

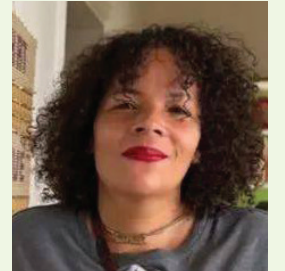
ANC looks outside for mayors

Party asks public to nominate candidates for key metros and cities ahead of crunch local government elections



Photo: @MbalulaFikile/X

Africa has a gift the world still needs



Tribute to Maria McCloy

NPA weighs charges in SA Steel Mills-linked fraud probe



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IN BRIEF



Banned: The unruly passenger on a flight.
Photo: @comedymikegoldstein/Instagram

Head in the clouds

A Qantas flight travelling from Melbourne to Texas was diverted to Tahiti, French Polynesia, after a drunk passenger allegedly bit a crew member, *The Independent* reports.

Passengers were seven hours into their 18-hour flight when a man stumbled out of the plane's lavatory, swearing at a crew member.

The man, who appeared to be not in his right faculties, asked a male crew member if he had been smoking weed and even told him that he "was just about to walk out for a cigarette".

The man resisted efforts to help him walk back to his seat, even though he appeared to be unable to walk due to his apparent inebriation.

Part of the incident was captured by comedian Mike Goldstein, who posted it on Instagram. The passenger, who was banned from travelling on all Qantas Group flights, was arrested after landing in Tahiti. The flight landed in Texas several hours late on Saturday.

Doom of the deep sea

The bodies of four Italian divers who went missing during an underwater cave expedition in the Maldives have been found, CNN reports.

The divers and an Italian diving instructor, whose body was recovered at the entrance of the cave on the day of their disappearance, died while exploring the Vaavu Atoll caves on Thursday.

The victims include Monica Montefalcone, an associate professor of ecology at the University of Genoa and researcher Muriel Oddenino, who were on a scientific mission to understand the effects of climate change on tropical diversity.

Montefalcone's daughter, Giorgia Sommacal, marine biologist Federico Gualtieri and diving instructor Gianluca Benedetti, also died.

The University of Genoa said the expedition to the cave was a private mission.

After several recovery attempts that involved the death of a member of the Maldivian National Defence Force, the bodies were discovered in the largest segment of the cave, which sits around 60m below the surface and is several hundred metres long.

A second chance

Animal welfare groups in South Africa have taken the state to court in a bid to relocate three elephants from the publicly-owned Johannesburg Zoo to a larger conservation park on the grounds that the animals are depressed, the Associated Press reports.

David Bilchitz, a board member at Animal Law Reform South Africa, one of the groups that has taken the case to court, said experts

NUMBERS OF THE WEEK

M&G mg.co.za

93



The age at which Felicien Kabuga, a suspect in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, died while imprisoned at the UN's detention centre in The Hague, *Reuters* reports. The former businessman and broadcaster promoted hate speech against Tutsis and armed ethnic Hutu militias during a genocide that led to the deaths of over 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Kabuga spent two decades on the run before he was arrested in France in 2020 and extradited to The Hague. After he was deemed unfit to undergo a trial due to his dementia and too ill to return to Rwanda, Kabuga remained imprisoned.

39



Is Novak Djokovic's age on 22 May. The highly acclaimed Serbian tennis player shares his birthday with English supermodel Naomi Campbell and South Africa's former national Minister of Arts and Culture Pallo Jordan.



\$5.25M

The lawsuit settlement agreed to by Jeff Titus, a US man from Michigan who was wrongfully sentenced to more than two decades in prison for the 1990 murders of two hunters. The settlement follows accusations that the police failed to turn over information that could have exonerated him at trial, and thus violated his constitutional rights. A 30-page document also introduced an alternate suspect for the murders. The suspect, who died in prison in 2011, was known to kill hunters, fishers and joggers.

€515K



The estimated street value of cannabis found in the possession of a man who flew from Toronto, Canada, to Dublin Airport in Ireland, the *BBC* reports. Revenue officers searched his baggage and discovered the cannabis in vacuum-packed packages. Irish police subsequently detained him last Friday.

246



The number of suspected Ebola cases that have emerged from the Democratic Republic of Congo as of 16 May, the *World Health Organisation (WHO)* reports. This figure, including another eight confirmed cases and 80 suspected cases, prompted the United Nations agency to declare the Ebola virus, identified as the Bundibugyo strain, a public health emergency of international concern. According to the WHO, there have been reports of groups of community members dying across health zones in Ituri and suspected cases in North Kivu and Ituri, raising concerns of a much larger outbreak.

Graphic: BUSI LETHOLE Compiled by: MAMAPUTLE BOIKANYO

intend to show that the three elephants were unhappy. They exhibited compulsive behaviour like rocking and appeared listless. Their enclosure was no bigger than a soccer field with no places to forage or mud pools to bathe in.

The Johannesburg Zoo denied the allegations and said the elephants were happy and healthy. It said the relocation of elephants from zoos to semi-wild locations was seldom successful.

Four Paws said Charley, the old bull elephant, who was relocated from Pretoria Zoo to a game reserve in Limpopo, was a paradigm of a successful integration into the wild after four decades in captivity.

The elephant, who also spent 16 years in a circus, began communicating with nearby elephants, foraging and bathing in mud pools within a year of living in the wild.

Sovereignty on trial

A French judge has launched an inquiry into the death of a journalist who was allegedly killed at the behest of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), *Euronews* reported.

Jamal Khashoggi, a US resident and a dissident Saudi journalist, was inside the Saudi consulate in Türkiye, collecting documents that would allow him to marry his Turkish fiancée, when he was attacked by Saudi agents who murdered him and dismembered his body.

The US and Türkiye have previously opened legal cases seeking justice for Khashoggi's



Inquiry: Journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Photo: April Brady/Project on Middle East Democracy

death, though they subsequently fell through.

When MBS visited France in 2022, Trial International and Democracy for the Arab World Now filed legal complaints against the crown prince for ordering a hit against Khashoggi, one of his most outspoken critics. Reporters Without Borders later joined the organisations in their complaints.

The NGOs also allege that MBS was complicit in acts of torture and enforced disappearance. Overriding opposition by the National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor's Office (PNAT) to open an investigation, the Paris Court of Appeal has ruled that the acts against the journalist could be considered crimes against humanity.

An investigating judge from PNAT's crimes against humanity unit will examine the complaint.

Lives in limbo

Sierra Leone has agreed to take in 300 West African migrants a year as US President Donald Trump's administration tackles immigration issues through third-country deportations.

Sierra Leone's Foreign Affairs Minister Musa Timothy Kabba told *Reuters* that his government agreed to accept a maximum of 25 deportees a month.

The first group expected to arrive on 20 May. The group includes citizens from Senegal, Guinea, Nigeria and Ghana.

Rights groups have criticised Trump's third-country deportations for sending people to countries where they are not nationals.

There are additional concerns over third-country deportees ultimately being transferred to their birth countries, despite having US protections that should prevent such transfers.

Sierra Leonean authorities have not clarified whether the deportees will be permitted to stay in Sierra Leone, nor have they revealed how the arrangement would benefit the country.

"It's part of our bilateral relationship with the US to assist with its immigration policy," Kabba said.

Grave errors

The Tasmanian government has issued an apology to families whose body parts from their deceased loved ones were taken without consent for scientific purposes, the *BBC* reports.

In September 2023, findings from an investigation launched by the state coroner revealed that pathologists might have "actively sourced" 177 human body parts collected from autopsies and handed them over to the University of Tasmania RA Rodda Museum in Hobart, where some of them were displayed.

Although the alleged sourcing of the body parts might have occurred between 1966 and 1991, the families continue to feel the shock and grief they felt when the details of the desecration of their relatives' bodies were uncovered.

The families appeared in parliament on Tuesday, where the state's health minister, Bridget Archer, apologised to them.

"It's important to remember that these were not just body parts or specimens or human remains. They were people," she said.

Although some family members welcomed the apologies, there was an acknowledgement of the irrevocable damage done to them.

The billion-dollar bailout

The US department of justice dropped its fraud case against Gautam Adani, Asia's richest man, after he employed the services of US President Donald Trump's personal lawyer, *The Guardian* reports.

Adani, the founder of the multinational conglomerate Adani Group, was indicted in New York alongside two executives of his renewable energy company on multiple counts of fraud in November 2024.

Adani, his executives and directors, allegedly conspired to pay a bribe of \$250 million (R4.1 billion) to Indian government officials and misled American and international investors to acquire state-sanctioned energy supply contracts.

Robert Giuffra Jr, who represented Trump in cases that include the Stormy Daniels' hush-money case, reportedly presented a 100-page slide during an undisclosed meeting at the justice department.

He demonstrated a lack of sufficient evidence, a lack of jurisdiction and said Adani would invest billions of dollars into the US and create 15 000 jobs if prosecutors dropped the case against him.

According to PBS News, prosecutors cited "prosecutorial discretion" in their decision not to further the case, although they said the investments would not have affected their decision. — *Mamaputle Boikanyo*

Mail & Guardian

Published by M&G Media Ltd
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25 Owl Street
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Printed by Caxton Printers (Pty) Ltd, 14 Wright Street Industria West, 2093 Gauteng 010 492 3394

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Madlanga's swift brand of justice

Police Sergeant Fannie Nkosi is among a growing list of figures facing criminal charges linked to investigations associated with the Madlanga Commission, fuelling comparisons with the slower prosecutorial fallout of the Zondo era

Nkateko Joseph Mabasa

A growing number of criminal prosecutions linked to the Madlanga Commission of Inquiry is prompting comparisons with the State Capture Commission – led by former chief justice Raymond Zondo – and whether it is producing quicker criminal accountability.

Even as hearings continue, investigations linked to the commission have already resulted in a widening list of court cases involving police officials, businesspeople and politically connected figures.

Police Sergeant Fannie Nkosi is among a growing list of figures facing charges linked to investigations associated with the commission.

Nkosi appeared briefly in the Pretoria North Magistrate's Court on Thursday, where his matter was postponed to 22 July to allow the state to seek the centralisation of charges he faces in Gauteng and Limpopo.

Nkosi, who has been denied bail, is among several figures whose legal troubles have emerged from evidence and investigations linked to the Madlanga commission, including Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Police Department deputy chief Julius Mkhwanazi and Ekurhuleni city manager Kagiso Lerutla.

Nkosi has also been implicated in an alleged R2.9-billion tender-rigging scheme involving the City of Tshwane, in which he allegedly pres-

sured chief financial officer Gareth Mnisi to favour private security companies linked to his younger brother.

Last week, the state charged Nkosi in connection with a Thohoyandou case involving the alleged theft of dagga, where he is accused of impersonating an investigating officer. These charges follow his arrest in March for defeating the ends of justice, money laundering and the unlawful possession of explosives and unlicensed ammunition.

Nkosi's case was postponed for further investigation and to allow prosecutors to combine the Pretoria matter with the Thohoyandou case, scheduled for hearing on 16 July.

The prosecutor told the court that the state intended to apply for the Thohoyandou matter to be transferred and joined with the Pretoria proceedings.

"It is the state's intention to apply for centralisation for the matter in Thohoyandou to be combined with the one here in Pretoria. For this reason, the state is requesting a postponement until 22 July for purposes of centralisation," said prosecutor Tholoana Sekhonyana.

The hearing also saw Nkosi's legal representative Siza Dali formally withdraw from the case.

Addressing the court, Dali said that after Nkosi was denied bail during a previous appearance, he had advised his client to appeal the ruling because another court could potentially reach a different conclusion.

"At the last appearance, when bail



Accountability: Police Sergeant Fannie Nkosi is among a growing list of figures facing charges linked to investigations associated with the commission. Photo: Screenshot

was denied, we advised the client that another court could come to a different conclusion regarding the granting of bail and that he ought to appeal that decision," he said.

The attorney added that Nkosi had not instructed his firm to proceed with an appeal against the bail ruling.

"It is for that reason that our intention today was to apply to withdraw from the matter," he said.

Another legal firm had already filed appeal papers on Nkosi's behalf and would assume responsibility for his defence, he added.

The prosecutor confirmed that another attorney had contacted the state to indicate that he had been instructed by Nkosi. Nkosi subsequently confirmed in court that Maliyo Attorneys would represent him going forward. Proceedings were brief before the matter was postponed to 22 July.

"The matter is postponed until 22 July for the purposes of centralising the matters. Bail remains denied," the magistrate said.

Nkosi is not the only figure linked to the commission now facing criminal prosecution.

Earlier this week, North West businessperson and police informant Brown Mogotsi was remanded in custody pending the verification of his Mmabatho residential address. Prosecutors indicated that the state

would not oppose bail at his next appearance, scheduled for 25 May.

Mogotsi faces charges of perjury and defeating the ends of justice after allegedly fabricating a police case relating to an alleged assassination attempt against him. The complaint was laid a week before his first appearance before the Madlanga commission in November 2025.

The case followed Mogotsi's unsuccessful bid for evidence leader Matthew Chaskalson to excuse himself from the commission proceedings.

Mogotsi alleged that Chaskalson had displayed bias and had pressured him to provide incriminating evidence against North West businessperson and ANC associate Suleiman Carrim. The commission rejected Mogotsi's claims.

The most prominent criminal case to emerge from the commission's investigations remains the state's prosecution of alleged crime boss Vusumuzi "Cat" Matlala and 17 other co-accused.

In a dramatic development, suspended national police commissioner Fannie Masemola was also implicated in the matter as an alleged accomplice.

Masemola faces charges linked to alleged contraventions of the Public Finance Management Act for his role

in approving the controversial R360-million Medicare24 police health-care tender awarded to Matlala's company.

While the Zondo commission produced extensive reports detailing corruption across state-owned enterprises and government departments, critics have argued that prosecutions flowing directly from its findings have been slow and uneven.

One of the most significant matters linked to the Zondo commission remains the long-running Transnet corruption case involving former executives and businessmen accused of fraud, corruption and money laundering related to locomotive procurement contracts worth billions of rand.

Former Transnet executives, including Brian Molefe, Anoj Singh, Siyabonga Gama, and former Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba, have faced charges in cases tied to allegations before the Zondo Commission.

However, many of those prosecutions have been delayed by procedural disputes and repeated postponements.

While the long-term outcomes of the Madlanga commission remain uncertain, the pace at which criminal cases are already reaching the courts has drawn sharp contrast with the slower prosecutorial fallout that followed the Zondo Commission.

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Mail & Guardian

The ANC has opened mayoral nominations to the public, allowing non-members to apply or be nominated as it reshapes its candidate selection process ahead of the local elections

Lunga Mzangwe

Facing what may be its toughest local government election battle yet, the ANC has decided to look beyond its own ranks in its search for mayoral candidates across the country's metros and municipalities.

The move follows the party's bruising performance in the 2024 national elections, when it fell below 50% for the first time since the advent of democracy and lost its outright majority.

On Wednesday, the party announced it had opened public nominations for the centralised selection of ANC mayoral candidates in the country's eight metropolitan municipalities and 22 secondary cities and towns.

In a statement, the party said it wanted to turn to the people of South Africa and ask the country to participate directly in identifying those who will carry the responsibility of municipal leadership as mayors in the next term.

"This invitation is genuinely open to all. Any South African who is not a card-carrying member of the movement may nominate a fellow citizen of integrity and capacity through the same portal and on the same terms as any member of the ANC," read the statement.

"A South African who is not a member may also self-nominate and place his or her own name forward as a nominee for consideration. The door is extended first; the question of membership comes later, in line with Rule 4.16 of the ANC constitution and the resolution of the national working committee (NEC) and before any name is publicly announced."

The party described this as "the deliberate intention of the movement. 'The African National Congress belongs to the people of South Africa, in the spirit of the charter's declaration that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.'"

The ANC opened the process on Wednesday and the final cut-off for this intake is midnight on Friday 22 May 2026.

Each nominee will, at the appropriate stage of the process, sign procedural undertakings governing this selection and the pledge to serve better, in line with the resolution of the national executive committee.

Previously, winning a regional conference as party chairperson automatically secured that person the mayoral candidate nomination for that region.

That practice was later scrapped after the party identified it as a weakness, with concerns that some leaders elevated through internal elections were not always suitably qualified for senior executive roles.

The ANC subsequently introduced a new system requiring regional structures to submit three names for consideration. These candidates would then be interviewed by the party's top seven officials, who would make the final selection.

This process has now been revised again.

An ANC NEC member told the *Mail & Guardian* that the decision to involve the public was not taken by

ANC opens door to public in mayoral candidate search



The people shall govern: Fikile April Mbalula, secretary-general of the ANC, at a conference in the West Rand. Photo: Supplied

the NEC but rather rushed through by party officials.

The NEC member said the party should not impose regional or provincial leaders on communities, adding that sometimes regional and provincial leaders elect "donkeys" among themselves and impose them on communities.

The source said that in 2016, the ANC had tried to field candidates in regions where they were not grounded in their communities and the party lost elections in those municipalities.

It was important for the party to field candidates familiar to the community to garner support, the NEC member said, adding that those who emerge must be people who have struggled alongside the communities they want to lead.

"They brought Thoko Didiza in Tshwane; they brought Danny Jordaan in Nelson Mandela Bay but they did not appeal to the local communities. Every community has its own leaders.

"If you go to Johannesburg, it has

its own role models, its own leaders and people who have emerged through the struggles of those communities," the NEC member said.

"If you take someone who does not attend the same church as the community, participate in the same stokvels or belong to the same sports clubs and then expect them to lead, that person will be rejected by those communities."

The source added that the ANC has to observe a process led by communities and then take decisions after hearing sentiments from local communities.

Johannesburg regional secretary Sasabona Manganye said the ANC's process of selecting candidates had changed over the last two elections.

Manganye said that the party had always allowed the public to comment on and make recommendations regarding policy, manifestos, and, in the last two elections, candidate selection.

Manganye said the ANC is an organisation of the people, not only of its members and there was nothing inappropriate about allowing society to provide input on who should be the party's mayoral candidates.

"You cannot lead society without considering its views. Mayors do not lead the ANC; they lead the public. So, you cannot reduce that process only to the ANC and its structures and forget the very important people who will be led by such individuals."

He said if a non-ANC card-carrying member was chosen as a mayoral candidate, they would be given an

'You cannot lead society without considering its views. Mayors do not lead the ANC; they lead the public'

opportunity to join the party before the elections.

"The person who is successfully selected, if they are not already a member, will, as per the guidelines, be required to join the party. By the time of the election, that person will already be a member of the ANC. This simply means the candidate will be a member of the ANC at the end of the day."

The ANC's Ekurhuleni regional chairperson, Nkosindiphile Xhakaza, said there were many people who were not card-carrying members of the ANC but who worked harder for the party than some of those in leadership positions.

Xhakaza said it should also be appreciated that while the party has about one million members, it receives votes from millions more people.

"If your membership is one million and you get voted for by over six million, it means there are many more people who identify with the ANC, even if they are not card-carrying members for one reason or another.

"We have a lot of professionals who would like to serve but somehow they are not part of the membership system for one reason or another. Those people could be in the private or public sector and those circumstances could make it difficult for them to maintain active membership.

"The ANC is the only democratic organisation that goes through a process like that. We are not like Mr Herman Mashaba, where they wake up and hire a leader. I doubt Xolani Khumalo has ever chaired a programme of action over the years."

Xhakaza said the ANC was born out of popular struggles in communities, adding that those applying for mayoral positions would not oppose the party's policy positions but would instead strengthen them.

He added that, despite the previous culture in which being a branch chairperson automatically meant standing as a ward councillor, branches would still exercise their choice in selecting candidates before communities are allowed to make their own inputs.

"The risk is that we must appoint someone who will uphold the values and principles of the ANC Constitution and live by them because it is the structures of the ANC that must oversee the work of that candidate.

"That is the only area where there could be a risk, that once the person ascends to office, they may not fully subscribe to the programme of action because there is an ANC manifesto that they must sign to confirm that they will abide by it," he said.

'A South African who is not a member may also self-nominate and place his or her own name forward as a nominee for consideration'

Emberton placed under scrutiny

The NPA is close to making a decision on possible charges in a probe involving SA Steel Mills and allegations of questionable cross-border transactions linked to the company

Brian Sokutu

Against a background of payments under scrutiny — amid claims that UK-based Emberton Limited was used to launder money by SA Steel Mills (SASM) and inflated invoices from India — the *Mail & Guardian* has learnt that the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) is close to deciding whether to charge the suspects linked to alleged fraudulent transactions.

The suspects have made warning statements to the SA Police Service but have declined to comment on the allegations. The *M&G* understands the probe includes Emberton, seen by authorities as a crucial link in entities involved in the external movement of public funds.

At the time of going to print, NPA spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago was not available for comment.

Sources have said the South African Reserve Bank and the South African Revenue Service investigative units “take these alle-

gations very serious and warrants a joint investigation into the conduct of these entities”.

The *M&G* has reported that affidavits seen by the newspaper point to concerns over due diligence processes and a flawed business case underpinning more than R1.2 billion in funding from the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition’s Black Industrialist Scheme to SASM, a steel manufacturer in Meyerton, east of Johannesburg. Revelations have also emerged about how the IDC funded SASM — an insolvent entity — using public funds. The IDC maintains that funding applications are assessed through “a comprehensive due diligence process”.

Lawyer Ian Small-Smith, representing complainants in the criminal complaint, declined to comment, saying law enforcement “must be left alone to do their work”.

Allegations of fraud and embezzlement are contained in affidavits deposed by feuding parties. About R121.5 million is allegedly linked to



Affidavit: About R121.5 million is allegedly linked to payments associated with Emberton Limited. Photo: Supplied

payments associated with Emberton Limited. The steel manufacturer has faced financial difficulty in recent years, leading to the sale of Pro Roof Industrial Park, which owns SA Steel Mills and the land on which its steel mill operates. Alfeco, led by Sachin Ahuja, acquired the business in April 2024 but later withdrew from the transaction.

The former SASM owners — Coin Wise Trading 42 (Pty) Ltd, Pro Roof Industrial Park (Pty) Ltd and the Pro RM Group — have denied claims of money laundering, dismissing them as “nothing new”.

In a response on behalf of Rafik Mohamed and the three entities, law

firm Shaheed Dollie Incorporated said the allegations formed “part of the disputed factual narrative advanced by Alfeco and PRIP, including in support of their damages claim and counterclaim in the private arbitration proceedings”.

“Our clients deny in the strongest terms that SA Steel Mills, Mr Mohamed, Coin Wise, PRIP, the Pro RM Group or any person acting on their behalf, used Emberton or any related transaction, to launder money, inflate invoices, misappropriate funds or dishonestly extract value from SA Steel Mills or the IDC funding structure.”

The firm said: “The transaction and

the entitlement of Alfeco to retain the PRIP shares were ventilated in private AFSA arbitration proceedings before Adv Azhar Bham SC.

“Those proceedings culminated in an award delivered on 12 December 2025. “We do not waive the confidentiality attached to the private arbitration proceedings.”

It said the Emberton issue “formed part of Alfeco’s broader attack on Mr Mohamed and the previous management of SASM”, though questions on Emberton were not answered and no transactional clarity was provided.

“That attack was advanced in circumstances where Alfeco had obtained access to the books and records of PRIP and SASM, had taken interim management, had pursued the retention of the PRIP shares and had advanced a damages counter claim in arbitration.

“Our clients deny that Mr Mohamed, Coin Wise, PRIP, the Pro RM Group or the previous management of SASM stole monies, misappropriated IDC funds, procured false accounting entries for personal benefit, laundered money, inflated invoices, dishonestly used Emberton or any other entity as a conduit, dishonestly misrepresented the financial position of SASM, PRIP or related entities or acted unlawfully in relation to the IDC funding arrangements.”

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Paying more for less power

Citizens are paying far more for electricity despite using less of it, as rising tariffs, fixed monthly charges and municipal costs reshape household bills and intensify affordability pressures

Mandisa Makgakga

South Africans are paying more for electricity while using less of it, according to a new light paper released by residential solar provider, GoSolr.

It says the power crisis is driven not by load-shedding but by rising tariffs, fixed charges and a pricing system that punishes reduced consumption and self-generation.

The quarterly Light Paper, titled “South Africa’s Latest Power Grab”, says the electricity crisis has shifted from one primarily defined by load-shedding to another increasingly shaped by affordability pressures and escalating fixed fees.

Electricity tariffs have risen by more than 1 100% since 2007. It cites the example of a typical Eskom direct customer consuming about 800kWh who paid R1 055 in 2014 and R3 388 in 2024 before the latest approved increases.

Electricity bills no longer reflect only the cost of energy consumed. Instead, households increasingly face layered costs including generation, grid infrastructure, municipal surcharges, diesel generation, system losses, theft and non-payment.

Consumers also shoulder indirect costs associated with unreliable electricity supply, including damaged appliances, reduced productivity, downtime, private security expenses and investments in back-up power systems such as generators, batteries and rooftop solar.

The latest tariff increases have intensified the concerns. Eskom implemented an average 8.76% increase for direct-paying customers from 1 April 2026. Municipalities are expected to implement average increases of 9.01% or so from 1 July 2026.

The National Energy Regulator of South Africa (Nersa) has also approved a further 8.83% increase for Eskom direct customers from April next year. The adjustments followed the regulator’s correction of a R54.7 billion error in Eskom’s regulatory asset base as part of a court-directed redetermination process.

However, the GoSolr paper says the biggest pressure on consumers increasingly comes not from usage charges alone but from fixed monthly fees that customers must pay to remain connected to the grid.

In Johannesburg, some three-phase post-paid customers — large residential or small business users with a high capacity three-phase electricity connection — allegedly face fixed charges of as much as R1 761 a month before using electricity. Many households across different municipalities pay fixed monthly charges exceeding R500.

Dean Van Vuuren, a homeowner in Centurion, said efforts to reduce electricity use had done little to lower his monthly bill.

“We switched off geysers, reduced usage and added solar where we could but the bill is still higher because of the fixed charges.”

Small business owner Louis Govender, who fitted solar panels in 2022 for his business in Benoni, Ekurhuleni, said installing solar panels had not shielded the business from escalating costs.

“We use less every month yet pay more and what is frustrating is that we have solar panels. It’s like we are being punished for being slightly off the grid,” Govender said.

