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Conversations *with the* President



SA Revenue Service leads the way in rebuilding the state

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

LAST week I visited the South African Revenue Service (SARS) National Command Centre in Tshwane to commend and congratulate its staff and leadership on their outstanding work.

In the last financial year, SARS achieved the highest revenue collection in the tax authority's history, collecting R2.3 trillion. These revenues collected into the fiscus return to our citizens as lifeblood. Basic services are delivered, social grants are paid out to society's most vulnerable, public infrastructure is built and maintained, and the machinery of government is kept running.

In many ways SARS is a stan-

dard-bearer for a capable state. It has been a trailblazer in the use of technology to construct a citizen-friendly ecosystem, making it easier for taxpayers to meet their obligations. It is little wonder that SARS is regarded as one of the best tax authorities in the world.

The South African Revenue Service also stands as a credible blueprint for rebuilding institutional capacity in the wake of the state capture era.

In 2018, I appointed a commission of inquiry into SARS headed by Judge Robert Nugent. When the commission began with its work, SARS was crippled by political interference, leadership purges were com-

monplace, and specialist enforcement capacity had been substantially dismantled.

Morale at the tax authority was at an all-time low and revenue collection had been significantly weakened. Levels of compliance were steadily declining, with both corporate income tax and personal tax collections down.

Seven years since the Nugent Commission issued its recommendations, nearly all those recommendations have been implemented.

Among the key recommendations were restoring capable independent leadership and governance, restoring compliance



and enforcement capabilities, modernising systems, and improving efficiency and services to taxpayers.

As a consequence, the tax authority has achieved a turnaround that has exceeded expectations

Just five years ago, public trust in SARS stood at 48%. It is now around 75%. Attitudes towards tax compliance also continue to improve.

SARS played an important role in South Africa's exit from the Financial Action Task Force (FAFT) grey list and in the sovereign credit ratings upgrade from S&P last year.

Certainty in tax policy and honesty and efficiency in tax administration is a key consideration for investors looking to bring their business to

our country. It sends a strong signal that South Africa is serious about institutional integrity and regulatory certainty. This is confidence that is hard to price, but easy to feel when a core institution like SARS regains public and investor trust.

For citizens, an efficient tax administration translates into a more reliable revenue stream for grants, infrastructure and basic services. For businesses, this means fairness and predictability.

The rebuilding of SARS illustrates the value of commissions of inquiry. Not only did the commission unearth the full architecture of wrongdoing but it proposed steps to ensure that there is no recurrence. Credit must go to the leadership and staff of SARS for implementing the recommendations with diligence.

As we continue in our efforts to build an ethical, capable state and prevent a recurrence of that dark period in our nation's history, we will look to SARS as an example of what can be done when institutional integrity is restored.

Just as state capture took place over a prolonged period of time, the work of rebuilding will not happen overnight.

Recommendations have been and will continue to be acted upon. Laws and processes have changed. Investigations have been undertaken and prosecutions have been initiated. Most importantly, institutions have been rebuilt.

The turnaround of SARS has shown what is possible with a clear mission, committed leadership and capable people. ■

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

12 FEBRUARY 2026

SEVENTY years ago, thousands of women of all races marched to the Union Buildings, their hearts beating with a common purpose.

Armed with extraordinary cunning and resolve, these women braved police checkpoints and harassment.

In a voice loud and clear, they said:

“We shall not rest until we have won for our children their fundamental rights of freedom, justice and security.”

We recall the powerful image of Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Sophie de Bruyn and Rahima Moosa carrying armfuls of petitions to lay at the doorstep of a Prime Minister who did not dare to meet them.

Every petition they handed over carried the weight of justice, each of the 100,000 signatures they had collected expressed a desire for freedom and equality.

For 30 minutes, the 20,000 women stood on the steps of the amphitheatre in silence, not singing, not speaking.

The powerful imagery of these women standing in silence illustrated their resolve and commitment to change.



Their silence reflected the deep emotional pain and frustration borne out of systemic apartheid oppression.

Their silence showcased the sorrow and anger that these women felt in their fight for justice and equality.

Their silence was long enough to be unsettling to the apartheid officials who were watching them.

In that quiet moment, they showed the world that it is not the shouts of anger, but the stillness of determination, that moves mountains.

After the silence came the singing of the now eternally famous chant that has gone down in our

struggle history, symbolising the powerful role played by women in the struggle against apartheid:

Wathint’ abafazi, wathint’ imbokodo. You strike a woman, you strike a rock.

It is said that the women’s chant rolled down the terraces of the Union Buildings, turning the seat of state power into a stage of protest, where courage meets authority.

This evening, we are honoured to have among us Mam’ Sophie de Bruyn, one of the leaders of that march and a stalwart of our struggle for freedom.

She and many other women who have made enormous sacrifices

in our struggle for freedom remind us that women have always been at the forefront of change, ready to stand up, speak out and never back down in the fight for justice.

To mark this anniversary, I ask you to rise and give a standing ovation to the women who marched on the Union Buildings in 1956 and to all the women of our land who continue to strive for the fundamental rights of freedom, justice and security.

It was fifty years ago, in that same spirit of defiance and struggle, that young people in Soweto walked out of school and marched towards Orlando Stadium to oppose the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and the hated system of Bantu Education.

Their courage in the face of a brutally oppressive regime reverberated around the world, and brought renewed attention to our struggle.

The determination and sacrifices of the youth of 1976 and of the generations of young people that would follow continue to inspire us.

Thirty years ago, in 1996, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the text on which our democratic nation is founded.

Our Constitution reflects the spirit of the women who marched on the Union Buildings in 1956 and the young people of 1976, and the many South Africans from all walks of life who fought for our freedom.

It is a Constitution that reflects the aspirations of the people of South Africa for a nation that is united and at peace; a nation that



has thrown off the shackles of oppression and a divided past.

It is a Constitution that calls on us not only to redress the injustices of the past, but to progressively realise the right of all South Africans to housing, health care, food, water, social security, education and a better and prosperous life for all.

Today, we must realise these aspirations in a world that is rapidly changing. A world in which narrow self-interest has replaced the common good. A world in which trade is used as an instrument of coercion.

A world in which might is right and the powerful impose themselves on the weak. To navigate this new world, we must draw on our strength as a nation.

Our strength comes from our values. The values of dignity and equality, of non-racialism and non-sexism, diversity and of the inherent worth of every person.

It comes from our people. From our tolerance, generosity, kindness and solidarity.

It comes from our steadfast com-

mitment to upholding the rights and affirming the dignity of people in our society who face prejudice and discrimination, including persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Our strength comes from our determination and resolve. It comes from our creativity and inspiration.

Our strength comes from our natural endowments, from the minerals in our earth and the richness of our soil, from the beauty of our mountains and shores.

Our strength comes from our institutions, which are robust and independent, and from the spirit of democracy and freedom that lives deep within us.

Our strength and power comes from one another. It comes from what we can achieve when we work together.

Our strength comes from our respect for one another, even as we may differ on various issues.

Our strength also comes from sporting men and women who continue to lift the South African

flag on the world stage and bring glory to our nation.

As we reflect on the state of our nation, we can say that we are stronger today than we were a year ago.

Our economy is growing again, and this growth is gathering pace.

While we have experienced four consecutive quarters of GDP growth, we know that it has to grow much faster to meet our social and economic challenges.

We have achieved two consecutive primary budget surpluses.

Our credit rating has improved, interest rates are coming down and inflation is at its lowest level in twenty years.

We are on a clear path to stabilising our national debt. The rand has strengthened against the dollar.

The Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the largest stock exchange on the African continent, has performed exceptionally well over the past year.

This growth reflects broader economic recovery, investor confidence and increasing interest in South African equities.

Our borrowing costs have declined.

Through Operation Vulindlela, we have made significant progress in accelerating economic reform and opening the way for investment and competition.

We have brought an end to load shedding and built a more dynamic and resilient energy system.

We have made progress in improving the performance of our ports and freight rail lines, steadily increasing the volume of goods that we move in and out of our country.

We have restored our passenger rail system. More and more commuters are now able to travel to work on new locally-made trains, significantly reducing their transport costs.

We are investing across our country in roads, bridges, rail lines, ports, dams, wind and solar farms.

We have created over 2.5 million opportunities through the Presidential Employment Stimulus, mainly for young people and women.

The Expanded Public Works Programme and the Community Work Programme continue to offer job opportunities to many throughout our country.

Last year saw the highest matric pass rate in our history, with more than two-thirds of all bachelor passes coming from schools in the most disadvantaged communities.

As the economy grows, the rate of unemployment is starting to decline.

By expanding our social protection system through the SRD Grant, we have reduced the number of people living in food poverty.

We are strengthening our anti-corruption laws.

Our country has been removed from the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force on money laundering and terrorism financing.

The work we have done to rebuild key institutions from state capture is showing results. The South African Revenue Service is once again a world-class tax authority.

The Investigating Directorate Against Corruption is making progress in prosecuting high-profile cases. Most importantly, our democratic system is maturing and growing stronger.

The Government of National Unity has shown that it is possible for South Africans to come together from across the political spectrum to work on a common agenda for growth and progress.



Last year, we hosted the leaders of the world for a successful G20 Summit, which showcased our country's strength on the global stage.

Confidence is rising among investors, businesses and consumers. These improvements are the result of a determined effort across government and all of society. They show what is possible when we work with unity and purpose.

Now, we have a unique window of opportunity to translate these gains into sustained growth. Despite this progress, we must be honest about the challenges we still face.

Although we are moving forward, we must not claim any easy victories. We are still far from where we need to be.

For too many people, life remains hard. Jobs are scarce and opportunity is out of reach. South Africans are worried about violent crime and corruption.

They are concerned at the state of local government and its inability to deliver basic services in many parts of the country.

Above all, they are desperate for work and for an income to support their families.

We can only be strong when we are equal, when the progress we have made is shared by all South Africans.

The Constitution calls on us to work towards a society in which every South African has a fair chance to make a better life for themselves.

In which every child receives a

decent education and an opportunity to work and thrive.

A society in which we reclaim our public spaces and meet one another in the street as equals. In which the state works for the people and the corrupt face consequences.

This State of the Nation Address outlines the actions that we have taken since last year and the steps we will take this year to advance the strategic priorities of the Government of National Unity.

These priorities are:

Firstly, to drive inclusive growth and job creation.

Secondly, to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living. Thirdly, to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.

This evening, we outline the work we must do together to build stronger communities and a stronger nation.

We outline the work we must do together to build a South Africa that is more prosperous, more inclusive, more peaceful, more united and ultimately more equal.

A stronger South Africa must be safe and secure.

The cost of crime is measured in lives lost and futures cut short. It is felt also in the sense of fear that permeates our society and in the reluctance of businesses to invest.

Children here in the Western Cape are caught in the crossfire of gang wars. People are chased out of their homes by illegal miners in Kagiso in Gauteng. Women are murdered by their partners in

their homes. Building sites are shut down by criminals.

This must and will change.

Organised crime is now the most immediate threat to our democracy, our society and our economic development.

Our primary focus this year is on stepping up the fight against organised crime and criminal syndicates, using technology, intelligence and integrated law enforcement.

We will tackle organised crime by consolidating intelligence at national level, identifying priority syndicates and deploying hand-picked, multidisciplinary intervention teams focused on dismantling criminal networks.

To strengthen our fight against gang violence, I am deploying the South African National Defence Force to support the police, as we did to great effect with illegal mining.

I have directed the Minister of Police and the SANDF to develop a tactical plan on where our security forces should be deployed within the next few days in the Western Cape and Gauteng to deal with gang violence and illegal mining.

As is required by the Constitution I will inform the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces regarding the timing and place of deployment of our soldiers and what it will cost.

We have to act to rid our country of gang violence.

At the same time, we are implementing an integrated strategy to address the root causes of crime

through coordinated interventions across society, from street lighting to access to social services.

We are going to tackle gun crime by streamlining legislation and regulations on licencing, possessing and trading in firearms and ammunition. We will increase enforcement of existing gun laws.

We are putting more boots on the ground through the recruitment this year of 5,500 additional police officers, adding to the 20,000 new officers we announced in previous State of the Nation Addresses.

We are also addressing the threat posed by the infiltration of illegal and counterfeit goods to South African jobs and industry.

We are establishing a national illicit economy disruption programme that brings together key state agencies and other stakeholders, including the private sector.

Through effective use of data analytics and AI, we will be targeting high-risk sectors like tobacco, fuel, alcohol and other counterfeit products.

The hearings of the Madlanga Commission of Inquiry have exposed rampant corruption in the SAPS and some metro police departments through the abuse of power.

We cannot tolerate this. The rule of law depends on a police service that is ethical, responsive and rooted in the communities that it serves.

The South African Police Service has established a task team to ensure that investigations arising

from the Madlanga commission are undertaken swiftly and without interference.

The State Security Agency will re-vet the senior management of the South African Police Service and metro police departments. The vetting process will include lifestyle audits.

As we have successfully done with previous commissions, we will use the recommendations of the Madlanga Commission to make far-reaching changes.

We are determined that the Commission's findings and recommendations will lay the basis for a fundamental reform of our criminal justice system.

We are confident that these efforts will succeed because the great majority of police officers are dedicated to upholding the law and diligently serving the people of South Africa.

Drawing on the success of Operation Vulindlela in advancing economic reform, we will use a similar approach to establish a hard-hitting new criminal justice reform initiative.

This will crack down on organised crime, corruption and the illicit

firearms trade using a dedicated team in the Presidency to ensure that reforms are implemented across the system.

We are further intensifying the fight against corruption by strengthening bodies such as the Special Investigating Unit, the National Prosecuting Authority and the Hawks.

We will finalise government's approach to the recommendation of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council on the establishment of a permanent, independent, overarching anti-corruption body.

We cannot accept that those who speak out against corruption are victimised and targeted.

The Whistle-Blower Protection Bill will be introduced in Parliament. Among other things, this will criminalise retaliation and provide psychosocial, legal and financial support to whistle-blowers.

And there will be a special focus on restructuring our procurement system with a view to ending corruption.

The Auditor General reports that the majority of incidents of corruption originate in the procurement system. We cannot allow



this cancer to continue and we must therefore act.

Measures will include the use of technology and the finalisation of new Public Procurement Act regulations by mid-2026.

We cannot fight organised criminals by treading softly. We must act with zero tolerance and bring the full force of the law to bear.

Let this message be clear: there will be no impunity for acts of corruption and criminality.

In addition to crime, water is now the single most important issue for many people in South Africa, from large cities like Johannesburg to smaller towns like Knysna and rural areas like Giyani.

We have all seen the pain that our people have been expressing through demonstrations in various parts of Gauteng. These protests have been fueled by frustrations over inadequate and unreliable access to basic services such as water.

I have directed the Minister of Water and Sanitation and her deputy as well as the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to attend to the water shortage problem and engage with our communities.

They are there at the moment, explaining to people precisely how government intends to immediately deal with the challenges our people are experiencing.

They informed me that the pipes that had been damaged are being repaired and the reservoirs are filling up again.

Poor planning and inadequate maintenance of water systems by many municipalities are the main cause of the problems we are going through now and are the reason that taps often run dry.

