

MeerKAT to be operational within five years

By Elias Tibane

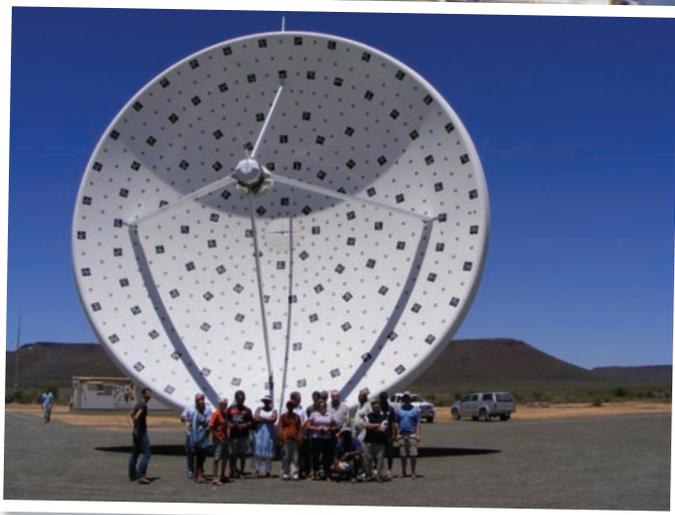


The Karoo Array Telescope (MeerKAT), which is a precursor to the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), is expected to be operational within five years. Even long before this deadline, more than 43 000 hours of observing time have already been allocated to radio astronomers from Africa and around the world. These experts have applied for time to do research with the telescope, which will consist of 64 dishes, each 13,5 m in diameter.

The MeerKAT will be built in the radio reserve near Carnarvon in the Northern Cape. The development of seven dishes, called KAT 7, has already been completed. KAT 7 is a prototype that will be used to test all of the telescope systems – the antennas, the receiver systems and the complex software and computing systems.

Meanwhile, following an initial identification of sites suitable for the SKA by the International SKA Steering Committee in 2006, southern Africa and Australia are the finalists. A consortium of the major international science funding agencies, in consultation with the SKA Science and Engineering Committee, is expected to announce the selected site for the SKA in 2012.

At about 50 to 100 times more sensitive than any other radio telescope on Earth, the SKA will be able to probe the edges of our Universe. It will help to answer fundamental questions in astronomy, physics and cosmology, including the nature of dark energy and dark matter. It will be a powerful time machine that scientists will use to go back in time to explore the origins of the first galaxies, stars and planets. The construction of the SKA is expected to cost about R14,25 billion.



South Africa ready to conduct Census 2011

South Africa is ready to conduct the country's biggest ever census next year, according to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA).

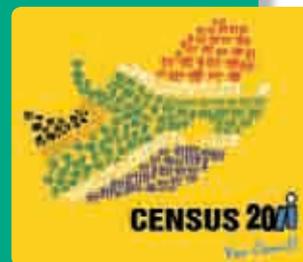
While R1,2 million has already been allocated to Stats SA to conduct Census 2011, the total cost of the project could amount to more than R1 billion. By mid-October, Stats SA was still negotiating with National Treasury for an additional R700 million.

The census is expected to provide temporary employment to more than 120 000 fieldworkers, who will count more than 14 million households nationally, including illegal immigrants and homeless people, from 10 to 31 October 2011.

"This census is set to provide the most comprehensive picture of the South African society and economy in the post-apartheid era," said Statistician-General Pali Lehohla.

The census will form part of a continent-wide commitment by most African countries to participate in the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, which began in 2005 and ends in 2014. The campaign aims to provide comprehensive data on the continent to assist in improved planning and development.

Census 2011 will be the third census conducted by a democratic South African government. The first population census in post-apartheid South Africa was conducted in 1996, followed by another in 2001. Although it was supposed to be conducted every five years, owing to some capacity challenges within Stats SA, the 2006 census was rescheduled for 2011. Instead, a Community Survey was conducted in its place in February 2007. The main objective of the survey was to provide demographic and socio-economic data at municipal level.