Investigative reporting by News24 recently found that City Power accumulated about R21.6bn in electricity sales losses over six years while owing Eskom more than R5.2bn.

The report stated that City Power



Spiralling: Electricity tariffs have risen by more than 1 100% since 2007. In addition to consumption costs, there are layered costs for generation, theft and non-payment, among others. Photo: Madelene Cronje

admitted that long-standing metering failures meant it could not accurately verify how much electricity it was receiving and being charged for by Eskom. The report found that City Power failed to inspect key intake meters despite setting targets to do so and acknowledged persistent mismatches between revenue collection and expenditure.

The findings have intensified debate around municipal tariff structures and whether pricing models are being used to compensate for operational inefficiencies, declining consumption and financial losses.

Public finance experts have warned that some municipalities risk entering what they describe as a financial “death spiral”, where falling electricity sales volumes force utilities to recover more revenue through higher tariffs and fixed charges, encouraging even more consumers to reduce grid usage or invest in self-generation.

Professor Alex van den Heever, of the University of the Witwatersrand’s School of Governance, said there was “no short-term route out of the debt” and described Johannesburg as being “in a death spiral”.

The affordability crisis is also intersecting with infrastructure concerns.

Johannesburg risks losing R1.4bn in Treasury-linked funding intended for electricity infrastructure investment, maintenance

and refurbishment backlogs amid governance disputes involving City Power leadership.

Critics say this highlights a growing contradiction in the electricity sector: consumers are paying significantly more while infrastructure quality and municipal financial stability remain under pressure.

The eThekweni Ratepayers Protest Movement (ERPM) in Durban, with the support of ActionSA, the uMkhonto weSizwe Party and Freedom Front Plus, marched to the City Hall on Wednesday to protest against rising municipal bills and poor service delivery. The march follows a stalemate with Mayor Cyril Xaba over tariff hikes. ERPM warned of possible wider mass action and presented an alternative budget that claims to achieve a 0% tariff increase while saving the city R263 million.

Xaba said he had written to Minister of Electricity Kgosisentsho Ramokgopa and Minister of Water and Sanitation Penny Majodina, urging Eskom and Umngeni-Thukela Water to reconsider their proposed tariffs for the 2026/27 financial year, citing them as unaffordable.

Eskom has defended the latest tariff adjustments, saying they are necessary to ensure financial sustainability and maintain reliable supply.

“We have been clear in communicating that Eskom is working to ensure that future tariff increase requests remain reasonable, recog-

nising the affordability pressures on both residential and business customers,” group chief financial officer Calib Cassim said.

The utility has also defended increased fixed charges as necessary to recover network and infrastructure costs that continue regardless of consumption levels or whether households generate some of their own electricity.

Eskom says subsidised tariffs remain in place for qualifying low-income households.

Nersa said the approved increases followed public consultation processes and were intended to balance Eskom’s financial sustainability with consumer protection obligations under the Electricity Regulation Act.

Municipalities purchase bulk electricity from Eskom before adding their own costs, surcharges and distribution margins. However, tariff structures differ substantially between municipalities.

Johannesburg has drawn attention for steep fixed charges, while the City of Cape Town has implemented comparatively smaller increases in some categories and introduced optional time-of-use tariffs for certain consumers.

The South Africa Local Government Association has raised concerns about the pace of bulk tariff increases and warned that municipalities have limited ability to absorb rising electricity costs without affecting other municipal services.

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Working on Fire sues over tender

The environmental protection organisation seeks to halt the award of the national wildfire management contract to Tefla, while the department and Tefla oppose the urgent relief

Sheree Bega

South Africa's national wildfire response system was at the centre of a legal battle in the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria on Tuesday.

Working on Fire has sought an urgent interim interdict to halt the department of forestry, fisheries and the environment's decision to award a multibillion-rand national wildfire management contract to the Tefla Group.

At stake is the structure and continuity of the Working on Fire programme, which both parties described in court papers as critical to wildfire prevention and suppression capacity across all nine provinces. The Working on Fire programme is implemented through a public-private partnership between the department and the Kishugu Group.

In its amplified heads of argument, Working on Fire argued that implementation of the award before judicial review was completed would cause irreparable operational disruption, including the loss of established firefighting infrastructure, aviation capacity and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) employment linked to the programme.

The department, however, contended that delaying or suspending implementation of the award would itself undermine national wildfire-response readiness and destabilise an essential public safety system.

The dispute arises from a 2022 contract for the five-year implementation of the Working on Fire programme, which was initially awarded to Working on Fire.

That award was set aside in April last year after a challenge by rival bidders, including the Tefla Group and the SA Youth Movement-CEF joint venture, after the court found that bidders had not been treated fairly.

The court ordered the department to reconsider the bids or restart the tender process, while allowing the existing arrangement to continue temporarily pending a legal outcome. After that reconsideration process, the department awarded the contract to the Tefla Group, triggering the current legal challenge.

Working on Fire said the department illegally altered the procurement framework after bids had been submitted.

It argued that all bidders prepared and priced proposals on the basis of a five-year implementation period under the original terms of reference. However, the department later engaged with Tefla regarding a substantially shortened two-year implementation model without reopening the process to competing bidders.

"The applicant's complaint is that the department materially altered the scope, pricing assumptions, mobilisation assumptions,



Burning issue: At stake is the structure and continuity of the Working on Fire programme, which both opposing side describe in court papers as critical to wildfire prevention and suppression capacity across all nine provinces. Photo: File

implementation assumptions and competitive conditions underpinning the procurement process, without reopening competition," the heads stated.

Working on Fire argued that the department effectively moved from one procurement model to another by considering revised pricing submitted by Tefla for a two-year arrangement based on years four and five of its original bid.

According to the papers, a Tefla representative told departmental officials during March 2026 discussions that the project had originally required "substantial investment over five years" but had now been "compressed into a two-year period", valued at about R1.8 billion.

The representative further raised concerns about "restructuring their costing for only two years" and said "significant changes would be required considering that three years had already lapsed".

Working on Fire argued that the discussions demonstrated that the department was negotiating revised implementation assumptions, pricing and operational changes linked to a reduced budget and shortened timeframe, while competing bidders were excluded from equivalent engagement.

"The second respondent [the department] did not merely allow price refinement from the fourth respondent [Tefla Group], it allowed a procurement redesign which should have been a new tender," the heads argued.

Working on Fire said the selective engagement with Tefla breached section 217 of the Constitution, treasury regulations and the Public Finance Management Act, which require procurement processes to be fair, equitable, transparent and competitive.

It further alleged that Tefla was afforded opportunities not extended to competing bidders, including engagement regarding revised pricing, implementation assumptions and tax-compliance issues.

"This is a patent breach of the principles of fairness, equity and transparency required by section 217 of the Constitution."

There were "prima facie concerns", it said, that the department failed to properly engage with earlier bid evaluation committee findings and independent quality-assurance concerns relating to Tefla's operational readiness and financial capacity.

On urgency and irreparable harm, Working on Fire said it has operated the programme since 2013, employing about 5 700 EPWP workers and maintaining aviation, firefighting and disaster-response capacity across all nine provinces.

It argued that implementation of the award before judicial review was finalised would terminate the arrangement and result in "irreparable operational, commercial and organisational harm". The continuity of wildfire-response capacity and disaster-management capability remained matters of substantial public importance.

The department, in an answering affidavit deposited to by director-general Nomfundo Tshabalala, opposed the application and argued that Working on Fire failed to establish any basis for interim or final relief.

The department denied that the procurement process was illegally altered and argued that the tender was reconsidered within the framework of the original five-year terms of reference after the earlier court order.

The reconsideration process included administrative compliance checks, technical evaluation, financial assessment, preference scoring and quality-assurance oversight.

The department disputed claims that the tender was unlawfully converted into a two-year arrangement, arguing that discussions about a shorter implementation horizon arose only after the award decision and were linked to budgetary and

operational realities.

It said that did not amount to a new procurement process or illegal redesign of the tender but rather legal post-award engagement concerning implementation of the contract.

The department further disputed allegations of procedural unfairness and unequal treatment, arguing that Working on Fire's claims were speculative and unsupported by evidence of illegality.

The department argued that delaying implementation of the award could undermine national wildfire-response readiness and affect EPWP employment linked to the programme.

It further contended that the tender was a service-provider agreement governed by procurement law that did not guarantee continued operational control by any particular contractor.

Working on Fire, it said, had not met the requirements for the interdictory relief it sought.

"The service it currently provides to the department is provided in terms of an agreement that has already been found to have been concluded unlawfully. Thus, save for the suspension order, the applicant has no right — even prima facie — to continue rendering the services pending its review," the affidavit stated.

The department argued that the original review brought by Tefla had succeeded and that the reconsideration process vindicated the decision to revisit the original award.

"Not only was Tefla's review successful but based on the re-evaluation, it has been vindicated in the sense that the tender should have been awarded to it at the outset.

"The applicant has already had the benefit of more than three years under the unlawfully concluded contract. To allow it to run up the clock further would defeat Tefla's right to effective relief," the department argued.

Tefla, in its answering affidavit,

also opposed the interim interdict and argued that Working on Fire was attempting to preserve the benefits of a service agreement declared invalid by the court in April 2025.

Tefla said the earlier court order only temporarily suspended the declaration of invalidity to avoid disruption to national wildfire services pending a lawful re-award or new tender process.

The company argued that Working on Fire was seeking to extend that temporary arrangement beyond what the court originally contemplated.

Tefla further disputed Working on Fire's contention that the department unlawfully reduced the scope of the tender, arguing that the original deliverables and operational requirements remained intact.

It said disputes over the lawfulness of the award and the department's handling of the procurement process should properly be determined during the Part B judicial review proceedings on a full record, rather than through urgent interim relief.

The Tefla Group said it accepted that the Working on Fire programme was important, as was the continuity of its services.

"That is why the order of 1 April 2025 suspended the declaration of invalidity of Working on Fire's agreement pending the signing of a new SLA pursuant to the re-award or a new tender," the affidavit stated.

"The order struck a balance, by permitting Working on Fire to continue temporarily despite the invalidity of its agreement, until a lawful re-award or new tender could be implemented.

"Working on Fire now asks this court to alter that balance by extending its continued performance beyond the event contemplated in the order."

It said it was willing and able to implement the programme once the service level agreement was concluded and a purchase order issued.

Judgment was reserved.

Environment

Kruger National Park's 100-year milestone reflects both South Africa's conservation history and SANParks' efforts to shift from exclusionary "fortress conservation" to community partnerships and local economic development

A century of Kruger

Brian Sokutu

As SANParks prepares to mark 100 years since the establishment of the Kruger National Park, the people who lived in and interacted with the landscape for tens of thousands of years are long gone.

Among them were the San, whose presence during the Stone Age survives in the park's rich collection of rock art and artefacts, a legacy that continues to offer insight into South Africa's deep human history.

Reflecting on Kruger's early years, renowned environmental historian Jane Carruthers recalled a vastly different park experience from the tightly regulated reserve visitors know today.

Carruthers, author of the influential book *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History*, said tourists visiting around 1927 often arrived with little understanding of wilderness conservation.

"When tourists came to Kruger, they wanted to touch the wild animals — even lions, if they could," she told the *Mail & Guardian*. "There were no roads and no infrastructure. The instruction from the central government, which had taken over Kruger from the Transvaal administration, was simply that it should



Boosting the village economy: Phindile Sobhuza-Tshaka and her husband Thabathani of Tshaka Tours. Photos: Brian Sokutu

operate as a tourist destination."

At the time, the southern enclave near Pretoriusskop Rest Camp was the only section open during winter.

"There were no rules and regula-

tions," Carruthers said. "People got out of their cars and camped wherever they wanted. There was nobody to watch them — no opening or closing times."

For Carruthers, Kruger's centenary is significant not only as a conservation milestone but as a reflection of South Africa's political and social evolution. "It tells us about the his-

tory of South Africa over the last 100 years, because Kruger has fitted into that history and South Africans have always adapted," she said.

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National Park

we've had, the fact that Kruger still survives is remarkable. It could have gone in a completely different direction. Each succeeding generation has taken the best of it and carried it forward."

Spanning nearly two million hectares across Limpopo and Mpumalanga, with its eastern boundary running along the Lebombo Mountains bordering Mozambique, Kruger remains one of the world's largest protected areas.

Often compared by European tourists to the size of Wales, the park is home to an estimated three to five million animals, according to SANParks chief executive Hapiloe Sello. "Statistics are never entirely accurate around the borders," Sello noted.

But while Kruger's wildlife attracts millions of visitors, communities living alongside the park continue to face many of the same challenges affecting the rest of the country: unemployment, poverty and limited economic opportunities.

Sello said SANParks has increasingly shifted away from the exclusionary conservation model that historically separated parks from neighbouring communities. Through its Vision 2040 strategy, the organisation is trying to integrate biodiversity protection with local economic development.

"When running conservation areas,



SANParks chief executive, Hapiloe Sello.

we have to avoid creating islands of privilege that only serve holidaymakers," she said.

"In the last 30 years, particularly post-1994, one of our guiding principles has been bringing communities closer to national parks and identifying areas of mutual benefit."

Central to that effort is SANParks' enterprise and supplier development

programme, which supports small businesses through training, market access and financing.

Among the flagship initiatives is the Sanlam-SANParks SMME Fund, which provides non-interest-bearing loans of up to R1 million to small businesses that secure SANParks contracts but lack working capital.

"These are people who ordinarily

would not have access to a R1 million loan from a bank," said Sello. "Without working capital, they wouldn't be able to fulfil the order."

SANParks effectively acts as guarantor for participating businesses, with a purchase order serving as security. About 150 SMMEs have benefited from the programme so far.

"We're looking for more social-impact partnerships," Sello said. "We cannot do this alone without collaboration with the private sector."

One such partnership is unfolding at Agulhas National Park in the Western Cape, where Needles Kitchen — a 60-seater restaurant near the southern tip of Africa — recently opened as part of a public-private partnership with SANParks.

The restaurant focuses on locally sourced seafood, meat and fynbos-inspired dishes alongside Cape wines and regional craft spirits.

Co-founder Noël Bastiaan said partnering with SANParks had opened significant opportunities for the family-owned business. "As concessionaires, we've been welcomed by SANParks and learned a lot about the organisation's culture," Bastiaan said.

The company secured the tender after a lengthy compliance and regulatory process following SANParks' 2024 call for investors in the new tourism precinct.

"This is the southernmost restaurant on the African continent," Bastiaan said. But beyond the location, he said the emphasis is on locality and community development.

"Our objective is to source locally — from fishermen, vegetable producers and local suppliers," he said.

"We also want to upskill staff from the area so that international guests receive world-class service."

The business, he added, is equally conscious of operating within a protected conservation area. "We have to think about waste management, sustainability and how we conduct ourselves in the park environment," Bastiaan said.

Further north, tourism entrepreneur Pindile Sopouza Chaga is using tourism to create economic opportunities in remote villages.

Chaga, co-owner of Chaga Tours and Adventures, said the company works with rural communities to build tourism awareness and develop local infrastructure, including accommodation, catering and village clean-up initiatives.

"We go into villages where people don't even realise tourism can create jobs and income," she said.

The business operates across several villages in the region, where attractions include mountains, waterfalls and agricultural tourism.

But with tourist numbers fluctuating, the company has also diversified into cultivating herbs and medicinal plants such as rosemary, thyme, lavender and calendula.

Villagers grow and harvest the plants, which Chaga Tours then buys and sells through its networks.

"We realised we were preaching tourism to struggling communities," she said.

"So we had to help them heal as well."

The project has since expanded into supplying products to businesses in Johannesburg and Limpopo connected to SANParks-supported SMME programmes.

Working with communities, women, youth and traditional leaders

Inclusive conservation — working alongside communities, traditional leaders and local knowledge holders — remains central to the work of the Natural Heritage Alliance (NHA), a civil society coalition advocating for conservation reform in South Africa.

The alliance this year marked five years since South Africa adopted the recommendations of the High-Level Panel's report to review policies, legislation and practices on matters related to the management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephants, lions, leopards and black and white rhino, a process that reshaped debate around wildlife conservation, animal welfare and community inclusion.

Established in 2022, the NHA brings together communities, women leaders, youth organisations, traditional healers and conservation groups. It says conservation should not focus only on protecting wildlife but also on justice, equity and livelihoods.

The coalition said progress had been made since the release of the report in 2021, including policy reforms aligned with the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity.

But the organisation warned that momentum appears to be slowing.

The NHA expressed concern over what it described as declining consultation with traditional leaders, healers and community

groups following changes in leadership at the department of forestry, fisheries and the environment last year.

It said inconsistent signals from the government risk undermining trust and delaying conservation reform.

"Our commemoration is more than a celebration — it is a call to action," the alliance said.

"Civil society reaffirms its commitment to work alongside the government to confront the triple crisis of biodiversity loss, climate pressures and inequality."

"The success of this partnership will determine whether lions, elephants, rhinos and leopards become symbols of hope in landscapes where people and nature can thrive together."

The High-Level Panel was established in 2019 by former environment minister Barbara Creecy, following mounting criticism of controversial wildlife practices, particularly the captive lion industry and calls from parliament for legislative reform.

The panel's report, released in 2021, contained recommendations aimed at aligning conservation policy with both biodiversity protection and socio-economic priorities.

Among ongoing concerns raised by civil society groups is the government's position on reviewing lion bone export quotas, with fears that earlier reforms could be weakened.



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MEETING OF THE CONVOCATION

Members of the Convocation of the University of the Western Cape are invited to the **Annual General Meeting of the Convocation** to be held from **11h00 – 13h00 on Saturday, 20 June 2026** at the Life Sciences Auditorium, Brian O'Connell Life Sciences Building (previously Life Sciences Building), Main Campus, Robert Sobukwe Road, Bellville.

The Convocation consists of the assembly of:

- academic employees of the University, appointed permanently or on contract for a period of not less than one year;
- the Vice-Chancellor/Rector, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors/Vice-Rectors, the Registrar, the Executive Directors; and the University Librarian;
- two members of the Council elected by the Council to serve on the Senate;
- emeritus professors of the University;
- graduates of the University, provided that any graduate who notifies the Council in writing, through the office of the Registrar, that he or she does not wish to continue to be a member of the Convocation, ceases to be a member upon receipt of that notice by the Registrar; and
- persons who were members of Convocation as at September 2018, when the amended University of the Western Cape Statute was enacted.

AGENDA

- Opening and Welcome
- Minutes of the previous meeting, Conv. 2025/01, Conv. 2025/02Sp
 - Matters arising from the Minutes
- Annual Report of the President of the Convocation
- Election of the President of Convocation: 2026/27
- Update on amendments to UWC Statute
- Convocation and Convocation Executive Committee (CEC) Standing Orders
- Matters to be referred to Council
- Recommendations and Suggestions
- Matters for Noting
 - Message from the Chairperson of Council
 - Rector and Vice-Chancellor's Report
- Announcement of Election of the President of the Convocation results
- Closure

Please RSVP to secretariat@uwc.ac.za by 12 June 2026 to confirm your attendance. Consult the UWC website www.uwc.ac.za for updates.

Dr N Lawton-Misra, Ph.D.

Environment

Sheree Bega

As conflict in the Middle East redraws global shipping routes, scientists are warning that South Africa's west coast is becoming an emerging danger zone for whales.

Thousands of commercial vessels avoiding instability in the Red Sea and Strait of Hormuz are rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope, dramatically increasing maritime traffic through some of the world's richest whale habitats.

New preliminary research presented to the International Whaling Commission by researchers from the University of Pretoria's Whale Unit at the Mammal Research Institute, Afriseas Solutions and the International Fund for Animal Welfare, found extensive overlap between whale habitats and major shipping corridors around Cape Town, Saldanha Bay and Cape Agulhas.

The analysis found that the number of large, fast-moving vessels travelling faster than 15 knots — considered the greatest ship-strike threat to whales — has quadrupled since late 2023.

The assessment combines species distribution models for six whale species — Bryde's whale, Southern right whale, Humpback whale, Fin whale, Sei whale, Sperm whale — with vessel traffic data to map areas of heightened exposure risk along South Africa's southwest coast.

"The risk has increased very simply because there's more ships," said professor Els Vermeulen, the chief scientist of the whale unit.

"And so we did a risk assessment to kind of pinpoint the areas where that risk is highest but it doesn't mean we see an increased mortality, it doesn't mean we see an increase in injuries. If anything, a lot of mortality related to ship strikes in general globally is cryptic."

Vermeulen explained that whale deaths from ship strikes are often invisible. "It happens offshore, if whales get hit, they will sink - they don't necessarily strand for us to see so we can't go around waiting for data to see an increase in mortality."

"When we have an increase in shipping, we know there's an increased risk and what we did is try to map where that high risk is and how that overlaps with the distribution of different whales."

South Africa's recorded data reflects this invisibility. "The numbers we have just shows it's super low; we have just, in the last 50 years of stranding data and we can see that less than 1% of that relates to ship strike and confirms a lot of what might be happening is cryptic, we don't see it per se," she said.

According to the preliminary assessment, the southwestern Cape coast is one of southern Africa's busiest maritime corridors, anchored by major ports including Cape Town and Saldanha Bay, as well as a key mineral export terminal at Saldanha. It is also an established global shipping route.

In recent years, pressure on this already congested sea space has increased further. Geopolitical instability in the Red Sea has led to about 18 international shipping companies rerouting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope. This diversion has significantly increased vessel traffic along South Africa's west coast.

Cruise ship activity has also risen, with Cape Town recording 83 cruise ship calls in the 2024/25 season.

At the same time, the region supports productive fisheries, including deep-sea trawl, longline, purse seine and small-scale artisanal fisheries across Cape Town, Saldanha Bay, St Helena Bay and Lamberts Bay.

Scientists warn that increasing global shipping traffic rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope is intensifying overlap with whale habitats off South Africa's west coast, raising the risk of vessel strikes



Ship ahoy: The analysis found that the number of large, fast-moving vessels travelling faster than 15 knots — considered the greatest ship-strike threat to whales — has quadrupled since late 2023. Photo: University of Pretoria's Whale Unit at the Mammal Research Institute

Whale strike risk rises as shipping surges off SA coast

The authors warned that this convergence of intensive shipping, fishing activity and high densities of recovering whale populations has created an elevated risk of whale ship strikes along the southwest coast.

The International Whaling Commission has identified ship strikes as one of the most serious global threats to large whale populations and has recommended a detailed risk assessment for the approaches to the Port of Cape Town.

The International Maritime Organisation has also been working on measures to reduce strike risk globally. A recent global review further highlights southern Africa as a major gap in ship-strike management and flags the region as requiring urgent attention.

South Africa's southwest coast and the Benguela upwelling system support globally significant populations of humpback, southern right, Bryde's, blue, fin and sei whales, as well as sperm whales.

In recent years, scientists have also documented humpback whale "supergroups" — large feeding aggregations of dozens, sometimes hundreds, of whales in confined areas linked to favourable conditions in the Benguela ecosystem.

According to the preliminary assessment, this convergence has created a zone of elevated strike exposure where whale habitats and shipping corridors overlap most intensely around Cape Town, Saldanha Bay, Cape Point and Cape Agulhas.

The researchers found that ship-strike risk is now a present and pressing issue for both inshore and offshore species.

The study also highlights suspected underreporting of whale ship strikes,

citing research indicating that only 0.6% of more than 7 000 recorded cetacean mortality and morbidity cases in South Africa over 50 years were attributed to vessel collisions.

"This figure seems implausibly low given the demonstrated overlap between whales and shipping," the preliminary assessment said. "Limited carcass recovery and observations (reflecting the high current speeds and high energy coastlines of the region), difficulty in assigning cause of death and the near absence of offshore detection all likely contribute to this underestimation."

As a result, the researchers argue, strike data alone cannot be relied upon to assess risk.

"Consequently, strike incidence records alone cannot serve as a reliable measure of risk and model-based approaches and the drawing on international experiences are essential to identify areas of concern."

The modelling shows that vessel traffic has increased substantially since December 2023, with the fastest ships — those most likely to cause lethal collisions — rising by a factor of four.

The analysis suggests that relatively modest changes to shipping routes could significantly reduce risk.

Shifting lanes slightly further offshore — by less than 20 nautical miles — could reduce strike exposure by 20% to 50% depending on species, while having minimal impact on voyage distances that often exceed 12 000 nautical miles.

The greatest reductions were estimated for Bryde's whales (50%), humpback whales (40%) and southern right whales (31%). Even offshore

species such as fin and sperm whales showed measurable reductions in risk.

However, the researchers caution these results are preliminary. "The risk estimates are based on relative occurrence probabilities from SDMs [species distribution models] rather than absolute density data."

Offshore whale distributions remain poorly understood and require further research, including dedicated surveys and tracking.

For Vermeulen, the challenge is to balance precaution with data limitations. "We can't quantify what this means for populations and it's not something we can even try to attempt to quantify because again if we don't know what the mortality rate is, we can't see how that impacts a population, right, so I don't think we need to wait for that either."

"We have an issue, it's very simple. There's more ships and we have a lot of whales in our waters so that means there is an increased risk; it means we need to mitigate and minimise risks."

Researchers are focusing on what is feasible with current data. "There's a lot of shipping lanes that come together around the Cape of Good Hope," she said. "That's quite a big hotspot because all the different lanes come together, they congregate in that area."

"And then you have something called port approaches. It's where the ships divert from the lane and they go into port. And so you can't reroute a port approach because they obviously have to go to port so that's usually where you look at speed restrictions in certain areas."

Vermeulen said international discussions are already underway with shipping bodies and regulators. "We're not pointing fingers at anyone, this is a global issue that has led ships to reroute for human safety."

"A lot of these stakeholders who are shipping companies and the World Shipping Council and the International Maritime Organisation, they're all sitting with us, they're all keen to talk about this ... A lot of them are very happy to adhere to guidelines, even voluntarily, so once in SA waters it's going to be up to us and the government now to say, okay these are the guidelines you want you to follow."

Researchers are particularly concerned about the humpback whale supergroups that form off the west coast during summer months.

"We have these very large aggregations of hundreds of humpback whales and those kinds of concentrations or densities of whales really worry us the most especially with port approaches because these ships then come very close to shore," Vermeulen said.

