



correctional services

Department:
Correctional Services
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

25 March 2023

DCS INVESTIGATION ON THABO BESTER

On 3 May 2022, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) received a report from Mangaung Correctional Centre, a public-private partnership (PPP) facility contracted to Bloemfontein Correctional Contracts, operated by G4S, indicating that offender Thabo Bester committed suicide by setting himself alight in his cell at about 3h25. This incident attracted media attention and it was confirmed to various media houses as received from G4S.

Recorded as an unnatural death, the Standard Operating Procedures dictated that an investigation be launched and the incident be reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS). In line with the Concession Contract, two officials from the DCS were appointed by the Controller (an official of DCS) to conduct an investigation into the incident.

DCS is now in a position to bring forth findings of its investigation on Thabo Bester, an offender sentenced to life and 75 years imprisonment, running concurrently. It has to be stated that this statement only provides an account from DCS as SAPS is still seized with the matter and conducting its own investigation.

A post-mortem conducted on the body that burnt beyond recognition in Cell 35 at Mangaung Correctional Centre, revealed that it was an adult male with blunt force trauma to his head. The post-mortem report further revealed that there were no signs of smoke inhalation in the body. Furthermore, it uncovered that that pancreas and the spleen in the body were in the early stages of decomposition. Over and above that, the DNA sequencing with a person identified to be the mother of Bester failed to indicate a common ancestor, or a match.

Based on the above, a plausible conclusion will mean that the said body referred to above is not of Thabo Bester. This is the basis upon which the DCS investigation report concluded that Bester escaped from lawful custody on 3 May 2022.

Critical at this stage is for Thabo Bester to be found. DCS is appealing to the public to assist with any information that may lead to the re-arrest of Bester. Such information should be provided to the nearest police station or a correctional services facility.

DCS signed a PPP agreement with the Contractor, Bloemfontein Correctional Contracts to design, construct, operate and maintain a correctional centre for 2 928 bed spaces, just outside Bloemfontein for a contract period of 25 years. This contract commenced with operations on 1 July 2001 and will end on 30 June 2026. DCS has no intention of extending the contract beyond the expiry date.

DCS has a duty of monitoring the daily operations at the facility to ensure that the Contractor complies with the Conditions of the Concession Contract and Schedules.

No stone will be left unturned in getting to the bottom of Thabo Bester's escape and there will be serious consequences for any party involved.

ENDS

Singabakho Nxumalo: 079 523 5794 | Logan Maistry: 083 644 4050
Singabakho.Nxumalo@dcs.gov.za | Logan.Maistry1@dcs.gov.za

Call Centre: 0860 000 327
enquiry.complaints@dcs.gov.za
www.dcs.gov.za