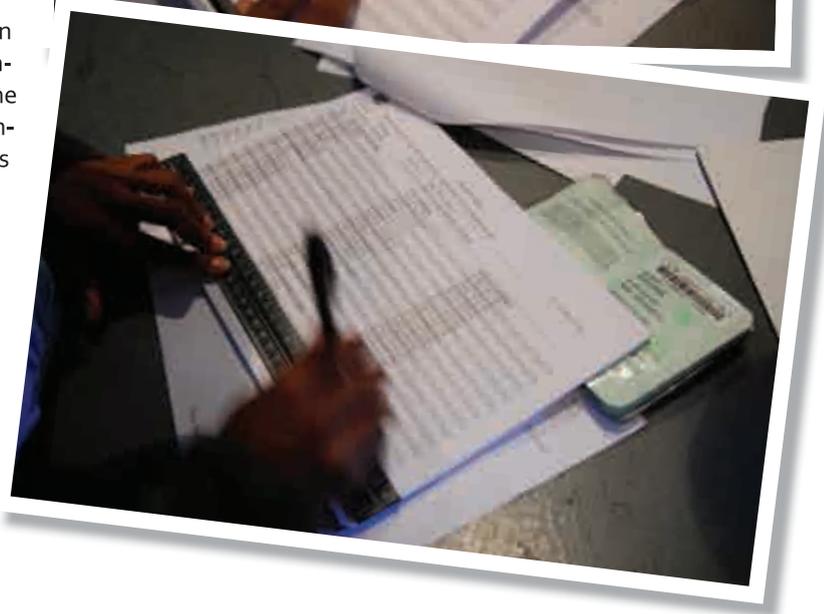
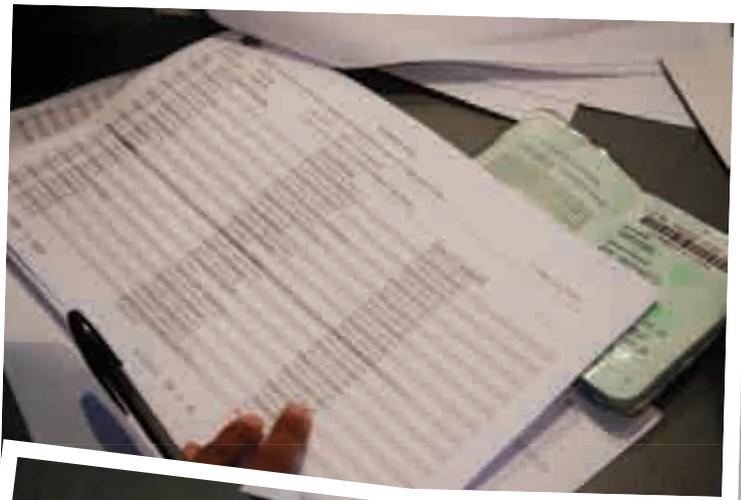
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS DATE ON THE CARDS

South Africa's third democratic local government elections will be held sometime between March and June 2011. The actual date is expected to be formally announced before the end of the year or in January 2011. Local government elections are held every five years to elect members of the district, metropolitan and local municipal councils which, in turn, elect the mayors of the municipalities to office.

In terms of Section 159 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, a municipal council's term expires after five years. If a municipal council is dissolved in terms of national legislation, or when its term expires, an election must be held within 90 days of the date that the council was dissolved or its term expired.

In the previous elections held on 1 March 2006, the African National Congress won 61,36% of the 8 380 seats nationally. The Democratic Alliance won 11,88% of the seats; the Inkatha Freedom party won 7,92%; while the Independent Democrats won 1,68%. A total of 97 political parties contested these elections.

Meanwhile, the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) has increased the number of municipal wards across the country for the 2011 local government elections. As part of the ward delimitation, all municipalities will have a minimum of four wards and a maximum of 130 wards. MDB chairperson, Mr Landiwe Mahlangu, says for the first time, over 10 000 council seats, which include 4 277 wards, will be contested in eight metropolitan councils, 45 districts and 231 local municipalities.





LAST LAUGH!

These quotes were taken from actual employee performance evaluations in one country whose identity shall remain undisclosed ...

"Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig."

"His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of morbid curiosity."

"I would not allow this employee to breed."

"This employee is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definite won't be."

"Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap."