"And whales that are feeding might not be very much aware of their surroundings or they're very much engaged in other types of behaviour."

Large whales are especially vulnerable because of their size and the limits of ship manoeuvrability. "To divert a ship of that size last minute because now you just saw a whale in front of you is fairly impossible," she said.

Whales, she warned, may struggle to detect large vessels acoustically. "The whale may not necessarily know where the front of that ship is because they depend so much on acoustic signals," she said. "That is something that might limit them to avoid large vessels when they're close by."

'We're not pointing fingers at anyone, this is a global issue that has led ships to reroute for human safety.'

How to know whether to buy or rent

The same property in different cities will give you different outcomes. Here's what to consider:



Ask Ash
Ash Müller

A thread on X went viral this week. A guy named Thendo Muloiwa shared that he had spent two years renting a flat in Victory Park, Johannesburg, for R12 000 a month. His landlord had listed the unit for sale at R1.4 million.

Thendo did the math (out loud, for all of X to see). What he found was uncomfortable reading for anyone who has been told that buying property is the golden path to wealth.

His numbers were blunt when he typed that bond repayments at prime would run at R14 479 a month. Add levies of R2 500 and rates of R1 200 and the total cost of owning the flat comes to R18 200 a month.

Compare that to the R12 000 he was paying to rent the space and suddenly the "Why rent when you can own?" crowd goes silent.

To make matters worse, the previous owner paid R1.375m for the unit in 2018. Seven years later, it's listed at R1.4m — an appreciation of R25 000. That's not a typo: R25 000 in seven years on an asset you were paying bond interest on.

Then Thendo hit the real eina button: some of the units had been sitting on the market since 2024, with no buyers. You obviously can't eat paper profits or an illiquid asset nobody wants to buy.

Is renting smarter than buying? Not exactly. Here's the most honest way I can answer: it depends on where you buy, what you pay and what the city around your asset looks like. Let me put it to you another way. The same property in different cities in South Africa will give you different outcomes.

Cape Town's property market has appreciated aggressively over the past decade. According to FNB's Property Barometer, the city's average house price growth has consist-



Leverage: A property that has been sitting unsold for 12 months is a negotiation opportunity. Picture: Pexels

ently outpaced inflation and the national average. In some suburbs, property values have doubled over the past 10 years. People who bought in Woodstock or Observatory in 2014 are sitting on real wealth today.

Johannesburg? That's a different story. Particularly in sectional title flats, like the type Thendo was renting. Prices in many areas have gone sideways or backwards in real terms.

After inflation, a lot of Joburg flat owners haven't gained anything.

The same could be said in the upper end of the luxury market as many with mansions in good areas of Johannesburg can't sell their homes for the prices they paid for them 10 years ago. Some have lost money on paper, even before you count the interest they paid on the bond.

Why? Because property prices follow people. And people follow functioning cities.

Cape Town, whatever its flaws, has a relatively functional municipality. The City of Cape Town consistently tops national rankings for service delivery and has received clean audits (one of the few municipalities to achieve consecutive clean audits each year). Water comes out of taps, roads get fixed and city planning, while imperfect, has some coherence.

When a city works, businesses want to be there. When businesses want to be there, skilled workers follow. When skilled workers follow,

demand for housing goes up. When demand for housing goes up, prices go up. It is not complicated; it is cause and effect.

The City of Johannesburg, by contrast, has been plagued for years by mismanagement, ageing infrastructure and service delivery failures.

Hillbrow, once one of the most sought-after addresses in Africa, is now a cautionary tale about what happens when a municipality stops caring about its built environment.

Even in suburbs like Victory Park, a decent, middle-class area, you see the knock-on effect of a struggling metro.

Investors are cautious and so are the buyers. The money is instead flowing to where things work or other areas that offer better security for the investment. This is why I always say: when you are purchasing a real estate asset, you are not just buying a property. You are buying into a municipality and how they deliver services and maintain infrastructure that affects your asset.

Your property's value is influenced by everything surrounding it. You could own the most beautifully renovated house on the street but if the house next door has been hijacked, the building across the road is derelict and the park on the corner is a crime hotspot, you are going to struggle to sell and achieve a good price.

This is why a mansion in a well-maintained estate in Stellenbosch and a mansion in a neglected Johannesburg suburb are two different investments, even if the buildings are identical.

The surrounding environment is almost as important as the asset. Infrastructure, green spaces, road quality, street lighting, cleanliness and neighbourhood safety all feed into what a buyer is willing to pay when you eventually want to exit.

Before you buy anywhere, walk the streets. Not just the block your property is on — the surrounding area within a kilometre. Look at the state of the roads and the buildings. Look at what businesses are operating there. Are there new restaurants opening or are shuttered shopfronts piling up? These are your indicators.

Even in a great city and a great suburb, you can destroy your investment by overpaying. This is probably the most underrated truth in property. The price you pay is the single biggest determinant of your return.

If you paid R1.375m for a flat in 2018 and it's worth R1.4m in 2025, you have not made money. You have lost money. Inflation over that period has been roughly 30%.

Your money sitting in a decent money market account would have grown significantly. The bond interest you paid has compounded year after year against you.

Smart buyers look for motivated sellers, distressed sales and properties that have been on the market for too long. A property that has been sitting unsold for 12 months is a negotiation opportunity. A buyer with a clean pre-approved bond in a slow market has enormous leverage.

In Johannesburg's flat market, I've seen buyers negotiate 15% to 20% off the asking price. The discount is day-one equity, real money you didn't have to earn.

There's also a concept called buying below replacement value — paying less for a property than it would cost to build it from scratch.

When you find those deals, the fundamentals are in your favour from the moment you sign.

Should you buy or rent?

If you're looking at a well-located property in a functioning city, the body corporate is healthy, the surrounding infrastructure is intact and you can negotiate a genuinely good price, buying can build wealth over time.

Property is one of the most accessible asset classes for South Africans. It gives you a leveraged position, meaning you can control a R1.5m asset with a much smaller initial outlay and if you hold it long enough in the right location, real capital appreciation follows.

But if you're buying a sectional title flat in a Johannesburg metro that has been struggling for years, paying full asking price, taking on a bond whose monthly repayment is substantially higher than the rental on the same property, in a building whose levies are stretched, you are not building wealth. You are carrying an expensive liability and calling it an investment.

Renting in that scenario is not a failure; it is patience with a purpose. The money you save on the difference between renting and owning can be invested in equities, ETFs or a deposit fund for when you find the right property at the right price in the right place.

Run the numbers and run them all. Not just the bond calculator on the bank's website. Because the real estate industry has an obvious interest in getting you to buy. The banks, the estate agents and the attorneys all make money when you sign. You're the only one at that table whose interests are entirely your own. Do the maths and buy smart — or not at all.



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Africa has a gift the world still needs

The demographic case is equally striking. More than 60% of Africans are under 25. By 2050, one in three people aged 15 to 24 anywhere on Earth will be African. A continent this young is not a problem to be managed. It is a generation to be partnered with

In 1971, Bantu Steve Biko set down a sentence that has not aged so much as matured. The great powers, he wrote, “may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look but the great gift still has to come from Africa, giving the world a more human face”.

Forty-five years after his murder in police custody, the sentence reads less like prophecy than a brief. It tells Africa its task and the world what it still awaits.

In a Europe rearming, a Washington turning inward, a Middle East at war and a multilateral order audibly cracking, that brief has become urgent. The question is whether Africa, long narrated through fracture, can finally narrate itself through purpose – and whether Britain, which once drew the lines, can learn to listen to the continent that is now redrawing them.

For too long, the African story has been told from the outside in. The wars in eastern Congo and Sudan, the unconstitutional transfers of power across the Sahel, the boats in the Mediterranean: these are reported as African pathologies. They are, in truth, the long tail of choices made elsewhere. The boundaries inherited from the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885 remain the architecture of much of the continent’s politics. Extractive economies, distorted state formation and a global financial system that treats African sovereignty as collateral all continue to do their quiet work.

Add to this the democratic deficit at the heart of global governance. Africa’s 54 states have no permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. The body that authorises war and peace in Africa is one in which Africa cannot vote on its own fate. International law, meanwhile, is invoked selectively, honoured in some capitals and shredded in others and the gap between rule and reality grows by the month.

But fracture is not the whole story. It is not even the most interesting part of it.

The continent’s development arc has moved from the founding ambition of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development to the structural reach of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). If Nepad offered the conceptual scaffolding for cooperation, the AfCFTA is one of the principal instruments for turning fragmented markets into a sovereign economic bloc. Fifty-five countries. 1.3-billion people. A combined gross domestic product of US\$3.4-trillion. The World Bank projects that effective imple-



Max Boqwana

mentation could lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035.

Trade statistics alone will not deliver renewal. Africa must also press its digital advantage, from fintech-driven financial inclusion to artificial intelligence and drone logistics, to leapfrog gaps that have persisted for generations. The infrastructure deficit, paradoxically, is a creative licence.

The demographic case is equally striking. More than 60% of Africans are under 25. By 2050, one in three people aged 15 to 24 anywhere on Earth will be African. A continent this young is not a problem to be managed. It is a generation to be partnered with. Its cities, universities and firms will either become laboratories of a new sovereign modernity or holding pens for frustration. Europe, with its own ageing demography and its border anxieties, has every reason to want the former.

Africa is not a continent in despair. It is a continent of contradiction, where conflict and innovation, fragility and possibility, poverty and resilience live side by side. This is precisely why unity remains urgent. Kwame Nkrumah saw it as a historical necessity. Julius Nyerere saw it as a practical imperative for dignity, development and survival. Their insight endures because fragmentation now weakens markets, diplomacy, peace, mobility and public trust at the same time.

Migration is the test the world watches most closely. Governed well, mobility strengthens labour markets, innovation and regional integration. Governed poorly, it becomes the raw material of fear, on both sides of the Mediterranean. The question for African systems is whether they can treat the African on the move as kith and kin rather than a stranger. The colonial habit of Othering must not be the template Africans use on one another. This continent belongs to all of us who live in it.

The mineral story is similar. Africa holds about 30% of the world’s mineral reserves, including most of the inputs for the global energy transition. It supplies roughly 75% of the world’s manganese, 70% of its cobalt and nearly 20% of its copper. Yet it captures less than 1% of the value of clean energy manufacturing. The



Great gift: Africa, a continent of contradiction, where conflict and innovation, fragility and possibility, poverty and resilience live side by side.

minerals leave. The value leaves. The jobs leave. What stays is the hole in the ground.

Abundance does not guarantee sovereignty. Mineral wealth must become leverage for industrialisation, technological capability and renewal, not a passport for the next round of extraction dressed up as green partnership.

Then there is the leakage. The High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, chaired by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, exposed the plumbing of economic loss. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates that illicit financial flows drain US\$88.6-billion from Africa every year, the equivalent of 3.7% of its gross domestic product.

Much of this money does not vanish. It moves to jurisdictions through financial centres across the world. The Global North’s seriousness about African development will, in the end, be measured by what its lawyers, accountants and property registers are willing to refuse.

The African renaissance cannot remain philosophy without machinery. It requires a strengthened African Union, effective regional economic communities, credible democratic systems, development finance, African-centred universities, independent judiciaries, innovation ecosystems and civic formations capable of holding power to account. These must become the engines of continental purpose.

A fragmented Africa will be negotiated over. A united Africa can negotiate. Rebuilding that unity asks three deliberate things of Africans, and a fourth of their partners.

First, deepen sovereign economies. Political sovereignty without economic agency is a farce. This means industrialisation, intra-African value chains, innovation, the protection of strategic resources and a model of development that serves African priorities without surrendering the continent’s soul.

Second, restore trust in institutions. Institutions make solidarity practical. Without ethical governance, democratic credibility and public confidence, continental ambition cannot endure.

No humane gift can come from machinery that its own people no longer believe in.

Third, renew a shared cultural identity. Pan-Africanism was never only political. It was civilisational, rooted in memory, liberation heritage, intellectual exchange and the recognition that the continent’s destiny is interconnected.

The gift Africa offers the world is not merely a product or a market position. It is a way of being together that the dominant industrial civilisation has not yet learned.

And to partners in the Global North and beyond: treat Africa as a peer. End the reflex of advice without listening, finance without partnership

and partnership without parity.

The countries that get this right will find in Africa not a problem to be solved but a continent to grow with.

It is in this spirit that the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, with the University of South Africa, will convene the 16th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture and its associated programme in Cape Town from 21 to 25 May.

By anchoring key engagements at the Houses of Parliament, the foundation locates Africa Day inside constitutional reflection, institutional renewal and continental solidarity. It is not a commemoration. It is a working week.

This is the practical grammar of the African renaissance. Ideas must become institutions. Institutions must earn trust. Trust must enable sovereignty. Sovereignty must advance solidarity. And solidarity, in the end, must give the world a more human face.

A continent once carved up to enrich an industrial world may yet teach that world how to be human. This Africa Month, we ask Africans to reimagine their homeland free of hunger, indignity and ignorance and to ready it for the gift it was always meant to give.

And we ask the world, including the readers of this newspaper, to be ready to receive it.

The colonial habit of Othering must not be the template Africans use on one another.

Max Boqwana is chief executive of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation.

Mail & Guardian

Africa must rise, for good

In this week's edition we pay homage to the Mother Continent as she marks Africa Day. We have assembled an array of excellent thought leaders to help us understand why Africa, despite its extensive mineral wealth, continues to carry the face of poverty.

There is no way a continent endowed with so much of nature's bounty can consistently fail to feed its people and resort to the mercy of the world's food kitchens. Given what Mother Nature has accorded us, Africa is able to feed every one of her 1.58 billion mouths.

That the continent seems unable to punch above its weight when it is so obviously able to do so boggles the mind. Decisions affecting us are crafted in places such as Beijing, Paris and, saddest of all, Washington.

Our argument is that the Second Scramble for Africa shouldn't happen on our watch when we have so much at our disposal to avert the age-old plunder.

It is a shameful indictment on the collective leadership of the continent that Africa continues to bleed resources through such blatant thievery as illicit financial flows, which stand at billions of US dollars.

As you read this, various think-tank organisations would have convened gatherings to chart the way to build a prosperous Africa.

This is not a new assignment. We can only hope that each of the events have not degenerated into the usual talk-shops. The time for Africa to rid itself of the stigma and stench of backwardness and underdevelopment has come — and gone.

We invite you to come along for the ride, through these pages, to see how, through partnerships, Africa can succeed at curbing the paternalistic attitude of the West, as evinced by French President Emmanuel Macron's insolent behaviour in Nairobi recently.

Africa is a much-needed partner of world nations, not their doormat.

One of our contributors on these pages posits that Africa has what the world sorely needs.

Perhaps Nairobi will wake up to the wisdom that, as a continent, we need to speak in one voice. No unilateralism has yet won the day.

The US of Africa carries a much more resonant voice than disparate pockets of calls for the continent to be heard.

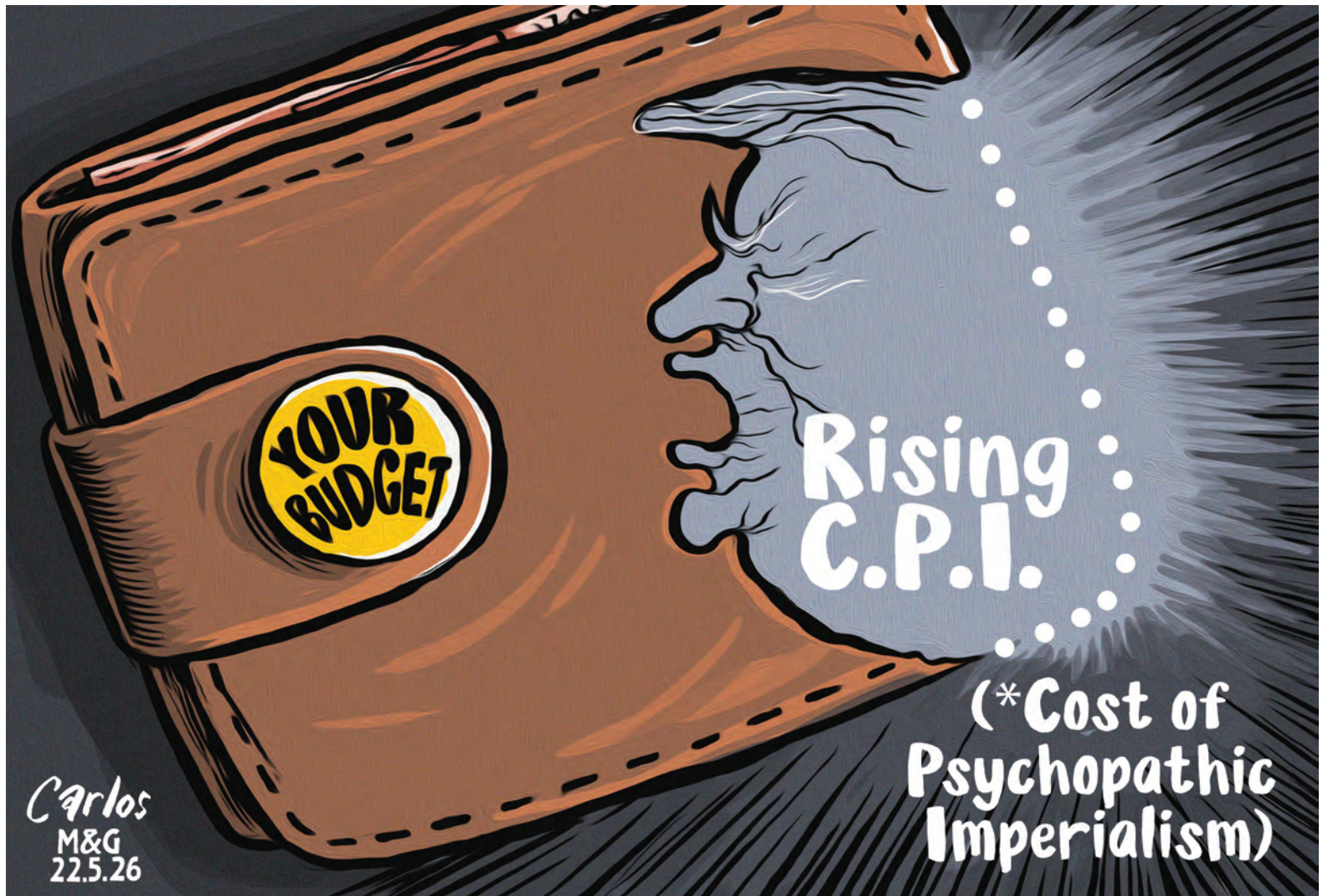
Let this not be the generation that betrayed the great ideas of such eminent sons of the soil as Kwame Nkrumah, Muammar Gaddafi, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta and so on.

Such scars as the bloodletting in the Sahel and Sudan and the so-called xenophobic attacks in South Africa should never be allowed to hold Africa back.

We have a lot to offer the world, including a more human face.

Africa and her Diaspora need to use this day to introspect, for real, this time.

M&G Media



Kenya hosts neocolonial delusion

The French president's visit to Nairobi was a spectacular flop that exposed the tension between African agency and Western entitlement

Gitobu Imanyara

The recent Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi was marketed as the dawn of a "new model of partnership" between France and Africa. But for those watching closely, the summit was less about a leap forward and more about a stumbling backward into the paternalistic patterns of the past.

The visit by French President Emmanuel Macron and the hosting by President William Ruto didn't just fail to live up to the hype, it was a spectacular flop that exposed the deep-seated tension between African agency and Western entitlement.

The failure began with a misunderstanding of modern Africa.

Macron arrived in Nairobi not as a partner seeking equal footing but as a headmaster looking for a captive audience. His outburst at the University of Nairobi, where he halted a youth session to lecture the crowd on respect and demand silence, was a mask-off moment.

His supporters might call it leadership. It looked more like the conduct of a man who sees the continent through a colonial lens. A guest does not shout at his hosts. A leader of a country that colonised 20 West African states lacks the moral authority to lecture Kenyans on etiquette when they are participating in the rowdy, vibrant discourse that defines their democracy. There is a reason Macron found



Diplomatic danger: The summit was meant to showcase a future-makers partnership. Instead, it exposed a future-fakers reality. Photo: Supplied

himself in East Africa rather than West Africa.

In the Sahel, nations such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea have begun asserting sovereignty by rejecting the Françafrique model that allowed France to maintain economic and political control for decades.

His decision to use a Kenyan podium to call out these absent nations was cynical. It turned Nairobi into a venue for colonial brokering rather than Pan-African solidarity.

Why must Kenya become the safe harbour for a leader whose policies are being rejected by our brothers and sisters in the West?

By hosting Macron as he disparages Sahel leaders working to secure their own resources from French extraction, Ruto risks positioning Kenya as a broker for the very interests pan-Africanists such as Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema have warned against.

A true pan-African policy would demand compensation for colonial atrocities and the return of stolen artefacts before rolling out the red carpet for a lecture on innovation.

If Macron's failure was one of character, Ruto's was one of credibility. During the summit, the Kenyan presidency took theatre to a new level, weaving a narrative of progress disconnected from reality.

To tell a visiting head of state and the Kenyan public that Kenya is manufacturing phones and computers in significant capacity is a bold departure from the truth.

Kenyans are right to ask where the factories are. Are they in the Industrial Area, in the villages of Murang'a or in Bungoma? The government might have made strides in digital infrastructure and fibre optics. But claiming the mantle of a global manufacturer of digital assets while citizens struggle with the cost of living is not visionary. It is fabrication. Comparing Kenyan tea to French wine might work as a dinner anecdote. Claiming a manufacturing boom that has not materialised insults the intelligence of Kenyan youth.

This is the diplomatic danger.

When Kenya hosts performances such as this one, without demanding historical accountability, it risks lending African legitimacy to a

project many Africans have rejected. Hospitality then becomes confused with submission. Partnership becomes a photo opportunity for old hierarchies. Nairobi should not be used to soften France's damaged image in West Africa while the grievances of the Sahel are treated as an inconvenience. That is not diplomacy. It is strategic laundering.

The online reaction to the visit — the memes and biting critiques from voices such as Victor M and Viking Blue — shows that the strategic management of power described by Willy Mutunga is no longer working as intended. Kenyans are not distracted by spectacle. They see through bilateral agreements that often operate as cover for extraction. They recognise when a guest has overstayed his welcome.

The summit was meant to showcase a future-makers partnership. Instead, it exposed a future-fakers reality. Kenya does not need a president who offers the country as a stage for neo-colonial tantrums. It does not need one who manufactures economic miracles through rhetoric alone.

To break the cycle, Kenya must demand a foreign policy that places African solidarity above Western validation. It must demand an internal policy built on verifiable progress rather than red-wine analogies.

Most importantly, Kenyans must refuse to be the subjects Macron seems to imagine. Respect is earned through mutual dignity and truth, not through trade deals signed under the shadow of a finger-wagging headmaster. The Africa Forward we need is one where Africa moves on its own terms, towards a future manufactured in reality, not speeches.

Gitobu Imanyara is a former member of the Kenyan and Pan-African parliaments, a human rights and pro-democracy lawyer and publisher. Follow him on X @GitobuImanyara

Have African leaders betrayed the dream of 1963?



Lucas Ledwaba

The founding president of independent Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, sounded a warning to Africa during the historic summit that gave birth to the Organisation of African Unity in Addis Ababa in 1963.

“If we do not approach the problems in Africa with a common front and a common purpose, we shall be haggling and wrangling among ourselves until we are colonised again and become the tools of a far greater colonialism than we suffered hitherto.”

Sixty-three years later, the jury is still out on whether African leaders are acting as a united front in tackling the continent’s problems, as advised by Nkrumah.

As the continent celebrates Africa Day on May 25, it is also worth examining whether Africa has moved closer to becoming the independent continent envisaged by Nkrumah and his generation of pioneers for a new Africa.

Is Africa now completely in charge of and in control of its vast mineral wealth? Or has it become a fountain for a new form of colonialism, exporting its minerals daily to China, Russia and the old colonial powers in Europe and the US? Do African leaders still go cap in hand to beg for crumbs and sell their countries’ souls to the world’s superpowers?

Africa Day is generally marked as a day for celebration, a day to rejoice at the steps taken by previous generations to fight against and eliminate the effects of colonialism, slavery, land dispossession and to chart a new course for a prosperous Africa.

Six decades after the formation of the African Union’s predecessor, the OAU, perhaps it is worth reflecting on whether the continent really has reason to celebrate.

Is the African dream, driven by the current generation of leadership’s ambitious Agenda 2063 on course?

News headlines continued to paint a picture of a continent in turmoil ahead of Africa Day this week, from a drone strike that killed 10 people in Mali, to gunmen abducting 39 students in Nigeria and four citizens killed during fuel protests in Kenya.

There was even more bad news. An outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus killed more than 100 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. In South Africa, citizens continued nationwide protests against the influx of illegal immigrants who, through the years, have poured into the country through its porous borders, aided by corrupt border officials colluding with syndicates.

A lack of political will to deal with immigration has seen undocumented people battling for survival in the lower ranks of the economy, while South African citizens grapple with high levels of poverty, unemployment and the rising cost of living.

In turn, South African citizens’ voice has been met with calls for



Common purpose: Africa Day should reflect the achievement of Agenda 2063’s aims to deliver inclusive and sustainable development to drive the pan-African dream of unity. Photo: AU

retaliation and tougher action against the country by, among others, Nigeria and Ghana, which have offered to repatriate some of their citizens.

This happens against the backdrop of revelations by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) that at least 990 people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea this year alone while trying to flee Africa for Europe.

The IOM noted in April that this figure is more than 460 higher than during the same period in 2025 – a surge of more than 150%.

Last April, the UN Children’s Fund (Unicef) revealed that approximately 3 500 children died or disappeared while attempting to cross the central Mediterranean migration route to Italy between 2015 and 2025.

Unicef also noted that between 2015 and 2025, at least 20 803 people died or disappeared in the central Mediterranean. The agency painted an even gorier picture, saying many shipwrecks on this perilous migration route from North Africa leave no survivors or go unrecorded.

This, it said, made the true number of people dying or disappearing practically impossible to verify, meaning the figure could be far higher.

