

Road rage

As the DA and ANC get stuck in the blame game traffic, the Cape Town taxi battle highlights long-standing problems with the dominant force in public transport



Photo: Jaco Marais/Gallo Images



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IN BRIEF

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho

If you hadn't heard of Zoom before 2020, you are sure to have when the Covid-19 pandemic started. Worldwide people had to isolate, keep social distances and otherwise protect themselves and others from contracting the deadly coronavirus. Businesses turned to Zoom and other communications platforms that enable people to have meetings on video so that people could work remotely. Now Zoom wants its employees to return to the office. It and other tech companies "that keep telling us the future is virtual seem to be leading the charge when it comes to in-person work", *The Guardian's* Arwa Mahdawi wrote this week. Now the advantages of working from home — such as work flexibility and being with your children for more than the early morning or evening before and after school and work — seem to be fading. Zoom is showing some restraint, though, with its hybrid approach. It wants employees who live within an 80km radius back at their office desks for two days a week. Elon Musk, on the other hand, virtually ended remote work for Twitter employees in November 2022. Google, in April last year, told its employees in the United States to be in the office for three days a week. Meta did so too in September. The BBC noted that Amazon and Disney were among the firms that have reduced remote work days.

A wild ride

Passengers and airline employees travelling on an Iraqi Airways plane had an unwelcome surprise last Friday when they found a bear had escaped from its crate in the plane's cargo hold. Online videos show the bear peeking out from behind a door as an airline staff member seems to pet it on the head while standing outside the plane set to depart from Dubai to Baghdad. Passengers were reportedly displeased with the incident because the plane's takeoff time had to be delayed. Additional online footage from the plane shows the captain apologising to passengers for the delay caused by the bear's escape. Later that weekend, an Iraqi Airways official who requested anonymity because he was not authorised to speak on the matter publicly confirmed claims that the bear was being transported to Baghdad. Keeping wild animals has become fashionable among Iraq's wealthy, and security authorities have struggled to protect the animals and the public.

Behind the TikTok posts

A TikTok influencer and her married mother have been found guilty of murdering two men in the United Kingdom, one of whom was the mother's secret lover. Mahek Bukhari, 26, who shared regular fashion updates to her 120 000 followers on TikTok, had been told by her mother, Ansreen Bukhari, that her boyfriend was disgruntled by their breakup and that he was threatening to release sexual footage of her to her husband if she did not pay him £3000, which he had spent on her. Mahek arranged a plan to confront Saqib Hussain, her 21-year-old lover, by luring him to a parking lot in Leicester city, with the promise of bringing the money. Hussain arrived at the parking lot accompanied by a close friend and found eight others waiting for him in two cars, including the mother and daughter. When Hussain and his friend attempted to flee the scene, they

NUMBERS OF THE WEEK

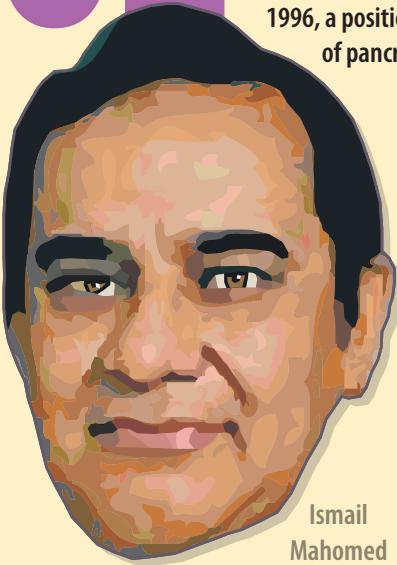


300

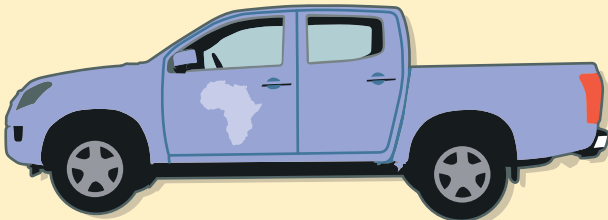
The approximate number of women and children who were abducted by criminal gangs in Haiti in the first half of 2023, according to Unicef on Monday

32

The number of years since Ismail Mahomed became the first black judge appointed to the Supreme Court of South Africa. Mahomed was also appointed as chief justice by former President Nelson Mandela in 1996, a position he held until he died of pancreatic cancer in 2000



Ismail Mahomed



10 000

The number of kilometres driven by 13 Ghanaians on a trip from Accra, Ghana to London, UK in order to raise funds for rural primary schools in the West African nation. The group reportedly travelled 800 to 900 km per day and used 250 litres of fuel daily for their bold expedition



Kwesi

35

Kwesi's age on 11 August. The award-winning rapper shares his birthday with EGOT (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony award winner) actor Viola Davis, American podcaster Joe Rogan and *Thor* actor Chris Hemsworth

The percentage of all species on Earth that live inside the soil, according to a paper published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* that showed that much of life on Earth is soil-based

59



Graphic: JOHN McCANN Compiled by: MAMAPUTLE BOIKANYO

were pursued by the two cars. "They're trying to kill me, I'm going to die ... please sir, I just need help. They're hitting the back of the car, really fast ... please I'm begging you. I'm going to die," Hussain said during a call to emergency services. The six other defendants were also found guilty of charges ranging from murder to manslaughter.

Actor sees day in the limelight

An actor's luck turned after she sent out a heart-rending post online about having to perform for one audience member during her one-woman show at the world's largest performance arts festival in Scotland. "There was one person in my audience today when I performed my one-woman play, *Sunsets*, at #edfringe. It's fine, isn't it? It's fine ...?" said actor Georgie Grier, alongside a tearful selfie after performing last Thursday at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Her post soon generated millions of views with celebrities in the United Kingdom offering Grier words of encouragement. "We've all done it," wrote Irish television host Dara Ó Briain. English actor Jason Manford wrote: "It is absolutely normal for one person to rock up to your show, especially at the beginning of Edinburgh and also for you to be a bit upset or annoyed about it." After receiving this flurry of online support from performers and entertainers, Grier was surprised by different results at her show the following day. According to a representative of the venue, Grier's show was sold out that Friday afternoon.

Foul taste of fascism

An Argentinian fast food outlet in the town of Rafaela in Santa Fe province has left a bad

taste in the mouths of the Jewish community after it named some of the items on its menu after Nazis. The restaurant, Honky Donky, featured food items such as the "Adolf" cheese and bacon-covered French fries, which could be added as a side to the "Ana Frank" hamburger. Other items on the menu are named after Chinese leader Mao Zedong and fascist Italian leader Benito Mussolini. A representative of the town's Jewish community told local media that they noticed the restaurant's crude campaign early this year and had spoken to the owners about it, who promised to remove the names but have not done so. After the town's Jewish community condemned the menu on their Facebook page, the restaurant released an apology on social media and promised to name their foods after figures of "peace and human rights", including Mahatma Gandhi, Barack Obama, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela and others.

Man hypnotised out of millions

A Nigerian man has claimed that an Islamic cleric and his accomplices stole his wife, children and millions of naira from him by hypnotising him. The Nigerian, who is based in the United States and who is only identified as Animashaun, says that he met a cleric in 2009 at lecture and began to follow him as a spiritual leader. According to reports that quote Animashaun, each of his visits to Nigeria began with the cleric giving him potions to consume and bathe in and orders for him not to see his wife and children, who were later housed in the cleric's home. The cleric told Animashaun that these were God's instructions. Animashaun then began sending money the cleric requested for business investments as well as other gifts in the form

of cash. It was only in 2021, after Animashaun borrowed money from three friends to give to the cleric, that he realised he was being duped. The cleric reportedly told Animashaun that he would cast a spell on the friends to make them forget about the money he owed them. According to security authorities, the cleric and his accomplices obtained about 104.54 million naira (R2.6 million) from the man and have been charged with "compelling action by intimidation, obtaining by false pretence" and other crimes.

Gay soldiers compensated

The 178 gay people who served in Germany's military and experienced discrimination have filed applications for compensation, according to Germany's defence ministry. The applications piled up soon after a law offering compensation to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people who suffered "systemic discrimination" in the Bundeswehr (Germany's armed forces) came into effect in 2021. Since its enactment, €400 000 (about R8.2 million) has been paid in symbolic compensation. The criminalisation of male homosexuality was legislated during the 19th century and became extreme during the Nazi regime, when gay men faced persecution from the Reich Central Office for the Combatting of Homosexuality and Abortion, a government bureau that targeted, monitored and arrested gay men. Although homosexuality was decriminalised in the late 1960s, it wasn't until 1994 that anti-gay legislation was removed from the country's criminal code. A study commissioned by the ministry also added that the safety of gay men in the military continued to be a threat well into the 2000s. — Mamaputle Boikanyo

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IFP says no to alliance with ANC

Velenkosi Hlabisa says the ANC provincial leader and corruption are impediments

Lizeka Tandwa

A coalition with the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal is near impossible with the ruling party's provincial secretary Bheki Mtolo at the helm, Inkatha Freedom Party president Velenkosi Hlabisa has said.

In an extensive interview with the *Mail & Guardian* this week, Hlabisa said the conduct of the ANC in the province had resulted in the disintegration of the relationship between the two parties.

The ruling party faces a possible decline in support in next year's election, with the IFP staging a comeback in the province in 2021 and taking control of several wards in by-elections since.

Mtolo angered the IFP when he wrote an open letter addressed to the late struggle stalwart, Mzala Nxumalo, calling IFP founder and former leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi a "meddlesome pretender" and a "ravening wolf".

In the letter, published in the *Daily News*, Mtolo said over the 50 years of Buthelezi's political life, he had been projecting an image of an honest man "yet he is a ravening wolf in sheep's clothing".

"This leader speaks with a forked tongue on matters. He creates an impression that what he does is in the interest of the nation. Zig-zagging has been the hallmark of his political career," Mtolo said.

Reacting to the letter, IFP spokesperson Mkhuleko Hlengwa released a statement calling Mtolo a "madman wielding an axe, baiting violence in a sorry, pathetic, cheap and desperate act to deflect focus on his failings as provincial secretary".

"Mtolo is a danger to democracy. He is a war-mongering lunatic, facing the inevitable implosion of the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal, as the prospects of losing power come to the fore ahead of the 2024 elections," Hlengwa said.

"He is a small boy projecting importance through a statesman



Insults: A letter written by the ANC's provincial secretary, Bheki Mtolo (centre above) soured relations with the Inkatha Freedom Party, says it's president, Velenkosi Hlabisa (left).

Photos: Darren Stewart/Gallo Images & Sandile Ndlovu/Getty Images

unacceptable," Hlabisa said.

"At a national level, the leadership of the ANC highly respects Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi and they highly respect the IFP as a partner in the political sphere. But it is different when it comes to KwaZulu-Natal — the ANC leaders in KwaZulu-Natal have all sorts of names they use in describing the IFP."

Hlabisa said the ANC's president Cyril Ramaphosa had dropped the ball in leaving it to the provincial leadership to foster reconciliation talks between the two parties.

"The ball is in the court of the ANC. The blunder the ANC president made — I might say because of his heavy schedule — [was that] he was really hoping that the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal would take forward the issue of reconciliation," he said.

"Unfortunately, they don't have the capacity to do so. But this matter must be taken forward by the president of the ANC. It is he who can make this relationship that exists of respecting each other between the IFP and the ANC filter down. It cannot be the other way around."

The IFP is set to hold talks with other opposition parties next week about forming a coalition to unseat the ANC in next year's elections.

Hlabisa has already received an endorsement from Freedom Front Plus leaders to head the coalition, should it emerge. He said that he would accept the position of president if the coalition agreed that he should lead.

Hlabisa said although a coalition with the ANC was not on the cards for now, if the coalition did not succeed in its grand plan to unseat the ruling party, the IFP would consider all its options.

"We are in coalition with the Democratic Alliance in 13 municipalities. So, now, the first choice in terms of coalition that is available for the IFP is the coalition with Democratic Alliance.

"ActionSA has spoken out openly that, whatever numbers they will get, they are looking forward to working with the IFP," he said.

Hlabisa said the ANC's reputation as a corrupt party was also an impediment to coalition talks.

"The issue of corruption in the ANC has almost all senior leaders implicated in the Zondo commission on state capture. Now, many people say the ANC has let us down. Our society has become a crime zone. We have graduates, medical doctors, who are unemployed and people are saying the load-shedding exposes us to crime at night," he said.

"Load-shedding is a direct failure of the ANC. Now, people say we are not going to vote for the ANC because we want the ANC out of power. So, it would not be a good thing for us to bring the ANC back through the backdoor to power when people actually wanted to vote it out.

"That is why they have one saying it can be an option but a very difficult option to take. The easy option for us is the DA, FF+, ActionSA and all other parties that we are engaged with in the national convention that will take place next week in Johannesburg," Hlabisa added.

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Stranglehold on public transport

The taxi industry strike has highlighted its power and the tussle between the DA in the Western Cape and the ANC-led national government

Lyse Comins

The taxi strike in Cape Town over the impounding of vehicles found to be flouting laws has brought into focus the power struggle between the Democratic Alliance (DA) in the Western Cape and the ANC-led national government.

It has also highlighted the importance of an industry which is the only source of affordable transport for millions of commuters but has long been poorly regulated.

The low cost and point-to-point flexibility of taxis appeals to consumers, not just in the Western Cape, but across the country, when contrasted with the more rigid routes and timetables of buses, noted Craig Pederson, the head of private digital forensics firm TCG Forensics, who has been monitoring the strike.

“The taxi industry has always offered an affordable route to work for thousands of blue-collar workers in the Western Cape.

“The decline of rail services has also made workers more reliant on taxis and buses over the years,” Pederson told the *Mail & Guardian*.

“This week we have been reminded of their importance as a route to work for many people, he added, referring to the thousands of commuters and schoolchildren who have been left stranded.”

The economic effect of the strike has been widespread, Pederson said.

“Stores have run low on, or out of, essentials such as bread and milk which are reliant on daily deliveries and a free-flowing route to market.

“Many restaurants have closed as staff haven’t been able to reach work.

“We’ve seen hundreds of businesses closing early to ensure staff can get home.”

The knock-on effect has also highlighted South Africa’s lack of a reliable public transport system, said Genevieve Labuschagne, researcher at the Centre for Risk Analysis.

“Businesses have had to change operating hours or close operations, places are working on skeleton staff, and staff who work on hourly wages have lost serious income.

“Services, such as transporting stock, have been disrupted so stock is running low for retailers as well as hospitality. There is also the economic loss from damage to property, which will only later be calculated,” she said. “The industry provides employment and, by extension, it plays a role in the employment of multiple other industries.

“Logistics and transport are crucial to a country’s economy and taxis have filled a part of the transport gap that has resulted from bad governance, no maintenance of infrastructure and corruption in state institutions.”

The taxi industry has long been plagued by poor regulation, while an oversupply of vehicles has, over the years, resulted in carnage on South Africa’s roads as taxi drivers competing for passengers flout traffic rules, largely without legal punishment.

“The taxi bosses operate with impunity ... outside of the rules of ‘normal’, legitimate businesses



Wheels are off: Minibuses were used to block roads and buses were burnt, leaving thousands of commuters without transport, after taxi operators went on strike this week.

Photos: Jaco Marais/Gallo Images and Brenton Geach/Gallo Images

ical analyst Ralph Mathekga noted.

Earlier this week, Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga slammed the City of Cape Town over its handling of the crisis, accusing it of being arrogant. She said the by-laws the city had used to impound taxi vehicles were “actually over-reaching and extending the legislation that already exists”.

“What is at play here is the evolution of power from the national to regional government. The bigger thing at play is actually how the provincial government is testing what is legally possible at a provincial level and the national government, that is not running this province, asserting itself,” Mathekga told the *M&G*.

He said the debate was whether the DA was wielding its inherent provincial legislative powers rather than power ceded to it by virtue of legislation set by the national government.

“What has happened in Cape Town could have happened 15 or 20 years ago. Why didn’t it? Because the ANC didn’t have coherence.

“It is one of the most interesting tensions that is happening in the evolution of power from national to regional government as the government is decentralising,” he said.

“The DA realises it doesn’t need the vote of the people affected by these laws, so they can enforce it. The law is the same in other cities, although you might find deviations here and there, but it is the stand which the municipality executives take.

The DA has been criticised, not just by the government but by civic groups over its handling of the strike and the plight of stranded commuters and pupils, but Pederson applauded its hardline stance, saying it should be emulated elsewhere in the country to bring the sector to order.

It’s never going to be easy to control an industry that operates largely on a cash basis, he added.

“We’re talking about a business that generates millions in tax free revenue. I’ve never seen or heard of a taxi charging value-added tax, yet it’s possible for a single taxi to generate more than the R1.2 million per annum threshold for VAT registration.

“This type of business is going to attract some shady characters and some hard characters. With their influence and standing in their communities as employment generators and cash businesses, it stands to reason it’s a highly competitive business.

“That, in turn, has led to taxi associations which represent the interests of different groups and routes.

“Those associations wield substantial influence and authority. The only way to deal with this is through regulation of the taxi industry and the City of Cape Town’s approach of ‘no-permit, no taxi’ is perfectly correct and should enjoy every support from local and national government.”

Pederson said taxi associations have always been about money, not politics, but added: “They do get drawn into the political fray, with parties vying for their support. They’re seen as a representative body and powerful within the communities they serve, so obviously politicians would be drawn to having their support.”

A source, who asked not to be named, said nepotism and patronage are deeply rooted in the industry.

“The taxi bosses are well-connected politically and commercially. If you take a look at Chikunga’s remarks and how strongly she defends the taxi bosses — regardless of the laws and violence — it shows how much influence the taxi industry has in politics.”

because it’s so hard to regulate.

“The taxi industry has been able to operate without roadworthiness; with unpaid fines and tickets; invalid [or no] licences and with no regard for the rules of the road because of the state of our traffic services and policing,” Labuschagne said.

“The taxi industry is a major political non-state actor. It has been allowed to get away with violence and strikes before and the failure of our government to react has placed them in a position where they are at the hands of the taxis.”

Taxi operators have increasingly become intolerant of competitors in the public transport sector and,

during the strike, buses belonging to Golden Arrow have been torched.

“The Western Cape and Cape Town are areas where public transport does operate more reliably and adequately in comparison to the rest of the country — the Gautrain is too limited in routes and destinations and is expensive,” Labuschagne said.

“Golden Arrow buses present an option for commuters who don’t want to use taxis ... buses are ‘threats’ to the taxi industry.”

Pederson weighed in: “We’ve seen similar dynamics at play with the sabotage of trains in Cape Town, where the undertone was that trains were being burned to disrupt their

operations and force commuters to use taxis instead.

“As soon as the taxi industry goes on strike, they will target buses as this is the logical alternative to taxis.

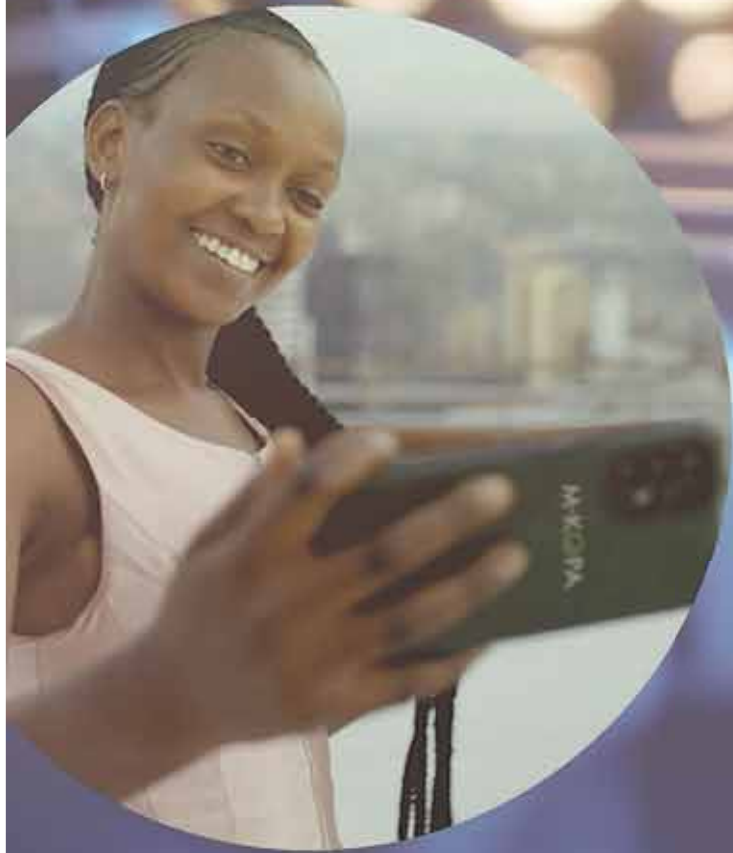
“Taxi operators feel they should be entitled to the same subsidies paid to bus services. Bus services receive subsidies to reduce the cost of public transport. While buses are easy to regulate and control routes, the same can’t be said of taxis,” he added.

The taxi strike has brought to the fore the political power tussle between the DA government in the Western Cape and the ANC-led national government, which lost control of the province in 2009, polit-



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Taxi bosses drive havoc in the long

The national transport minister has slammed local by-laws while the police minister has distanced himself from the taxi mayhem that's playing itself out in the Western Cape

Eunice Masson

The violent and deadly taxi strike in Cape Town has not only strangled the city's economy and public movement, but has also exposed the national government's apparent reluctance to take decisive action against the sector.

On Monday, the taxi strike, which has affected large parts of the Western Cape, prevented more than 280 000 learners from attending school, while public violence restricted health services and emergency responses and infrastructure was damaged. Five fatalities have been recorded.

Police Minister Bheki Cele remarked that the matter was a transport, not a policing issue. He spoke to the *Mail & Guardian* hours before publicly condemning the violence only after relative calm was restored in volatile areas.

Shortly before Cele's address to the media on Tuesday afternoon, Transport Minister Sindiwe Chikunga described the City of Cape Town as "arrogant", further fuelling tensions between the city and taxi leaders.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's office had not responded to the *M&G*'s questions sent on Monday regarding the ongoing taxi violence. Cape Town MEC for safety and security JP Smith, who has been criticised by the ANC for being a law unto himself, slammed Ramaphosa's silence at the height of the taxi violence.

"They either see this as a political opportunity — the political points trump the reason and sensibility of it — or they do not understand the issues and they are therefore not willing to weigh in and have the vision to see what is at stake," Smith said.

The South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) continued its strike on Thursday, extending it beyond the initial planned seven-day protest.

Western Cape Premier Alan Winde told the *M&G* on Wednesday evening, after meetings with Santaco yielded no results: "We want to be fair but we also want to be tough on crime, we want to be tough on safety, we want to be tough on the law."

The premier's office in the DA-led Western Cape took over discussions with Santaco and the national department of transport after negotiations between the taxi group and the City of Cape Town reached a stalemate last Sunday.

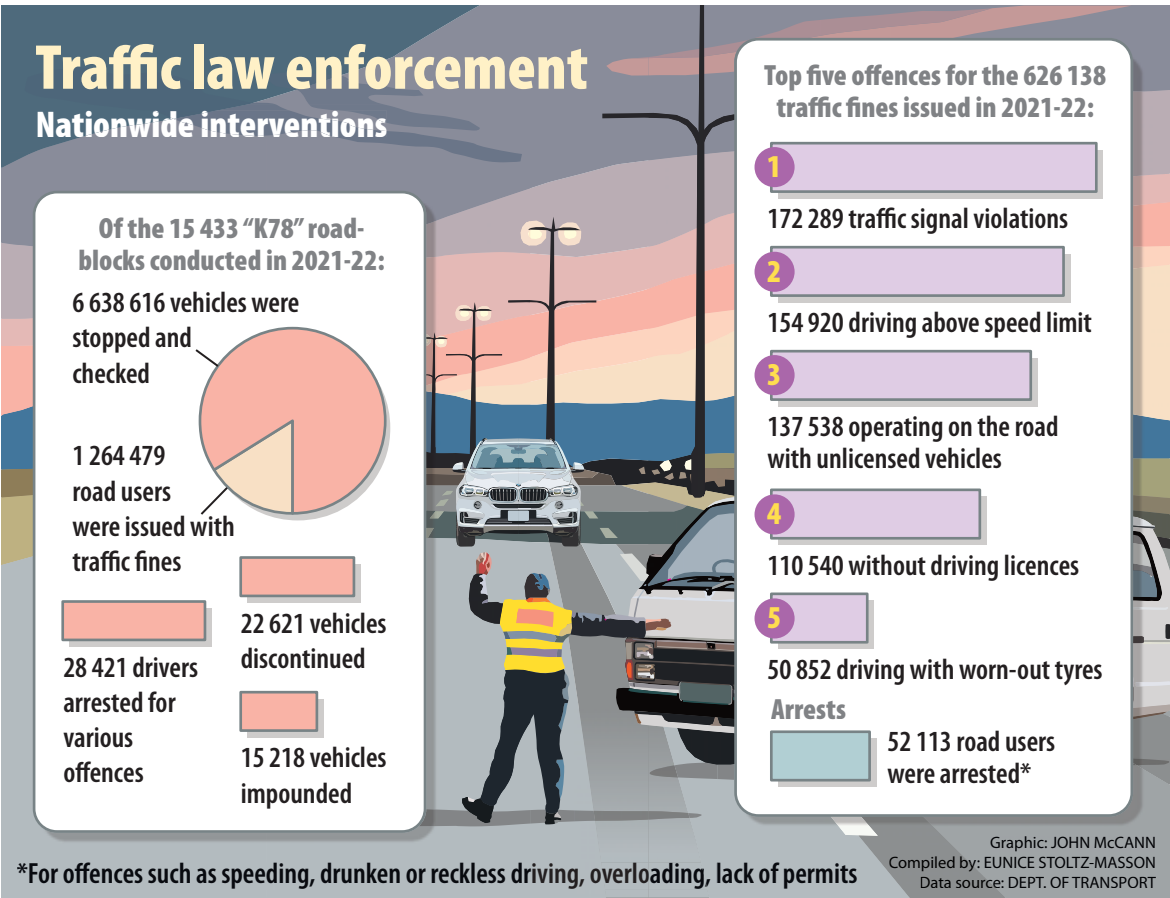
An entourage of armed bodyguards carrying assault rifles allegedly escorted Santaco leaders to the negotiations with city officials. Smith said Santaco abandoned the talks after its armed guards were searched by city law enforcement officials.

The city said it would not negotiate at gun point. "We've taken a principled position that we will not speak to those who are perpetrating violence until it stops," Cape Town mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis told the media, while standing next to Cele.

"The fact is that the people that we



Disquiet: Law enforcement officers in Nyanga township on day five of the minibus taxi strike that has seen five people killed, vehicles burnt and public services brought to a halt. Photo: Jaco Marais/Gallo Images



are negotiating with in a conference room are the same people with members who are out in the streets causing incredible violence and mayhem in our city — and even murder."

Cele, who has publicly defended his presence at a Santaco meeting last week, insisted to the *M&G* that the standoff between the city and Santaco did not involve criminality and that the solution "lies within the city".

He said Santaco provincial chairperson Mandla Hermanus and Smith "just need to fix those matters, it is that simple".

The prolonged taxi strike seems to stem from renewed tensions between leaders in the taxi industry and the provincial government. These arose when Santaco withdrew its participation from the minibus taxi task team — an initiative aimed at addressing permit barriers and other grievances in the Western Cape.

In a letter dated 9 August and seen by the *M&G*, Santaco told MEC for urban mobility Ricardo Mackenzie

that it was not opposed to vehicles being impounded provided this fell under national legislation.

The taxi council also repeated its call for a moratorium on impounding vehicles "until such a time that we are able to resolve these issues". Santaco said it "maintains its position to continue with the taxi stay-away until a moratorium has been instituted by the city and Western Cape government, pending the resolution of all outstanding matters at the minibus taxi task team".

Santaco announced the strike last week over what it called the "frivolous impoundment operations run by the [provincial] government, which has had a negative impact on our operators and industry".

There has been a significant increase in traffic fines, arrests and vehicle impoundments affecting all motorists since Cape Town's amended traffic by-laws came into effect in July.

The city's weekly road statistics during the second last week of July show a combined figure of nearly 400 arrests carried out by local law enforcers, metro police and the South African Police Service for offences including driving under the influence and speeding.

More than 26 200 fines were issued for various traffic violations and a further 326 public transport vehicles were impounded, compared with 264 the week before and 248 during the first week of July.

"The vehicles are impounded in terms of legislation, where drivers are unable to produce a valid operating licence, or are found to be operating contrary to the conditions of their operating licence," the city said in a statement.

During the past year, the city has impounded 6 245 minibus taxis, nearly 500 of which are stationed at its Maitland pound. An adjacent field is under construction to increase its holding capacity.

In other hotspots in the country

where taxi violence frequently flares up, the numbers of impoundments, specifically of minibus taxis, are much lower than Cape Town.

In Gauteng, 299 taxis have been impounded since the start of the year, of which 17 are stationed at its pound in Benoni, the provincial traffic department confirmed. The traffic department in KwaZulu-Natal did not respond to an inquiry sent well in advance of publication. But the impoundment of 64 taxis in the province's Ugu district in May 2022 was widely reported and welcomed by local authorities.

On Tuesday, Chikunga, to whom Cele deferred, lambasted the city for its drive to enforce traffic by-laws and clampdown on taxis which critics say are a peril to passengers and other road users.

After meeting Santaco and local government officials in the Western Cape, Chikunga called for the immediate release "without any conditions, all vehicles impounded based on operating licence and leave those impounded in terms of the National Land Transport Act of 2009".

"We call on the City of Cape Town to respect and uphold national laws as they currently stand," she told a media briefing.

Chikunga said the city's by-laws were in contravention of national law and if the rest of the country were to impound vehicles on the same conditions, there would be no vehicles on South Africa's roads.

"She is running away from the truth," said Mzwakhe Nqavashe, chairperson of the city's safety and security portfolio committee which passed the traffic by-laws.

"There is no by-law that is wrongly enforced. No taxi has been impounded under a by-law. She is misguided or she is deliberately mischievous to say that."

There is a lengthy process preceding the promulgation and final enforcement of any by-law, said Nqavashe. The city's by-laws are drafted by a portfolio committee whose members are drawn from the Economic Freedom Fighters, the Good party, Freedom Front Plus and other political organisations.

The by-laws are the product of a legislative process that started in 2016. Nqavashe said the amendments were motivated by the National Land Transportation Act, which was considered to only focus on minibus taxis.

A gap was identified in that national legislation applies exclusively to public transport, Nqavashe said, "so there was a need to change the behaviour of all motorists, not only public transport". He stressed that outside legal opinion was obtained, including from Halton Cheadle, who helped to draft the Bill of Rights in 1996.

When the final draft of the by-laws was submitted for public comment, Nqavashe pointed out that the portfolio committee did not receive complaints from the taxi industry because, at the time, it "did not think [the by-laws] talks to them, because they have been covered in the [Transport Act]".

A source who was directly involved in drafting the National Transport Act and spoke to the *M&G* on condition of anonymity, said the Act "does authorise the city to impound taxi vehicles when they act in contradiction to their operating conditions".

ignored countrywide problem



Disruption: Golden Arrow buses stop alongside the N2 at the entrance to Nyanga to take people to the city and other areas amid the ongoing taxi strike that has left workers and schoolchildren stranded. Photo: Brenton Geach/Gallo Images

The source, who continues to work on the Act and its amendment bills which are before parliament, argued: “All the laws are in place, they are just not being enforced.”

The chairperson of a taxi association affiliated to Santaco, who has been barred from operating on the Cape Flats while the strike continues, said the national government

was to blame for the crisis. Speaking on condition of anonymity, he said: “The government saw these things coming; [they] are responsible for this mess. They just

kept on allowing taxis onto the road. They should have said ‘no permit, no vehicle’.

“They just need to impound all the vehicles that do not have per-

mits, and take all the pirates off the road,” he added, pointing out that a permit application form states that the applicant cannot be part of any criminal activity, but “nobody, not even the government, take notice of the form”.

He said he and his drivers had no choice but to take part in the Santaco strike. Santaco met the Western Cape government on Thursday to discuss a resolution. The taxi council also indicated that it was seeking legal advice on obtaining a court interdict for the release of all its impounded taxis.

The Golden Arrow Bus Services, which is contracted by the city to offer transport services in Cape Town, has not been able to operate a full service since the strike commenced last week.

“The company has suffered significant financial losses,” Golden Arrow spokesperson Bronwen Dyke-Beyer said.

“Our primary concern is trying to render a service to people who desperately need transport to provide for their families, to get to educational institutions and to access critical services such as health care.”

Golden Arrow and the City of Cape Town both obtained court interdicts against taxi members harming or intimidating bus drivers and passengers, or obstructing, interfering or blocking any vehicle or public roads.



NOTICE IN TERMS OF SECTION 3(2)(B)(I) OF THE PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE ACT 2 OF 2000 (‘PAJA’)

The Agricultural Research Council (‘ARC’) hereby gives notice in terms of section 3(2)(b)(i) of PAJA of an administrative decision and action that may materially and adversely affect the rights or legitimate expectations of intellectual property (‘IP’) creators and their heirs in terms of the respective IP Policies of the ARC and the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008 and its Regulations (‘the IPR Act’).

The ARC specifically hereby gives clear notice of the nature of the administrative decision and action, and affords 90 (ninety) days to IP creators and their heirs to make representations or to submit a request for internal review or appeal (where applicable and should it be necessary where negotiations do not result in a final resolution of the matter). The ARC also herein provides reasons for the said administrative decision and action.

Following an internal audit and review of the internal IP Policies of the ARC, the provisions of the IPR Act and the available historical records of income and royalties derived from publicly funded research and the role of IP creators and their heirs (potentially qualifying to receive benefits); and after seeking specialist legal advice; and consulting with the National Intellectual Property Management Office (‘NIPMO’), the ARC has decided for the below reasons, to deviate from the strict application, to the letter thereof, of the benefit sharing provisions of its respective internal IP Policies.

Strict adherence to the letter of the benefit sharing provisions of the internal IP Policies of the ARC, is not commercially viable, does not support the long-term and statutory obligations of the ARC, would undermine the role, functioning, and objectives of the ARC, and would not support a fair, equitable and just application of benefit sharing or just administrative action, as foreseen in the IPR Act. A deviation from the benefit sharing provisions of the respective IP Policies of the ARC is thus justified and essential, provided the ARC adheres to the framework, ambit, and objectives of the IPR Act.

Furthermore, owing to the vastly diverse nature and form of IP at respective campuses of the ARC and differentiated commercialisation models and income streams, universal application of the benefit sharing provisions of the respective IP Policies, strictly in the format that they were originally cast, would lead to unfair and unjust transfer of benefit to some IP creators versus others. The ARC has thus decided to adopt a benefit sharing model falling within the ambit, framework, and objectives of the IPR Act instead, embarking on a process of negotiation to identify and engage potential IP creators to agree on terms of benefit sharing.

For any enquiries in this regard, kindly contact Dr Cynthia Motsi: motsic@arc.agric.za

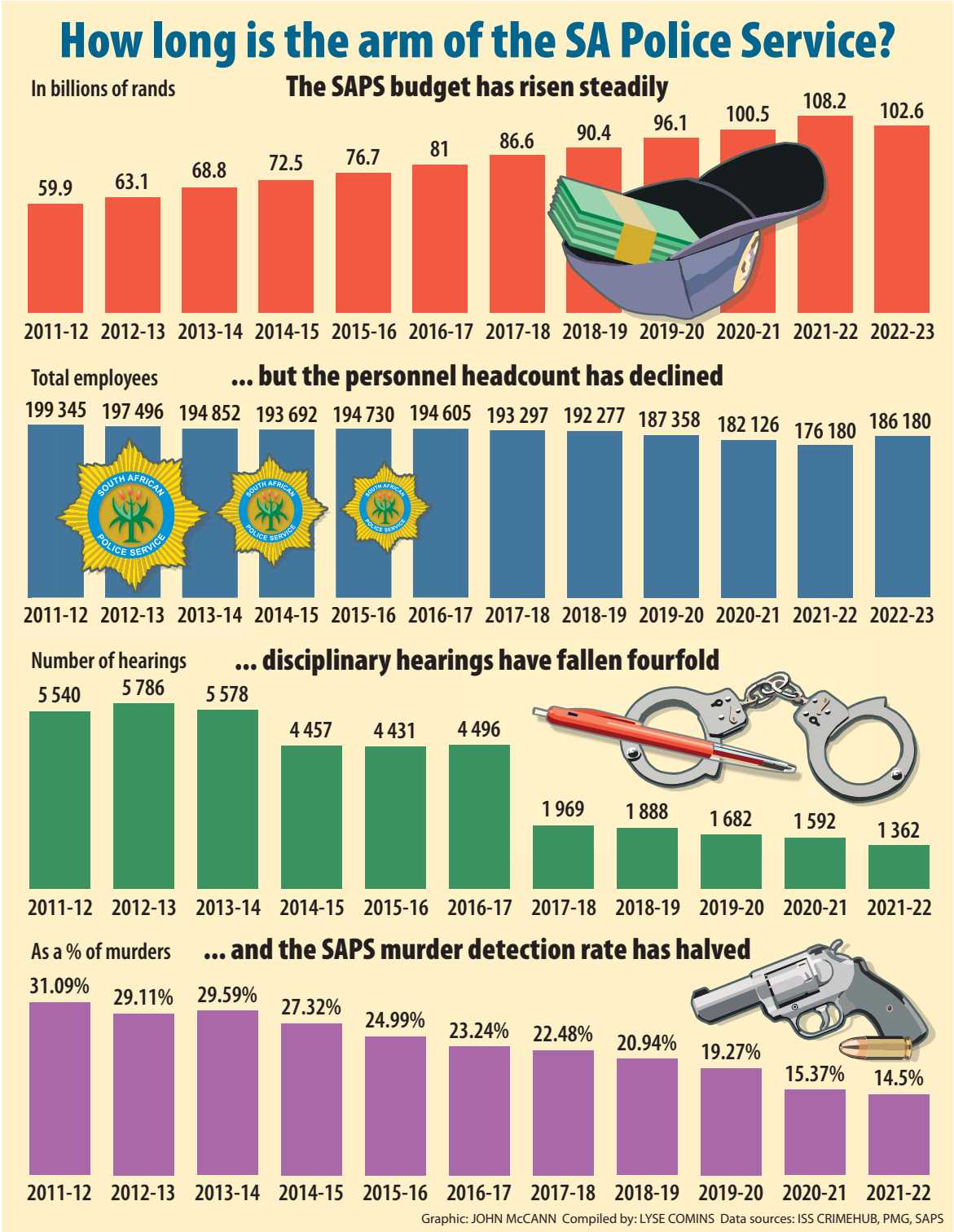
Police service ‘captured, outdated’

Hiring 10 000 new recruits annually will not solve the crime crisis because of poor training and policing, as well as rampant corruption

Lyse Comins

The South African Police Service (SAPS) is an “outdated”, “captured and corrupted”, ill-disciplined organisation in decline that will not win the fight against crime simply by boosting its ranks with 10 000 new recruits each year. This was the scathing criticism levelled at the police service by security experts, who weighed up its 186 180 staff complement and R102 billion budget in 2022-23 against its declining ability to solve serious and violent crimes, and bring corrupt officers to book. They said a paradigm shift towards a decentralised, federal policing model, rooting out political appointments and corruption, professionalising and modernising the service, along with technology training to fight organised criminal syndicates and cybercrime, was necessary. The reforms should also include allowing neighbourhoods to directly appoint station commanders. The police announced on 5 August that it was recruiting 10 000 officers, while raising the qualifying age to 35. There has been a 7% decline in the number of police officers from 199 345 in 2011-12 to 186 180 in 2023, despite an 86.5% higher budget than the R57.9 billion of 2011-12. But simply boosting staff numbers will not improve policing capabilities, argued Institute for Security Studies (ISS) justice and violence prevention programme head Gareth Newham. According to an ISS report analysing police staffing and performance, the key reason for the decline is the Safety and Security Sectoral Bargaining Council agreement which stipulates that non-commissioned officers receive promotions every four years regardless of performance. In 2018-19, 42 000 officers were automatically promoted without any performance review, adding R1.2 billion to the salary bill. “The rationale for the decision was to improve morale but this ups the morale of corrupt officers who get promotions and reduces the morale of honest and hard working police officers. In any government department in the world, you don’t get promoted just for coming to work,” Newham said. Despite the ballooning budget, the police’s crime solving ability has waned. According to ISS data drawn from police statistics, the police solved just 10% of armed robbery cases and 14.5% of murders in 2022-23 compared with 53% and 31% respectively in 2011-12. “That reduction in capability is not about the numbers of police but how you train, motivate and reward them. The police have been in serious decline over the past decade but the only response the government has is,

‘we are not going to fix the system but will just have tens of thousands more going through it,’ said Newham. “It is unlikely they are going to make a difference because training is outdated, it doesn’t keep up with the types of crime we are facing.” He said corruption among new recruits was a problem — the police are investigating allegations that new recruits bought their way into jobs during the 2022 drive — and performance management systems are dysfunctional. “The systems for motivating and rewarding are not working, and neither is performance management if you are a bad cop, if you are brutal. We have seen with the VIP incident [where Deputy President Paul Mashatile’s protection officers assaulted military trainees on the N1 freeway in Johannesburg last month] that the disciplinary system has collapsed,” Newham said. He said this was evident in the fact that 95% of the 55 000 complaints to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) from 2011-12 to 2022-23 led to no sanction against implicated officers. “The least likely outcome is to be dismissed,” Newham said. He added that recruits are not properly vetted and training is outdated, rendering the police unable to deal effectively with extortion and organised crime. “Civilian claims indicate what unlawful police behaviour has been costing the police. In 2012 the police paid out R100 million in damages to civilians and last year they paid out more than R500 million. In the last five years victims of police brutality and unlawful behaviour were paid out R2.3 billion.” The National Development Plan (NDP), a policy document that aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030, notes that “the serial crises of top management” is having a negative effect on the police service. “A national policing board should be established with multisectoral and multidisciplinary expertise. It will set out the standards for recruiting, selecting, appointing and promoting police officials and police officers,” the NDP says. “The board will also develop a professional code of ethics and analyse the professional standing of policing, based on international norms and standards.” It also proposes the strengthening of the justice system, the professionalising and demilitarising of the police service, and increased community participation. “If government were serious about fixing the police the first thing they have to do is get an independent panel — retired generals, international experts and civil society — to do an assessment of top manage-



ment and see who is not qualified, get rid of who should not be there, and then make new appointments based on merit,” Newham said. “If this had been implemented 10 years ago as proposed in the NDP, we would be in a much better position and have a highly responsible cohort of police learning best lessons from around the world. “In the next 10 years cops are going to have to be able to use laptops, because cybercrime is growing, they are going to have to understand how organised criminal networks work. They need to be problem solvers, innovative thinkers and be able to work in teams. “But these are factors they don’t think of when recruiting; it is all height, age and weight, they don’t look at aptitude.” Newham believes President Cyril Ramaphosa is “the only one who can fix” the police system “but he doesn’t seem to think it’s a crisis because he is saying nothing, not a word in any speech, that he wants to fix it”. The problems facing the police include the “politicisation” of investigations and limited resources, Institute for Race Relations (IRR) researcher Marius Roodt said. “South Africa is also fundamentally a violent society for a number of complex reasons. If we look at

‘In 2012 the police paid out R100 million in damages to civilians and last year they paid out more than R500 million’

crime statistics, crime started coming down [in] the mid-1990s but this trend started reversing in 2010, partly because of the destruction of many institutions in the Zuma years, not least the police,” he said. “In addition, it seems that some of the police have been infiltrated by criminal gangs.” The IRR has published proposals to fix the police in its regular Broken Blue Line reports. Some of these include the need to re-instil respect for the chain of command; create a university-educated officer corps; better equip Ipid; establish a new investigative agency in the department of justice; decentralised decision-making in station leadership and allow neighbourhoods to directly elect station commanders. It has also proposed that the appointment process be depoliticised, that Neighbourhood Watch groups integrated with private security companies be formed and the police be decentralised to allow for the establishment of provincial police services. Gideon Joubert, an independent security consultant and the owner of the online platform, Paratus, warned that the state of the police service is “dire and declining and perhaps irrecoverably so”. “The SAPS has haemorrhaged long-serving and experienced members since before 2010. A significant number of officers with specialised skills have either left for the private sector, pursued better career opportunities overseas — where they are in high demand — or taken early retirement. Many of these skills are permanently lost, since there is nobody

to transfer them to new recruits.” Joubert said the police service employs about 97 600 people for visible policing duties. But officers work a four-shift rotation to provide 24/7 policing, so only about 24 400 officers are on visible policing duty at any given time. “For a population of about 60 million people, this gives roughly one police officer on duty for every 2 500 people, which is far below the minimum global recommendation of one officer to 342 people. “To further exacerbate matters, the SAPS is an extensively criminally-infiltrated organisation where corruption appears to have become completely endemic and firmly-rooted,” Joubert said. Problems facing the police include “political interference, criminal capture and infiltration, and terrible management combined with a lack of competent leadership. “This has resulted in a collapsed police service, which in turn has created a colossal security vacuum. This vacuum is presently being enthusiastically exploited by various criminal groups, from zama zamas to the construction mafia to the taxi mafia, drug smugglers, human traffickers, highway pirates and everything in between. The fact that so many of these criminal groups have high-level political connections is additionally concerning. “Communities and private sector actors are now obligated to step in and fill this vacuum however they can in order to preserve law and order in the absence of a state which is rapidly receding.” The SAPS had not responded to questions from the Mail & Guardian by the time of publication.