There is no silver bullet to address this challenge, which has its roots in systemic failures and many years of neglecting infrastructure. To ensure water security in the long term, we are build-

ing new dams and upgrading existing infrastructure.

We have committed more than R156 billion in public funding for water and sanitation infrastructure alone over the next three years.

The construction of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and other large-scale projects like the Ntabelanga Dam, part of the Mzimvubu Water Project in the Eastern Cape, is advancing.

And we are in the final stages of establishing a National Water Resource Infrastructure Agency to effectively manage the country's water infrastructure and to mobilise funding for water infrastructure.

However, the real challenge lies not in the availability of water, but in getting water to people's taps.

The Water Services Amendment Bill will enable us to hold water service providers accountable for their performance and withdraw their license if they fail to deliver.

If a municipality is not willing or able to provide a service to its residents, it must be done by another structure that can.

These reforms will address the root causes of the water crisis.

In the short term, we need to address the immediate crisis where water outages are being experienced right now.

Three years ago, when we were experiencing daily power cuts, we established the National Energy Crisis Committee to enable a focused national response.

We overcame what seemed like



an insurmountable challenge by adopting a clear plan and delivering on it.

Using the same approach, we will now elevate our response to the water crisis to a National Water Crisis Committee, which I will chair.

This structure will bring together all existing efforts into a single coordinating body.

It will deploy technical experts and resources from national government to municipalities facing water challenges.

It will ensure that action is taken swiftly and effectively to address the problem.

To address the challenges effectively we will not hesitate to use the powers enshrined in the Constitution and in the Water Services Act to intervene in municipalities where necessary.

We will hold to account those who neglect their responsibility to supply water to our people.

Government has already laid criminal charges against 56 municipalities that have failed to meet their obligations. We will now move to lay charges against municipal managers in their personal capacity for violating the National Water Act.

The critical problem is that in many metros, cities and towns, water revenue is being used for other purposes and very little is invested in upgrading and maintaining water infrastructure.

To address this challenge, in line with the commitment that we made last year, we have introduced a new R54 billion in-

centive for metros to reform their water, sanitation and electricity services.

This will ensure that revenues from water usage are put straight back into fixing pipes, reservoirs and pumping stations.

Water outages are a symptom of a local government system that is not working.

A far-reaching overhaul is now underway to address the root causes of dysfunction in many municipalities.

In many places, local government administrations are weak and governed by patronage rather than technical capacity and merit.

In her most recent report on local government, the Auditor-General said local government is characterised by insufficient accountability, failing service delivery, poor financial management and governance, weak institutional capability and widespread instability.

She says that arresting the decline of local government will require our collective action. We are now taking collective action. Learning from our experience of the past 30 years, we will in the coming months finalise a revised White Paper on Local Government.

This will provide solutions for the functioning of an effective local government system. The White Paper will reimagine the way that local government works.

The current system is too complex and fragmented, expecting even small and weak municipalities to take on many responsibilities.

We will propose fundamental changes that recognise the reality that some municipalities can take on more functions than others, and that we need a differentiated approach to municipal powers and responsibilities.

We are also proposing a more structured cooperation between municipalities and traditional and Khoi-San leadership institutions to enable community engagement and shared problem-solving.

We will ensure that senior officials in local government have the required qualifications and are appointed through an independent process free from political interference.

Where municipalities fail, we will strengthen the ability of national government to intervene more quickly and to direct corrective measures in the interests of serving our people better.

These changes may be difficult. But they must be done.

While these fundamental reforms are underway, we will continue to implement targeted support to improve the delivery of basic services through the Presidential Working Groups on eThekweni and Johannesburg.

While we have made progress in stabilising eThekweni, which has led to investor confidence returning, there is much more that needs to be done in Johannesburg to deal with collapsing infrastructure, financial mismanagement and electricity and water interruptions.

There are many committed people with skills and experience working in local government. It

is our responsibility to remake, reorganise and better resource municipalities so that they can do their work.

As a country, we are increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions.

Just a few weeks ago, catastrophic flooding in Limpopo and Mpumalanga caused the loss of at least 45 lives and widespread destruction of homes, schools, clinics and other infrastructure.

The classification of the floods as a national disaster has enabled national and provincial government to prioritise funding to address the most pressing needs of the people affected.

A stronger South Africa depends on a growing economy.

For more than 15 years, our economy has experienced low growth.

All our actions now are driven by the need for rapid and inclusive economic growth to create more jobs and better quality jobs.

To give effect to the Medium Term Development Plan, Cabinet has approved a comprehensive implementation plan to drive growth and inclusion.

Through this plan, we are working to revive growth by creating the conditions for firms to invest by maintaining a clear and stable macro economic framework, investing in infrastructure that works, creating a conducive regulatory framework that supports growth and enables competition, and a focused and forward-looking industrial policy.

The foundation of this plan is investment, particularly in public



infrastructure, as well as labour intensive growth sectors that are capable of future growth.

These include the digital and the green economy where young people will find employment opportunities.

Infrastructure is much more than an investment in brick, mortar, concrete and steel. It is an investment in jobs, productivity and growth.

For many years, fixed investment has been declining. We are now changing that.

Government has committed more than R1 trillion in public investment over three years to build and maintain infrastructure.

This is the largest allocation of its kind in our country's history. It will be transformative.

Through the Infrastructure Fund and new regulations for public-private partnerships, we are using innovative funding models, reducing risk and attracting investors to fast-track projects in energy, water, transport and digital infrastructure.

We launched our first-ever infrastructure bond to raise funding for the infrastructure drive, which

was more than two times oversubscribed.

Disputes arising from implementation of tenders often delay the implementation of necessary infrastructure.

To prevent undue delays in critical projects, we will establish specialised courts for commercial matters with dedicated judges and dedicated court rolls to ensure faster outcomes in matters that have a bearing on the economy and development.

This year, we will begin the work to establish a professional State Property Company to transform the 88,000 buildings and 5 million hectares of land owned by the state into professionally managed engines of growth and development.

Through Operation Vulindlela, we are working to transform the structure of our economy, to fix our infrastructure and make our electricity, water and logistics sectors more competitive and efficient.

Having put load shedding behind us, we must now transform our energy system to ensure long-term energy security.

For decades, our economy grew on the back of cheap electricity.



But then state capture, mismanagement, inadequate maintenance and inflated megaprojects drove up the cost of electricity to businesses and our citizens.

Now, with the far-reaching changes we are making to the sector and with our abundant solar and wind resources, we will be able to drive down the cost of electricity.

Regulatory changes have enabled a massive and growing pipeline of investment in renewable energy.

By 2030, more than 40 percent of our energy supply will come from cheap, clean, renewable energy sources.

We are establishing a level playing field for competition, so that we are never again exposed to the risk of relying on a single supplier to meet our energy needs.

We are restructuring Eskom and establishing a fully independent state-owned transmission entity.

This entity will have ownership and control of transmission assets and be responsible for operating the electricity market.

Given the importance of this restructuring for the broader reform of the electricity sector, I have established a dedicated task team under the National Energy Crisis Committee to address various issues relating to the restructuring process, including clear timeframes for its phased implementation. It will report to me within three months.

In addition, we will this year commence the first round of independent transmission projects to enable private investment in expanding our national grid.

We will work in each province to address transformer overloading, illegal connections and equipment failure with the objective of eradicating load reduction by next year.

We are committed to the path that we have embarked on to modernise our energy system.

We have begun to turn around the performance of our rail system and ports, so that our businesses can get their products to global markets.

We have now enabled private rail operators to access our network, which will allow different rail companies to compete and move volumes from road to rail.

Later this year, we will initiate major public-private partnerships in our port terminals and rail corridors through a concession model that preserves public ownership while mobilising private investment and expertise.

Last month, we concluded a partnership with an international port operator to manage the Durban Pier 2 Container Terminal, the largest in our country.

This partnership will result in new investment in equipment and infrastructure at the port, and will bring it back to world class standards.

We continue preparations for the introduction of high-speed rail in South Africa, covering routes such as Johannesburg to Musina, and eThekweni to Johannesburg.

Nearly 30 companies indicated their willingness to participate in high-speed rail corridors when we put out a request for information last year.

We are preparing to send out a request for proposals, which will introduce a new era of long-distance rail travel in South Africa.

We are determined to compete in a rapidly changing global economy.

Our industrial policy focuses on areas where we have competitive advantage, where we can create jobs and where we can drive up exports.

Our trade policy is aimed at promoting sustainable development, growth and strengthening our international partnerships.

In a world where countries are looking to diversify their supply chains, we have an opportunity to ramp up our exports across the globe.

We have a diverse economy, high-quality manufacturing facilities and strong regulatory frameworks.

We are strengthening our capacity for trade negotiations and expanding our missions abroad to drive economic diplomacy.

Amid the turmoil in the global economy, we are supporting our established industries in the face of strong headwinds.

We have moved to revive our ferrochrome industry and to protect jobs in our steel, automotive and other sectors which employ hundreds of thousands of South Africans in good quality jobs.

We are working with businesses and workers to close loopholes in our tariff structure and develop additional measures to protect and grow our manufacturing base.

As we protect jobs in vulnerable industries, we remained focused on sectors that will drive future growth.

We know that we can create millions of good quality jobs in sectors like agriculture, mining, services and the green economy.

These are areas where we can be more than competitive. We can be the best in the world. Our agriculture sector is expanding rapidly.

Already, we are the second largest exporter of citrus fruit in the world.

We are opening new markets for our exports, from citrus and avocados to maize, livestock, grapes and wine.

Through the Blended Finance Scheme, working with the Land Bank and commercial banks, we have provided R7.8 billion in innovative funding to black producers.

We will deploy 10,000 new extension officers to support farmers and improve agricultural productivity. This will give rise to many opportunities for young people to be employed in the agricultural sector.

While the rest of our agriculture sector is thriving, the cattle industry is today facing one of the worst outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease our country has experienced.

This disease is damaging our economy, resulting in export bans, trade restrictions and devastation of herds.

We have decided to vaccinate the national herd of 14 million cattle.

This requires 28 million vaccines over the next 12 months.

The state will facilitate the acquisition of the vaccines centrally to ensure that we get the right vaccine for the particular strain of the virus in South Africa.

We will work closely with the private sector to enable an efficient rollout and most importantly we will ensure that commercial, private and communal farmers have immediate access to vaccines.

I have established a task team made up of farmer organisations and experts, working together with the Minister of Agriculture and his department, that will report to me every month about the progress we are making in dealing with this pandemic.

We have classified foot-and-mouth disease as a national disaster and will be mobilising all necessary capabilities within the state to deal with this crisis.

Our services sector, from digital technology to financial services, is growing.

Our financial institutions are some of the best in the world and they have the ability to compete

in Africa and across the globe.

We are attracting major investment in digital infrastructure, with 55 data centres already built and more than R50 billion of investment expected over the next three years.

Tourism is a vital driver of economic growth, with every 13 international tourist arrivals supporting one job.

Our tourism sector made history last year, recording the arrival of 10.5 million visitors.

We must now promote unique cultural, historical and natural attractions that reflect the country's identity.

This can include traditional festivals, local crafts, historical sites and natural landscapes across our country and in rural areas as well.

As we strengthen our criminal justice system we will make areas safer for tourists to visit.

In the coming year, we will extend the Electronic Travel Authorisation system to all countries that require a visa, enabling applications for tourists to be processed digitally within 24 hours.





The biggest opportunity of all lies in green growth. We are pivoting our economy to be a leading supplier of the products which the world will rely on in decades to come.

We are expanding support for the manufacturing of green products for global markets, from fertiliser to jet fuel, chemicals to steel.

From March this year, we will introduce a 150 percent tax deduction for investment in new energy vehicles, while supporting the local production of batteries.

International pledges to the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan now stand at approximately R250 billion. This is financing large-scale investment in manufacturing, infrastructure and skills.

South Africa has some of the world's largest reserves of critical minerals.

Our ore reserves are valued at more than R40 trillion, making mining a sunrise industry.

After many years of declining investment in exploration, we are dedicating funds towards geological mapping and exploration to harness our critical mineral reserves.

Just this week, the Industrial Development Corporation announced more than R300 million in funding for the Frontier Rare Earths Project in the Northern Cape.

This has the potential to become one of the world's largest and lowest cost new producers of minerals that are needed for smartphones, lithium batteries and other products.

Confidence in the future of South African mining was very evident during the Mining Indaba this week here in Cape Town.

New gold, copper, rare earths, platinum and coal mines are being opened.

At the G20 Leaders' Summit in November last year, the G20 countries supported our proposal to expand local beneficiation of critical minerals and the export of finished products.

Over the course of the first five South Africa Investment Conferences, we were able to raise R1.5 trillion in investment commitments.

To date, over R600 billion has flowed into projects. New factories, mines and other facilities are being opened each year.

We have now set ourselves a target of raising R2 trillion in new investments over the next five years.

We therefore look forward to hosting the sixth South Africa Investment Conference on the 31st of March 2026.

To build a more inclusive economy, we are going to back those who create opportunity.

If every small and medium business in South Africa could employ one additional person, we would create 3 million new jobs.

But many of these businesses, a number of which are owned by women and young people, cannot get funding to start or to grow. Many struggle to find markets for their goods and services.

And nearly all small and medium

enterprises have to contend with a multitude of regulations, by-laws, licensing requirements and bureaucratic hurdles.

We take seriously the public comments on the draft Business Licensing Bill, and will ensure that the final Bill makes it easier, not harder, to start and run a small business in South Africa.

This year, we will provide more than R2.5 billion in funding to over 180,000 small and medium enterprises, and extend a further R1 billion in guarantees.

Naturally we will seek to also focus on women- and youth-led businesses to foster their empowerment.

And we will amend the National Credit Act regulations to make it easier to access credit at a lower cost.

The transformation of our economy is necessary to drive sustained growth, reduce inequality and correct the injustices of the past.

We are undertaking a review to refine, realign and strengthen our Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment framework to ensure that it supports greater transformation and inclusive growth.

All of these actions will create a stronger economy and fix the foundations that were broken.

It is a matter of national concern that too many South Africans remain unemployed and too many young people struggle to find their first job.

That is why as we rebuild the economy, we are creating work

and livelihood opportunities on a large scale through public and social employment programmes.

In places like Standerton in Mpumalanga, the Presidential Employment Stimulus is creating work that matters, turning dumping sites into parks and empty yards into community gardens.

The SA Youth platform has provided millions of young people with access to work and learning opportunities for the first time.

The Youth Employment Service, a partnership between business and government, placed over 200,000 young people in year-long work experience opportunities.

This year, we will introduce regulatory changes that will make it much easier for businesses to participate in the Youth Employment Service and create jobs for young people.

In the coming year, we will expand our public employment programmes, including the Community Works Programme, EPWP and the Presidential Employment Stimulus.

We will ensure they are better coordinated to provide income support, skills development and pathways into longer-term work, particularly for young people and women.

To ensure that no one is left behind, we are implementing decision to increase employment equity targets of persons with disabilities in the public service to 7 percent by 2030, and to mandate a 7 percent preferential procurement target across all government and public entities.

Above all, however, a strong



economy relies on a well-educated, capable and skilled population. Our focus now is on establishing a firm foundation for learning in the early years of a child's life.