The big question perhaps is why Africans are risking life and limb, fleeing their countries of birth for South Africa and Europe in droves. Europe has also taken a hard line against African migrants who continue to arrive in large numbers.

Perhaps an even more crucial question Africa needs to confront and answer is exactly what Africans are running away from.

This is especially significant because the continent’s wealth in

raw materials, natural resources and its ability to produce food surpluses capable of feeding the rest of the world has never been in question.

Various research studies by independent bodies list among the reasons forcing Africans to risk their lives at sea economic aspirations, with young people seeking better opportunities to escape high unemployment rates in battered economies.

Among the reasons provided by those fleeing Africa is that many are driven by conflict, persecution, instability and civil wars.

The question then arises: why, in the 63 years since the formation of the OAU, now known as the AU, is Africa still grappling with such problems?

What has gone wrong in the six decades since the spirit of optimism and unity expressed by Nkrumah and his generation?

Going through the record of speeches delivered at the 1963 summit, one is buoyed by the enthusiasm and positive spirit of delegates. The desire to achieve economic and political independence, cooperate and build a united Africa is unmistakable.

Leaders were unanimous in calling for continental development and industrialisation, taking control of their countries’ raw materials, tapping into abundant water sources and building hydroelectric infrastructure to light up Africa.

They advocated improved intra-African trade and presenting a unified front when trading with Europe

and other continents, opening the continent to improve trade and movement and achieving peace, stability and economic prosperity.

But today, the story of Africa betrays the enthusiastic optimism shown by its leaders at that historic gathering hosted by Emperor Haile Selassie more than half a century ago.

Indications are that although the desire to cooperate and unite remains, Africa is fragmented and retreating into old colonial constructs of individualism.

Regional bodies established to push the agenda of unity seem to have become blunt and impotent structures focused on securing the interests of individual member states.

As a result, intra-African trade and movement across the continent remain restricted and bogged down by red tape.

A World Bank report published in March 2026 revealed that “poverty rates remain stubbornly high in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

It went further, saying the region is “currently very far from eradicating extreme poverty”.

The January 2026 Global Economic Prospects report noted that severe food insecurity remained high across the region in 2025, affecting about one-quarter of the population – more than double the global average.

It further revealed that, in contrast to a declining global trend between 2021 and 2024, the number of undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa increased from about 250 million to nearly 280 million as food prices remained high.

This, the report said, partly reflected the effects of the region’s armed conflicts, as well as the aftermath of adverse weather events such as severe droughts in Southern Africa and floods elsewhere.

Efforts underway indicate some progress in achieving the goals of Agenda 2063. Recently, it was announced that the Trans-African

Highway has reached more than 56 000km.

The Trans-African Highway is an ambitious project which, when completed, will link nine major corridors spanning nearly 60 000km from Cairo in the north to Cape Town in the south and from Djibouti in the east to Dakar in the west.

Hopefully, the continent’s leaders can push harder to achieve most of Agenda 2063’s goals and transform Africa into a global powerhouse.

It is an indictment of the current crop of leaders that so many people continue to leave their homes to escape poverty, underdevelopment and political instability – movement that creates further problems, as experienced in South Africa, where poor people are turning on one another and opportunistic formations exploit the situation.

The meaning of Africa Day should reflect the achievement of Agenda 2063’s aims to deliver inclusive and sustainable development to drive the pan-African dream of unity, self-determination, freedom and progress.

As Fulbert Youlou, the president of Congo-Brazzaville, told the 1963 OAU summit:

“African development depends on industrialisation. Only by producing the essential manufactured goods it needs can Africa ensure its development and reach a higher standard of living.”

If that were achieved, together with political stability, there would be far less reason for thousands to trek across their homes in desperation in search of a better life.

Lucas Ledwaba is editor and publisher of *Mukurukuru Media* and author of *A Desire to Return to the Ruins* – a look at the contentious issues of land reform and restitution in post-apartheid South Africa, *Broken & Broken: The Shameful Legacy of Gold Mining in South Africa* and *We Are Going to Kill Each Other Today: The Marikana Story*.



Perhaps an even more crucial question Africa needs to confront and answer is exactly what Africans are running away from.



Independence: The Auda-Nepad steering committee, which met in May 2026, affirmed the principle that Africa must accelerate transformation and self-reliance. Photo: Auda-Nepad

Africa's development cannot be willed into existence by any single actor. Not by governments alone, not by markets alone and not by donors alone.

That was the founding insight of the African leadership that gave us the New Partnership for Africa's Development in 2001. It remains the operative principle as Nepad marks 25 years in 2026.

The Thabo Mbeki Foundation's High-Level Business Breakfast on Thursday, 21 May 2026, was a working conversation about the partnerships the next phase of African renewal will require: between African states, between African and global actors and between state and non-state institutions on the continent.

The African renaissance cannot be financed by sentiment and it cannot be delivered by governments working in isolation.

When presidents Mbeki, Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal), Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria) and Hosni Mubarak (Egypt) shaped the framework that became Nepad, partnership was not a slogan attached to a policy. It was the policy.

The plan rested on three interlocking commitments: African ownership of African development; regional integration as the route to scale; and continental renewal anchored in mutual accountability between African states and their global partners.

African ownership meant the agenda would be set in Addis Ababa and Abuja, not in Washington or Brussels.

Regional integration meant the small size of individual African economies would be overcome through coordinated infrastructure and connected markets.

Continental renewal meant Africa would rebuild its institutions and productive base on terms of partnership rather than dependency.

Twenty-five years on, that architecture remains correct. What has shifted is the urgency to act on it.

The African Union Development Agency carries the implementation mandate. Through the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, Auda-Nepad's 2025 annual report noted that more than 50 regional projects were assessed for maturity and 24 moved towards bankability.

Africa's renaissance hinges on partnerships

Twenty-five years after Nepad, there is an urgency to act on what its founding fathers envisaged for the continent's renewal

Yet Africa moves too slowly from adoption to implementation. Regional projects are held back by weak preparation, regulatory fragmentation, limited domestic capital and uneven state capacity.

Africa exports raw value and imports finished dependency.

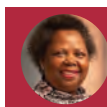
The partnerships Nepad anticipated have too often defaulted into older patterns of conditionality and aid rather than co-investment and co-production. Above all, the agenda has suffered from the absence of political leadership for whom the development of the entire continent is the central preoccupation.

A continental programme of this scale cannot succeed without champions in the state houses themselves.

Nowhere is the partnership question sharper than in financing.

The African Development Bank's 2025 annual meetings platform stated that Africa needs more than \$1.3 trillion to achieve the sustainable development goals, \$68 billion to \$108bn annually for infrastructure, and more than \$242bn annually for climate financing until 2050.

Globally, the UN Conference on Trade and Development and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimate the annual Sustainable Development Goal financing gap for developing countries sat at between \$4 trillion and \$4.3 trillion, more than a 50% increase over pre-pandemic estimates. These are not numbers any single category of actor can close.



Gloria Serobe

African budgets cannot close them alone.

Official development assistance from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, even at its 2022 record of \$211bn, cannot close them alone. Private capital cannot close them without credible regulation, efficient tax regimes, prepared projects and risk-sharing instruments.

What is required is structured partnership of the kind Nepad envisaged: between African governments and global capital markets; between multilateral development banks and African pension and sovereign wealth funds; between OECD donors moving towards the

0.7% of gross national income target and African states honouring their own domestic resource mobilisation commitments; and on African soil, between the state and the non-state actors who together constitute the productive and civic capacity of the continent.

Public-private partnership is sometimes spoken of as an accounting technique for getting infrastructure off government balance sheets.

That is a poor reading. At its best, it is the practical expression of a shared developmental responsibility. The state sets the framework and convenes. A capable developmental state, guided by a pro-

fessional civil service, carries the central work of coordination, with the lifting of millions of Africans out of poverty and lives of indignity as its overriding objective. Business brings capital, execution capacity and operational discipline. Civil society contributes scrutiny, distribution networks and moral authority. None of the actors can substitute for the others. We learnt this in practice.

In March 2020, as Covid-19 began to threaten South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the Solidarity Fund, an independent public benefit organisation designed to unite government, business, labour and civil society in a single national response. I was asked to serve as its founding chairperson. Within days, the fund had moved from concept to operation. Government seeded the effort with R150 million. By the time the fund published its first interim impact report in late 2020, it had mobilised more than R3.1bn from more than 304 000 donors.

The Solidarity Fund did not solve the pandemic. What it did was demonstrate that when a clear common purpose is defined, when governance is independent and transparent and when each actor contributes from its comparative strength, public-private partnership can mobilise resources at a pace no single sector could manage alone. We do not need to invent the principle.

The continental crises make the argument concrete.

The International Energy Agency reported in 2025 that almost 600 million people in Africa lacked access to electricity. The African Continental Free Trade Area, which the World Bank estimates could raise

incomes by 9% and create 18 million jobs by 2035, depends on ports, customs and payment systems that must work in concert.

The Kampala CAADP Strategy and Action Plan for 2026 to 2035 aims to mobilise \$100bn, lift agrifood output by 45% and triple intra-African trade in farm goods.

The African Union target is for the continent to produce more than 60% of the vaccines it needs locally by 2040, against current production of around 1%.

Each is a partnership agenda. None is a public sector agenda or a private sector agenda alone.

Africa's development programme requires a cohesive, multipronged approach. We must build a continental project pipeline that transforms ideas into bankable investments while mobilising domestic pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and development investment institutions to invest locally.

Furthermore, by harmonising regulatory frameworks, we can overcome the fragmentation that hinders scale. The initiative must integrate trade policy with industrial development, skills, energy and logistics, supported by credible risk-sharing instruments that attract global capital without compromising African ownership.

Business has a direct role. We attended the High-Level Business Breakfast as co-authors of the continent's next delivery compact, alongside development finance institutions willing to absorb risk, civil society partners who can hold the work accountable and governments that understand investment follows credible rules.

The founders of Nepad understood this. Twenty-five years ago they argued that African ownership, regional integration and continental renewal were a single project, carried by a coalition broad enough to include African states, African business, African civil society and Africa's global partners. That argument has not aged. It has matured.

The next 25 years must move from frameworks to action. Our call as a foundation is to a new generation of thinkers and practitioners who will take this legacy as a platform from which to carry Africa's development forward.

We will do this together or we will not do it.

Gloria Serobe is a trustee of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation.



Cornelius Monama

'For South Africa, Africa Day carries an even deeper meaning'

Africa Day is a profound reminder of Africa's shared destiny, its unfinished struggles and its enduring aspirations for unity, dignity, sovereignty and development.

Africa Day should not be reduced to romantic slogans detached from present realities or to empty rhetorical speeches and nostalgic tributes to our liberation past. It must instead serve as a powerful call to confront today's challenges with determination, resolve and concrete action.

For South Africa, Africa Day carries an even deeper meaning. Our freedom was nurtured, defended and advanced by African and international solidarity.

A number of countries across the continent sheltered exiles, trained freedom fighters and mobilised international support against apartheid. South Africans must never forget the historic sacrifices made by fellow African nations during the liberation struggle.

In a rapidly shifting geopolitical era marked by economic uncertainty, intensifying competition between global powers, climate instability, unemployment and rising social pressures, Africa faces urgent questions of governance, development, accountability and sovereignty. South Africa stands at the centre of many of these debates because of its strategic position on the continent.

Africa Day should also be a moment of pride and celebration. Africa is asserting its leadership in global affairs, with South Africa and President Cyril Ramaphosa playing a pivotal role in elevating the continent's stature on the international stage. Far from being peripheral, Africa is emerging as a credible force for principled diplomacy, multilateralism and negotiated solutions to global challenges.

Under Ramaphosa's stewardship, South Africa has positioned itself and by extension the continent, as a bridge-builder and advocate for justice. The voice of Africa is steadily becoming stronger and more influential in global diplomacy. In an increasingly fragmented world order characterised by geopolitical rivalry and the weakening of multilateral institutions, this growing African agency is significant.

At the broader continental level, South Africa has been instrumental in advancing African solutions to African problems through African Union-led peace missions, institutional reform and economic integration. These efforts signal a fundamental shift.

Africa is no longer a passive recipient of global decisions but an architect of its own destiny and an active player in driving international outcomes.

This was powerfully demonstrated in South Africa's response to the Russia-Ukraine war. Rather than choosing sides in a distant conflict, South Africa championed dialogue, de-escalation and a negotiated settlement. In 2023, President Ramaphosa led an African peace mission to Moscow and Kyiv, demonstrating that African nations will no longer accept exclusion from decisions that shape the global order. The mission amplified Africa's collective voice, demanding inclusion at the table on issues of peace and security.



Human dignity: As Africa reflects on unity and solidarity, migration continues to expose the continent's unresolved struggles around governance, opportunity, sovereignty and economic survival. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

SA citizens are not xenophobic for demanding lawful migration, secure borders and fair access to limited opportunities

A landmark demonstration of this elevated role came when South Africa hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg in November 2025, the first time the forum convened on African soil. The summit placed African priorities at the centre of the global agenda, delivering concrete wins on debt sustainability, infrastructure investment, climate finance, food security and critical minerals.

By steering the world's premier economic forum towards the needs of the Global South, South Africa dramatically enhanced both its own prestige and the continent's standing, proving that Africa is a vital and indispensable partner in shaping a more equitable world order. South Africa's rise as a respected diplomatic actor demonstrates that African leadership can shape global conversations meaningfully and credibly. Through Ramaphosa's leadership, South Africa is not only reclaiming its own voice but also helping to amplify Africa's voice in world affairs.

These developments should be celebrated on Africa Day because they reflect a continent gradually asserting its voice and agency in world affairs. For far too long, Africa was treated merely as a site of intervention, extraction and dependency.

Increasingly, Africa, with South Africa often at the forefront, is positioning itself as an active participant in shaping the global agenda, advocating for peace and defending the interests of the developing world.

While South Africa's growing diplomatic stature deserves recognition, the country also faces immense domestic and regional pressures that cannot be ignored. Over the past

decade, South Africa has become a destination for millions of foreign nationals from across the continent. Migration itself is not a new phenomenon but the problem arises when it becomes unmanaged and undocumented.

Weak governance, corruption, unemployment, instability and economic collapse elsewhere have fueled migration pressures.

South Africans are increasingly frustrated by the perception that some African governments have outsourced their socioeconomic problems to South Africa. Curiously, when South Africans legitimately demand stronger border controls, the enforcement of immigration laws and the protection of already strained public resources, they are frequently dismissed as xenophobic. Such characterisations are both unfair and dishonest.

Every sovereign nation has the right and obligation to regulate immigration according to its own laws, economic capacity and national interests.

African states across the continent enforce immigration laws, deport undocumented migrants and prioritise their own citizens for employment and business opportunities without being labelled xenophobic, revealing a troubling double standard.

It is within this context that PLO Lumumba's recent intervention must be understood. Lumumba rightly raises concerns about violence, vigilantism and the protection of human dignity. Criminal attacks against foreign nationals must be condemned unequivocally and South Africa's constitutional order demands the protection of all people within its borders.

However, Lumumba's intervention reflects a selective and incomplete understanding of the immigration crisis confronting South Africa. He appears to suggest that South Africa alone bears a unique moral obligation to absorb the continent's socioeconomic pressures because some African countries supported our liberation struggle. This argument is neither sustainable nor consistent with how sovereign states operate. Solidarity during liberation cannot mean a permanent surrender of South Africa's right to regulate immigration and protect limited public resources for its citizens.

As Africans, we need to have an honest conversation. Why, for example, must people migrate from distant countries and travel thousands of kilometres to South Africa instead of seeking refuge or opportunities in the nearest neighbouring country? When other nations deport migrants or restrict certain business sectors to their own citizens, it is defended as sovereignty, yet similar actions by South Africa are framed as xenophobia.

There is also a troubling tendency among some self-proclaimed Pan-Africanists to advocate for open borders — but only in South Africa. South Africa is expected to be the only venue for this farcical experiment by some pseudo-Pan-Africanists. True Pan-Africanism was never intended to erase national sovereignty. It envisioned cooperation among strong, self-sufficient states, not one country absorbing the consequences of socioeconomic difficulties or governance failures confronting parts of the continent.

South Africans are not xenopho-

bic for demanding lawful migration, secure borders and fair access to limited opportunities. Respect for sovereignty, lawful migration and accountable governance are neither xenophobic nor betrayals of Pan-Africanism.

Africa Day demands maturity, honesty and consistency. It demands that the root causes of migration be confronted head-on. At the same time, South Africa must strengthen border security and restore confidence in the rule of law.

Most importantly, Africa Day should renew Africa's collective vision. The continent cannot afford to remain dependent, fragmented and reactive in an increasingly competitive global order. It needs leadership that is committed to delivering jobs, dignity and opportunities for its people.

For Africa to achieve its full potential, leaders will need to foster genuine continental solidarity instead of viewing South Africa as a permanent pressure valve. The long-term solution lies not in exporting people but in building functioning economies, stable democracies and capable states across the continent. Only then can Africa Day

truly represent both the memory of liberation and the promise of shared prosperity, mutual respect and genuine African renewal.

When history judges our generation, it must never be said that we saw the crisis confronting our continent, understood the solutions and still failed to act. Let it be said, instead, that we chose action over rhetoric, courage over complacency and responsibility over indifference.

For far too long, Africa was treated merely as a site of intervention, extraction and dependency.

It needs leadership that is committed to delivering jobs, dignity and opportunities for its people.

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Africa and our hollow unity



Wellington Muzengeza

As Africa Day looms, the continent is once again invited to celebrate its unity, yet what we rehearse is ritual rather than power.

Sixty-three years after the founding of the Organisation of African Unity, Africa continues to stage solidarity as spectacle: flags raised, anthems sung, speeches delivered. Beneath this choreography lies a hollow core.

The continent has mastered the aesthetics of belonging while neglecting the architecture of sovereignty. We revel in the sentiment of Africanness but recoil from the arduous labour of constructing freedom in material, institutional and strategic terms.

What passes for solidarity is too often a nostalgic echo of liberation struggles rather than a living project of emancipation. Pan-Africanism, once animated by bold structural imagination, has been reduced to symbolic comfort.

The harder work of integration, autonomy and collective strength remains deferred, leaving Africa trapped in a cycle of commemoration without transformation. Africa Day should remind us not only of what was won but of what remains unfinished: the urgent task of converting ritual into reconstruction, sentiment into sovereignty and unity into power.

The OAU's founding compromise — the sanctification of colonial borders, the doctrine of non-interference and the implicit protection of incumbents — constructed a continental order designed less to generate strength than to suppress disruption. In privileging stability over transformation, it preserved the cartographic logic of empire, locking Africa into a patchwork of micro-states whose sovereignty was more symbolic than strategic.

By elevating regime security above collective emancipation, it embedded fragility into the very DNA of continental governance, institutionalising weakness as principle.

The African Union, despite its new vocabulary and expanded ambitions, did not transcend this inheritance; it merely repackaged it, offering reform in appearance rather than substance, continuity disguised as change.

Africa's developmental stagnation is too often reduced to the convenient refrain of "bad leadership". There is truth in the charge: predatory elites, extractive politics and governance failures have undeniably stunted progress, yet this explanation is ultimately superficial, for leadership does not operate in a vacuum. It is shaped and frequently distorted by a governance architecture that was never designed to produce developmental states.

Post-colonial systems were not simply inherited; they were engineered to be administratively centralised, economically dependent and politically brittle.

In many countries, electoral

Budgets are rewritten in Washington and Brussels rather than in Harare, Accra or Nairobi



Pan-Africanism: Africa should evolve towards genuine unity and structural freedom or it resigns itself to managing an elegant fragility while external powers continue to choreograph its destiny.

frameworks, fiscal regimes and institutional rules are calibrated to reproduce incumbency rather than accountability.

To blame leadership alone is to misdiagnose the problem. The deeper truth lies in the uneasy intersection of both: flawed leaders ensnared within flawed systems, each reinforcing the other and together constraining Africa's capacity to realise its full potential.

To analyse Africa's governance failures without confronting the structural rigging of its political economy is to miss the deeper story.

The continent's trajectory has long been constrained by systemic burdens: foreign debt that erodes policy autonomy, import dependence that suffocates local industry, conditionalities that dictate fiscal and social policy and trade regimes that privilege raw material extraction over industrialisation. These mechanisms function less as neutral instruments than as levers of control, narrowing sovereignty.

When debt obligations intensify, policy freedom contracts. Budgets are rewritten in Washington and Brussels rather than in Harare, Accra or Nairobi.

Industrial policy is discouraged, subsidies dismantled and public sectors downsized; the very tools that powered Asian development are denied to Africa in the name of "discipline". What emerges is not simply poor governance but a structurally constrained order.

Leadership matters but it operates within a cage forged by external regimes and internal fragility. Africa's challenge is to dismantle both.

Today, the geopolitical and financial landscape confronting Africa is shifting in profound ways. The continent is no longer confined to the narrow corridors of Western lenders and Bretton Woods orthodoxy.

China, India and the Gulf states have introduced alternative financing streams, new diplomatic pathways and fresh forms of leverage.

Multipolarism has, at least in theory, widened Africa's room to manoeuvre, offering opportunities to diversify partnerships and escape the singular discipline of Western conditionality, yet this apparent liberation raises a more uncomfortable and urgent question: if the system is no longer entirely unfair, how strategically competent are African governments in navigating it?

China extends infrastructure financing without overt political conditionalities but often through opaque contracts and resource-linked repayment structures. India offers technology transfer and defence cooperation, while Gulf states deploy capital at a scale that rivals Beijing, reshaping logistics, agriculture and energy sectors. These options undeniably diversify Africa's external engagements but they also demand sharper negotiation, stronger institutions and a coherent continental strategy.

The issue, therefore, is no longer simply that the global system is rigged against Africa. It is whether African states possess the diplomatic intelligence, bargaining power and internal coherence to engage in bilateral and trilateral agreements on their own terms.

Multipolarism has created a marketplace of opportunities but without strategic competence. Africa risks exchanging one form of dependency for another. The challenge is not only to seize new options but to do so with clarity of purpose, institutional strength and a collective vision that transforms external partnerships into instruments of sovereignty rather than new chains of subordination.

Across the continent, the erosion of governance, the persistence of exclusionary politics and the unresolved question of national identity continue to fracture the solidarity that Pan-Africanism once promised. The dream of unity has been weakened not only by internal divisions but also by the gravitational pull of a renewed global scramble.

Europe pursues Africa's critical minerals to fuel its green transition;

the United States recalibrates trade and security partnerships with transactional caution; China deepens its infrastructure-driven diplomacy; India expands its technological and defence footprint; and Gulf states inject vast capital into logistics, agriculture and energy, reshaping the continent's economic geography.

In theory, this multipolar environment should furnish Africa with unprecedented leverage, offering the possibility of negotiating from a position of strength, yet in practice the continent engages this shifting landscape not as a coherent geopolitical actor but as a constellation of fragmented clients, each bargaining alone and forfeiting collective power at the very moment it is most needed.

The tragedy is that Africa's strategic centrality is acknowledged by all external powers but rarely by Africa itself. Without unity of purpose, institutional coherence and a continental strategy, multipolarism risks becoming not a platform for emancipation but another theatre of dependency, where Africa's resources are bartered piecemeal and its sovereignty diluted transaction by transaction.

Coups proliferate because the institutional scaffolding of democracy has been hollowed out, leaving behind the façade of elections without the substance of accountable governance. Ballots are cast, parliaments convene and constitutions are invoked, yet the machinery of representation has been stripped of credibility.

Citizens increasingly tolerate and at times even welcome, military intervention not out of ideological conviction but out of exhaustion, having watched civilian elites deliver neither prosperity nor dignity. What was once celebrated as liberation has been reduced to the mere absence of colonial rule, while new dependencies — financial, technological and security-driven — quietly entrench themselves beneath the rhetoric of sovereignty.

In this vacuum of credible civilian authority, praetorian politics thrives, feeding on disillusionment and presenting itself as a brutal corrective to democratic failure. The rise of mili-

tary regimes is not simply a rejection of democracy but a symptom of its hollowing: when institutions are weak, when governance is extractive and when external dependencies dictate policy, the promise of civilian rule collapses into ritual.

The tragedy is that Africa's democratic architecture has been constructed more for display than for delivery, more for external validation than for internal legitimacy. Until governance is rebuilt on the foundations of accountability, inclusion and autonomy, coups will remain less an aberration than a recurring punctuation in the continent's political narrative.

By now, Africa should have secured a deeper freedom, one measured not in ceremonial anniversaries but in integration, autonomy and the capacity to shape its own destiny, yet the continent remains trapped in symbolic gestures, rehearsing unity without wielding it as power. Corrective action cannot be cosmetic; it must be radical, structural and unapologetically transformative.

It requires functional integration rather than ceremonial unity, so that continental institutions move beyond rhetoric to enforce binding commitments. It demands regional bodies endowed with real authority, capable of disciplining states that undermine collective progress.

It calls for continental bargaining power over minerals, debt and global partnerships, ensuring that Africa negotiates not as fragmented clients but as a coherent bloc. It insists on a shared security doctrine, one that protects sovereignty from both internal fragility and external manipulation and it necessitates sustained investment in state capacity, youth empowerment and intra-African trade, building the foundations of prosperity from within rather than outsourcing development to external patrons.

Only through such measures can Africa convert its deferred aspirations into substantive sovereignty. Anything less risks perpetuating the cycle of elegant fragility, a continent rich in symbolism yet impoverished in power. The time has come to replace ritual with reconstruction, nostalgia with strategy and sentiment with sovereignty.

Pan-Africanism is not dead; it has been suffocated by caution, by the incrementalism of leaders who mistook mere survival for strategy and by the small ambitions of elites who confused ceremony with substance.

The continent now stands at a crossroads as stark as any since independence: either Africa evolves towards genuine unity and structural freedom or it resigns itself to managing an elegant fragility while external powers continue to choreograph its destiny.

Africa's youth — restless, connected and unwilling to inherit a diminished horizon — are demanding more than commemorations and rhetorical solidarity. They demand competence, courage and coherence.

They demand leaders who can negotiate with intelligence in a multipolar world, institutions that can enforce accountability and a continental vision that transforms Africa's strategic centrality into actual power.

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These mechanisms function less as neutral instruments than as levers of control, narrowing sovereignty.