Solar panel theft on the increase

A thriving black market has developed as householders install alternative energy sources in the battle against blackouts

Mandisa Nyathi

Load-shedding has led to a rise in the theft of solar panels across the country. South Africa has seen a surge in the installation of alternative power systems as state-owned utility Eskom fails to meet energy demand, with rolling blackouts happening daily because of frequent breakdowns at power stations. Security, insurance and energy experts told the *Mail & Guardian* that load-shedding has created high demand — and consequently a massive black market — for solar panels. Forensic investigator Calvin Rafadi said that solar panel theft was increasing in part because they were easy to remove. “Criminals use a spanner to unscrew the panels. They usually wait for the targeted house owners to be out during the night and come with a ladder and remove the panels to sell on the black market — similar to what happens in the copper cables industry,” he said. Fidelity Services Group head of communications Charnel Hattingh said the security company had responded to numerous theft incidents involving solar panels and batteries of late. “The thieves have enough time to dismantle the system before leaving the property. “Stolen items are, in our experience, often sold to people who are looking to use them as scrap materials or as their own alternative energy source,” she said. According to insurer King Price’s Wynand van Vuuren, solar panel theft was likely to increase. Auto & General’s chief executive officer Ricardo Coetzee said there had been an increase in home break-ins, with load-shedding being one of the contributing factors. “Solar-panel theft is an emerging trend — one that we are keeping an eye on,” he said. The insurers added that some customers said they suspected their panels had been stolen by people from the company that had installed them. According to De Wet Taljaard, a solar energy technical specialist at the South African Photovoltaic Industry Association, the identifying serial number laminated onto some solar panel cells was difficult to remove without damaging the panel. “Unfortunately, the serial information is often placed on stickers or displayed via non-permanent methods and can be removed with relative ease.” He added that the information was also saved on the software of the inverter and access could be password-protected by an authorised installer. Rafadi recommended that residents set up neighbourhood watch groups to help keep thieves at bay. “These criminals come dressed in work suits, to look like they are coming to maintain the panels. “It is wise for those who own the panels to alert their neighbours when they are not around to keep an eye out for them and to alert the



Security: Make sure your solar panels are securely bolted on the roof to discourage theft. Photo: Waldo Swiegers/Getty Images

police of suspicious activity,” he said. Hattingh advised homeowners to keep yards well-lit at all times and have proper barrier security installed. “Always keep your alarm armed and use its different features — including various modes for various times of day or situations,” she said. According to Power Geeks, another solution is to make sure the panels are securely locked in place on the roof, making them hard to steal. The insurance companies urged customers to insure their panels and to upgrade the cover when necessary to avoid being underinsured in the event of a claim. Santam manager Marius Steyn said that an investment in solar power systems comes with new risks. “When a solar power system is installed, it influences the value of the building and therefore the building sum insured should be increased to accommodate the value of the investment in the solar power system,” he said. If the insured value of the building was not equal to the current replacement value — ie the client was underinsured — the claim might not be paid out in full. “Remember to factor in the cost of installation in your insured value,” he said. Steyn stressed that when homeowners choose an installer, they should double-check their credentials, such as references of previous work and how long the business has been in operation, to help ensure that they are not thieves. “A reputable installer should provide a comprehensive quote detailing the scope of work, components that will be used in the installation as well as, importantly, after-sales services, warranties and guarantees,” Steyn said. Mandisa Nyathi is a climate reporting fellow, funded by the Open Society Foundation for South Africa.



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Filthy rivers run through Cradle



Landowners and businesses in the Cradle of Humankind are up in arms over Mogale City sewage pollution

Sheree Bega

When Trevor Brough first moved to the rolling grasslands of the Cradle of Humankind about 30 years ago, it was for the peace and quiet it provided.

Back then, he would not have imagined the pristine rivers flowing through the sensitive Unesco World Heritage Site, which accommodates the fossil hominid sites of Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai and environs, would become contaminated with sewage. Or, that he would now be conducting what he sardonically calls “Cradle sewage tours”, to highlight the extent of the sewage pollution fouling waterways and threatening human health, tourism, agriculture and groundwater.

Years ago, the Blougatspruit and the Bloubankspruit teemed with life. “They’re totally dead now,” said Brough, who looked stricken as he stood on the banks of the Blougatspruit coated with crusts of rotting sewage.

Brough, a director of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Association, said huge quantities of raw or poorly treated sewage had been flowing into the Blougatspruit from the dysfunctional Percy Stewart wastewater treatment works in Krugersdorp for several years.

He said the infrastructure around the plant is failing, with the main sewer pipeline overflowing, at times pouring raw sewage into the Blougatspruit.

Percy Stewart’s wastewater flows into the Blougatspruit, which then runs into the Bloubankspruit running through the Cradle of Humankind and into the Crocodile West area and then into Hartbeespoort Dam.



Most foul: The Blougatspruit (above left) once teemed with life, which is why Trevor Brough (above right) moved to the Cradle of Humankind. Now faecal matter from a broken treatment plant and sewage tankers (below left) coats the river’s banks (below right). Photos: Delwyn Verasamy



“Thankfully the rivers are largely hidden from most of the tourists ... but they would most probably have some smell in some areas. If the wind is wrong, we can actually smell Percy Stewart in the Cradle.”

Uphill from Percy Stewart, convoys of sewage trucks rumbled down to a manhole in the Blougat Nature Reserve, where they dump raw sewage collected from septic tanks. The truck dumping is uncontrolled, Brough said.

“Whatever overflows or splashes here, runs out at the back of this fence and goes into the Blougatspruit, so effectively there is raw sewage going straight down into the Blougat.”

There is no access control or security. “This place is open 24/7 and anybody can dump anything here. They don’t get charged and no one checks what they’re dumping.”

Andy Dott, the owner of the Cradle

Moon Lakeside Game Lodge, about 30km from the Percy Stewart plant, said: “You could be putting nuclear fallout down that hole, nobody gives a shit. And then it promptly goes around the corner into Percy Stewart and comes back into our system.”

Dott said businesses in the Cradle have raised more than R1 million “potentially for legal fees to take on the individuals in Mogale City who are responsible” for the collapse of the Percy Stewart plant.

“We are all totally reliant on the river. Just the smell alone makes it unpleasant to go near there and then, of course, you’ve got people wanting to do recreation on the water.”

He has hippo, otters and fish eagles. “It’s critical that the water source is kept clean. All our little venues are just reliant on clean water ... It’s ironic that our own government is polluting the river.”

Last month, Ferrial Adam, the exec-

utive manager of WaterCAN, tested the Bloubankspruit’s water. “Within 20 metres of getting to the water, I could smell it. It’s pure shit water. We used our indicator test, a clear plate. For open source water, it’s not supposed to have more than 10 spots. The plate was covered in spots.”

Andrew Gaylord runs a restaurant in the Cradle on the banks of what he calls the “shit river”.

“We’ve got two active fossil dig sites on the property so it’s kind of scary when you hear what’s going on with the water,” he said. “At night it’s just pure sewage you’re smelling. For customers coming for dinner or for breakfast, you don’t know if they’re going to complain.”

He remembers standing on frogs walking home. “Now if you see a frog, it’s definitely not from the river because it’s got all four legs.”

In November, Sean Phillips, the director general of the department of water and sanitation (DWS), wrote to Mariette Liefferink, of the Federation for a Sustainable Environment, informing her that his department had issued a directive in August 2020 for the sewage pollution.

The department was monitoring the municipality’s action plan and the effluent water quality had not improved. “The effluent quality, which is discharged, pollutes the water resources, which affects water users including the Cradle of Humankind and the Crocodile River, which feeds into the Hartbeespoort Dam.”

On 23 June, Phillips said his department had funded phase one and two of the refurbishment of the Percy Stewart plant to the tune of R55 million. While phase one has been successfully implemented, “it seems that there are delays on the execution” of phase two and the department still intends taking “further enforcement action”.

On 20 July, Forestry, Fisheries and

the Environment Minister Barbara Creecy wrote to Liefferink informing her that, “even though the primary regulator in relation to sewage matters is the DWS”, her department “also has a responsibility”.

This is because the area is in a World Heritage Site, which falls under the national department’s mandate. Creecy has now instructed officials from the chief directorate of enforcement to “undertake the necessary investigations and collect evidence, which will inform the approach that will be taken”.

Brough, meanwhile, is encouraged by discussions with Mogale City’s new MMC for water and sanitation, Peter Modise, and “it’s almost as if they might be more open to trying to do something about the problem”.

In December, in a state of conservation report to Unesco, Khorommbi Matibe, the acting director general of biodiversity and conservation in Creecy’s department, said the results from microbiological analysis of water samples collected during the 22 September monitoring run showed bacteriological contamination of surface and groundwater resources.

The bacterial pollution is evident by total *E coli* and *coliform* bacteria values that routinely exceed a count of 2419.6 per 100ml.

Affected surface water resources include the Blougatspruit, Bloubankspruit, Tweelopies Spruit and Rietspruit. But the Blougatspruit and Bloubankspruit, downstream from the Percy Stewart plant, “show the most severe faecal contamination”, suggesting they receive inadequately treated wastewater.

“Although there are no foreseeable threats caused by the bacteriological pollution on the in-situ fossils, the current concern is focused on the impact of the pollution on the natural environment, the health of the local community and the aesthetic appeal of the property’s natural resources,” the report said.

Mogale City responds

Mogale City’s water services department told the *Mail & Guardian* that in November 2019 that it had appointed a maintenance contractor for three years to repair and maintain sewer pump stations and wastewater treatment works through a tender process.

“This scope of work as per the contract was designed to ensure smooth operation and performance of the system while also minimising downtime of the system, which often resulted in sewer spillage and malfunctioning of the sewer treatment works.” It said the appointment yielded “positive results as sewer spillage and overflow” from sewer pump stations was minimised.

When the contract ended in November, a new bid advertisement process ensued and a new

service provider for repairs and maintenance of the water and sewer system infrastructure was appointed in April. “Repair work on malfunctioning sewer pump station components and wastewater treatment works components has commenced and [is] moving swiftly,” Mogale City said.

Additionally, a work order to the appointed contractor amounting to R15 million was issued for the urgent repair of sewer pump stations “and the municipality is confident that this will soon yield satisfactory results”.

Root cause analysis on risks indicate that the main risks are 42% because of maintenance and repairs, 15% attributed to operation and 8% each for human resources and management, Mogale City said. A service provider was

appointed to assist with the refurbishment and repair of key equipment such as mechanical screens, pumps and motors.

The municipality said it was putting security measures in place to monitor trucks that are disposing chemical toilet waste to the manhole, ensuring that only trucks with permits issued by the municipality use the disposal point.

Security personnel will ensure “that truck dumpers do not spill on the surface and that all waste in the pipes is disposed into the manhole and spillage around the manhole will be cleaned”.

It said plans are in place to relocate the disposal point from the Percy Stewart catchment point to a sewer manhole disposal point at the Flip Human wastewater treatment works. — *Sheree Bega*

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Ongama Mhlontlo was born 1996 in Mthatha, Eastern Cape and moved to Cape Town where he obtained a Bachelor Music at the prestigious CTU Opera school 2019, moving then to the US obtaining 2021 a Master of Music degree at the Manhattan School of Music. Since 2015 he performs own compositions and does arrangements. Since 2016 he appears on stage in various concerts and roles, notably 2019 at Cape Town Opera as Tebaldo in Bellini's: I Capuletti e I Montechi. He covers roles and music pieces from the Baroque, and the Viennese Classic up to the Romantic realm and also Modern Music.

Monthati Masebe started to work the keys in the tender age of ten and is an accomplished piano player, in addition composing vocal and instrumental pieces for opera, orchestras and film and is now studying at the Duke University, N.C. for a Ph.D. in composition.

Mortuary jams distress families

Too few pathologists, unclaimed bodies, a shortage of storage and poor management are behind the post-mortem backlogs

Lyse Comins

Families have had to identify their loved ones in a state of decomposition because of a backlog in post-mortems apparently caused by an shortage of pathologists at state mortuaries.

Lakewood Funeral Services owner Kevin Bougaard, who assisted two families with burials recently, described the experiences they had to endure to identify their family members.

“The one case was a 40-year-old woman who died of unnatural causes. When the family did the viewing, she was already decomposed and the brother-in-law could not identify her. The only way he could identify her was by looking at her hands, because he could recognise her nails,” Bougaard said.

He said this was as a result of backlogs in the release of bodies from the state’s Hillbrow mortuary because of delays in performing post-mortems.

“In the same week, there was another case where a 37-year-old man had been shot, so he was murdered, and we had to go to the mortuary with the family to do the identification of the loved one,” he said.

Bougaard said he arrived at the mortuary on Friday 21 July to fetch the body of the man who had died on 16 July, but he was told that the body was not ready for collection. He said bodies were usually ready for collection two to three days after the day of death.

“The mortuary said there is a backlog but they would work the weekend to do the autopsy to get the body released. We were supposed to have his funeral on Saturday, but we had to postpone it,” he said.

“On Monday, when we went to the mortuary, his name was on the list to be the first for the autopsy [that day]. We waited about 30 minutes or so and one of the staff then said ‘there are no doctors’; no one had pitched for work, they are all off sick.

“On Tuesday we went into the mortuary again and still no doctors had pitched up to work and that’s when we started reaching out to the media, we were desperate. They never mentioned the word ‘strike’ but the conditions they work under are not good,” he said.

Bougaard said pathologists at Hillbrow mortuary do on average 4 000 autopsies a year, but apparently only five pathologists are employed at the facility.

A person who works in the funeral parlour industry, who asked not to be identified because he is not the business owner, said the situation at the mortuary was “not up to standard”.

“The place has a stench that is unhealthy to the human body. We go

on a Thursday to collect a body and they say come back on Friday, and then when we go back we are told to ‘go, come back next week’, because they are short-staffed. The system is not working because they are doing favours for some people [who jump the post-mortem queue].”

He claimed that pathologists usually left the mortuary by noon every day, and just one would stay on duty to deal with emergencies.

The Democratic Alliance spokesperson for health, Jack Bloom, said he had alerted Gauteng’s health MEC, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, to the “unacceptable situation” at the Hillbrow mortuary.

“Families are anguished as the bodies of their loved ones are not released. This issue needs to be resolved urgently. All cases of unnatural death are supposed to be sent to the state mortuaries for a post-mortem, which should be done within two days. But the backlog at Hillbrow mortuary has grown to about 100 bodies, and families are waiting for more than a week before the body is released,” Bloom said, adding that funeral parlours had also complained that bodies were sometimes released in a decomposed state.

“There is a general problem of poor management and staff shortages at the nine mortuaries run by the Gauteng health department, but the Hillbrow mortuary seems to be worst affected.”

Funeral Industry Reform Association chairperson Johan Roussow, who has been lobbying the government to amend regulations related to the funeral sector and mortuaries, said the problem of backlogs was countrywide in cities and towns.

“It is all over the country, because, in the first instance, the government doesn’t have the capacity for sufficient storage space in all of the provinces,” he said.

He said a large part of the problem was pauper burials, where poor families did not claim bodies because they could not afford a funeral.

Roussow alleged that pathologists who worked full-time for the state were moonlighting, doing post-mortems in the private sector for fees of R4 000 to R7 000 per autopsy.

He said doctors who did not know the person who died tended not to specify the cause of death and instead wrote “natural causes”.

‘There is no national law incorporating everything, there is no regulator in place [and] there is a lack of management and skills’



Logjam: Relatives wait outside the state’s Hillbrow mortuary (above) for a body to be released. The body of an unidentified man (below) lies on a tray in the mortuary. A shortage of pathologists and other factors cause post-mortems to be delayed at state facilities. Photos: Guillem Sartorio/Getty Images)



When families want a cremation, the law requires that a post-mortem is done. He said pathologists can do about four or five autopsies a day and earn up to R35 000.

“It’s all about money. The funeral parlour has a doctor in his network and says ‘please sign the death certificate’, so whether doctor says natural causes and does not stipulate the cause of death, they don’t care because it enables them to register the death, but when they find out the customer wants a cremation then they need the exact cause of death,” Roussow said.

He believes legal reform is required to clean up the industry, which is also beset by fly-by-night funeral parlours that lie in wait “like tow-truck drivers” outside mortuaries to prey on traumatised families, and then charge “exorbitant fees” to release the bodies to their undertaker of choice for the funeral.

“There is no national law incorporating everything, there is no regulator in place, no ombudsman, and we have to say there is a lack of management and skills even in the government mortuaries,” he said.

Avbob’s general manager for funerals, Pieter van der Westhuizen, said his funeral directors had said there was a “serious problem” at the Hillbrow mortuary, which was struggling with backlogs, while Cape Town mortuaries took four to five days for the release of bodies.

He said no problems had been reported in Durban at this stage.

Van der Westhuizen said he was

not sure of the cause of delays, but he was aware that in many cases private pathologists were contracted to the state to do post-mortems at a fee of R3 500 to R5 000.

The Gauteng health department announced on 24 July that it has established a provincial task team to address the backlog at mortuaries.

Departmental spokesperson Motalale Modiba said it had also introduced a digital fingerprint system that will help identify people and that unknown individuals can be referred for paupers’ burials.

“The issue of insufficient pathology services has got to do with the shortage of specialists in this area across the country. As Gauteng we recently opened a training room which will assist with training of more specialists in this area,” he said.

Nkomo-Ralehoko told a media briefing last week that the team would ensure bodies were examined and released without delays.

“At this particular Hillbrow mortuary alone, this move has resulted in 139 bodies being examined between 24 and 31 July 2023. Out of the 139 bodies examined, 96 of them have been claimed or collected by their families while 43 are still awaiting collection,” she said.

“The task team is providing this support on a 24-hour basis and seven days [a week] for the next 30 days while we finalise other processes.”

Modiba said full-time pathologists may only do private work with spe-

cial permission, but some worked for the state on a part-time basis.

Health department spokesperson Foster Mohale said ageing infrastructure was affecting mortuary services, especially where storage facilities are still at police stations.

He said the department was facing problems with unclaimed bodies and also in cases where they could not be disposed of because of ongoing police investigations.

“The department is working with SAPS [South African Police Service] and Cogta [department of cooperative governance and traditional affairs] to resolve the issue of unclaimed bodies,” Mohale said.

Western Cape department of health spokesperson Megan Davids said regulations pertaining to the rendering of a forensic pathology service promulgated under the National Health Act state that an unidentified person should be buried within 30 days.

“But we have opted to follow every available process to try identify the person and to have a DNA profile on record for future inquiries, which greatly exceeds the 30 days.”

“The Western Cape government has invested in increasing storage capacity and infrastructure and thus we are able to safely manage our cases with no storage concerns. What is of concern, however, is the minimal inquiries received at our facilities by families looking for their loved ones, and the number of deceased that are not registered on our National Population Register.”

It's the word of the flies in crime

Bugs provide clues about when and where a person has been killed but experts say the police could make more use of forensic entomology if it was formalised and funded

Eunice Masson

South Africa's most notorious serial killer, Moses Sithole, and murderer Dumisani Mkhwanazi, found guilty in 1997 and 2020, respectively, are linked by something seemingly less remarkable — insects.

Medico-criminal forensic entomology has demonstrated its significance in strengthening criminal cases over the past three decades in a country where citizens are increasingly angered by police inefficiencies and shortages.

It was Mervyn Mansell who used forensic entomology to determine the sequence in which Sithole committed his murders in 1994 and 1995 in Atteridgeville, Boksburg and in Johannesburg's suburb of Cleveland.

Although entomological evidence was used to build the investigation around the murders, it did not directly contribute to Sithole being convicted, because it was not used in court. This changed when Mansell became the first entomologist in South Africa to present such evidence in court that led to a successful murder conviction — that of Albert du Preez Myburgh in 2000.

Myburgh was found guilty of abduction, indecent assault and the murder of eight-year-old Cindy-Ann Bauer.

Mansell was able to determine the time of Cindy-Ann's death using insects collected from her body weeks after she went missing. The time of death correlated with the time Myburgh admitted to have kidnapped the girl.

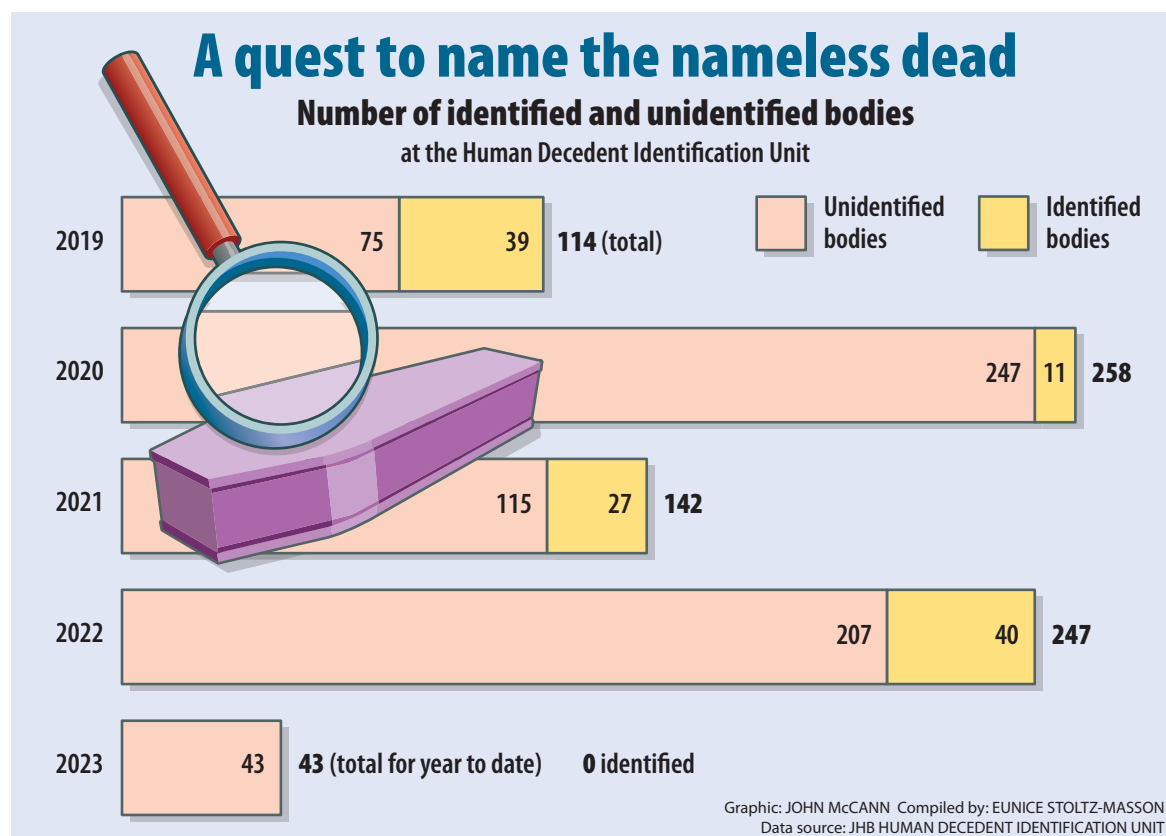
"The basic principle of forensic entomology is to provide an objective biological estimate of the time a victim has been deceased post-mortem interval or the victim has been exposed to natural elements [in] the local environment," said Mansell, who is now retired.

He believes the most significant development is the South African Police Service's victim identification unit getting a permanent forensic entomologist.

Aside from determining when a person has died, entomology is also able to show if a body has been moved by using the geographic distribution and behaviour of insect species, said entomologist Zanthé Kotzé, of the zoology department at the University of Pretoria.

She said that in the 2004 Leigh Matthew murder case, a spider's funnel-shaped web supported the state's case that Donovan Moodley froze Matthews' body for 12 days after murdering her. He then staged a murder scene next to the R82 near Walkerville, south of Johannesburg, where her body was found.

Insects can also determine whether any toxins such as drugs, poison or gunshot residue are present in a body because "the metabolites of these toxins may change the developmental patterns of the insects", said Kotzé.



Lawrence Hill, who works at the department of forensic medicine and pathology at the University of the Witwatersrand, pointed out how valuable blood feeders — ticks, lice and fleas — are when found on a body.

"Sometimes you will find that DNA can be linked to a perpetrator or someone who was around the body just before death, because that DNA is still present if that insect was feeding on another person as well," he said.

Even when no insects are found "it still tells us a little about the body". Hill was consulted during the investigation into the murder of Palesa Madiba by Mkhwanazi. The University of Johannesburg student was killed in 2013 but her body was found seven years later. When Hill was asked to determine the time of death, there were no insects present.

"What it did tell us [was that] the body was buried immediately as there was no colonisation of any insects on the body. Whatever happened, the death was concealed very quickly," he said.

Despite the leaps forensic entomology has made since the early 2000s, experts say that the failure to formalise and fund the discipline, as well as the police not sharing information with entomologists, limits the contribution it can make in solving homicide cases.

Kotzé said: "Due to low numbers of expertly trained forensic entomologists, many crime scene investigators are not aware of the important information that insects can provide when found on a victim, and thus this evidence is often overlooked."

She added that "very few" investigators and officers are trained in collecting entomological evidence.

"It often happens that evidence is incorrectly collected and handled at the crime scene itself. This includes omission of collecting live specimens, incorrect storage and preservation, and insufficient photography of the evidence in situ," said Kotzé.

Allison Gilbert, an entomologist and head of the Human Decedent Identification Unit at Wits University, agrees with Kotzé regarding entomological evidence sometimes being overlooked.

She said the police service is the only institution in the country mandated to handle evidence.

And with limited personnel having to deal with an overwhelming

amount of evidence, it is only "diligent investigating officers and forensic pathologists who ask for 'more' to be done to assist in the death investigation".

Kotzé said the main obstacle for forensic entomology — both in the police service and at tertiary level — is the shortfall of expertise. She added that training for police officers in basic collection techniques at crime scenes, "would go a long way in strengthening the use of forensic entomology in criminal cases".

Aside from criminal investigations, insects can also contribute to identifying bodies.

Hill explained that insect parasites on a corpse can show that the person might have been in a certain area before their death.

Stephen Franseca, the manager of the African Centre for Medicolegal Services, said: "Insects are around us no matter where we are in the world. And so their impact on pathology and on the identification process is huge."

Franseca works closely with the identification unit at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Although he uses forensic entomology the least of all of the forensic disciplines, he believes in the value of research and growth in each discipline because it allows different expertise to contribute to an investigation.

And although forensic entomology has not yet been used to establish an unidentified person's country of origin, it does not mean it cannot.

Invitation

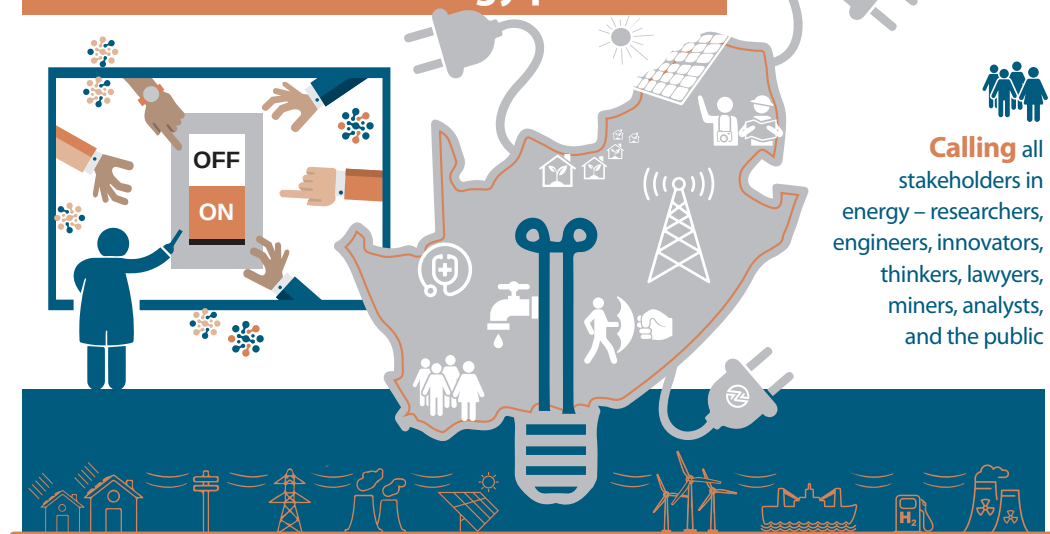
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Saving SA's little dragon, Smaug



Trade in rare sungazer lizards for the international exotic pet trade is rampant

Sheree Bega

Heavily armoured and covered in spiny scales, South Africa's rare and enigmatic sungazer lizards (*Smaug giganteus*) are named after Smaug, the fiery dragon of Middle-Earth in JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

But it is the 20-million-year-old threatened species of lizard found only in South Africa that is under attack, poached from their burrows in the Highveld, the Free State and Mpumalanga, for the lucrative international exotic pet trade.

Sungazers, the largest lizards in the girdled lizard group, are "amazingly charismatic", said Shivan Parusnath, the African regional director for the National Geographic Society, who researches the population genetics of the species — and the illegal reptile trade.

Their rarity and dragon-like appearance is what makes them sought after in the global pet trade, which is contributing to their decline. Parusnath said the long-lived sungazers are one of the top five reptile species exported from South Africa. Because sungazers do not breed in captivity, all the animals in the global trade come directly from the country's threatened wild populations.

Last month, Gauteng couple Gerald and Elisha van der Westhuizen were sentenced in the Kempton Park regional court for their role in smuggling sungazers from South Africa.

Gerald van der Westhuizen was sentenced to a fine of R1 million of which half was suspended for five years on condition that he is not convicted of a similar offence.

His wife was sentenced to five years' direct imprisonment, with the sentence wholly suspended for five years on condition that she is not convicted of contravening the Prevention of Organised Crime Act.

Their illicit activity was intercepted on 24 May 2019, when South African Revenue Service customs officials were conducting routine inspections at OR Tambo International Airport's international mail centre and found a parcel destined for Germany, which contained six sungazer lizards, two of which were dead.

The contents were declared as "gift teddy and candies" and the animals were hidden inside a stuffed toy. The parcel was addressed to M Drescher, in Germany.

Two years later, on 19 November 2021, German citizens Daniel Lohde and Marko Drescher were nabbed in the Northern Cape while illegally catching and trading in reptiles, including armadillo girdled lizards — a threatened and protected species — geckos and tortoises, with the intention to smuggle them out of South Africa into the international exotic pet trade. They were convicted of the illegal possession and attempted export of listed reptiles.

Phone analysis revealed detailed WhatsApp conversations, voice notes and photographs between Lohde and



Gerald van der Westhuizen pertaining to the export of sungazer lizards. The South African had illegally sent sungazer lizards to Germany and Mexico on three occasions.

Sungazers can fetch thousands of dollars internationally, with the

main markets being Japan, Germany and the US. Parusnath said that most of the people involved in the illegal trade are from these countries.

"Primarily, like in the Netherlands and Germany, you get a lot of citizens of those countries that come to South

Large-scale problem: Sungazer lizards are under threat from poachers who sell them in Japan, Germany and the United States.

Photos: Shivan Parusnath

Africa, poach stuff and then they themselves take it [out of the country] in their suitcases. It's not as common to have South Africans involved in this because the big money comes from international trade," he said.

In the past decade, there has been a concerted effort to raise the profile of the illegal reptile trade and "it's very cool to see the work we've done starting to show itself in our legal system", Parusnath said.

Convictions and sentences, such as those meted out to the Van der Westhuizens, help set precedent and show that South Africa is taking the illicit reptile trade seriously.

"But, at the same time, there's going to be a demand for these reptiles. So, until we have better systems in place, we're still going to have this poaching. In my mind, rhino poaching is no different to sungazer poaching. They're both species that can't handle this kind of poaching."

Parusnath said recent research has shown that reptiles are the number one group of traded animals in the world, making up more than half of all traded animals globally. The illegal reptile trade is the third-biggest in the world after drugs and weapons.

Reptiles are cold-blooded, "so they don't show up necessarily on the thermal scans and when they do get a bit cooler, they stop moving as much so they're fairly still", he says.

"They have slower metabolic rates, so they don't need to eat, drink and breathe quite as often ... and I don't mean they don't need to breathe and that if you put them in a box they'll survive, because a lot of reptiles end up dying because of suffocation and starvation, but they can handle it better than a mammal can," he said.

Reptiles are "poached alive" and "sent across the world, alive".

Graham Alexander, a professor of herpetology at Wits and a leading authority on reptiles, explained that although the illicit trade of reptiles is not as high profile as rhino horn or pangolin scales, "in a lot of respects,

it is probably resulting in the same sort of money changing hands".

With the Van der Westhuizen matter, two of the six sungazers had died but four were alive "so, I guess, as long as some of them are not dead when they get to the other side, the smugglers are willing to take that loss, because they can make so much money out of it".

There have been cases of people getting permits to export sungazers on the pretext that they were captive-bred. "Sungazers generally don't breed in captivity and there are only very few records, literally like three," he said.

They give birth to live young, typically two, and a female will only breed every second year.

"The reproductive output is very low and certainly where people are exporting 100 or more sungazers, they were wild-caught, poached animals. It's just that they got away with saying they were captive-bred."

Parusnath's research showed, for the first time, that sungazers have "a family structure where the babies stay with their parents for 10 to 15 years. A colony of sungazers is made up of a family where the cousins live next to each other and the aunts and uncles live alongside each other. It's like a society that we are used to."

Johan Marais, who runs the African Snakebite Institute, said there had been a "massive shift" in how seriously reptile crime is being taken in South Africa, by the courts and the government.

The government is beginning to realise "it's part of our natural heritage, it's really problematic and that reptile smuggling still ranks up the top of three smuggling networks in the world".

But smugglers are becoming more sophisticated.

"Because of all these laws, what the smugglers are now doing is resorting to claiming the reptiles that they are exporting are captive-bred, because the law makes provision that if you can breed an animal, you can export the progeny," Marais said.

"We are seeing, with rinkhals for instance — hundreds — being exported and nobody is breeding them commercially, so these are lies."

The weak spot is KwaZulu-Natal where "guys claim they are breeding chameleons and certain snakes and lizards and ... they quite easily are getting permits", he said. "Many of these animals are not captive-bred. Recently, lizards were poached in Mpumalanga and shipped out of South Africa from KwaZulu-Natal with permits."

Marais said the most recent price he was quoted for sungazers was \$3000 each and the "prices are going up". In a single day, poachers can wipe out an entire colony.

The illegal trade in reptiles has become more specialised. "They are looking for the really rare snakes, like some of these dwarf adders, some that are known from 30 individuals that science ever captured, but there's more than 30 of them in the overseas pet trade ... dwarf chameleons, dwarf adders, armadillo lizards, sungazers and there's now also the girdled lizards."

At the provincial level, "there has to be far more thought going into any permit that is issued because these permits are just issued far too readily and, more often than not, it is wild-caught animals that are being exported as so called captive-bred".

Reviving the spirit of unity and hope: A call for an active citizenry in South Africa

Let us fight against despondency, retain our hope and exercise our democratic right to vote

Murphy Morobe

In a country where despondency and disillusionment are pervasive, many ordinary South Africans, including myself, grapple with the decision to fight or flee from our challenges. As we navigate the complexities of our circumstances, we are reminded of the fight for freedom and justice symbolised by Nelson Mandela during the UDF's Release Mandela Campaign. Now more than ever, as we commemorate Mandela Month, we must draw inspiration from the traditions and values bequeathed by those who went before us in the fight for freedom.

Being heard is not enough: Action is required

While knowing that our voices are being heard is encouraging, mere acknowledgement is not enough. We, the people, were our own liberators and must not shy away from the historical call to be involved in addressing the pressing issues facing our nation. Our entire country cannot be made to wait with docility while the party in power introspects. There must naturally be tension between people's demands and a governing party's preoccupation with its inner demons. People have every right to be impatient, especially as those afforded the privilege to execute are distracted by vested interests that have more to do with the pecuniary inclinations of those in positions of authority.