We are expanding access to early childhood development through the Bana Pele mass registration of ECD facilities and an increase in subsidies for ECD learners. By making Grade R compulsory, we are getting all children off to a good start.

We are intensifying efforts to fix the basic education system, with a focus on early learning, literacy and numeracy, and mother-tongue based bilingual education.

We congratulate the matric class of 2025, which achieved an 88 percent pass rate.

This is the highest pass rate in our history, reflecting both the commitment of these learners and the interventions we have made to improve learning and teaching in schools.

As we welcome improvements in the matric pass rate, we must address the high dropout rate in the last few years of schooling. More learners must be able to write matric and to take subjects,

like maths and science, that will enable them to progress further.

To enable the youth of today to transform our society and secure their future, we are preparing the ground for a skills revolution.

We are undertaking a fundamental overhaul of the skills development system to implement a dual training model that integrates education with practical workplace experience.

We will reform and reduce the number of Sector Education and Training Authorities to improve governance, strengthen industry participation, raise the quality of training and better align skills development with the needs of the economy.

This includes improving the use of TVET colleges as the primary sites for occupational training and artisan development.

To support effective workplace-based learning, we will increase the proportion of the skills development levy returned to employers, restoring it to its original level of 40 percent.

We will also transform the National Skills Fund into a more agile, outcomes-driven instrument

that supports unemployed young people to access workplace experience and employment, building on successful initiatives such as Jobs Boost.

These reforms will ensure that various training programmes we have in government are a door to opportunity, not a dead end.

To absorb the increasing number of young people passing matric, we will expand the opportunities for young people to enter institutions of higher learning.

I have directed the Ministers of Finance and Higher Education to work on a proposal to build more universities and TVET colleges with specialised areas of focus.

An immediate problem is the great shortage of student accommodation at our institutions of higher learning. I have directed the Minister of Higher Education to address this challenge, working with financial institutions on innovative ways in which government can provide student accommodation.

A stronger South Africa is built on strong communities. And strong communities look after their children. More than a quarter of children under 5 are stunted, increasing their risk of disease and affecting their ability to learn and grow. This is devastating for children and their families and has an impact on our society as a whole.

This year, we will embark on a mission to end child stunting by 2030 and tackle malnutrition among young children, in line with the National Strategy to Accelerate Action for Children.

We will focus on the crucial first 1,000 days of a child's life.

Building on existing support such as the Child Support Grant, we will implement targeted interventions to ensure that pregnant women and low birth-weight children get the protein and nutrients that they need.

This is a massive crisis that demands attention and resources. The Medium Term Budget Policy Statement will set out a clear allocation for the actions we need to take.

A major contributor to child stunting is excessive alcohol consumption, which can affect a child's development during pregnancy.

Alcohol abuse leads to violence, road accidents and crime.

To address this scourge, we call on provincial governments to strengthen the regulation of alcohol by limiting the density of liquor outlets, restricting trading hours and ending the sale of alcohol in large containers.

As national government, we have proposed measures to curb excessive alcohol use, including minimum unit pricing or higher excise duties and greater restrictions on alcohol advertising, which we are consulting on with stakeholders.

Since it was introduced during

COVID-19, the Social Relief of Distress Grant has kept millions of South Africans out of food poverty.

As a transformative instrument to improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable people, this grant will be continued.

This year, we will redesign the grant to more effectively support livelihoods, skills development, work opportunities and productive activity.

We know that most of the money provided through social grants is spent on food and transport. In our cities and towns, most people live far away from workplaces and services.

We are remaking our cities and reducing the cost of living for working families by expanding affordable housing and revitalising commuter rail.

We are introducing a new model for housing, where people are given subsidies for ownership and rental in areas that are suitable for them.

We are shifting from building houses for people to supporting them to build, buy or rent their own housing.

Yesterday marked the 60th anniversary of the declaration of District Six as a White Group Area.





A couple of hundred metres from where we are now, more than 60,000 residents were forcibly removed and relocated to the Cape Flats.

The destruction of District Six is a painful reminder of our shared responsibility to redress the injustice of the past and to build vibrant and cohesive communities.

The restitution claim lodged in 1998 affirmed the lawful right of former residents and their descendants to come home. That return has required court supervision, detailed planning and sustained public investment.

Many homes have been completed and handed over to verified claimants.

With R500 million allocated to this work, we are proceeding with Phase 4 of construction.

The restoration of District Six is a goal that we all seek and responsibility that we must all shoulder. We are working to build a healthy nation.

As part of preparation for the National Health Insurance, we are investing in health facilities, personnel and systems to improve access to quality care.

We will be undertaking substantial investment in health infrastructure, prioritising the construction and revitalisation of academic hospitals.

On a recent visit to George Mukhari Hospital in Ga-Rankuwa, I witnessed the dire effects of inadequate health infrastructure.

Starting with George Mukhari Hospital, we will be working with various public and private financing institutions to finance

the building and revitalisation of healthcare facilities.

As a nation, we are finally able to imagine a country without AIDS.

In support of our programmes to prevent and ultimately eliminate HIV, we will be undertaking a massive rollout of Lenacapavir, a 6-monthly injection that has proven highly effective in preventing transmission of HIV.

We are also working to end cervical cancer in our country by mobilising society to ensure that every young girl between the ages of 9 and 15 receives the HPV vaccine.

Last year, we classified gender-based violence and femicide as a national disaster.

Through this classification, we are able to better coordinate our response and direct efforts towards the most impactful interventions.

Building on the National Strategic Plan, we will mobilise all sectors of society through communication and social mobilisation to challenge harmful attitudes and practices.

We will continue to promote women's economic empowerment through training, financial support and preferential procurement.

We will strengthen law enforcement through faster investigation, improved case management, expanded sexual offences courts, and action against repeat offenders.

We will scale up survivor-centred support, ensuring access to shelters, one-stop service centres,

mobile and rural outreach, and the placement of social workers in police stations.

Illegal immigration poses a risk to our security, stability and economic progress.

We will address this problem while ensuring that the fundamental human rights of every person in this country are upheld and protected.

This year, we will take additional steps to secure our borders. Funding to strengthen border security will be prioritised, covering infrastructure, technology and people.

Key border posts will be redeveloped through public-private partnerships and will extend the Electronic Travel Authorisation to all international airports and the busiest land ports of entry.

We are already using drones and technology to greater effect all along our border line.

The police, Home Affairs and labour inspectors will work together to crack down on violations of existing immigration, labour and other laws.

Employers that hire foreign nationals without the required visas will face the full might of the law. To tighten enforcement, we will hire an additional 10,000 labour inspectors this year.

As we undertake these interventions, we insist that the laws of our country must be observed by everyone.

We will not tolerate violence and other acts of lawlessness directed at foreign nationals.

No foreign national should be unlawfully barred from accessing

public facilities, including schools and health facilities.

To build a stronger South Africa, we need an ethical, capable, and developmental state.

A capable state needs committed and honest public servants with the right skills and a deep culture of service.

Over the past year, we have passed significant new legislation to professionalise the public service.

The Public Service Amendment Bill will protect key appointments from political interference and ensure that capable and qualified people are appointed to senior positions on the basis of their suitability for the job.

Lifestyle audits have been made mandatory for senior public servants, reaching 93% compliance across departments last year.

We are establishing a central registry for disciplinary cases across all spheres of government. This will prevent people who are facing or have undergone disciplinary action from being employed elsewhere in the state.

We are continuing to improve the governance and performance of state-owned enterprises, like Eskom, Transnet, Denel, Prasa and several others.

This includes the implementation of clear standards for appointments to ensure that the leaders of these entities have the right qualifications and experience.

We will continue to work in a phased manner towards a centralised model for managing our SOE portfolio so that we can set



standards, improve governance and ensure financial sustainability to deliver on their mandates.

This includes finalising the National State Enterprises Bill in line with this approach.

We will harness digital transformation as a driver of growth, inclusion and effective service delivery.

This year, Home Affairs will launch the Digital ID to enable safe and secure use of digital services for all South Africans.

We will digitise driver's licenses, matric certificates and services at the Master's Office. Citizens will be able to fill out police statements online and eligibility for SASSA grants can be tested remotely.

All these services will be made available on the MyMzansi platform.

Soon, every South African will be able to access many of the services they need without visiting a government office or filling out manual forms.

This year alone, hundreds more bank branches will now offer Smart ID and passport services,

decreasing queues and waiting times.

We will also work with civil society to ensure that citizen's protections and rights are safeguarded through this digital revolution.

For South Africa to be strong, our continent, Africa, must be at peace and it must prosper.

To advance the values of our Constitution, to promote our national interest, we seek a world that is sustainable, just and inclusive.

In an increasingly volatile world, South Africa holds firm to the principles that defined our G20 Presidency and underpin our foreign policy: Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability.

Through our position in the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, we are advancing regional integration, peace and stability.

We are using our international relations to support domestic economic priorities, including manufacturing, value addition and export growth.

We are contributing to the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area to expand

trade between African countries, drive industrialisation and create jobs.

South African firms – our banks, our farmers, our manufacturers – will be leading suppliers to an African market of 1.4 billion people whose working age population will double in the next 25 years.

We are building mutually beneficial relationships with all countries on terms of equality and respect.

In a world where powerful nations often assert their dominance and influence over less powerful states, our country's commitment to sovereignty and self-determination is sacrosanct. It is not negotiable.

We will stand firm on our sovereignty and promote our national interests, values and the rights of our people.

We are clear that we will continue to respect the rights and sovereignty of other nations, but we must be equally clear that we will not be bullied by any other country.

We will forge strong partnerships with like-minded countries to increase our shared resilience to global disruptions.

Building on our Presidency of the G20, which all attest to have been successful, we continue to advance the priorities of the Global South.

These include inclusive growth, debt relief, climate action, reform of global governance institutions and the beneficiation critical minerals at source.

Drawing on the work of the G20 Extraordinary Committee on

Global Inequality we are working with our international partners towards launching the International Panel on Inequality.

This is an important pillar of the global effort to reduce inequality within and between countries. We continue to champion multilateralism and strengthen humanitarian diplomacy.

South Africa remains a clear and consistent voice for international law, for justice and for human rights.

South Africa will continue to support conflict prevention and peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations, African Union and SADC. We are proud of the participation of South African soldiers in peacekeeping missions in many parts of the African continent since the advent of democracy.

We have requested the United

Nations to allow us to withdraw our troops from the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a view to consolidating our defence force.

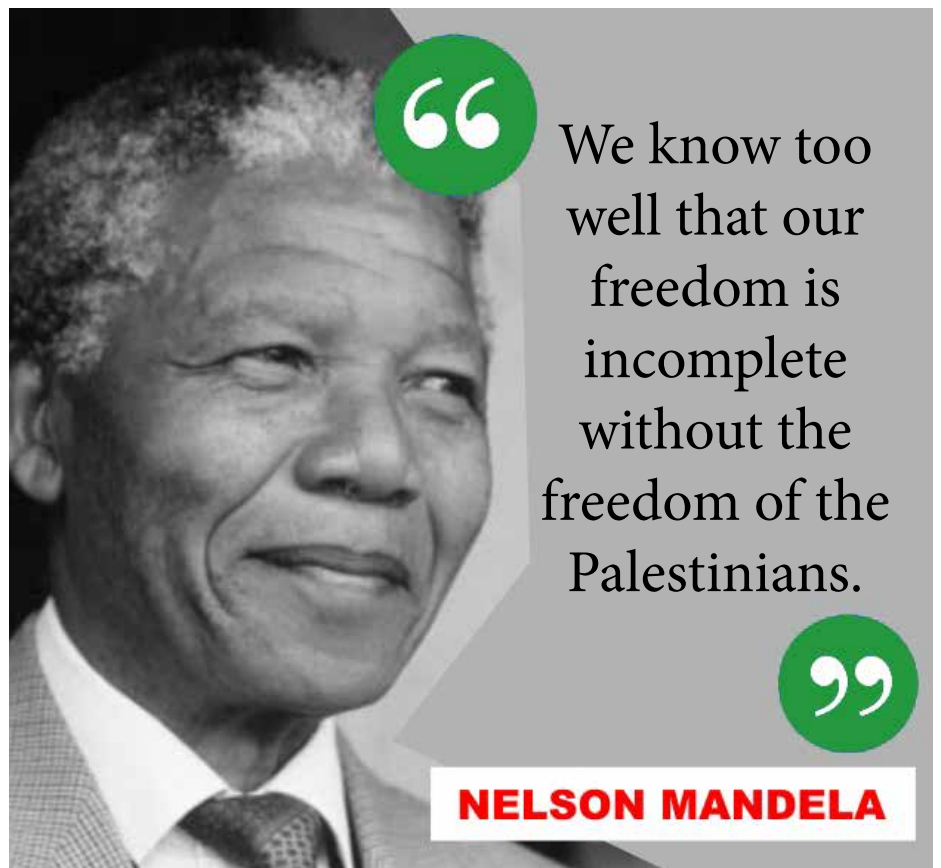
We cannot consider ourselves free for as long as the people of Palestine, Cuba, Sudan, Western Sahara and elsewhere suffer occupation, oppression and war.

Our nation has reached a turning point.

We are leaving behind an era of decline and turning towards an era of prosperity and growth.

We have done much to overcome the effects of state capture, the COVID-19 pandemic, the public unrest of 2021 and the devastating floods of the following year.

We are turning towards hope, towards the reality of a better future for all.



“ We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians. ”

NELSON MANDELA

The progress we have made over the last five years gives us hope and encouragement. It shows what we can achieve when we work together.

Now is not the time to rest.

Now is the time for all South Africans to be part of taking our country forward.

Last year, we embarked on a new chapter in our democracy, launching a National Dialogue at a convention that brought together South Africans from across the country representing all sections of society.

This year, the National Dialogue process will spread across South Africa, reaching every community, every school, every university and college and every part of our society.

Under the guidance of the Eminent Persons Group, consisting of prominent and respected South Africans, and led by an inclusive Steering Committee, these public dialogues will give the citizens of this country the opportunity to raise their concerns, aspirations and plans for the future.

These public dialogues will culminate in a national convention where all of these conversations will be brought together to outline the actions that we must all take to build a better South Africa. These conversations will guide the formulation of an overarching national compact and of the next phase of our National Development Plan beyond 2030.

In building this national consensus, we must draw not only on the shared values of our Constitution, but on the unifying power of sport and the rich diversity of

our culture.

As we celebrate those who have reached the heights of global achievement, we must appreciate how sport and cultural activities build a cohesive society.

Harnessing the spirit of the women of 1956, the youth of 1976, and the people of South Africa in 1996, the year 2026 must be a year of transformative change.

This must be the year that we make South Africa stronger. We must fix local government.

We must fight crime and corruption, and restore trust in the criminal justice system. We must create jobs and livelihoods for every South African.

And we must build a state that works for the people.

Above all, we must ensure that this rising tide lifts every South African.