Africa–Asia development divergence

What has prevented most African countries from performing as well as Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam in economic modernisation is connected with the continent's 'soft Westernisation', focused mainly on appearance



Seifudein Adem

Why did countries such as Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam industrialise with remarkable speed while much of sub-Saharan Africa struggles to achieve comparable transformation?

Standard explanations often point to culture, geography, colonialism or governance. Yet these explanations frequently overlook a more fundamental issue: the difference between adopting the symbols of modernity and building the capabilities that sustain it.

The source of the development divergence between Africa and Asia lies in the distinction between what may be called hard modernisation and soft Westernisation.

Hard modernisation is the acquisition of productive capability. It involves mastering science, engineering and industry. It is primarily the capacity to produce, maintain, adapt and even improve modern products and institutions. Soft Westernisation, by contrast, emphasises appearances: Western lifestyles, Western consumption patterns and Western cultural imitation more generally, without the corresponding productive transformation.

We should note here that African historiography identifies two schools of thought on the impact of the West on Africa. The epic school argues that the West's impact has been of epic proportions: deep and wide-ranging, as measured by religious, linguistic and educational indicators. Those colonial years, despite their brevity, were truly exceptional.

The episodic school argues that the postcolonial period illustrates how shallow the impact of European colonialism was. The colonial period was just an episode in relation to the millennia of African history. That is why Western ideas and institutions failed to take root in Africa.

I hasten to argue that there should be a third, hybrid school that simply posits that the West's impact on Africa is deep culturally (soft Westernisation) and shallow technologically (hard modernisation). This distinction helps us to understand how societies exposed to similar global forces produce radically dif-

Within a few decades, Japan transformed itself from a vulnerable feudal society into a major industrial and military power.



Focal point: Many African states pursued prestige-oriented urban modernisation and import-substitution policies while neglecting agriculture and rural society. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

ferent developmental outcomes.

The experience of Meiji Japan (1869-1912) illustrates this clearly. Faced with Western military and technological might in the mid-19th century, Japan did not merely imitate Western culture. It strategically sought to acquire the technical foundations of power – what we have called above hard modernisation. Education was reoriented towards science and engineering.

Students were sent abroad to acquire practical expertise. Foreign specialists were invited to train Japanese counterparts. Technical books were rapidly translated into Japanese so that knowledge could be domesticated and disseminated widely.

Equally important, the Japanese state aligned incentives with national developmental goals, allowing engineers, technicians and industrial planners to gain prestige and influence in society. Advancement increasingly depended on technical competence rather than cultural imitation alone.

The result was the emergence of a new elite capable of building industries, managing infrastructure and reproducing foreign technologies domestically.

Within a few decades, Japan transformed itself from a vulnerable feudal society into a major industrial and military power.

Much of Africa's encounter with modernity unfolded at about the same time as Japan's but under very different conditions. Colonial institutions were designed primarily for political control and economic extraction rather than indigenous industrial development. Colonial education systems therefore focused largely on producing clerks, interpreters, teachers and administrators who could operate the machinery of colonial governance. Mastery of European languages and administrative norms offered the greatest opportunities for advancement. Technical and industrial education remained limited.

Under such conditions, Africans

responded rationally to the incentives before them. Cultural and linguistic assimilation yielded social mobility, while technical capability often offered fewer rewards. Over time, this produced postcolonial elites who were often more culturally Westernised than technically industrialised. The process of decolonisation, too, was the process of replacing the Western 'other' with the Westernised 'self'.

The consequences of this dynamic remain visible today. Many African societies display the outward symbols of modernity – glass buildings, imported technologies, Western-style universities and urban consumer culture – and yet heavy dependence on external sources for industrial goods, maintenance systems and technological innovation persists.

Let me illustrate this with a powerful example from the late pan-Africanist intellectual Ali Mazrui. In his 1986 documentary *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, Mazrui walks into what he describes as an expensive hotel in West Africa.

At first glance, everything appears modern. The building looks impressive. The room is well furnished and carries all the outward symbols of modernity.

But then something interesting happens. Mazrui begins to interact with the environment. He tries to turn on the radio. It does not work. He walks into the bathroom. The cold-water tap works but the hot-water tap is not connected at all. There is no pipe. He returns to the bedroom, finds a note encouraging guests to report problems and picks up the phone to call reception. The phone is dead.

At that moment, Mazrui turns to the camera and rhetorically asks: "We have acquired Western tastes ... but have we acquired Western skills?"

This episode in Mazrui's documentary is not merely an anecdote. It is a diagnosis. What is actually happening in that room is this: the objects are present but the system is not functional. The form exists, but the underlying capability is missing. Consumption is visible but produc-

tion and maintenance are absent. The form of modernity exists; the underlying systems that sustain it do not. Mazrui called the whole phenomenon "Westernisation without modernisation".

What about the divergence between sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia? At independence, the two regions shared many similarities. Apart from their topography and climate, both occupied similarly peripheral positions in the global economy. Both depended heavily on primary commodity exports. Both experienced authoritarian rule, corruption and weak institutions. Countries such as Indonesia and Nigeria experienced similar histories of long military rule and resource dependence.

In 1960, Southeast Asians were, on average, poorer than sub-Saharan Africans in terms of per capita income. By 1980, Southeast Asians had caught up with Africa. By 2010, Southeast Asians were, on average, wealthier than Africans. In the 2020s, the per capita income of Southeast Asians was more than three times higher than that of sub-Saharan Africans.

In short, poverty declined dramatically across much of Southeast Asia. It remains widespread in much of Africa.

The great divergence in development between Africa and Asia became visible not only in manufacturing but also in agriculture. Indonesia emerged as one of the world's leading cocoa producers despite entering the sector decades after Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Vietnam became one of the world's leading coffee exporters despite entering large-scale coffee production only recently, leaving Ethiopia, the historical birthplace of coffee, in fifth place.

Part of the explanation for this divergence lies in the differing priorities in the developmental strategies of the two regions. In Southeast Asia, governing elites pursued pro-poor, pro-agriculture and pro-rural-development strategies before full industrial take-off. In other words,

agricultural productivity, export competitiveness and rural welfare were prioritised.

The logic behind Southeast Asia's approach is simple arithmetic: the most effective way to increase incomes quickly on a large scale in an underdeveloped economy dominated by peasant agriculture is to invest in enabling smallholder farmers to raise their productivity and sell more of what they produce. By contrast, many African states pursued prestige-oriented urban modernisation and import-substitution policies while neglecting agriculture and rural society.

The outcome in many sub-Saharan African countries has been what is called "mal-modernisation": urbanisation without industrialisation; Western tastes without Western skills; Western consumption patterns without Western production techniques; and a Western culture of letters without a Western culture of numbers.

In other words, what prevented most African countries from performing as well as most Asian countries in economic modernisation is connected with Africa's "soft Westernisation".

Yet the broader lesson is not that Africa should mechanically imitate Asia. Historical circumstances differ. What the experiences of Meiji Japan and Southeast Asia suggest is that successful modernisation depends fundamentally on the alignment of institutions, incentives and learning towards capability-building – hard modernisation.

True, Africa under colonialism was inserted into a global system that did not require it to become a technological producer. Africa also did not have a say on what type of knowledge to import. This does not, nevertheless, mean that the postcolonial African leadership should be let off the hook for the lack of progress after decolonisation.

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Yet the broader lesson is not that Africa should mechanically imitate Asia.



Shabodien Rومانay

Engineering underdevelopment

Nations that escaped colonial domination find themselves surrendering economic sovereignty to creditors, ratings agencies and technocrats miles away. This is remote-controlled neocolonialism without the geography



Irony: International Monetary Fund and World Bank (pictured) loans to poor countries come tied to conditions that often weaken states, dismantle social protections and entrench dependency. Photo: Ajay Suresh

The growing global debate about the resurgence of the imperialist project, most starkly exposed by the unprovoked war on Iran and the devastation in Palestine, must be understood within the broader context of financial, economic and resource domination.

In this light, the great tragedy of the modern world is not simply that many countries, particularly poorer nations, failed to achieve development; rather, it is that they were systematically prevented from doing so.

For decades, the world has been told a comforting story: that poverty in Africa, Latin America, parts of Asia and the Caribbean is largely the result of corruption, incompetence, tribalism, laziness or a lack of innovation.

The prescription offered by powerful Western financial institutions and the media was simple: borrow money, liberalise markets, privatise state assets, cut public spending and prosperity would surely follow.

But for millions across the Global South, the outcome was not development. It was ever-deeper dependency. This is what scholars called “developing underdevelopment”: a process in which the global economic system does not merely fail poor countries but actively structures their weakness.

Behind the polished language of “economic reform”, “stabilisation” and “fiscal discipline” lay a harsh reality: entire societies were forced into austerity while wealth continued flowing outward towards global financial centres.

Much of this was exposed in the book *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* by John Perkins.

The principal architects of the system were institutions born from the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference — chiefly the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The institutions undoubtedly helped stabilise some economies and provided emergency financing during crises.

But their record in poorer countries also reveals a deeply troubling pattern: loans came tied to conditions that often weakened states, dismantled social protections and entrenched dependency.

The irony is painful. Nations that had only recently escaped colonial domination found themselves once again surrendering economic sovereignty, this time not to imperial governments but to creditors, ratings agencies and technocrats thousands of miles away. The language changed. The power relations did not. This is remote-controlled neocolonialism without the geography.

The main vehicle was the austerity machine. During the debt crises of the 1980s and 1990s, dozens of poorer nations were subjected to structural adjustment programmes. The programmes demanded cuts to public spending, currency devaluation, privatisation, removal of subsidies, trade liberalisation and shrinking of the state.

On paper, the reforms were meant to create efficient economies. In reality, many countries saw collapsing public services, rising unemployment, weakened industries and rampant poverty.

Schools deteriorated. Hospitals lacked medicine. Food prices rose. Domestic industries collapsed under competition from subsidised Western imports. Governments became less accountable to their people and more accountable to foreign lenders. The result was not merely economic hardship. It was the erosion of dignity and sovereignty.

South Africa presents a particularly important modern example of how global financial power can shape political and economic realities.

After apartheid, the country inherited one of the most unequal societies on Earth: massive racial inequality, concentrated ownership, structural unemployment and deep poverty.

Yet despite the historical burdens, post-apartheid governments have been repeatedly pressured to maintain fiscal orthodoxy to reassure global markets and ratings agencies. The influence of Western-controlled credit-rating agencies such as Moody's, S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings became especially

pronounced during periods of political contestation and debates over economic transformation.

Not toeing the line meant downgrades to “junk status”, which increased borrowing costs, weakened the rand, reduced investor confidence and further intensified pressure for austerity measures.

Critics in South Africa argued that ratings agencies often reflected ideological hostility towards state-led developmental policies, land reform debates, expanded public spending or efforts to challenge entrenched economic power structures. As a result, many South Africans questioned why speculative financial

markets appeared to wield more power than democratic mandates; why social spending was viewed negatively while corporate bailouts in wealthy countries were tolerated; and why transformative policies in the Global South were often treated as “market risks”.

It is not surprising that US ambassador to South Africa Brent Bozell has been dispatched here to dismantle BEE, withdraw the International Court of Justice case against Israel and stop the alleged genocide of white Afrikaner South Africans. Or else ...

This does not mean every downgrade lacked economic justification. South Africa has undeniably faced corruption, state capture, energy instability, weak growth and governance failures. But critics argue that the broader system remains unequal. Wealthy countries routinely sustain high debt levels without equivalent punishment, while developing nations are subjected to far harsher scrutiny and market volatility.

As for corruption, I have written before about the Financial Action Task Force and its targeting of developing nations while ignoring the UK and its financial controls, even though it might be the biggest financial laundromat in the world. The result is that developing nations often govern under the shadow of external financial approval.

Zambia, Argentina, Jamaica, Pakistan and South Africa, for example, differ in geography, culture and politics. Yet the outcomes share striking similarities: weakened sovereignty, external dependency, austerity, social strain and concentration of wealth.

There is deep hypocrisy at the heart of the system. Western powers preach free markets to poorer

countries while heavily subsidising their own industries. African farmers are told to compete “fairly” against billion-dollar agricultural subsidies in Europe and the US.

Poor countries are pressured to privatise public assets while multinational corporations acquire strategic industries at bargain prices. Governments are instructed to cut social spending while Western nations themselves routinely engage in state intervention during crises.

When banks collapsed in wealthy countries in 2008, governments spent trillions rescuing them. When poorer nations faced crises, they were told to tighten their belts. This is not an equal system. It is a hierarchical one.

Debt as modern colonialism

Kwame Nkrumah, who led Ghana at independence, warned decades ago that political independence without economic independence would produce a new form of colonialism. He was prophetic.

Today, many poorer countries, including South Africa, which spends almost R421 billion servicing government debt — about 16% of the budget — spend more on debt servicing than on healthcare or education. Entire national budgets are shaped around maintaining creditor confidence.

Credit-rating agencies, with their headquarters in the West, can downgrade nations overnight, causing currencies to collapse and borrowing costs to soar. In such a system, democracy becomes constrained.

Governments may be elected by their people but economic policy is often dictated externally. This is colonialism without colonial offices.

A different future is emerging

However, the world is changing. Countries across the Global South are increasingly questioning Western financial dominance. New alliances such as Brics and institutions like the New Development Bank reflect growing demands for a multipolar economic order.

Nations must explore trade in local currencies, regional development banks, sovereign industrial policies and alternatives to dollar dependency. In essence, they must wear themselves off dependence on institutions whose only interest is maintaining nations' dependence on restrictive funding.

Whether the alternatives will create genuine justice remains uncertain. But one thing is clear: the old model has lost moral credibility.

The moral question

At its heart, the debate is not merely economic. It is moral. Can a global system be called just when wealth consistently flows from the poorest regions to the richest? Can institutions claim neutrality when voting power is dominated by wealthy nations whose corporations benefit most from the rules? Can development truly occur when sovereignty is conditional on creditor approval?

The Global South does not seek charity. It seeks fairness. It seeks the right to industrialise without strangulation, to educate without austerity, to feed its people without dependency and to chart its future free from financial coercion.

Until then, the world will continue witnessing the cruel paradox of our age: a system that speaks endlessly about development while continuing to develop underdevelopment.

Shabodien Rومانay is a teacher and the former headmaster of Islamia College in Cape Town. He is also the founder member of the Salt River Heritage Society and a committee member of the Academia Library and Resource Centre.

Five countries and five warnings

Examples of how restrictive loan conditions, external financial pressure and ratings-driven economic discipline reshaped poorer countries:

Zambia

- International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt restructuring and Structural Adjustment Programmes.

- Privatisation of the copper industry, austerity and public sector cuts.

- Massive unemployment, weakened state revenues and deterioration in health and education systems.

Argentina

- IMF bailout programmes.

- Fiscal austerity, currency policies and spending reductions.

- Economic collapse in 2001, soaring poverty, riots, unemployment and a worsening debt crisis.

Jamaica

- IMF stabilisation loans.

- Trade liberalisation, spending cuts and debt-servicing priorities.

- Agricultural decline, brain drain, persistent debt dependence and weakened domestic production.

Pakistan

- Repeated IMF bailout cycles.

- Tax increases, subsidy removal and currency devaluation.

- Inflation, rising energy costs, a weakened middle class and recurring debt crises without structural transformation.

South Africa

- Ratings agency downgrades and market pressure.

- Fiscal restraint demands, austerity expectations and investor pressure.

- Higher borrowing costs, a weaker currency, constrained developmental spending and intensified inequality debates.

Thought Leader



William Gumede

Use BEE to resource civil society

The policy must be remodelled to become broad-based, helping make community organisations and social enterprises its core beneficiaries rather than political elites and their connections

All black economic empowerment (BEE) deals in the private sector should include participation by genuine civil society, community organisations and social enterprises.

Private sector BEE deals largely empower politically connected politicians, trade unionists, civil servants and the ANC, as well as politically connected trusts, businesses and dealmakers of all colours.

BEE must be remodelled to become genuinely broad-based, making civil society, community organisations and social enterprises the core beneficiaries.

The Competition Tribunal and Competition Commission should also, in high-stakes mergers, compel companies to set aside funding specifically for civil society, community organisations and social enterprises.

Companies should also be obliged to channel larger proportions of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding to these groups. Many CSR programmes are not impactful, do not reach their stated sustainability targets and are not long-lasting. Dedicated channelling of the funding to civil society, community organisations and social enterprises would be more developmentally beneficial.

The licensing conditions of the National Lottery oblige organisations to fund NPOs. However, there has been criticism that the funding has not been effectively distributed to deserving civil society, community organisations and social enterprises.

In fact, politically connected individuals have established patronage-based “non-profit” organisations to which the funds were channelled.

There have been many disheartening reports of looting of lottery money meant for poor people.

There are also reports that lottery funds meant for community upliftment, social infrastructure and public service delivery have been diverted for personal enrichment or political patronage.

State development finance institutions, such as the Public Investment Corporation, the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Industrial Development Corporation, provide significant BEE funding. It should be compulsory that development finance institution funds set aside for BEE transactions allocate significant portions to civil society organisations, community organisations and social enterprises.

In addition to the funds government departments, development finance institutions and state-owned entities provide, they also have so-called “transformation” funds.

It must be compulsory for these state transformation funds to allocate large portions of their funding to civil society organisations, community organisations and social enterprises.

The same can be said for many private sector companies that have “transformation” funds.

BEE companies of a certain size must also be compelled to make funding available to civil society organisations, community organisations and social enterprises. Such funding should not be given to politically connected “civil society” organisations or, on the basis of patronage, to organisations linked to politically connected individuals in return for state BEE contracts.

An alternative approach to supporting civil society, community organisations and social enterprises would be to create a Civil Society Support Fund, run by civil society,



A vacuum: For a variety of reasons, funding earmarked for development and assisting the poor has been cut or redirected to other causes. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

business and professionals. The private sector, public sector transformation funds, BEE companies, wealthy individuals and foreign governments and agencies could make BEE contributions to the fund.

According to figures from the department of social development, as of February 2023 there were 270 313 NGOs registered with the department. The sector employs more than a million people, more than 80% of them black. The management of the organisations is similarly largely black.

Young people make up the bulk of employment. The sector provides and develops large numbers of democratic, Constitution-based and caring leaders, more so than political parties or business.

Civil society plays a critical role in delivering public services, even more so given the catastrophic failure of public services because of ANC government corruption, incompetence and lack of accountability. The organisations provide humanitarian assistance during emergencies, where the state is often absent.

Civil society organisations also play key roles in fighting official corruption, incompetence and lack of care and in holding elected representatives, public representatives, state-owned entities, democratic institutions and businesses accountable.

Civil society organisations have also been key in strengthening democracy. South Africa’s civil society organisations have heroically defended the Constitution, democratic values and democratic culture, which have been under severe attack from populist and authoritarian political, traditional and cultural leaders, structures and institutions.

Civil society organisations have helped keep a brake on violent shadow groups, such as taxi mafias, gangsters, construction mafias, community “business forums”, crime bosses, informal miners and other powerful shadow networks that

operate parallel to democratic and government institutions, influencing decisions, policies and resource allocation. In the vacuum created by official corruption, incompetence, public service delivery failure and the breakdown of the rule of law, the shadow organisations sidestep bureaucratic procedures to fraudulently capture public resources, policies and debates.

Business funding to civil society, community organisations and social enterprises is minuscule compared with that in peer emerging markets, let alone developed countries.

Most of the funding for civil society, community organisations and social enterprises comes from foreign development aid, mostly from Western developed countries, the US, European Union member states and Japan.

Foreign development assistance declined after the end of apartheid in 1994, when foreign donors moved funding away from the organisations to the new democratic state in the hope of strengthening state capacity.

In addition, the ANC-run state either moved the funds to government projects or to politically connected and ANC-approved “civil society” organisations.

Furthermore, post-1994 foreign development funding to South Africa declined as donors from developed countries argued that the country was a middle-income country with a democratic government and therefore no longer required significant foreign development aid. Business and the state did not step into the funding vacuum that was left.

When the European Union integrated former eastern European countries into the EU, traditional development aid to South Africa, Africa and developing countries was reduced. The EU also shifted its strategy from providing development assistance to developing countries to promoting trade.

Foreign development aid funding

to South Africa plunged further after the 2007-08 global financial crisis, with industrial countries redirecting it to domestic priorities.

The Covid-19-induced global economic crisis forced developed countries to cut development aid to South Africa and other developing countries even further.

After Russia’s war on Ukraine, European countries redirected development aid away from developing countries and South Africa to eastern Europe and domestic priorities.

US President Donald Trump, adopting “America First” policies, reduced development aid to developing countries, Africa and multilateral organisations. The US also slashed or stopped its contributions to global multilateral organisations, such as the UN, which channel funding to humanitarian aid, civil society and peacebuilding in poorer countries.

The Trump administration introduced sweeping global trade tariffs that disrupted economies. Many developed countries, in an effort to rebalance their domestic economies after the high tariffs imposed by the US, also reduced development aid.

The US and Israel’s war with Iran further disrupted the global economy. Developed countries are now cutting development aid as they reboot their economies.

China does not provide state development aid or significant philanthropic support to civil society, community organisations and social enterprises in developing countries unless these organisations align with the objectives of the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

Corruption, incompetence because of ANC cadre deployment and patronage-based BEE have caused systemic public service and infrastructure failures — whether power and water outages or rail and port deterioration — as well as policy failures and the breakdown of the rule of law. This has collapsed many companies. Others have moved abroad.

The ANC government has often introduced rigidly ideological, populist and patronage-based domestic and foreign policies that have wreaked havoc on the economy.

Many high-net-worth South Africans have also left the country because of corruption, state incompetence and patronage-based BEE, reducing the philanthropic aid, resources and capacity they would have contributed to civil society, community organisations and social enterprises. This means there is less South African private sector funding for development.

Finally, it is critical that BEE, private sector CSR funds and state transformation funds do not go to politically connected civil society, community organisations and social enterprises. Similarly, money set aside by the Competition Tribunal and Competition Commission from high-stakes private sector mergers should not go to politically connected organisations.

No active or former politician or civil servant should benefit from funding that comes from BEE deals, CSR funding, Competition Tribunal and Competition Commission mergers or lottery money.

Private and public sector funding, local and foreign philanthropy and foreign development aid supporting civil society, community organisations and social enterprises would have a catalytic effect on strengthening democracy, development and employment creation.

Professor William Gumede is the founder of the *Little Black Book*, the directory of black professionals and entrepreneurs established in 2000 and later sold to Times Media. He is former chairperson of ActionAid.

This is an edited extract from Professor Gumede’s recent farewell speech as ActionAid chairperson at Constitutional Hill in Johannesburg.

Transformation trajectory on trial

The challenge about the pace of implementing change in the legal sector represents more than a dispute playing out in the high court



Tebogo Khaas

The challenge to the Legal Sector Code before the Gauteng division of the high court of South Africa is about far more than ownership targets, regulatory design or technical compliance with broad-based black economic empowerment legislation.

At its core, the matter forces South Africa to confront a difficult but unavoidable question: Nearly three decades into democracy, has the legal profession transformed meaningfully or merely cosmetically?

The answer is uncomfortable.

The litigation brought by some of South Africa's largest corporate law firms — including Bowmans, Webber Wentzel, Werksmans and Norton Rose Fulbright South Africa — raises legitimate concerns about the implementation of the Legal Sector Code gazetted in September 2024.

The firms argue that the code is irrational, unlawful, unconstitutional and practically unworkable, particularly regarding the requirement that large firms achieve 50% black ownership within five years.

The concerns should not be dismissed lightly. Transformation policy that is poorly conceived, procedurally flawed or disconnected from commercial realities risks producing unintended consequences. Law firms are not conventional corporations. Their structures, partnership models, professional obligations and succession arrangements differ materially from those of industrial or retail enterprises. The sustainability of firms, retention of skills, international competitiveness and fiduciary obligations to clients all matter.

Yet it would be equally mistaken to ignore the deeper frustration that gave rise to the Legal Sector Code.

For decades, black legal practitioners have complained — often correctly — that transformation in the upper echelons of the legal profession has proceeded at an intolerably slow pace. Although demographics in candidate attorney programmes and junior professional ranks have changed considerably, ownership, control, premium commercial work and institutional influence remain disproportionately concentrated.

The legal profession occupies a unique position in South Africa's constitutional order. Lawyers are not merely commercial actors. They are officers of the court, custodians of constitutionalism and gatekeepers to justice and economic participation. A legal sector that remains structurally exclusionary inevitably undermines confidence in both the profession and the broader constitutional project.

That is why this case cannot simply be reduced to a dispute about percentages. At the heart of the debate is whether the trajectory of transformation is sufficient. The answer, judging by disparities in ownership and briefing patterns, is plainly no.



Plan of action: Exclusion in South Africa was historically engineered through law, policy and institutional design. Undoing that legacy inevitably requires deliberate intervention. Photo: Supplied

One of the most compelling arguments advanced by those opposing the challenge is that transformation efforts by some large firms have often been superficial or ephemeral. The problem is not merely representation in recruitment brochures or diversity committees. The real issue is economic participation and institutional power.

Who controls firms? Who receives the largest commercial briefs? Who leads transactions? Who accumulates generational wealth from the profession? Who sits at the apex of decision-making structures? The questions matter because economic exclusion in South Africa was historically engineered through law, policy and institutional design. Undoing that legacy inevitably requires deliberate intervention.

Critics of the Legal Sector Code are correct that transformation cannot be achieved through blunt instruments alone. Artificially imposed targets without sufficient regard for operational realities might generate instability, tokenism or unintended distortions. Sustainable transformation must be commercially viable, skills-based and capable of preserving professional excellence.

But defenders of the code are equally correct in warning that perpetual gradualism has become a convenient refuge for institutional inertia. The legal profession cannot continue to invoke complexity indefinitely while substantive ownership patterns remain stubbornly unchanged.

Importantly, the debate should not be framed as a simplistic contest between “competence” and “transformation” or between constitutionalism and empowerment. Such binaries are intellectually dishonest and socially corrosive.

South Africa possesses a deep reservoir of exceptionally capable black legal talent across the Bar, academia, the judiciary and private practice. The real challenge is whether institutional ecosystems genuinely create pathways for the talent to

access ownership, capital accumulation and high-value commercial work at scale.