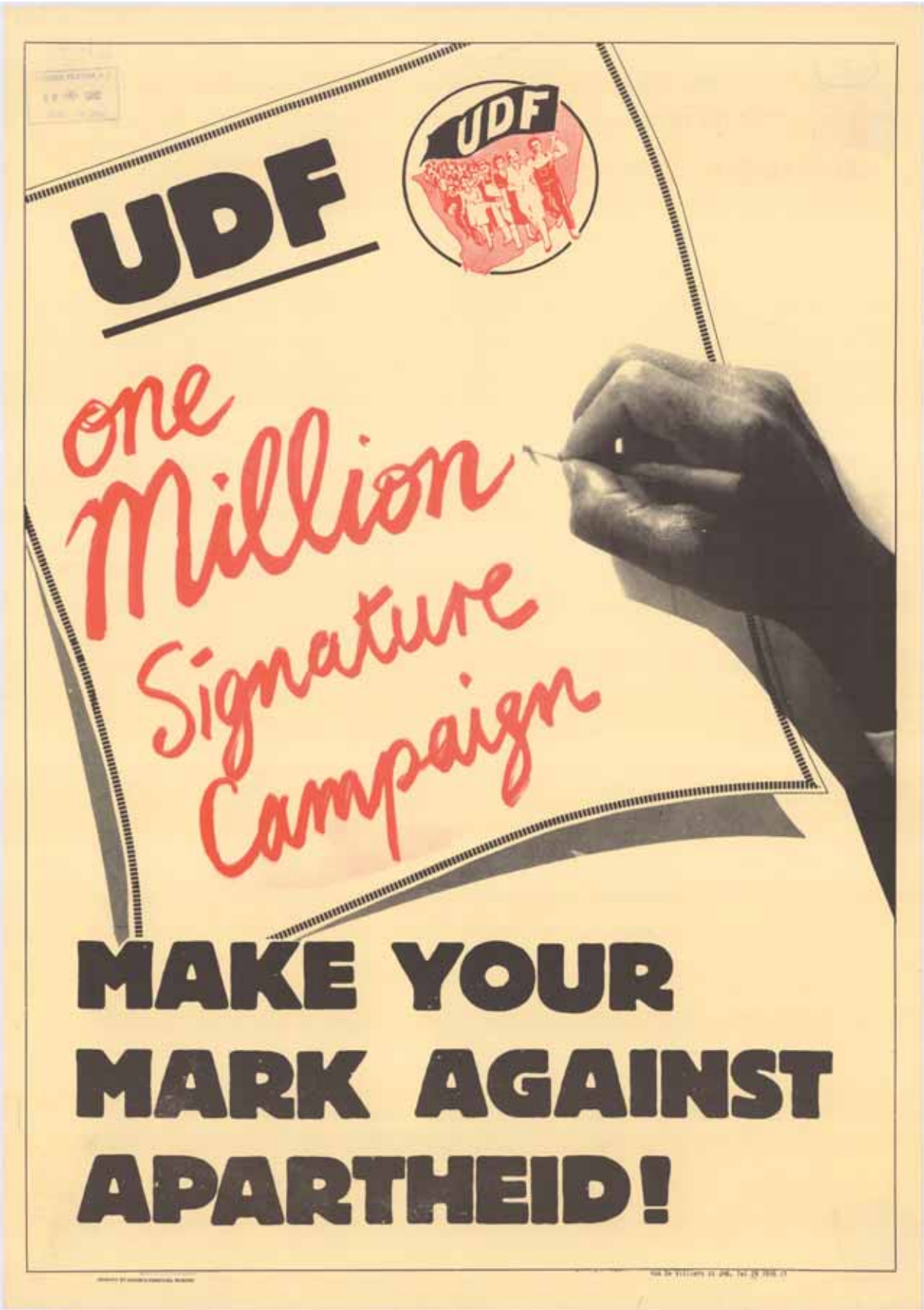
For this reason, I believe that a people's government cannot afford to be entangled in a party's internal struggles. Providing critical services to the people must remain uninterrupted and should always be the primary focus of state institutions. Citizens expect that the annual plans of the president should be prioritised for "a better future for all" that the ANC promises.

Reconnecting with the UDF legacy: Lessons for today's challenges

As a member of the surviving United Democratic Front (UDF) executive, I can attest to the importance of remembering the legacy of the anti-apartheid body. We united across racial lines, mobilising people to fight for justice and equality. Non-racialism was not just a slogan; it was evident in how we organised and led. Reconnecting with the principles of the UDF is essential for revitalising the body politic of our society.

Rebuilding strong civic associations and community involvement

In the present day, the palpable loss of meaningful community engagement, accentuated by the tragic breakdown of civic associations, has contributed to the prevailing sense of disempowerment in society. While there are indeed a plethora of civil society organisations across the length and breadth of the country, the experience of the mobilisation and organisation attained during the UDF's existence has in it critical lessons that are



The experience of the mobilisation and organisation attained during the UDF's existence has in it critical lessons that are relevant today for application in mitigating the debilitating disempowerment felt by communities.

relevant today for application in mitigating this debilitating disempowerment felt by communities.

It is imperative to rebuild these structures to empower people and foster an active citizenry. Civic organisations and advice centres, in particular, can provide access to information, promote unity, and address the community's diverse needs. Most importantly, party affiliation or membership cannot be a prerequisite for forming or joining these local-level structures.

Challenges and opportunities for a strong opposition

A healthy democracy requires a robust opposition that challenges the governing party and presents alternative policies and ideas. As we are not a one-party state,

South Africa's political landscape needs a strong opposition rooted in explicit countervailing ideologies and programmes that are not just focused on individual gain. To ensure a thriving democracy, change and a constitutional rotation of power is essential, allowing different parties to bring fresh perspectives and ideas.

Preserving the Constitution and democracy: The role of an active citizenship

The UDF fought for a democratic South Africa anchored in a robust constitution. Today, it is imperative that in whatever sector we are in, we must fight to protect and preserve this constitution through an active citizenry. This means holding leaders accountable and demanding transparency in governance. A passive

citizenry risks losing the gains made all those years ago.

Uniting and empowering citizens for a brighter future

Reviving the UDF spirit and fostering an active citizenry is vital to reclaiming our democracy. The commemoration and celebration of the UDF's 1983 launch takes place on 20 August 2023 at the Old Johannesburg City Hall, and this 40th-anniversary celebration must leave a legacy by focusing on campaigns that forge, deepen and strengthen an active citizenry. A citizenry that knows its rights and appreciates its power to affect change through mobilisation and organisation stands a better chance of holding those in power accountable.

Transcending our historical legacy: Empowering voters

We must be vigilant and jealously guard our hard-earned freedoms as we progress. We have to keep working at transcending those historical barriers that discourage voters and rob them of their agency of being change agents. While we do not intend to form a political party for the upcoming elections, we encourage citizens to exercise their right to vote and make informed choices. Elections are a significant aspect of our democracy, and active participation is crucial for a thriving nation. Through an active citizenry, the best chance for speeding up transformation and engendering accountability can be entrenched.

Conclusion: United in purpose for a better South Africa

In conclusion, South Africa faces challenges that demand action and unity. The legacy of the UDF must serve as a source of inspiration, reminding us of the power of united action and non-racialism. Rebuilding civic organisations and empowering communities are crucial steps in fostering an active citizenry. We must protect our Constitution and democracy by holding leaders accountable and actively participating in shaping the future of our nation.

In these 40 years since the clarion call of UDF UNITES, APARTHEID DIVIDES, we once more are compelled by the forces of history and circumstances to come together, set aside our differences, and work towards a common purpose — a South Africa where all citizens can thrive. As we navigate the complexities of the present times, let us draw strength from our history, embrace hope, and commit ourselves to building a better tomorrow for future generations.

United, we can overcome the challenges and create a nation that upholds the values of justice, equality, and inclusivity. The time to act is now. Let us rise to the occasion and renew the spirit of unity and hope in our beloved South Africa.

Murphy Morobe, UDF40 National Steering Committee Member

Africa

Ghost voters haunt Zim elections

An analysis of the voters' roll indicates that the elections on 23 August for the president and legislature will not be free and fair

On election day in Zimbabwe this month, Tendai and his wife will leave home and head in opposite directions.

The couple, from the central town of Kadoma, live under the same roof but have been assigned to different polling stations in one of a series of anomalies in the voters' roll that have raised fears of rigging.

"I'll go my way, she'll go her way — it's the new abnormal," said Tendai, who supports the opposition and preferred to use a pseudonym because of safety concerns.

Zimbabwe votes to elect the president and legislature on 23 August in what analysts expect to be a tense affair, amid a crackdown on dissent and a disaffected population battling hyperinflation, poverty and high unemployment.

Suspensions over possible election irregularities are rife in a nation that has been ruled by Zanu-PF since independence in 1980 and has a long history of disputed votes.

Activists at Team Pachedu, a civil

society group, say an analysis of the roll suggests such fears are well grounded.

"We have discovered a lot of irregularities," said Tafadzwa Sambiri, a spokesperson for the group. "Chief among them is the recycling of IDs."

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) did not reply to a request for comment.

Identity documents in Zimbabwe come with an identification number that is meant to stick with a person for life — but that doesn't appear to be the case for some. Team Pachedu said it found thousands of ID numbers that were linked to a person in the 2013 elections but are tied to a different name in 2023.

In some cases, the name stayed the same but the date of birth has changed — something sceptics might think suggests these people do not exist. The group said it found other oddities; people who are dead or registered twice or seemingly crammed in a relatively small space — such as the 183 voters living in the same house on the outskirts of Harare.

Thousands of others, like Tendai,



Disputed: The elections will be marred by new repressive laws and intimidation, as well as ID numbers belonging to dead people, and names and addresses that don't match. Photo: Zinyange Auntony/Getty Images

have noticed their place of voting has changed.

A woman from Harare, who also preferred to remain anonymous, said: "I now have to board a taxi to Southerton, which is about three kilometres from where I stay. It's costly and not convenient for me."

The issue first came to light in May, when election authorities made the roll available for inspection, and many found their names had been removed or misplaced.

Among them was David Coltart, a former education minister and a member of the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), the leading opposition party, who, after a day of searching, figured he had been moved to a polling station further away from the house he has lived in for decades.

"[This] is hugely problematic, particularly in rural areas where people don't have access to the internet and

don't have decent means of transport," Coltart said.

On election day some might find they have gone to the wrong place, he added.

In some instances, voters from ruling party strongholds appear to have been moved in bulk to opposition leaning areas, according to Team Pachedu.

Activists fear the anomalies could prove decisive. The vote is largely expected to be a rematch between President Emmerson Mnangagwa, of the ruling Zanu-PF, and CCC leader Nelson Chamisa.

Mnangagwa won the last elections in 2018 with a narrow margin, bringing home 50.8% of the vote. The results were disputed but Chamisa lost the legal battle in court.

A report by Human Rights Watch last week said the upcoming ballot will be held under a "seriously flawed

electoral process" that does not meet global standards for freedom and fairness.

It pointed at the ZEC's "lack of impartiality" as one of the many issues, along with the adoption of repressive laws to muffle dissent and the use of intimidation, violence and the courts against the opposition.

Yet Coltart said the CCC remained confident it has strong enough support to overcome such obstacles and carry the day.

"There's no doubt that Zanu-PF and Mnangagwa pulled out all the stops to do everything possible to prevent Chamisa and the 'Triple C' from winning," he said. "But the question still remains whether it's going to be sufficient."

International observers, including missions from the European Union and the African Union, have been invited to monitor the vote. — AFP

In post-coup Niger, many salute 'liberation' despite global criticism

The coup that shook Niger nearly two weeks ago triggered an international outcry and curbs on domestic freedoms, yet many people in the capital say the change is a breath of fresh air.

About 30 000 people turned out last Sunday for a rally in a Niamey stadium to support the soldiers who, on 26 July, toppled Niger's elected president, Mohamed Bazoum.

For foreign and local critics, the event was a stage-managed show, designed to back the coup leaders in their face-off with the West African bloc, Ecowas, which is waving the threat of force to reinstate Bazoum.

But within the stadium, and on the streets of Niamey, there were many people who seemed genuinely relieved to see the end of 12 years in government by Bazoum's Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS).

"It's liberation," said Ousseini Tinni, a mechanic.

"Given the situation that this country has been in for decades, we feel free," said Alhassane Adamou, an office administrator in the private sector.

Niamey has long been known as a stronghold of the opposition, and domestic critics of the coup and its effect on rights have kept their



Overthrown: Cars were burned outside the party headquarters of deposed president Mohamed Bazoum. Photo: Getty Images

heads down. The coup leaders have also announced the suspension of the Constitution, banned demonstrations and arrested several of Bazoum's ministers, although there have not been mass arrests.

In this context, many people said democracy under the PNDS had been a sham.

"I support the soldiers 100 percent," said Samaila Abdourahim, a trader. "Under the old regime, they talked about democracy but it was

merely words. We weren't experiencing a democracy but a dictatorship."

Bazoum is feted abroad for his election in 2021 that ushered in Niger's first-ever peaceful transition of power since gaining independence from France in 1960. But there is often a different view of Bazoum in Niamey, where many people nurse bitterness or disappointment.

They point to the condemnation of opposition leader Hama Amadou to a one-year jail term on charges

of child trafficking, a sentence that made him ineligible for the election.

Riots broke out in the capital after Bazoum's victory that led to two deaths and 468 arrests.

In its 2022 Democracy Index, the Economist Intelligence Unit placed Niger among countries with "authoritarian regimes".

"We were afraid of expressing ourselves. As soon as you expressed your opinion, they came and arrested you," said Tinni.

Others spoke out about cronyism, corruption and insecurity that they said had flourished under the PNDS.

"This is what prompted the public to support the putsch," said Adamou, whose words drew nodding heads of support among the onlookers surrounding him.

Part of the hostility is directed towards France, whose support for Bazoum — a key ally in the French anti-jihadist strategy in the Sahel — is deemed to be proof of complicity.

Ken Opalo, an associate professor at Georgetown University in Washington, drew a parallel between the coup in Niger and military takeovers in neighbouring Mali in 2020 and Burkina Faso in 2022.

Foreign allies prioritised "stemming the flows of migrants, accessing natural resources, fighting jihadist in

the Sahel so they don't have to fight them in Western cities, and maintaining overall geopolitical influence in the region", he wrote in a blog. "Democracy and economic development have mostly been subordinated to these larger objectives."

The International Crisis Group think-tank said in a report on Monday, "President Bazoum launched a sincere effort to reform institutions and governance ... but his capacity for changing the real practices of the state and its representatives was restricted by the need to balance the political forces that brought him to power."

The question is whether General Abdourahmane Tiani, Niger's latest strongman and a reputed confidant of former president Mahamadou Issoufou, will change things.

According to an opinion poll published in March 2022 by survey firm Afrobarometer, more than half of the Nigeriens interviewed said they were dissatisfied with their democracy.

But 61% said they preferred democracy to other forms of government — and 84% opposed dictatorship.

"If we tolerate them [the military] today, it's because it's in our interest for them to be there. Now, it's us, the people, who will be making the decisions," said Abdourahim. — AFP



'In the US many states have passed laws that are either against or restrict activities of homosexuality ... so why pick on Uganda?' — **Foreign Affairs Minister Okello Oryem, after the World Bank decided to halt new loans to Uganda over its anti-gay law.**



Magic: Voodoo wrestler Maitresse Libondans, who lives in Selemenbao district in Kinshasa, will only enter the ring if her ancestors assure her of victory. She bares her breasts to freeze her opponents during the combat sport. Photo: Alexis Huguet/Getty Images

Spellbinding 'voodoo' wrestling

A huge draw in the poor areas of Kinshasa, the sport involves men and women who use magic in the ring

Emmet Livingstone

There has been a power cut, and under moonlight in a poor quarter of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC's) capital, wrestler Maitresse Libondans explains how she invokes her ancestors to cast spells that rout her opponents.

"I research the fetish," says the 28-year-old, who is wearing a red wig ahead of her fight and holding a cane that she says is imbued with mystical powers.

Maitresse Libondans is a practitioner of "catch-fetich", also called voodoo wrestling — a wildly over-the-top Congolese sport where fighters grapple with each other and use magic to try to gain supremacy. She will only step into the ring if her ancestors, reached through spiritual rites, assure her of conquest.

And once in combat, she uses her signature fighting technique: baring her chest to hypnotise her opponent.

"I made him suck my breasts," Maitresse Libondans said matter-of-factly about her most recent victory.

A huge draw in impoverished neighbourhoods of Kinshasa, voodoo wrestling features men and women of all sizes, who use various degrees of magic in the ring.

The precise origins of the sport are unclear, with wrestlers saying they had followed the example of their elders.



Mystical: A voodoo wrestler whispers incantations over his opponent during a fight in Kinshasa. Photo: Alexis Huguet/Getty Images

But some say mystical confrontation dates to the 1970s and the era of the "Rumble in the Jungle", the legendary boxing match in Kinshasa between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman.

Over a beer before her fight in the Selemenbao neighbourhood, Maitresse Libondans, who is also a spiritual healer and whose real name is Ornella Lukeba, whispers incantations as her eyes begin to cross.

Her coach, enjoying a beer at the same plastic table, freezes, transfixed. It is a premonition of what is to come in her looming one-on-one with a wiry male fighter named Masamba.

Staged late in the evening on a rickety wrestling ring in a small school courtyard, the bouts attracted about 200 people, paying 3 000 Congolese francs (about R24) for an adult ticket.

A brass band and drummers blared a constant stream of lively music, energising an enthusiastic crowd.

Sachets of liquor were on sale. Many people also lit up joints.

These raucous scenes are a far cry from the well-heeled centre of Kinshasa, which is hosting the Francophone Games, roughly the French-speaking equivalent of the Commonwealth Games.

In the first bout, a male fighter in a woman's dress and Adidas boxing shoes downed his opponent with a spell, and conjured up a burst of flames in the ring. One fight later, Maitresse Libondans strode into the ring, parading to the music of the brass band.

Her contest with Masamba was tough. They flipped each other over and performed mock sexual assaults on each other. But then Maitresse Libondans lifted up her shirt, freezing Masamba and the referee, who both proceeded to suck her nipples.

Under her spell, she made the hypnotised pair dance to the music as she walked away victorious, to roars of delight. "He should go home and

better prepare his incantations," she said after the bout.

According to the fighters, voodoo wrestling is judged based on three criteria: technique, courage and magic. But there appeared to be few strict rules during the fight in Selemenbao, other than to entertain and break taboos.

The final fight was won by a burly Congolese army officer wearing a suggestive pink tutu.

Many wrestlers say they make a living solely from the fight winnings, with prize money running to the equivalent of thousands of dollars for the largest events. Most also supplement their income by working as healers.

Panther, a wrestler-healer in Selemenbao, chose not to fight at the bout in his neighbourhood, judging the winnings too meagre. But he said people came from far and wide for his cures.

The 48-year-old performed rituals at his shrine of figurines and lit candles, installed beneath walls covered with fetish images and "temple of death" and "black demon" written in French.

Uttering a string of incantations, Panther, his face covered in talcum powder, placed a lit cigarette in the mouth of one statue. It then appeared to draw a puff on its own, with smoke escaping from its mouth.

"The statuette that emits the smoke is the oldest ancestor of this temple," Panther said. "He manifests himself through smoke."

Spiritual traditions as well as Catholicism run deep in the DRC, which means that not everyone looks kindly on magic.

"There are people who are afraid of me," said Maitresse Libondans, clutching her stick. "But," she said, "there are also lots of fans." — *AFP*

Human Rights Watch accuses Angolan police of killings

Angola's police have allegedly killed more than a dozen activists since January, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said this week, urging the government to swiftly investigate reports of abuse and rights violations.

The country's law enforcement authorities have also been accused of the arbitrary arrests and detention of hundreds, HRW said in a statement.

Angolan law enforcement authorities including police, state security and intelligence services "have been implicated in unlawful killings of at least 15 people".

Political activists, artists and protest organisers were the main targets of the "alleged rights violations", which the rights group has condemned.

"Angolan authorities should urgently act to end abusive police policies and practices and ensure that there is justice for victims and their family members," said Zenaida Machado, a senior Africa researcher at HRW.

Although the government has attempted to improve law enforcement, criminal prosecutions against police officers who commit these violations remain rare, it said.

The arrests are more frequent in the oil rich northern province of Cabinda, close to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the past six months, the rights group has interviewed 32 people across the country including victims and their relatives, witnesses and security sources.

In one instance men who identified as criminal investigation service members held a group of young men in custody "whose bodies were found three days later at a hospital morgue".

A friend of the victims, who were known for participating in anti-government protests, said that the police had been monitoring the group.

Angola's ruling party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, has denied HRW's claims.

"Investigations are already underway," said party spokesperson Rui Falcao. "However, we find it strange that those calling for the necessary investigations already have conclusions and are passing judgement."

According to the HRW, the country's leading opposition, Unita, said it had documented more than 130 cases of people being killed by security forces during protests since 2017.

Last Saturday, thousands of people called for Angola's President Joao Lourenco to step down during a rally in the capital organised by Unita.

The oil-rich nation has experienced a wave of protests since the government cut subsidies for petrol in June.

The move was aimed at curbing government spending, as the economy suffers from a slide in oil prices that has weakened the local currency, the kwanza. But it resulted in unpopular sharp fuel price hikes. — *AFP*

On the road

Porsche adds pepper to bestseller

The Cayenne has gone under the knife for a subtle — but highly effective — makeover

Avon Middleton

As far as vehicle updates go, to call what has been done to the Porsche Cayenne significant would be an understatement.

You might not immediately notice it from the outside as you look at the pictures on this page, trying to work out precisely what has changed — we'll take you through it shortly. First, let's look at the reasons why.

The Cayenne is Porsche's best-selling vehicle, responsible for a third of all sales globally. This mid-life update wasn't just to freshen it up but also to ensure it sells well into the cycle of employing electric powertrains too, something Porsche will be adding to the range from 2025.

The exterior changes seem subtle until the pre-facelift version is parked side by side with this one. It's one of those "I know something is different but I can't quite put my finger on it" moments.

Let us help. For a start, Porsche has reworked the face. It's repositioned the headlights to be higher and slightly fuller, while the bonnet seems to slope downwards, giving you the illusion of a lower nose, reminiscent of the lower-slung vehicles in the marque's range.

The bumper incorporates a few more horizontal decorative pieces, into which Porsche has worked the DRL LED lights.

The doors have been reworked for a cleaner look that accentuates the front and rear wings.

At the rear, close inspection will reveal a cleaner look too, minimalist in its panel design, and augmented by new 3D light clusters and P-O-R-S-C-H-E lettering, which is no longer backed by glassware.

You'll also notice that the number plate position is much lower, making for a larger and cleaner tailgate.

The redesign feels subtle, yes, but it comprises a long list of minor adjustments and changes that ultimately lend the Cayenne an uncluttered and well-proportioned look, finished by a selection of up to 30 alloy wheel options ranging between 20 inch and 22 inch.

Porsche has called in the services of the bi-turbo V8 once again, with enough work done to reduce emissions sufficiently for the Cayenne S to coexist with the other models.

The 349kW V8 is paired to Porsche's 8-speed Tiptronic box with all-wheel drive and variable torque distribution between the front and rear axles.

Power aside, it's this powertrain's elements working in unison that makes the Cayenne S feel so good

to drive. Even in the pouring rain, the chassis and grip levels offered through the Porsche Traction Management control system make for a confident and brisk drive.

The way it rotates through steering inputs is every bit the sporty SUV we've come to expect.

Part of this balance of dynamics and comfort has been enhanced in the new Cayenne via a reworked suspension setup, now featuring two valves on each damper.

The extra valve gives further adaptability to the rebound and compression stages, effectively making the Cayenne better at putting "comfort" and "sporty" in the same sentence.

This two-valve tech is standard on all Cayennes, whether fitted with air or steel-spring suspension. The tech is part of the PASM (Porsche Active Suspension Management) system, which is standard across the range for the first time. In practice, it makes the Cayenne all the more flexible in its use and driving experience.

We got the opportunity to swop the V8 for the base Cayenne, powered by a turbocharged V6 mated to a Tiptronic 8-speed. It's immediately apparent that, at 89kW shy of the "S", the Cayenne turns in with a noticeable agility and lightness. It's every bit the performer in walking the line of on-road comfort and sporty dynamics.

Ditto on the chassis changes mentioned above. The V6 commands even more attention as it feels just as surefooted and exciting, albeit with a different exhaust note and, if you're counting, slower acceleration times and top end.

It's the pick of the range as far as the models we have driven are concerned and will turn in just over 10 litres/100 km on the efficiency scale.

As for safety, a big talking point is a new level of tech on the Porsche HD Matrix LED headlights, which are a R55 000 option, and come with a multitude of adaptations.

All-new interior concept

The cabin is the showstopper. The previous architecture and operating concept are gone, replaced by a layout that shares much of its design with the electric Taycan. The concept centres around the driver, presenting features and functions in the most efficient and flexible way.

Porsche products are synonymous with personalisation, which extends to how the driver enjoys the layout of the graphics and functions of the various displays.

The overall master material design is the use of black-panel surfaces that run across the whole dashboard. It creates a harmonious home for display surfaces, from the driver's



Red-hot: The Porsche Cayenne has been revamped, inside and out, with subtle styling and an ever better experience for the driver and passengers.



floating console display to the two infotainment displays that sit centrally and in front of the passenger.

A 10.9-inch display allows passengers to access most functions without distracting the driver. Part of this update is incorporating video-streaming applications in order for passengers to enjoy entertainment while the driver focuses on driving.

Not a bad compromise, really — the Cayenne certainly is entertaining for the person at the wheel.

The passenger display is covered by a special film that masks the view from the driver's side, much like phone privacy screen protectors.

The other key interior point is the driver's instrument cluster, a free-standing, bezel-free, curved display.

It integrates all driving displays within a new, customisable pres-

entation that works in conjunction with a head-up display, also customisable, with six changeable information interfaces.

Traditional Porsche displays, such as large central rev counters, remain but there are also several options and menus for all the driver's functions. The glaring omission here is that Porsche has altered the start/stop switch from the old "key" type to a start-stop button. Purists might weep. Also, the gear selector has been moved to the side of the wheel.

Despite its SUV nature and real-world use for family mobility, the Cayenne's interior has been designed to ensure the sportscar feel is preserved and accentuated.

The new design architecture leaves room for signature Cayenne details, such as the dual handles

flanking the centre console.

The console itself, now devoid of the gear selector, feels higher than before, giving the illusion of sitting lower in the cabin, a key trait of any sports car. The steering wheel, too, has been lifted from the Porsche 911 with its drive mode selector.

What Porsche has achieved with this new architecture is future-proofed this generation of Cayenne for the electric versions. It's done it in a way that stays true to Porsche's DNA, for the most part, but also in a way that isn't as jarring as some of its German competitors.

Where there are multiple screens, there can be an uncomfortable sense of too much colour and too many clashing graphics.

On the tech front, Porsche has added something we've been wondering about for a while — a wireless charging tray for your smartphone with a cooling function.

The Cayenne has always been a very competent and compelling car. With this comprehensive update, one could argue it's an unbeatable package. It's subtle in styling yet offers more to the driver and passenger experience than ever before.

While we got behind the wheel of the Cayenne and Cayenne S in Austria, the local range includes these plus the E-Hybrid that couples the V6 to a 130kW electric motor. Porsche claims 85km of electric-only driving from the plug-in hybrid.

As you read this, the new Cayenne will already be at your nearest Porsche Centre.



'I hooked up my accelerator pedal in my car to my brake lights. I hit the gas, people behind me stop, and I'm gone.' — **Steven Wright**

Chery boosts the Tiggo 8 Pro Max

It's a significant step up and it'll find favour with local seven-seater mid-size SUV buyers

Ntsako Mthethwa

Affordable luxury has become a buzzword in the vehicle sector as Chinese car-makers rise to the challenge of offering buyers unrivalled value for money.

That said, consumers expect nothing less than a complete package of features and benefits as standard. From safety and performance to comfort and style, Chinese products often deliver on every facet without breaking the bank.

A fitting example is the flagship Tiggo 8 Pro Max from Chery, which ushered in sporty Chinese flair after the launch of the regular Tiggo 8 Pro in February last year.

It's been a success story for the brand since its relaunch into the local market in 2021, with about 20 000 Chery models finding homes across the country.

Speaking of the Tiggo 8 Pro Max, it was introduced before the end of last year as the flagship model in the Tiggo series consisting of the Tiggo 4 Pro, Tiggo 7 Pro and Tiggo 8 Pro.

Subtle refresh

Roughly six months later, Chery is giving its Tiggo 8 Pro Max SUV a subtle makeover both inside and out. The last time I got acquainted with the facelifted SUV was in Wuhu, China, in April.

The Tiggo 8 Pro Max has always been a stunning vehicle that combines sporty with a range of standard features that one would pay a premium for in vehicles from marques of European origin.

Subtlety is the name of the game here, and unless you're a diehard fan of the product, it'd take a few glances to spot the differences.

Upfront, a new grille incorporates an illuminated Chery logo that gives the SUV a modern touch. The LED Matrix headlights have been slightly tweaked and now feature more satiny daytime running light clusters.

It's when you move to the rear of the car that the changes become more apparent, thanks to completely redesigned light clusters that are linked by an LED light bar. This stylistic element has also become a trend among Chinese manufacturers.

In typical Max style, the SUV comes with four exhaust tips that add a sportier touch.

Interior changes

Inside, the seven-seater boasts significant changes, and I commend Chery for addressing the concerns I had when I sampled the Tiggo 8 Pro last year.

For starters, the secondary screen for climate-control adjustments has been removed and replaced by a set of haptic touch-sensitive buttons that are easier to control.

As the brand pushes towards digitisation, there are two 12.3-inch screens, one is for the instrument cluster, and the other serves as an



Good value in its segment: The update to the exterior of the Chery Tiggo 8 Pro Max is subtle but the SUV's interior has been significantly changed.
Photos: Justin Lee



infotainment system with functions including wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

The interior is not short on style and Chery has gone to extra lengths to make the new model even more premium, courtesy of soft-touch leather, wood-grain patterns as well as silver finishing on various points of the interior.

Also new inside is the centre console, which is home to a new gear selector, cup holders and a 50 Watt wireless charging pad.

Chery has packed the Tiggo 8 Pro Max to the brim with features such as a Sony sound system, ambient

lighting, offline navigation, four USB ports, a panoramic sunroof, voice control and a "boss button" which allows rear occupants to control the front passenger seat, all as standard.

Mechanics stay the same

Mechanically, the Tiggo 8 Pro Max is unaltered. It still houses the same 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol engine with 187kW and 390Nm of torque sent to the front wheels via a 7-speed DCT transmission.

During our launch drive, we thoroughly tested the SUV's suspension on highways and scenic back routes in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings were

that the suspension leans towards the firmer side, lacking sufficient damping for road imperfections. A softer setup would be more fitting for a family-oriented vehicle.

Power delivery is impressive with lively off-the-mark and overtaking acceleration, with minimal noise intruding the cabin space.

On the safety side, the new Tiggo 8 Pro Max comes standard with a revised ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance System) that includes adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking, an updated all-view monitor camera and lane keeping assistance as well as a DVR driver

view recorder for the first time.

The updated ADAS also positions the Tiggo 8 Pro Max in the spheres of Level 2 autonomy.

I found the active safety systems, such as lane-keep assist and front-collision assist, intrusive at times. While they are effective — overly so at times — there's definitely some room for refinement.

Unfortunately, the Tiggo 8 Pro Max remains a thirsty car, even when driven with efficiency in mind. At the launch, I saw fuel consumption figures hover around 10.9 litre/100km, considerably higher than the 7.6 litre/100km claimed by Chery.

A big step up

Priced at R669 900, the new Tiggo 8 Pro Max may boast subtle changes when compared with the outgoing model but as far as first impressions go, it's a big step up and it'll find favour with local seven-seater mid-size SUV buyers.

At its price, it's easy to forgive it its flaws, and if the value offered by Chinese cars appeals to your inner accountant, it's worth looking at. It competes well with rivals such as the VW Tiguan AllSpace, Proton X70 and Subaru Forester.

The price includes a five-year/60 000km service plan, a five-year/150 000km comprehensive mechanical warranty and a seven-year/90 000km service plan.

Chery also offers a 10-year/100 000km engine warranty for the first owner.

As a side note, the first 100 buyers of the Tiggo 8 Pro Max will gain membership to The Max Club. This offers a host of lifestyle benefits, a five-year care package plus the opportunity to win a trip to China.

Business

Emerging markets unwinding?

Not just yet. Chile and Brazil are leading the pack with their recent interest rate cuts, but South Africa is on its own timeline

Sarah Smit

After beating advanced economies to the punch in their fight against inflation, two emerging market countries have started to cut interest rates from their multi-year highs — loosening their vice-like grip on borrowers.

Meanwhile, despite inflation seemingly being on a downward trajectory, South Africans are staring down the prospect of debt costs being kept at their current painfully high levels for some time. This is as the South African Reserve Bank treads carefully, with the country's energy predicament and the rand's weakness continuing to pose risks to its inflation outlook.

If the interest rate decisions of other emerging market central banks are anything to go by, it could be many months before the Reserve Bank fires the starting gun on its own interest rate easing.

It took the Central Bank of Chile eight months before its board members took their fingers off pause. Brazil, which followed Chile's lead, took even longer.

Notwithstanding the Turkish central bank's unorthodox monetary policy, Chile recently became the first major emerging market to cut its policy rate since the aggressive tightening cycle that gripped much of the world during the latter half of 2021 and in 2022.

In a larger-than-expected move, in late July the Central Bank of Chile reduced interest rates by 100 basis points, marking a welcome reprieve after borrowing costs had climbed to their highest level since November 1998.

The vote to cut Chile's policy rate was unanimous, with the central bank's board noting that inflation had fallen faster than expected in June. The bank also flagged continued business and consumer pessimism.

The South American country's monthly economic activity index (a close proxy for GDP growth) saw its fifth consecutive contraction in June, suggesting that restrictive monetary policy had taken a toll.

The Central Bank of Brazil — which cut its policy rate last week, also by a larger margin than expected — likewise cited easing inflation and the country's economic decline. The bank reduced the rate to 13.25% from 13.75%, where it

had been held for eight months. Despite having the first major central bank to raise its policy rate from pandemic-era lows, Brazil's inflation soared to 12.13% year-on-year in April 2022, marking the steepest rise in prices in 26 years. After having raised the rate 11 times, starting in March 2021, and holding it at a six-year high, Brazil's inflation retreated to 3.16% in June of 2023.

Cooling inflation in Latin America comes after central banks in the region opted to "frontload" interest rate hikes, rather than waiting to see whether prices would come down on their own.

Given their history of high inflation, policymakers in emerging markets were less convinced than some of their colleagues in advanced economies that inflation would be transitory.

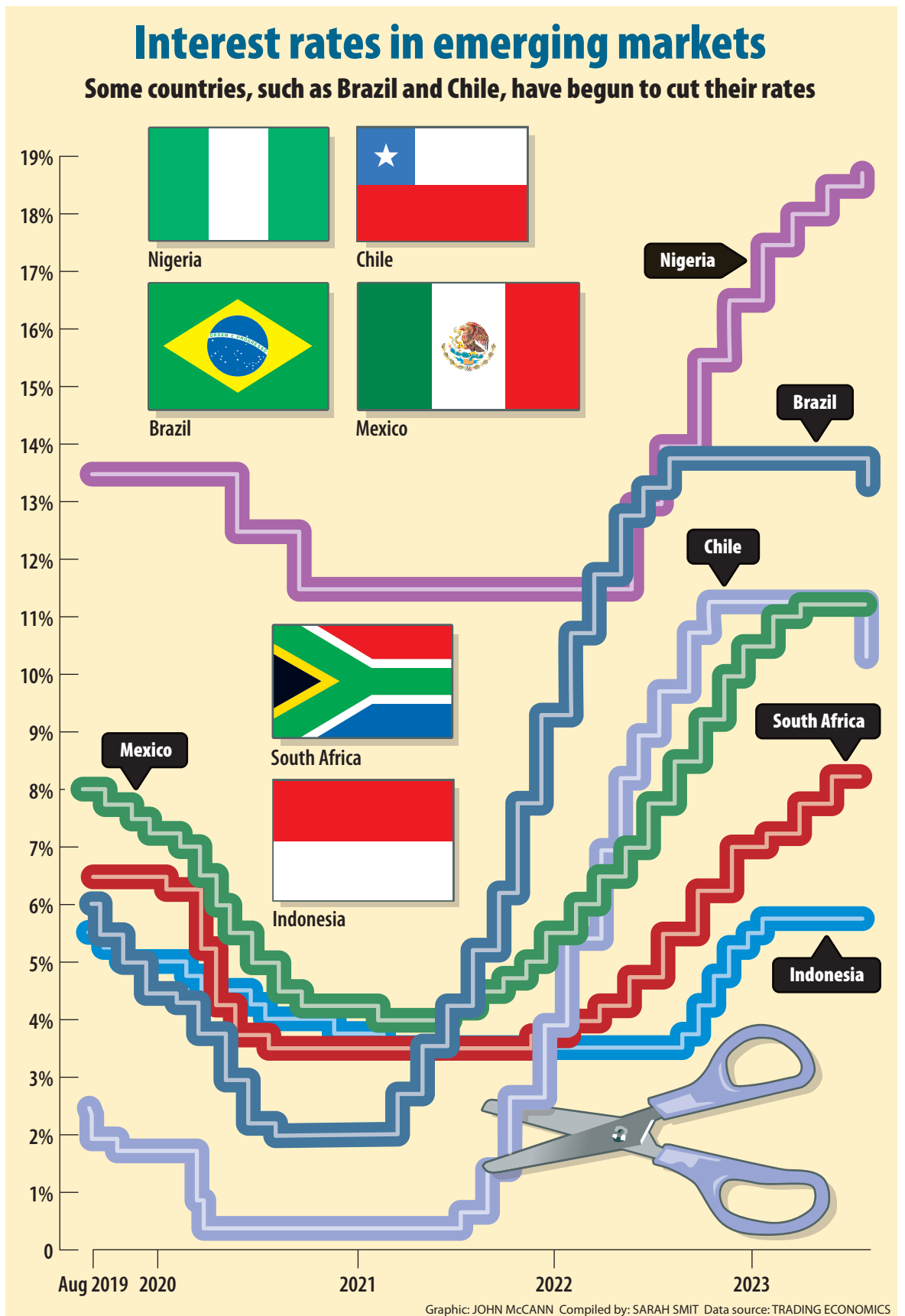
Brazil's March 2021 rate hike came nine months before the Bank of England (BoE) began tightening its monetary policy. The US Federal Reserve started lifting rates a year after Brazil did. While the latter central bank seems to have managed to bring inflation to heel — though prices are still above its 2% target — interest rate hikes have been less effective in the UK. UK inflation stood at 7.9% year-on-year in June, well above the BoE's 2% target.

The South African Reserve Bank also pre-empted rate hikes in the UK and in the US, first lifting the cost of borrowing in November 2021.

At the time, the prospect of tighter monetary policy in the US posed a considerable risk to domestic inflation. The Fed's decision to eventually lift its policy rate in 2022 led to a period of dollar strength, hitting emerging market currencies, which had experienced something of a hot streak in 2021 amid higher commodity prices.

Currency weakness causes imported prices to rise, applying upward pressure on inflation.

However, South Africa's inflation — driven mainly by external forces, such as post-pandemic supply-chain bottlenecks and the Russian-induced upward spiral in food and oil prices — did not reach quite the same heights as many of its peers. The country's annual inflation rate peaked at 7.8% in July 2022, but proved stubborn as the economy reeled from the effects of load-shedding and the ongoing weakness of the rand.



In a sign that prices are finally coming down with some speed, in June South Africa's annual inflation eased below the 6% ceiling of the Reserve Bank target range for the first time in over a year, pulling back from 6.3% to 5.4%.

After 10 consecutive interest rate hikes, the Reserve Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) voted to hold the country's repo rate at 8.25% in July. As it stands, South Africa's repo rate is at its highest level since 2009. But analysts don't expect the MPC to follow July's decision with a cut anytime soon.

In their report outlining their expectations for South Africa's economy in the third quarter, Absa economists said their baseline view was that inflation would ease further, briefly slipping below 5% in July,

Chile became the first major emerging market to cut its policy rate since the aggressive tightening cycle of late 2021 and 2022

before tracking sideways to end this year at 5%.

They believe the MPC's hiking cycle is done but said there is a high bar before the committee administers any cuts, given that inflation expectations have drifted higher. They expect the committee will start to cut rates in March next year.

Saah Mhlanga, chief economist at Rand Merchant Bank, suggested a rate cut could come even further down the line. The bank expects the first rate cut to happen in July 2024.

"We have fiscal risks, which the Reserve Bank has highlighted and which might lead to currency weakness. We still have potential risks to food price inflation from El Niño. Load-shedding. All of these contribute to sticky prices," Mhlanga said.

"And those are structural. These mean that the Reserve Bank is more likely to stay put before it starts thinking of cutting rates."

Local idiosyncrasies, such as the country's energy crisis, have caused the rand to underperform compared to other emerging market currencies — also affecting inflation.

Pinpointing an emerging mar-

ket trend is difficult, considering inflation dynamics tend to differ considerably from country to country, Mhlanga added. Sanisha Packirisamy, an economist at Momentum Investments, agreed.

"I think we need to be a bit careful about lumping emerging markets together, because of their different inflation post-pandemic and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine," Packirisamy said.

"For instance, if you think of our emerging market counterparts in Asia, most didn't experience very high rates of inflation, because they didn't necessarily embark on big stimulus programmes post-Covid-19 ... So, the dynamics are quite different across the board."

Packirisamy expects the Reserve Bank will start to cut rates during the second quarter next year, noting that the MPC would be hesitant about cutting rates before the Fed.

"And I think cuts are going to come at a slow pace. They'll do it in small increments because they will still be looking out for whether disinflation is sustainable ... A lot will depend on how fast inflation is coming down but they are unlikely to make massive moves."



‘Urgent and decisive action is required by government, labour, civil society and business to unlock South Africa’s undoubted economic potential and ensure higher levels of sustainable and inclusive economic growth.’ — **Nedbank chief executive Mike Brown**

El Niño, the next inflation frontier

The inflation-induced economic malaise seems to be lifting but as things heats up, so will prices

Sarah Smit

Inflation has started to ease in South Africa and elsewhere — suggesting that the price spiral that followed the world economy’s post-Covid recovery and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is simmering down.

But economists have pointed to another force that threatens to light a fire under inflation once more — El Niño, the weather phenomenon that pushes temperatures higher, threatening food security.

In their report outlining their expectations for South Africa’s economy in the third quarter, economists at Absa flagged El Niño as a potential risk to growth and to inflation. This is after the South African Reserve Bank, which recently changed tack on interest rate hikes, warned that a stronger El Niño threatens the country’s agricultural outlook.

In June, climate experts attending a summit in Pretoria pointed to what

looks to be an unusually strong El Niño developing this year.

Neville Sweijd, a senior researcher at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, noted published data at the time had shown unprecedented ocean and air temperatures.