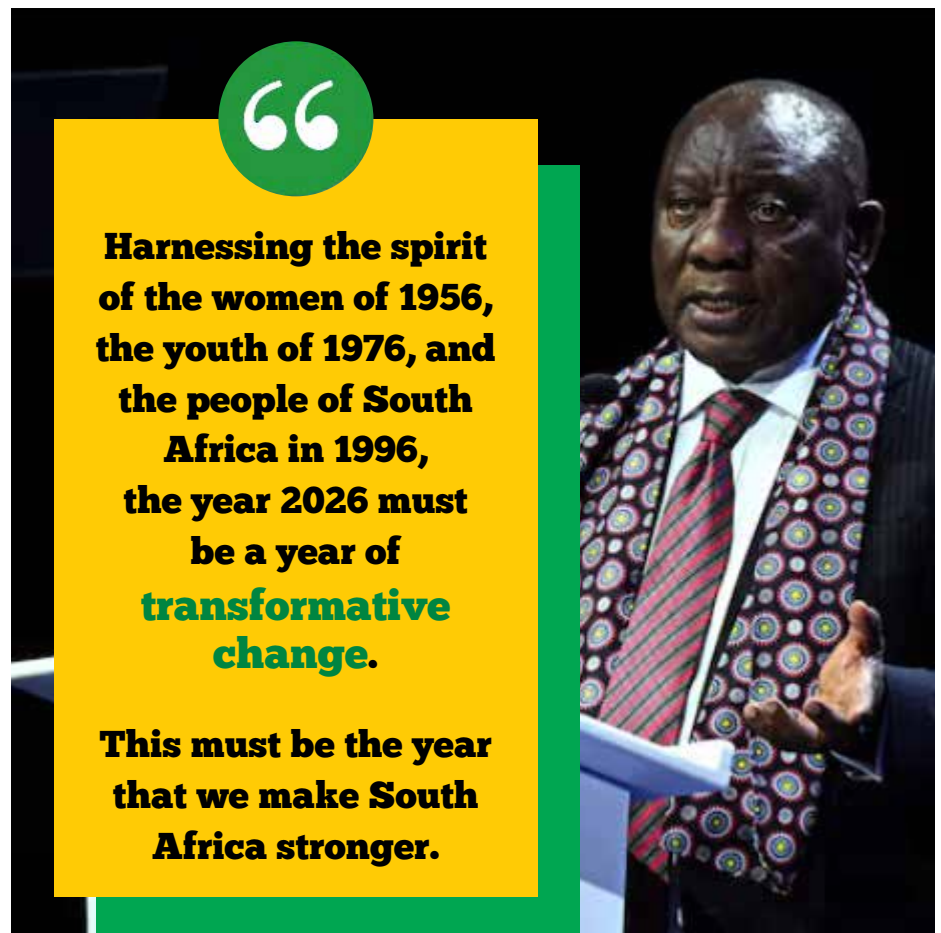
As the economy grows, it should bring into its fold those who have lived on its margins for decades.

Our fight against crime should be felt in the townships and informal settlements as well as the suburbs.

Our schools and hospitals should make no distinction between those arriving at their doors.


In this way, we can build a stronger, a more resilient, and a more equal society – one that stands tall among the nations of the world.

We have indeed turned a corner. Now we must look ahead and move with speed. ■



ANC Veterans League pays tribute to Leon Levy, signatory of the Freedom Charter, communist, trade unionist, mediator and patriot

■ By **SNUKI ZIKALALA, ANC Veterans League President**

 On the 31st of January 2026, we lost a patriot, Cde Leon Levy. From ages 17 to 96, he made a significant mark across generations and organisations. He held leadership roles in the Jewish socialist movement Hashomer Hatzair, the Communist Party of South Africa, the Congress of Democrats, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), COSATU, and the CCMA.

Together with his twin brother Norman, who died in July 2021, he had been a pillar of the liberation movement. He helped form SACTU and led it for nine years. It was in this capacity that he was one of the five signatories of the Freedom Charter in 1955, together with former ANC president, Chief Albert Luthuli, Jimmy La Guma from the South African Coloured People's Congress, Monty Naiker of the National Indian Congress and Pieter Beylerveld of the Congress of Democrats.

After the Treason Trial and five months as the first detainee under the then-90-day law, he went into exile with his wife, Lorna, and brother, Norman, where



they continued to play an active role. After 1994, he returned to South Africa and spent 19 years working at the CCMA.

What can we learn from the legacy of Cde Leon Levy? And how should we honour him together with his twin brother Norman and wife Lorna?

Firstly, from their parents, who were immigrants fleeing antisemitism and pogroms in Lithuania, Cde Leon and Cde Norman learnt about discrimination, inequality and freedom. They recognised that these values can't apply to some but not to others.

While being proud of being Jewish, they condemned Zionism. Despite coming from a more privileged white community, they recognised that freedom was indivisible and joined the struggle alongside the oppressed black majority.

Secondly, as a leading trade unionist and founder of SACTU, Leon recognised the power of organisation and workers' unity in the struggle against apartheid. SACTU's founding premise was that the economic and political struggle against apartheid was inseparable and that to secure improved wages and conditions for workers, it was necessary to



overthrow the apartheid regime.

And thus, for Leon, it was no contradiction to be part of the trade union movement, the Congress movement and the Communist Party.

Thirdly, being a signatory to the Freedom Charter, he recognised the importance of providing hope, setting a vision which was inclusive and transformative – to contrast the divisive legacy of apartheid. The Freedom Charter clause on there, which attributes work and security to his influence, is attributed to his influence.

Fourthly, when he returned to South Africa, he recognised the important challenge of rebuilding and rekindling democratic values and practices, especially in the workplace. Restoring workers' rights and dignity goes beyond enshrining them in legislation and requires building institutions that enable workers to defend themselves fairly in workplace disputes. And thus, his contribution to the CCMA.

The former General Secretary of COSATU, Mbazima Shilowa,

also recalls that he played a pivotal role in COSATU's submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, detailing the life of workers under apartheid and business collusion with the apartheid regime.

Lastly, we remember the values of Leon, Norman and Lorna. As COSATU said in their statement:

“ They can rest knowing that they played their role with distinction and humility, never asking for anything except the opportunity to serve, never demanding anything but a better life for all...It is one that South Africa's current and future generations of leadership would do well to reflect upon and learn from. The nation is indebted for their selfless contributions.”

We should honour the Levy comrades by emulating their values and continuing to implement their understanding of struggle, including the dialectics between the struggle for democracy and socialism and between fighting racism and embracing non-racialism. We should honour their legacy by recognising the importance of principled unity in the interests of the people, rather than continuing to splinter within the trade union and progressive movements. ■



Speakers at the historic launch of the Freedom Charter



■ By **MZWANDILE MASINA**

 On 4 February 2026, South Africa formally acceded to the African Export Import Bank (AFREXIMBANK) through the signing of the Instrument of Accession by President Cyril Ramaphosa, a long-overdue, strategic breakthrough for industrialisation, export growth, and economic sovereignty. With South Africa becoming a full sovereign member (Class A shareholder) on this day, it closed the final gap in Afreximbank's membership, giving the bank 100% continental coverage.

The African National Congress, having strenuously advocated for this strategic intervention both in government and in Parliament, sees this as a progressive milestone, which gives South Africa a seat on the board and greater decision-making power in African trade finance. The ANC-led Cabinet endorsed the accession, triggering a domestic legal process under Section 231(2) of the Constitution culminating in the

signing and marking South Africa as the 54th state to join. Through the ANC's rallying support, Parliament approved the accession in late 2025, enabling the conversion of shares held by state entities like the Export Credit Insurance Corporation (ECIC) and the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) into sovereign Class A shares. Under ANC Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition Parks Tau, the government integrated the accession into the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030. The move is designed to support the ANC's industrial policy, specifically focusing on decarbonisation, diversification, and digitisation.

The accession to AFREXIMBANK is part of the commitment to building a developmental state, reindustrialisation, advancing inclusive growth, and deepening continental economic integration underpinned by the African National Congress's core political principles of solidarity, self-reliance, and shared prosperity.

South Africa's growth and development trajectory

Over the past two (2) decades, South Africa's growth and development trajectory have been constrained by over-reliance on an oligopolistic, uncontrolled domestic financial sector heavily skewed towards short-term lending and money market activity. Low economic growth and unemployment have been some of the country's most pressing challenges. Over the years, the government has put policies in place to address these challenges; however, the lack of access to finance has been a barrier to the effective implementation of these policies.

The country has also relied on external financing from global multilateral financial institutions, whose lending frameworks have often promoted a set of orthodox policy prescriptions as well as universal/ conventional solutions to developing countries like South Africa. These frameworks have historically suppressed the



President Cyril Ramaphosa and the President and Chairman of AFREXIMBANK, Dr George Elombi, at South Africa's accession signing ceremony.

development, discouraged active industrialisation, limited expansionary fiscal and monetary policy, sustained a decline in Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), and prioritised 'price stability' and 'business confidence' at the expense of the much-needed employment creation and structural transformation.

Full Membership

South Africa's full membership in the AFREXIMBANK provides the country with a sensible, credible, and progressive alternative, capable of being a catalyst for the country and the continent's economic development. As an African multilateral financial institution, AFREXIMBANK expands South Africa's access to development-oriented finance that is critical for growth. In doing so, it strengthens South Africa's economic sovereignty, enhances economic policy autonomy, and supports access to development finance, allowing the country to

implement measures in line with its priorities of promoting industrialisation, strengthening regional trade and driving inclusive economic growth. AFREXIMBANK will allow South Africa to unlock high-impact financial and strategic facilities, thereby making significant contributions in these priority areas.

The AFREXIMBANK provides South Africa with a variety of financing instruments, including long-term project finance, guarantees and blended instruments, which are essential to unlocking industrial development and trade growth that will contribute to addressing these challenges. Additionally, South Africa's full membership allows it to leverage the Bank's favourable investment grade rating and Preferred Creditor Status. This enables more competitive export insurance for exporters and boosts investor confidence in South African projects. Consequently, these contribute to increasing exports to

the continent, as well as allowing for the expansion of South African companies through investment in the rest of Africa.

The \$8bn country programme

The \$8 Billion (approx. R128 billion) Country Programme is the primary industrial component of Afreximbank's \$11 billion commitment to South Africa. This funding is strategically aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and the National Industrial Policy Framework to boost export-led growth and regional trade. It will provide funding to industrial projects, export diversification, infrastructure development and transformation initiatives. This programme represents a decisive intervention to channel long-term finance into strategic sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing, agro-processing, infrastructure, the green economy, and export-oriented industries.

Beyond the core \$8 billion programme, Afreximbank announced further financial support and highlighted existing interests. An additional \$3 billion has been set aside for the Transformation Fund to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), township economies, and black-owned businesses and aims to contribute to inclusive economic participation. It will unlock real opportunities for black-owned enterprises, women-owned enterprises, and enterprises owned by persons with disabilities, who continue to face systemic exclusion from credit markets dominated by an oligopolistic financial sector. Through the Transformation Fund, black-owned enterprises get a fair chance to improve their productive capabilities, meaningfully participate in strategic sectors of the economy, including the beneficiation of critical minerals for clean energy technologies, and contribute to job creation, as envisioned in the ANC's agenda of broad-based economic participation and radical socio-economic transformation.

Existing Pipeline

Prior to its formal accession on 4 February 2026, Afreximbank had already cultivated a robust project pipeline in South Africa exceeding \$6 billion (approx. R96 billion). These projects, many of which are already in advanced stages of review or active development, demonstrates the bank's deep commitment to our country even before our transition to a sovereign Class A shareholder. Many of the projects cover healthcare, transport, and financial services.

Since 2018, Afreximbank has operated the South Africa-Africa Trade and Investment Promo-



tion Programme (SATIPP), a \$1 billion initiative with the ECIC (Export Credit Insurance Corporation) designed to boost trade between South Africa and the rest of the continent. This program laid the groundwork for this more expansive \$8 billion Country Programme.

Partnership

This partnership will also improve regional value chains and deepen South Africa's integration with other markets in Africa as the country seeks new markets to offset trade volatility with traditional partners. The move also strengthens Afreximbank's role in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), particularly as South Africa is the highest regional contributor to intra-African trade, accounting for 19.1% of the continent's total trade in 2024.

South Africa's partnership with Afreximbank complements the work of domestic Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) such as the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), the Development Bank of Southern Afri-

ca (DBSA), Export Credit Insurance Corporation of South Africa (ECIC), and the National Empowerment Fund (NEF). Together, these DFIs can help reverse the effects of financialisation by redirecting capital towards investments in productive sectors, localisation, industrial upgrading, and a Just Energy Transition (JET) that protects vulnerable workers and communities.

South Africa's accession to AFREXIMBANK is therefore not a rhetorical response to a shifting global order. Rather, it is a strategic, political, and developmental response that reflects the ANC's long-standing vision of an economy that is industrialised, inclusive, export-oriented, and anchored in African solidarity. It affirms the principle that development finance must serve the people (especially the poor and working-class) and ensure inclusion in the strategic sectors of the economy rather than serving the narrow interests of financial capitalists. ■

Mzwandile Masina is Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Trade, Industry and Competition.

uTatomkhulu and the Theology of the Oppressed: Faith as a Weapon of Liberation

■ By **ANDILE LUNGISA**

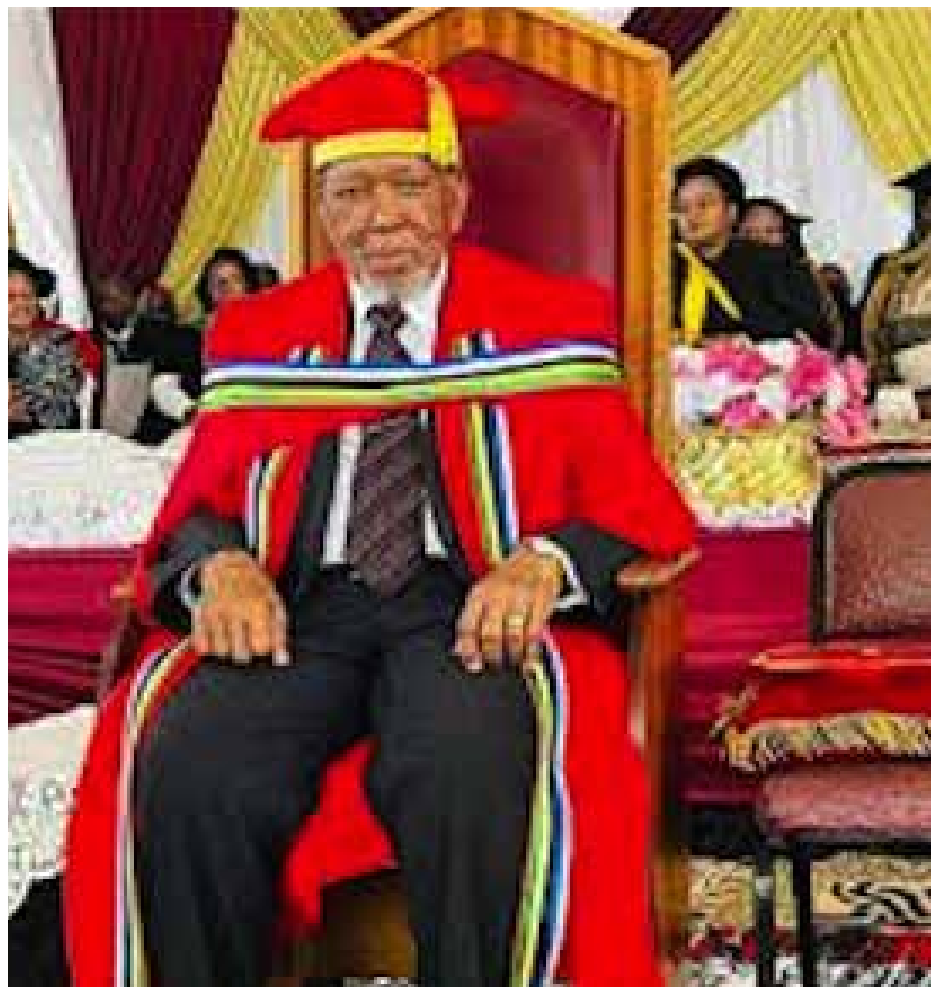
TO speak of Bishop Dr John Bolana (fondly known as uTatomkhulu) merely as a church leader is to misunderstand his historical role. He stood in the lineage of liberation theologians who understood a fundamental truth: Christianity in Africa was either a force for liberation or a tool of occupation—never neutral. uTatomkhulu chose the side of the oppressed, and he chose it unapologetically.