Equally troubling is the reality that briefing patterns in both the public and private sectors often continue to mirror historical preferences.

Many black-owned and black-led firms remain excluded from lucrative streams of commercial work despite possessing the requisite expertise and capacity. Transformation cannot succeed where economic opportunities remain concentrated in historically dominant networks.

This is precisely why the legal sector's transformation debate evokes such strong emotions.

For many black practitioners, the issue is not abstract ideology but lived professional experience. It is about encountering invisible ceilings despite qualifications, competence and years of practice. It is about watching transformation celebrated rhetorically while

meaningful control remains elusive. At the same time, transformation discourse must guard against unfair personal attacks and racial essentialism.

The public criticism directed at senior counsel Tembeka Ngcukaitobi for representing the applicant firms was misplaced and unfortunate. Advocates operate under the cab-rank rule, a foundational principle of the legal profession that obliges counsel to accept briefs irrespective of personal agreement with a client's cause, subject to limited exceptions. The integrity of the adversarial legal system depends precisely on this principle.

To suggest that black advocates may represent only politically fashionable causes is illiberal and inconsistent with constitutional values. Some of South Africa's most important constitutional advances emerged precisely because lawyers represented unpopular litigants or contested positions.

The legitimacy of legal argument does not depend on the race of counsel appearing in court. What matters is whether the courts can facilitate a principled constitutional resolution

that balances transformation imperatives with legality, rationality and sustainability. The balance is critical.

If the Legal Sector Code is indeed procedurally flawed or irrationally formulated, the courts must say so. Constitutional democracy requires that even noble objectives be pursued lawfully. But if the challenge merely seeks to preserve concentrations of economic power under the guise of practicality, South Africans should view such resistance with understandable scepticism.

Ultimately, the real question is not whether transformation should occur. That debate was settled constitutionally and morally long ago.

The real debate concerns pace, method, sincerity and accountability. South Africa's legal profession stands at an inflection point.

The country cannot afford a legal sector perceived as resistant to meaningful inclusion, nor can it afford transformation frameworks that undermine institutional sustainability or reduce empowerment to compliance arithmetic.

The way forward requires honesty from all sides. Large firms must acknowledge that transformation frustrations are neither imagined nor unreasonable. Government and regulators must recognise that durable reform requires policy precision, consultation and commercially sustainable implementation mechanisms.

Transformation imposed without legitimacy will provoke resistance. Transformation delayed indefinitely will provoke disillusionment.

The challenge before the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria therefore represents more than a legal dispute. It is a mirror reflecting South Africa's unresolved tension between economic justice, constitutional governance, race, power and institutional change.

Whatever the outcome, one reality remains undeniable: the legal profession can no longer rely on symbolic transformation while substantive ownership and economic power remain largely insulated from democratic change.

Tebogo Khaas is the chairperson of Public Interest SA and director of The Ethics Academy

25 YEARS AGO

The head of Kruger National Park's game capture unit, Douw Grobler, has been suspended and charged with misconduct relating to the sale of disease-free buffalo. Grobler, a vet, is renowned for his expertise in relocating elephants and other large mammals.

He is in charge of the park's Lowveld buffalo breeding project, aimed at countering the serious impact of bovine diseases on wildlife stocks by breeding disease-free buffalos.

For the past three years the project has been removing buffalo calves from their mothers and suckling them on Jersey cows, to prevent the mothers passing on their diseases. The disease-free buffalos were not intended for sale. The goal was ultimately to supply about 2 000 of them to other national parks.

The project, which South African National Parks ran in conjunction with Phalaborwa game farmer Koos Bekker, was closed after Grobler's suspension last month. It is alleged the project was selling buffalos without authorisation and some were sold without checks to ensure they were disease-free. —Mail & Guardian May 18 to 24 2001

VERBATIM

● **“The state's submission is that where he [Matipandile Sotheni] talks about his personal circumstances, where he talks about his work employment, his employment history ... has been covered in the previous bail application. All he has to talk about right now is the additional charges the state [has] against him. We don't need to rehash this. It is my submission that it is not even procedural; you don't get two bites on one cherry.”** — State prosecutor advocate Nqobile Maphalala told the court that any new evidence should relate only to the additional charges and not introduce fresh material outside the original bail application.

● **“It is the state's intention to apply for centralisation for the matter in Thohoyandou to be joined with the one here in Pretoria. For this reason, the state is requesting a postponement until 22 July for purposes of centralisation.”** — Prosecutor Tholoana Sekhonyana said in the matter regarding suspended police officer Fannie Nkosi.

● **“People were asking themselves where I'm going. I said I'm going home. This is home. I joined Mayibuye because I would find more opportunities to serve my people.”** — Xitsonga musician and former MP Papa Penny joined the Afrika Mayibuye Movement (Mayibuye), saying the party offered him a platform to better serve communities in Limpopo.

● **“Most commuters purchase weekly tickets and according to the company's calculations, the highest weekly fare currently stands at R431. With the 10% increase, that ticket will cost R474, translating to an increase of R43 per week.”** — Putco spokesperson Lindokuhle Xulu explained the R43 weekly bus fare increase.

The Diplomat

Marion Smith

Land in Abidjan with a sense of excitement, our journey into Côte d'Ivoire began with anticipation and curiosity as we travelled to the West African nation during Africa Month. There seemed no better time to explore a country rich in culture, heritage and resilience than in May – a month dedicated to celebrating Africa and reflecting on its progress and identity.

The Embassy of Côte d'Ivoire in Pretoria had carefully compiled an itinerary that would offer us insight into the country's many regions, cultures and communities. From bustling cities and historic landmarks to agricultural heartlands and cultural centres, the trip promised to reveal different dimensions of the nation.

Ambassador Sakaria Kone, together with Ahmed Soro, the tourism attaché at the embassy, ensured that we were not merely visitors but fully immersed participants in Ivorian hospitality and traditions.

One of the highlights of the journey was visiting Grand-Bassam, undoubtedly one of my favourite cities in Côte d'Ivoire.

The mayor's office, under the guidance of the deputy mayor and dedicated staff, spent the day introducing us to the Unesco World Heritage city and its fascinating past. The experience went beyond sightseeing; it became an opportunity to connect with history and local culture.

Our day included cultural activities, beachfront meals and long walks beneath streets lined with magnificent century-old mango trees. Fish freshly prepared on the beachfront while waves rolled onto the shore created one of those unforgettable travel moments in which time seems to slow down.

Jean-Louis Moulot, the mayor of Grand-Bassam, described the city with immense pride: "The city of Grand-Bassam, the first municipality of our country, the first capital of Côte d'Ivoire, a city registered on the Unesco World Heritage List, is proud of its past, of its abundant cultural heritage which is a symbol for Côte d'Ivoire today. In light of these assets, such as tourism, education, science and technology, Grand-Bassam is optimistically heading for the future."

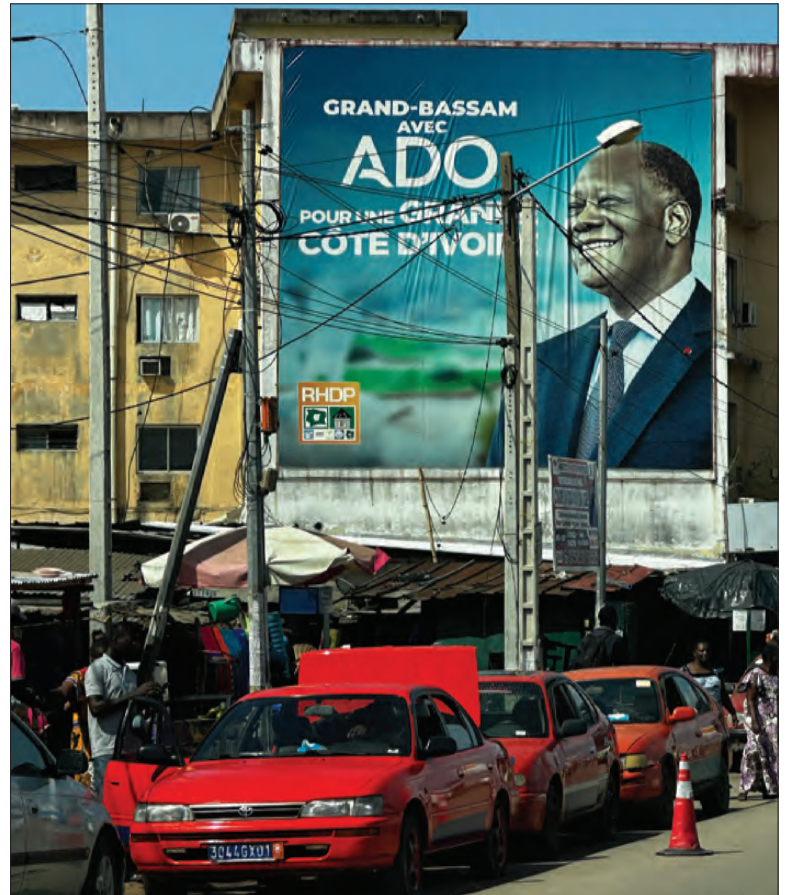
His words felt reflected in every street and building around us.

Grand-Bassam was once Côte d'Ivoire's port and legal capital and served as a major economic powerhouse during the era of French colonial expansion in the Gulf of Guinea. It attracted people from across Africa, Europe and the Mediterranean Levant, creating a city shaped by many influences.

The streets are lined with historic buildings, each carrying stories from another era. Among them stands a house originally built in 1920 by a native of the Gold Coast, present-day Ghana, before later being acquired



Old and new: Trees grow from cracks and crevices in the weathered walls of the former Hotel de France, built in 1900, in Grand-Bassam. The city streets are lined with historic buildings, each carrying stories from another era. Photos: Marion Smith



Celebrating Africa Month in Côte d'Ivoire

The journey through culture, heritage and hospitality showcased that beyond the landscapes and landmarks is the warmth of the people and their optimism for the future

and transformed by Lebanese-Syrian merchant Mr Ganamet.

Nearby sits the former Hotel de France, built in 1900 and regarded as one of the area's earliest luxury hotels with its three suites. Today, it is a photographer's dream. Trees grow from cracks and crevices in the weathered walls, stretching towards sunlight while roots spill over the structure. Across the road stands the former Bank of the African Colony, another reminder of Grand-Bassam's economic significance.

Just before entering the city lies another extraordinary attraction: West Africa's largest artisan village. Several hundred huts, workshops and stores – close to 400 and supporting about 2 000 artisans, apprentices and retailers – showcase the best of Ivorian craftsmanship. It is a place where art and tradition meet commerce, preserving centuries of skills while supporting livelihoods.

Another unforgettable experience took us to San Pedro to visit a cocoa plantation. The visit offered insight into an industry that forms the backbone of Côte d'Ivoire's economy.

Before reaching the cocoa fields, we experienced an extraordinary welcome ceremony from the community. We were greeted with kola nuts, fiery spices and palm wine.

Passing through rubber fields and eventually arriving beneath the shade of cocoa trees, we quickly discovered the realities of life in this environment. Despite standing beneath dense canopies, the heat and humidity were almost indescribable. Côte d'Ivoire remains the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa and is responsible for a substantial portion of global cocoa production. The industry supports millions of livelihoods and remains central to the country's economy.

Yet beyond statistics and exports, standing among the cocoa trees creates appreciation for the labour, environment and communities behind every chocolate bar consumed across the world.

Travelling further north to Korhogo revealed another side of the country's economy and culture. Visiting the women-led shea butter cooperative in the Petit-Paris 2 district became one of the most inspiring moments of the trip. The Tcheregnimin Women's Cooperative, consisting of 146 women, has operated since 2002 and today stands as a remarkable example of community-driven economic empowerment.

With support from development organisations, the cooperative has expanded significantly and now includes modern facilities such as

grinding mills, stoves, ovens, storage spaces and administrative offices.

Shea butter production is a fascinating process. Harvesting begins during May and June, when women gather the fruit and process the nuts through several stages over six or so days. Weekly production reportedly reaches around 40 tonnes of butter.

Walking through the facility and learning about the process was eye-opening. Before leaving, many of us purchased shea butter to take home. At about R45/kg, we were astonished both by its affordability and remarkable quality.

Africa Month, observed throughout May, commemorates the founding of the Organisation of African Unity – now the African Union – and celebrates Africa's diverse cultures, histories and achievements. Visiting Côte d'Ivoire during the period felt especially meaningful. We experienced festivals showcasing African cuisine, music, art and fashion, while heritage celebrations, such as the captivating Panther Dance in Korhogo, offered a glimpse into traditions that continue to thrive.

Each visit to Côte d'Ivoire leaves me with a full heart and gratitude. Beyond the landscapes and landmarks, it is the warmth of the people, their pride in culture and their optimism for the future that stays with me long after departure.

As Africa Month reminds us to celebrate our continent, I left Côte d'Ivoire with one thought: perhaps Africa Month should not be limited to one month at all. Perhaps it should be every month.



Sweet moment: Another unforgettable experience took the writer to a cocoa plantation in San Pedro. The visit offered insight into an industry that forms the backbone of Côte d'Ivoire's economy.

FROM SYMPATHY TO SYSTEMS

What a menopause-smart workplace actually looks like in practice

In the first article of this series, *The Hidden Labour Issue in Plain Sight*, menopause was framed as a workforce issue affecting participation, retention and workplace inclusion.

The second article, *The Hormonal Glass Ceiling*, explored how symptoms and workplace dynamics can quietly shape confidence, visibility and career progression.

The third article, *The Cost of Looking Away*, examined the organisational implications of menopause through productivity strain, presenteeism and the gradual loss of experienced talent.

The next question is practical: **what should organisations actually do?**

Across many workplaces, menopause is increasingly acknowledged yet not systematically addressed.

Support often depends on individual managers, informal accommodations or isolated wellbeing initiatives rather than embedded workplace practice.

A menopause-smart workplace is not necessarily one with expensive programmes or specialist interventions. More often, it is a workplace where leadership capability, operational systems and people practices are designed to respond more effectively to a normal life-stage transition that intersects directly with performance, wellbeing and retention.

The shift required is not from indifference to sympathy. It is from sympathy to systems.

From awareness to application

Awareness alone does not necessarily improve workplace functioning.

Many organisations now recognise that menopause can affect energy, concentration, sleep, confidence and sustained performance. Yet recognition without practical application can still leave employees carrying the burden individually.

Research increasingly suggests that the most valued forms of workplace support are often practical rather than clinical.

O'Neill et al. (2023) found that employees experiencing menopause frequently identified manager understanding and flexible work arrangements among the most helpful forms of workplace support.

This matters because workplace systems influence how manageable daily pressures become. Organisational structures can either intensify strain or help employees continue contributing effectively.

FLEXIBILITY SUPPORTS PERFORMANCE

Employees experiencing menopause often identify flexible work structures and practical manager support as among the most valuable workplace interventions.
(O'Neill et al., 2023)

THE MENOPAUSE-SMART WORKPLACE



Menopause-smart workplaces rely less on isolated gestures and more on embedded systems that support sustained performance, retention and organisational value.

What practical support can look like

Contrary to popular perception, menopause-smart workplaces do not necessarily require large budgets or highly specialised programmes.

In many cases, effective support involves relatively modest operational adjustments integrated into existing management and wellbeing practices.

These may include:

- Flexible scheduling where sleep disruption affects concentration or recovery
- Greater autonomy around workload pacing.
- Access to cooler workspaces or corporate apparel flexibility.
- Manager training on responding appropriately and consistently.
- Clearer wellbeing pathways.
- Improved communication practices.
- More flexible hybrid or remote work where operationally possible.

These responses are not about lowering expectations or reducing accountability. They are about enabling employees to continue performing effectively while navigating temporary but meaningful challenges.

Many organisations already make adjustments for caregiving responsibilities, disability inclusion, injury recovery and broader employee wellbeing.

Menopause requires a similar practical and human-centred approach.

The manager effect

In practice, workplace experience is often shaped less by policy documents and more by direct management behaviour.

Managers influence workload expectations, communication tone, flexibility, performance discussions and day-to-day employee experience. Without understanding menopause, managers may unintentionally interpret fluctuating performance, fatigue or reduced visibility as disengagement or declining capability.

By contrast, informed managers are often better equipped to manage performance constructively, reduce unnecessary pressure and support sustainable work patterns.

The challenge is not turning managers into health professionals. It is helping them lead people more effectively through normal human realities that affect work.

GOOD WORKPLACE DESIGN BENEFITS EVERYONE

Many menopause-supportive practices - including flexible scheduling, clearer workload pacing and supportive management - improve functioning across the wider workforce.

Designing workplaces for sustainability

Modern workplaces already adapt to many dimensions of human experience.

Organisations routinely re-

spond to parental responsibilities, disability inclusion, burnout prevention and changing workforce expectations. Menopause increasingly belongs within this broader conversation about sustainable workforce design.

This is particularly important because menopause commonly occurs during years associated with high expertise, leadership responsibility and institutional knowledge.

Women between 45 and 55 often occupy operationally critical positions across organisations. They lead teams, mentor younger employees and hold significant institutional memory.

When experienced employees quietly disengage, reduce participation or exit prematurely, organisations lose continuity, capability and accumulated expertise.

RETENTION IS A STRATEGIC ISSUE
Women aged 45-55 often occupy experienced, leadership-intensive and operationally critical roles within organisations.

Global workplace guidance increasingly recognises menopause as an issue linked to productivity, retention and workforce participation (*European Menopause and Andropause Society (EMAS), 2021; The Menopause Society, United States, 2024*).

For organisations facing growing skills shortages, leadership pipeline concerns and workforce sustainability pressures, this matters strategically.

Building practical systems

The most effective menopause responses are often integrated rather than isolated.

Instead of relying solely on once-off awareness campaigns, menopause-smart organisations increasingly embed support into leadership development, manager capability programmes, employee wellbeing systems, flexible

work practices and broader inclusion frameworks.

This creates consistency. Employees become less dependent on whether individual managers happen to be informed or supportive.

Importantly, these systems also help reduce stigma indirectly. When menopause is approached as a normal workforce reality rather than an exceptional personal problem, workplace conversations often become more constructive and solutions-focused.

MENOPAUSE SUPPORT DOES NOT REQUIRE COMPLEX PROGRAMMES
Most menopause-smart workplace responses involve practical adjustments, awareness and management capability more than specialist interventions.

From isolated gestures to embedded systems

While the workplace conversation around menopause is still evolving, one message is becoming increasingly clear: **sustainable support cannot depend solely on goodwill or isolated acts of kindness.**

Workplaces function through systems - through management practices, operational design, communication patterns and organisational culture.

The organisations likely to respond most effectively are those moving beyond occasional accommodation toward more intentional workplace design.

As this Workers' Month series has argued throughout, menopause is not simply a private health matter unfolding outside organisational life. It intersects directly with participation, performance, leadership continuity and workforce sustainability.

The real shift now is not only recognising menopause. It is building workplaces capable of responding to it intelligently, practically and consistently.



Pravienna Naidoo | Midlife transition specialist focused on workplace wellbeing, leadership and life-stage change. She is a co-founder of My Second50 | Midlife Reimagined, a South African platform supporting individuals and organisations through midlife and menopause.

For organisations seeking practical ways to support menopause in the workplace, further information is available at www.mysecond50.info, or via connect@mysecond50.info and **084 983 5918** (call and WhatsApp).

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HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS-HOD

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Professor / Associate Professor and HOD: Town and Regional Planning (Post No. 20001496)
- Professor / Associate Professor and HOD: Civil Engineering & Geomatics (Post No. 20001926)
- Professor / Associate Professor and HOD: Civil Engineering (Midlands) (Post No. 20002165)
- Professor / Associate Professor and HOD: Architecture (Post No. 20000504)
- Professor / Associate Professor and HOD: Electrical Power Engineering (Post No. 20000278)

FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Statistics (Post. No. 20001827)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Physics (Post No. 20001823)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Chemistry (Post No. 20000104)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Textile Science & Apparel Technology (20001362)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Maritime Studies (Post No. 20001886)

FACULTY OF ACCOUNTING & INFORMATICS

- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Information Technology (Post. No. 20000025)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Information Systems (Post. No. 20001468)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Finance & Information Management (Post. No. 30001809)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Auditing & Taxation (Post. No. 20001916)

FACULTY OF ARTS & DESIGN

- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Fine Art & Jewellery Design (Post. No. 20001898)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Video Technology (Post No. 20001450)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Visual Communication Design (Post No. 20001712)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Centre for General Education (Post No. 20000892)

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Applied Management (Post. No. 20001801)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Public Management and Economics (Post. No. 20000052)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Entrepreneurial Studies (Post. No. 20001163)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Ecotourism (Post. No. 20000813)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Marketing and Retail (Post No. 20000126)

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Chiropractic (Post. No. 20000549)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics (Post No. 20001871)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Radiography (Post No. 20000168)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Nursing (Post No. 20001394)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Homeopathy (Post No. 20000896)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Biomed and Clinical Technology (Post No. 20000157)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Somatology (Post No. 200001875)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Emergency Medical Care and Rescue (Post No. 20001867)
- Professor / Associate Professor & HOD: Basic Medical Sciences (Post No. 20000922)

For the Heads of Departments positions the period is a term of **FIVE (5) YEARS FIXED TERM CONTRACT**, renewable for one additional term based on performance and the appointment is at the appropriate level of Professor / Associate Professor. Once the HOD term is over the staff member will revert back to a substantive post at the appropriate level of Professor / Associate Professor.

Applicants are being directed to the careers@dut.ac.za website for the full job advert and job profile. Please complete an official application for employment form, obtainable from our website at www.dut.ac.za and send a detailed CV with all relevant qualifications.

Communication will be entered into with the shortlisted candidates:
NB: Only applications made on our application for employment form would be considered.

"While DUT strives for equal opportunities, preference will be given in terms of the University's equity policy. University reserves the right not to appoint."

CLOSING DATE: 14 JULY 2026.

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 our Manager: Talent Acquisition & Operations on email: recruitment2025@dut.ac.za



The University of Zululand subscribes to the principles embedded in the Employment Equity Act

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

FIVE-YEAR FIXED-TERM PERFORMANCE-BASED CONTRACT

REFERENCE NUMBER: 2026/06/VC93

The University of Zululand (UNIZULU) seeks to appoint an accomplished Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Institutional Support. The appointee will provide strategic leadership and operational oversight across all non-academic functions of the Institutional Support Portfolio. The portfolio encompasses the following units across all campuses of the University: (a) Protection and Security Services, (b) Communication and Marketing, (c) Student Services, (d) Information and Communications Technology, (e) Institutional Planning, and (f) Institutional Quality Assurance. Specifically, the appointee will ensure that UNIZULU Protection and Security Services, Communication and Marketing, Student Services, Information and Communications Technology, and Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance are efficiently governed and managed to support the institution's mission of delivering high-quality education and financial sustainability.

The incumbent will have strategic oversight of all operational functions, champion data protection, and drive compliance, efficiency, institutional quality, and sustainable practice across the University campuses.

The incumbent will be required to implement higher education and institutional policies, processes, and systems to ensure quality, efficiency, compliance, accountability, and sustainability in the management of physical, financial, and human resources. A key focus of the role will be strengthening institutional systems to support campus integration and enhancing organisational culture to enable optimal service delivery to all stakeholders.

The position is a five-year fixed-term appointment, with the possibility of renewal for a further five-year term, subject to satisfactory work performance. A competitive total annual remuneration package, inclusive of benefits, will be offered to the successful candidate.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: • A Doctoral Degree in Business Leadership or Business Administration or Operations Management or a related field • Possession of a recognised qualification (or working towards it) in Health and Safety will be an added advantage • At least 10 years' extensive experience in operational and governance leadership within a multi-campus higher education environment or equivalent context/setting • Strong track record in project financial management, property / estates oversight, marketing / communication, and/or health and safety compliance • Experience in leading contract negotiations, procurement processes and risk management • Demonstrable insight into Supply Chain Management laws and practices • Evidence of successful experience in project management, including proven ability to work with multiple constituencies and drive efforts spanning a wide range of functions • Previous experience as a Director of Operations or similar leadership role • Desirable is experience of managing capital projects, institutional expansions and sustainability initiatives including bid writing and accessing additional funding streams.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES: • Strong understanding of property and employment law, Operations management best practices, and well-being initiatives • Ability to develop and implement University-wide policies and procedures effectively • Ability to develop strategy and implement operational plans in all areas of this portfolio • Negotiation and communication and financial management, and budgeting skills • High-level communication skills, with the ability to influence and engage with stakeholders at all levels • Familiarity with property management, facilities planning, and sustainability projects • Knowledge of Data Protection, and strong planning, coordination, and interpersonal skills.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES: • Strong ethical leadership and a commitment to supporting the University's vision and values • Ability to work under pressure, handling complex operational challenges effectively • A collaborative approach to leadership, promoting a positive and supportive working environment.

To obtain the University of Zululand Application Form, please visit the University website and click on **Vacancies** (<http://www.unizulu.ac.za/vacancies>). Applications must be submitted by e-mailing the completed Form, together with the required supporting documentations, to Ms N.N. Mdletshe at e-mail: MdletsheNN@unizulu.ac.za or by submitting an application via **PNET** (www.pnet.co.za).

REGISTRAR

FIVE-YEAR FIXED-TERM PERFORMANCE-BASED CONTRACT

REFERENCE NUMBER: 2026/06/RR01

The University of Zululand (UNIZULU) seeks to appoint a high calibre, dynamic, visionary, and accomplished leader into the position of Registrar.

The Registrar is a member of the Executive Management team and reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal. The Registrar also works closely with the Chairperson and other members of the University Council and its Sub-Committees.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: • Provide leadership in the areas of institutional governance, professional and legal advisory services • Act as the Secretary to Council and its Sub-Committees • Provide secretariat services to the Senate, Institutional Forum and the Executive Management Committee • Provide effective and efficient management of the Registrar's portfolio by leading and taking responsibility for the following services: * Ensure compliance with relevant acts, statutes, rules, charters, policies, regulations and procedures * Focus on the administration of the student academic life cycle including student judicial services, student data and information systems, records management and institutional reporting * Management and coordination of graduation ceremonies * Ensure effective and timely academic administration support in the maintenance of academic structures and standards • Provide leadership in managing, analysing and archiving all student-related record • Provide leadership in the development of the overall annual university academic calendar • Prepare the institutional annual report to the Department of Higher Education and training adhering to prescribed requirements and deadlines.

