

■ FRAUD

Former bank employee implicated in vehicle-finance scam

KAILENE PILLAY and CHANELLE LUTCHMAN

THE net is closing in on the kingpins who masterminded an elaborate scheme to defraud Standard Bank of more than R27 million.

In the scam, unemployed people made fraudulent applications to the bank for vehicle finance.

Two men were arrested in Phoenix on Saturday, and four luxury vehicles – including a BMW M3 and a high-end Land Rover – were seized. The men are expected to appear in court soon.

Police sources yesterday revealed that the arrest of a female former Standard Bank employee was also imminent.

Last week, The Mercury's sister newspaper, Post, reported that 11 people linked to the scam were arrested and had their assets seized.

Cam-Aron Aidan Pillay, 20, Junaid Khan, 24, Fatima Ershad, 43, Kevin Pillay, 33, Rajesh Dewduth, 39, Dhanraj Ramsunder, 44, Wendy Mvundla, 23, Kaylin Salik, 19, Malvin Valayundan, 31, Govindma Moonsamy, 58, and Nadine Govindasamy, 41, appeared in the Durban Magistrate's Court on 22 counts of fraud last Tuesday.

Police seized fifteen luxury vehicles, valued at R15m, last week. But sources said there were at least 100 vehicles obtained through the scam.

The 11 accused were released on

R1 000 bail each.

All the suspects, except for Govindasamy who handed herself over to police, were arrested by members of the Provincial Commercial Crime Investigations Unit and the metro police, in various operations in Chatsworth, Phoenix, Stanger and Durban North.

It is alleged that the fraudulent applications were vetted by the bank employee, who has since been fired from her job.

Sources close to the case said investigations by Standard Bank revealed that the suspects allegedly handed in fraudulent documents in a bid to obtain a motor vehicle loan.

The loan was approved by the bank employee. "The kingpins would befriend the victims and convince them to open a bank account on the pretence of wanting to purchase a luxury vehicle."

It has been alleged that once the victims received their bank card, they would hand it over to the kingpin. Some of these victims included people picked up off the street.

The account would then be activated with card swipes and deposits. After three months of transactions, the kingpins would then make an online application for vehicle finance, the source said.

Once the finance was approved,

the victim would go with the kingpins to a dealership, where they would purchase a luxury vehicle and sign for the deal.

"However, soon after the kingpins would take the vehicle and the victim would receive a cash payout to keep quiet," said the source.

The court heard that the amount received by each victim varied with payments between R45 000 and R160 000. Standard Bank spokesperson Ross Linstrom said the matter was an ongoing investigation.

"Standard Bank has a zero tolerance stance on fraud or theft of any kind and will take the necessary action, when it's appropriate to do so."

■ EXCLUSION

Unisa students protest over deregistration

Durban shuts doors, others expected to join

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YET another student protest is brewing, with Unisa's main campus in Durban shutting its doors yesterday after students protested against the academic and financial exclusion of a number of students.

About 1 500 students from Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses have allegedly been deregistered by Unisa.

The affected students include returning students who were doing bridging courses, those who failed to pass 50% of their subjects because they claimed they did not have study material, and new students whom the institution allegedly failed to register.

The students have allegedly been told to register next semester.

Yesterday, all study groups and tutorial classes were halted in Durban and students at the Pietermaritzburg campus held a mass meeting.

"This is starting at the main campus (Durban) and by (today) we believe all other campuses will be joining the protest," said a student leader who declined to be named.

Students said they felt they were being mistreated by the institution. "How can we be told we should return next semester when this semester has already been paid for?" one student asked.

The protest comes as Durban University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology and the Uni-

versity of Zululand are resuming their academic programmes after student protests that threatened to derail the academic year.

In a memorandum of demands drafted by the Student Representative Council and supplied to The Mercury by Unisa, the students said they were promised they would receive their allowances from February 28.

They said the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) had confirmed that money for the allowances had been sent to Unisa.

"But not a single student has received their allowance, yet students are expected to write their assignments that are due (this month) and also prepare for exams that start (next month)."

"Students did not perform well last year. We all know we had a problem with book allowances. How then do you expect a student to pass without getting all the necessary support? This was the fault of the university and NSFAS," said the memorandum.

It said the exam timetable had been brought forward from May to April to accommodate the national elections, which has further compromised their ability to pass this semester.

"The memorandum of demands has been received and forwarded to the relevant management offices in the region and in Pretoria," said Unisa spokesperson Martin Ramotshela.