The last time El Niño hit South Africa was in 2015, a year marked by one of the country’s worst droughts. Between January and December, the South African Weather Service recorded only 403mm of rainfall — the lowest annual total in 112 years.

According to a 2018 study by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the El Niño-induced drought in 2015 caused crop failure resulting in worrying food shortages in a number of countries, including South Africa. The country’s maize prices escalated 22% above their five-year average, it found. During the drought, South Africa imported maize for the first time since 2004.

Though inflation was contained in 2015, the following year prices

ticked up above the Reserve Bank’s 3% to 6% target range, peaking at an annual rate of 7% in February 2016.

After hitting excruciating highs last year — in the wake of pandemic and war-related supply-chain chokeholds — South Africa’s inflation has only recently fallen below the 7% mark. The still-elevated inflation recorded in the first few months of the year was largely driven by food prices, which hit a 14-year high in March.

In June, inflation fell below the ceiling of the Reserve Bank’s target range for the first time since May last year. Coming in at 5.4% year-on-year, the June price easing was helped by a significant fall in food price inflation compared to April.

In the midst of lower inflation, last

‘Encouragingly, domestic crop prices have not pushed sharply higher in recent months’

month the Reserve Bank’s monetary policy committee opted to hold interest rates at their 14-year highs. But the committee’s tone was hawkish, noting that, while global inflation has eased in the near term, the longer-term economic outlook “remains clouded by risks to the inflation trajectory, ongoing geopolitical tensions and the effects of climate change”.

On the growth front, El Niño is not a big concern, according to the Absa report, as expectations are that the weather phenomenon’s damage will be limited, given healthier soil moisture from the past four seasons of La Niña. “But El Niño remains a downside growth risk worth monitoring in the months ahead.”

The International Grains Council forecasts that South Africa’s 2023-2024 maize crop will come in at 15.6 million tonnes, down only slightly from the 16.4 million tonnes, expected for 2022-23, it notes.

“Encouragingly, domestic crop prices have not pushed sharply higher in recent months,” the report states, adding that food inflation is expected to continue to moderate during the coming months.

According to the bank’s forecast, food inflation will average 10.4% this year and 4.8% next year, and risks are skewed to the upside.

Given the uncertainty surrounding El Niño’s intensity and duration, it is difficult to predict its impact on inflation.

In a research note, published last week, Investec chief economist Annabel Bishop said while inflation is expected to fall further this year, sticky food prices could keep it from embarking on a deeper descent.

Bishop also noted that the base effects of the high prices recorded in the second half of last year would result in lower inflation prints for the remainder of this year.

She said inflation is expected to average around 4.5% year-on-year next year. But there are risks, “particularly from food price inflation, with retailers seeing margin squeeze on the costs of load-shedding, while climate change is escalating globally and locally”.

“The economic effects of climate change will increasingly be felt,” Bishop added, “as will the impact of climate mitigation actions”.

Sixth Money Talks Podcast

Partner content

Embrace your power to manage your money

Derek Davey

In the sixth Episode of Money Talks Eloise Boezak, African Bank Head of Marketing for Consumer Banking, outlined the importance of honesty and discipline when it comes to managing our finances, and part of this is carefully working out our budgets. Boezak was interviewed by Radio Broadcaster Khanya Sosibo and Communications Consultant Doric Sithole, in the sixth Money Talks podcast, a collaboration between African Bank and the Mail & Guardian.

Sosibo highlighted a concerning statistic from the South African Reserve Bank, stating that over 75% of South Africans’ take-home income is spent to service debt. She pointed out that more than 70% of South Africans earn an average of just R5 700 per month, making it challenging to budget effectively, especially for their retirement. However, she also emphasised the resilience and innovation of South Africans, and urged the encouragement of this spirit.

Financial literacy, Boezak asserted, is a powerful tool that can transform lives. Being empowered to learn how to manage your money and feel that you are in control can boost the confidence of women significantly.

Speaking about women in South Africa, especially women of colour, Boezak acknowledged their ability to manage money well to survive, but highlighted their lack of knowledge when it comes to generating wealth. She pointed out that the absence of wealthy role models in the media contributes to this disparity. Boezak

Money Talks!

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Financial Freedom Starts at Home:
Empower Yourself with Financial Literacy, with

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African Bank's Head, Marketing Consumer Banking, Customer Engagement

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used African Bank’s origin story, founded by black entrepreneurs with audacious dreams, as an example of a positive role model that should be celebrated.

The Marketing Head shared the inspiring story of a single mother who started off selling “kotas” (a hollowed out quarter loaf of bread filled with ingredients like chips, polony and atchar) on the streets of Alexandria, and eventually grew her company to multiple brick-and-mortar stores, and now she has six. She emphasised the need for women to have confidence in their capabilities and how important it is for them to share their success stories with each other.

Boezak added that delayed gratification plays a crucial role in financial success, as many people tend to overspend when they come into money. She shared her personal experience and the lessons she learned from her mother, advising

others to be mindful of their spending habits.

Embracing opportunities and entrepreneurial gifts, Boezak said, can lead to financial freedom and resilience during tough times. Believing in oneself can bring about positive change and peace of mind.

“We live in Africa, which is a place of community — a good example of this is stokvels. I encourage people to talk about money,” said Boezak. “Talk to your guy friends at the bar, don’t try to do it on your own; empower your girl tribe.”

Regarding budgeting, Sithole asked Boezak how to be more creative with it. Boezak suggested being honest with ourselves and examining our spending habits. Taking time monthly to review and assess our budgets, along with exploring different financial instruments and banking services, can help to optimise our financial planning.

It helps if you put aside time once a month, to

sit down with a cup of coffee, and examine your budget, and ask yourself what you need and what you want. There are many amazing instruments out there, such as influencers on social media. Look at what your bank offers you: African Bank, for instance, gives you 6% or more interest on money you leave in your account.

Boezak concluded by emphasising that budgeting is about intent, discipline, and courage. She encouraged listeners to take control of their finances and use money as a tool to empower themselves.

In summary, this episode reminds us of our legacy of limited choices, but also the potential for freedom and responsibility that comes with financial success. Boezak urged young people to use their time wisely and make conscious financial decisions to create a brighter future.

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SA Inc still steers the economy



Sarah Smit

With labour seemingly sidelined in talks affecting the economy’s future, big business isn’t as hard done by as some believe

Transition. It’s a word that crops up more often nowadays, particularly in the context of our slow and often painful crawl towards a greener economy.

In South Africa, the word “transition” is especially loaded. It was not so long ago that the country underwent its own economic reconfiguration during its passage towards democracy.

Today, the urgency afforded to South Africa’s energy transition has coincided with what looks to be another period of political rupture, the true extent of which will be exposed in the aftermath of next year’s election.

Said rupture, if it comes to bear, will be the result of the current administration’s failure to bring about a more equal and just economy, a rewiring gone wrong.

As was the case 30 years ago, this transition looks to be shepherded by the more powerful among us, namely the country’s corporate elite. Despite a view that SA Inc’s support is misplaced, given the government’s perceived betrayal of the private sector after apartheid, business has landed itself in a pretty position — its adversaries to its left now seemingly nudged out of the picture.

Last week, business leaders, who have now signed a 115-strong pledge to save South Africa’s economy, met the government as part of their collaboration to arrest the country’s decline. If the collaboration is successful, helping end South Africa’s energy, logistics and corruption crises, it could lift the country’s GDP by 3% or more, the business lobby claims.

The pledge by chief executives, announced the week prior, was met with cynicism from a number of analysts, many of them pointing out that



Talk left, walk right ANC: The labour movement has lost significant ground in the past 30 years. Photo: Waldo Swiegers/Getty Images

big business was effectively lending a hand to a wrecking ball of a party in the ANC. Behind this criticism is a view that this corporate elite should finally buck up, lest they fall into the trap of hitching their wagon to the governing party — and its less palatable policies.

In a statement, neoliberal lobby group the Free Market Foundation called on business to demand that the government abandon some of its policies, which have given rise to the National Minimum Wage Act, the Employment Equity Amendment Act, the Expropriation Bill and the National Health Insurance Bill, each of which have been deemed bad for business.

“Business must do all it can to avoid being co-opted by hostile government actors who seek to legitimise bad policy and use the capacity of commercial firms to implement those policies,” the foundation said.

Responding to concerns surrounding the CEO pledge, Standard Bank South Africa chief executive Lungisa Fuzile said he would work with the government if it means improving the country’s prospects. “Because I want a South Africa that works, a South Africa that delivers prosperity for everyone.

“I am not doing it for the governing party. I am doing it for South Africa.

South Africa does not belong to the government ... As a chief executive officer of a company that operates in South Africa, I will work with a legitimate government that exists at any given point in time.”

In their analysis, the Brenthurst Foundation’s Ray Hartley and Greg Mills pointed to a sort of moral weakness that has characterised corporate South Africa’s dalliance with the state. “Business has fallen for a political chimera,” they wrote.

“It will help the ANC shore up public enterprises ahead of next year’s election and then, its services no longer needed, watch aghast when the next government (likely to be formed by the ANC or an ANC coalition) brings out the lash with a new raft of populist policies.”

The problem is — as the Brenthurst analysis suggests in its contention that “business never found a government it didn’t like” — if you’re looking for a backbone, you’re not going to find it in SA Inc.

The pitfall of certain analyses of corporate South Africa’s role today is that they tend to overstate the extent to which big business is under siege — and the unearned boost its alliance with the governing party has given it, even during the worst of times.

It should be noted here that Brenthurst has its own history with

the ANC. The brainchild of Harry Oppenheimer, the Brenthurst Group brought together members of the country’s white corporate fraternity and the ANC to talk economic policy. The Brenthurst Group — made up of Anglo American executives and the then chief executives of Sanlam, Old Mutual and Standard Bank — was apparently deeply concerned that progressive forces had an undue influence over economic policy.

At the heart of commentators’ criticism of corporate South Africa’s posture towards the state is a view that it has relinquished a chunk of its power, allowing these so-called progressive forces to establish primacy.

Although this may have been true at some point — for instance, when labour federation Cosatu was able to hold off efforts to unbundle and privatise Eskom — it would be wrong to say labour has managed to maintain its foothold in its dealings with the “talk left, walk right” ANC.

The National Minimum Wage Act was not the win for labour that the Free Market Foundation’s statement implies. In fact the paltry bump in minimum wages, negotiated by social partners, including Cosatu, at the National Economic Development and Labour Council, came with certain trade-offs that ended up being harmful to the trade union movement in the long run.

Amendments to South Africa’s labour laws, pushed through with the National Minimum Wage Bill, required trade unions to hold secret ballots to decide on industrial action, thus infringing on the right to strike.

Although Cyril Ramaphosa’s presidency hasn’t been the all-out victory that big business may have hoped for (failing, as it has, to create and hold on to investor confidence) it has propped the private sector on a political pedestal. Today, despite continued resistance from the left, Eskom’s unbundling and other privatisation reforms are now not so much a question as an inevitability.

All this to say that it is not surprising that labour has been elbowed out of conversations about the country’s economic future, which Cosatu has complained about.

ANC-induced losses have hit everyone, including big business, although not nearly to the same degree. And as our current economic transition has so far shown, some are still more equal than others.



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Thought Leader

Comment and analysis from the Mail & Guardian



Kafka and the president's men in Warsaw

President Cyril Ramaphosa's peace mission to Ukraine and Russia shows what happens when politics sinks to the bizarrely absurd

South Africans have much to be depressed about. So, we complain and indulge in cynicism. Let us consider the proposal of the philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche: amor fati. Love your fate, rather than lament it, or fixate on otherworldly hopes. Comedians such as Pieter-Dirk Uys have thanked politicians for writing their scripts for them. It is healthy to see the humour in events that confuse and devastate us.

Occasionally we move from comedy to a higher "Kafkaesque" level. This adjective, derived from the writings of the Prague-born author Franz Kafka, a great figure in 20th century world literature, mostly refers to a surreal world of nightmarishly complex, bizarre, absurd or illogical quality.

During a discussion of our president's June peace mission to Ukraine and Russia with my friend, a former European ambassador, South Africa's potential contribution to the Kafka Museum on the banks of the Vltava River in the Czech Republic struck us both.

Why did the president embark on the blitz-visit, seemingly out of the blue, as a latch-on to visiting Geneva, after mobilising a few other African leaders? Of course, we were under much international pressure because of our overt close ties with Vladimir Putin's Russia; refusal to condemn the brutally violent invasion of Ukraine for what it is; perceived comfort with war crimes like the alleged kidnapping of children and (hopefully wrong) suspicions about the provision of arms to assist in killing Ukrainians.

Yet, my friend, who experienced firsthand from the front seats of many official aeroplanes negotiations in several central African countries, is of the view that South Africa is well placed to offer mediation in international conflict. This is because of our internationally admired Constitution, independent judiciary and free media, besides our heroic struggle against colonialism and imperialism and successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Under leaders with the moral status of Nelson Mandela and eruditeness of Thabo Mbeki we indeed experienced a golden age of diplomacy. That era seems to be no more.

As our president knows, successful negotiations follow thorough preparation, through very hard work through many long nights and weekends. This was one of the reasons the ANC largely prevailed in our consti-

tution-drafting process.

Did proper preparation take place before the mission into unfamiliar territory, rich in a history of interwoven ties, interests and tensions, which they could not hope to understand without expert think-tanks and an envoy having frequently visited all concerned capitals?

Perhaps we could merely have played to them the words of the Shakira song *My Hips Don't Lie*, "No fighting, no fighting!" Or did Kafka write the script for the Polish saga?

Before we touch down in Warsaw, a few things about Poland, Russia and South Africa are worth remembering. One is that Chris Hani's murderer, Janusz Walus, is Polish.

Another is that Poland was for a considerable part of history crushed between and oppressed by Russia and Germany. This, a Polish professor, with hatred in his eyes, pointed out to me decades ago in the house of a famous German professor, nearby a visiting Russian professor, who understood little. Poland is, yet again, a frontline state in the way of Russian expansion.

The flight from Johannesburg to Warsaw, the gateway to Ukraine, filled with up to 120 presidential security staff and a dozen journalists, was postponed several times, mainly because of uncertainty who would pay for it. This finally settled, the flight took off with a three-day delay, disregarding the military's warning that overflight must be authorised by every country on the trajectory. And, lo and behold, the Italians stopped the flight right at the entry of their airspace and made it circle around a few times before they could continue to Warsaw.

Disaster loomed on touchdown in Warsaw. Our president was not part of all this. In spite of the many protectors, the one to be protected was not on board. He was at the United Nations in Geneva, with his own

Perhaps we could merely have played to them the words of the Shakira song 'My Hips Don't Lie': 'No fighting, no fighting!'



plane and security detail. He would fly into Warsaw separately.

Regardless the fine details about permits, which presidential security head General Wally Rhoode (of Phala-Phala "phame") tried to explain, is it then a surprise that the Poles, already on edge, flipped over backwards when they had a plane landing with 120 security personnel on board and at least 10 large (allegedly 1 x 1 x 1.5 metre) crates of weapons in the cargo ... without a president to protect? They blocked the disembarking of the staff and the offloading of the weapons. My friend understands where the Poles are coming from.

Presidential security agents must be armed and ready at all times. The president's mission was for a couple of days only. How would the several platoons have protected him? Would they have opened the 10 crates on the tarmac, or in their hotel rooms, to shoot down terrorist aeroplanes or drones? How many weapons would each agent have carried? Were the rest to be left in the hotel lobby, under the supervision of a polite but tired concierge, hoping for a tip?

And, how would they have got their weapons when these were stored away in heavily nailed-down crates? When under threat, would they have asked the attackers to wait for a moment, for them to open the crates in their formidable arsenal and start shooting their president out of trouble, or prepare a safe environment for his landing?

Further ad absurdum, the president would travel from Poland to Kyiv in Ukraine on board a train with limited seating capacity. How many of the 120 protectors would have gone on board with him? What about

their weapons? Would they have taken the crates aboard the train, with several African heads of state and their entourage? If the crates were stored in the cargo car, which passenger trains had in days gone by, immediate action in the face of an attack would have required Quentin Tarantino's hero in *Kill Bill* (played by Uma Thurman), who dug herself out of her own grave before killing many bad guys.

All of this was to be taken into war-torn Ukraine; or Russia — as if Putin's security agents have not proven themselves to be more than efficient.

The whereabouts of our embassy in Warsaw at the time poses more questions. Did meetings not take place to prepare for all aspects of the visit, like the documents needed for passengers and cargo to transit through Poland? My diplomatic friend is astounded by the apparent lack of planning.

One can keep one's mind on the entertaining Kafkaesque, and not let it wander any further into the possible real destination of the heavy weapons. Kafka provoked thought, though. Who sent an explosive present or 10 pre-ordered handle-with-care packages to whom? A brutal way of silencing concerns is the ominous important-sounding concept of "state security". The Poles considered just that. They stopped the process in its tracks.

As far as we can see, the trip did not yield the result that a real magic wand weaver's quick drop-in would. Presidents Vlod and Vlad looked equally perplexed. The destruction of hospitals and schools continued.

Many saw the South African initiative as somewhere between ridiculous, shameful and sinister. At the very least it was unworthy of South Africa's once-upon-a-time status as a respected international player, mediator and standard-setter. Even if some benefit may still arise from the visit, it could hardly justify the wacky Warsaw woes.

Where did it go wrong? Rhoode's explanation was banal and unpersuasive: "It is racism. They want to sabotage South Africa ... and put the life of our president in jeopardy."

Yes sir, sure. Perhaps they wanted to finish what Walus would have, if he were not rudely interrupted. Anyway, who dares to doubt an accusation of racism? South Africans need not and cannot think further.

What was learnt from the experience? According to the minister in the presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni (as reported by Andisiwe Makinana in *Business Day*), we should perhaps not overestimate our constitutionally entrenched founding values of accountability and openness: "(M)aybe we should not take the media on this kind of trip."

From his grave in Prague, Kafka must have smiled wryly at this clumsy attempt to copy his portrayal of the absurd.

Johann van der Westhuizen, who assisted in drafting South Africa's Constitution, is a retired justice of the constitutional court, the founding director of the University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights and a former inspecting judge of correctional services. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Mail & Guardian.

Thought Leader

Mail & Guardian

DA ignores law of the unintended

The City of Cape Town has a predilection for by-laws that strain the limits of lawfully devolved authority and sound sense. It seems part of the exceptionalism of the Democratic Alliance's oldest fief, meant to signify that, like fewer potholes, orderliness is a feature of opposition rule.

It is also a bloody-minded response to intractable problems that demand realism, searching reflection and relentless work. The city was deservedly shamed for a 2021 by-law that allowed it to fine the homeless living on its sidewalks up to R500.

Geordin Hill-Lewis's administration deserves to be shamed too for the bloodshed the taxi strike has wrecked. Not because enforcing traffic rules is wrong but because the way in which it has done so is idiocy.

Reckless taxi drivers are a deadly hazard, but it is equally trite that their leadership has always used violence as leverage. Ignoring that reality, and its risks, is callow politics.

The city has agreed to rethink impoundment for lesser road violations. This is largely thanks to Western Cape Premier Alan Winde, a measured politician who knows the effective blockade of townships has denied residents food and medicine.

The mayor refused to negotiate at gunpoint, but is said to be ready for talks after two days of relative calm. When this happens, he will make concessions, then reiterate his call for the urgent devolution of passenger rail services to the metro.

The question is whether the city has the wherewithal to manage the railways and the ports or will plead force majeure — shortage of funding, sabotage, court setbacks — when the task proves difficult. The failure of the MyCiti bus service and the macho inefficiency of JP Smith's metro officers provide clues but we will not know the answer because the national government is not about to cede anything.

Still, it's election year and the clamour for devolution plays well with voters who buy into the exceptionalism of the peninsula that distances itself from the rest the country. This where, as many on the Cape Flats have said, Vladimir Putin would not be safe but gang lords remain so.

The local government has not found the courage for that fight. The majority of the electorate will vote for it next year, some by default because the alternative of returning the ANC to power is too terrible to contemplate. But the city deserves better than the cynical shortcuts the mayor pursues on homelessness, spatial planning and transport.

For that, Hill-Lewis will have to learn that the law of unintended consequences applies to him and to listen to the people affected by his decisions. Ward councillors say it is hard to secure a meeting with him and long-serving officials speak of a man bored by finer details and due process.

His impatience points to ambition above application and, to borrow a phrase from him, a wasted opportunity.

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Cause for a case of the blues



Luke Feltham

The football season starts anew and, like our politics, for anyone in royal blue that brings more questions than it does excitement

Wednesday. The pressure of being asked to fill the inimitable Paddy Harper's column inches this week is unbearable. But in the fire there is opportunity. Specifically, a rare window to counterpose Harper's rabid, unconditional love for the Arsenal.

It's not like the Gooners need any extra airtime anyway. They look set for this weekend's new season; some sharp signings will undoubtedly further steel up the side that shot above expectations last time out.

That same enthusiasm is not shared by those of us of a Blue persuasion. We're watching through squinted eyes to find out if Chelsea's 2023 pantomime is over.

It's not even really a case of optimism or pessimism ... rather daunting, debilitating uncertainty. Uncertainty borne of the realisation that no one recognises this side.

A little over two years ago Thomas Tuchel lifted the Champions League, the undisputed pinnacle of club football. Today, only three players who took to the Porto pitch that night remain — the immortal Thiago Silva and the mirrored wingbacks Ben Chilwell and Reece James.

The pace of change has been nauseating. Perhaps even existentially challenging.

Any football fan has spent incalculable hours attempting in vain



Love affair: Chelsea fans celebrate prior to the pre-season friendly match against Borussia Dortmund, which ended in a 1-1 draw.

Photo: Stacy Revere/Getty Images

to articulate to a friend, husband or wife why they support the team they do. Matters of the heart are not easily explained, not even to oneself. But when everything you've known has been stripped away, it must be asked what exactly it is that you're still in love with?

The question must be sent down to the recesses of the soul.

The plight of democracy has long been that it is uncomfortably analogous to fanatical sport

Of course, comings and goings are nothing new. Chelsea fans have long had to fend off the perpetual, inane allegation that former owner Roman Abramovich "ruined football" with his transfer spend.

Yet even in our past Russian sugar daddy's most profligate moods, the team retained a consistent core — in personnel and philosophy. The presence of Cech; the guile of Cole; the irresistible drive of Drogba; the leadership of Lampard.

These were unbreakable pillars in Heraclitus' river of flux that kept a winning identity afloat for a decade. Today, there is no equal. (Although the news of James taking the full-time captaincy this week is cause for some solid chest-thumping.)

If this all sounds esoteric to you

non-football fans then there is some bad news for you. Your country, and in many ways your life, is being governed by this same asinine level of thinking.

The plight of democracy has long been that it is uncomfortably analogous to fanatical sport. We all wear the same colours to mark our allegiance, swear at anybody wearing the wrong ones, gather in groups to sing and cheer, and slavishly support our team no matter what — even if our captain sleeps with his best friend's wife. Completely irrational behaviour.

That's a problem in a system built on the premise that ideas should be shared and traded based on their worth. And South Africa is now facing down the consequences.

Electoral attendance has been declining for some years. The longer we continue on that trajectory the more the legitimacy of the result will come into question. At the very least we are braced for a coalition pageant next year.

Most poll analysts will tell you that the cause is simple: disillusioned ANC supporters are not showing up. Burned by their own party, erstwhile supporters would rather stay home than cast their vote for anyone else.

Much of the explanation is tethered to the nuances of the revolutionary party taking power and just what that means — even 30 years later. But responsibility must also undeniably fall on the failure of anyone to offer a meaningful, broad alternative.

Our opposition continually behaves like boorish football fans, ready to spew objections before the words have even left the other side's mouth.

Even if Manchester United falters, you could hardly expect their faithful to switch to Burnley Football Club if that's the only alternative.

Next season, election and football, is going to be a rough one. Or maybe that's just the Paddy Harper imposter syndrome speaking.

Thought Leader



Vulnerable livelihoods: A maize farmer in Qunu, Eastern Cape, hangs her mielies out to dry. About 40% to 60% of smallscale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are women. Photo: Carl de Souza/Getty Images

Include women in finding ways to tackle climate crisis

Climate is seen and dealt with in large part from a masculine point of view and this must change

Climate change is hugely unequal. We know it affects the poor and vulnerable the most and scientists say the African continent suffers the harshest effects of this disaster.

And as if gender-based violence, sexual harassment and wage gaps aren't enough, women must also bear the brunt of this human-made disaster.

I'm not pulling this out of thin air, I promise. There's a body of research that shows how women are affected the most by climate change. The link is there and clear.

The Institute for Security Studies said in a report: "The double burden of climate change and gender inequality renders women more vulnerable because they are less likely to have access to financial and social assets. These include land tenure, social and legal services, political participation, paid livelihoods, governance and infrastructure."

The KwaZulu-Natal floods are a testament to these unequal effects. Researchers Fidelis Udo and Maheshvari Naidu explored this when studying the vulnerability and adaptation experiences of black women in the province.

Among their key findings was that women and girls were further entrenched in poverty because floods wiped out their sources of livelihood.



Ozayr Patel

Many of these women have to provide food and other essentials for their families and the floods damaged this.

They also found that this made them vulnerable to gendered power relations and abusive male figures. The halls set up to shelter people driven out of their homes put women in a vulnerable position because they had to share the space with men.

Women in business and the entrepreneurial world are harder hit than their male counterparts, some studies found.

Agriculture is one of those sectors. Although women work in agriculture, they own only about 13% of the land. It can be even lower in some African countries such as Nigeria, as researcher Kate Gannon found.

Her three major findings show that women entrepreneurs are more exposed to climate risk, they face many barriers when it comes to adapting to climate change and they are on the front line of harsh climate impacts.

Because they run households, the effect of climate change on the home will hit them hardest.

Gannon wrote: "There is also some evidence to suggest that women and

their business activities are more likely to be confined to more marginal and degraded agricultural land. This land is less resilient to climate shock. So climate shocks are likely to be more severe for women entrepreneurs than for their male peers."

Women regularly face more barriers in entrepreneurship than men do. Kezia Fortuin wrote for the International Growth Centre that "40% or more of the agricultural workforce is represented by women, while in sub-Saharan Africa, women make up 60-80% of smallholder farmers".

She noted that these jobs are informal. There are no worker contracts that protect women and so when climate shocks hit, these women suffer. When rainfall and temperatures are erratic, it affects their livelihoods and food sources.

This is not a doom and gloom situation. There is an opportunity to include women in adaptation strategies. These strategies need the perspectives of women who are mostly affected by the climate crisis.

Policymakers and people fighting climate change must include vulnerable women in their plans. For exam-

ple, in the case of KwaZulu-Natal, women have been exposed to floods which could be crucial in developing useful mitigation and adaptation strategies.

This is something that climate scientist Susan Chomba is vocal about. In a *Guardian* article she wrote: "The way climate is seen in the world, it's seen very much from a masculine perspective. For example, while male climate scientists focus heavily on developing renewable sources of energy to replace fossil fuels like oil and gas, they pay far less attention to the hundreds of millions of women worldwide who are burning wood for tasks like cooking. Incorporating the perspectives of women — particularly poor, rural women — would better ensure comprehensive solutions."

Local knowledge is critical for developing climate resilience. Much of that knowledge comes from women who have experience living with these problems.

In a UN Women article, African Union youth envoy Chido Mpemba said climate change affects people who depend on natural resources; people whose livelihood is highly dependent on the land such as women in agriculture. These women need to be front and centre of climate initiatives and sustainable development.

It's crucial for the viewpoints of women to be included in fighting climate change. Their perspectives have a vital role to play. Because they face the climate crisis head on, give their voices a space. Allow them to help solve the climate crisis.

25 YEARS AGO

A blunt "no" was the Zimbabwean government's reply to the demand by the women's land lobby for a third of resettlement land.

With a third of 700 000 rural households headed by women, the lobby thought it had a case. If 50 000-odd war veterans have been allocated 20% of the five million hectares identified for resettlement in the next five years, why should the same principle not apply to women?

"Because," said Joseph Msika, the minister in charge of resettlement, "men would turn against the government if we did."

Msika, who is chair of Zanu-PF and a farm owner, added that families and marriages would be destroyed if permits, leases and title deeds were held by husband and wife, or wives.

Sociologist Rudo Gaizanzwa disagrees. "It would make women feel more secure."

She points to the "cotton suicides", when women kill themselves at harvest time because husbands squander income from cash crops. Women are the losers in the land equation. Widows are dispossessed by relatives when their husbands die. — *Mail & Guardian*, 14 to 20 August 1998

VERBATIM

● "He was sort of ahead of his time. Freddie did this whole androgynous look – he wore makeup, he dressed in women's clothes. It's like a language, isn't it? You communicate [something] without saying it." — Sarah Hodgson, a specialist in entertainment memorabilia, on Freddie Mercury's clothing and his sexuality. About 30 000 items belonging to Queen's frontman will go on auction at Sotheby's in London.

● "Look, the trial should have continued even without Kabuga. He was the planner and financier of the genocide. The court appears to be on the side of the killer, when it should be neutral." — Francine Uwamariya, a 1994 Rwanda genocide survivor, who lost her entire family. United Nations appeal judges have indefinitely suspended the trial of genocide suspect Felicien Kabuga, 90, because he has dementia.

● "It's a really difficult choice whether to stay here or to go ... The whole family will be reunited. We all see, the whole world sees, that [Russia's] war will not finish this year, it's obvious." — Ukrainian refugee Maryna Nesterenko on her decision to leave the UK with her daughter.

● "I wait for news every day... we don't even know if she's alive, really. It could be considered as torture." — Tatsiana Khomich, speaking about her sister Maria Kolesnikova, a Belarusian opposition activist held in isolation in prison. Other key opposition figures have vanished in the prison system.

● "These operations are nothing more than a deliberate attempt to destroy the taxi industry in the province with no regard to the impact that this action will have on the communities that we service." — Mandla Hermanus, the South African National Taxi Council's Western Cape chair, on the City of Cape Town impounding taxis.

Although women work in agriculture, they own only about 13% of the land. It can be lower in some African countries

Thought Leader

Graphic: JOHN McCANN



Cyril and the art of dodging bullets

The president has done much to duck threats and gain political capital — but how will he use this?

President Cyril Ramaphosa has been navigating turbulent waters for the past year but always seems to come through in the clear.

Lately, he's dodged past the rugged rocks of Phala Phala and narrowly missed the cataclysmic vortex of Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

A look at the words associated with Ramaphosa's name in July's news shows how he's managed to steer his way through with artful diplomacy. This has given him an opportunity to show some leadership in the country and on the global stage.

"Cleared" is the word most closely associated with Ramaphosa (after "Cyril") in my online database of top daily news articles in July from *IOL*, *News24* and *TimesLive*. This word aptly describes his escape from trouble in both the Phala Phala and Putin struggles.

In the news, it is used primarily about acting public protector Kholeka Gcaleka's report on Phala Phala, released on 30 June, which declared him off the hook for wrongdoing related to that scandal. "Phala Phala" is also closely associated with Ramaphosa's name in the news.

As expected, the acting public protector's report was rubbished by opposition parties but also drew flak from rebel ANC national executive committee member Andile Lungisa, who said that even his eight-year-old son "won't approve it".

Julius Malema had much harsher words for Ramaphosa in his speech at the Economic Freedom Fighters'



NewsWords
Ian Siebörger

(EFF) 10th anniversary celebration, saying, "When we take over next year, we are arresting Ramaphosa. He is going to jail. He stole money in SA. He hasn't been arrested. Ramaphosa is not above the law. Ramaphosa must go to jail."

This comment made "jail" a strong association with Ramaphosa in July's news. These words make it seem that the EFF is not quite cosying up to the ANC as a potential coalition partner just yet.

As a digression, it's interesting that Malema wants Ramaphosa to go to jail but not Putin or Jacob Zuma. He is making clear where his loyalties lie.

So, Ramaphosa has cleared the rocks of Phala Phala — for now. Still, the acting public protector's report is widely viewed as a whitewash and the African Transformation Movement has set the wheels in motion for a legal review of it. This means there will continue to be question marks over his integrity relating to this scandal for some time.

Ramaphosa's escape from the Putin vortex has been much more nail-biting, leaving South Africans on tenterhooks for the past few months. No fewer than five of the 12 words showing the strongest association with Ramaphosa in July's news revolve around his diplomatic dance with the Russian strongman.

Top of these is "affidavit", referring

to an initially confidential statement Ramaphosa made to the Gauteng high court. He said arresting Putin when he arrived in South Africa for the Brics summit would be tantamount to declaring war on Russia.

"Arresting" is another close association with Ramaphosa because of this impasse.

The court has since ruled that the affidavit should be made public. Ramaphosa apparently believed a threat by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev that the country would use its "assets [and] all our missiles" against any country that arrested Putin. This has been taken as a threat of nuclear war.

Putin's name had a close association with Ramaphosa's in the news, thanks to the diplomacy between the two that has unfolded over the past month. It would have been fascinating to listen in on their phone call on Saturday 15 July, just after which it was announced that Putin was no longer coming to the Brics summit by "mutual agreement".

Less than two weeks after all this happened, Ramaphosa was in St Petersburg for the Russia-Africa summit and was singing Russia's praises, saying, "As South Africa, we remember with deep gratitude how the support of the people and the

government of the then-Soviet Union sustained our struggle for liberation. Today our bilateral relationship remains strong."

"Russian" and "Russia" were close associations with Ramaphosa's name in July's news.

And so Ramaphosa has diplomatically avoided both the threat of war with Russia, however real that threat ever was, and the ire of the International Criminal Court and possible isolation from the West for failing to arrest Putin, should he have stepped on our shores.

He was even able to concede to the Democratic Alliance that the government would arrest Putin if he ever dared to come here.

Another gigantic threat was dodged. But, again, where does this leave the president's integrity? Ramaphosa has an opportunity afforded by the Brics summit and South Africa's role in this bloc to increase the pressure on Russia to show respect for human rights and end the war on Ukraine.

How will he use it?

Ramaphosa is also amassing political capital in the ANC, giving him more freedom to guide the party to the stances he chooses. Two events from the past month in which the word "support" was associated with Ramaphosa's name illustrate this.

First, ANC secretary general Fikile Mbalula publicly supported Ramaphosa in a disagreement with Mineral Resources and Energy Minister Gwede Mantashe over green energy.

In June, Mantashe refused Ramaphosa's instruction to sign a memorandum of understanding for a \$1 billion agreement funded by the

Netherlands and Denmark to help us transition to green hydrogen energy.

In response, Mbalula said he and Luthuli House, the ANC's administrative centre, would back any steps Ramaphosa opted to take against Mantashe, saying, "If a minister does not comply, does not do what is expected, the president must act. He has all our support." This statement also made "Luthuli House" one of the strongest associations with Ramaphosa's name in July.

Second, the ANC Women's League elected a Ramaphosa supporter, Sisisi Tolashe, to replace Bathabile Dlamini, one of the last holdouts of the radical economic transformation faction, as its president. As *TimesLive* put it even before the election, "So far, the faction has been getting bloody noses from those who support Ramaphosa."

This support, on the back of his wins in the December ANC elective conference and being cleared by the acting public protector, means he is arguably in the strongest position since his presidency began.

As Paul Hoffman has argued, this could enable him to push through much-needed reforms in the ANC and take a bolder stance in his diplomacy with Russia.

Our president has the opportunity to recover some integrity. The question is, will he take it?

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Ramaphosa has an opportunity afforded by the Brics summit and South Africa's role in this bloc to increase the pressure on Russia

Thought Leader

Who votes in Zimbabwe – and why

The integrity of democracy in the country hinges on its citizens showing up to make their crosses

OPINION
Nnaemeka Ohamadike

Zimbabwe is preparing for elections on 23 August. It does so against the backdrop of a complex past, where the struggle for democracy and inclusivity has been marred by political instability, hardships, lack of meaningful electoral reforms and a concerning track record of human rights violations and repression of freedom.

In the aftermath of the ousting of former president Robert Mugabe in a 2017 military coup, the 2018 elections were anticipated as a potential turning point for Zimbabwe's democratic trajectory. However, the aspirations for a smooth transition towards democracy were met with disappointment.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) came under scrutiny for its lack of transparency in decision-making and failure to engage in meaningful consultations with opposition parties during the pre-election period. This raised doubts about the body's independence.

The situation worsened when the constitutional court dismissed a petition from the main opposition party at the time, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), contesting the 2018 presidential election results, further fuelling scepticism about the political autonomy of electoral institutions.

The MDC was subsequently infiltrated and divided by the ruling party, Zanu-PF, creating two factions. This eventually led to the MDC Alliance essentially becoming the Citizen's Coalition for Change (CCC), led by Nelson Chamisa.

These lingering challenges from the 2018 polls, compounded by other factors, have evoked deep-seated apprehensions that this month's elections may once again be tainted by a multitude of electoral irregularities.

The many rights violations, the repression of freedom, irregularities within the electoral body and accusations of the misuse of state resources for the ruling party's gain are but a few of the factors leading to this.

Such concerns regarding the integrity of the electoral process have the potential to significantly influence voting behaviour and the outcome of the elections, which raises critical questions about the country's journey towards a truly democratic future.

Using a host of nationally representative Afrobarometer surveys, which include Round 6 conducted between 2014 and 2015; Round 7 from 2016 to 2018; Round 8 in 2019/2021 and Round 9 last year, what voting patterns can we potentially see in this month's poll in Zimbabwe?

One crucial finding from the Round 6 data is the impact of institutional quality on voter participation.

Under Mugabe's rule, Zimbabweans who lacked trust in the ZEC were less likely to vote. Mugabe pushed a political agenda

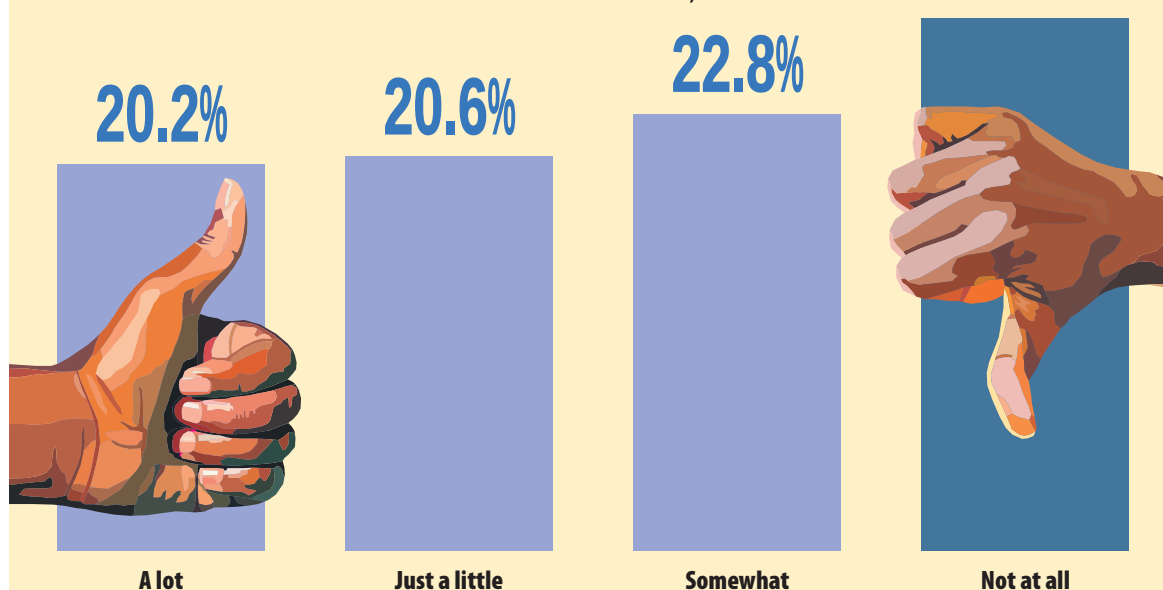


Ballot: A banner for Zimbabwe's main opposition Citizens Coalition for Change is displayed in Sibombvu village, outside Bulawayo, as the country heads to the polls this month. Photo: Zinyange Auntony/Getty Images

Faith in the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

Survey respondents were asked if they trust the ZEC

Level of trust as a percentage of respondents.
Afrobarometer round nine, 2022



Graphic: JOHN McCANN Compiled by: GGA Data source: AFROBAROMETER (2022)

focusing on Zimbabweans who would vote in his favour, which led to ongoing resignation and distrust in the ZEC.

This highlights the significance of ensuring a transparent and trustworthy electoral body, and process, in encouraging citizen engagement.

The significance is further amplified by ongoing disputes over the voters' roll and delimitation report, as well as the appointment of relatives and loyalists of the ruling party's politicians as election commissioners in the ZEC last year.

This not only casts doubt on the impartiality and fairness of the electoral process but also raises concerns about potential voter disillusionment and the likelihood of lower voter turnout among segments of the population who perceive there to be a lack of independence in the electoral body and other institutions, such as the judiciary.

Given the instances of judges being offered housing loans and other favours, concerns have arisen about the judiciary's independence, both in the lead-up to the elections and in their potential handling of post-election disputes.

Another consistent trend across all four rounds of Afrobarometer data is the lower voter turnout among the youth (35 years and younger). While declining voter turnout and youth engagement in politics is a global phenomenon, and not unique to Zimbabwe, this pattern is concerning and is likely to persist in the forthcoming elections.

Allan Chipoyi, the chairperson of Project Vote 263, a rights group, highlights that some young people are hesitant to register to vote due to their perception that the election has already been rigged.

This trend poses a potential challenge for the main opposition, the CCC, as the party heavily relies on the support of the youth.

