



ANC TODAY

VOICE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

13–19 March 2026

Conversations *with the* President



eThekweni provides lessons on stabilising local government

■ By **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

THE progress being made by the eThekweni metro towards stabilisation demonstrates how effective leadership, coordinated action and strong societal partnerships can support struggling municipalities to regain their footing.

Last week, I met with the Presidential eThekweni Working Group stakeholders, which include national government, provincial government, local government, business, community-based organisations and organised labour. We established the working group in 2024 in response to concerns from business and residents about the city's decline.

At the time, the metro was be-

set by service delivery failures, deteriorating infrastructure and sliding business and investor confidence.

Two years later, the interventions undertaken to tackle poor service delivery and failing infrastructure are driving an effective sustained recovery in the metro.

The Durban Business Confidence Index is at its highest level since it was established. In the manufacturing sector, confidence has risen by nearly 16% quarter-on-quarter, a significant development for a city with a major port and a strong industrial base. Tourism has also rebounded strongly, with more than 1.2 million visitors to the metro during the recent festive season. In addition, key infrastruc-

ture projects are underway and we are seeing improvements in safety and security coordination across the metro.

While stabilisation is not the same as a complete turnaround and the metro still faces significant challenges, the experience of eThekweni offers a viable model for coordination and partnership that can be replicated in other metros and municipalities to enable them to recover.

The working group approach is based on the District Development Model, which we launched in 2019 to improve service delivery by fostering collaboration across all three spheres of government. The model has proven effective in addressing challenges in government, but more

importantly has encouraged various stakeholders to work together. It is designed to bring together government, business, labour and civil society to accelerate turnaround strategies.

Last year, the eThekweni metro approved a Partnerships Framework as a mechanism for public-private cooperation, particularly on infrastructure and catalytic projects. For business, supporting local government turnaround has a direct economic benefit because improved service delivery strengthens the economic environment in which companies operate.

Drawing on lessons learned from the eThekweni Working Group, last year we established the Presidential Johannesburg Working Group, which is focused on governance, service delivery, infrastructure, urban renewal and safety.

While working groups can contribute to stabilising municipalities, sustained progress depends on strengthening institutional capacity across the entire local government system. Municipalities must be able to deliver on their constitutional mandates without the need for national intervention.

The review of the White Paper on Local Government currently underway will result in a far-reaching overhaul of the entire local government system. Among the reforms under consideration are a differentiated approach to municipal powers and responsibilities; improving appointment processes for senior municipal officials; and stronger cooperation between municipalities and traditional leadership institutions.



Financial stability is major challenge for municipalities.

A number of municipalities are characterised by poor revenue management and rising municipal debt. Audit outcomes show that around two-thirds of municipalities are in financial distress. Without stronger revenue management and financial discipline, service delivery challenges will persist and backlogs will only worsen.

The revenues collected from service provision are meant to be reinvested into maintaining and upgrading infrastructure to improve service delivery. However, in far too many instances these resources are redirected to cover other costs.

To address this problem, R27.7 billion has been allocated over the next three years to encourage metros to reform their water, sanitation, solid waste and electricity services. Government is reforming the municipal infrastructure grant to address persistent underspending, misuse of funds and capacity constraints.

The progress being made in

eThekweni and other municipalities is part of a broader programme of reforms that are contributing to better economic growth and improved business confidence. The reforms we are undertaking in the energy, water, telecommunications and logistics sectors are already making an impact on the efficiency and competitiveness of our economy.

The progress being made in eThekweni to rebuild capacity and restore accountability shows how municipalities can achieve a turnaround with political will and the involvement of stakeholders and residents.

When local government fails, the impact is felt by communities, businesses and households. When local government works well, villages, towns and cities become engines of opportunity and growth.

With local government elections on the horizon, this is an opportunity for all stakeholders to work together – not to campaign for the ballot box, but to renew the promise of local government to uphold the dignity and improve the life of every citizen.



TRIBUTE BY **PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA** AT THE
HOMECOMING CELEBRATION
OF REV JESSE JACKSON

7 MARCH 2026

The Family of the late Rev Jesse Jackson,
Your Excellencies,
Friends,

The people of South Africa are with you today as you lay to rest a great man and celebrate a remarkable life that altered the moral direction of a nation and inspired the conscience of the world.

We are here to join you as you say farewell to a man who carried the message of hope from the streets of Chicago to the streets of Johannesburg.

Today we are also here, as South Africans, to claim Reverend Jes-

se Jackson as one of our own. We lay claim on him today because he laid claim on us first.