Liberation theology, as lived by Bishop Bolana, was not an academic exercise nor a borrowed theory. It was organic African theology, forged in the lived experience of landlessness, racial capitalism, and spiritual humiliation imposed by colonial Christianity. For him, theology had only one legitimate starting point: the condition of the African masses.

God Is Not Neutral in an Unjust World, our beloved Tata often quipped.

Like James H. Cone, the father of Black Liberation Theology in the United States, Bishop Bolana rejected the lie of a “color-blind” or “neutral” God. Cone famously declared that God is Black – not in pigment, but in political location.

God stands with the oppressed against their oppressors. uTatomkhulu echoed this conviction in practice. His God was not found in grand cathedrals but in dusty



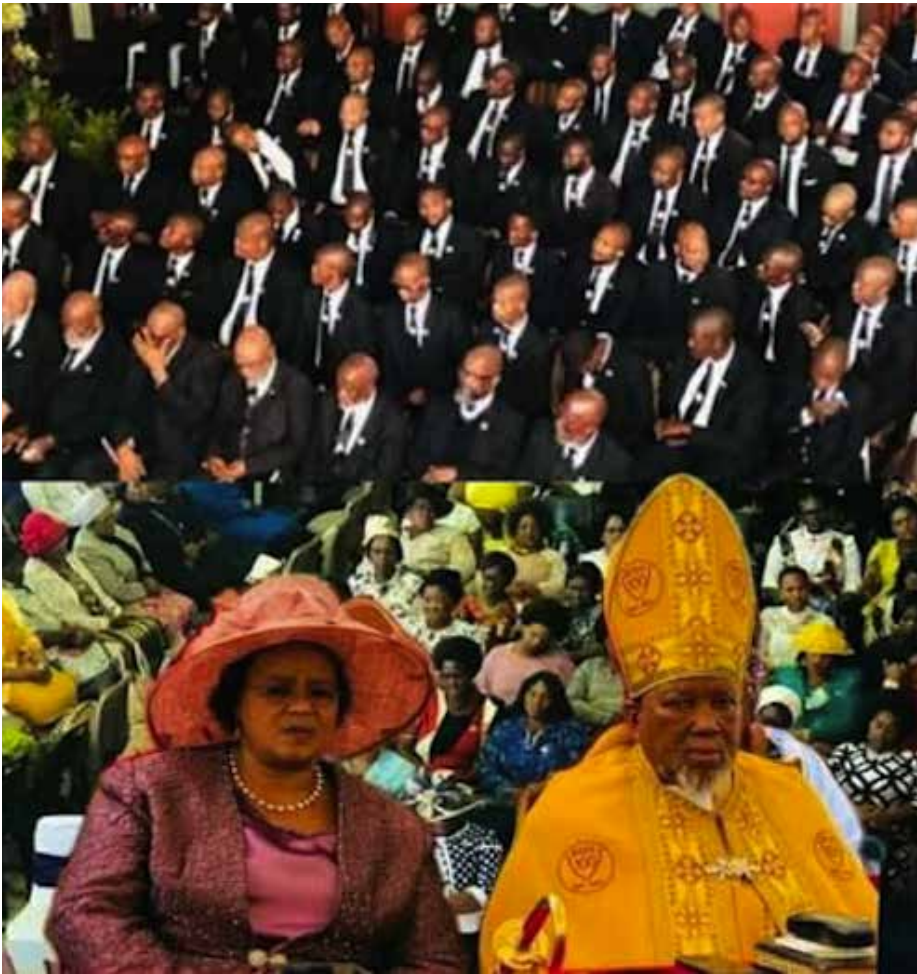
New Brighton streets, among the hungry, the unemployed, the youth abandoned by the post-colonial state.

Where Cone wrote, Bolana built. Daily meals, youth festivals, communal discipline—these were not acts of charity but acts of theological resistance.

Hunger, for uTatomkhulu, was not a spiritual failure but a political crime.

Consciousness before salvation was uTatomkhulu’s creed. Bishop Bolana’s theology ran parallel to the thinking of Steve Biko, even though one spoke the language of theology and the other of political philosophy. Both understood that the greatest weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

Which reinforced perception, resilience, and resistance. When the mind is free, informed, and



empowered, even the strongest chains can be broken. He stood firm, fostering awareness, critical thinking, and self-empowerment. He gracefully embodied these qualities. A true epitome of Steve Biko's legacy.

Colonial Christianity taught Africans to wait for heaven while



accepting hell on earth. uTatomkhulu rejected this violently. His emphasis on African values, social cohesion, and youth consciousness was a direct assault on mental colonisation. Like Biko, he believed liberation begins with self-definition-naming God, naming oneself, and naming the enemy without fear.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is often cited as South Africa's premier liberation theologian. Yet while Tutu operated largely within global ecclesiastical and diplomatic spaces, Bishop Bolana remained embedded in African Independent Church tradition-outside colonial approval structures.

Where Tutu confronted apartheid through moral persuasion, Bolana confronted post-apartheid abandonment through material

action.

In this sense, Bolana represents a second-phase liberation theology: one that recognises that political freedom without economic justice is another form of colonial control. Like Bishop James Ngcanjini Limba, the founder of the Bantu Church of Christ, Bolana rejected European ecclesiology outright. Both men understood that liberation theology in Africa must include institutional independence, not just radical sermons. Owning the church, governing it biblically but Africanly, and resisting co-optation were theological acts.

Globally, figures like Gustavo Gutiérrez in Peru and Óscar Romero in El Salvador articulated liberation theology against capitalist exploitation and state violence. uTatomkhulu shared their core belief, that sin is not only personal, but structural, whilst not absolving the individual of responsibility for his actions and destiny.

But unlike many Latin American theologians, Bishop Bolana did not rely on Marxist analysis filtered through European categories. His framework was Pan-African, communal, and rooted in lived African experiences and spirituality. The church itself, its Passover gatherings, Sabbath observance, and prophetic tradition-became a liberated space, a territory wrested back from colonial religion.

Bishop Bolana's close ties with liberation veterans and political leadership were not signs of compromise or social climbing, but of strategic engagement. Like Kwame Nkrumah, he contended that political power without ideological grounding collapses into

corruption. He opened the church to those who had fought for freedom, reminding them, sometimes uncomfortably, that the struggle did not end in 1994.

Yet he never surrendered the church to party politics. His loyalty was to the people and his God, not to power. This is why the church fed the community daily, regardless of election cycles.

Unlike many liberation theologians whose legacy lives primarily in texts, Bishop Bolana's theology lives in institutions, rituals, and disciplined communities. Over 2.5 million members across Southern Africa are not followers of a personality, but participants in a living theology of self-reliance and dignity.

His belief was simple and dangerous to power:

God walks with the poor.

God eats with the hungry.

God is African because Africa is marginal in the global vortex of power.

IsiXhosa, sithi, uTatomkulu, Bishop Bolana ebengumntu "Untamo Inamafutha" enobubele uthando eyimvuzemvuze, ebengelilo "Inqweme lentulo".

The Bishop is gone, however his theology of revolutionary love and redemption remains. uTatomkhulu Bolana has joined his ancestors, but liberation theology in the Bantu Church of Christ remains alive, militant, and unfinished.



As long as land remains stolen, as long as youth remain unemployed, as long as African spirituality is treated as inferior, his theology continues to speak.

Like all true liberation theologians, he did not ask for permission.

He did not wait for approval. He did not wait for approval. He or-

ganised faith into resistance.

And that is why history will remember him not only as a bishop-but as a theologian of the struggle of the dispossessed.

Lala ngoxolo Gaba Thithiba Nozinga Cihoshe Mqgosini Mjobi Mnt'womlambo.

Thikoloshe Ndoko... ■



"It is not our diversity which divides us; it is not our ethnicity, or religion or culture that divides us. Since we have achieved our freedom, there can only be one division amongst us: between those who cherish democracy and those who do not"

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

The story the DA cannot wish away and the questions Helen Zille still refuses to answer

■ By **FAIEZ JACOBS**

THERE are scandals that fade because they were built on noise. And then there are scandals that refuse to die because they were built on documents, procurement records, affidavits, court dockets, and the hard residue of institutional decisions.

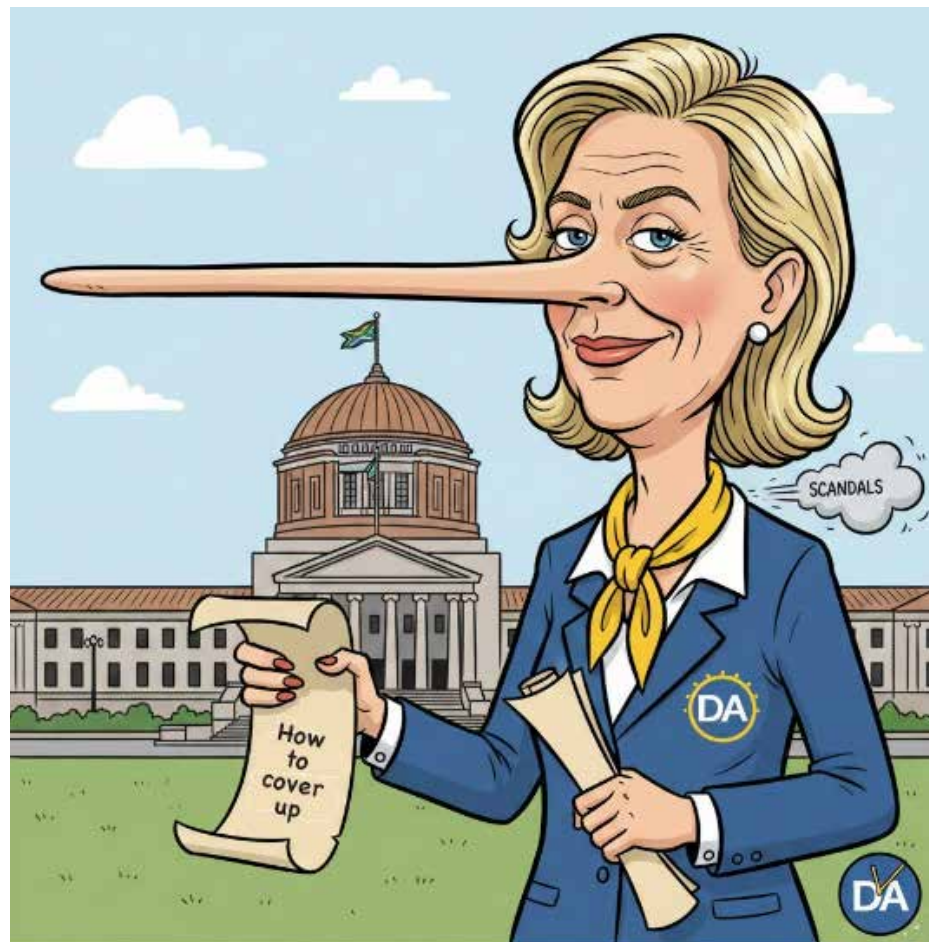
The Paul Scheepers saga and his relationship with the DA's Helen Zille is the second kind.

I asked the questions in 2015 when Zille was Premier of the Western Cape and the DA wanted the public to swallow a single line: *"It was just debugging."*

I asked because the situation was plainly abnormal: a DA-run provincial government had used public funds to contract a private entity linked to a serving SAPS Crime Intelligence officer for a sensitive, security-adjacent service in the heart of the provincial executive environment. That should have triggered maximum transparency and independent review. It was covered up.

Instead, it triggered what the DA always reaches for when it feels threatened: messaging, dismissive, deflection, legalism, double standards, hypocrisy and political arrogance.

Now, in 2026, the story returns with a harder edge. Scheepers has been convicted in what the



NPA itself described as a landmark prosecution involving fraud, money laundering, and contraventions linked to PSIRA and RICA-related surveillance equipment compliance, including unlawful possession of a *"grabber/locator"* device without ministerial exemption, and the concealment of proceeds through multiple accounts. Sentencing is set down for April 2026.

So the DA's problem is no longer a historical debate about

language. It is a live governance credibility crisis:

You contracted into a grey zone.

You insisted denial and spin were closure.

Your contractor is now convicted in a case rooted in the very risks the public warned about. You don't need the word *"spy"* to describe this.

You need the word accountability.

The 2010 contract: what the DA wants you to forget

In May 2010, under a DA-led Western Cape government, a private entity associated EAGLE EYE with Paul Scheepers was contracted to “debug” phones in the provincial executive environment. Contemporaneous reporting put the cost at around R115,800 and described the procurement method as “limited” the kind of term that should immediately force the following questions into the open:

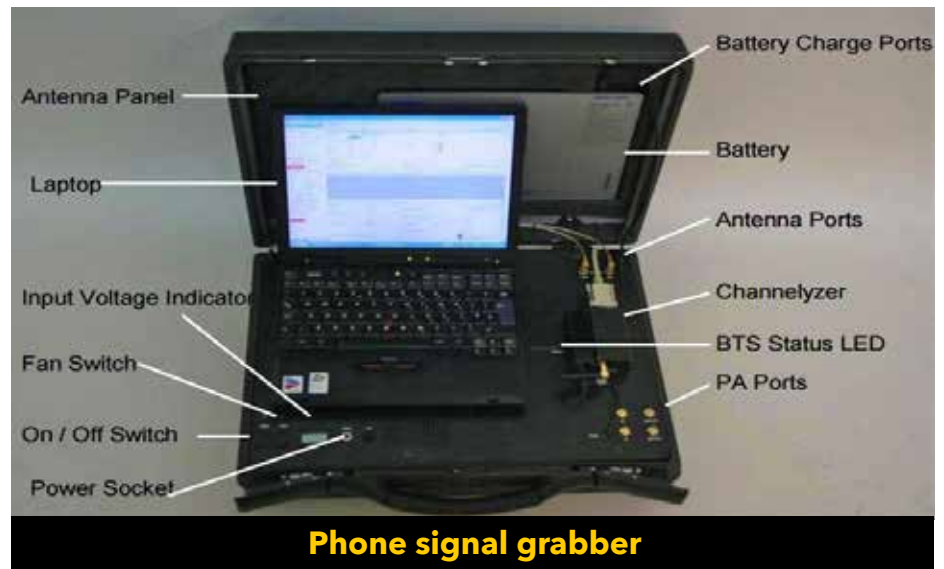
- Limited procurement on what legal basis? Who gave the political instruction to execute administratively?
- Deviation approved by whom?
- What risk assessment was done?
- Why not a transparent competitive process for a high-risk service?
- What safeguards were built into the scope?