Participation in political activities,

Some young people are hesitant to register to vote due to their perception that the election has already been rigged

such as attending political rallies and affiliating with a party, has also shown a positive correlation with voter turnout in previous elections.

Zimbabweans who actively participate in political discussions are also more likely to cast their votes.

This suggests political engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping citizens' willingness to exercise their democratic rights and that a higher turnout can be observed if parties continue to engage their supporters.

This finding holds significant implications for the CCC, especially considering the police decision to ban its political rally just six weeks before the elections. However, despite this setback, citizens appear undeterred and are actively participating in rallies.

Socioeconomic conditions have also influenced voting patterns in previous elections. Specifically, unemployment has been a significant deterrent to voter turnout, particularly during Rounds 6, 7 and 9.

As Zimbabwe grapples with ongoing economic challenges, the imperative to address unemployment and improve living conditions cannot be overstated.

These measures are critical for bolstering voter participation and rekindling faith in the democratic process.

With hyperinflation, mounting unemployment, threats to dump the US dollar, and other economic challenges, exacerbated by decades of poor governance, it is likely that unemployed Zimbabweans will be less inclined to participate in the upcoming polls.

These factors are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the electoral landscape as citizens navigate their concerns about their livelihoods and the country's economic prospects.

Afrobarometer data from Round 6 also revealed a connection between engaging in bribery in accessing public services and reduced voter turnout.

This underscores the importance of combatting corruption and promoting transparent governance, as citizens are more likely to engage in the electoral process when they trust the integrity of public institutions.

Round 6 of the survey suggests a potential for higher voter turnout among Zimbabweans residing in rural areas in the elections.

The data revealed a significant pattern indicating that those living in rural communities were more likely to cast their votes than their urban counterparts. This observation holds immense significance for both Zanu-PF, given their robust rural support that could provide an advantage in the upcoming elections, and the main opposition party, the CCC, which enjoys strong urban backing.

Other interesting findings from Rounds 7 and 9 include that Zimbabweans with higher levels of education were less likely to participate in past elections. This suggests more educated citizens are increasingly aware of institutional deficiencies leading to reduced electoral engagement.

Moreover, in Round 9, conducted last year, Zimbabweans who feared political violence and intimidation exhibited lower voter turnout in the previous election.

This underscores the need to foster an environment that enables citizens to exercise their right to vote in this month's elections without fear.

The importance of Zimbabweans actively exercising their constitutional right to vote cannot be overemphasised. Lower voter turnout has the potential to significantly influence outcomes in favour of the incumbent party.

Without implementing strategies to change this, the general elections in Zimbabwe are likely to mirror the recurring adverse patterns observed in previous elections.

The concerning trend of anomalies within the ZEC warrants close attention as it might impact voter trust and election outcomes.

Addressing issues related to youth voter apathy; urban voter disengagement; unemployment; political violence and intimidation and corruption remains critical for fostering greater citizen participation.

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Thought Leader

What does patriarchy actually mean?

Powerful concepts are not immune to losing their strength when overused or misunderstood

OPINION
Sarah Setlaelo

It's Women's Month in South Africa and some of us will be hearing the word "patriarchy" more frequently than usual. But what does it actually mean? The term "patriarchy" has become what philosophers would call a "panchreston", meaning that it is used as an attempt to explain a complex idea, but explains nothing at all.

Yet, it has a clear etymology and derives from the Greek word for "patriarch", which means "rule of the father". The notion of a father ruling pertains to the traditional role played by adult males in their extended families or male heads of a community. They are elders in terms of age, charged with the responsibilities of leading, dispute resolution, wealth creation and preservation, towards protecting and providing for the family or community.

When one considers that most African societies as recently as a century ago lived according to a communitarian system, and that the nuclear family is a relatively Western configuration, a patriarch was not merely any adult male or a husband to one wife. In fact, most men were also under the custodianship of their patriarch, and not only women and children.

For example, when a man decided to get married, he needed his elders to grant him permission (or not), to facilitate the provision of a dowry, and to represent him to the family of the bride-to-be. They also negotiated the terms of lobola or bogadi on his behalf, which contrary to the English translation "bride-price", is not a transaction but a series of rituals to forge a union between the two families.

So, it was not only the bride and wife who was handed over in marriage by her patriarchs, the man also required patriarchal custodianship to become a groom and husband. This is a custom that remains today among many African ethnic groups.

When the term "patriarchy" is used in contemporary times to connote general male hegemony or male domination, this does not account for male subordination under patriarchy.

But, what it denotes — male privilege — in both its interpersonal and systemic forms, is at the core of female rebellion against patriarchy and male anxiety about women empowerment.

Many African scholars, with Oyeronke Oyewumi as the foremost example, argue that gender is a Western construct because in African culture, seniority is configured according to age rather than biological sex. As such, both males and females have the opportunity to

be leaders in their families and communities when they become elders.

Other scholars take this argument further and contend that some African societies were matriarchal before Western incursion. This meant that birthright, leadership and inheritance were transmitted through the female line.

In contemporary times, a new argument in this respect is that African American communities and many urban black communities globally, are matriarchal by default because of the high incidence of black male incarceration, unemployment and death. The argument here is that (patriarchal) white hegemony and white supremacy target black males to prevent them from advancing in society and building functional families.

These three positions in the debate challenge the allegations that all African/black men are patriarchs, who enjoy various privileges because of their masculinity, and that many of them in anti-black societies seek to emulate the kind of individualistic patriarchal power supposedly wielded by white males.

Arguably, patriarchy served a systemic purpose in traditional African and some Western societies dating back centuries, as a responsibility-based position of authority. But in contemporary society birthed by three industrial revolutions, individualism, capitalism and an influx of women into the public sphere, family-centric patriarchy has morphed into a generic rights-centric sense of male entitlement.

As such, patriarchy no longer operates in the context of a communalistic system, but is now a watered-down individualistic pursuit of power. Strictly speaking this is not patriarchy.

In other words, whether or not the man is a provider, protector and qualified leader of a family or community, they insist on respect and deference from all women they encounter. This is the new face of "patriarchy" that some women are rejecting because it demands certain rights, but does not comply with the reciprocal responsibilities. South African anthropologist and activist Elaine Salo insists that patriarchal myths nurture the delusions of grandeur and power that many men suffer from and that encourage their sense of entitlement to female submission.

Another South African academic, politician and businesswoman, Mamphela Ramphele, offers some insight into this novel version of African patriarchy during the 1970s and 1980s when she was one of the leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement. She claims that black



Views: Activist, academic and businesswoman Mamphela Ramphele (above) argues that black women were oppressed by the apartheid system and by black men. Feminist academic Pumla Dineo Gqola (below) holds that both traditional and progressive women perpetuate the 'cult of femininity'. Photo: Brenton Geach/Gallo Images



women occupied a unique role of being oppressed by both the apartheid system and black men. She found that the male-biased liberation movement focused mostly on the systemic oppression of black men, while sidelining the plight of black women.

Although Ramphele contested male domination in much the same way that black feminists and women's rights activists do today, she also made the uncomfortable acknowledgement that women at times perpetuate gender inequality.

This happens particularly in the household domain, where they sacrifice their own needs so that they can be valued and admired for the cumbersome responsibilities that they carry as caregivers of men and children. Ramphele explains that one of the dividends they got was a form of agency or autonomy in the domestic sphere, even though they usually complained about the burden.

South African feminist scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola theorises this ironic role of the "traditional woman" as the self-sabotaging "cult of femininity" that is so well constructed that it operates in both traditional and progressive female

spaces because it defines "femaleness" and "womanhood".

Contrary to the accusation that modern black women have rejected femininity because they are competing with men, many have had to reluctantly take on traditionally male responsibilities because their black male partners or custodians are falling short or have abandoned them. However, while in this ambivalent space, at times they assume traditionally feminine gender roles if they will be rewarded, and at other times, they reject them because the men in their lives have proven to be inconsistent and incompetent.

What keeps the individualistic variant of patriarchy intact is the entrenched notion that men cannot be challenged or contradicted because they are volatile, and so women should never make a man angry, otherwise their anger offers justifiable grounds for violence.

According to Gqola, to keep the violence of men at bay, women are taught passivity and submission. Some end up becoming what African American feminist bell hooks refers to as "patriarchal females" because they uphold and protect male whims.

African American philosopher Tommy J Curry is not convinced that black males aspire to patriarchal power over women in the way that he claims their white counterparts do. He finds it strange that black men and women have been subjected to

the same history of slavery, colonisation and anti-black racism, yet curiously, the black feminist claim is that black men have latched on to the same individualistic patriarchy exercised by their (former) oppressors, while black women have not.

He insists that instead of being privileged and protected by (white) patriarchy, black men and boys are revealed to be its greatest victims under closer examination. Curry, however, speaks of the American context and thus does not account for African patriarchy that predates slavery, and lives on in various manifestations in contemporary Africa.

I have not spoken exhaustively about what patriarchy is and is not. I have merely attempted to highlight that the term "patriarchy" has become shorthand for explaining a disjuncture between the rights and responsibilities that traditionally came with a male occupying this role.

Therefore, when many speak of patriarchy, they are actually referring to the collective delusion of individual male entitlement, where men are seeking validation and affirmation but without reciprocity.

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Male privilege is at the core of female rebellion against patriarchy and male anxiety about women empowerment

Thought Leader

Humans the risk of artificial intelligence

The key to overcoming the self-inflicted problems and threats of technology lies in our own intellect

OPINION
Guru Kali

The future is now, old man. Or woman. Or them. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is in full swing.

Despite the risks of leaping into tomorrow's world prematurely, the cat is already out of the bag. Regenerative large language learning models are just the start. Every day, news of technological and digital "advancements" and innovations grace headlines, as glimpses of artificial intelligence's (AI's) infiltration into every facet of our society and individual lives emerges.

In 2014, China publicly announced its outline of a social credit system using data and AI to construct a moral ranking system that monitors the behaviour of its citizens and ranks them based on their "social credit".

The Chinese government aims to reinforce the idea that "keeping trust is glorious and breaking trust is disgraceful", punishing individuals with throttled internet speeds, banning access to flights, and even barring people's children from enrolling in higher education if the Communist Party deems them untrustworthy.

1984 Orwellian comparisons are not exclusive to the totalitarian Far-East, but alive in the apparently democratised West as well. After the recent riots in France, the French parliament passed laws granting police the authority to remotely activate cameras, microphones and GPS systems on the phones, laptops and cars of its citizens and residents.

The government systems make use of facial recognition, geo-tracking and social media data, scraping variables to create risk profiles for anyone in the public, and confirmed for use at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

As usual, the industry at the forefront of technological advancement, and making the most gains, is the war industry. Huge amounts of data from satellite and drone imagery can now be evaluated in seconds, and strategy options assessed with pinpoint accuracy to minimise the risk of casualties for "us", and maximise death and destruction for "them". The conflict in Ukraine may be driving AI innovation for the American military industrial complex in their second proxy war with Russia, but war wouldn't be war without the reigning champion in the Middle East, Israel.

Israel has been using AI systems to plan deadly military operations for drone swarms in Syria and Lebanon and even *Sapiens* author Yuval Noah Harari fears that Israeli democracy is fighting for its life in the wake of Benjamin Netanyahu's government taking aims to neutralise the country's supreme court.

The idea and responsibility of democracy is either being exposed as a farce, or too ideological for practical application, revealing the more common ideologies of greed, money and power sitting behind the war machines, and now empowered by high-tech capabilities.

Next on the cards may be our right of autonomy. As World Economic Forum founder Klaus Schwab wrote in his book, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, "As capabilities in this area improve, the temptation for law enforcement agencies and courts to use techniques to determine the likelihood of criminal activity, assess guilt or even possibly retrieve memories directly from people's brains will increase ... Even crossing a national border might one day involve a detailed brain scan to assess an individual's security risk."

Self-driving cars sound like a wonderful idea, until the doors lock without prompt and the car drives you to the police station for unpaid parking tickets, and with implanted brain-computer interface devices approved for human testing, such as Elon Musk's Neuralink



Masters of our demise?: Sophia the Robot (above) received citizenship from Saudi Arabia and made history as the first robot with an identity card. Paintings by Ai-Da Robot, the first artificial intelligence robot artist, are displayed during the United Nations Global Summit on AI for Good. Photos: Fatih Hepokur/Getty Images & Johannes Simon/Getty Images

company, so that one day you will be able to start your Tesla by blinking your eyes ... twice ... or by just initiating that thought.

The "enhancement" could also come with severe consequences for personal thoughts that are not approved by your government. Is our integration with technology stripping away individual rights, or are tin-foil hats required to the party? It's a wild world, especially when our rights are restricted as consequences for non-compliance to mandated policies and laws.

The imminent "achievement" of technological "singularity", where the evolution of a self-learning, self-developing artificial intelligence surpasses the skill and intellectual capacity of the human being, may actually save us from ourselves. But before we deal with Arnie's Terminators, we would first need to deal with Orwell's 1984.

In the unabated quest of our advancement, we have become overly arrogant about our survival. This is not the first rodeo for humans. Civilisation of the Bronze Age, Ancient Egyptians, and Indus Valley people developed extensive civilisations, but were wiped off the planet for reasons still unknown.

Is this the tale of the human? A continuous repetition of hubris hurtling towards our own demise. Are we happy to continue riding this wave towards Babylon? Replicating the sins of the father? Alas, poor Yorick.

With instant access to digital records, AI is

smarter than you and all your friends, or anyone you know. The advent of AI has promulgated knowledge and democratised art. The future is now. ChatGPT is being appointed as the chief executive of corporations, and AI robot butlers are on pre-order, eager to serve you cappuccinos. Commerce and industry have reached new highs (or lows) and will continue to do so.

Perhaps now our addiction to creating processes, systems and automation can be quelled by the robots, and the humans can go back to being humans.

Hollywood writers can go on strike over AI labour concerns, but research shows that AI is still more creative than 90% of humans. And yet we are far more advanced. With all of our tools and technology and fancy gadgets, the ability to be a human remains exclusive to humans. AI may be able to write, but it doesn't have the childhood trauma to understand the subtleties of sarcasm, and AI may be able to draw a beautiful picture like a real artist, but AI cannot move to Berlin and overdose like a real artist.

The blessing, and the curse, is that we are human. AI's vast data is still the sloppy seconds of the lived human experience, and the intelligence of nature is far superior to anything artificial. Maybe just a few trillion more variables and you'll be Gucci.

If we are to overcome the self-inflicted chal-

lenges of technology, we would first need to overcome the intellect, and remember the nature that we exist as. At some point, we lost sight of the fact that to harm nature is to harm ourselves. We have allowed the avarice of misguided, unaware leaders to guide us towards corrals of illusion, distracted from the consciousness that we are.

The risk of AI is not AI, but the human, and the carnage left in the wake of the ideological attachments. As much as we may assume our expertise and ability to use, misuse, guide or control the remarkable tools that we have created, we will continue to stumble towards our demise as long as the awareness remains external to the human experience.

We are attempting to apply finite rules to infinite games, but the sky is big enough for anyone to fly, and the only option left on the table is to bring higher dimensions of consciousness into our awareness.

Our salvation, as it always has, does not lie towards the external, but internal. We remain infinitely connected to nature, whether we are aware of it, or not, or acknowledge it, or not. It is only in the stillness of our breath that we can remember who we are. No manipulation by our fellow humans can tarnish that, and no AI can soar these skies.

If we can remind ourselves that whether this human experience is an illusion, a game, simulation, divine revelation, or all of the above, that the answer is still love. If we can remember that as a human, nothing human can be foreign to us, and that we are not trying to save nature, but that we are nature trying to save ourselves, then perhaps we can step out of our own way, and AI can come along for our ride. Cappuccinos for the road?

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Mail & Guardian.

Thought Leader

Hey guys, let’s be honest about booze and GBV

OPINION
Nickolaus Bauer

The rate at which women are killed by intimate partners in South Africa is five times higher than the global average.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an indictment on our nation and the relationship between alcohol abuse and violence is complex. The factual evidence of bruised and broken bodies at the hands of inebriated partners speaks to a direct correlation.

Various studies and research exploring this relationship have highlighted the need for multi-faceted intervention.

Alcohol can lower inhibitions, impair judgment, increase aggression and contribute to violent behaviour.

Several studies have also found that a significant proportion of perpetrators of gender-based violence in South Africa were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incidents.

But research has also illustrated that alcohol abuse combined with other underlying risk

factors such as socio-economic stress, cultural norms and socialisation around masculinity to further increase the risk of gender-based violence occurring.

Moreover, the possibility that the relationship between abuser and victim is not just interpersonal in nature but also one of financial dependence muddies the water in finding a solution.

Solutions must be urgently crafted because the effect on victims of gender-based violence is profound and often long-lasting.

Beyond physical injuries there is emotional distress and psychological trauma that affect not only women — the direct victims of gender-based violence — but their families too, as children often get caught up in the conflict.

We are a country of heavy binge drinkers and this needs to change. Alcohol in this country is cheap by international standards and readily available for purchase in legal and illicit markets. You will struggle to find many other places in the world where a quart of beer is cheaper than a loaf of bread. Or where liquor distributors can’t guarantee that their products are only

sold in establishments with genuine licences and to clients above the legal drinking age.

From a regulatory and legal framework there are levers at government’s disposal to call upon but they have been left largely untouched over the past few years.

The Liquor Amendment Bill of 2016 could reduce alcohol consumption by up to 7% by placing strict controls on the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages. But there appears to have been no movement on the legislation for years. The Control of Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages Bill of 2013 was also approved by the cabinet for public comment more than a decade ago. The legislation would have banned alcohol advertising but was never actually released to the public.

These two draft laws align directly with interventions advocated for by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in addressing harmful alcohol consumption.

But merely trying to address South Africa’s alcohol abuse with legislation will be foolhardy. Alongside making alcohol more expensive

and less accessible, the WHO calls for an urgent rolling out of more effective education initiatives so that people can better understand the harmful impact of alcohol abuse.

More critically, men, the main culprits of gender-based violence, need to urgently assume responsibility for addressing this scourge.

Women’s Day cannot simply be an annual event to commemorate the strength and resilience of South Africa’s mothers, grandmothers and daughters.

There must be a concerted effort among all men to call out toxic behaviour when they encounter it. To encourage those that need help to seek out counselling and assistance. And ultimately ostracising the men that commit gender-based violence by reporting them to authorities.

Nickolaus Bauer is the campaign manager for DG Murray Trust’s Alcohol Harms Reduction Campaign. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Mail & Guardian.

Trump can run for president from prison

The United States Constitution does not prevent him from contending the elections – and the majority of Republicans continue to support him

OPINION
Imran Khalid

On 3 August, the former president of the United States, Donald Trump, pleaded not guilty to charges of attempting to overturn the 2020 election results — his third criminal indictment of the year. Despite these legal challenges, he remains resolute in his pursuit of a White House comeback in 2024.

The last indictment levied three criminal conspiracies against him, including charges of defrauding the US by employing dishonest tactics to hinder lawful federal government functions. Additionally, Trump faces accusations of corruptly obstructing and impeding the congressional proceedings on 6 January 2021 to certify the election results.

The indictment also cites a conspiracy targeting the right to vote and the accurate tabulation of votes.

Amid these mounting legal woes, Trump’s ambitions for a return to the presidency remain firmly in the spotlight, setting the stage for a contentious and closely watched political saga.

With three criminal cases already ensnaring him, Trump braces for a potential fourth. In New York, he confronts 34 felony charges involving hush-money payments to a porn star.

In Florida, 40 felony counts implicate him for withholding classified documents and obstructing retrieval efforts. Additionally, four counts in Washington relate to his alleged endeavours to overturn the 2020 election.

Another storm is brewing for Trump in Georgia, where a county district attorney is investigating his purported efforts to undermine the election results in that state. The legal maze unfolds as the primaries loom, promising a protracted struggle that could shape the former president’s political future.

The latest indictment looms as Trump’s paramount challenge. Experts consider the 2020 election interference case the most serious of the three, labelling it as “probably the most significant legal case in US political history”. The indictment charges Trump with seeking to invalidate valid votes and undermine the election results, aiming to thwart Joe Biden’s 2020 triumph.

The stakes are unprecedented, and the outcome could reverberate through the annals of American jurisprudence and presidential history. Prosecutors highlighted Trump’s role in the



Theatre of the absurd: The charges against Donald Trump are serious, including that he conspired to obstruct the 2020 presidential elections, but he could still return to the White House. Photo: Nathan Howard/Bloomberg/Getty Images

lead-up to the US Capitol attack on 6 January 2021, as his supporters besieged the building to obstruct Biden’s election certification. The trial’s implications extend beyond Trump himself, because it confronts the core tenets of justice and governance.

The world watches as this legal battle unfolds, with potential repercussions that reach far beyond the courtroom. The latest indictment draws extensively from the now-defunct US House select committee’s investigation into the Capitol riot, an investigation that has split American society along partisan and ideological divides. The committee’s conclusive report, released in December last year, established Trump’s rejection of the 2020 election results and his concerted efforts to overturn the outcome.

Unfazed by the committee’s findings, Trump, seeking a third White House term in November, denounced the investigations as politically motivated.

The charges against Trump represent a pivotal moment, reflecting the deep-rooted divisions in American society and the complexities of holding a former president accountable for his

actions. The trial transcends mere legal proceedings, resonating with the fundamental questions surrounding the sanctity of elections and the future of democracy in the US.

Ironically, the majority of Republican voters seem unaffected by the prospect of Trump’s entanglement in multiple criminal cases. The implications of this sentiment on the political landscape points to the fast corrosion of political norms and standards of a society that is ready to accept a tainted politician as the head of state.

All the opinion polls in the US suggest that, after each indictment in a new case, Trump’s popularity is further jacked up. Last week, in a joint poll by *The New York Times* and Siena College, Republican voters expressed support for Trump, with a 54% backing. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis trailed far behind with only 17% support. Other notable contenders, including Mike Pence, Nikki Haley, and Tim Scott, received negligible backing, each garnering no more than 3% support. The survey’s results reflect Trump’s continued sway within the Republican base and the challenge he poses to potential rivals as the party contemplates its future leadership. The American political

theatre plummets into new depths of absurdity, entertaining the possibility of a highly controversial former president’s return to the White House in its decaying democracy.

Curiously, even if incarcerated, Trump could still vie for the presidency, because US laws don’t prohibit a path from prison to the White House — rendering the impeachment process rather ineffective for Democrats. No provisions in the Constitution bar individuals under indictment, convicted or imprisoned, from seeking the presidential slot. Even amid the grip of a “speedy trial”, Trump could potentially orchestrate his presidential campaign from behind bars.

The drama of the 2024 presidential race is going on full-throttle, but the larger farce of American politics is far from over.

Dr Imran Khalid is a freelance columnist on international affairs based in Pakistan. He qualified as a physician from Dow Medical University in 1991 and has a master’s degree in international relations from Karachi University. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Mail & Guardian.

Thought Leader

Miners will have to clean up their act

Mines offer jobs and promise other benefits, but people are increasingly more concerned about the harm mining does to the land, air and water on which they depend

OPINION

Sikho Luthango

Mineral Resources and Energy Minister Gwede Mantashe announced in January an exploration campaign to open mines in Limpopo, North West and Northern Cape, which have been identified as a “new mining belt” for transitional minerals.

These are key to the energy, mobility and digital transition and include platinum group minerals (PGMs), lithium, cobalt and copper. South Africa is endowed with PGMs and manganese. Many industrialised states have identified these minerals as “critical” and a new rush for cooperation and business with many mineral-rich states is underway especially in light of the 2015 climate change Paris Agreement.

New exploration and mining projects require mining licences. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to open new mines, including in South Africa, without community buy-in. This is largely because it is no longer enough to convince people of the social benefits of mining such as jobs and “development”.

Instead, people are increasingly weighing potential social benefits with the negative environmental consequences of mining, particularly in the context of climate change and a just energy transition. And it is difficult for companies to justify mining, especially where there have been no material benefits for people. This has major implications for the demand of transitional minerals.

One can argue that the “social licence to operate” — as a means to manage social tensions and contestations against mining — no longer captures the reality on the ground. Instead, the Sustainable Licence to Operate (SDLO) better captures these shifts.

The Xolobeni community’s resistance to the proposed mining for ilmenite, titanium-iron oxide, rutile, zircon, and leucosene on the Eastern Cape’s Wild Coast has become the symbol of resistance to mining in South Africa.

It dates back to 2002 with the discovery of the rare minerals and the granting of a mining right by the mineral resources department to Mineral Sand Resources (MSR). The mining right was later suspended after it was challenged by the Amadiba Crisis Committee.

In 2015, Transworld-Energy, a subsidiary of MSR, filed for another mining rights application. In 2018, the community again challenged this and the Pretoria high court ruled that without consent from the community, no mining can occur — unless the state expropriates the land.

The Xolobeni community proposed an alternative developmental path in the form of ecotourism. I visited Xolobeni in 2019, the beaches



Different values: Xolobeni people (above) on the Wild Coast have resisted attempts by the government and an Australian company to mine their lands. Fishing boats (below) have been abandoned after crude oil polluted the water and shoreline of an estuary in Ogoni, Nigeria. Photos: Delwyn Verasamy & George Osodi/Getty Images



are serene, the sea blue to greenish and nothing Camps Bay could ever live up to. More importantly, people have land, they fish and farm and the animals roam on vast green stretches of land. The people have a life of dignity. Without a doubt, there is potential for an ecotourist economy with the right investments by the government.

Xolobeni is not the only community resisting mining. The Makhasaneni community is against Jindal Africa’s proposed open cast R30 billion iron ore mine in Entembeni in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The Entembeni Crisis Forum’s petition against mining is gaining momentum, with almost 5 000 signatures collected since late July.

Although some residents support the mine, others, including the farming community, are against the harmful environmental impacts the mine will have on water sources and crops that include fruit and nuts.

In addition, the mine says about 350 households will be relocated, but the forum says that based on the map, about 3 000 households may be affected. The social and environmen-

tal impact assessments are still being completed.

The Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation, the Global Environmental Trust and other NGOs are contesting an environmental impact assessment and the public participation process of Petmin’s Tendele coal mine in Somkhele, KwaZulu-Natal. The community approached the court to block the expansion and restart of the mine. The Pietermaritzburg high court delivered a judgment in early July giving the green light for the mine’s expansion to continue.

The Somkhele mine employed about 1 600 people and since the mine stopped working, it has been described as a “ghost town” with only 22 workers on site. The dispute in the poverty-stricken area is between residents, workers, businesses linked to the mine and the mine itself. The National Union of Mineworkers, representing the workers, is another strong proponent of the mine.

Some have described the battle as the environmentalists versus the rest. In their report in *BusinessLive*, Jaco Visser and Natasha Marrian write, “At its heart, this dispute revolves around environmental

legislation and the impact of mining operations on the environment and on local communities” and calls into question whether there can be a “just” in the “transition”.

The local economy of Somkhele largely depends on the mine. Through Social Labour Plans (SLPs) mines have absorbed a part of the traditional role of the state through the provision of local infrastructure such as hospitals and schools.

But SLPs have also become contentious. They are not integrated with local economic development plans and mining companies sometimes default on delivery. Over the years, SLPs have been a way to obtain a social licence to operate. The prospects of employment for residents was another but the Xolobeni and Somkhele resistance to mining shows that this has changed.

There is also an increasing awareness of people’s rights as it relates to the environment. Human rights and environmental cases have also risen on the continent, including in Nigeria, where Ogoni farmers approached a Netherlands court about oil spills by Shell’s subsidiary. Shell was ordered to compensate the farmers and to rehabilitate the land.

A new claim against Shell in a UK court for oil related pollution and compensation dating back to 1989 is being pursued by more than 11 000 people from Nigeria’s southeastern oil-producing region.

About 54 oil spills have been recorded by Shell in the region, damaging vast areas of mangrove forest, killing fish in rivers and leaving people without a sustainable source of food and livelihood.

These claims indicate the increasing awareness of people’s rights as it relates to the environment.

Sustainable jobs are also becoming a major consideration because some mines close and leave behind the negative consequences of mining such as deforestation, land resettlement, and water and air pollution. This is certainly the case of Somkhele where jobs are being weighed against the environmental costs.

Anglo American, one of the world’s largest mining companies, is facing the “Kabwe case”. Earlier this year, a South African court was tasked with determining whether a class action by a Zambian community in the “world’s most toxic town” would be allowed to proceed. According to pollution experts, lead poisoning may be linked to the damaged brains and other organs of generations of children who live in Kabwe.

Antonio Maria Afonso Pedro, the director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Sub-regional Office for Central Africa, said it is now more appropriate to speak of a “Sustainable Development License to Operate”, which measures success not only on the basis of the benefits and returns of mining but also the observance of the highest environmental, social and governance standards.

The SDLO also recognises the need for a harmonisation of all standards that govern the mining sector to ease the administrative burden on implementing governments and companies. In addition, the SDLO recognises sustainability as a conditionality that must be more stringent and go far beyond corporate social responsibility minimum standards and include ways for industry to be held accountable for harms it causes.

The SDLO raises important questions for the government and industry as it relates to the governance of mining both domestically and internationally. It also raises the importance of consultation and consent where loopholes have been used in the past. Many communities demand free prior and informed consent to participate fully and meaningfully in the decisions that will affect their environment.

The current contestations against mining are an indication that social benefits, or even the promise of beneficiation, is not enough. Although South Africa has a strong environmental legal framework, land rights are still precarious. A balancing act will be required from the government to protect human and environmental rights, especially in the context of a rush for critical minerals.

Sikho Luthango is a public policy and mineral governance expert based at Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southern Africa.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Mail & Guardian.

Funeral Cover

Celebrating life after death

Unpacking the value of life, disability and funeral cover

Rebecca Haynes

Creating a living legacy is an important ingredient in life for many. However, the inevitability of passing on highlights the importance of closure a celebration of life brings to the impact on the legacy left behind.

The face of funerals and funeral cover changed indelibly with the still lingering Covid-19 that publicised leading personalities' death and almost overnight, discussion of death was no longer taboo as few were untouched by the trauma of the pandemic. It also meant a rise in awareness of the value of funeral cover with recognition that this was no longer the territory of those heading towards their golden years, but applied to the loss of children and younger adults.

A funeral cover policy requires a monthly premium that can be structured according to available disposable income. On passing the beneficiary's nominated person is paid out a specified amount and able to make the requisite funeral arrangements. The basic advice recommended is not to choose the cheapest option, but to optimise the value the policy will realise.

People are under severe financial pressure with the global and local economic headwinds taking their toll. There are companies like AVBOB which do give premium relief in the event of such crisis as retrenchment or loss of a breadwinner, however, the importance of maintaining open communication and a transparent relationship with the selected insurer cannot be stressed enough.

This is not just to advise of problems, but to enable the insurer to help policy holders

Anthony Miller, CEO of Simply insurers.

ers to prevent being over-insured, assist in making sure the cover is adequate, regularly evaluate cover appropriateness and help when financial difficulty affects payment of premiums. There are always options to ensure cover is maintained.

Also, when signing up for a policy, disclose all information and let your family know about the funeral cover you have in place and where to find it in the event of your death. Also understand the waiting periods and exclusions. Cover for natural death normally comes with a waiting period, but accidental death provides immediate cover.

Flexibility

"A very important factor to consider is whether the insurer is going to pay in the event there's a

claim," says Anthony Miller, CEO of insurers, Simply. "Some insurers have a bad reputation for repudiating claims and are to be avoided.

"Another important consideration is all-in cost. We don't try to be the cheapest funeral provider in the market. We try to offer very flexible cover so customers can get what they need without having to take anything they don't. By doing so, we often save customers a lot of money versus the alternatives which can typically be quite rigid."

Simply's operating model is different to other insurers in the market. While they've seen strong growth targeting retail customers with their combinations of life, disability and funeral cover, they've also been successful getting SMEs to take cover for their staff – paying the premiums on behalf of their employees and ensuring cover is in place when tragedy strikes.

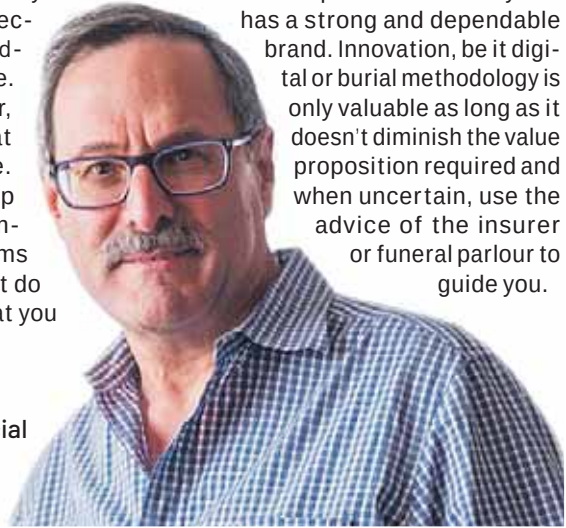
"Even where employers pass the cost on to their employees, the cost savings achieved via more efficient distribution and effective collections are material for the employees," says Miller. It's also a great way for employers to add value to their employees at low or no cost."

While past perceptions are that funeral cover was only for this mass market, this has shifted to the perception that everyone needs funeral cover and in the light of concerns about the high costs of funerals here, effectively every South African needs a funeral plan in place.

"The optimal plan should cover the cost of burial and re-

lated expenses such as airtime and groceries which have not been planned for," says Phillip Kassel, executive financial advisor, Liberty Life. "To keep up cover, take up a plan that is not excessive. You can cover up to 32 family members and premiums are age rated, but do choose a plan that you can afford."

Phillip Kassel, executive financial advisor, Liberty Life.



This is a traditional market and the bottom line is to choose an insurer that provides certainty and has a strong and dependable brand. Innovation, be it digital or burial methodology is only valuable as long as it doesn't diminish the value proposition required and when uncertain, use the advice of the insurer or funeral parlour to guide you.

Preserving the environment with modern technology

Aquamation, first introduced to South Africa by AVBOB, which offers this as an option through its Maitland and Pretoria branches, is gathering momentum as a 'green burial' movement that promotes natural decomposition of the body and avoids using non-biodegradable chemicals and materials.

One of its most notable users was activist Anglican archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu, who was not only known for his campaign for racial justice and outspoken anti-apartheid sentiments, but was also very environmentally conscious and wanted to use aquamation as an eco-friendly alternative to cremation or other burial options when he passed.

Aquamation advocates believe it is a far more eco-friendly alternative to an ornate coffin going into the ground and it is estimated that aquamation uses ten times less energy than a flame cremation and can reduce a crematorium's carbon footprint by around 90%.

Aquamation might be gaining ground and awareness, but AVBOB's CEO, Carl van der Riet, says burial wishes are also cultural- and religious-based and each culture has its own interpretation and expression.

"We are very aware and conscious of different culture requirements. It takes time to learn a deep understanding of these and we believe we have this understanding. This informs our evolving service offering and the diverse levels of our services and plans so that we can offer an end-to-end service, holding the hands of those left behind and guiding them through the complexities to ensure our support adds value at times of tragedy," says van der Riet.

In a nutshell, aquamation or alkaline hydrolysis involves the body of a person being immersed in a mixture of hot water and a strong alkali, in this case potassium hydroxide, in a pressurised metal cylinder. The number of hours involved in total decomposition depends upon the size



A viewing room where family and friends can view their loved one being prepared for aquamation.

of the deceased.

Sterile remains

Everything except the bones is digested and liquefied and the liquid can safely be discarded. The bones are then dried in an oven, reduced to dust and these are returned to relatives in an urn and can be treated as the relatives wish, just like other ashes from a flame-based cremation approach.

Because aquamation completely hydrolyses both RNA and DNA and destroys all pathogens, all viruses are completely denatured and the end result is a sterile solution of amino acids, salts, sugars and nutrients – all by-products of natural decomposition.

Originally developed in 1990 to dispose of the bodies of lab animals, it has played a significant role in the disposal of carcasses affected by such virulent illnesses as mad cow disease. In the 2000s, it moved into the medical school sector and was used to dispose of human cadavers donated for medical research.

"We are also keenly aware that we have both a direct and indirect impact on the environment. Aquamation is just one way that demonstrates that we are deeply committed to preserving our natural resources and we are still the first and only funeral services provider in Africa that offers aquamation as a process that uses water to return us to nature," concludes van der Riet.

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Unlocking value through constant evolution

Companies such as AVBOB understand the value of cover and celebrating its 105th year in August since its humble beginnings in Bloemfontein as a society to support families. It continues to support South Africans every day when tragedy hits their families and this can hit at any age.

"We started as a mutual organisation and believe maintaining this powerful business model is a critical differentiator of our business," says Carl van der Riet, AVBOB's CEO. "We believe it provides huge value to our customers. As Africa's largest mutual assurance organisation we can directly offer benefits to our policyholders that no other insurer can.

"Our mutual status drives our ethos, purpose, and competitive differentiation. We offer our members the opportunity to participate in the value we create, whereas other insurers are mandated to create shareholder wealth. For example, in the 2021/2022 financial year we paid out R2.7-billion in policy benefits and shared over R550-million of our profits with our more than 2.5-million policyholders covering 8.5-million lives."

Part of its ethos of the personal touch, as AVBOB has grown in reputation and service offering, including diversifying into the business-related manufacturing side of the business, it continues to support its nationwide network of 350 branches.

"It comes down to 'always putting people first', be it policyholders, employees or members of our supply chain – the statement by the company's founders that is the golden thread through everything we do and stand for," continues van der Riet. "While there are companies closing branches for their own strategic objectives, we firmly believe that having accessible branches where the bereaved can have direct contact with the experts handling their personal loss is a fundamental service. We offer a complete package and an integrated service and provide both funeral insurance and funeral services."

"In pursuance of our shared value objectives, we accelerated the digitisation of our customer and supply chain interactions in order to drive modernisation and growth. AVBOB has always been forward-thinking in its adoption of technology and IT prevails throughout the business. IT delivers the tools, foresight and agility to serve both within and outside the organisation.

Accessibility

"The AVBOB Groups' digital agenda is adding greater value and creating a purposeful, sustainable, inclusive, consistent and service-orientated digital workplace for customer and employees alike, building business resilience and unlocking value through innovation.

Carl van der Riet, CEO of AVBOB



ital workplace for customer and employees alike, building business resilience and unlocking value through innovation.

"Everything now happens in real time and in this

service-driven world, we need to offer immediacy, personalisation and accessibility to our clients to position the business for an era marked by growing customer enlightenment. We also need to ensure that the tools we have are available to our 5000-strong nationwide sales force.

"The challenge we continue seeing is the burden of providing for funerals falling on the shoulders of an unprepared and financially non-resilient family, lacking adequate or having no funeral cover and getting into debt or selling off assets when the family suffers a loss.

"It's essential to be prepared for

the unexpected and ensure you can provide for financial needs – not just in terms of funeral cover, but also for the short, medium and long terms. Leaving a legacy means effective financial planning at all life stages and managing finances in order to achieve life goals.

"Funeral cover provides the financial safety net for your own or a loved one's funeral and this is vital considering that a funeral in South Africa can cost upwards of R80 000. This is not a cost legacy you want to leave behind for your loved ones – especially if it means putting them into debt."

All you need to know about Aquamation

AVBOB will be celebrating 105 years in the funeral business on 15 August 2023. It is a leader in the funeral business and the biggest mutual society in Africa. Over the years, AVBOB has offered traditional funeral services and cremation to its policyholders and non-policyholders. However, in 2019, AVBOB launched aquamation, also known as alkaline hydrolysis, which is an eco-friendly, water-based type of cremation.

1. Aquamation was introduced in South Africa in 2019.
2. Aquamation is an eco-friendly, water-based form of cremation.
3. The scientific name for the aquamation process is alkaline hydrolysis. However, it is also known as flameless cremation, water cremation and bio-cremation.
4. Although it has been in use abroad in various applications for many years, AVBOB is at the forefront of developing this innovative procedure in South Africa.
5. Aquamation gained international attention when Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu opted for aquamation for his send-off at the AVBOB Maitland branch in January 2022.
6. The aquamation process has a decreased carbon footprint and eliminates the direct emission of greenhouse gases or mercury into the environment, while ensuring an energy saving of 90% when compared to flame-based cremation.
7. Aquamation at the AVBOB Pretoria West branch in Gauteng was launched on 22 June 2022.
8. AVBOB plans to expand its aquamation service to a further eight AVBOB branches across South Africa over the next few years.

IS AQUAMATION SAFE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

Since innovation is at the forefront of everything AVBOB does, the alkali used for aquamation is safe for the environment. The water-based process uses a solution consisting of 95% water and 5% alkali (potassium hydroxide).

AVBOB does NOT use acid in the aquamation process. Instead, aquamation uses an alkaline catalyst, which is the chemical opposite of acid. The alkali used in this case is potassium hydroxide salts.

THE AQUAMATION PROCESS

1. The body is first laid in a receptacle that is placed in a sterile, stainless steel chamber.
2. A combination of gentle water flow, moderate temperatures and alkalinity is used to hasten the natural process.
3. All organic material is gently broken down into its most basic building blocks.
4. Our bodies are composed of approximately 60% water. Therefore, during the aquamation process, only the bone minerals remain. These are then lightly processed into powder.
5. The remains (ashes) are returned to the family in an urn. Families receive 20-30% more ashes with aquamation.
6. What is left at the end of the process is a benign sterile liquid (containing NO trace of DNA and RNA) that is recycled back into the municipal wastewater system.
7. All chemicals are rendered inactive after the whole process.



Aquamation is currently being offered to non-policyholders and AVBOB policyholders at the AVBOB Maitland Funeral Parlour in Cape Town and the AVBOB Pretoria West branch in Gauteng.