You may ask: how can a son of South Carolina belong to the people of Soweto?

How can a man born into the segregated American South be claimed by the people of a far-away land that was bedevilled by a racist system of apartheid?

We will tell you how. We will tell you why.

Belonging is not determined by the soil on which you were born. Belonging is determined by the soil on which you choose to join

the fight against an evil racist and oppressive system.

In the long and painful years of our struggle, when the voices of our people were often silenced, Jesse Jackson chose to belong to us by raising his voice against apartheid on our behalf.

When our cause was ignored, and many would look away he stood firm in solidarity with us.

He looked at a people he had never met and said: their pain is my pain. Their chains are my chains. Their struggle for freedom is my struggle.

And for this, the people of South

Africa remember him not as a distant friend, but as a brother in the struggle for justice and freedom.

That is why we proclaim that he is ours too.

Jesse Jackson was an African. We lay claim to him because he was an African. Pledging his solidarity with our struggle made him one of us.

An African. An African American.

He epitomised the image that was depicted by one of the key founders of the African National Congress, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, who delivered a most famous speech in 1906 when he was a student at Columbia University.

He said: “I am an African, and I set my pride in my race over against a hostile public opinion... The brighter day is rising upon Africa. Already I seem to see her chains dissolved.”

That speech captured the spirit of African pride and hope. This is what Jesse Jackson meant to South Africa and Africa. Hence we stand here today and say he also belongs to us.



Jesse Jackson stood with the people of South Africa during our darkest hour. He told the world that the struggle for dignity in the United States of America was inseparable from the fight against apartheid and injustice in South Africa.

When Jesse Jackson reminded the United States that its strength lies not in exclusion, but in the beautiful diversity of its people – black and white, rich and poor, urban and rural, workers and farmers, immigrants and the forgotten – we were inspired by his message and embraced the universal values of diversity, inclusion and equity that he preached.

Nelson Mandela and his comrades were hugely inspired by Jesse Jackson whilst they were serving life sentences on Robben Island as they observed how he carried our struggle for justice beyond the borders of the United States.

He was a voice — a voice that refused to be silenced when silence would have been easier. A voice that preached a message of hope from the streets of Chicago to the dusty streets of Soweto, that justice was not a privilege for the few, but a birthright for all.

His rallying call “Keep hope alive” became a compass for our struggle and gave us hope for victory over the evil of system of apartheid exclusion, division and oppression.

Jesse Jackson expressed his solidarity with the people of South Africa when he first visited South Africa in 1979, two years after the callous killing of Steve Biko in apartheid police cells. He drew massive crowds at rallies in Soweto, where he famously declared that: “*This land is changing hands.*”

When the Reagan administration chose “*constructive engage-*



TRIBUTE

ment” – diplomatic language for doing nothing – Jesse Jackson chose unconditional solidarity with the oppressed majority in South Africa.

He became the most visible American political figure advocating for comprehensive pressure and economic sanctions against South Africa.

By placing South Africa at the centre of American electoral politics during his presidential election campaign, Jesse Jackson influenced millions of voters to confront apartheid as their moral responsibility too.

He led many marches here in the United States and in 1985 was arrested with his two sons, Jesse Jr. and Jonathan, outside the South African Embassy. As they were arrested, they sang **“We shall Overcome”**. It was a song that became part of our struggle and from which we drew inspiration.

He took the fight against apartheid global.

On the 2nd of November 1985, he marched with then ANC President Oliver Tambo, Anti-Apartheid Movement President Trevor Huddleston and more than 150,000 people – in what was one of the largest anti-apartheid demonstrations ever held in Britain – to demand sanctions against South Africa and the release of Nelson Mandela.

Not only did he march in the streets; he walked into the corridors of power.

He personally lobbied Pope John Paul II to visit South Africa and hasten change. He pressed Mikhail Gorbachev to cut all Soviet diplomatic ties with Pretoria. He challenged Margaret Thatcher to her face. She refused to budge, but he did not stop.

When Nelson Mandela finally walked free in 1990 after 27 long years of imprisonment, Jesse Jackson was there in Cape Town, witnessing a moment the world would never forget. He described the atmosphere as a *“release of glee and joy,”* as millions

celebrated not only the freedom of a man, but the rising hope of a nation.

In 1994, he was present when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected President of South Africa. Jackson kept returning after 1994, when many of his contemporaries moved on.

We claim Jesse Jackson as one of our own because he never saw the struggle in South Africa as a distant or foreign cause, but as a struggle that belonged to him as well.