Police spokesperson Lieutenant-Colonel Thulani Zwane said the protest had been peaceful.

■ SERVICE DELIVERY



THE Shamase family of Nongoma, who lived in a mud house, left, for several years, received a new home yesterday.

Emotional pensioner gets keys to his new home

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A NONGOMA pensioner was overcome with emotion when his new home was officially handed over to him yesterday.

Khekhe Shamase, who lives in KoMbuzi rural area in Nongoma, received the keys to his house from the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Ravi Pillay, yesterday.

"We were a laughing stock in this community and there was nothing we could do, as we only survive with pensions," Shamase said, as he described what it was like living in a mud house.

The department said the KoMbuzi Rural Housing Project's total yield on completion would be 1 500 units, and the outstanding 1 000 units will be rolled out as phase two and phase three at 500 units per phase.

According to Pillay, 491 houses had been completed, with the nine houses still outstanding to be completed in the coming weeks.

Shamase, 78, said living in a mud



KWAZULU-NATAL MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Ravi Pillay, hands over a house to Khekhe Shamase.

house was difficult. "When it rained, there would be water coming in from the roof and we wouldn't sleep as water would be

all over the floor," he said.

He added that he was also pleased that his new home had an inside toilet.

Shamase said his family of six would also feel safer.

"We were promised a home long ago, but at least it has finally come and I'm very happy. I hope that other people will also get this help as this is a very poor community," he said.

Pillay said the cost of Phase One of the project was R64.1 million and that this was a huge economic investment, particularly as it relates to rural development.

"The other outstanding 1 000 units will be done in the subsequent Phases Two and Three, thus bringing the total cost of the entire KoMbuzi Rural Housing Project to close to R185m invested in this area under the Mandlakazi," he said.

"We will ensure that Nongoma is covered ward to ward with housing projects in excess of 12 000 units covering almost all villages, as is the case with this project, which covers KoMbuzi, eGagasini, Domba, Qondile and Number 7," said Pillay.

■ DISCIPLINE

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THE South African Council for Educators (Sace) will today launch a programme aimed at protecting teachers in the classroom. The Teachers' Rights, Responsibilities and Safety Programme will be officially launched in Gauteng and later rolled out to provinces and districts around the country.

Speaking to The Mercury before the launch, Sace spokesperson Themba Ndhlovu said the launch came on the back of the recent safety summit, where there was a call to protect teachers in the classroom.

Programme set to protect teachers in classrooms

He said Sace was aware of the many challenges teachers faced daily, including cases where teachers were assaulted by parents or pupils.

Last month, a 52-year-old Rustenburg teacher was rushed to hospital after a parent assaulted her. Mpuseng Sepotokele, a Grade 3 teacher, was accused of beating a pupil in her class, whose mother then assaulted her with an umbrella.

A Durban high school teacher, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said

the situation in today's classrooms had changed drastically.

"We never feared our teachers, we simply respected their authority in the classroom. Now a pupil will stand up and challenge you. If they are rowdy and want to cause trouble, as a teacher you cannot reprimand them. They will take you on," the teacher said.

The move for the programme has been welcomed by teachers unions.

South African Democratic Teachers Union spokesperson, Nomarashiya

Caluza, said it was important to understand what teachers were faced with.

"Teachers have been, and continue to be, assaulted by pupils.

"We believe that Sace has been silent on these matters and this has created the impression that they do not care," she said.

National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa chief executive, Thirona Moodley, said the ongoing incidents of school violence had escalated to an unacceptable level.

"Violence in schools has affected pupils, teachers and community members. Parents are being killed outside schools, there are violent robbery attempts during school hours and attacks on members of the community by pupils. We need to return to a situation where schools become safe environments," Moodley said.

She said teachers had a right to teach in a safe working environment and the launch of the programme was a step in the right direction.

Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Parents' Association, Vee Gani, implored parents to instil discipline in their children at home.

NATIONAL LAUNCH OF THE GOOD GREEN DEEDS PROGRAMME

The President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, cordially invites you to join him at the launch of the Good Green Deeds Programme.

The Good Green Deeds programme is aimed at changing behaviour towards littering, illegal dumping, and towards waste in general. The Programme is part of our commitment to clean South Africa, to make our cities, towns and rural areas places where it is safe and healthy for all to live.

Date: 08 March 2019
Time: Gates open at 08:00 AM
Venue: Sisa Dukashe Stadium, Mdantsane, East London

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