This was not stationery. This was not catering. This was executive communications security one of the most sensitive domains in any state, and one of the easiest to abuse when boundaries are weak.

That is why, when the story surfaced publicly in 2015, the DA’s preferred narrative “just debugging” was never enough. “Debugging” is not a morally neutral service when it involves leaders’ devices, communications pathways, and sensitive state information.

My 2015 questions were not “party politics” – they were constitutional governance

When I spoke then, as ANC Western Cape provincial secretary, I was not trying to score a headline. I was doing what op-



position is supposed to do in a democracy: forcing disclosure where the state prefers secrecy.

My questions were simple, direct, and still unanswered today:

1. Why did the Western Cape government hire a serving Crime Intelligence officer (through his private entity) for this work?
2. On what grounds was this decision made, and who approved it?
3. Why was there no open, competitive tender process for a high-risk service?
4. What exactly was the scope and what prevented scope creep into unlawful interception?
5. Which parts of government were involved and did any work extend beyond the executive phones?
6. What safeguards protected political actors, journalists, officials, and ordinary residents from abuse?
7. Why did Premier Zille treat scrutiny as an attack rather than convene an independent inquiry and publish the record?

Those questions were not answered with documents. They

were answered with posture: deny, ridicule, reframe, move on.

That posture is the real scandal because in a constitutional democracy, the correct response to a sensitive security-adjacent contract is not theatre. It is radical transparency.

2026: the convictions that make Zille’s old posture indefensible

Fast forward to 2026. After an 11-year prosecution trail, Scheepers is convicted of multiple offences including fraud, money laundering, and contraventions tied to PSIRA and RICA-linked equipment compliance. The NPA describes key aspects as firsts of their kind.

This is what the convictions do: they confirm that the central figure in this controversy was operating in a space that touches the gravest constitutional sensitivities unlawful private investigative activity, unlawful surveillance-related conduct, and illicit financial concealment.

Again: I am not claiming the 2010 provincial work itself has been proven unlawful in court. I do not

need to. The standard of governance does not wait for a conviction to demand accountability.

The standard of governance is this: If you contracted a sensitive service into the executive environment, show the safeguards. If you cannot show them, you have already failed.

“Just debugging” is not a defence it is a demand for evidence

The DA’s weakness is not what it admits. It’s what it refuses to publish.

If it was “*just debugging*,” then the DA should release the full procurement and governance record:

- The contract and scope of work;
- The deliverables and technical limitations;
- Chain-of-custody rules for devices;
- Audit logs and recordkeeping requirements;
- Data handling and destruction provisions;
- Conflict-of-interest screening and declarations;
- PSIRA/RICA compliance checks and legal opinions;
- Deviation/limited procurement motivation and approvals;
- Oversight and accountability lines.

This is not a request for gossip. It is a request for the file.

In any credible governance culture, the file is the answer. Not the slogan.

The bigger truth: the DA normalised “grey capability” and Cape Town is living with the consequences

The Scheepers episode was

never only about a contract. It was about a DA governing style: building capability at the edge of oversight, defending it politically, and treating scrutiny as illegitimate until courts or raids force transparency.

Look at where Cape Town is now: repeated public controversies around investigative units, contested mandates, raids, allegations of tender corruption, whistleblowers demanding independent audits, and politicians calling for SIU involvement. The DA waves “*clean audits*” as a shield, as if financial compliance automatically proves procurement integrity, ethical culture, and institutional restraint.

It does not.

A clean audit is not a clean city. It is not a clean procurement culture. It is certainly not a clean governance ethos when secrecy and parallel capability become normal.

And that is the connecting line the DA does not want discussed:

In 2010, the DA normalised the idea that you can outsource sen-

sitive security-adjacent functions into government via limited procurement and then shut down scrutiny with word games. In 2026, Cape Town and the Western Cape are still battling the consequences of governance by deflection.

Zille wants to posture as a national saviour but she never cleaned her own house

Helen Zille now wants to present herself as a corrective force in national politics – the experienced administrator, the guardian of clean governance, the adult in the room.

But you cannot posture as the guardian of accountability while carrying unanswered questions of this magnitude questions that go to privacy, civil liberties, procurement integrity, and the boundary between state power and private capability.

You cannot ridicule scrutiny in 2015 and then demand trust in 2026.

You cannot preach “*rule of law*” while refusing to publish the records that would allow the public to assess whether your govern-



ment acted lawfully and ethically in a high-risk area.

This is why I use the phrase: the story the DA cannot wish away. Because it is not built on rumour. It is built on an undeniable fact pattern:

- The contract existed.
- It was sensitive.
- It involved access to executive communications environments.
- It was procured through a method described as “limited.”
- The figure at the centre has now been convicted in a landmark matter involving unlawful private surveillance-related contraventions and money laundering.

That combination demands answers not vibes.

The DA must answer directly, in documents

So I am asking again, more directly than I asked in 2015:

1. Who initiated and approved the 2010 “debugging” procurement, and under what deviation/limited procurement justification?
2. What vetting was done on the supplier and principal individuals including conflict-of-interest and legal compliance checks?
3. What exactly was the scope of work, and what technical/contractual safeguards prevented unlawful interception or monitoring?
4. What were the data handling rules access controls, logs, retention, destruction and who audited compliance?
5. Was the contract ever terminated? If so, when, why, and where is the record? If not, why not?
6. Why did Premier Zille choose denial and ridicule instead of

convening an independent inquiry and publishing the file?

7. What is the DA’s current policy in the province and in the City on security-adjacent outsourcing and parallel investigative capability, and what safeguards now exist to prevent abuse?

These questions cannot be answered with another press statement. They can only be answered with documents.

The closing truth

This is not about ANC versus DA. This is about whether a DA-run government normalised grey surveillance relationships and whether Helen Zille used certainty and spin to shut down scrutiny rather than welcome independent review.

The Scheepers convictions have now stripped the DA of its favourite escape route: pretending the risk was imaginary.

The risk was real. The boundary was blurred. The public interest was obvious. And the records must come out.

If the DA truly believes its conduct was beyond reproach, then it should stop hiding behind slogans and publish the file so that the people of the Western Cape, and the country, can judge whether this was governance... or a dangerous flirtation with the grey zone.

Because democratic legitimacy is not something you announce.

It is something you prove. ■



LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY ACTION PLAN

For all your service delivery and corruption issues, send an email or WhatsApp to:

✉ basic.services@anc1912.org.za

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Issues will be escalated to the relevant department, municipality, or province.

2024: The Year of Decisive Action
to Fix Local Government and
Transform the Economy

114TH ANNIVERSARY

ANC



The China-Africa Economic Partnership Agreement (CAEPA) – Re-balancing the Trade Relationship Between South Africa and China

■ By **MZWANDILE MASINA**

6TH FEBRUARY 2026 has marked a turning point in South Africa's evolving trade and industrial policy trajectory with the signing of the Framework Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Prosperity (CAEPA) between the Republic of South Africa and the People's Republic of China. This landmark agreement was signed by South Africa's Minister of Trade, Industry, and Competition, Parks Tau, and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Wentao, not as an anomaly, but as part of a broader reconfiguration of global economic cooperation in which countries in the

Global South seek more flexible, development-oriented partnerships that recognise the reality of uneven development, long theorised by Vladimir Lenin, and the persistence of unequal exchange and centre-periphery relations, as articulated by Samir Amin.

Strategic Coordination and State Led Interventions

Internationally, frameworks such as the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Shared Prosperity (IPEF) reflect a shift away from orthodox, market-fundamentalist

trade arrangements towards co-operative models that acknowledge that development does not occur uniformly, and that Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) require policy space, strategic coordination, and state-led interventions to overcome structural dependency and historical underdevelopment. CAEPA aligns squarely with this global trend and signals South Africa's strategic commitment to engage the fragmented multipolar world on terms that serve its national development goals rather than entrench structural dependency and historical underdevelopment.

South Africa has, over many years, entered into trade and economic agreements with Western trade partners, including the European Union (EU) and the self-willed United States (U.S.). Many of these agreements were concluded in a different global trade context which presumed that advanced industrial economies and EMDEs compete on a level playing field, despite vast differences in industrial capacity, technological advancement, and mineral endowment. In several instances, these agreements have increased negative macroeconomic consequences, vulnerability to external shocks, and premature deindustrialisation and limited progress in diversifying the economy in EMDEs such as South Africa. CAEPA is qualitatively different in both form and intent because it rejects the presumption that advanced industrial economies and EMDEs compete on a level playing field. CAEPA is an explicitly flexible framework that allows South Africa to negotiate sector-specific outcomes, incorporate industrial safeguards to protect domestic productive capacity, and sequence commitments in line with domestic capacity. This design acknowledges the reality of uneven development between South Africa and China and avoids premature deindustrialisation, while creating space to support industrialisation, investment-led growth, and structural transformation in both countries.

Historical Solidarity

CAEPA is further underpinned by long-standing political and economic relations between South Africa and China, underpinned by historical solidarity and consolidated and formalised through platforms such as the Forum on

China – Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the All-Round Strategic Cooperative Partnership in a New Era. These relations have evolved beyond symbolism and are increasingly focused on concrete development outcomes, including infrastructure development, industrial investment, skills transfer, and expanded productive capacity. CAEPA should therefore not be comprehended as a standalone agreement, but as an economic expression reflecting a broader strategic and maturing partnership between two dominant economies in Africa and Asia pursuing a shared prosperity.

Sector Specific Growth

CAEPA has the potential to benefit a range of productive sectors of our economy if aligned with South Africa's Draft National Industrial Policy Framework. These include agriculture and agro-processing, particularly value-added exports such as citrus, wine, rooibos, and processed foods; mining and mineral beneficiation, with a fo-

cus on moving up the value chain rather than exporting raw minerals; and manufacturing sectors such as automotive components, steel and metal fabrication, machinery, and capital equipment. CAEPA also opens scope for cooperation in renewable energy sources, green technologies, and new energy vehicles, which are sectors deemed critical for a transition to a green economy and long-term industrial sustainability. CAEPA further offers opportunities in technology, digital industries, and infrastructure-related manufacturing, provided that localisation initiatives, skills development, and technology transfer are actively pursued in line with the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP 2024-2029). We can situate CAEPA within the current geopolitical environment, particularly South Africa's ongoing tariff and trade tensions with the U.S. In this context, diversifying trade and investment partnerships is not optional but necessary. South Africa cannot allow the future of its industrial base to be dictated by unilateral trade actions or





external geopolitical pressures. CAEPA enables South Africa to assert its policy agency as well as its developmental sovereignty and reinforces the principle that our trade policy must be driven by national development goals rather than external dictates.

Mutually beneficial

We see CAEPA as being mutually beneficial and must not reproduce harmful trade patterns. South Africa's experience with dumping, import surges, and unfair competition from China has demonstrated the real risks to domestic industry, workers, and emerging black industrialists. CAEPA cannot and must not become a conduit for China's unfair trade practices that displace South African manufacturers or undermine local value chains. The agreement must actively support industrial upgrading, localisation initiatives, and fair trade, with enforceable safeguards to protect vulnerable strategic sectors of our economy and promote win – win outcomes

for both countries.

If implemented with discipline and strategic intent, CAEPA can offer real potential to develop our industrial capabilities and advance radical socio-economic transformation. It can help reduce market concentration by opening space for new entrants, lowering structural barriers to entry, and supporting black-owned Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) to access new markets and integrate into advanced economic niches within Global Value Chains (GVCs). Through targeted investment, technology transfer, and supplier development, CAEPA can contribute meaningfully to addressing the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment and to avoiding a 'middle-income trap' that thwarts South Africa's ability to catch-up with advanced industrialised economies.

Consistent with the ANC's commitment to a developmental state agenda, the emphasis must on

CAEPA being guided by clear industrial policy objectives, strong state coordination, and ongoing oversight. CAEPA is neither a purely commercial nor diplomatic instrument. Rather, its deeper purpose is developmental. Thus, its real objectives are building productive capacity, creating decent work, and transforming property relations in South Africa, including patterns of ownership, investment, and participation in the economy.

We welcome CAEPA as a strategic opportunity to advance South Africa's developmental agenda, while stressing that its success will depend on implementation that is firm, balanced, and unapologetically focused on enhancing national development goals and the interests of the South African citizenry. ■

Mzwandile Masina is Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Trade, Industry and Competition.

Economic Growth and Job Creation – A Cause for Celebration and Commitment

■ By **ISHMAEL MNISI**

SOUTH Africans have every reason to welcome President Cyril Ramaphosa's latest State of the Nation Address (SONA), which has struck a bold and confident chord for our nation's future. In a time when hope can sometimes feel in short supply, the President's address stands out – not just as another set of policy promises, but as a powerful reflection of real, meaningful progress in economic growth and job creation. For the ordinary South African, these are not distant headlines; they are signs of change that are already beginning to transform lives and rekindle optimism across our country.

Inclusive Economic Growth: Turning the Corner

South Africa's journey to inclusive growth has not been easy. Years of global economic headwinds, the impact of state capture, and the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic left our nation facing daunting challenges. Yet, under President Ramaphosa's leadership and the steadfast commitment of the ANC, we have begun to turn the corner.

Our country has now recorded four consecutive quarters of GDP growth, an achievement that signals the recovery of our economic fundamentals. This is not just an abstract figure for economists;



it means that businesses are regaining confidence, investors are seeing South Africa as a place of opportunity, and the economic environment is becoming more stable for everyone. The improvement in our credit rating, the lowering of interest rates, and the sharp decline in inflation are all factors that make the cost of living more manageable and open doors for ordinary South Africans to save, borrow, and invest.

Job Creation for All – Especially the Youth and Women

The President's address made it clear: job creation is the ANC's number one priority. Over the past year, more than 2.5 million opportunities have been created through the Presidential Employment Stimulus, with a special emphasis on the youth and women

who have historically been most excluded from the mainstream economy. These are not just numbers – they are stories of young people finding their first job, women becoming breadwinners, and families breaking the cycle of poverty.

The highest matric pass rate ever recorded, particularly in the most disadvantaged schools, demonstrates that we are laying the groundwork for a future workforce that is skilled, motivated, and ready to contribute. By investing in education and skills development, we are ensuring that our economic growth is sustainable and that no one is left behind.

Stimulating Investment and Industrialisation

President Ramaphosa's an-

nouncement of R1 trillion in public investment over the next three years is a watershed moment for South Africa. This unprecedented commitment is already translating into new roads, bridges, energy projects, and digital infrastructure across the country. It is also attracting further private investment, creating a virtuous cycle of growth and job creation.

Support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has expanded, with R2.5 billion in funding allocated to help these businesses start, grow, and employ more South Africans. SMEs are the backbone of our economy – they are found in every village, township, and city, driving innovation and providing opportunities where they are needed most.