His greatest gift to the oppressed people of South Africa was the courage he gave us to believe that we must never surrender hope, that justice would prevail, and freedom would come.

He encouraged us not to lose hope in the face of oppression.

Not to lose hope in the face of injustice.

To have hope that ordinary people, standing together, would



write their own history of triumph against apartheid.

The life of Reverend Jesse Jackson reminds us that the struggle for justice is never the work of a single lifetime. It is a long and noble journey carried forward across generations. It is a relay in which the torch of freedom is passed from one courageous hand to another.

Martin Luther King Jr. lifted that torch and gave the world a dream of justice and equality.

Jesse Jackson carried that dream forward with hope, keeping its flame alive in the hearts of those who refused to surrender to injustice.

And Nelson Mandela carried that dream into freedom, helping to build a rainbow nation where dignity and liberty could belong to all.

And so today that torch still burns. It is now in our hands – to guard it, to carry it forward, and to ensure that the dream of justice continues to light the path for generations yet to come.

Now we must ask ourselves how we can honour the life and memory of Jesse Jackson.

We honour him by carrying forward the values he lived for: justice, dignity, equality,

By committing to a lifetime of service to others.

By showing up when others look away from injustice, when they fear to stand up to power and when they walk away from suffering.

By pledging solidarity and using



every opportunity to support the just struggle of others.

By ensuring that there is justice for all.

By keeping hope alive, as Jesse Jackson taught us.

Today we honour a man whose voice stirred the conscience of leaders and ordinary people, whose courage strengthened movements across the world, and whose faith never wavered even when the road was long.

To our mother, Mrs Jacqueline Jackson, to Santita, Jesse Jr., Jonathan, Yusef, Jacqueline, Ashley and the entire Jackson family:

We, the people of South Africa, are here to say thank you.

The African National Congress,

with which Jesse Jackson worked closely, thanks you.

We are here not only in mourning, but in gratitude.

Deep, abiding, unrepayable gratitude.

You gave us your husband. Your father. Your patriarch.

You shared him across an ocean, across continents.

Across marches and prison gates and inauguration days.

When South Africa needed a friend in the corridors of power you allowed Jesse Jackson to be that friend.

His support meant that when our people were tear-gassed in Soweto someone in America was weeping with us.



It meant that when our leaders sat in prison cells on Robben Island, someone was standing in the capitals of the world, in Washington and in London, saying: Nelson Mandela and his comrades are not terrorists or criminals. They are freedom fighters. The world must listen and act.

We are grateful that on the day Nelson Mandela walked free – on that historic and miraculous day – Jesse Jackson was standing in the sunlight with us.

Not because it was required of him. But because it was in him to witness the emergence of the South Africa he had campaigned for, been arrested for, struggled for and prophesied about in Soweto in 1979.

We honour him for his enduring commitment, his expression of real love, sacrificial love.

The commitment he displayed did not wait to be invited. It made him simply show up.

Jesse Jackson showed up for

South Africa.

Again. And again. And again.

Long after the cameras moved on.

Long after the sanctions were won.

Long after apartheid had been defeated and relegated to the ash heap of history he kept coming back.

To express its gratitude as a free nation, South Africa awarded him the Order of the Companions of the OR Tambo.

But no medal, no honour, no citation is wide enough to express what Jesse Jackson gave and meant to us.

What he gave to us cannot be framed and hung on a wall.

It lives in our Constitution. It lives in our freedom. It lives in the hearts of our people.

That is why we are here today:

to carry of Jesse Jackson's spirit home with us.

For the hope he nurtured, the courage he inspired and the solidarity he showed to our people must not end with this moment.

It must continue to inspire us in our shared journey to build a better life for all our people.

So, on behalf of sixty-two million freedom loving South Africans, we say thank you.

Go well, Reverend. Go well, Mkhulu.

The ancestors – Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Winnie Mandela and many others both here and in South Africa – have been waiting to embrace you.

And we, the people of the rainbow nation that you helped to build, salute you and we say:

Amandla. Power to the People.

Rest in eternal peace.

ANC distances itself from Misuse of Food Parcels for Political Publicity

■ By **ANC SECRETARY GENERAL FIKILE MBALULA**

THE African National Congress (ANC) has noted with serious concern the circulation of social media images depicting the distribution of food parcels while displaying the name, colours and branding of the ANC by Cde Bernice Swarts, a Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister. These images create the false impression that the activity forms part of an official ANC programme or campaign.