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No one who qualifies for tertiary education should be denied access

Derek Davey

The cost of tertiary education is on the rise, and while the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provides interest-free loans to economically disadvantaged students, these loans still need to be repaid. To address this issue, both the private and public sectors are working on strategies to support South African students. These challenges were discussed recently in a webinar hosted by the *Mail & Guardian*, African Bank and Fundi.

The webinar was preceded by the launch of the Fundi and African Bank Student Funding Insights Report, which delves into some of the issues that were addressed at the online event.

In her opening address, Mikateko Chauke, Head of Strategic Communications and PR at African Bank, emphasised that student protests at the beginning of the year highlighted the financial difficulties students face in managing their study expenses. She stressed the importance of financial discipline and literacy for students, as their limited knowledge in financial matters often leads to overspending, compounded by late payments, financial exclusion, and the concept of the "missing middle". The landscape of student loans in South Africa is primarily dominated by loans from government institutions such as NSFAS, with R47 billion allocated to 900 000 students this year. NSFAS loans are interest-free, while loans from private institutions come with higher interest rates.

Tuition fees, study materials, accommodation, and general living expenses are some of the costs students have to bear.

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Panelists: Professor Peter Mbatl, Vice Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences; Mary Maponya, Executive Head of Lending, Fundi; Mxolisi Manana, UJ SRC President 2023, SAUS MEC ex officio 2022/23.

Tuition fees vary across institutions, with public universities generally charging lower fees ranging from R50,000 to R150,000. Chauke stressed that financial planning empowers students to manage their budget, reduce debt, develop sound financial habits, create emergency funds, invest in their future and achieve financial independence.

Chauke concluded by emphasising that while student loans can be a valuable tool to help students achieve their career aspirations, students must also be responsible borrowers. Thorough research on loan options and lenders is essential, and engaging the borrower by asking pertinent questions is a must do, as repayments should not burden students with lifelong debt.

The moderator, Thembekile Mrototo,

highlighted the issue of the missing middle, where some students have financial circumstances that do not fit into the criteria for loans.

Mxolisi Manana, UJ SRC President 2023, pointed out that loan repayment difficulties extend to students in the TVET sector as well. The challenges are complex, including uncertainty about loan continuance from one academic year to the next. Efforts are being made by the private sector, universities, and the government to address these issues.

Professor Peter Mbatl, Vice Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, concurred that the government has made substantial commitments to address these challenges. He emphasized the importance of supporting future generations by giving

back to the system for those who have been supported by NSFAS.

While NSFAS does not fund students for additional undergraduate degrees, other funding institutions can assist, especially for degrees in scarce skills areas. Some universities also offer scholarships, albeit to a limited number of top-performing students. Efforts are made to accommodate as many students as possible on campus to alleviate accommodation challenges.

Mary Maponya, Executive Head of Lending at Fundi, shared that Fundi is actively engaging with students and universities to address funding gaps for the "missing middle." Fundi is developing products to make loan repayments more affordable and continuously seeks new ways to support students and universities. Permanent employment is a crucial criterion for obtaining a Fundi loan.

Mbatl and Manana both emphasized the need for transparent communication between the private and public sectors to achieve sustainable funding solutions for higher education.

In conclusion, all participants agreed that quality education should not be denied to anyone who qualifies for tertiary studies. Efforts are being made to address the challenges related to student loans, accommodation, and funding, with the ultimate goal of providing access to higher education for all deserving students.

To access the Fundi and African Bank Student Funding Insights Report, visit:
<https://fundiconnect.co.za/student-funding-insights-report/>



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JOIN DUT TO IMPROVE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

Durban University of Technology (DUT) is located on the warm east coast of South Africa in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). It sprawls over seven (7) campuses that cater for about 32 000 students. Two of these are located in spectacular KZN Midlands, well-known for its undulating hills, which unfurl coastwards from the Drakensburg Mountains nearby. Five of these are located in tropical and picturesque Durban, which sits ensconced beside the 'Valley of a Thousand Hills' as it tapers off into the Indian ocean.

ENVISION2030, our strategy, identifies DUT's DNA as having two strands, namely '*people-centered and engaged*' and '*innovative and entrepreneurial*'. These are interwoven intrinsically by several double- pairs consisting of 'values and principles' that bind our Double-Helix together. The extrinsic expression of our DNA is via The DUT Way, which irradiates our collective thought and mind, heart and soul, character and behaviour.

The University's goal is to '*contribute towards improving the lives and livelihoods of all its people in the broader society*'. DUT strives consistently towards excellence and greatness in the teaching- learning and in the research-innovation nexus; something that has been recognized recently both nationally and internationally. These internationally recognised strengths are enacted through our impactful engagement internally and externally in service of our localities, the region and the country at large.

DUT is: 'Creative. Distinctive. Impactful'

The Ideal Incumbents:

In pursuance of **ENVISION2030**, the ideal incumbents:

- Epitomises and demonstrates values- and principles-driven leadership and management, our DNA and The DUT Way.
- Fosters visionary and transformative leadership that is efficient, effective and impactful not only internally, but in our broader society nationally and internationally.
- Embeds systems thinking and management in the implementation of plans and projects, while ensuring sustainability.
- Takes leadership in ensuring that our education philosophy statement: 'our innovation and entrepreneurship shapes adaptive graduates that transform society' is not only enacted across DUT, but is a lived experience among, primarily, academics and students.
- Is creative and innovative, deliberative and decisive, and is a leader, a strategist and a manager.
- Is a seasoned academic leader with a proven record of academic excellence.

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: TEACHING AND LEARNING

Duration of Contract: Five (5) year-fixed term, renewable and based on performance | **Post Reference: R203**

Multi-year renewable contract based on performance will be offered.

Minimum Requirements:

- A PhD or a Doctorate with 10 to 15 years experience of researching and teaching at University level, nationally and/or internationally
- At least 5 years experience at senior/executive and academic leadership/management level, with demonstrable acumen to lead and manage in a 'volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous' environment, more particularly at faculty and/or institutional level.

A full Professor is preferable.

EXECUTIVE DEAN: FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Duration of Contract: Five (5) year-fixed term, renewable and based on performance | **Post Reference: E400**

Multi-year renewable contract based on performance will be offered.

The University seeks to appoint an outstanding academic as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. As a member of the executive management team reporting directly to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), this position plays a key role in the management and administration of the Faculty as a whole. It is expected that the incumbent will strengthen the Faculty's service ethic to students and its staff and build its engagement with industry, communities and government. As an administrator, the Executive Dean will be responsible for the academic integrity, administrative management, financial management, human resource and strategic transformational leadership of the Faculty.

The incumbent will strategically manage the following divisions: • Architectural Technology • Chemical Engineering • Civil Engineering and Geomatics • Construction Management and Quantity Surveying • Electrical Power Engineering • Electronic and Computer Engineering • Industrial Engineering • Mechanical Engineering • Town and Regional Planning.

Minimum Requirements:

- A PhD or a Doctorate with 5 to 10 years experience of researching and teaching at University level, nationally and/or internationally, of which 5 years of experience should have been in a senior academic management capacity
- Relevant higher education leadership and managerial skills, with demonstrable acumen to lead and manage in a 'volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous' environment, more particularly at faculty and/or institutional level.

A full Professor is preferable.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS THE 25TH OF AUGUST 2023

Please complete an official application for employment form and send a detailed CV and a covering letter with the exact name of the post you are applying for. This can be obtainable from our website: www.dut.ac.za (the careers section).

The detailed requirements for the job and the submission of applications can be addressed to:

Mr Mxolisi Msomi, Senior Director: Human Capital Services, email: dvcrecruit@dut.ac.za / tel. (031) 373 2579/2345. Communication will be entered into with short-listed candidates only.

"While DUT strives for equal opportunities, preference will be in terms of the University's Employment Equity Plan, with specific consideration for female candidates. The University reserves the right not to appoint".

ENVISION2030

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability
fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence

CREATIVE. DISTINCTIVE. IMPACTFUL.

Academics & Courses
CONTACT:
Ilizma 063 026 7450
Vanessa 083 458 8155

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Elsie 076 556 8777

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Academic Jobs & Jobs

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG
FACULTY OF SCIENCE



The Faculty of Science invites applications for the Headships of the following respective schools as below:

HEAD OF SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES (5-year fixed term appointment)

For more information about the school see:
<https://www.wits.ac.za/geosciences/research-and-teaching-facilities/>

HEAD OF SCHOOL OF ANIMAL, PLANT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES (5-year fixed term appointment)

For more information about the school see:
<https://intranet.wits.ac.za/academic/facs/science/apes/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information and to apply, please visit <https://www.wits.ac.za/vacancies/>
CLOSING DATE: 31 AUGUST 2023

14150M&G



The UFS is always looking for new talent

The University of the Free State (UFS) creates opportunities and growth through leading, learning and teaching, focused research, and impactful engagement with society. Situated in the heart of South Africa, our character of caring and diversity translates into an outstanding university experience.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic

(Peromnes Level 2 – Contract appointment: Five (5) years, with the possibility of reappointment for a further term).

Assumption of duties: 01 January 2024.

For the full advertisement, please visit our website at:
<https://ufs.hua.hrsmart.com/hr/ats/Posting/view/1069>

Director: International Affairs

(Peromnes Level 5 – Contract appointment: Five (5) years, with the possibility of reappointment for a further term).

Assumption of duties: 01 January 2024.

For the full advertisement, please visit our website at:
<https://ufs.hua.hrsmart.com/hr/ats/Posting/view/1065>

Closing date: 03 September 2023.

For enquiries, please contact 051 401 9737 or email: JonesEY@ufs.ac.za

Additionally, kindly contact 051 401 9848/9329/9012 for assistance.

For the full advertisement, please visit our website at <https://ufs.hua.hrsmart.com/hr/ats/JobSearch/viewAll>

T: +27 51 401 7705/7267 | www.ufs.ac.za



Inspiring excellence, transforming lives through quality, impact, and care.



The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is mandated by statute to oversee the further development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, ensuring quality qualifications, which lead to the full development of each learner and the social economic development of the nation at large. SAQA is recruiting for the following position:

MANAGER:
SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (SCM)

All-inclusive remuneration package of
R 958 824 – R 1 125 825 per annum

SAQA seeks to appoint a Manager: Supply Chain Management. The successful candidate will manage the procurement administration and the Supply Chain Management function in line with the National Treasury requirements and SCM Policy and Procedures.

The successful candidate may structure the total package for a 13th cheque. Housing, medical aid, and pension allowance are included in the total package for the above position.

To view the full advert and apply for the above vacancy please use the following link:
<http://hr.saqa.co.za>

The closing date for applications is 31 August 2023

SAQA will verify credit and criminal records as well as qualifications (A SAQA evaluation certificate will be required for all foreign qualifications). SAQA reserves the right not to make an appointment to the advertised post and will only communicate with shortlisted candidates.



A University that distinguishes itself as caring for people and on its academic excellence, agility, responsiveness and transformation principles, invites applications for the position of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal that will steer a value-driven institution where impact matters. The University ranks number one in South Africa on Employer Reputation, International Research Networks and Sustainability as well as featuring quite prominently on Student Engagement.

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL

The University of Pretoria (UP) is a leading research-intensive university in South Africa, with an outstanding local, continental and global reputation for teaching and learning, research excellence, student access and success, as well as engaging our communities. The University's nine faculties and its business school offer a wide variety of under- and postgraduate programmes, which are recognised internationally and accredited by the regulatory authorities and professional bodies. The University contributes a significant percentage of South Africa's well-trained and innovative graduates whose employability is rated as first by reputable ranking agencies. UP produces responsible and productive citizens, and future leaders in many levels of society and across industries. Teaching and learning excellence is supported by impactful and wide-ranging research, underpinned by innovation, collaboration and inter- and trans-disciplinarity. Research that offers solutions to the socio-economic challenges facing our country, our region and the globe, lies at the core of the University's Strategic Plan, UP 2025/26 and Beyond.

The University is seeking a Vice-Chancellor and Principal who has a clear understanding of the needs of a diverse student body, their contemporary challenges and how to advance a holistic support programme that enhances student success in numerous aspects of their campus life.

UP has a stellar international reputation founded on collaborations and partnerships that advance its Teaching and Learning, Research and Community Engagement agenda, positioning it to make a real impact on both the local communities it serves and the world.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal is expected to drive a Digital Transformation strategy that permeates all areas of UP's operations and the academic agenda of the University.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal is the head of the University, responsible for the academic stature of the institution and its effective and efficient management. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal is accountable to the University Council and is assisted in the management and administration of the University, by the members of the Executive and the senior management team.

Duties:

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal is the Chief Executive Officer of the University. As such, the incumbent is expected to be a strategic, innovative, inspirational/transformational leader with a clear understanding of the Higher Education sector both in South Africa and internationally. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal is expected to have a superior working knowledge of the legislation and reporting regulations that govern higher education in South Africa. The Vice-Chancellor will drive the University's Strategic Plan, approved by Council, with conviction, courage, integrity and a deep commitment to teaching and research excellence, social justice and the achievement of a transformed institution. Among other duties, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal is expected to demonstrate knowledge of the funding arrangements for higher education, be an avid fundraiser with a solid track record, and have a deeper understanding of the financial health and sustainability of universities. The successful candidate will demonstrate a people-centred approach, exceptional communication, negotiation, conflict and multi-party resolution skills and other competencies that will accelerate the University's standing in higher education. In addition, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal is expected to have the commitment to drive a dynamic institutional culture towards the attainment of the institutional goals.

Requirements:

- A recognised doctoral qualification from an accredited institution in the juristic area where the degree was earned.
- A proven record of academic excellence and a recognised academic standing evidenced by a national and international body of scholarship in the field of specialisation, and other impactful academic and community engagement contributions.
- A minimum of eight years of proven leadership success at an executive level having progressed through the academic/management hierarchy.
- Proven leadership, management and communication skills at senior management level in higher education.
- An ability to successfully manage leadership teams, and to empower, motivate and unite staff, students and other stakeholders to achieve the shared objectives of the institution.
- Experience of human resources and financial management appropriate to the level of appointment.
- An in-depth knowledge and a strategic understanding of the national and international higher education sector and the challenges confronting it.
- A commitment to harnessing technology to achieve the strategic objectives of the University and to support the University in preparing graduates fit for the workplace of the future.
- A commitment to sustaining and further developing a student-centred, transformed, inclusive and multilingual culture for all stakeholders, especially students.
- A well-developed national and international network that will support growth for the University and its stakeholders.
- A well-developed understanding of the compliance universe of the University and the operational environment within which universities function.
- A valid driver's licence.

Make today matter
www.up.ac.za

Applicants must familiarise themselves with the University's Regulation and Procedure for the Appointment of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal and the timeframe in respect of the appointment process and accept same in writing. The applicable regulation and timeframe are available on the University's website at www.up.ac.za or may be obtained from the Director: Human Resources at +27 12 420 2375 or directorhrvc@up.ac.za.

An application consisting of: (1) a written acceptance of the applicable regulation governing the appointment process and the timeframe; (2) a declaration of intent (vision statement); (3) a comprehensive curriculum vitae; (4) an abridged curriculum vitae; and (5) the names and contact details of at least three contactable referees must reach the Office of the Director: Human Resources by no later than 12:00 on 15 September 2023. The University reserves the right to contact current and previous employers in the reference check process with due consideration of the relevant privacy legislation provisions. Applications should be emailed to directorhrvc@up.ac.za Only applications received on, or before the deadline by means of the methods indicated, will be considered.

In accordance with the Employment Equity Plan of the University and its Employment Equity goals and targets, preference will be given, but is not limited, to candidates from under-represented designated groups.

All candidates who comply with the requirements for appointment are invited to apply. All candidates agree to the verification of personal credentials and competency assessments and the publication of their CV and letter of intent to members of the Senate, Institutional Forum and Council.

By applying for this vacancy, the candidates consent to undergo verification of personal credentials and related information including, but not limited to, qualifications, criminal record, credit record, and current and historic disciplinary proceedings, as part of the selection process.

The University of Pretoria reserves the right to not fill the advertised position.

14139M&G



YOU'RE DESTINED FOR GREAT THINGS

SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: UNIVERSITY RELATIONS, STUDENT AFFAIRS & UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG (UJ) SPORT (P2)

AUCKLAND PARK KINGSWAY CAMPUS
(5-year contract renewable subject to performance)

SENIOR DIRECTOR: POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL (PGS) (P4)

AUCKLAND PARK KINGSWAY CAMPUS
(5-year contract renewable subject to performance)

Introduction

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) is a vibrant and cosmopolitan university, anchored in Africa and driven by a powerful strategy focused on attaining global excellence and stature (GES). With an emphasis on independent thinking, sustainable development and strategic partnerships, UJ is an international university of choice. The University is guided by the Vice-Chancellor's vision of "Positioning UJ in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) for societal impact in the context of the changing social, political and economic fortunes of Africa".

Senior Executive Director: University Relations, Student Affairs & University of Johannesburg Sport (P2)

(5-YEAR CONTRACT RENEWABLE SUBJECT TO PERFORMANCE)
AUCKLAND PARK KINGSWAY CAMPUS

The Senior Executive Director plays a critical role in maintaining a healthy and sustainable institutional environment, enhancing stakeholder confidence, and contributing to the University's long-term success and sustainability.

Reporting to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, the role serves as a member of the Management Executive Committee (MEC), and its functions entail the provision of:

- Key Stakeholder Relations Management services to support the Vice-Chancellor and MEC with guidance on current affairs and their impact on the strategy of the University of Johannesburg.
- Appropriate advice to all members of the Executive Committee (the 'MEC') regarding protocol management and administrative processes when interacting with external stakeholders.
- Ensuring proper relationship management with media to ensure effective and efficient affiliation and association as and when required.
- Operationalising the University of Johannesburg's branding, which requires aligning various elements within the organization, including its culture, processes, systems, and people, to deliver a unified brand experience to customers, employees, and other stakeholders.
- Provide leadership on administration and services of key units, namely, Student Affairs, University Relations, and UJ Sport.

The University is seeking to appoint an exceptionally motivated and energetic leader who will be expected to:

- Support the Vice-Chancellor in implementing the University's Strategic Plan.
- Contribute to the development and provide oversight in the execution and monitoring of the university strategy.
- Support the Vice-Chancellor to achieve effective follow-through on critical decisions and matters of strategy made by the MEC and other University committees.
- Ensure successful development and implementation of University Relations, UJ Sport, and Student Affairs strategies to advance the University's Strategic Objectives, including overseeing rollout of operational strategies.
- Effectively manage resources (financial, human and physical) for the effective running of the Division.
- Ensure effective people management within the domain in line with the UJ policies and guidelines.
- Ensure good corporate governance and compliance pertaining to policies, legislation and regulations.
- Provide stakeholders with relevant and accurate information about the domain's governance practices, performance, risks, and decision-making processes.
- Build and safeguard the institution's image and reputation by proactively addressing stakeholder concerns, demonstrating responsible governance practices, and aligning the institution's values with stakeholder expectations.
- Provide guidelines in the planning and execution of important events, both internal and external, ensuring that proper protocol is followed, and that the institution's reputation is upheld.
- Provide strategic support in prioritising and filtering incoming information, reviewing, and drafting correspondence, and ensuring timely responses to important matters.
- Develop clear, profound, and meaningful partnerships and relationships with spheres of government and communities.
- Build a strong institutional brand that is crucial for the success and recognition of the University with the objective of increasing brand loyalty and attraction. Criteria, amongst others, to achieve this would be the building of an 'online presence' and the delivery of a consistent brand.

Minimum requirements:

- Doctoral Degree (NQF 10).
- Minimum of 10 years' managerial work experience at the executive level.
- Senior managerial experience in various settings including governmental relations, stakeholder relations, local and international governance.
- Exceptional managerial and organisational skills as expected.
- Have insight into the local and international political landscape.
- Ability to keep abreast of national and international government affairs.
- Understanding of local, national and international government relations.
- Well-respected and a mature executive administrative leader who is able to inspire and motivate an institutional community, students, alumni, and external stakeholders in the University.

Senior Director: Postgraduate School (PGS) (P4)

(5-YEAR CONTRACT RENEWABLE SUBJECT TO PERFORMANCE)
AUCKLAND PARK KINGSWAY CAMPUS

The Senior Director reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation. The primary responsibility of the Senior Director: Postgraduate School (PGS) is to direct and manage the University's programme of strategic support to postgraduates and postdoctoral research fellowships, postgraduate funding, development of research capacity and the improvement of staff qualifications.

Job Specification

The Senior Director is expected to:

- Determine, articulate, implement, lead, and strengthen the University's postgraduate programmes, postdoctoral research fellowship programmes, supervisor development, transdisciplinary studies, and research capacity development programmes in accordance with the University's 2025 Strategic Plan; namely attaining Global Excellence and Stature (GES) in the context of 4IR;
- Manage the postgraduate programme to ensure an exceptional good life-cycle experience for postgraduate students;
- Source external funding (including and beyond the National Research Foundation (NRF)) to support postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellowships in the form of bursaries, scholarships, and fellowships. For external sponsors outside of the NRF, the approach must be coordinated with the Research and Development Office;
- Provide strategic support to staff to acquire higher qualifications and provide the necessary support to establish them as leaders in research;
- Develop, implement, and monitor the postdoctoral research fellowship programme to attract top local and international postdoctoral fellows and ensure that postdoctoral research fellows are productive in terms of research and development as academics;
- Support/introduce initiatives for research talent management, including the improvement of staff qualifications;
- Ensure institutional compliance with the relevant statutory and regulatory framework in which the University functions;
- Ensure the highest level of portfolio governance, efficient administration, and systems functioning, including enrollment planning for the Faculties and College;
- Ensure effective and efficient management and utilisation of the portfolio's finances and resources;
- Respond to the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) research capacity-building related policy documents, draft proposals, and reports, and initiate policy;
- Partner with faculties and divisions towards an approach that continuously communicates the societal and discipline-specific impact of our postgraduate students and postdoctoral research fellows. The approach should include, among others, social media;
- Collaborate with faculty and other stakeholders to develop and implement postgraduate programmes and initiatives;
- Establish and maintain appropriate systems (analytical tools, information systems, projections of cost behaviour), processes, and policies to ensure effective and efficient management of resources; and
- Manage risk within the portfolio.

Minimum Requirements

- Doctoral degree (NQF 10) and proven experience in a Higher Education environment.
- An extraordinary administrator within an academic institution and/or a senior academic with administrative experience (for example, a former head of department, vice-dean, etc.) – at least five years of relevant management experience.
- Demonstrated leadership at all academic levels: undergraduate, postgraduate, postdoctoral, and in staff recruitment, mentorship, and development.
- Proven excellence and experience in research.
- Established and valuable local and international networks paired with outstanding stewardship, diplomatic, effective, and efficient communication skills to leverage local, Pan-African, and global networks.
- Proven resource, strategic, and people management skills, with exceptional ability and resilience to function under pressure.
- Financial and numerical acumen (advanced user of spreadsheets, including online documents/worksheets), coupled with the understanding and use of data analytics.
- Proven experience in managing projects.
- Outstanding personal qualities of integrity, sound judgment, energy, passion, and constructive interpersonal skills.

Recommendation

- A well-respected academic leader who can attract and motivate the academic community and students in the University's drive to provide high-quality teaching, cutting-edge research, and effective community engagement. The candidate should ideally be rated by the NRF.
- Be an inspiring and contributing member of the postgraduate component of international networks, for example, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), Universitas 21 (U21), and others.

Note – to ensure effective delivery of strategy, the structure and associated functions are reviewed from time to time. The University reserves the right to make appropriate changes (including line of reporting) that would serve the best interest of the organisation, associated staff and students.

Terms of appointment:

The positions of Senior Executive Director and Senior Director: Postgraduate School are subject to a compulsory probation period of 12 months, are a 5-year contract appointment with an executive-level remuneration and benefits package commensurate with experience and qualifications. The appointments may be renewed for a further term of office, subject to performance.

Retirement age:

The normal retirement age for both positions is 65. Consideration will be given to candidates who would be able to serve a 5-year term.

Application:

To apply, submit a detailed Curriculum Vitae and letter of motivation outlining a possible vision and strategic direction for the position. The name and full contact details (including telephone numbers and email addresses) of at least (3) three traceable and credible referees must be included.

Applications must be marked 'Confidential' and addressed to the Executive Director: Human Capital Management, and emailed to Ms. B Dumezweni at email: bdumezweni@uj.ac.za

Closing date: 27 August 2023





Specific Procurement Notice

Request for Bids
Goods

(One-Envelope Bidding Process)

Country: Eswatini

Name of Project: Health Systems Strengthening for Human Capital Development
Contract Title: Procurement of Cancer Screening and Pre-Cancer Treatment Equipment
Loan No.: 9126-SZ

RFB Reference No.: SZ-MOH-374474-GO-RFB

1. The **Kingdom of Eswatini through the Ministry of Health** has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Health Systems Strengthening for Human Capital Development Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for **Procurement of Cancer Screening and Pre-Cancer Treatment Equipment** “For this contract, the Borrower shall process the payments using the Direct Payment disbursement method, as defined in the World Bank’s Disbursement Guidelines for Investment Project Financing, except for those payments, which the contract provides to be made through letter of credit.”
2. The **Ministry of Health** now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for Cancer Screening and Pre-Cancer Treatment Equipment, Mbabane, 8-10 weeks delivery.

Item description	Specifications	Qty
1. Insulated vaginal graves speculum for LEEP	Size 115x35mm, self-retaining Double blade with screw mechanism to keep the blade open, blade length ~115mm, blade width 35mm, insulated blue in color Reusable	60
2. LEEP ball electrodes	Standard 3/32 connector shaft, 5mmx12mm	125
3. LEEP Surgical electrodes Loops used for excision Small size Medium size Large size	Standard length 13cm, loop sizes,10mm 15mm and 20mm	250 250 50
4. Iugol’s iodine for screening of precancerous lesions	Aqueous iodine solution BP Contains Iodine 5g/100mls Potassium iodidev10g/100mls for medical use 500mls	40 bottles @ 0.5litres
5. Cervical punch biopsy forceps	Size10 inch	15
6. Gallipot, small size for cotton swabs	Small size 40 x20mm	20
7. Kidney dish	Small size 20cm 200x115x30	10
8. Sponge holding forceps straight	Size 18cm	100
9. Teneculum forceps for holding the cervix	Single tooth 10inches (25cm)	10
10. Colposcope machine for Cervical cancer screening	Digital video colposcope machine	5
11. Leep machine	Finess +Electrosurgical Generators	8

3. Bidding will be conducted through international competitive procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank’s “Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers” 4th Edition of November 2020 (“Procurement Regulations”), and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Ministry of Health, attention Nkosithini Masina and e-mail-nkosithinima@gmail.com copy procurement.swazihealth@gmail.com and inspect the bidding document during office hours 0830 to 1630 hours at the address given below.
5. The bidding document in English may be purchased by interested Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of 1,200.00 Emalangeneni. The method of payment will be Cash. The document will be available as hard copy sent by email upon proof of payment.
6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 11.00 hours Eswatini Local Time, 21 September, 2023. Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders’ designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below on 11.00 hours Eswatini Local Time, 21 September, 2023.
7. All Bids must be accompanied by a “Bid Security” of: US\$2,080.00
8. “Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder’s beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.”
9. The address(es) referred to above is (are):

Ministry of Health
Nkosithini Masina
King Mswati III Avenue East, P.O. Box 5, Mbabane, Eswatini
Telephone: +268 2518 4111
Facsimile number: +268 2518 6279
Email address: nkosithinima@gmail.com copy procurement.swazihealth@gmail.com

Jobs, Tenders, Notices & Classified



THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIDS COUNCIL

THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIDS COUNCIL (SANAC) BRINGS TOGETHER GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO CREATE A COLLECTIVE RESPONSE TO HIV, TB AND STIS IN SOUTH AFRICA. THE COUNCIL IS CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA.

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR A BID

Bid Description: Key Populations Biobehavioral Survey Lite and Population Size Estimates

Bid Reference Number: RFP SANAC 08/0001/2023

The TOR and the Bidding document will be available at SANAC Trust website www.sanac.org.za from 04 August 2023 under Supply Chain Management tab- then click Tenders

Closing date and time: 31 August 2023 @ 11:00 a.m

There will be no briefing session; Preference point system: 80/20

Bidders are required to submit Completed Bid Documents and detailed proposals as outlined on the bid document including the supporting documents required for evaluation criteria and the required documents.

Bids including technical and financial proposals can be submitted on both hard copies to SANAC Trust Offices, 2nd Floor Block E, Hatfield Gardens, No 333 Grosvenor Street, Hatfield, 0083; 4 Hard Copies and One (1) soft copy on USB (included in the package) or email to Beullah@sanac.org.za; or Telephone inquiries: (012) 748 1021; attention: Ms Beullah Mthombeni, Procurement Officer

SANAC Reserve the Right to withdraw or alter this tender Advert.

2023 1438

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INVITATION TO BID

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PENSION FUND.



BID GEPP 02/2023:

Legal and Compliance service providers for a period of 5 years

The Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPP) herewith invites bids/requests for proposal from competent service providers to provide legal and compliance services to the GEPP.

Bid documents will be available from **07 August 2023** on the following website: www.gepp.co.za

A virtual compulsory briefing session will take place on **17 August 2023 at 14:00pm**. Service providers who are interested in submitting a bid must register their intention to attend the session with Ms Nokwanda Shoba, tenders@gepp.co.za, by **16 August 2023 at 15:00pm**.

Closing date: 12:00pm (midday) on 28 August 2023.
Late bids will not be permitted.

All bids must be deposited in the bid box at the GPAA's offices at 34 Hamilton Street, Arcadia, Pretoria.

For more information contact us at:

Government Employees Pension Fund

0800 117 869 enquiries@gepp.co.za gepp.co.za

Government Employees Pension Fund @GEPP_SA



PUBLIC NOTICE

PROJECT CLOSE OUT

TO ALL OUR ESTEEMED VENDORS

FHI 360 South Africa country office would like to notify the impending project close out of the **Capacity Development and Support (CDS) project by September 30, 2023**. To this effect, all our esteemed vendors are requested to submit their outstanding invoices and updated statements by 25th August 2023 to the following email invoice_sa@fhi360.org or procure_sa@fhi360.org

All queries and/clarification can be channeled through to FHI 360 to the undersigned contact details.

Finance & administration Director – Ntseiseng Lephole nlephole@fhi360.org
Acting Finance Manager – Bella Mudau smudau@fhi360.org

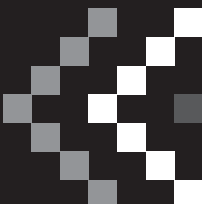
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University of Johannesburg

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14149M&G

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Departement van Energie
41 Schmidtsdrift Straat
Telkom Gebou
Kimberley

Posadres
Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte
Departement van Energie
Privaatsak X 6093
Kimberley, 8301

Legal Notice

ESTATE NOTICE

In the estate of the late STELLA BESSIE MACDONALD, BORN 23/04/1926 (IDENTITY NUMBER 2604230055086), DATE OF DEATH : 28/09/2022 of WESTVIEW LODGE, 40a WESTVIEW DRIVE, BRYANSTON, SANDTON

ESTATE NUMBER: 004437/2023

Creditors and Debtors in the above estate are hereby requested to file their claims and to settle their debts at the undersigned within 30 days from the date of

publication hereof being 11/08/2023

AUSTEN SMITH
P O BOX 37
PIETERMARITZBURG 3200

TEL NO. 033 3920500

Legal Notice

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Posadres
Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte, Departement van Energie, Privaatsak X 96 Pretoria 0001

Legal Notice

IN THE REGIONAL COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF THE NORTHERN CAPE HELD AT HANOVER

CASE NO: NCDA/ RD54/2021

In the matter between

DON PIPES
Identity Number 621202 5040 08 5
PLAINTIFF
and
MIETJIE PIPES (born PIETERSE)
Identity Number 6210310237 08 5
DEFENDANT

ABBREVIATED SUMMONS

TO: MIETJIE PIPES (born PIETERSE), Identity Number 621031 0237 08 5, a major female person whos occupation and address is unknown to the Plaintiff: TAKE NOTE that you are herewith called upon to

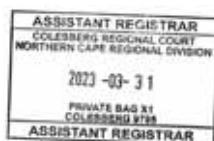
give notice within 1 (one) month from publication of this Summons, with the Registrar of this Honourable Court, situated at Hanover and with the Plaintiff's Attorney of record, of your intention to oppose the action wherein:

DON PIPES, a major male with residential address at 1 Murray Street, Hanover, claim:

1. An order declaring the marriage between himself and Mietjie Pieterse Id no 6210310237 085 null and void;
2. Cost of suit, only if defended;
3. Further or alternative relief;

KINDLY TAKE NOTE that should you neglect to give notice of your intention to Defend, judgment may be granted against you without any further notice. **SIGNED at MIDDELBURG EC on 31 March 2023**







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CONTACT:

Ilizma Willemse 063 026 7450
Vanessa Diedrich 083 458 8155

Jobs

CONTACT:

Elsie Mashanzhe 076 556 8777

Joburg Theatre proudly celebrates the iconic recipients of the Golden Buzzer



Musa Motha is a passionate amputee dancer from Sebokeng who received a Golden Buzzer after his electrifying appearance on Britain's Got Talent 2023.

Joburg Theatre is elated to announce and celebrate the outstanding achievements of three South African icons who received the coveted Golden Buzzer on these prestigious television shows: *Britain's Got Talent*, *America's Got Talent*, and *America's Got Talent: All-Stars*. Musa Motha, Mzansi Youth Choir and Belinda Davids have made history and brought immense pride to the nation with their remarkable performances. The Golden Buzzer accolade is a testament to the immense talent, dedication and hard work displayed by these incredible performers.

Joburg Theatre, as a cornerstone of the arts and entertainment, takes great pride in seeing South African artists shine on the global stage.

Motha is a passionate amputee dancer from Sebokeng. He recently made his appearance on *Britain's Got Talent* 2023 (season 18) and graced the stage with a coruscating performance that sent tremors the of astonishment through the auditorium. He began his career as a street dancer, and his passion for dancing led him to join the esteemed Vuyani Dance Theatre, where he honed his skills in contemporary, afro-fusion, tap dance and ballet. In his successful career as a dancer, he became involved in several productions that toured different parts of the world including *CION*, which was staged at Joburg Theatre in 2022, a sold-out season in which Motha bagged himself insight features in art magazines, international newspapers and television interviews. He continues to inspire disabled art lovers and performers.

The breathtaking Mzansi Youth Choir appeared on *America's Got Talent* clad in elegant white attire, and stirred audiences with a crescendo of chants that left Judge



19 AUG @19:30

20 AUG @15:00

the mandela at
JOBURG THEATRE

Performers | Belinda Davids, Musa Motha, Mzansi Youth Choir

Simon Cowell and many in the audience in tears. The choir's repertoire is an exciting assortment of South African music which incorporates elements of traditional music, pop and jazz. Mzansi Youth Choir was established to recognise and provide opportunities to talented teenagers who are passionate about music. The choir is not new to the Joburg Theatre's Mandela stage; they have performed several times there and earned recognition by collaborating with the theatre on other projects such as The Joburg Festival of Lights. The choir continues to represent the country by chanting some of the hits that unite the rainbow nation.

Internationally acclaimed South African star Belinda Davids took the *America's Got Talent: All-Stars* stage by storm and moved the audiences from their seats with a stellar performance. She has received standing ovations across the globe. Davids

is known for performing in the production *The Greatest Love of All*, bringing Whitney Houston's musical legacy to life. The production is a collaboration with the Showtime Australia Company and is staged on the Mandela stage annually, with sold-out performances.

As an institution committed to nurturing and promoting local talent, Joburg Theatre extends its heartfelt congratulations to Motha, Mzansi Youth Choir, and Davids for their momentous achievements. Their success serves as an inspiration for aspiring artists and reaffirms the immense potential in the South African performing arts scene.

Joburg Theatre invites all theatre lovers and fans of these exceptional talents to join in the celebration and continue supporting the arts in South Africa.

For more information about Joburg Theatre and upcoming performances, please visit www.joburgtheatre.com.

Performance times:
Saturday 19 August 2023 at 7.30pm, and Sunday 20 August 2023 at 3pm.

Tickets are on sale from R150 - R350

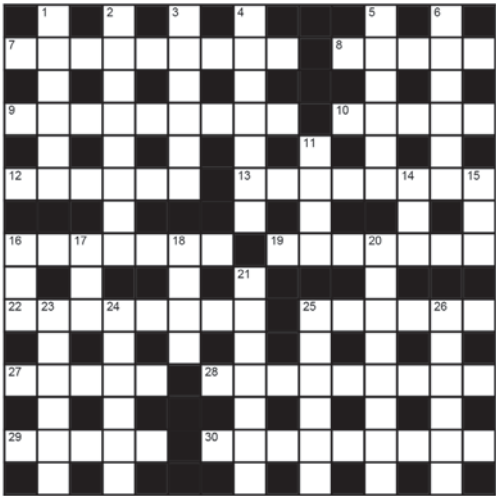
Puzzles

THE ORIGINAL SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

JDE 391
by George Euvrard

- Across**
- 7 One country fights to be polite with a righteous outside (5,4)
 - 8 Rabbi stripped and sent back to religious leader (5)
 - 9 Practical joke in the form of a tiny bra? (5,4)
 - 10 Wig loses temperature, first and last, and gets cold in car (5)
 - 12 Workroom has vrot frozen water (6)
 - 13 Held a dance and enjoyed wonderful time (3,1,4)
 - 16 Hiring the French when gin is being made (7)
 - 19 Yen (read ‘trembling’) for minister’s house (7)
 - 22 Clean around joint and large injury (8)
 - 25 Fault to feed around about ten at first (6)
 - 27 Minute or small (5)
 - 28 Me, I fell – an accident at home (2,7)
 - 29 One house has knock–out cage (5)
 - 30 Policy is bit unknown in amongst leftie environment (5,4)

- Down**
- 1 Con gets rent of first flat (3–3)
 - 2 University preserves book literature on drink (8)
 - 3 Was playing and takes the wrap (6)
 - 4 Our group holds the poor earth captive – there’s the twist (7)
 - 5 Take in big chunk of fab sorbet (6)
 - 6 Force to turn up clutching quiet student (6)
 - 11 Chopper in a spin without an answer (4)
 - 14 Is plural of ‘a’ finally fair and acceptable? (3)
 - 15 Set up short lock (3)
 - 16 Way of going out to lobby black and white leaders (3)
 - 17 Boxer from African country loses opener (3)
 - 18 New tea made without water (4)
 - 20 Certainly not! Father has troubles, plain and simple (2–6)
 - 21 Chat about winch having shaggy middle (4–3)
 - 23 Pitch to hotel crew (6)
 - 24 Inappropriately puts down Brothers, banning Mass put in place (6)
 - 25 Want right protected in curtains (6)
 - 26 Swarm to pass on? Yes (6)

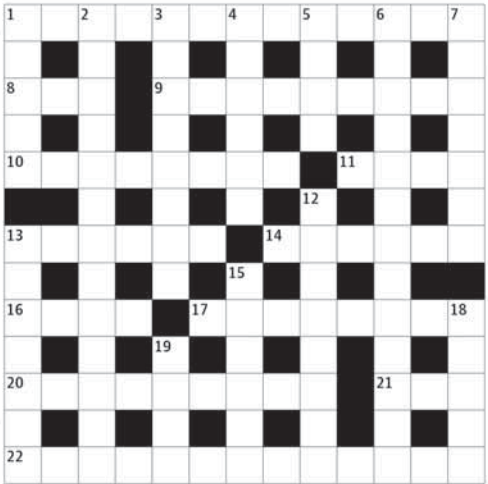


All JDE solutions and explanations can be found on the JDE Facebook page at facebook.com/JDE-638881149942911

QUICK CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Small, pug–faced New England dog (6,7)
 - 8 Informal information (3)
 - 9 Designed for both mitts (3–6)
 - 10 Bride or groom (8)
 - 11 Continent (4)
 - 13 Support — time (6)
 - 14 Spectre — alcohol (6)
 - 16 Small quantities of liquid (4)
 - 17 Wrongly interprets text (8)
 - 20 Role — nature (9)
 - 21 Frozen water (3)
 - 22 Dealt out again (13)

- Down**
- 1 Launch (5)
 - 2 Advertisement carried up and down the street (8,5)
 - 3 Away from the middle (8)
 - 4 Sounded the horn (6)
 - 5 Bring up (or back?) (4)
 - 6 Businessman — I trail nudists (anag) (13)
 - 7 Shining (7)
 - 12 Meat on the bone served in barbecue sauce (5,3)
 - 13 Motorbike passenger attachment (7)
 - 15 Beer (6)
 - 18 Tempo — drug (5)
 - 19 Soviet Union’s official news agency (4)



14 875

LAST WEEK’S SOLUTIONS

Quick Crossword 14 874

	O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A	P	I	T
C		I	U		U		A		R			
L	E	V	E	L		F	O	R	T	U	N	E
I		U		L		F		E		N		A
P	O	L	O		S	E	L	F	L	E	S	S
P	E		B		R		I					U
E	N	T	R	A	P		M	E	M	B	E	R
T			L		H		D		A		E	
Y	O	D	E	L	L	E	R		A	R	C	H
C		A		R		C		C		K		U
L	O	C	K	O	U	T		O	N	I	O	N
O		H		O		I		I		N		T
P	H	A	R	M	A	C	O	L	O	G	Y	

Cryptic Crossword 390

	1	B		2	W		3	P		4	S		5	T		6	F		7	A
8	A	U	T	O	C	R	A	T		9	A	L	O	O	F					
	L		K		O		O			B		R		S						
10	F	L	U	E			11	W	A	K	E	U	P	C	A	L	L			
	S					L		E		L		E		A						
12	J	E	W		13	E	L	S		14	R	O	A	D	R	A	G	E		
	Y		Q					S			T		T							
15	S	E	C	U	N	D	A		17	P	E	N	A	L	T	Y		18		
			A		O		19	U					I		A					
20	B	A	L	L	R	O	O	M		22	L	I	N	E	U	P				
	R		S		R		H	E												
23	F	A	C	S	I	M	I	L	E	S		24	B	L	E	W				
	B		I		A		A		S			A		N						
25	L	I	G	H	T		26	B	R	E	A	T	H	E	R					
	E		N		S		A		R		H		D							

SUDOKU

	9							
	2			4				3
		3	8		9	6		
			7			3		6
7			1		5	9		
			9			4		1
		4	3		8	1		
	1			5				6
	7							

How to play Sudoku: Place a number from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK’S SOLUTION

6	9	3	2	8	7	4	1	5
1	2	4	5	3	9	7	8	6
8	7	5	6	4	1	9	2	3
4	1	8	9	6	5	2	3	7
3	5	7	8	2	4	1	6	9
2	6	9	1	7	3	8	5	4
7	4	6	3	1	2	5	9	8
5	3	1	4	9	8	6	7	2
9	8	2	7	5	6	3	4	1

50 years of hip-hop

A playbook

As the 50th birthday of hip-hop rolls around, it’s clear that its influence isn’t limited to New York — it’s a mic to black lives across time and everywhere

Ron Derby

I grew up in what was called a “coloured” location in Pietermaritzburg. There, I quickly got to understand that there was a particular bounce or edge one had to have when wandering around the streets to show you belonged and was not to be picked on.