Why Ordinary South Africans Should Celebrate

For the ordinary South African, these achievements mean more than numbers on a page. They mean:

- More jobs and opportunities for young people and women.
- Lower inflation and interest rates, making it easier to buy groceries, pay school fees, and build a future.
- Better schools and higher matric pass rates, giving every child a fair shot at success.
- Roads, bridges, and infrastructure that make it easier to get to work, do business, and connect communities.
- New businesses opening their doors, offering hope to families and revitalising neighbourhoods.

These are the building blocks of a more inclusive, fair, and prosperous society. They are proof that the ANC's agenda is not just about promises – it is about ac-



tion and outcomes that matter to every South African.

Engagement and Celebration: The Role of ANC Cadres and Branches

It is now more important than ever that ANC cadres and branches embrace these achievements and become ambassadors of progress in their communities. We must go beyond celebrating these milestones; we must engage our neighbours, friends, and families on what these developments mean for them, and how they can take advantage of new opportunities. By sharing these successes, we reinforce the message that, under ANC leadership, South Africa is moving forward.

Addressing the Critics: Facts Over Rhetoric

It is natural – and healthy – for a democracy to have robust debate. Some opposition voices may seek to downplay or dismiss these achievements, focusing solely on the challenges that remain. It is true: unemployment is still high, and too many South Africans are struggling. However, these critics overlook the real progress that is being made. The facts speak for themselves:

- GDP growth has returned after years of stagnation, with four consecutive quarters of positive growth.
- The Presidential Employment Stimulus has created over 2.5million opportunities, a historic achievement in job creation.
- Inflation is at its lowest level in twenty years, and the cost of borrowing is coming down, giving relief to households and businesses.
- Public investment is at its highest level ever, with R1 trillion committed to infrastructure that will drive further growth and job creation.

No one denies that challenges remain. But the direction is clear, and the momentum is building.

The ANC is not complacent – we are committed to doing even more. But we must also recognise and celebrate the gains, because they show that our policies are working.

Conclusion: A New Dawn for South Africa

The President's SONA is a clarion call to all South Africans: now is the time to build, to invest, and to believe in the promise of our nation. We have weathered storms, but we are emerging stronger, more united, and more determined than ever to create a country where everyone has a place and a chance to succeed.

Let us celebrate these achievements – not as an endpoint, but as a foundation for even greater progress. Let every ANC member, every branch, and every South African stand tall and share this message: South Africa is rising, and together, we are building a future worth celebrating. ■

Sobriety, Not Spectacle: South Africa, Iran and the Discipline of Foreign Policy

■ By **GODFREY NKOSI**

SOUTH Africa's relationship with Iran has, in recent months, taken on an emotional tone that should worry anyone who believes that foreign policy is not theatre but strategy. There is a growing sense that, in the midst of our deepening impasse with the United States, we are behaving like a jaded lover who, in full public view, clasps the hand of a new partner not out of conviction alone, but to send a pointed message to the one who hurt us. That posture may feel momentarily satisfying, but it is not how a serious state advances its national interest.

This is not an argument against relations with Iran. Nor is it a retreat from principle. South Africa is correct to defend the sovereignty of states, to oppose unilateralism, and to resist the notion that global power entitles some countries to dictate to others. These positions are deeply rooted in our own history of struggle and in the values that informed our liberation movement. The problem arises when principle slides into performance, when moral clarity is replaced by dramatic excess, and when symbolism is pursued with eyes wide shut to the material conditions in which we operate.

The liberation movement taught us something more demanding



than righteous indignation. We were taught to read the balance of forces, to understand the terrain, and to advance the interests of the people with discipline rather than bravado. Revolution, at its most serious, is not an emotional outburst; it is a calculated act grounded in reality. When we forget this, even correct principles can produce harmful outcomes.

South Africa's stance on Iran, at its core, is defensible. We reject regime change by force. We insist on respect for sovereignty. We oppose the weaponisation of sanctions when they deepen suffering rather than resolve conflict. These are not minor positions. They are consistent with international law and with the moral authority we earned through our

own history. But nowhere in this tradition is there an instruction to be theatrical, or to turn every point of agreement into a public spectacle that unnecessarily narrows our diplomatic room for manoeuvre.

Recent developments suggest precisely such an overreach. Remarks attributed to the Chief of the South African National Defence Force during a visit to Iran created the impression that South Africa had entered a values-based military alignment with Tehran. Whether this was the intention or not is almost beside the point. In international politics, perception travels faster than clarification. The fact that the Department of International Relations and Cooperation felt

compelled to publicly explain that these remarks did not constitute official foreign policy should have given us pause. When military diplomacy begins to look like foreign policy by improvisation, we are no longer acting with the coherence demanded by our Constitution.

The same concern applies to the recent naval exercises conducted off our coast with partners including Iran. Multilateral military exercises are not unusual, nor are they inherently provocative. South Africa has a long record of defence cooperation across regions and political systems. Yet context matters. In a period where our relations with the United States are already strained, and where global tensions around Iran are acute, the inclusion of Iran in highly visible drills created controversy that overwhelmed any technical or operational benefits such exercises might have delivered. Worse still, the confusion around whether this participation was fully aligned with presidential intent exposed governance weaknesses that should concern us more than the drills themselves. Foreign policy cannot be credible if it appears internally contested or administratively incoherent.

Then there is the decision by a cabinet minister to participate in the commemoration of Iran's Islamic Revolution Day. States routinely mark national days with diplomatic courtesies, but a revolution anniversary is not a neutral symbol. It is a celebration of a specific political project, one that remains contested both inside Iran and internationally. For South Africa to be seen as celebrating, rather than engaging soberly, sends a message far louder than any carefully word-



ed statement about sovereignty ever could. It suggests endorsement where, in reality, our own constitutional values require us to retain the capacity for independent moral judgement.

This is where the deeper contradiction emerges. South Africa's Constitution commits us to human dignity, equality and freedom. These are not regional values or Western impositions; they are the ethical foundation of our own democratic settlement. There will be moments, inevitably, when these values place us at odds with friends and partners, including Iran. If our default setting becomes one of reflexive defence, if we occupy the corner automatically, we risk forfeiting the moral authority to speak when those values are violated. Solidarity does not require silence, and sovereignty does not demand applause.

None of this amounts to bowing to pressure from the United States or Israel. That framing itself is part of the problem. It reduces South Africa's agency to a reactive posture, as if every diplomatic move must be read as

either defiance or submission. A mature foreign policy is neither. It is guided by national interest, informed by principle, and executed with restraint.

There is a difference between standing firm and shouting from the rooftops. The former earns respect; the latter invites unnecessary retaliation.

South Africa's vulnerability in the current global order is not theoretical. Our economy remains deeply integrated into global markets. Our trade, financial flows and industrial ambitions are exposed to shifts in sentiment and policy far beyond our borders. To pretend otherwise is not revolutionary; it is negligent. Reading the material conditions today means acknowledging that symbolic gestures can carry tangible costs, and that those costs are ultimately borne not by diplomats, but by workers, the unemployed and the poor.

It is also worth remembering that South Africa maintains relations with many countries whose politics we do not fully endorse. We manage those relationships with a degree of quiet professional-

ism. We do not dramatise them. We do not turn every engagement into a statement of ideological alignment. Why, then, does our relationship with Iran appear to demand a different register, one that is louder, more defiant and less measured? The answer lies not in principle, but in emotion, particularly in the temptation to use Iran as a proxy through which to express frustration with Washington.

That temptation must be resisted. Foreign policy driven by grievance rarely serves long-term interests. Our struggle history should inoculate us against such impulses, not encourage them.

The movement survived precisely because it understood when to confront, when to negotiate, and when to bide its time. It understood that strategy is not weakened by restraint, but strengthened by it.

The conclusion is therefore not a call for retreat, but for recalibration. South Africa should continue to engage Iran diplomatically. We should defend the principle of sovereignty consistently, without exception. We should oppose collective punishment and unilateral aggression wherever they occur. But we should do so without unnecessary flourish, without symbolic excess, and without closing off the space for moral independence. To do otherwise is to confuse noise with courage.

In an increasingly volatile world, South Africa's greatest strength lies not in dramatic gestures, but in disciplined clarity. Sobriety, not spectacle, is what will allow us to advance our values, protect our interests and retain the credibility earned through decades of principled struggle. ■



IF I MUST DIE

■ By **PROFESSOR RIFAAT AL-AR'EER**

If I must die
 you must live
 to sell my things
 to buy a piece of cloth
 and some strings
 (make it white with a long tail)
 so that a child somewhere in Gaza
 while looking heaven in the eye
 awaiting his dad who left in a blaze -
 and bid no-one farewell
 not even to his flesh
 not even to himself
 see my kite,
 the kite you made, flying up
 above
 and thinks for a moment an angel is there
 bringing back love
 If I must die
 let it bring hope
 let it be a tale. ■

Professor Rifaat Al-Ar'eer, a Palestinian poet, published this poem shortly before he was killed in Gaza in December 2023.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

14–20 February 2026

Source: SA History Online, O'Malley Archives, Africa Today/Yesterday, The Africa Factbook and Amazwi SA Museum of Literature

14 February 1961 The Rand replaces the British pound

The Union of South Africa introduces its own currency, the Rand (ZAR) replacing the British pound since the latter colonized the country in the 17th century. Under apartheid, the Rand had the head of Jan van Riebeeck, the original settler and colonizer. Since 2012, all Rand notes have the face of Nelson Mandela, father of our democracy.

14 February 1976 Second Battle of Amgala

In this battle, the Polisario Front of Western Sahara wins its first major victory against Morocco to liberate the territory. In 1975, the International Court of Justice ruled that the Saharawi people must decide on their independence and right to self-determination, denied by Morocco ever since, despite OAU, African Union and United Nation resolutions in support of the implementation of the judgement.

14 February 1981 Samora Machel pledges solidarity after Matola Raid

President Samora Machel of Mozambique pledged solidarity with the South African people, in reaction to the Matola massacre on 30 January 1981, where more than 14 uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) cadres were killed. Machel, to-

gether with the African National Congress (ANC) President, Oliver Tambo, was addressing mourners at the funeral of the victims of the Matola raid in Mozambique killed by South African security forces. The victims were Lancelot Hadebe, Mandla Daka, Daniel Molokisi, Steven Ngcobo, Vusumzi Ngwema, Thabang Bookolane, Krishna Rabilal, Themba Dimba, Motso Mokgabudi, Collin Khumalo, Levinson Mankankaza, Albert Mahutso, Mduduzi Guma, William Khanyile and Vuyani Mavuso. Mavuso was kidnapped during the raid, and was later executed when he refused to cooperate with apartheid security agencies and betray his comrades.

14 February 2021 First African woman to lead WTO



Nigerian finance minister and former foreign minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala becomes the first woman and first African to serve

as Director General of the World Trade Organisation.

15 February 1900 Siege of Kimberley ended

During the Second Anglo-Boer War, a 123 day siege was held over Kimberley, which came to an end on this day. After numerous attacks by the Boer commandos firing 5, 800 shells, the town suffered only 134 casualties among armed defenders and twenty-one civilians, but some 1 500 people, mostly Coloureds and Blacks, died of famine and disease. Infant mortality rate during the 4 months of the siege rose to 67, 1% among Whites and 91.2% among Coloureds and Blacks.

15 February 1960 Oldest Bank trade union in Commonwealth formed

The South African Society of Bank Officials (SASBO), now an affiliate of COSATU was formed in secret in February 1916, the first in the British Commonwealth of its nature. *"In the earliest days, the founders met in absolute secrecy and it was necessary to produce proof of identity before admittance to a meeting."* SASBO started as a whites-only union, but became more non-racial since the 1980s. Though started in banks, it is now called SASBO – the Finance Union – with a presence in banks, insurance companies, credit unions and other financial institutions.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

15 February 1964

ILO suspends South Africa

The governing body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) meeting in Geneva, votes in favour of suspending South Africa from participation in its Annual General Conferences. The resolution is passed by thirty-two votes to fourteen with two abstentions.

15-21 February 1986

Six Day War in Alexandra

The 1986 six-day war in Alexandra was sparked by the tear-gassing of mourners after a funeral, sparking running battles between police and youth. Several arrests were made and 27 people were killed.

15 February 1986

University of Pretoria admits first 20 Black students

The university which was formed in 1908 and remained exclusively white. On 15 February 1986, the university admitted its first twenty black students. It later opened a campus in Hammanskraal for black students, and in 2004 merged with the defunct Vista University's Mamelodi Campus. Today the university has three languages of communication, Afrikaans, English and Sepedi.

15 February 1995

President Mandela announced he will not stand for re-election

President Nelson Mandela on this day announced he would not be standing for re-election in 1999. Mandela, who was released from prison in February 1990, became the first democratic president of the Republic of South Africa in April 1994. His announcement



meant stepping down as African National Congress's (ANC) and as the country's president. The struggle icon took over as ANC president from Oliver Reginald Tambo in 1991. Thabo Mbeki, his Deputy President in government replaced him as president of the ANC in 1997 and as State President in 1999.

15 February 2018

Parliament elects 5th President of the Republic



ANC President, Cyril Ramaphosa was elected unopposed as the fifth President of democratic South Africa by the National Assembly on 15 February 2018.

16 February 1991

Bheki Mlangeni, Human rights lawyer, activist assassinated

Bheki Mlangeni was a member

of the national executive committee of the student organisation AZASO (now SASCO) during the 1980s; active in the UDF and ANC, and practiced as a human rights lawyer in the 1990s. He worked with former Captain Dirk Coetzee to expose the existence of a secret police unit based at Vlakplaas, which carried out assassinations of anti-apartheid activists. On 16 February, Mlangeni received a postal package with a tape player, and when he tried to listen to the tape it exploded. He died instantly, leaving his wife and young child. He was only 35 years old when he was assassinated.

16 February 1991

First new Africa Women's Cup of Nations played

The first match in a revamped continental competition for women's football, later known as African Cup of Nations (WACON) was played. The first championship was won by Nigeria, who went on to win 11 out of the 14 tournaments. Other champions were Equatorial Guinea in 2008 and 2012, and South Africa for the first time in 2022. Banyana Banyana made it to the finals as runners-up five times, in 1995, 2000, 2008, 2012, 2018, before the win in 2022 against Morocco.

16 February 2017

Museum of National Egyptian Civilisations opens

The Museum, an idea dated back to the era of King Farouk (1939-1945), was finally started with excavations and construction in 2000, and 17 years later opened its doors in old Fusat, in the city of Cairo. The museum comprises 9 large halls displaying the civilization of Egypt from the prehistoric period to the present era, including a pyramid shaped hall on the

top floor. The Royal Mummies Hall is seen as the most important exhibition.

16 February 2018

Black Panther

The superhero movie *The Black Panther*, based on the Marvel comic book set in the fictional African kingdom of Wakanda was released and became a global megahit, drawing attention to the genre of AfroFuturism.

16 February 2020

Egypt Space Day

The country holds its first National Space Day, to educate the public and win support for the country's space programme, including satellites which provide communication to millions along the Nile River.