The ANC wishes to state categorically that the distribution reflected in these images is not an ANC campaign and was not authorised by any structure of the organisation. The organisation therefore distances itself from these actions and emphasises that the activity was not undertaken under the mandate or authority of the ANC.

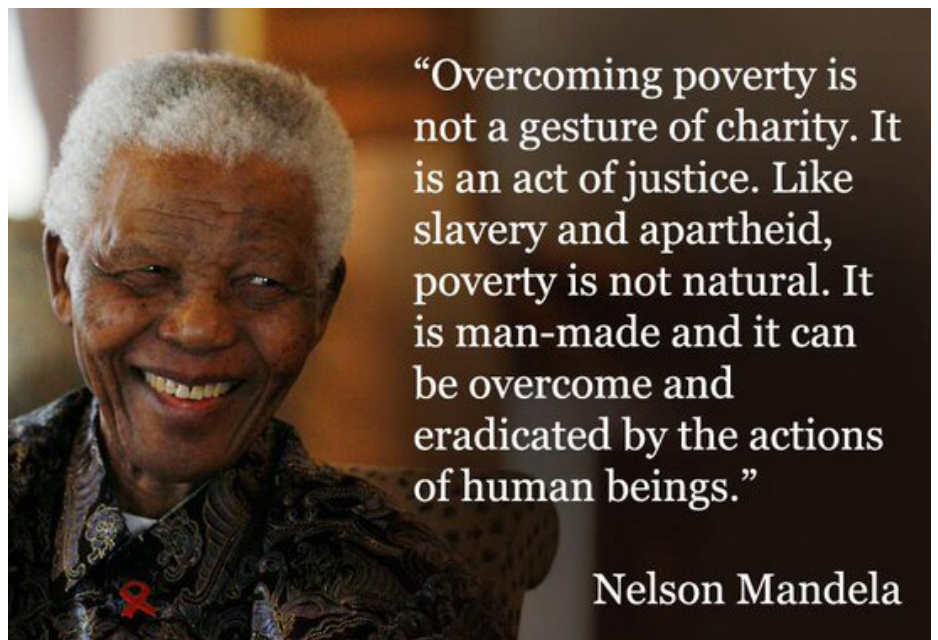
The ANC recognises that many of its members across the country play an important social responsibility role in their communities by assisting vulnerable households and supporting local initiatives. Such acts of solidarity reflect the values of Ubuntu and service to the people that

define the movement. However, members are reminded that acts of charity or community assistance must never be conducted using the ANC name, colours or branding, nor should they be presented as organisational programmes when they are private initiatives. The movement further underscores that assistance to communities must always uphold the dignity and respect of the people, and must never be conducted in a manner that may diminish their humanity.

The organisation has taken internal steps to address the matter

and reprimanded the comrade involved, together with those who participated in the activity under the ANC banner without authorisation. The ANC calls on all members, organisations and individuals to refrain from misusing the ANC name and symbols, particularly in ways that undermine the dignity of communities or mislead the public.

The movement remains committed to advancing lasting solutions to poverty, unemployment and inequality in line with its historic mission to build a better life for all.



“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.”

Nelson Mandela



ANC Veterans' League grows in strength

■ By **LISA SEFTEL**

SINCE the Veteran's League National Conference in July 2023, membership figures have almost doubled from 2340 to 4164. New branches and regions continue to be launched, giving the League a national footprint.

Gauteng held a successful provincial conference at the end of last year, and North West and KZN are hoping to hold their provincial conferences before the end of March.

"The Veterans League has also grown in influence", says Secretary-General Ilva Mackay Langa. Her report to the latest NEC meeting of the Veterans League

(VL) lists the following achievements:

- Ensuring the adoption of a Base Document on Renewal by the ANC NEC.
- Drafting modules for the Foundation Course and ensuring its roll-out including fundraising for the training to occur.
- Proposing a three-phase ANC national election strategy to win back the confidence of the people, which has been integrated into the ANC's strategy.
- Initiating the establishment of a service delivery and corruption hotline, email and WhatsApp number, which is currently operating from Lu-

thuli House.

- Standing steadfast against corruption, including arguing that the Integrity Commission must have original powers, drafting a disclosure of assets document while we wait for the lifestyle audits to be initiated. The Veterans' League is also working on proposed amendments to the step-aside policy.
- Facilitating participation in service delivery war rooms to fix local government.
- Leading the way with proposals for electoral reform in the ANC, including one member one vote as well as a review of the current model of government.

