWF was supporting Rand Water's call to use water sparingly, it should also be making a critical input in the high-altitude water sources such as Lesotho and the Drakensberg, which were

feeding Gauteng. The Department of Water Affairs said key issues leading to water shortages were poor planning, budget constraints, supply chain management issues and inappropriate technical solutions.

In addition to those other factors were a lack of community acceptance or support, poor levels of own-revenue generation and limited expenditure capacity, poor metering and billing systems, and poorly trained and apathetic staff.

Meanwhile, the South African Weather Service forecasts rain and thundershowers today and tomorrow. Thursday and Friday are expected to be sunny.

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## Students divided on when to end fees protest

WHAT has been hailed as a heroic students' movement against university fees is now causing consternation among students divided on whether to end the protest or not, following the government's "zero percent fee increase" announcement.

And as many universities remained closed yesterday, the #FeesMustFall movement is now under threat of being construed as a self-seeking, political grandstanding campaign.

Attempts by Wits management, notably vice-chancellor Adam Habib, to resolve the impasse were yesterday thwarted by disagreements between student groups.

This was despite Habib announcing a nine-point plan that included

commitment to finding financial resources to support the children of all workers employed in currently outsourced services. He also held closed forums with opposing groups.

Cracks between students were also clearly shown in the petitions calling for a resumption of classes, with more than 4 000 students having signed up on an online petition.

However, the students opposed to a return to classes insisted they were concerned that if the government does not give a guarantee on its promise of free education, they could be faced with unaffordable fee increases again next year.

#ANCCapture began trending on Twitter, with many people weighing in. Student leaders Shaera Kalla

and Nompundelo Mkatshwa are said to have been present at the meeting with Habib, as was President Jacob Zuma's daughter Thuthukile.

According to @simamkeleD, the reason for the meeting was to bring a stop to the #FeesMustFall protest.

She posted on Twitter: "The decision to go ahead with #FeesMustFall is against the ANC interests, and they are lobbying for strikes to end #ANCCapture."

"They don't get why students

want to demand #FreeEducation & to #EndOutsourcing. Because that would require structural change."

A group of students then allegedly found out about this "private meeting" and interrupted it, demanding to know what was going on. @simamkeleD said "emotions ran high" and students felt betrayed.

The growing unrest from students who did want classes to resume so that they can write exams

was punctuated by two burning tyres outside the Great Hall. It was not clear who lit the fire, and security were quick to douse the flames.

First-year student Raymond Siphon Ngwenya said while he supported the #FeesMustFall campaign, he was concerned that free education would reduce the quality of education at Wits.

"For the school to function, it's money. Where's the government going to get that money?" he asked.

He added that the government would have to raise taxes, which meant that the parents of lower-income students would still have to pay more than they could afford, just indirectly.

A group of about 50 students marched across campus and into Senate House hall, where Habib was meeting students, to demand that classes resume.

The group also yelled "We want to write exams!" at passers-by and



interrupted the discussions in Senate House with chanting and stomping.

Wits was expected to be closed again today as students and management continue with their talks.

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