It was a swagger, accompanied by particular slang words and a manner of dress — baggy jeans — that if I didn’t ascribe to, I’d certainly be picked on for either my “bus head” or my African “snot”, as a result of my darker skin colour.

It’s something that I wasn’t very good at pulling off — I mean, how does one have a bounce on one specific leg, and not look silly in the process, or wear T-shirts back to front without looking ridiculous to one’s older siblings?

Still, I managed an air of cool. I’d like to imagine, a cool enough air to let me enjoy my childhood in Woodlands, my Idaho on the perimeter of my small town.

My mother, who was exposed to much of this attempt to find street cred, would be most amused by her only son’s attempts at fending off the dangers of that little township, where “Danny Boy” from Ghost Town would every now and then chase my best friend, Marvin, and me home from school — just because of our geekiness, I suppose.

There were many ground rules for my behaviour on the streets of my little world and, more critically, outside the local grocery store where some of the older Jack Purcell-wearing boys and men gathered to smoke cigarettes all day, in the absence of anything else to do, because the few textile and woodwork factories that surrounded my neighbourhood were shutting down as cheaper Taiwanese and, later, Chinese goods flooded into the country in the early 1990s.

No matter how small one’s chest — and mine was critically small — you had to push it out, and I pushed mine out as if I owned the piece of earth my little feet were walking on.

In truth, you just didn’t want to be too noticeable or appear too meek or your bike could get stolen when you inevitably had to leave it outside Tannie’s shop while buying a loaf of bread. Mine was stolen. Enough said.

I thought about these images of my big-headed self, with a Zulu-speaking family in an “English” ghetto, in the final throes of the abnormal racial and

economic experiment that was apartheid, and just how important it was that I subscribe to a playbook of how to act to thrive or, at the very least, survive, without being constantly challenged on my toughness — an exhausting enterprise.

It’s a playbook that I imagine every young black child in an urban setting had to ascribe to as our parents flocked to urban centres despite designs meant to keep them out or in the “bantustan” experiments that emerged in the early 1970s.

By apartheid design, interaction between the races had to be minimal and especially with white South Africans. Black people had to be kept far away from the cities, transported in and out by trains, buses and taxis. It was an experiment bound to fail by simple arithmetic as townships grew bigger and ever closer to cities where, much like in the US, the white populace had escaped to suburban bliss.

If we take it on a broader scale, over the past two decades, cities and towns across Southern Africa have grown by 100 million, with reports that there are about 179 million people living in urban spaces today — 47% of the region’s population.

This migration exposes the difference between my parents’ generation, and mine — they had to navigate very different growing pains.

Their environment, especially that of my father, was the rolling hills of KwaZulu-Natal while mine was the hard tar of an urban landscape with many different shades of black, and in my early teenage years, white South Africa in Model C schools when they opened to me at the advent of democracy.

I had to have a different playbook to my father’s and hip-hop fit the bill — it was a cloak.

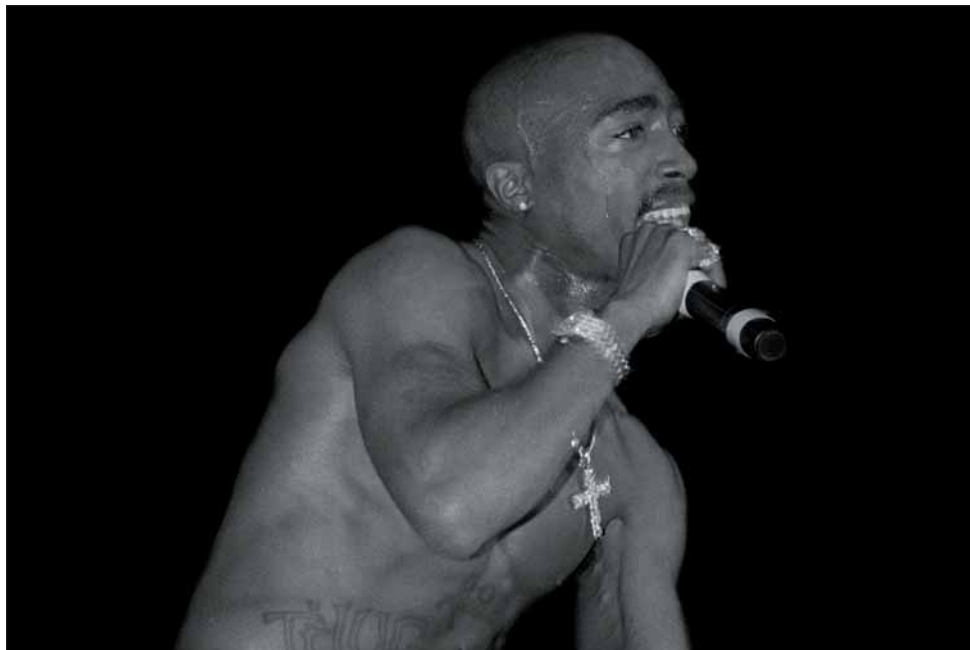
When watching the early music videos of DJ Jazzy Jeff (Jeffrey Townes) and The Fresh Prince (Will Smith) in the 1980s, I saw a sass in young men not much older than myself that I could emulate. They carried an air of confidence in navigating their urban jungle and made black the cool thing to be.

Michael Jackson was just too Neverland to be real for my generation. But here were two of the most commercially successful rap artists of the time, rapping with Tempo haircuts, colourful T-shirts and baggy jean-shorts that said, “Looking like me is cool — and I belong.”



Inspiration: The videos of DJ Jazzy Jeff in the 1980s showed that black was the cool thing to be. Photo: Brian Stukes/Getty Images

for the black experience



Cloaked in confidence: (Clockwise from above) Tupac Shakur, Notorious B.I.G. and Jay-Z in performance. The sass of the hip-hop luminaries made it cool to be black, providing inspiration for young black people all over the world. Photos: Raymond Boyd/Getty Images, Chris Walter/Getty Images and Brian Ach/Getty Images

Simply, there was nothing to apologise for about being black.

When I was no longer going to school in the relative safety of my “coloured” township, and became part of the experiment of multi-racial schooling in the very early 1990s, hip-hop and its culture would become a much, much more important play-book, in particular its harder edges, when dealing with a new sort of bully, prone to calling me “kaffir”.

When Eazy-E (Eric Wright) brought his gangster rap to form N.W.A. with the legendary Dr Dre (Andre Young), the red plaid shirts made famous by Snoop Dogg in the videos from his critically acclaimed *Doggystyle* album were the clothes to wear every casual day at Linpark High in Maritzburg.

The message being sent by my motley crew — of two, really, me and my best friend Sifiso — was that we weren’t to be messed with.

On my pencil case, I remember writing, in Tipex, New York giant Notorious B.I.G.’s line “Black and ugly as ever” to express my edgier side, to impress upon whoever read it how dangerous this skinny 14-year-old was.

It didn’t work too well on my favourite English teacher. For this was all theatre, really, as I admit all I cared about was some good laughs, girls, football, rugby and for Sifiso to continue dominating athletics to attract more girls.

There were no thoughts of carrying guns or representing gangs — such as the Crips or the Bloods in Los Angeles thousands of kilometres away — which was, and continues to be, the hallmark of West Coast rap.

Between the ages of 14 and 16, I experienced the loss of both of my parents and my taste in hip-hop changed, looking for a darker moon, perhaps.

That’s when the late Tupac Shakur swallowed me whole. His music spoke primarily of his own death, and the pain of loss. It was of great comfort and shadowed me throughout my teen years. It led to a dropping of my shoulders and dragging of my feet as I contemplated the great loss of my life.

I started emerging from this very cold winter as South Africa’s transition was playing out against a backdrop of a buoyant economy, and the Africa-first narrative of Thabo Mbeki’s early administration, and hope of better, more conscious, rappers such as The Roots and Common took hold.

By this time, the plaid shirts of Snoop Dogg had long gone and there was a return to wearing belts, at the



very least, which would have pleased my father no end.

By this time, a South African interpretation of hip-hop had matured to better incorporate local musical tastes. TKZee, Stoan of Bongo Maffin and the late, but not forgotten, Zimbabwean rapper Mizchif had begun to make hip-hop our own.

The likes of HHP, Tuks and the whole Maftown gang made it fashionable to rap in Setswana. KwaZulu-Natal also had a huge hip-hop base. They were the inspiration for latter-day heroes, such as the K.O, Cassper Nyovest and the late AKA.

Today, standing as the embodiment of hip-hop and its 50-year journey is Jay-Z. He, of all the many practitioners of the art form, encompasses the journey from a “black male misunderstood” to one who has finally been understood.

He went from selling drugs on the streets of Brooklyn as a 13-year-old to becoming a man respected for his art and his business acumen. It’s a path that could have easily seen him



Legends: Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg on the stage in California last year. Photo: Kevin C Cox/Getty Images

end up in Rikers Island prison like many of his peers who pounded the hard concrete pavements of New York.

Anyone who has followed hip-hop understands the importance of Jay-Z to the art — he is to hip-hop what

Miles Davis is to jazz, Frank Sinatra to swing and big band music.

He is the most updated playbook of how to navigate the urban jungle for a “black male misunderstood”, as the The Notorious B.I.G. once rhymed.

The genre will have other totem poles. I imagine men such as Burna Boy or Wizkid from Nigeria might lead that charge as the rapidly urbanising African continent gains traction in global culture.

The growing prominence of our own amapiano tells of how much of an influence the continent will have on how black children carry themselves, not only in Johannesburg, Lagos and Nairobi, but in New York, Los Angeles, Paris and London.

They are competing and, to some extent outperforming, Travis Scott, Kendrick Lamar, Childish Gambino, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion, who are America’s younger crop of hip-hop ambassadors.

Hip-hop is black urban culture, a cloak for any young person finding themselves in a new world, with rules on slang, dress and, most importantly, attitude.

Hip-hop’s home isn’t New York. At its core, it’s a mic to black lives in the latter half of the 20th and the 21st centuries.

Unearthing stories and reawakening collective memories

Zeitz MOCAA exhibitions showcase histories of struggle, resistance and radical solidarity

Jamaine Krige

In a culmination of 18 months of tireless work, the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA) last week launched its new season of exhibitions, with *Past Disquiet* and *Seismography of Struggle: Towards a Global History of Critical and Cultural Journals* taking centre stage. These exhibitions, described as critical curative interventions into art history, explore archival, exhibition and publishing narratives from the past, drive home powerful narratives of resistance, struggle and solidarity.

Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz MOCAA, Koyo Kouoh, says the two latest exhibitions show the level

of engagement and political inquiry that her team brings, not just to museum-making, but to the unearthing of stories. “They highlight the power and necessity of unearthing fundamental stories, and I think as Africans we still have so many stories to unearth about ourselves; stories that we were told wrong, that we have to reclaim in our own words.”

Coinciding with the exhibition openings was the launch of *Radical Solidarity: A Reader*, inspired by a Radical Solidarity Summit, hosted online by the Zeitz MOCAA in September 2020, while the world was still under Covid-19 restrictions. “We were so energised by the proceedings that we decided to translate the entire programme

into a publication, bringing together the ideas and projects of some of the most active and inspiring thinkers, artists and activists committed to fostering the arts from Africa and its diaspora,” Kouoh explains.

Speaking at the book launch was former Chief Constitutional Court Judge, Albie Sachs, who has served on museum board for the past six years: “The Zeitz MOCAA is so much more than just this remarkable building. Halfway between a cavern and a cathedral waiting to be filled, the museum is vast and strong, which means it can take strong materials and house strong leaders. And in Kouoh and her team, it seems to be getting both of those.”



Koyo Kouoh, Executive Director and Chief Curator, Zeitz MOCAA. Photo: Andile Buka

Past Disquiet brings resistance art to life

Past Disquiet is not a traditional art exhibition. Instead, it is the memory of art as resistance brought to life; an exhibition unlike anything hosted at the Zeitz MOCAA before. Through a collection of video interviews, publications, pamphlets, posters and photographs, *Past Disquiet* stitches together radical acts of solidarity and showcases how artists, militants, visionaries and dreamers from across the world organised exhibitions and intervened in public spaces to create museums with a difference — museums in solidarity with causes from Chile, Palestine, Nicaragua and South Africa. It is a story of museums without walls, and more often than not, museums-in-exile.

Rasha Salti and Kristine Khouri are the researchers and curators behind *Past Disquiet*, the archival and documentary exhibition that will be based at the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town for the next 10 months. The show, they say, is best described as an exhibition of stories. “You will see art, but not necessarily art in the traditional way,” Khouri laughs. “We don’t even show archives in the traditional way!”



Rasha Salti and Kristine Khouri, the researchers and curators behind *Past Disquiet*, an archival and documentary exhibition that will be based at the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town for the next 10 months. Photo: Ramiie_G

The spark for the exhibition came when the duo encountered a catalogue for the *International Art Exhibition for Palestine*, held in Lebanon in 1978. “We wanted to understand how something so remarkable — an exhibition of 200 artists from 30 countries across the world — could take place in Beirut in the middle of a civil war,” Khouri recalls.

As they continued to dig, they discovered

that this initiative in Beirut had been inspired by Chilean exiles in France in the early 1970s. This was also to be the seed for a collection for Nicaragua, as well as a collection in solidarity with South Africa’s struggle for liberation, known as *Art Against Apartheid*.

Salti says the connections between these four collections are important: “When we

started, we were harkening to a past — a recent past — that had somehow been forgotten, marginalised in art history and museum studies. But it was not quiet or silent. It was just under the surface, angling to come out. Somehow, political awakenings always spark creative awakenings. It was a time when ideas like social justice, democracy,

equality and anti-racism brought people together; a time when people gathered around these ideas. Not national identity, but ideas.”

The invitation from the Zeitz MOCAA was important to bring the story of the *Art Against Apartheid* collection home. It was also a chance to expand the exhibition and add a new section paying tribute to local and regional art collectives like the Botswana-based Medu Art Ensemble, and the Community Art Project in Cape Town. “While artists from around the world were making posters and presenting art in public spaces for change, so were the artists in and around South Africa,” she explains.

Presented in accessible language, Salti says the exhibition is spatially designed to engage, despite the density of the information presented: “In the end, what is important to us is that the visitor is immersed in all the stories that we tell, and finds themselves transported back to a universe not far removed in time from where we stand now. It was a time of difficulty but also of promise. If nothing else, we want people to leave with that emotion.”

Khouri echoes this: “We want people to be inspired by dreams, because this really is an exhibition of dreamers; of people who imagined a just future. I hope that people walk away with an understanding of the hard work that went into ensuring that a future is possible, and that it remains possible today.”

Seismography of struggle: Creating an integrated global history

If there is to be a comprehensive intellectual history of humanity, the focus cannot remain solely focused on European perspectives. This is according to Zahai Rahmani, who is an Algerian-born academic and author, and one of France’s leading art historians. Rahmani is the curator of *Seismography of Struggle: Towards a Global History of Critical and Cultural Journals*, the second audio-visual archival exhibition that will call the Zeitz MOCAA home for the next 10 months.

The installation, which brings together more than 1000 journals and forms part of an ongoing research project, is an inventory of critical and cultural journals from the non-European world. It seeks to understand print media and publishing as fundamental tools in the struggle for anti-colonialist, abolitionist and liberatory movements in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

“We need to review works like these because regularly, anthologies about art, culture and politics have the same European origins, which are only one part of the story,” Rahmani explains. “I wanted to find other writings, writings that were similar but not necessarily the same, from other parts of the world.”

In her research, she forgoes the term art, instead focusing on the idea of culture. “The concept of ‘art’ comes from European people, and we always hear the same things — there is primitive art for Africans and for ‘the other’, and then there is European art, art with knowledge and intellectual perspectives and perspectives,” she says. “My idea was that we forget about art and look at what kind of conversation and what kind of fight was being proposed by non-European people through this idea of culture.”

Behind every one of the 1000 manifestos, she says, is intention, either in the form of a project or a perspective: “Europe in the 19th century was so conservative, and the writings of the time proposed specific politics, with the prominence of a monoculture, the idea of one god and prohibitions around drugs and sexuality. It was important to understand the culture and politics proposed by non-European communities during the 19th and 20th century, and I was surprised by the liberty we found in these manifestos.”

She says the first texts about homosexuality came from Japan and Africa, and the first feminist movements from



Academic, art historian and author Zahai Rahmani. Photo: Sebastien Dolidon

women in Egypt at the start of the 20th century: “I was very touched by this other way of thinking that had been around for so long, but almost erased from history. It is important for us to have access — free access — to these resources, because these are the memories and stories who remind us, and the world, who we are.”

Rahmani was also surprised by how well-documented South Africa’s fight against apartheid was: “We have more than 100 journals from the African National Congress, and not just from South Africa. There was a shared solidarity and awareness from across the world.”

Senior Curator and Head of Curatorial Affairs, Storm Janse van Rensburg, says this is why it is important to remember that *Seismography of Struggle* is not just an installation, but that the research conducted by Rahmani and her team is also available through a publicly accessible database. “That access and the connections it creates extend far beyond the walls of a museum,” he says. “What is amazing is that we as the Zeitz MOCAA can step in and provide a space where this work also becomes an immersive, physical experience to those who want to engage with it.”

Art

New space for deep learning

Elana Brundyn opens her new gallery in Cape Town with a Lebohang Kganye exhibition

Kimberley Schoeman

While walking through Cape Town’s busy city centre, it is easy to catch yourself stopping to peek inside Brundyn Arts & Culture, a new space in the art world where collectors and enthusiasts are invited to connect on a deeper level. Unlike most galleries, which are white-walled, Brundyn Arts & Culture’s are a warmer grey tone decorated with patterned tiles from the outside in while incorporating the raw and industrial vibe of the area. Under the guidance of its founder Elana Brundyn, who was the founding CEO of the prestigious Norval Foundation and director of institutional advancement at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, the new gallery and cultural consultancy is sure to be a major fixture on Africa’s bursting art scene. “I’m fascinated by the psyche of the collector,” says Brundyn. “There’s also a lot of deep learning here. Even before the world was all about artificial intelligence and deep learning, this is something art-

ists have been doing forever.” Previously, Brundyn worked with some of the continent’s most celebrated artists and exhibitions including William Kentridge’s *Why Do I Hesitate* and Jackson Hlungwani’s *Alpha and Omega*, which received the Special Commendation from the Sotheby’s Prize body. Now, through Brundyn Arts & Culture, Brundyn is able to put her stamp of approval on emerging artists who are not represented by any of the major galleries. **Every picture tells a story** You will be hard-pressed to find a spot in the Brundyn Arts & Culture space that is not intentionally designed for deep-rooted connection, whether you’re in the gallery, in the basement or looking in the windows from the street. Walking through the exhibition with Brundyn, it is clear she and the team are believers in people coming together to celebrate contemporary African artists. Beyond the exhibition space, there are a number of works by contemporary artists, including a painting by Lulama Wolf in her office. Until October, visitors and passers-

by will see works by Johannesburg artist and photographer Lebohang Kganye in her first solo presentation in Cape Town called *Mmoloki wa mehopolo: Breaking Bread with a Wanderer*, showcasing work from five projects from the last decade. “We are particularly proud to launch our exhibition space in Cape Town with a show by Lebohang Kganye because her practice perfectly aligns with our mission and purpose, to foster sincere appreciation and comprehensive knowledge of art in a distinctly African context while promoting meaningful collaboration, deep learning and creative exchange,” says Brundyn. On the lower floors are works from Kganye’s 2018 series *Tell Tale* and a short film called *Shadows of Re-memory* from 2021, which share an aesthetic of shadowy human silhouettes within Karoo-like dioramas, which feel like miniature theatre sets. The scenes also explore the Owl

‘We wish to promote meaningful collaboration, deep learning and creative exchange’

House in the Eastern Cape’s Nieu-Bethesda, the home of recluse Helen Martins. It’s clear that Kganye is fascinated by how these stories coalesce memory, imagination, and fantasy. Another theme explored through Kganye’s work is that of female lighthouse-keepers in the 19th and 20th centuries, via *Keep the Light Faithfully* (2022), which connects to Kganye’s surname, which means “light” in Sotho. The one photographic series of Kganye’s that stands out is *Ke Lefa Laka — Her Story* (2023). The works are an ode to Kganye’s late mother. The artist restages photos taken of her mother throughout her life — by wearing the same clothing and mimicking her stances and poses — and superimposes them on the originals, showing the clear similarity between mother and daughter. Together, the photos feel like you are walking through a photo-montage of both their lives, which are full of joy and celebration. But, at the same time, South Africa’s art world can be tricky to navigate as it exists more as an art economy than an art ecosystem, where the value of purchasing and participating in art creates rigid barriers. Despite having won international awards, Kganye is not represented by any of the major local galleries. Even though she is exhibiting at Brundyn

Arts & Culture, she has to remain neutral, explains Brundyn. “Sometimes a barrier is as simple as buying an admission ticket. At Brundyn Arts & Culture, we are open by appointment or invitation only and that is a barrier, but our Boschendal space is for everyone because it’s not simply a museum setting,” explains Brundyn. For those who can’t access the gallery, pieces from Kganye’s most recent body of work *Mosebetsi wa Dirithi* are on display in the large street-facing windows. These large draping patchworks, featuring three large female figures, are inspired by images pulled from family albums, embodying kinship and strength. Throughout *Mmoloki wa mehopolo: Breaking Bread with a Wanderer*, Kganye makes the viewer look back into their own memories and archives to understand what they make them feel today, in retrospect, or whether these memories were even factual representations at all. If an inaugural exhibition at a new artistic space like Brundyn Arts & Culture has the ability to elicit memory archiving, then they are definitely doing something curatorially compelling. But isn’t that the purpose of an artistic exhibition? To feel like a wanderer in a space that feels like it is speaking directly to you.

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50 years of hip-hop

The hop, skip and a jump to

As hip-hop turns 50, this auspicious occasion will be celebrated loudly around the globe with shows, exhibitions, publications and academic conferences. But, South African hip-hop scholar reminds, there’s a crucial local anniversary that should not be forgotten writes **Charles Leonard**

Adam Haupt remembers exactly his response on that early Thursday summer’s evening in 1993. The video of *Understand Where I’m Coming From* by hip-hop group Prophets of da City had just ended on the weekly *Toyota Top 20* TV show. The song’s opening lyrics set the tone: “Why should I fight for a country’s glory/ When it ignores me?/ Besides, the township’s already a war

zone/ So why complain or moan?” It was the most incendiary four minutes, not just lyrically, but also with its gut-punching visuals of South Africa’s violent apartheid past. But co-host Neil Johnson carried on like it was nothing going, “Oops, next up,” before cutting to the ad. Haupt, remembers: “But I’m, like, ‘Dude, this is going to get you into trouble!’” The song was off Prophets’ third album *Age of Truth*, which was

released on 11 November 1993. Then 21-year-old Haupt “literally ran out to try and get this album because Prophets really set something off”. He had the right instinct because the album rattled cages, with most of the songs being banned. The group’s debut *Our World*, released in 1990, widely touted as South African hip-hop’s first album, was followed by *Boom Style* the following year. But it was the powerful, politically

eloquent and musically epoch-making *Age of Truth* that not only became the group’s most revered release but also South African hip-hop’s most important album. It is therefore a fitting coincidence that the 30th anniversary of *Age of Truth* overlaps with the 50th anniversary of hip-hop. When I asked Haupt, who is now the director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies at UCT, if South African hip-hop had a big-bang moment like DJ Kool Herc’s sup-

posed foundation night on 11 August 1973, he said: “I don’t think so. I wouldn’t talk about moments of origin; I will talk about turning points.” The release of *Age of Truth* was certainly such a turning point, for local hip-hop generally, but also for Haupt personally. He has written extensively on hip-hop, including co-editing the recent *Neva Again: Hip-Hop Art, Activism and Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (an HSRC free download).

The album’s release marks the 30th anniversary of his relationship with South African hip-hop as a scholar.

“I happened to be working on an honours dissertation on Ice-T’s *Body Count* album.”

“So, I was already looking for contemporary examples of subversive anti-racist, anti-sexist artists. And, of course, *Body Count* was anti-racist — but it was homophobic and misogynist.

“And so my thesis was about that — can you pursue social justice as an artist and just be focused on race and not think about gender?

“And my punchline was, ‘No, you’ve got to do both!’

“And then this song — *Understand Where I’m Coming From* — comes on TV and I’m, like, I know what my master’s is going to be on!”

Haupt decided he better find Prophets and interview them.

He ended up being the first South African to do academic research on local hip-hop and became a free-lance music journalist for the *Mail & Guardian* and *SL Magazine*. That way, he got to know the hip-hop community as he really spent time with them.

What was it like that first time when he sat down and interviewed the guys of Prophets?

“Very intimidating! I was 22. They were seasoned — by the time I caught up with them, they were sufficiently burned.”

Age of Truth was recorded at massive discount in the fancy Bop Studios in the Bophuthatswana “bantustan”. This caper is hilariously recalled by the group’s MC Shaneen Ariefdien and DJ Ready D in *Neva Again*.

Few shoot from the hip on the exact origins of the genre

Hip-hop’s big bang 50 years ago was not one loud explosion. It was the sound of a young, Jamaican-born DJ mixing between two copies of the same album extending them into one seamless breakbeat at a party in the Bronx, in New York.

But was it that back-to-school party that birthed hip-hop? Many think so. Others hedge their bets with a “maybe” here and a few provisos there. Those of a more sceptical persuasion go, “Let’s not mess with the story of origin,” while some realists give it a firm rebuttal.

The *History Channel* states under the headline “Hip hop is born at a birthday party in the Bronx” that “it came to life precisely on August 11, 1973, at a birthday party in the recreation room of an apartment building in the west Bronx”.

To remove any doubt, they continue: “The location of that birthplace was 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, and the man who presided over that historic party was the birthday girl’s brother, Clive Campbell — better known to history as DJ Kool Herc, founding father of hip-hop.”

Several prestigious universities have conferences this year to celebrate hip-hop turning 50. Prominent international publications have printed celebratory features. Fans can look forward to a major concert in the Bronx featuring hip-hop luminaries including Lil Wayne, Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg,



Legend: 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, in the Bronx, New York, said to be where hip-hop was born in 2007. Photo: Peter Kramer/Getty Images

Slick Rick, Common, Lil Kim, Eve and the headliners Run DMC.

History Detectives, a popular show on the American PBS channel, sent sociologist Tukufu Zuberi to find out if 1520 Sedgwick Avenue was really the birthplace of hip-hop.

“I know unearthing hip-hop’s roots, now mired in decades of oral history and urban legend, will be a challenge,” Zuberi said before he interviewed Curtis Sherrod, executive director of the Hip Hop Culture Center of Harlem, and the centre’s musical director, DJ Silva-Sirfa.

Then Zuberi puts a damper on festivities: “Curtis and Silva-Sirfa are convinced that Kool Herc threw a party at which a new kind of

musical performance was introduced but neither can offer me proof that it actually happened.”

The best approach comes from *The New York Times* which recently published a splash of “50 influential voices”, chronicling hip-hop’s evolution, while calling the 50th anniversary “a framing of convenience”.

“Insisting the genre has an origin point, therefore, is really just another way of insisting on its importance, its stability and its future,” wrote their critic Jon Caramanica. “You can quarrel with the specific details — and many do — but not with the intent, which is to ensure no one again overlooks

the genre’s power and influence.”

South African hip-hop scholar Adam Haupt responds with a nudge and a wink to the Kool Herc story. “That’s a nice story. It’s a lovely story. Let’s not mess with the story of origin ...”

Haupt warns against exclusion, saying by establishing Kool Herc as the founding father, you “embed patriarchy into hip-hop”.

“You can do two things at the same time: acknowledge the multiplicity of the actors on the scene, as well as reverse engineer where the stuff comes from.”

Haupt refers to Shante Paradigm Smalls’ book, *Hip-hop Heresies: Queer Aesthetics in New York City*, which highlights that queer heads were involved from the get-go and in different scenes — disco, punk and hip-hop — at the same time. Many other people were immersed in the scene, including Latinos, women and white hip-hoppers.

“So, to present the formation of hip-hop as purely the story of African American heterosexual males is reductive and exclusionary,” Haupt says.

“The music industry had a big role to play in co-opting hip-hop and reducing it to a particularly narrow version of black masculinity, to the exclusion of other kinds of masculinities and other kinds of gender identities.” — **Charles Leonard**



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a half century

It ended badly because the shit-stirring group included the line, “Fuck Mangope, even if we record here.” Lucas Mangope was the homeland’s cantankerous puppet president.

The studio’s head engineer confiscated the master tapes when he heard that. Fortunately, Prophets had made backups.

“Ramone [de Wet, the group’s dancer] managed to get hold of the box; he managed to grab the beweging [the thing], while they were threatening us,” Ariefdien recalled.

The group literally had to rush for the “border”. They released the album but, unbeknown to Prophets, a lot had been happening behind the scenes.

Age of Truth was banned. Their tour itinerary suddenly dried up, there were cancellations and their music was pulled from stores.

“I interviewed them. It was bloody, it was very intimidating because it wasn’t going to be this wonderful talk to me about the potential of hip-hop ... they were fuming, they were angry,” Haupt recalls.

To this day, he remembers this one quote from Ariefdien: “When we speak gamtaal and kak like that, the shit’s on purpose. It’s not for some white-ass, middle-class motherfucker at home. The shit is for the streets. You know, we want the laaitie at home to say, ‘Now, we can relate to that!’”

Prophets did a voters’ education tour before 1994’s first democratic election. The group thought they were exercising their right to free expression by saying, “Don’t vote for the Nats; don’t trust them.”

“But the ANC was, like, ‘Whoa, whoa, whoa! We are trying to reconcile and you are agitating for what?’ And their response is, ‘No justice, no peace, that’s what we’re advocating.’”

Haupt adds: “And they weren’t wrong because the compromises we made really hurt us today. And so that’s what’s funny because they were called Prophets of da City, and *Age of Truth* was a prophetic album. They anticipated the ANC’s betrayal of its promise to the electorate.”

So, if there was no big bang, a ball-park idea of when South African hip-hop started?

“I think the very early 1980s is probably a safe bet for a lot of people. I don’t think there’s any singular moment. What does seem to be



Ahead of their time: DJ Ready D, Shaheen Ariefdien, Ishmael Morabe and Ramone of the South African hip-hop group Prophets of da City.

Photo: Gallo Images

clear is that it started in Cape Town first, that the uptake was in Cape Town,” Haupt says.

He adds that, at the time, people came to hip-hop through different ways, many through dance, with Emile YX? of Black Noise, graffiti artist Falko and Prophets of da City’s DJ Ready D prominent examples.

One of the big turning points was the Saturday matinée at The Base in Cape Town in late 1980s, early 1990s, which provided a space for artists like them to come together.

“What happens there is a lot of people don’t just get exposed to the music but they talk philosophy, they talk politics, and they share reading, and they share tapes. That is a pedagogical moment.

“Once it takes that shape, it becomes a movement ... what they’re doing, they’re not just listening to cool music or learning to spin

on their heads.

“They are literally in the mode of the struggle; they’re in ‘each one teach one’ mode. And that is powerful. And it’s obviously cognate with what was already happening with a mass democratic movement, the anti-apartheid struggle — kids are taking control of their own education.”

But hip-hop was just one thread. There were other places, such as the Congress of South African Writers’ office in Belgravia Road in Athlone, Cape Town, which was “a space of subversion for creative writers”.

Some of the people on the hip-hop scene were already activists, such as Ariefdien.

“And so, it’s just that conscious hip-hop, this particular version of hip-hop, was what was needed in a

political moment. So, that is a turning point.”

Another turning point, says Haupt, was when Prophets of da City began to rap in their mother tongue and affirm what they call “gamtaal”, or what scholars would now call Afrikaaps or Kaaps. It’s a language created in settler colonial South Africa, developed by the 1500s.

It took shape as a language during encounters between indigenous African (Khoi and San), South-East Asian, Dutch, Portuguese and English people. Today, Kaaps is most commonly used by working-class people on the Cape Flats.

Groups such as Prophets of da City, Brasse Vannie Kaap and Black Noise used hip-hop “to validate black modes of speech”. In the process, they validate black identities.

“It didn’t just upset the apartheid

sensors, it also upset their peers because, ‘Wie praat so? Jy moet reg praat.’ [Who talks like this? You must speak correctly.] And, ‘Is jy dan ’n skollie?’ [Are you a gangster, then?] All of that is going on at home as well,” Haupt explains.

That was when people stopped sounding American, and started “using Cape history and Cape vernaculars in service of black consciousness ideology, in opposition to the way that the apartheid state positioned them as coloured and separate from black”.

He concludes: “So, for me, those are the turning points. That’s how I would see it. Some other cats might want to talk about moments of origin like, ‘Yo, I was the first to this and I was the first to do this and I was the first to do that...’ but I think there were multiple things happening at the same time.”

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Pioneer in the art of cinema

From TV series to films and adverts, Teboho Mahlatsi was ahead of his time

Vus'muzi Phakathi

In his 1889 essay *The Decay of Lying*, Oscar Wilde opined that “life imitates art far more than art imitates life.”

However, in exceptional instances, life unfolds and, when immortalised through capture, assumes a form where those previously unaware of the unfolding perceive life as intricately shaped by the art that mirrors it — an essence embodied by the work of Teboho Mahlatsi, who died on 3 July at the age of 49.

Lauded as a luminary among trailblazing black South African filmmakers, Mahlatsi's origins can be traced back to Kroonstad, a modest enclave in the north of the Free State.

In an epic tale of a post-apartheid South Africa in search of its identity, Mahlatsi emerged as a protagonist in an ensemble of visionaries. He was cast in the role of a young man with an innate gift for storytelling, imbued with the power to put black lives into vivid motion pictures, gracefully panning through a shifting landscape and making art of an actual lived experience.

In a 2010 Ted Talk, Mahlatsi answered a question about his reason for making movies, and what kind of filmmaker he was, by saying, “I make movies because I am first and foremost a fan of cinema ... Like a typical township kid, I fell in love with cinema from going to the bioscope. I don't consider myself an African filmmaker — there's a particular connotation that comes with that — I'm just a filmmaker.

“I create essentially popular films. I'm like the Brenda Fassie of films. I want to entertain. I want to make films for that township kid who went to bioscope like I did.”

Borrowing Professor Njabulo Ndebele's description “politics of the personal”, the stance Mahlatsi took was that of the “cinema of the personal” — films that spoke, first and foremost, to his environment and to himself. This is evident in his work, from the seminal series *Yizo Yizo* to *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning*, *Sekalli le Meokgo* and even his adverts.

Faced with the task of capturing a life well lived, I discerned the truest portrayal of this towering figure was to be found in the voices of those who have thrived because of the foundation he laid.

This article does not look to frame or contextualise the memory of Teboho Mahlatsi, instead, its purpose is to find his voice still resonating in the voices he touched.

Although filmmaking was his predominant medium, at his core Mahlatsi was a storyteller. An astute one of the highest African order. And it is his bravery in honest storytelling that inspired filmmakers, advertising executives and playwrights alike.

As an ode to his contributions, I gathered the musings of three black storytellers who in their own modes and mediums have embraced honesty in the tapestry of how they communicate the vastness of the black lived experience.

When films are being made, often the sacred blueprint of a storyboard stands as a formidable bulwark safeguarding the artistic vision. To know our characters, our world, our given circumstances, and how all these combine, we look to the storyboard to be our anchor.

Allow me to introduce for Act 1:

Mmabatho Moncho, a filmmaker:

“Like most South Africans of my generation, my first encounter with Teboho's work was *Yizo Yizo*. At the time, my impressions were not necessarily about the filmmaker but of the art itself. The most visually distinct thing was the colouring of the series — I had not seen something like that on TV.

“The hyper-real acting style, use of language, and exploration of themes was utterly compelling. It did for me what I think a great TV show should do — I forgot about the artists and got lost in the art.

“*Yizo Yizo* marked a turning point in treatment. It impacted the style of acting; the use of



The return baba: (From top) In three scenes from the seminal TV series 'Yizo Yizo', Chester and Papa Action in a car, Chester harasses Hazel at school and a close-up of Bobo the drug addict, directed by the late Teboho Mahlatsi. Photos: The Bomb Shelter

**Location: The township
Year: The mid-1990s
Music: Kwaito**

South Africa, the beacon of African advancement, continues to exist in the developing world paradigm. The artists who practise their trade in forms that have been widely practised in the West find themselves having the duty of Africanising the tropes and technologies with which they apply their craft.

What Plato made of theatre in Ancient Greece, Jefferson Tshabalala has to fashion for the modern-day lokishi palate. It is easier for him to do this when his predecessor took the cinema of Orson Welles and located it in *Yizo Yizo*'s Supatsela High School. The tools may be of the West but the tales are of the South.

Enter Jefferson Tshabalala, a theatre-maker:

“It was through the iconic *Yizo Yizo*. I remember thinking, even as a kid, that that's what I want to do. To tell stories about black people. I had never known anything like it. I knew I wanted to be in the arts but that programme made me know what that could look like.

“When I think of [*Yizo Yizo* characters] Bobo, Hazel, Javas, Mantwa, Chester, Papa Action, Thiza, Nomsa — I imagine people who are true, authentic, well-rounded and clear in their township lived experience.

“That is a trace in my work that I feel Teboho paved for many of us — to not apologise about the splendour and vast scope of what black characters can be and become.

“This work is rightfully in the canon. It shifted and informed a defining cultural moment in how artists and art speaks about a country in ruin as it relates to its majority and especially its youth.

“A genius of his time, Teboho knew what we needed before we did, and to go onto unventured terrain bravely makes him a pioneer a cut above many.”

In the montage, we see the stage. We see the screen. We see the curtain. We see the lens. We see the lights. We see the grading. But, above all, whether live or on screen, we see black people in their fullest glory.

Cut 2. Act 3.

Stories and their telling are not limited to the domestic dramas and political satire for which South Africa is well known. There are also stories of corporations, brands, institutions — and they use storytelling to engage the consumer, investors and their internal staff at large.

both spoken and cinematic language that felt colloquial. It also opened doors for a certain type of actor and performance that may have not found space in the mainstream.

“It sparked what some regard as the ‘kwaito era’ of South African film- and TV-making. *Yizo Yizo* did for actors what YFM did for the radio broadcaster. The style remains a blueprint for hyper-real drama today.

“In my short film *Joko Ya Hao*, the opening scene is a woman washing her bloody hands in a bowl of water. I wrote and directed that scene as homage to a visceral moment in *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning*, where the young man washes his hands in the bowl that is traditionally placed outside the gate of a home for mourners to cleanse their hands when returning from the graveside.

“The symbolism and poetry of that moment stuck with me for years, and when the opportunity arose, I paid my homage.

“If I were to keep it strictly local, I'd say the

depth of research and how it translates to the screen remains unmatched. Look at *Portrait of a Young Man Dying* and *Sekalli le Meokgo* and how he brought familiar worlds of story to the screen in a philosophical approach.

“He was truly pioneering a South African brand of ‘cinema of the personal’ which did not feel self-referential.”

Slow fade to black. Queue music.

The song is a Zola kwaito jam, as the cut jumps we hear, “And if I die, badde lam' uhlale wazi ngiyak'thanda” (my buddy, always know that I love you.)

The jump cut does not take us out of the township because “thina ekasi siGhetto fabulous”. The rhythm of the shots scored to the rhythm of township anthems lets us know even in his last dance, iBadde lethu lohlala listhanda (our buddy will always love us).

More than the epic loss, we celebrate the gains of the gift he left.

Cut 1. Act 2:

of the personal

Mahlatsi was a maverick in how he used his gift for telling stories to connect brands and people. From a long art form to a discipline that requires tales to be told in seconds, Mahlatsi was a master in all mediums.

Hailed as one of the youngest black directors to pioneer in film, his reach extended to would-be young black executives in the advertising space.