- Pursuing the re-opening of the Special Pension application process, which will require amendments to the current legislation.

The Veterans League believes in leading by example. The VL NEC meeting adopted Guidelines for the nomination and elections of provincial and regional executive committees, adapted from the national guidelines adopted by the ANC NEC, but including a provision for candidates nominated to prepare a motivation setting out why they would be a suitable candidate to serve and what they will contribute if elected.

The political report by the VL President, Cde Snuki Zikalala, focused on the current global turmoil and the threat that the latest developments posed to South Africa as well as our erstwhile allies such as Cuba.

He said that *“we should be mindful of what Mark Carney, the Prime Minister of Canada, said at the World Economic Forum – we are ‘living within a lie’ and that it is time to take the delusional signs out the window and acknowledge that there never was a rules-based international order and that imperialism, where the strong can do what they can, and the weak must suffer what they must, is the lived reality today.”*

Cde Zikalala asked the question: *“Are we ‘living within a lie’ in South Africa? We must welcome the State of the Nation Address by the President and the Budget Speech of the Minister of Finance. We can see that the GNU is working, reforms are moving apace, and SARS is collecting more revenue. As a result, we may see stronger GDP growth and attract more investors.*

“However, each day our radios and TVs are flooded with incredible stories from witnesses at the Madlanga Commission and Parliamentary Hearings on the same topic, where top cops and criminal syndicates loan each other money and engage in other outrageous actions. It gives our people no confidence that the state can guarantee their safety.

“Comrades, let us not live a lie. While acknowledging that poverty, inequality and unemployment are a result of structural features of our economy, we should also acknowledge that our inability to provide our people with reliable water, electricity and other basic services, especially at the local government level, stems from where we have gone wrong as the ANC. Patronage politics is trumping service delivery at the local government level. Greed and hunger for money and power among our own ANC members are widespread.”

He called on the Veterans League to be courageous and not to tire in the renewal of the ANC and campaigning for victory in the local government elections.

“If we are to succeed in the local government elections, our focus has to be on reaching out to our communities, listening to the people, fixing local government and ensuring that our candidates, from mayors to ward councillors, are ethical, competent and incorruptible.”

The VL President’s call was echoed by the Secretary General, who called on Veterans to mobilise in voting districts and wards by:

- Registering supporters online with IEC and encouraging youth to register and vote for the ANC;
- Ensure all elderly are registered for special votes;
- Ensure the frail and bedridden are registered with IEC for home visits;
- Do Letsema Friday and Saturday clean-up;
- Report all water leaks, potholes, non-functioning street lights and so on to local councillors and the ANC toll-free Hotline;
- Making sure councillors hold regular meetings;
- Making sure ANC branches are functioning;
- Making a food garden in your yard or in a communal spot.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2026
VOTER REGISTRATION WEEKEND

20 - 21 JUNE 2026
TIME: 08H00 - 17H00

Government intensifies war against corruption in the water sector

■ By **PEMMY MAJODINA**

WATER is life. Corruption steals it! When corruption infiltrates the water sector, it does far more than distort procurement processes or inflate invoices. It dries up taps, delays critical infrastructure projects, contaminates rivers, and steadily erodes public trust. In a water-scarce country like South Africa, corruption is not victimless crime. It represents a direct assault on human dignity and national development.

This powerful sentiment echoed throughout the venue on Thursday as we officially launched the Water Sector Anti-Corruption Forum in partnership with the Special Investigating Unit - a decisive, multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to rooting out graft, strengthening coordination across government, law enforcement, civil society, and the private sector, and safeguarding one of our nation's most precious and vulnerable resources: water itself.

When corruption infiltrates the water sector, not only does it distort procurement processes or inflate invoices it also dries up taps, delays infrastructure, contaminates rivers and erodes public trust. In a water-scarce country such as South Africa, corruption is not a victimless crime. It is a direct assault on human dignity and development. This is



the sentiment that reverberated throughout the venue on Thursday when we launched the Water Sector Anti-Corruption Forum in partnership with the Special Investigating Unit.

It is against this backdrop that we have launched the Water Sector Anti-Corruption Forum (WSACF) in collaboration with the Special Investigating Unit (SIU). This initiative follows a corruption vulnerability risk assessment conducted by the SIU, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, which identified the water sector as particularly exposed to incidents of fraud and corruption. That finding demands decisive action.

The establishment of the WSACF is informed by the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS), which calls for a whole-of-soci-

ety approach to fighting corruption. Experience has shown that anti-corruption forums in vulnerable sectors provide effective platforms for mobilising inclusive participation across the public sector, civil society, regulators, private enterprise, academia, organised labour, traditional and religious leaders. Corruption thrives in isolation; it is defeated through collective resolve.