The position is a five-year fixed-term appointment, with the possibility of renewal for a further five-year term, subject to satisfactory work performance. A competitive total annual remuneration package, inclusive of benefits, will be offered to the successful candidate.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: • A relevant Master's degree in Law/Public Administration or equivalent qualification • A PhD qualification will be an added advantage • Ten (10) years' managerial and leadership experience coupled with sound knowledge of the principles of good governance and administration within the Higher Education sector, of which five (5) years should have been in a senior role • Knowledge of Higher Education Sector relevant pieces of legislation • Extensive experience of the Higher Education policies, regulatory and compliance • Strong and proven leadership qualities at senior/top management level • Demonstrated ability to operate effectively within complex and dynamic environment.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES: • Strong administrative and organisational skills • Financial and people management skills • Analytical thinking skills • Ability to develop and implement University wide policies and procedures effectively • High level communication skills with the ability to influence and engage with stakeholders at all levels.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES: • Strong ethical leadership and a commitment to supporting the University's vision and values • Ability to work under pressure, handling complex operational challenges effectively • A collaborative approach to leadership, promoting a positive and supportive working environment.

To obtain the University of Zululand Application Form, please visit the University website and click on **Vacancies** (<http://www.unizulu.ac.za/vacancies>). Applications must be submitted by e-mailing the completed Form, together with the required supporting documentations, to Ms P. Nhlengethwa at e-mail: nhlengethwap@unizulu.ac.za or by submitting an application via **PNET** (www.pnet.co.za).

All applications must include the following, which are critical in evaluating each application received: • A Self-Evaluation by the applicant showing how his/her competences and qualifications meet the requirements for appointment • University of Zululand Application Form • A detailed Curriculum Vitae • Certified copies of all academic qualifications • Copy of Identity Document • Names and contact details of at least three (3) contactable work-related referees (one must be a current or recent superior) • One confidential referee report to be e-mailed by one of the referees to the e-mail address specified below.

CLOSING DATE: 07 JUNE 2026.

All applications must be received no later than 12h00 on the closing date stated above.

Please note that UNIZULU is committed to employment equity and equal opportunity. Communication will be entered into with shortlisted candidates only. The University reserves the right not to make an appointment in the position as advertised.

By applying for these positions, you hereby give consent to the University of Zululand, that your personal information, e.g. your name and surname, identity number, banking details, address, resume' etc, may be used, distributed, handled or processed and or stored for purposes of Recruitment and Selection process of the University only.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HIGH COURT
OF SOUTH AFRICA
GAUTENG DIVISION,
PRETORIA

CASE NO:
016069/2025

In the case between:
**ZANDILE JUDY
MANANA EXECUTION
CREDITOR**

and

**MINISTER OF HOME
AFFAIRS**
1ST EXECUTION DEBTOR

**THE DEPUTY INFOR-
MATION OFFICER OF
THE OFFICE**
2ND EXECUTION
DEBTOR OF THE DIREC-
TOR GENERAL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOME
AFFAIRS

**NOTICE OF SALE
IN EXECUTION OF
MOVABLE PROPERTY
BY WAY OF PUBLIC
AUCTION**

PURSUANT to a judgment of the High Court Gauteng Division, Pretoria. The under mentioned goods will be sold at 10:00 on 24 June 2026 by public auction to be held at **HALLMARK BUILDING, 230**

**JOHANNES RAMOK-
HOASE STREET, PRE-
TORIA 0002** by the Sheriff of the High Court, Pretoria North East to the highest bidder for cash.

1. Registration as a buyer is a requirement in terms of the following:

The Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2009;
The Financial Intelligence Centre Act 38 of 2001;

2. Goods will only be sold for cash to the highest bidder or sold subject to confirmation as per the Consumer Protection Act on the instructions of the judgment creditor or his attorney.

3. Goods offered for sale are:

1 x WHITE FORD SINGLE CAB BAKKIE – Reg: HJ 56 KT GP

**FOR ENQUIRIES:
SHERIFF PRETORIA
NORTH EAST, 102
PARKER STREET, RIV-
IERA, PRETORIA, 0084**
**SIGNED AT PRETORIA
ON THIS THE 07TH
DAY OF MAY 2026**

**T.J MPHABLELE
SHERIFF OF THE
COURT**

**NTIYISO HLONGWANA
ATTORNEYS INC**
Attorneys for the Ap-
plicant
Tel: 073 115 5785
Emails: law@hlongwanaattorneysinc.co.za
Cc: hlongwanaattorneysinc@gmail.com
Ref: NHA/03/MAN-ZJ/23

**C/O SHIRIMANI F AT-
TORNEYS**
255 Pretorius Street
JSL Towers, Office No
617, Pretoria
Tel: 060 408 2513
Email: info@shirimaniattorneys.co.za
Cc: shirimaniattorneys@gmail.com
PRETORIA

Jobs & Notices

CALL FOR SUPPLIER DATABASE REGISTRATION

The South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) invites qualified and interested service providers to apply for registration on the SANAC Supplier Database for various goods and services categories, including consulting, ICT, catering, logistics, events, office supplies, research, training, construction, and other specialist services.

Interested suppliers must submit the required registration documents, including CIPC registration, CSD proof, company profile, B-BBEE affidavit/certificate, and



other relevant supporting documents.

Supplier registration forms and the full Terms of Reference (TOR) are available on the SANAC website: <https://sanac.org.za/supply-registration-forms/>

Please note that registration does not guarantee work allocation, and SANAC reserves the right to accept or reject applications.

Application Closing date and time :
05 June 2026 @ 16h00 PM.

15302M&G

NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the estate of the late:
HESTER WILHELMINA BESTER

ID: 241124 0044 088

of:

52A KOKANJE RETIREMENT VILLAGE, VAALWATER ROAD, MODIMOLLE

who died on
13/07/2025

Master's Reference No :
7616/2025

All persons who have claims against the abovementioned estate are called upon to lodge such claims with the Executor within a period of 31 days of the publication of this Notice.

MILLERS TRUSTS & ESTATES

Beacon House
123 Meade Street
GEORGE
6529

Ref : TT/AB1/U-
B849/100772
Tel : (044) 874-1140

READ. J.M.

ESTATE OF THE LATE

READ: JOHN MICHAEL
ESTATE NO: 1520/2025,
PROVINCE: Eastern
Cape, I.D. NO:
3903245014081, LAST
ADDRESS: 29 Cotton
Wood Complex, Montmedy
Road, Lorraine, Port
Elizabeth

MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE:
Gqeberha

MASTER'S OFFICE: Port
Elizabeth

In terms of section 35 (5)
of the Administration of
Estates Act, No. 66 of
1965, notice is hereby
given that copies of the
Liquidation and Distribution
Accounts in the estates
specified below will be
open for the inspection of
all persons with an interest
therein for a period from
the date specified or from
the date of publication
hereof, whichever may be
the later, and at the offices
of the Masters of the High
Court and Magistrates as
stated. Should no objection
thereto be lodged with the
Masters concerned during
the specified period, the
executors will proceed to
make payments in
accordance with the
accounts.

David Shapiro &
Associates Inc.
1 Unity Street, Fellside,
Johannesburg, 2192
P O Box 11107,
Johannesburg, 2000
TEL: 0114832046

Kennisgewing ingevolge 'n lisensie-aansoek kragtens die Wet op Petroleumprodukte, 1977 (Wet No. 120 van 1977).

Hierdie kennisgewing dien om belanghebbende of geraakte partye in kennis te stel dat ZEROVAGAS (EDMS) BPK, hierna verwys as "die aansoeker", 'n aansoek ingedien het vir 'n GROOTHANDELS lisensie, aansoeknommer J/2026/05/13/000.

7 GANI STRAAT
ATHLONE
KAAPSTAD

Die doel van die aansoek is dat die aansoeker 'n lisensie toegestaan word om petroleum-groothandelaktiwiteite te onderneem soos uiteengesit in die aansoek. Reëlings om die aansoekdokumentasie te besigtig kan getref word deur die Beheerder van Petroleumprodukte te kontak by:

- Telefoon: (021) 427 1001;

of - Faks;

of - E-pos: Lungisile.Pakati@dmre.gov.za

Enige besware teen die uitreiking van 'n lisensie ten opsigte van hierdie aansoek, wat die bogenoemde aansoeknommer duidelik moet vermeld, moet binne 'n tydperk van twintig (20) werksdae vanaf die datum van publikasie van hierdie kennisgewing by die Beheerder van Petroleumprodukte ingedien word. Sodanige beswaar moet by die volgende fisiese of posadres ingedien word:

Fisiese adres:

Die Beheerder van Petroleumprodukte
Departement Minerale Hulpbronne en Energie
Map House, Strandstraat 44, Kaapstad, 8012

Posadres:

Die Beheerder van Petroleumprodukte
Departement Minerale Hulpbronne en Energie
Privaatsak X 9, Roggebaai, 8012



**SETSOTO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
EXTERNAL & INTERNAL ADVERTISEMENT**

Setsoto Local Municipality, with its seat in Ficksburg, Free State, is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer with clear employment equity targets. It is the municipality's intention to promote equity through the filling of posts, according to the set Employment Equity targets. Qualified persons, women, and people with disability with the skills and expertise to discharge the duties of the under-mentioned positions are invited to apply. The Whites, Indians and African Females will be given first preference and are encouraged to apply.

DIRECTORATE : TREASURY SERVICES

DIVISION : BUDGET AND REPORTING

POSITION : SENIOR ACCOUNTANT FINANCIAL REPORTING

UNIT : FICKSBURG

SALARY : R 540 600.91 per Annum (PL 2)

REQUIREMENTS A relevant 3-year tertiary qualification, preferably a National Diploma/ BCom or higher qualification in Accounting / Finance. Candidate must demonstrate a high level of Computer Literacy (Microsoft Office) Excel and MFMA requirements. A minimum of 5-8 years' experience including 2 years in supervisory experience in Municipal accounting in a Finance department plus MFMP. Candidate must be in possession of Code B driver's License. Candidates must not have a criminal record of any kind.

COMPETENCIES Candidate must meet the following competency level; Accounting, Procurement, Financial Management, Costing, Budgeting, Financial Reporting, Financial Process Management, Oral Communication, Written Communication, Organizational Awareness, Problem Solving, Planning and Organizing, Interpersonal Relationship, Service Delivery Orientation, Action and Outcome Orientation, Cognitive Ability, Learning Orientation, Team Orientation, Coaching and Mentoring.

DUTIES Provide financial assistance with financial reporting. Compiling of annual AFS. National Treasury Reporting. MSCOA and GL updating and balancing. Assess municipalities against the relevant Accounting Reporting Framework. Municipalities supported and monitored against Municipal Standard of Chart Accounts (MSCOA) implementation. Roll out of municipal support interventions to municipalities. Conduct municipal financial assessments based on financial statements and other related data.

ENQUIRIES Human Resource Advisor (Me. S.G. Potloane), tel (051) 933 9300

NOTE Applications must be accompanied by a recently updated Curriculum Vitae, as well as certified copies of all qualifications and Identity Document. Failure to submit requested documents will result in your application not being considered. Applicants who do not receive feedback within two months from the closing date must accept that their application was unsuccessful. Short-listed candidates will be subjected to reference checks, vetting, and signing of indemnity forms. A candidate who canvasses for preference will be disqualified. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.

Please send your applications to the Municipal Manager, Setsoto Local Municipality, P O Box 116, Ficksburg 9730. Faxed or e-mailed applications will be automatically disqualified.

**Closing date 5 June 2026.
before the end of the business day (16h30).**

Mrs. NF MALATJIE - MUNICIPAL MANAGER

15303M&G



University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

**NOTICE OF 2026 UNIVEN CONVOCATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)**

Notice is hereby given of the 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Convocation of the University of Venda (UNIVEN), which is scheduled to take place as follows:



Date:
20 June 2026



Venue: Ndalo Lodge Mbombela, Portion 16 of Farm
Granite Hill Kaapsehoop Road, Nelspruit



Time:
10h30

In terms of paragraph 12.1(2) of the Constitution of the Convocation a notice of the AGM of Convocation must be published at least five weeks before the date of the AGM.

This is an elective AGM. In terms of paragraph 8(2) of the Constitution of the Convocation, nominations for the positions of President, Vice President, five (5) Convocation members, and one (1) Convocation member living with disability must be submitted in writing to the Secretary to Convocation.

In terms of paragraph 56(1)(a)-(d) of the UNIVEN Institutional Statute, the Convocation consists of:

(a) all the persons, other than the persons referred to in subparagraph 1(b), who were immediately before the commencement of this statute members of the convocation of the University; (b) the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Registrar; (c) the permanent academic employees designated by the Council on the recommendation of the Senate to be members; and (d) all graduates of the University.

In terms of paragraph 58(2) of the Institutional Statute, it is the duty of every member to notify the Secretary of any change of address and such address is regarded as the member's registered address. Furthermore, paragraph 58(4) of the Institutional Statute provides that, once a voting day for the election of the executive committee of the Convocation is announced, the voters' roll will open for registration for 15 calendar days.

Accordingly, every member who intends to participate in the AGM process needs to update their details on the voter's roll, as anyone who does not appear on the voter's roll will not be allowed to vote at the AGM.

AGENDA

1. Adoption of Minutes of the AGM of 25 October 2025
2. Report of the President of Convocation
3. The Vice Chancellor's State of the Campus Report
4. Adoption of the Revised Constitution of Convocation
5. Elections of the President and Vice President of Convocation, five (5) Convocation members and one (1) Convocation member living with disabilities.
6. Any other motion complying with the requirements of paragraph 12.1(3) of the Constitution of the Convocation.

NOMINATIONS

The call and process of nominations shall be issued on 18th May and close on **29th May 2026 at 16h45.**

ATTENDANCE

RSVP by not later than 4 June 2026



Scan the QR code or use the link below to RSVP:
<https://l1nq.com/zf89nh5>

For additional information,

please email mashudu.ramaleba@univen.ac.za and justice.lebopa@univen.ac.za

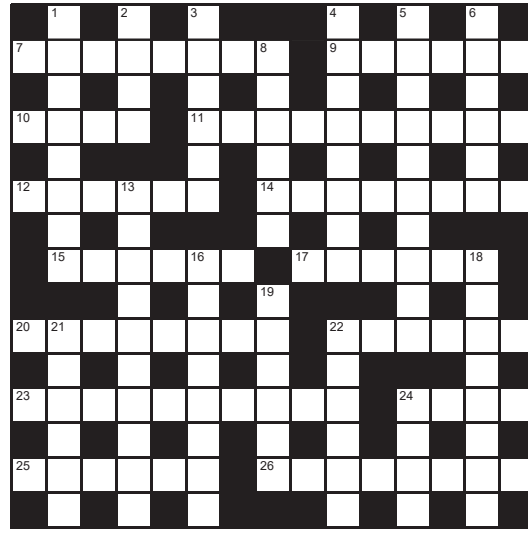
Puzzles

THE ORIGINAL SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

JDE 531
by George Euvrard

- World class — and also from our perspective, not that of the UK or US
- Multilingual — every crossword has one Afrikaans (marked **A**) and one isiXhosa (marked **X**) word
- Fresh & unique — compiled the previous week especially for the *Mail & Guardian*

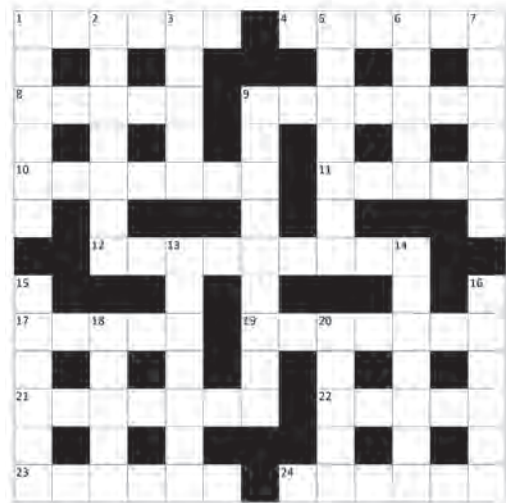
- Across**
- 7 Appreciated our land — very old due to quake around final aquifer (8)
- 9 Reach up to a high position in the church (6)
- 10^X Father, bless all who operate as leaders (4)
- 11^A Fish with mother when at the river (10)
- 12 Danced over, very quietly, while asleep (6)
- 14 Cheers to innovative dole circles (6–2)
- 15 Wheel guides you initially at speed (6)
- 17 Clever poster sabotages riot (6)
- 20 Do up Waterfront in tone, specially after regular green (8)
- 22 Put on mascara, ordered me a pud, fabricated, then reconciled (4,2)
- 23 Court journalists with exercise (5,5)
- 24 Long tea chest has no match (4)
- 25 Fishing aid is good and bad, I finally conclude (6)
- 26 Dared ark with rains falling (3,1,4)
- Down**
- 1 Accompany a gun being lifted far (3,5)
- 2 See life symbol (4)
- 3 Trapped male into getting food (6)
- 4 Poor family gives rise to animosity (3,5)
- 5 Turn coal red, amazingly not using energy, but a signal cable (6,4)
- 6 Hesitate to free mole in Mpumalanga town (6)
- 8 Lack of resistance in the end (6)
- 13 Left focal length to adapt to



- visiting place (4,2,4)
- 16 Wandered through endless school then sped off (8)
- 18 Most hard, some Plato — ough! — established (8)
- 19 Turn over regularly, Jenny, to finish (6)
- 21 Watch with large papers
- providing a visor (6)
- 22 Graduate offspring to become artisans (6)
- 24 Wary to transform? Wrong! (4)

QUICK CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Place of uproar and confusion (6)
- 4 Short expression (6)
- 8 Scene of open conflict (5)
- 9 Human beings collectively (7)
- 10 Dry white Burgundy (7)
- 11 Beer (5)
- 12 Vehicle which is potentially very dangerous (9)
- 17 Local intonation (5)
- 19 Colourful parade (7)
- 21 Weepy (and intoxicated?) (7)
- 22 Mistreatment (5)
- 23 Lure (6)
- 24 Smooth and shining (6)
- Down**
- 1 Substance used for whitening military belts etc (6)
- 2 One who sticks to traditional views (7)
- 3 Be of service to (5)
- 5 Someone who directs the activities of a spy (7)
- 6 Taking off (5)
- 7 Bear without giving up (6)
- 9 Badly formed (9)
- 13 Very beautiful (7)
- 14 Paltry sum of money (7)
- 15 Thwart — my ties (anag) (6)
- 16 Determined (6)
- 18 Fully grown (5)
- 20 Knot in a tree (5)



Quick Crossword courtesy of ©The Guardian 15 012

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

Quick Crossword 15 011



Cryptic Crossword JDE 530



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

8	6	9	1	2	3	5	7	4
2	1	5	6	7	4	8	3	9
3	7	4	5	9	8	2	6	1
5	3	7	4	1	6	9	8	2
9	8	6	7	5	2	1	4	3
4	2	1	3	8	9	7	5	6
1	4	2	8	6	7	3	9	5
6	9	8	2	3	5	4	1	7
7	5	3	9	4	1	6	2	8

SUDOKU

		8						
		2					4	
		7	9	8				6
	1							9
4	3			5				7
	7		2		3			
	5			1		9	8	
	4				6	3		
	8	4	9		5			

What's Up



Encouraging debate: Artist and researcher, Buhle Ngaba continues to push African storytelling boundaries on stage. Photo: Supplied

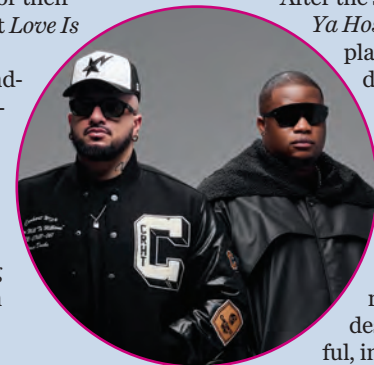
'BLING!' returns to the The Market Theatre Lab

Buhle Ngaba brings her award-winning *BLING!* back home to The Market Theatre Laboratory where the work was first developed under the 2024 Barney Simon Residency. The show comes after a sold-out debut at Wiener Festwochen 2024 in Vienna and the Afrovides Festival 2025 in Amsterdam. Directed by Ilana Dlangalala-Cilliers, *BLING!* runs from 28 to 31 May 2026 at the Ramolao Makhene Theatre, Market Square, Johannesburg. The production revisits the Cullinan diamond through a courtroom narrative that tracks South Africa's journey

to democracy. Framed as Phatsima Khullinan, a sentient diamond, the story interrogates restitution, heritage and colonial ownership debates. Critics note its sharp metaphor for reparations and inherited systems across postcolonial economies. Ngaba, a multi-award-winning artist and researcher, continues to push African storytelling boundaries on stage. Reservations can be made via The Market Theatre Laboratory at 011 838 7498. Expect a sell-out return of *BLING!* celebrating history, justice and cultural reclamation on stage.

Venom & Shishiliza release 'Saka Mama'

Hitmaking duo Venom & Shishiliza return with *Saka Mama*, dropping on Friday, 22 June and setting the tone for their upcoming project *Love Is Pain 2*. Known for blending hip-hop, amapiano, Afro-pop and kwaito, the pair continue to build a sound that bridges genres while keeping a distinctly South African pulse.



The new single features a stacked line-up including Yumbs, Masterpiece YVK, Kwesta, Eeque, Ch'cco and Zwayetoven, weaving together infectious grooves and lyrical flair. *Saka Mama* loosely translating to

Dance Mama, leans into carefree energy, crafted for dancefloors and good times. After the success of *Flight Ya Hoseng* and the multi-platinum *Sondela*, the duo once again deliver a melodic, genre-blurring anthem that celebrates rhythm, movement and collaboration. Speaking on the release, Shishiliza describes it as playful, inspired by attraction on the dancefloor and made purely for enjoyment. *Saka Mama* marks the first step toward *Love Is Pain 2*, arriving later this year on streaming platforms everywhere.

Content Creator Awards entries are live

Entries for the 2026 Content Creator Awards are open, inviting South African digital creators to submit work celebrating the country's fast-growing online culture. Founded in 2022, the not-for-profit initiative recognises storytellers, educators, entertainers and innovators shaping conversations online, while supporting a more professional creator economy. Entry is free across most

categories. The winners receive prizes of up to R20 000 and industry recognition. Founder Manuela Dias de Deus says creators are entrepreneurs and cultural drivers, with the awards designed to unlock visibility, mentorship and long-term growth. Phase 1 categories include Emerging Creator, Trendsetter, Impact Creator, Expert Voices, Style Icon, Dance, Best Creator x Brand Collaboration, Branded Content, Wildcard, Best Online Series and Creator of the Year.



Mentorship: The not-for-profit initiative recognises storytellers, educators, entertainers and innovators. Photo: Supplied

Friday

An unforgettable reckoning with June 16

Unathi Kondile

There are theatre productions that grab you by the throat in the first five minutes and refuse to let go.

Then there are those that ask you to sit still, lean in and do the labour of remembering alongside them. *Rise '76*, the ambitious new commemorative work by Tiisetso Mashifane wa Noni, belongs firmly in the latter category.

Clocking in at roughly 140 minutes, *Rise '76* drifts dangerously close to becoming a staged oral archive rather than living theatre. Conversations linger. Testimonies expand. Historical detail piles onto historical detail. The script is sharp, witty and often profoundly moving but it is also indulgent in places.

One understands why Mashifane wa Noni's first draft ran close to four hours.

"To hit as many historically accurate, emotional and storytelling beats as possible, I was always aware that the play would sit at about two hours, the challenge then became a matter of how to pace the play for maximum impact," explained Mashifane wa Noni.

Be that as it may, this is a must-see, must-experience and must-awaken-consciousness kind of production.

Rise '76 does not offer easy catharsis. It asks for patience. It asks for concentration. Occasionally, it asks for too much of both.

But it also offers something increasingly rare in contemporary theatre: seriousness of purpose.

Commissioned by the Market Theatre and the Baxter Theatre in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto Youth Uprising, *Rise '76* is not interested in offering audiences a sanitised liberation narrative. Mashifane wa Noni instead approaches June 16 through the slippery, unreliable architecture of memory itself.

Rise '76 resists simplified liberation mythology, presenting June 16 as lived trauma remembered imperfectly across generations of South Africans

"What more can one say about a historical event that everyone knows about?"

Mashifane wa Noni, who grew up in Pretoria and attended Glenstantia Primary before matriculating from St Mary's Diocesan School for Girls Pretoria in 2013, writes like someone deeply conscious of history as both political machinery and emotional inheritance.

Her academic background in politics, philosophy and dramatic arts bleeds through every scene. You can hear the influence of a young woman who witnessed first hand both #FeesMustFall and #RURferenceList while studying at Rhodes University. Someone who understood early that protest movements are never experienced uniformly by those inside them.

Rise '76 refuses uniformity. The production synthesises insights gathered from more than 40 interviewees, assembled during research between September and November 2025. The density of testimony becomes both the script's greatest weapon and occasional Achilles heel (for me). There is richness in how the play stitches together fragments of real lives into composite characters and emotionally layered

scenes. A particularly haunting sequence, drawn from the testimonies of three former schoolchildren; Sam, Priscilla and Dikeledi, reconstructs the terror of encountering an armed white policeman amid the chaos of June 16.

Elsewhere, the chilling testimony of the lieutenant-colonel allegedly responsible for firing the first fatal shot becomes a confrontation scene that lingers long after the show.

"Memory, as the pillar of my creative interpretation of the play, allowed for conflicting accounts to play an interesting narrative role because my cast and I quickly realised that someone would say one thing in their testimony that completely contradicts what someone else said in theirs.

"Or someone would remember something that did not make any factual sense but keeping in mind that is how the person remembers it. And then having to decide on whether we portray it as it is, even if it's somewhat incorrect."

Key resources also used in drafting the play include Truth and Reconciliation Commission testimonies; *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter Memories of June 1976* by Professor Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu; *I Saw a Nightmare – Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976* by Professor Helena Pohlandt-McCormack; and *Sam Nzima: A Journey Through His Lens* by Nhlanhla Mthethwa.