Enter Kagiso Tshepe, an advertising creative

“In retrospect, I realise that before the magnum opus that is *Yizo Yizo*, I had encountered The Brother’s work in what was my childhood favourite TV moment — commercials.

“His work for some of South Africa’s most iconic brands had something that drew me in — something familiar. It was a world inside the TV that looked and felt like the world around me, but seen from a beautiful eye.

“Teboho’s approach to storytelling in Ad Land was as brilliant as it is in long form. He showed me my reality in a way that made me fall in love with every scene I saw in my family, on my street, at church and even in my school.

“Through his lens, township life and the black experience became a celebration, remarkable and worthy.

“*Yizo Yizo* is a university. It’s a whole degree. It’s a school that I believe every creative in this country, especially if you’re black, must go to. It must be studied. There is so much to learn from that work.

“Even before we get into the nuances and the jewels of it, the amazing thing is that Teboho and the team at Bomb made such a piece. Just



Trailblazer: Teboho Mahlatsi was a film director and producer at Bomb Shelter Productions.
Photo: Robert Tshabalala/Gallo Images

the fact that they gave us *Yizo Yizo* is more than enough to write an entire thesis of gratitude to Teboho Mahlatsi. The Brother, thank you.

“The Brother was a pioneer; it was not only our eyes he opened but also the doors into an industry that seemed unattainable to most of us. He was, and will forever be, a great reference.

“You can’t talk about advertising films in South Africa without referencing his work. Not a single creative, regardless of race, will argue with that. His ability to balance a fantastic story with authenticity and respect is unmatched. It’s something I admire about him and has become a big influence that I always try to bring into my own work.

“I’m very grateful and privileged to have had the opportunity to work with Teboho on a few

projects — and what a pleasure that was.

“He collaborated in a way that obliterated titles and collapsed hierarchy, where differences in age, work experience, quality of language, or any of the silly things that generally get in the way of most collaborations, he dissolved it all and created a calm and inspiring space for everybody, because only the work mattered and everyone was allowed to bring themselves into the work.

“That’s what made most of his work so human. Yes. Humility and humanity — that’s it.

“That’s what I’ve learned from The Brother and I hope to practise and share it with everyone.”

Tail slate.

Teboho Mahlatsi skilfully wielded the craft of cinematography to present an intricate triptych of South Africa’s essence, employing a trinity of lenses that unveiled the nation’s complexities. He harnessed the midshot to depict the familiar, revealing aspects of the black collective consciousness.

Then, with the precision of a super extreme close-up, he peeled back layers, prompting a visceral confrontation with our perceived understanding. Yet it was in the artful zooming out, that he transcended boundaries, capturing the grandeur of the broader world.

With these lens shifts, Mahlatsi engaged in a dynamic discourse with blackness, employing the wide shot to encompass the tapestry of black identity, the midshot to illuminate the narratives of black people, and the close-up shot to intimately explore the essence of individual black lives, each frame a symphony of revelation and introspection.

2023 Basadi in Music Awards (BIMA)

Partner content

Joburg Theatre announced as home of 2023 Basadi in Music Awards

The event will be an extraordinary celebration of female talent in the music industry

The prestigious Joburg Theatre has been named the official home of the highly anticipated 2023 Basadi in Music Awards (BIMA). The event, set to take place on 12 August 2023, promises to be an extraordinary celebration of female talent in the music industry, with renowned media personality Khanyi Mbau as the host.

Xoliswa Nduneni-Ngema, CEO of Joburg City Theatres, said: “Empowering voices, celebrating brilliance. We are proud to be the home of the Basadi in Music, a momentous celebration honouring the extraordinary talents and achievements of women in the music industry. From vocalists to producers, composers to executives, this groundbreaking event shines a spotlight on the exceptional contributions that women make, amplifying

their impact and inspiring generations to come.

“We are delighted to be part of the movement that recognises and applauds the trailblazers, visionaries, and game-changers who continue to shape the soundtracks of our lives. Together, we are creating a harmonious world where every woman’s voice finds its rightful place.”

As Johannesburg’s leading arts and entertainment hub, Joburg Theatre provides the perfect backdrop for this remarkable occasion. The venue’s state-of-the-art facilities and commitment to excellence align seamlessly with the spirit of the Basadi in Music Awards. The ceremony will showcase the phenomenal achievements of women in the music industry, honouring their awe-inspiring talent, dedication and contributions.

BIMA CEO Hloni Modise said: “We are delighted to have Joburg Theatre as the official home of the Basadi in Music Awards. Joburg Theatre has long been a beacon of creativity and a venue where memorable performances and celebrations have occurred for decades. We are grateful that they have opened their doors to us, providing a world-class setting to honour and showcase the incredible talents of women in music. This partnership symbolises the power of collaboration and our shared commitment to uplifting and celebrating women in the industry.”



The complete list of nominees is available at www.basadiinmusicawards.co.za.

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Theatre & Culture

Playing with local languages

Shakespeare is a dirty word ...

In the theatre, language is not only a means of communication but a powerful tool through which identities are shaped, celebrated and contested.

Two productions — J Bobs Tshabalala's *Khongolose Khommanding Khommissars* at The Market Theatre and a revival of Paul Slabolepszy's *Saturday Night at the Palace* at the Joburg Theatre— offer an interesting reflection on how South Africans speak.

Both playwrights, who are vastly different in their approaches to writing dialogue, shed light on the nuanced relationship between language, identity and power dynamics.

Tshabalala possesses a unique vantage point. As someone who masterfully navigates Xhosa and English, he embodies the meeting of cultures and languages.

He says, "I am very aware in South Africa what English is equated to socially — the tension of a particular proficiency with the English language — and what that means in terms of a person's background or a person's upward social mobility."

Tshabalala confronts the weighty connotations attributed to English — the language of the coloniser. His work explores the diverse ways in which English is wielded by different groups in the black community.

The multiplicity of "black Englishes" becomes a dramatic tool



At this Stage
Greg Homann

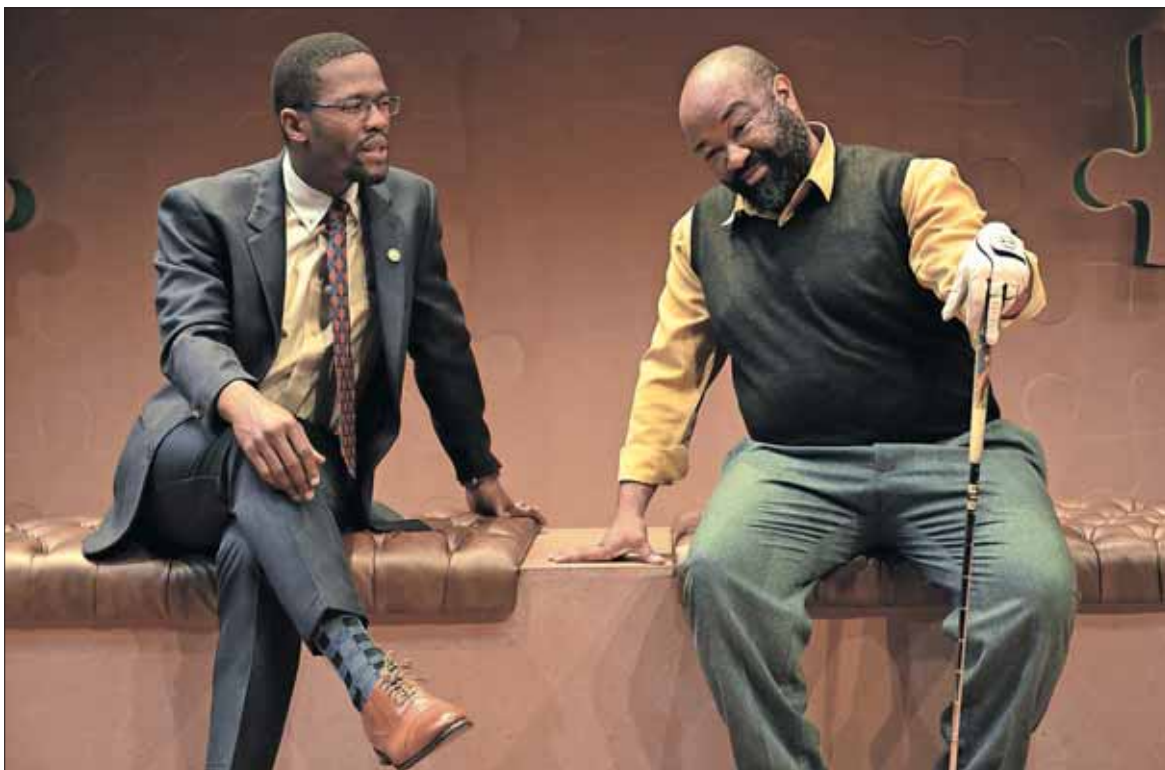
in his arsenal, allowing him to shape characters, dynamics and tensions.

This theatrical verbosity, as seen in his playful satire *Khongolose Khommanding Khommissars*, encapsulates the performative aspects of language, specifically within the country's political circles.

In the play, five politicians embrace linguistic showmanship, using intricate idioms and vernacular to assert their cultural capital and lay claim to authority. The result is comedic language games that could be described as a marriage between political cadence and heightened English. At first, it sounds quite Shakespearian.

Tshabalala says, "I often make the proclamation that I detest the vulgar assumption that I write in English. I say this to be contentious and cheeky, because I do write in English, but I'm making a proposition that I'm not writing an English that is universally known. It is a particular type of English. It is a very South African English which is a very local English."

He adds, "As a South African playwright, a black South African playwright, when it comes to writing, particularly heightened text in



All the world's a stage: Anelisa Phewa and Lebohang Motaung in J Bobs Tshabalala's 'Khongolose Khommanding Khommissars'. Photos: Lungelo Mbulwana

the South African paradigm, I often think about the 'highness' of the language of the native speakers of isiXhosa who raised me use."

The way his characters speak mirrors the political speeches that saturate the South African public sphere. Through the fusion of language play, Tshabalala delves into the complexities of translation, interculturality and the dynamics of communication.

This reflects the broader political pattern where command over language and translation is often a battleground for competing ideologies.

His use of language is a conduit for understanding the intricate dance between those who wield power and those who seek to challenge it.

Slabolepszy's *Saturday Night at the Palace*, first staged in 1982, provides an historical alternative to hear the politics of language.

He has always navigated South Africa's linguistic terrain with a distinct flair, creating characters who speak with a vivid spectrum of English expressions and colloquial-

isms, often informed by Afrikaans.

Like Tshabalala's, his characters grapple with the intricacies of language as a marker of social status, aspiration and belonging. The language they use is both a reflection of their identities and a tool for navigating their sociopolitical setting.

They assert their agency, often using humour and wit to disarm those who might judge them for their simple use of English that is muddled with popular expressions.

With *Khongolose Khommanding Khommissars*, Tshabalala breaks new ground. He has claimed a heightened use of English that feels entirely local and recognisable. The Shakespearean-ness of his dialogue adds a political tension point.

His assertion that he writes a "particular type of English", one that is uniquely South African, challenges ideas of linguistic purity and ownership. This sums up the long-standing essence of local theatre's engagement with language — the recognition that it is an ever-evolving entity shaped by history, culture and the

interplay of voices.

What is clear from these two productions is a realm where power dynamics, cultural identities and historical legacies converge. These are spaces that invite audiences to be entertained by the nuances of expression, translation and negotiation.

Shakespeare is often considered a distant figure writing in a foreign tongue. His work finds a place in this discussion — a reminder that language, whether dirty or divine, is a vessel through which stories are told, identities are shaped and a nation's history is etched.

● *Khongolose Khommanding Khommissars* runs at The Market Theatre until Sunday, *Saturday Night at the Palace* is on at the Joburg Theatre until 20 August. Book at Webtickets. ● Greg Homann is the artistic director of The Market Theatre Foundation. His influential work as an award-winning director, dramaturg, playwright, educator and academic has made him a leading figure in the South African theatrical landscape.

A unifying blanket fit to be worn by a queen

Lesego Chopape

"We have to play an active role in writing the history of our culture," says Prince Thulani Gatsha Mrhetjha, who is also a Ndebele influencer. He said this at the recent unveiling of the iNdllovukazi Blanket in honour of Queen Sekhothali Mabheha in KwaNdebele.

She was born Princess Sekhothali Seeiso of the Kingdom of Lesotho and became queen of the Ndebele kingdom when she married King Makhosoke ii Mabheha in 2019.

The iNdllovukazi blanket is powerful — it has become a symbol of unity between two different cultures, the Basotho and Ndebele. The Queen consort's blanket merges her Basotho culture with Ndebele culture.

"Keeping to the original umbhala striped blanket, we added significant Basotho symbols, such as the crocodile, which is our totem, the hat, which symbolises the king's crown, the shield, which is the coat of arms for his majesty, and corn, which is the staple food for the Basotho people," Queen Sekhothali tells the *Mail & Guardian*.

Unity was key as people from different cultures gathered to celebrate two nations coming together.

"We saw this as a chance to promote unity and diversity.



Royal show: Queen Sekhothali wears the iNdllovukazi Blanket which was unveiled in KwaNdebele recently. Photo: Chris Allan

Irrespective of if I am a Ndebele, you are Sotho or Tswana, we can live together," Prince Mrhetjha says.

Kerri Poolman, product development manager and account executive at Aranda, the oldest blanket manufacturer in South Africa, says it started engaging with the Ndebele Royal House through Prince Mrhetjha.

"As Aranda, even though we are the manufacturer of all traditional blankets, we can't do things on our own, we can't decide what people are going to wear or not wear — that is not what we are about," she says.

Poolman says it is important for Aranda to form these kinds of relationships and it is proud of its collaboration with the royal family.

"We really are touching people's lives and it is an incredible privilege," she says.

The blankets are of very high quality and one might assume only the elite would be able to afford them, especially the iNdllovukazi Blanket, however, Aranda has made sure they are affordable for most.

"Pricing is something we look at all the time, especially in this economy with lots of challenges. "So, we are very aware of who the end user of our product is and it is so important that they can be affordable for the people they are meant to be used by."

Prince Mrhetjha says this collaboration is part of archiving and preserving the Ndebele people's culture.

"Every queen deserves their own blanket — that way people will be able to point at a queen's reign through a blanket," he says.

He was grateful for the collaboration as they were able to tell Aranda how their history is meant to be told, from their perspective. For the royal family, it is more than a blanket, it is a way they can preserve the Ndebele culture for future generations.

A local resident, who asked to stay anonymous, told the *Mail & Guardian*: "What an honour it is to have witnessed such a day. It is so amazing to see his majesty and the queen make sure that our culture will always remain strong.

"This blanket, to me, feels like a blanket the queen is putting over her nation, to make sure we are always in her warmth," he says.

"It is extremely humbling as you can imagine that this role is not easy but, when you uphold yourself in the right manner and respect cultures, you tend to be proud.

"I am proud to be here and be part of such a great nation."

"All we need to do is work together to ensure that we are protected and nurtured and keep it shining in the world," Queen Sekhothali says.

Series

The Witcher: Meek ending for Cavill

Season three volume two starts like a house on fire — and the flame goes out and into Ciri

Ozayr Patel

Volume two of *The Witcher* kicked off where volume one ended, on a knife-edge, balanced, with Aretuza under siege. Volume one left us with Redania's spymaster Djikstra holding a knife to Geralt's throat. Warning, spoilers ahead!

What an episode this was. It picked up right where the brilliant volume one left off and took us right into a battle for the magical island with both sides, Redania and Nilfgaard, making a play for it. The mages battle valiantly to hold their lands.

With the Redanian soldiers, Djikstra is attempting to determine alliances on the magical island. The plan is to rid the island of mages who have an alliance with their enemy, Nilfgaard. The dastardly duo, Djikstra and his mage accomplice, Philippa, dubbed it "the purge".

Before it gets very far, Nilfgaard through the witch Fringilla who is a confusing character, elven leader Francesca and loyal soldier Cahir enter Thanedd with soldiers to make a play for it. They were brought in by Vilgefortz, a stab in the back to his partner, Tissaia. The conversation the pair have really hurts Tissaia, the anguish visible.

The battle ensues and we learn about various witch alliances before they all rally together to keep their home safe.

Tissaia eventually resorts to extreme chaos to keep hold of Aretuza. She uses a power called Alzur's Thunder, which takes a huge toll on her because of the chaos it relies on.

They manage to keep the foes at bay but the use of such power, the

betrayal that she couldn't see and the heavy casualties lead her to take her own life.

Redanian king Vizimir is unhappy about his team's failure to capture the place and tells Djikstra that someone will pay. He ends up dying after Philippa takes action for the threat. His brother Radovid assumes the crown.

Geralt meets his match

Meanwhile, Geralt and Yennefer make their way to Ciri. They find her and are met by Rience, the fire mage who has been chasing Ciri hard.

Setting up an awesome confrontation, Geralt and Yennefer make light work of what was a pretty good antagonist. He loses his head quicker than we expect.

The trio make plans to get Ciri far away from the fray. Yennefer heads back to help Tissaia and the witches. Cahir, in a total about-turn, abandons Nilfgaard interests and apologises to Ciri for his actions in season one and pleads with her to take his life. He intervenes and stops some riders trying grab Ciri.

As Geralt and Ciri attempt to take a boat and ride out, Geralt sends Ciri running. The battle with Vilgefortz is about to take place.

Whoa! Geralt gets his butt handed to him. We see how strong Vilgefortz really is. With his staff, he smashes Geralt's sword, breaks his back and leaves him with a gaping wound in his leg.

The battle leaves Geralt in a bad way — it looks like they could be setting him up for his departure from the show.

He gets dropped off at the Dryads' forest to heal. Basically, he spends all three of his final episodes wrapped up, healing. It is a weak ending for someone who embodied the role with such fervour.



Of swords and snow: A scene from the new season of Netflix's fantasy drama television series 'The Witcher'. Photo: Susie Allnutt

At least they let him out with a bang, standing up for a downtrodden family at a Nilfgaard checkpoint after he destroys the soldiers taking bribes from these people.

The highlight of his time at the Dryads recovering is a human archer he meets called Milva, who is so sulen and grumpy it's fantastic.

That, coupled with Geralt's friend, Jaskier who is trying to help him heal and who loves a chirpy comment, adds some colour.

This was a chance for the show to start the end of Henry Cavill playing Geralt as Liam Hemsworth takes up the mantle but it was not jumped on.

Ciri's chaos

After Geralt's royal butt-whipping, Vilgefortz reaches Ciri at what looks like a small monolith on the island. You'll remember Ciri has the power to drop them, opening portals. They're also a gateway to other

regions which was alluded to in *Blood Origin*.

He tries to convince her to join him, to study under him to embrace the power she has and he can guide. It doesn't work — she creates a portal which leads to a massive explosion and gets thrown into a desert.

Episode two is basically Ciri in the desert. What a drag, especially following the previous two episodes. She confronts people from her past, sees visions and befriends a unicorn, which helps her survive.

In the visions she meets Falka, a long-lost relative, who was powerful, killed her father, led a rebellion and was burnt at the stake.

Falka encourages Ciri to embrace the chaos of fire magic to heal the unicorn which was hurt in an altercation with a monster.

Ciri does so and it looks a lot like *X-Men's* Jean Grey embodying her Dark Phoenix power. "It feels good," she says while glowing red. Falka's coaxing and manipulating makes it look as if Ciri is joining the dark side.

After being captured by slavers, Ciri meets The Rats, a group of criminals who free her, after she takes her first life — the life of the man who captured her.

She tells them her name is Falka, making it look as if she has embraced the evil and chaos within her.

Overall thoughts

I was a bit disappointed that the show's creators missed the chance to make the transition from Cavill to Hemsworth smooth, especially after Geralt took such a beating. Also, episodes two and three don't stick to the pace and thrill of the first episode.

The episode focusing on Ciri in the desert was boring. While I get it's important for her character's growth, especially since she is rumoured to be the focal point of the show, it dragged. So desperate to be good, and bring about change in a positive way, she quickly transitioned to the dark side — if that is where they take her.

Yennefer and the witches fall away swiftly to lick their wounds after the battle.

Nilfgaard's leader Emperor Emhyr has led a massive event to announce Ciri's return. But it is not her who is presented to him, with a smiling Vilgefortz next to him who has been maimed after Ciri blew up the tower.

We know Vilgefortz was working on creating fake Ciris. For what reason and whether Emhyr will know, we will have to wait and see.

Diehards might not be happy but the average person, like me, will stick by the show and see what they come up with. I'm curious about how Hemsworth does and what becomes of Ciri.

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Mic check: A culture encompassing multiple art forms

Water Research Commission

Advertising supplement to the **Mail & Guardian**

August 11 to 17 2023



WRC on a mission to quench Limpopo's thirst

CEO says programme to educate local communities about water management systems is on course to reap rewards



The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Water Research Commission and the Limpopo government, as part of the newly launched Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilience Programme.



Water Research Commission CEO Dr Jennifer Molwantwa says that science, innovation, and technology is being used to empower communities in Limpopo.

Lucas Ledwaba

The Water Research Commission's (WRC) CEO Dr Jennifer Molwantwa believes the recent memorandum of understanding signed with the Limpopo government will benefit water-stressed communities if adopted and adequately implemented across municipalities in the province.

The agreement which was signed on 24 July 2023 is part of the Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilience Programme (GLSCRP).

The programme aims to enhance climate resilience and water utilisation in the Giyani area in the north-eastern part of Limpopo. It focuses on scaling and optimising multiple-use water systems, services and alternative energy options.

"We believe as the Water Research Commission that this is a momentous occasion," Molwantwa said after the signing of the MOU in Polokwane.

The GLSCRP is a three-year community-led programme scaling Multiple Water Use Systems and solar energy to develop, research and demonstrate practical and sustainable water and climate adaptation solutions in Giyani to improve water sources, water utilisation, community resilience and local economic development.

"We have looked at this programme starting at a local level, where we have taken young people, farmers and people who have got challenges around water, and we have used science, innovation, and technology to say, how can they transition and be empowered?" said Molwantwa.

The programme is funded by the Government of Flanders and the WRC, with partners with Tsogang Water and Sanitation, the Association for Water and Rural Development and the University of the Western Cape.

It is currently implemented in five agricultural sites: Daniel Ravalela Farm, Dzumeri Farm, Loloka Farm, Dzumeri Farm 2 and the Muyexe Community Project, and on four community sites: Mbhedle, Mayephu, Mzilela and Matsotsosela, which have a population of approximately 5 000 residents.

"We have given them different tools such as planting out of a bag, which means that when there is when there is limited water availability the small-scale farmers can still plant using less water and not requiring vast



pieces of land, because planting happens in a bag; this ensures that the farmer's livelihood is not impacted negatively," said the CEO.

"We have also done multiple use of water training and said, when you have water, for example, after you wash, you can use it to water your garden, and be able to grow plants," she said.

"We have taught the people how to disinfect the water, taking into consideration the fact that there are challenges of water availability — even if there were to be floods, what are people supposed to do when there's lots of water?"

"So we have empowered them in a number of ways, and what is so beautiful is that the people themselves were not forced. They were invited, they were surveyed, but they have shown commitment over the last two years. This is a three-year project that says they are going to be part and parcel. And what we think is so critical is the involvement of the province."

Molwantwa explained that the selection of Giyani as the initial location of the project came about because the Government of Flanders was already working in the area when the WRC came on board.

"They wanted to continue the work that they used to do in Giyani. It is also very significant because of the ... lack of water in that area. The other thing is the fact that with climate change, we know that areas that don't have water are going to be even more impacted," she explained.

"It could have been done anywhere

else, but when you test your models, you check where there is going to be the highest impact. This is one of the areas in the province that is very hot, and one of the key impacts of climate change is that when it's so hot, because of evaporation the water in the dams will dry out. So this is a very significant example," she said.

Molwantwa believes that the success of the project in Giyani can be replicated in other areas to yield similar positive results.

"It means that from this lesson and case study, this can be taken into other district municipalities as well as other local municipalities. We practise what we call 'train the trainer'. Now that we have trained the people, they need to start being ambassadors."

Molwantwa added that it is vital to use science and technology in water preservation, especially in a time of energy crisis.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) warns that feeding a global population expected to reach nine billion people by 2050 will require a 60% increase in food production. FAO also cites population growth, rapid urbanisation, changing diets and economic development among some of the factors driving increased demand for water, energy and food.

According to the organisation, agriculture is the largest consumer of the world's freshwater resources, and more than a quarter of the energy used globally is expended on food production and supply.

The Government of Flanders is funding the three-year community-led water programme in Giyani.

"Let's talk about what we call the water-food-energy nexus. Most of the people who farm worry about water, but they don't worry about energy. And most of the people who produce energy or use energy don't care about how energy is involved in the production of water or food," Molwantwa explained.

"Irrigation by its nature is mechanised, even if it's drip irrigation or whatever, the most conservative, it's mechanised. But currently South Africa has a challenge of energy availability, so what are the options that are available? We have used solar as an alternative so that farmers can irrigate without having to worry about the challenges of load-shedding," she said.

"So what this also tells us is that we need to be planning for climate change impacts. We must not worry too much and say, oh, the people don't have electricity and therefore there's nothing we can do. What are the options? What are the alternatives? This challenge of energy is not going to end."

Molwantwa added that the preservation of water and taking care of natural resources like rivers is key to saving the precious resource, which is in short supply in South Africa.

"We really have to understand that water is expensive, and South Africans assume it rains and therefore water comes out of the tap," she said.

"Let us try and start thinking we need to pay for services and support our very own government. A case in point is that each and every household will have satellite television. Most of the people in our country have smartphones, but when it comes to that which is life [water] we believe, 'no, somebody [else] must pay for it'. So we really have to start thinking about conserving water. If you see a leak in the road, make it your business to report it," she said.

"There's a lot of wastage in the system. So as a nation, as a people, we [must] understand that water is not limitless. It is a limited resource. And one day when there isn't water, we are going to have a problem. I always say that we don't have a problem of water availability, we have a problem of water quality, where if the water is not fit for purpose, then what are you going to do?" — *Mukurukuru Media*

Water for Limpopo, with love from Flanders

The Belgian government continues to make a significant contribution in providing clean water to drought-stricken residents



Government of Flanders Deputy-General Representative Nikolas Bosscher says the Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilience Programme will empower communities, promote and develop sustainable agriculture, improve water solutions and foster economic development. Photo: Lucas Ledwaba/Mukurukuru Media

Lerato Seerane

The Government of Flanders has invested R40 million into a three-year programme that is already bearing fruit in the drought-stricken Giyani area of Limpopo province.

The agreement is part of the Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilience Programme (GLSCRP), which aims to enhance climate resilience and water utilisation in the Giyani area. The programme focuses on scaling and optimising multiple-use water systems, services and alternative energy options.

The three-year community-led programme is scaling Multiple Water Use Systems and solar energy to develop, research and demonstrate practical and sustainable water and climate adaptation solutions in Giyani.

Government of Flanders Deputy-General Representative Nikolas Bosscher said the programme is a realistic and much-needed initiative that seeks to solve water challenges in drought-stricken communities.

“The challenges faced by South Africa, particularly in Limpopo, are the semi-arid climate and water delivery or availability issues. In Giyani, these challenges are even more pronounced, especially in meeting the Millenium Development Goals 2026 targets,” Bosscher said at the historic signing of the memorandum of understanding between the Water Research Council (WRC) and the Limpopo Office of the Premier.

The United Nations notes that “between 1990 and 2015, 2.6 billion people gained access to improved drinking water sources” and that “worldwide, 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation”.

But the agency warns that “despite progress, 2.4 billion are still using

unimproved sanitation facilities, including 946 million people who are still practising open defecation”

Bosscher explained how the programme went through project cycle management, where it not only looked at the aims but also consultations done with stakeholders and the beneficiaries.

He said at this stage the programme shows capability to empower communities, promote and develop sustainable agriculture, improve water solutions and foster economic development.

Bosscher said all the communities where this initiative is operating demonstrated notable improvement with respect to implementation capacity, activities, coordination and cooperation.

“We see the positive effects of the programme in water-scarce regions like Giyani, where the programme responds to the needs of the communities. We recognise that every stakeholder, including community leaders, was consulted, which made sense. It gained the support of the programme’s actual users, who are local residents and stakeholders from the municipality and province,” he said.

Bosscher said during his visit to Giyani he got to see how the programme is working out in the nine sites.

“This is a programme that is needed ... because it’s a very dry area where water is very scarce, and people need the water for consumption and for sanitation. We also see how well coordinated the programme is, because for the Flanders Government, it’s important to see that the programme has strong buy-in from province, district and local leaders,” he said.

Bosscher said they are impressed with how this initiative makes maximum use of

the assistance given by his government, and encourages the WRC to continue to manage the programme successfully.

“We recommend that organisations adopt similar programmes, because they are necessary and pave the way to creating a solution to [conserving] one of the most important things to have, which is water. We believe in the programme and are confident that it will continue even after the funding expires [at the] end of 2024 ... thank you for the wonderful work so far,” Bosscher said.

The programme is expected to sustain itself when the funding cycle by the Government of Flanders ends.

Tendani Masindi, Chief Director in the Limpopo Office of the Premier responsible for integrated planning, infrastructure planning and project management, said the partnership with the Flanders government came about as a result of their work with the WRC.

“Through the Water Research Commission, we were able to benefit from their funding model. That is how we find ourselves with Flanders today and we really welcome this initiative,” said Masindi.

The Limpopo provincial government has invited the public to witness the positive impact of the GLSCRP firsthand, and encourages people to visit the areas in Greater Giyani Municipality to see the implementation of flushing toilets without reticulated water, showcasing the innovative solutions being developed to address the water challenges faced by the communities there.

Limpopo’s Deputy Director General for Stakeholder Management Coordination, Walter Segooa — who signed the memorandum on behalf of the provincial government — emphasised the alignment

of the strategic partnership with the key priorities and aspirations of the Limpopo Development Plan (LDP).

The LDP aims to ensure integrated and sustainable socioeconomic and infrastructure development while improving the quality of life for Limpopo citizens. The South African government and Flanders have a longstanding cooperation, with the National Treasury of South Africa as the strategic partner for development cooperation.

The working together grew from other smaller projects and multiple partners to a more focused approach, resulting in one-year programmes, which were replaced by five-year Country Strategy Papers (CSPs).

The CSP 2012-2016 took a different approach and focused mainly on job creation through the development of SMMEs and social enterprises. Government, civil society, international organisations and the private sector were involved in the implementation. In March Flemish Minister for Finance, Budget, Housing and Immovable Heritage Matthias Diependaele visited South Africa for the signing of six new agreements between Flanders and South African academic institutions, to strengthen their existing partnerships.

Earlier this year president Cyril Ramaphosa hosted Prince Philippe and Queen Mathilda of the Kingdom of Belgium during a visit that was described as “a demonstration of the strong bilateral relations that exist between the two countries”. Flanders is one of three federated regions of Belgium.

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Partnership to ensure taps never dry in Giyani

Collaboration between the WRC and provincial government aims to keep water flowing, to stimulate the local economy



WRC Programme Manager Virginia Molose says there is already improved water and energy infrastructure, just one year into the programme. Photo: Lucas Ledwaba/Mukurukuru Media

Lerato Seerane

The Water Research Commission (WRC) and the Limpopo Office of the Premier are on a mission to ensure that the taps in Giyani never run dry by using scientific innovation and indigenous knowledge systems to improve water supply.

Dr Jennifer Molwantwa, CEO of the WRC, emphasised the importance of harnessing skills and knowledge to empower communities to manage their own environment.

“This project has laid the foundation for us to learn and do more with less. The lessons learned from this programme will serve as valuable information and knowledge for future endeavours. Indigenous knowledge, combined with scientific innovation, has been instrumental in helping communities adapt and progress,” she said.

Walter Segooa, Deputy Director General for Stakeholder Management Coordination — who signed a memorandum of understanding with the WRC on behalf of the provincial government — has emphasised the alignment of this strategic partnership with the key priorities and aspirations of the Limpopo Development Plan (LDP).

The LDP aims to ensure integrated and sustainable socioeconomic and infrastructure development, while improving the quality of life for Limpopo citizens.

“We believe that knowledge resides in communities and we are facilitators that aim to bring out the best in these communities, because when you walk in the streets of Giyani, you can see the empty stalls that actually say that there was some kind of viable economy before. So we want to bring back those activities and boost the economy,” said WRC Programme Manager Virginia Molose.

She said the WRC examined how it could find reliable alternatives for water and electricity supply in ways that are climate smart, consistent and work as a substitute, because the area is dry, with limited resources.

“Our programmes introduced technological models that are now used in these communities, working along with the Mopani District Municipality, because even though they try to do what they can, water supply is inconsistent due to our energy supply, which has become rather unstable,” said Molose. “So with models like solar, when there is load-shedding, guaranteed sunlight kicks in to give energy that helps the operations to run successfully.”

She said that just over a year into the programme, there is already improved water and energy infrastructure. The areas concerned receive a lot of sunlight so solar systems have been installed, which are reliable, cost less and ensure sustainable water services.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) notes in a report on water management that “solar irrigation is an increasingly reliable, relatively low-cost, clean-energy solution for agricultural water management in areas with high incident solar radiation”.

The organisation further notes that “in many rural areas, solar irrigation initiatives can be a way of providing broader access to energy for agriculture, as well as for other uses in rural areas where reliable access to electricity is lacking or diesel is expensive.”

She said the WRC researches the entire water chain, which involves sanitation, and matches it with climate-smart technologies which, even in their simplest form, will see farmers increasing their production.

“The other sustainable climate-smart form which operates similarly to the greenhouse effect, but in the form of little

pockets that link together, is a plant-in-a-bag method that helps farmers maintain a good percentage of produce using less space,” she said.

“Also, communities are beginning to come together in the implementation of this programme by utilising an app that estimates for them how much water they use and what crops are better suited to that environment, allowing us to be climate aware without reducing farmers’ yields,” Molose said.

In response to climate change challenges a feasibility study was conducted in 2019/2020 in the drought-stricken regions of Giyani. The study sampled about 45 areas. Nine areas from Mopani district and Greater Giyani Local municipality were identified by the research as the worst affected.

Molose said infrastructure has been improved and work has been done to support the mandate of the Greater Giyani Local Municipality and Mopani District Municipality.

“This is to make sure that taps never run dry in those areas,” said Molose, adding that more focus has been put on helping local farmers and small businesses, to improve the local economy.

The Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilience Programme (GLSCRIP) is an ambitious initiative under the WRC aimed at addressing the adverse impacts of climate change in the Giyani region.

The GLSCRIP focuses on both drinking water and water for production purposes. The programme aims to make water challenges a thing of the past in Giyani, and it also upskills the residents of these drought-stricken areas.

The work entails technology-driven predictive models, coupled with satellite data and climate monitoring, and provides support through training and capacity

development, strengthening networks for collaboration, innovation and technology implementation.

Molose explained that some of the reasons that motivated the launch of the programme in Giyani include dwindling water supplies and the fact that communities rely on electricity for their water supply systems, which have been impacted by load-shedding.

Giyani residents who have borne the brunt of chronic water shortages are also set to benefit from a project by the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Minister of Water and Sanitation Senzo Mchunu announced in April that the Giyani Water Project is on course, and that 24 out of 55 villages meant to benefit from the project will soon get water. He announced in April that his department is providing funding and support to the Mopani District Municipality through its Water Services Infrastructure Grant for the reticulation of 55 villages. The Department said this is set to increase the level of services, from communal taps to yard connections, as part of the Giyani Bulk Water Supply Scheme.

“The highlight is to have people learn about climate change and implement solutions, because when there is water we see change in people’s lives, and water remains a crucial component to support those activities,” Molose said.

“We are signing a MoU with the office of the premier recognising that WRC, local municipalities, government and communities cannot do it alone but through collaboration. We want our work to be recognised. We need the Limpopo government to ensure that our work will continue to be sustainable, even after the programme comes to an end.”

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WRC

Limpopo residents must not lose hope – water is on its way

Programmes set up in Giyani will improve water access, agriculture and sanitation



Tendani Masindi, Chief Director in the Limpopo Office of the Premier (above), said the province is committed to providing water for its people. In recent years the Giyani region has experienced significant impacts from climate change, including more frequent and severe droughts, erratic rainfall patterns and increased water scarcity. The GLSCRП is responding to the needs of the local communities in addressing this crisis.



Lucas Ledwaba
The people of Limpopo should not lose hope when it comes to water provision because work is ongoing to ensure that they have access to clean water and sanitation.

A pioneering project aligned to the District Development Model is turning the tide against water shortages.

“As a province, we are not going to leave them [people of Limpopo] behind. My message is that they should not lose hope,” Tendani Masindi, Chief Director in the Limpopo Office of the Premier, said after the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Water Research Commission (WRC).

Masindi is responsible for integrated planning, infrastructure planning and project management in the premier’s office.

In recent years the Giyani region has experienced significant impacts from climate change, including more frequent and severe droughts, erratic rainfall patterns and increased water scarcity.

The Limpopo Development Plan (LDP) notes that the province has been identified as the most vulnerable in terms of climate change impact. The WRC warned that the changes in weather patterns have adversely affected agriculture, livestock farming, and water availability for domestic use, posing substantial challenges to the livelihoods and wellbeing of local communities.

However, said the WRC, through comprehensive research and data analysis, the Giyani Local Scale Climate Resilience Programme (GLSCRП) aims to deepen the understanding of these climate change impacts and develop evidence-based strategies to mitigate their adverse effects.

“We have committed ourselves to say development is about them [the people]. So, whatever we are doing, we are doing it for them. They should not lose hope. We are still going to enter into additional agreements for their sake,” Masindi said.

The GLSCRП seeks to address the challenges posed by climate change and ensure a more resilient and prosperous future for local communities through collaborative partnerships, innovative solutions, community engagement and rigorous monitoring.

“This is the programme that will also augment the work that is already happening from the side of municipalities in terms of water provision. We have indicated that by 2025, we are so ambitious and confident as a province that we will be able to reach about 80% [of people] in terms of provision of water,” Masindi said.

“But then given all other challenges that will relate to finance, this [partnership with WRC] support is welcome, so that we are then able to join hands in terms of meeting that target,” Masindi said.

According to the WRC the primary objectives of the GLSCRП are to enhance water utilisation efficiency, improve

water access and sanitation, strengthen community resilience, and promote sustainable livelihoods in the Giyani region.

The WRC said that to achieve these objectives, the programme engages with key stakeholders including the Limpopo Office of the Premier, the National Department of Water and Sanitation, the Mopani District Municipality and the Greater Giyani Municipality among others.

It also includes cooperation with the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (COGSHТА), the South African Local Government Authority (SALGA), the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (LDARD), the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment, and Tourism (LEDET), local councillors, traditional authorities, community leaders, the agriculture sector, and small businesses, local traders, cooperatives, and subsistence, commercial and smallholder farmers.

Masindi said the collaborative efforts involving different stakeholders is a perfect example of the District Development Model (DDM).

The main objectives of the DDM which was launched by President Cyril Rampahosa in 2019 include focusing on the district or metropolitan spaces as the appropriate scale and arena for intergovernmental planning and coordination.

It also aims to produce a spatially integrated single government plan that guides and directs government-wide strategic investment spending, project delivery and accountability for each district and metropolitan area.

“Moving forward the DDM requires us to join hands in dealing with the challenge of water in the country and in certain areas where we are able to, we should be able to do that. So you can see the DDM at play throughout the implementation of this project. And it gives hope to those who are still waiting for water,” Masindi said.

Masindi added that there needs to be greater emphasis on areas where there is greater potential.

“We are hoping that there will be a trickle-down effect. When communities that do not have water see their neighbours getting water, then they know they are also in line to receive water,” she said.

Earlier this year Limpopo Premier Chupu Mathabatha said in his State of the Province Address that water provisioning is high on the provincial government’s agenda.

Mathabatha said during engagements with Minister of Water and Sanitation Senzo Mchunu, it was agreed that they have to expedite bulk water infrastructure projects, especially the Nandoni-Nsami 33 Bulk pipeline, Giyani Water Treatment Phase 1, Giyani Water Services, and the Loskop Regional Bulk Water Supply.

“This we must do without hesitation because the people of Giyani have been waiting for water for a long-time. They must



A solar-powered pump house at Ahi Tirheni Mqekwa Agricultural Primary Cooperative.

drink water before the end of the financial year,” Mathabatha said.

Masindi said one of the key areas being promoted through the GLSCRП is agriculture.

“We are actually promoting agriculture. We are promoting mining and we are promoting tourism. And the area that we are talking about, the Giyani area, the soil type [there] favours agriculture, meaning that with this support our communities will then be able to participate in agricultural activities,” said Masindi.

The WRC is not only working to help make the taps run but is also contributing to scientific research to help come up with innovative technological solutions to water provision by working with universities.

“We are contributing a lot. Even last year we recorded in our annual report 198 PhDs and 48 doctoral fellows who are contributing in terms of capacity,” WRC CEO Jennifer Molwantwa said.

She said the WRC has also collaborated with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Melinda Gates Foundation, among others.

“What we have also noticed is that not all science and elevation comes out of the laboratory. Indigenous knowledge is also science that we can tap into. With our new strategy we have said we want to ensure the centres of excellence in each and every province.

“When we are in Limpopo we must be able to work together with the University of Limpopo and the University of the Western Cape (UWC), to ensure that they can learn from each other, and train each other. Once



A solar-powered pump house at Mayephu Village.

UWC goes home, Limpopo must continue. Students from Limpopo must be able to solve Limpopo problems, and until we get into that mode, we will keep on competing.

“Yes, you must compete, you know, who has IP, who has higher publication rates, but the solutions of the South African people lies with the brains and the knowledge that is generated in South Africa,” she said.

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