17 February 1951

Patricia de Lille born in Beaufort West



Patricia de Lille, leader of the GOOD party, and Minister of Public Works was born on this day in the Western Cape town of Beaufort West. She went to Bastiaanse High School, and worked as a laboratory technician until 1990. During this period, she joined the SA Chemical Workers Union, became a shop steward and eventually regional secretary of SACWU and elected onto its na-

tional executive in 1983. She was elected as Vice President of the black consciousness trade union federation, National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) in 1988, the highest position for a woman in the trade union movement at that time. She was part of the PAC delegation during the negotiations of the early 1990s, and elected as a PAC Member of Parliament in 1994, where she went on to serve on the Parliamentary committees of Transport, Health, Minerals and Energy, Trade and Industry, Communications, the Rules Committee and the Code of Ethics. In 2003 she left the PAC to form the Independent Democrats, and later went into coalition with the Democratic Alliance, and became MEC for Social Development (2010-2011) and Mayor of Cape Town (2011-2018) in the DA government. She formed the GOOD party ahead of the 2019 national and provincial elections, winning two national seats and one in the Western Cape legislature. De Lille was appointed as Minister of Public Works in the Cabinet of President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019.

17 February 1962

Football match called off

On 17 February 1962, the soccer match between Lourenco Marques (Mozambique) club Desportive and Durban City Football Club (South Africa) was called off. A Lourenco Marques newspaper reported that this was because no black and Coloured players would be allowed to play during the game. According to a report by Cape Times, the teams' members themselves decided not to take part in the game.

18 February 1857

Nongqawuse prophecy

A period of hardship set in for the



amaXhosa after their defeat in the Eighth Frontier War. In April 1856 Nongqawuse, an adolescent girl living in the area ruled by Paramount Chief Sarhili (Kreli), was reputedly addressed by her ancestors. Their message was to tell the AmaXhosa that their ancestors would rise from the dead on a certain day and also to instruct them that all cattle were to be slaughtered. There was to be no cultivation, but people should dig new granaries and erect strong cattle-folds to house what would be received from the ancestors. On that specific day the sun would rise and set again in the east and a whirlwind would sweep all White people into the sea. Sarhili ordered his subordinate chiefs to obey the injunctions. The first date of resurrection was set for 11 August 1856, but as the day dawned and nothing happened, other dates were set, including 18 February 1857. Disappointment followed disappointment, until Sarhili finally renounced all belief in the prophecy after about fifteen months. By then, the amaXhosa had been heavily affected. Tens of thousands died, while about 30,000 streamed across the border in search of food and work. Many held the belief that the true plotters were land-hungry colonial authorities.

18 February 1931**Toni Morrison born**

Toni Morrison is one of the most celebrated authors in the world, with a host of novels, plays and children's books to her name. As the first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, Morrison's work has inspired a generation of writers to follow in her footsteps.

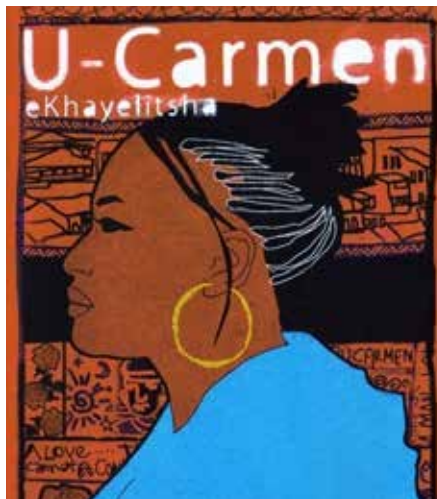
18 February 1953**Jeff Radebe born**

Jeffrey Thamsanqa Radebe was born in Cato Manor, where his family lived until they were forcefully removed in 1958 to KwaMashu. An activist since student days in 1976, a member of Umkhonto weSizwe, a lawyer, political detainee, a leader in the SACP, and a long-serving member of the ANC NEC (1991-2022). He was also amongst the cadres from the 1994 parliament and served as Minister of Transport, Constitutional Development and Justice, Minerals and Energy and Minister in the Presidency from 1994 to 2019, when he retired. Cde Jeff Radebe is the Convenor of the KZN Provincial Task Team (PTT).

18 February 1975**TPLF formed**

The Tigray People's Liberation Front was formed on this day,

fighting for greater autonomy within a federal state, eventually playing a leading role in the overthrow of the Derg regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991. Under Meles Zenawi the TPLF became the dominant faction in the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which governed Ethiopia until 2019 when current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed abolished the EPDRF and formed the Prosperity Party that excluded TPLF. The situation deteriorated and in 2021 resulted in a violent conflict between the Federal government and the TPLF until the Pretoria Peace Agreement of 2022 to facilitate cessation of hostilities.

18 February 2005**SA film wins Golden Bear Award**

The South African Xhosa film *uCarmen eKhayelitsha* became the second South African movie to compete and first to win the Golden Bear award as the best film at the 55th Berlin Film Festival in Germany. The film was shot in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. The musical, sung entirely in isiXhosa, is about an HIV-positive rural woman and won two other awards, the Human Rights Award at the Venice Film Festival in 2004 and the Best Film award

at Pune, India. The lead actress, singer Pauline Malefane, accepted the award in isiXhosa before bursting into song at the request of the film's director, Dornford-May.

18 February 2020**AfDB funds Nigerian SAPZ**

The African Development Bank offers 500 million USD to Nigeria to finance special 'agro-industrialised processing zones (SAPZ) in all four geographical quadrants of the country with loans to farmers to boost agricultural production. As the most populous country in Africa (200 million), the country imports most of its food and is seeking to turn this around, spending over USD 6 billion a year on agricultural imports. Across the continent, the African Development Bank by 2023 committed \$853 million to develop more than two dozen Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones in 11 countries.

19 February 1897**British demolition of Benin City**

As British forces carried out the demolition of Benin City, photographers captured the magnificent stone pyramids and fabled stone walls before they were torn down. The photos stand as testimony to the wanton destruction of African art and architecture.

19 February 1962**Report calls for more say for Afrikaans press in SAPA affairs**

The first part of the South African Press Commission's first report was tabled in parliament by the Minister of the Interior, de Klerk. The report, which had taken eleven years to draw up consisted of

two volumes totaling 700 pages, with nineteen annexures running to 1,566 pages. It strongly recommended that the South African Press association (SAPA) gives more say in its affairs to the Afrikaans-language press.

19 February 1971

Arrests of Unity Movement activists

It was reported that the Security Police had detained about twenty Africans, Coloureds and Asians. The detainees were said to be members of the Unity Movement of South Africa, founded in 1943 by Coloured schoolteachers.

19 February 1990

Mandela issued with his first South African passport



Nelson Mandela was issued with his first South African passport on 19 February 1990, eight days after he was released from prison. It was this passport that he used to embark on a tour of African states that supported the South African liberation struggle, including Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia.

19 February 1996

Largest flood affects Vaal Dam

To date, the largest flood affect-

ing the Vaal Dam, took place from December 1995 to February 1996, when inflow of over 4,700 cubic metres per second (170,000 cu ft/s) was measured into the Dam which was already at full capacity due to good rains. On 19 February 1996, the Vaal Dam's capacity was 118%. The dam has 60 flood gates, and on 21 February 2023, the Department of Water Affairs reported that the dam was 120% full, and that 14 sluices had been opened, causing downstream flooding.

19 February 1997

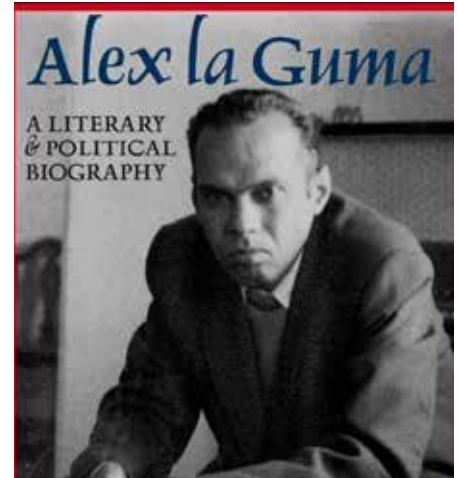
Deng Xiaoping of China died

Leader of the Chinese Communist Party Deng Xiaoping passed on at the age of 92 in Beijing. He is widely credited for the social and economic reforms since the 1970's that saw the rise of China into the world power it is today. These policies include long-term planning and decentralized economic management to lift millions out of poverty. 'Deng stressed individual responsibility in the making of economic decisions, material incentives as the reward for industry and initiative, and the formation of cadres of skilled, well-educated technicians and managers to spearhead China's development.'

20 February 1925

Novelist, poet and activist Alex La Guma is born

Justin Alexander la Guma was born in District Six, Cape Town on 20 February 1925. His father, Jimmy La Guma was of Cuban descent, which made him mixed race in South Africa and was classified as Coloured. La Guma's father was involved in anti-apartheid activism, a path that he would also follow. La Guma



was a talented writer and wrote several books, most of them depicting the plight of black people under apartheid. He was arrested several times as an activist, and would use his time in jail to write. He later went to exile in England before returning to his father's native country Cuba, where he became an African National Congress (ANC) representative. La Guma died in 1985.

20 February 1940

Dr Abdurahman dies in Cape Town

Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, medical doctor and Cape community leader, died on this day at the age of 69. Founder and leader of the anti-apartheid African People's Organisation (APO), he was the first Black person to become a member of the Cape Town City Council (from 1905-1940). His death raised concern within the Black, Coloured and Indian communities, as he was a well-known human rights campaigner. The Standard and Imvo Zabantsundu (Black Opinion) hailed him as a great leader who was at all times available to address the needs of oppressed communities. In June 1999, President Nelson Mandela posthumously honoured Abdurahman by awarding him the National Order for Meritorious Service in Gold.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

14–20 February 2026

Source: www.un.org, www.au.int, *The Africa Fact Book (2020)*, www.daysoftheyear.com

14 February

International Book Giving Day

The day is dedicated to increasing children's access to and enthusiasm for books. In South Africa, the Reading Panel, convened by former Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka aims to ensure all children can read by 2030. Having books at home and access to books at school are important for the development of a love of reading amongst children. Participate in the day by giving a book as a gift, donate books to your local library or a school library, support organisations that distribute books, connect with others using the hashtag #bookgivingday.

15 February

International Childhood Cancer Day

According to Child Cancer International, every year over 400,000 children are diagnosed with cancer, with survival rates ranging from 80% in high income

countries and 20% in low income countries. The day raises awareness of childhood cancers and support to survivors and families. The theme for International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD) 2026 is: ***Demonstrating Impact: From Challenge to Change.***

15 February

World Hippo Day

Hippopotamus – an old Greek name for river horse – are the world's third largest mammal (only blue whales and African elephant are larger), yet are in danger. They are only found in Africa, at home in over 30 African countries. In the wild they live up to 50 years, and are herbivores.

17 February

Global Tourism Resilience Day



For many countries, tourism is a major source of income, foreign currency earnings, tax revenue and employment. Because tourism connects people with nature, sustainable tourism has the unique ability to spur environmental responsibility and conservation. Sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, is

a cross-cutting activity that can contribute to economic growth, alleviating poverty, creating full employment and decent work for all.

17 February

World Pangolin Day

Pangolins are mammals that are covered in tough, overlapping scales made of keratin. They eat ants and termites using an extraordinarily long, sticky tongue, and are able to quickly roll themselves up into a tight ball when they feel threatened. There are eight known species of pangolins – four in Asia and four species in Africa. Pangolins are amongst the world's most trafficked non-human mammals, according to National Geographic, and are therefore under serious threat of extinction. The Asian species are listed as critically endangered and the African species vulnerable. In 2016 – the 186 countries party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the treaty that regulates the international wildlife trade – voted to ban the commercial trade in pangolins.

18 February

World Whale Day

Whales are the largest animals in the world, and they are in every ocean. They are warm-blooded mammals that nurse their young. In size, they range from the dwarf sperm sharks that weighs just over 270 kg and the huge blue whale, that weighs over 180,000 kg (about 33 elephants!) and may be

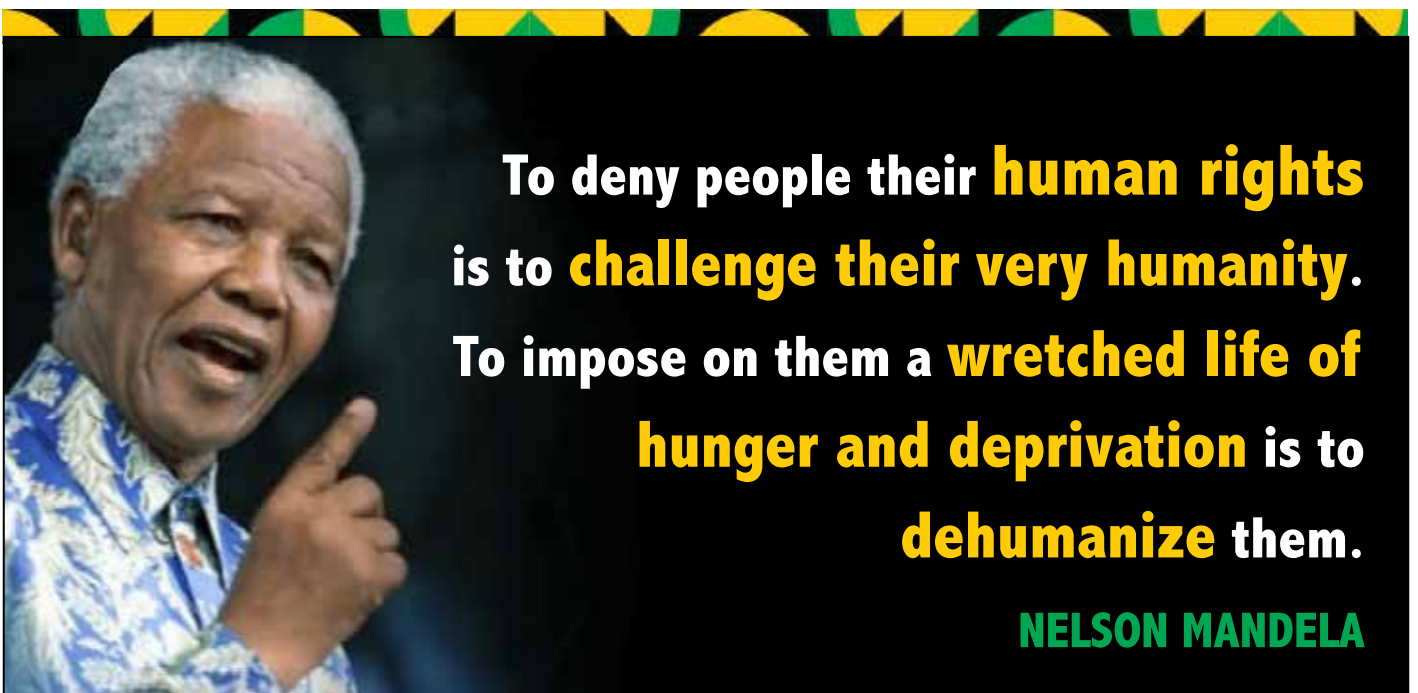
as long as 60 meters, the width of a rugby field. Although they live in water, they breathe air. World Whale Day is celebrated every year on the third Sunday in February.

20 February

World Day of Social Justice



Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. Social justice is upheld when we promote and advance gender equality, the rights of workers, the poor, homeless, LGBTQI, indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove legal and other barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation or disability. The pursuit of social justice for all is supposed to be at the core of the United Nations' global mission to promote development and human dignity.





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Issues will be escalated to the relevant department, municipality, or province.



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