The writing of the production avoids simplistic hero worship. The young people of 1976 are portrayed not as mythologised martyrs carved from granite but as frightened, ordinary children thrust into extraordinary violence.

The production's most affecting insight is perhaps its insistence that history happened to people who

'Walking away from the play, I have more emotions than I do have thoughts. The fire has been ignited in me.'



Emotional texture: Zilungile Mbombo, Mfuneli Ntumbuka and Alex Sono. The script is sharp, witty and moving. Photos: Fiona MacPherson



Food for thought: Sbuja Dywili, Botlhale Mahlangu and Alex Sono in *Rise '76* which offers a seriousness of purpose.

could easily have been us. Back then.

There is also something quietly profound about the way so many high school learners have reportedly responded to *Rise '76* at The Baxter.

Despite the common assumption that younger South Africans engage with June 16 only in abstract, textbook terms, they appeared deeply affected by the production's emotional and historical texture.

Perhaps beneath the perceived distance we so often attribute to today's youth lies unresolved transgenerational grief/trauma/guilt searching for a language, direction and release.

The emotional reckoning became evident in conversations with learners who attended a school's performance at the Baxter last week.

"Personally, it was very emotional and I thought that the characters were well-developed and that it really humanised a story that people do not really speak about a lot. We saw the perspective of the schoolkids

and we saw how heart-wrenching it was for everyone that was involved," Halo said [full name withheld].

Another learner, Zintle, perhaps articulated the production's deepest provocation most clearly: "Walking away from the play, I have more emotions than I do have thoughts.

"The fire has been ignited in me. I am really confronted by the question of what is it that I am going to do or that our generation is going to do about the injustices in our society today? And I do feel a bit of guilt because it's been 50 years since 1976 and I do not think we have maintained the struggle or the reasons that the students fought and died for back then."

Rise '76 is showing at the Baxter Studio, in Cape Town, until 30 May 2026 before it heads to the Market Theatre's Mannie Manim Theatre, in Johannesburg, from 5 to 28 June 2026.

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Becoming: Bongeziwe Mabandla's *Ndingubani* has been gestating for years, waiting for the courage to come into being. Photo: Christopher Saunders

Fully present, finally free

Kibo Ngowi

The lights go down at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg and three silhouettes appear in separate pools of light.

One behind a drum kit, one behind a keyboard and one standing centre stage, directly in front of a microphone. The audience, drenched in darkness, falls silent. Then Bongeziwe Mabandla's distinctive voice cuts through that silence and the room erupts.

It's the first South African stop of his world tour and from that opening moment, the evening belongs entirely to him.

Flanking Bongeziwe on either side are two Mozambican multi-instrumentalists whose contributions to his sound are anything but incidental. To his left stands Tiago Correia-Paulo — long-time musical director, principal producer and the architect of much of Bongeziwe's distinctive electronic-infused Afro-folk sound, best known before this for his work with 340ml and Tumi and the Volume.

To his right is the younger Bruno Saranga, who also operates under the artistic moniker PizzawPineapples, a remarkably versatile musician, producer, sound engineer and visual artist. Together the three of them form something tighter than a band.

They move like a single musical organism.

Over the course of the evening, Bongeziwe pulls from across his discography, weaving familiar songs in and out of new material from his forthcoming album *Ndingubani*, due for release on 11 June.

The first time I saw him perform was back in 2022 at Constitution Hill, just before fellow Eastern Cape-born singer-songwriter Nakhane. I remember being struck then by the way he picked up his acoustic guitar

and stepped off the stage mid-performance to walk among the audience, playing without missing a beat. The same guitar is with him again tonight at Emperors Palace, picked up and put down between songs depending on what the music requires.

He starts the evening in a black suit, elegant and composed. By the end, he has stripped down to a white vest, shorts and suspenders, dancing and jumping on stage with the joyful physicality of an artist who understands in his body what music is for. At one point, not long into the show, he calls on the seated audience to come forward and gather in front of the stage and they do, without hesitation, rising to meet him.

Before the show, I caught Bongeziwe on the phone from Maputo, Mozambique, where the African leg of his tour had begun. The tour has taken him through the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, the UK, Belgium and France. After Joburg it will take him to East London for the Umtiza Arts Festival, then Gqeberha, Durban, Stellenbosch, Cape Town and ultimately Réunion Island for both the Indian Ocean Music Market and the Sakifo Reunion Music Festival, before returning to Emperors Palace for the final show.

His international footprint is staggering. He has performed

across Europe, the US, Mexico and Australia, as well as in Africa — in eSwatini at the iconic Bushfire Festival, Zambia and Cape Verde. Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon are in his sights. And not just for performances.

"I'm putting a Cameroonian artist on my album," he tells me, with the quiet satisfaction of a man who has thought carefully about what it means to make African music that reaches across borders.

All this touring, it should be said, has been done without the backing of a major label. Bongeziwe works through his management company Black Major, with distribution handled independently through Platoon. When I ask him about the mechanics of making all this happen, he opens up about a reality that rarely makes it onto the Instagram highlight reel.

"Sometimes people don't shed light on how much it takes to do this kind of music and tour around the world," he says.

"People see the Instagram posts and the sold-out announcements. But I wonder if people really ever investigate what it takes for a musician to tour without support from South Africa, without government support. What does it really look like? People would be surprised how much we break our backs and ultimately sacrifice a lot of ourselves."

His new album, *Ndingubani* — a title that translates roughly as "Who am I?" — arrives as both a question and an answer. It is, he says, an album that has been gestating inside him for years, waiting for the courage and the life experience to come fully into being.

"There are certain things I could only be able to write about now in my life," he says. "There were feelings and ideas that were always there but I didn't have the courage or I didn't know how to write them. It's only through this album that I

was able to, maybe through experiencing pain deeply enough, finally piece it together."

One of the album's most significant songs is *Ndikhuhule* (*Depression*), a track about something Bongeziwe says he understood about himself only last year. "I didn't know last year that I've always been dealing with depression or feelings of depression," he says. "But I guess I didn't know how to write it. How do you write a song like that? And it's only through this album that I was able to maybe experience pain so much that I was able to finally piece it together. But it's definitely something that was always lingering."

The album balances that emotional weight with the sonic duality that has defined his evolution as an artist, the warmth of acoustic folk instrumentation alongside the pulsing energy of electronic production. When I ask him how he decides which direction to take a song, he dismisses the idea of any formula.

"I think it's just from the beginning stages. You can kind of feel where a song is wanting to go," he says simply.

That intuition has served him well. His 2020 album, *iMini*, released during the isolation of lockdown, opened South Africa up to him in ways his earlier work hadn't managed.

Growing up in Tsolo in the Eastern Cape before making his way to Johannesburg, he was for a long time an artist better appreciated abroad than at home, a not uncommon experience for South African musicians operating outside the mainstream.

"South Africa has really grown for me," he reflects. "It hasn't always been like that. Especially with the release of *iMini*, it really changed my home base. And I'm so happy it did because it really opened up South Africa for me in a big way. It's been

the reward of persistence."

The vulnerability that defines his songwriting — the willingness to lay bare grief, longing, desire and now depression — might seem like an act of courage but Mabandla says the accumulated warmth of his audiences has made it easier to go further.

"When you say something of great weight, the response is very important," he says. "A lot of the stuff I've shared through my music has been received well, so now I have the comfortability to share even further."

The intimacy does come with its complications. Being a private person at the centre of an increasingly large emotional community is something he navigates carefully.

"It's overwhelming," he says of the experience of fans who feel they know him through his music. "And it's kind of difficult because I think I am that person who is usually one-on-one, you know. But sometimes I can't. It's like: thank you very much and then you move on."

Despite his growing international profile and his stated ambition to plant himself firmly as a global artist, there is something in Bongeziwe's reflections that feels less about conquest and more about presence.

He is a man who has been chasing a dream for long enough to know that the chasing itself can become a way of avoiding the moment you're in.

"I'm at this place where I realised that one day could be right now," he tells me. "I no longer want to wait. I want to fully express myself in the moment. Some of us never know how many shows we have in us. And I just don't want to not be present. It think time runs out if you don't do it."

Back at Emperors Palace, the crowd gathered in front of the stage sings back every word. Bongeziwe, now in his vest and suspenders, dances like nobody is watching and plays like everybody is.

By any definition, he is present — gloriously, completely, unambiguously present. Whatever *Ndingubani* turns out to be, the man asking the question seems to know the answer.

Friday

Kingsmead Book Fair returns

Lesego Chepape

The 14th annual Kingsmead Book Fair returns on Saturday, 23 May 2026, in association with Standard Bank, bringing with it the kind of energy Johannesburg rarely slows down long enough to hold onto anymore.

For one day, readers, writers, thinkers and the merely curious gather around stories. Not simply to buy books but to sit in conversation with ideas, memory, discomfort and possibility.

Tickets range from R60 to R115 on Webtickets but what the fair offers has never really been transactional. It remains one of the few cultural spaces that believes in slowness. In sitting down. In listening carefully. In turning pages instead of endlessly refreshing timelines.

In a world where stories move through TikTok reviews, podcasts, newsletters, audiobooks and streaming adaptations, the Kingsmead Book Fair remains committed to the physical and emotional experience of reading.

Alex Bouche, the director of the fair, says that while the event has adapted to changing media habits, its central mission remains intact.

"We focus mainly on traditional literature because we think that literacy and reading is just so important," Bouche says.

"While we have invited people

The annual Kingsmead Book Fair creates space for difficult conversations, thoughtful reflection and the simple pleasure of sitting with stories in an age defined by distraction



Reflection: At the Kingsmead Book Fair readers, writers, thinkers and the curious gather around stories. Photo: Supplied

who have podcasts onto panels and people who have done adaptations from books into plays and we have included them on the programme, our focus is always going to be on traditional literacy and promoting the love of the book."

That commitment feels almost radical. Not because digital culture is inherently bad but because attention itself has become fragmented. Reading asks something different of people. It asks for time, concentration and imagination. It asks people to sit with complexity instead of skimming past it.

The Kingsmead Book Fair under-

stands this deeply and over the years, has managed to preserve a sense of intimacy despite its growing scale.

This year's programme feels especially compelling because of how sharply it reflects the emotional and political realities of South Africa right now.

More than 160 authors will take part in more than 80 sessions across children's, teen and adult programming. Yet despite the size of the offering, the curation feels intentional rather than overwhelming.

"We have over 80 sessions happening throughout the day on our children, teen and adult programmes,

which is very exciting," Bouche says. "One of the things that we're talking about is Joburg in particular."

Johannesburg itself becomes one of the central characters of the fair this year.

"We have invited Tara Roos, who is a journalist. She will be in discussion with Jeff Wicks," Bouche explains. "And we've also invited Helen Zille because we feel that she has a broad knowledge of what's happening in the city, following everything that she's done and all the visits she's made to different areas."

The session asks a question many residents have quietly carried for years now: Can Joburg be saved?

"And I think that she can give us input on the status of the city and where to from here in terms of saving Joburg," Bouche says.

It is difficult to think about Johannesburg without emotion. The city exists in constant contradiction. It exhausts people while simultaneously making them fiercely protective of it. Decay and beauty live on the same street.

Infrastructure collapses while creativity somehow continues to thrive under the pressure.

The fair's willingness to centre the conversations is part of what has kept it culturally relevant. It refuses to treat literature as something detached from society. Here, books become entry points into larger conversations about politics, economics, identity and survival.

"We're also obviously looking at mental health and making it through," Bouche says. "So there we have Rachel Kolisi and Proverb. They are both speaking about difficult times and lessons they've learnt along the way."

The programme also revisits South Africa's historical wounds through discussions around apartheid's legacy. "With the anniversary of the Soweto Uprising, we've got a session on unpacking the legacy of apartheid, which I think will be hugely interesting," Bouche says. "With Yunus Carrim and Lebo Diseko."

The conversations matter because South Africa lives inside the consequences of its history daily. The geography of cities, economic disparity, access to education and emotional inheritance continue to reflect apartheid's architecture decades later. Literary spaces become necessary because they create opportunities for reflection beyond outrage or performance.

For younger attendees, the programme reflects how literacy intersects with digital culture as well.

When asked what she hopes attendees leave with this year, Bouche's answer feels less like an event objective and more like a wish.

"I hope that they feel that they have been enriched by the authors," she says. "That they have attended meaningful sessions that have included them in the sense of rich debate and dialogue and that they can't wait for next year to join us again."

Maybe that is ultimately what the Kingsmead Book Fair continues to offer in an age of endless distraction: the increasingly rare opportunity to be fully present.



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Tribute

The beautiful beating heart of our community

Lesego Chepape

In true Maria McCloy style, to get to her send-off meant tracing the city she loved so fiercely. Johannesburg did not simply mourn her; it moved for her.

Cars lined up outside The Parktonian Hotel before people made the familiar walk toward the Joburg Theatre. No one needed directions. You simply followed the procession of style. The women in sculptural jewellery. The below the knee skirts. The leather jackets. The knitwear. The famous Mother & Child T-shirts McCloy made iconic.

Even in death, Maria had styled the room.

But inside the theatre, beneath all the texture and glamour, the mood shifted. Johannesburg — usually loud and restless, was quiet. Friends held onto each other. People cried before the programme even began. The city that Maria documented, stitched together and amplified suddenly felt smaller without her in it.

I walked in as journalist and long-time friend Niren Tolsi approached the podium. He immediately captured what so many had struggled to articulate since her death: how impossible it felt to write or speak about Maria McCloy in the past tense.

"It's been eight days since Maria died," he said, pausing often to gather himself. "And like all of us gathered here, I still do not know how we manage to face each day without her."

Tolsi described the everyday intimacy of their friendship: the WhatsApp voice notes, the gossip delivered with razor-sharp political analysis, the messages about celebrity culture and corruption, the side-eyes and laughter that became their own language.

"How will I survive without our conversations?" he asked. "Without that McCloy side-eye snort and giggle signalling I was being suitably scandalous?"

The theatre laughed softly through tears because everyone there knew exactly what he meant. McCloy's friendships were immersive. She was not halfway with people. She was entirely there.

Tolsi spoke of how McCloy loved Johannesburg with a rare and radical attentiveness. "She walked through Joburg layering observations and documentation," he said. "She understood and re-stitched the fabric of this city through politics, aesthetics and a love for culture, cloth and accessories."

It was perhaps the clearest description of what McCloy represented to post-apartheid urban culture. She was not merely adjacent to culture; she helped shape the lens through which Black South Africans saw themselves after 1994.

Tolsi recalled meeting McCloy at Rhodes University. They were among

The city that Maria McCloy documented, stitched together and amplified fell quiet at the Joburg Theatre to honour one of its greatest architects

only a handful of Black students in their journalism classes, navigating an institution still deeply colonial in character.

"We formed hard exoskeletons to preserve our Blackness," he said.

Even then, Maria's politics was already formed. She challenged rape culture, advocated for survivors and spoke openly against abusive men long before it became socially acceptable to do so in creative circles. She was also speaking about decolonisation decades before movements like #RhodesMustFall emerged nationally.

"She was never porous in her principles," Tolsi said. "If she knew someone had been violent towards women, she made it clear where she stood."

Their friendship stretched from student politics to Johannesburg's cultural boom years in Yeoville during the late 1990s. Tolsi remembered parties at Westminster Mansions where artists, musicians, journalists and future cultural leaders gathered around McCloy's orbit.

"At some point I walked downstairs and found Brenda Fassie shouting into the intercom trying to get into the building," he laughed. "Maria is the coolest person I know, I thought to myself."

That coolness would become part of her mythology but Tolsi resisted reducing her to aesthetics alone. "People talk about her fashion and DJing and publicity work," he said. "But what I want to underline is that she shaped post-apartheid South Africa. She reshaped how we understood ourselves, how we danced, how we dressed, how we played."

Writer and filmmaker Milisuthando Bongela followed with a tribute that was both devastating and funny, much like the friendship she described.

Bongela spoke about meeting McCloy in 2008 after moving to Johannesburg broke, uncertain and searching for direction.

"One day she saw me at a party and said, 'What's going on with you? You've lost your light'," Bongela recalled.

When Bongela admitted she needed work, McCloy casually told her to come to the office in January. "I don't even think they had a position for me," she laughed. "I feel like



Loving memory: Maria McCloy was someone who made Johannesburg feel possible. Someone who gathered people across class, art, music, fashion and politics and convinced them that beauty, style and radical care belonged together.



they made one up on the spot."

That was McCloy's way. She made plans for people. She connected them. She held them up. Bongela also painted a vivid portrait of life at Westminster Mansions in Yeoville, where McCloy's apartment became the emotional centre of an entire community.

"Her home was the literal middle centre of the building," she said. "The beautiful beating heart of our community."

Westminster was more than an apartment block; it was an ecosystem of artists, journalists, musicians and wanderers. McCloy knew everybody. She introduced neighbours to each

other. She hosted legendary January parties where one could encounter an ex-lover, a future employer, a famous poet, a sangoma or a lifelong friend all in the same night, Bongela said.

"Everything somehow passed through this butterfly," Bongela said. "Because Maria was the nosiest person I ever met."

Again, the theatre burst into laughter.

Bongela remembered how Maria never cooked, how her apartment smelled of incense instead of onions, how takeaway biryani and bottles of wine often stood in for domesticity. Yet somehow her home still radiated

warmth.

"She gave people time," Bongela said. "She gave us herself."

The most striking part of Bongela's tribute was her reflection on McCloy's emotional generosity. Even after arguments, even after distance, she remained present.

"Ten years ago we stopped speaking for a few months," she admitted. "Then in the middle of a feud she asked me for a lift home. I thought, 'But we're fighting.' But I couldn't say no. That was the end of the dispute. Never to be discussed again."

Then came Dzino, co-founder of Black Rage Productions alongside McCloy and Kutloano Skosana. Through tears, Dzino spoke about the ambition they shared as young Black creatives in the 1990s. "We wanted to create something like *Drum* magazine for our generation," he said. "There was no media covering Black urban culture properly."

Out of that vision came Black Rage Productions, which helped redefine South African television, publishing and music journalism in the democratic era. "Maria was at the centre of that universe for us," he said. "She was the energy, the style, the taste, the instinct."

He laughed remembering how she refused to fully digitise her business despite growing international demand for her accessories. "I told her to set up a website," he said. "But now I understand why she didn't listen to me. Maria loved talking to customers. She wanted connection."

It became a recurring theme throughout the memorial: McCloy as connector. McCloy as archivist of people. McCloy as emotional infrastructure.

And then, finally, there was Thandiswa Mazwai.

She did not give a speech. She simply stood before the audience and sang *Throw It Away* by Abbey Lincoln.

The room broke open.

Mazwai's voice carried what language no longer could. By then, everyone understood that this memorial was not merely about mourning a public figure.

It was about mourning someone who made Johannesburg feel possible. Someone who gathered people across class, art, music, fashion and politics and convinced them that beauty, style and radical care belonged together.

Outside, the city continued moving. Taxis hooted. Traffic thickened. Street vendors packed up for the evening. Johannesburg remained itself.

But for a few hours inside the Joburg Theatre, the city stopped to honour one of its greatest architects.

Tribute

Kibo Ngowi

Maria McCloy had a life and impact so big that it feels impossible to quantify.

The DJ, publicist, fashion designer, cultural connector, mentor, champion and friend passed away at age 50 on Tuesday, 12 May 2026, at Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg following heart failure.

The news sent a shockwave through South Africa's arts and culture community, leaving behind a silence where so much energy, warmth and movement had always been.

Her family, in a statement released shortly after her passing, described her as "a vibrant and creative soul who embraced life wholeheartedly". They spoke of her kindness, her warmth, her generosity and her unwavering love for the people around her.

"She had a special way of bringing people together," they wrote, "and her presence brought comfort, laughter and love to all who knew her." She is survived by her mother, her two beloved sisters Thandiwe and Natasha and a vast extended family of friends and collaborators whose grief is as public as the love she gave them.

To understand who Maria McCloy was, you have to understand what she did. And then you have to understand that the doing was never really the point. The point was always the people.

Singer-songwriter Zoë Modiga, one of many artists whose careers McCloy championed, reached for a distinction that cuts to the core of what made her singular.

"I'm not talking about a hopeful, dreamy, 'best wishes' love," Modiga wrote in her tribute, "but a DOING LOVE. Refreshingly no fluff, matter of fact, straight talker, fiery, 'let's do this' and completely in your corner kind of love. She would work you to the bone but unlike most times, you'd look around and be the one on top of the little hill you built."

Their most recent collaboration was one for the books. Modiga had reached out to McCloy in a mild panic ahead of her album launch at the Market Theatre on 23 April 2026. She needed the seats filled and the support to be there.

"Guess who came through for us?" Modiga wrote. "From a panic to a sold-out show." It would be their last project together. "There were so many more plans. Ideas. But to have realised what we were able to — that's a blessing. A gift."

McCloy's roots in the Johannesburg cultural landscape ran deep and long. Journalist and writer Palesa Segomotso Motsumi traces her own career back to McCloy's influence.

"Before there was Milisuthando Bongela, there was Maria McCloy covering the cultural beat at the *Mail & Guardian*," Motsumi wrote, "and she always sent stories to cover my way. Always courteous and down to unearthing and develop new voices and talent."

The relationship between the two stretched across decades and cities. "I will be 40 years old next year and when I bump into Maria — in Bloemfontein, in Johannesburg — she would treat me as a peer. She was a queen. Unmatched and graceful."

Motsumi's account of McCloy's influence dates back to 2014, when McCloy launched her eponymous brand and extends all the way to their most recent conversations about the Montreux Franschhoek Jazz Festival.

"She had proposed that I send in my proposal to her," Motsumi wrote. That was simply how McCloy operated: always opening doors, always

Friends, collaborators and the artists whose careers she helped shape remember Maria McCloy — one of Johannesburg's most beloved cultural forces



Distinction: Maria McCloy with singer-songwriter Zoë Modiga, one of many artists whose careers McCloy championed. Photo: Nkosi Khona Zulu

Johannesburg has lost a cornerstone

making the call, always welcoming people into spaces they hadn't yet imagined for themselves. "I became a writer and journalist because of Maria McCloy," Motsumi said plainly.

Singer Nakhane first encountered McCloy on an ordinary Monday morning, in the back seat of their car.

Nakhane's then-new partner Chris Wilson worked with McCloy at MTV and the two drove to work together each day.

Nakhane found himself turning from the front seat to look at this person they'd never quite encountered before — dressed in her unmistakable style, putting the finishing

touches on her look, drinking coffee from what they describe as "the smallest, yet beautifully made cup".

They remember the red of her lipstick, her smile, her hair, her rings, her bracelets, her neckpieces. They had been living in the western suburbs of Johannesburg at the time, still, in their own words, "an Eastern Cape child at heart".

"Being introduced to her," they wrote, "I became a real Joburger."

Six months later, Nakhane and their partner moved into the flat next to McCloy's and for a while she was simply a friend and neighbour

— someone to share Uber rides to Rosebank with a few times a week.

Then they began to see her more clearly. "I realised how much love and passion she had for the people who were fortunate enough to know her deeply," they wrote.

"But this was not the useless, idle love and passion that a lot of us foster. Hers was specific and when she vowed to do something she did it with all that love and passion dialled to a 10."

For years, McCloy gave Nakhane clothing from each new collection she designed, freely and without condition — not once asking them to post about it on social media.

They called themselves her guinea pig. Books borrowed from her flat were never really borrowed. Later, when Nakhane was signed to a French label that knew little about the South African scene, there was only ever one person they would consider for the publicist role. McCloy got the job.

"The action-first ethic she had in her personal relationships carried over doubly into her work," they wrote. "I'd never met someone who could laugh at silliness with you one second and then turn and scold you like a disappointed teacher when you had been slacking."

The two of them learned each other. They argued. And then they woke up at five in the morning together to make it to news interviews on time — McCloy always there in person, not because she had to be but because that was her way of showing that if she expected your best, she would be there delivering hers.

"Johannesburg has lost one of its cornerstones," Nakhane wrote, "and I don't know how it will ever recover."

If there is one figure who perhaps knew the full Maria — the DJ, the mentor, the friend, the creative force — it is Colleen Balchin, also known as Rosie Parade and Coco, who met McCloy in the early days of Maboneng in 2011, when McCloy ran her Market on Main stall every week and Balchin hosted Sunday rooftop parties across the street.

"I was a bright-eyed and chaotic 21-year-old," Balchin recalled, "and she was a bright-eyed and chaotic 36-year-old. The age I am now, where she has left me."

Their friendship deepened through the years and the hangouts at Kitchener's, through the Pussy Party in 2016 where Balchin booked McCloy to DJ before she'd even had a chance to sign off on the flyer and before McCloy had decided she wanted to perform under the name Podesta rather than McCloy. "Of course," Balchin laughed, "McCloy would McCloy."

Over the decade that followed, Balchin became something of a DJ mum and manager to McCloy, watching with delight as her career gathered momentum. But it was the quality of McCloy's friendships that left the deepest impression.

"The genuine love in her world," Balchin wrote, "as non-negotiable as a pot of earl grey, Wilson's toffees in her endless supply of incredible bags, a drink on her third song, an electric slide on the dance floor during her DJ sets, a bold lip, and a wicked observation that would leave me cackling while she grinned into her phone. Always arranging the next most amazing thing."

McCloy's last DJ set, on 30 April at Ratz, ran for seven and a half hours. The room was up in arms, the music relentless. At 2:30 in the morning, Balchin had to beg her to stop.

"Once she started," she wrote, "good luck to the person trying to get her to stop." It was a set played for no client brief, no corporate expectation. Just Maria, doing what she loved, for the love of it.

"I'm proud to say," Balchin wrote, "she nailed that."

Modiga, in her tribute, remembered dancing all night at McCloy's 50th birthday, a room that existed, entirely and beautifully, in her honour.

She described her as "the president of culture making" and called her legacy and impact something that "stands tall, always." She signed off with a tenderness that spoke for all of them: "Dance well, *phumula kahle Ndlovukazi* (Rest well, Queen)."

There will not be another Maria McCloy. But then, there never was.

Mail & Guardian Friday

May 22 to 28 2026 • mg.co.za/arts

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