"When she opens her mouth, it seems that it is only to change feet."

"He would be out of his depth in a parking lot puddle."

"This young lady has delusions of adequacy."

"He sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them."

"This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot."

"This employee should go far, and the sooner the better."

"Got a full 6-pack, but lacks the plastic thing to hold it all together."

"A gross ignoramus - 144 times worse than an ordinary ignoramus."

"He certainly takes a long time to make his pointless."

"He doesn't have ulcers, but he's a carrier."

"I would like to go hunting with him sometime."

"He's been working with glue too much."

"He would argue with a signpost."

"He has knack for making strangers immediately."

"He brings a lot of joy whenever he leaves the room."

"When his IQ reaches 50, he should sell."

"If you see 2 people talking and one looks bored, he's the other one."

"A photographic memory but with the cap over the lens."

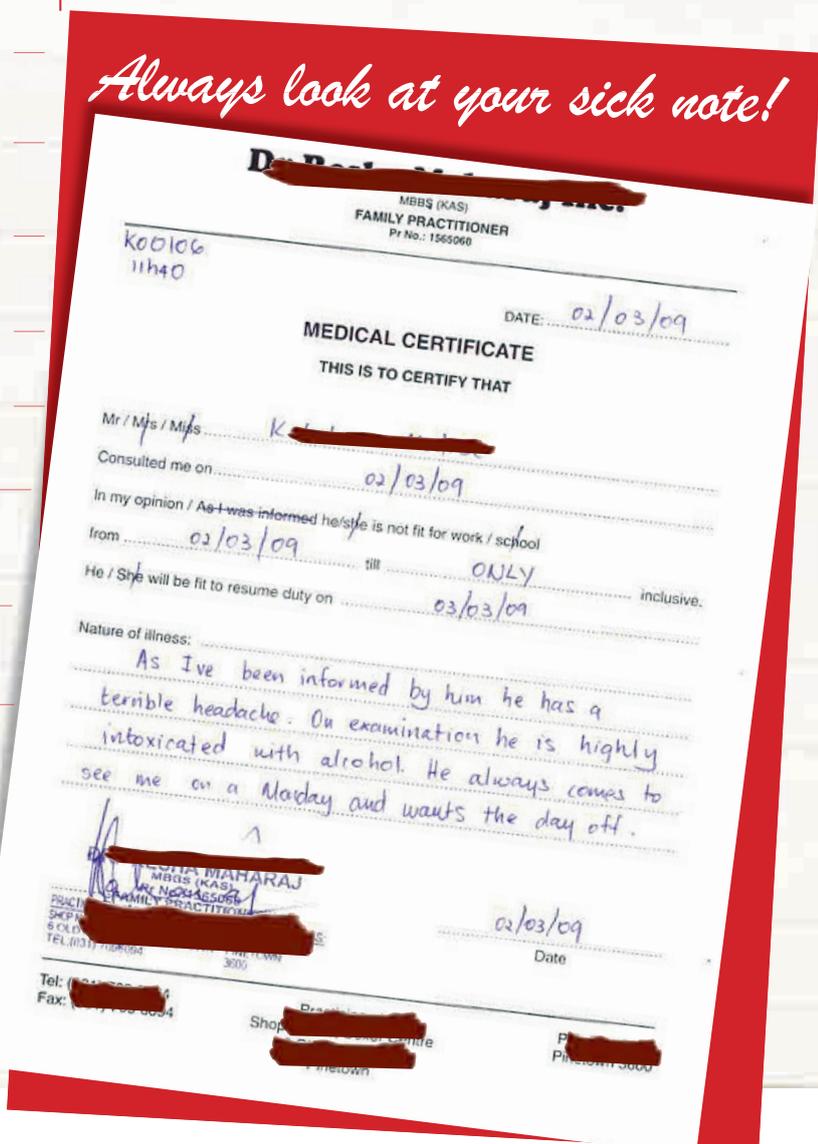
"A prime candidate for natural deselection."

"Donated his brain to science before he was done using it."

"Gates are down, the lights are flashing, but the train isn't coming."

"Has 2 brains, one is lost, the other is out looking for it."

Always look at your sick note!



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