The Water Sector Anti-Corruption Forum is therefore not a symbolic structure. It is a strategic intervention designed to develop tailored, measurable solutions to address corruption risks across the water value chain. It is aligned to the Department of Water and Sanitation Anti-Corruption Strategy, which emphasises prevention, detection, enforcement and institutional integrity. It advances



the vision of the National Development Plan 2030 for a capable and ethical developmental state, and reinforces our commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 6 - ensuring access to clean water and sanitation for all.

Corruption in the water sector manifests in multiple and deeply damaging ways. It appears in inflated infrastructure contracts, collusive tender processes and manipulation of supply chains. It surfaces in the diversion of funds meant for maintenance, leading to the deterioration of treatment works and pipelines. It is evident in criminal networks that extort contractors, disrupt construction sites and delay strategic bulk water projects. It is reflected in illegal connections and water losses that weaken municipal finances and compromise sustainability.

Each of these acts has tangible consequences. When a dam project is stalled by corruption-related litigation or intimidation, communities wait longer for relief. When funds for refurbishment are misappropriated, wastewater plants fail and rivers are polluted. When procurement is compromised, infrastructure quality suffers and long-term costs escalate. Cor-

ruption, in this context, is not merely financial misconduct — it is a threat to water security itself.

South Africa already faces structural constraints: limited rainfall, climate variability, ageing infrastructure and rising demand. We cannot afford to compound these realities with governance failures. Every rand lost to corruption is a rand not spent on fixing leaks, expanding supply schemes or protecting our freshwater ecosystems.

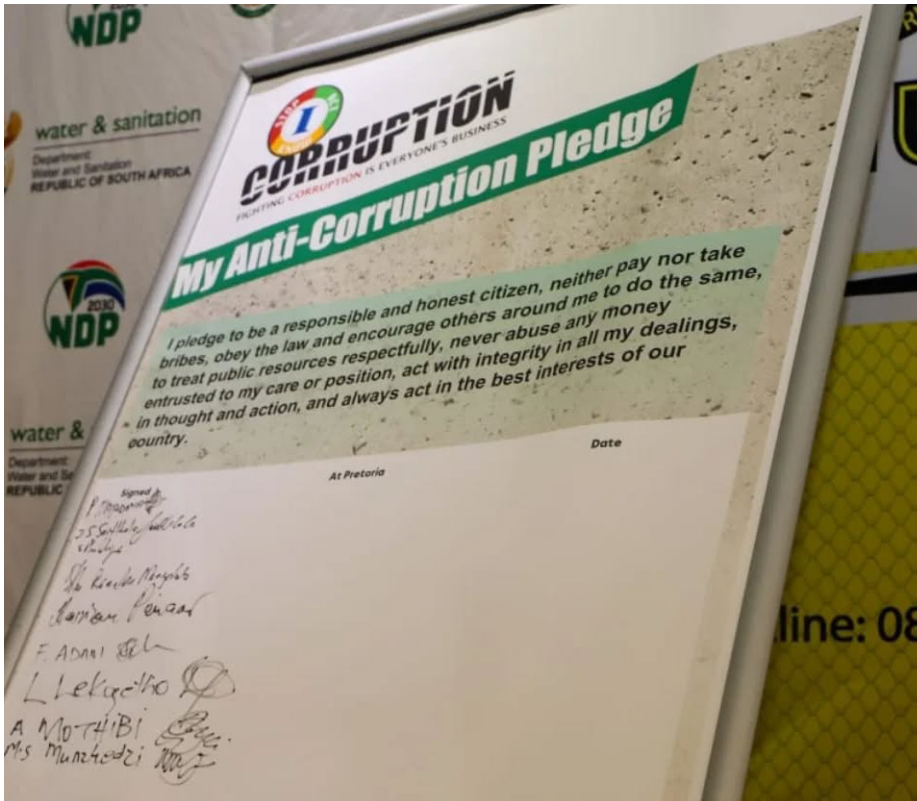
Government's commitment to fighting corruption is steadfast and demonstrable. The SIU continues to investigate maladminis-

tration and recover public funds, with billions of rand already returned to the state across sectors. Strengthened consequence management, improved coordination between investigative bodies and enhanced oversight mechanisms reflect a state increasingly determined to ensure that wrongdoing carries consequences.

The WSACF builds on this proven commitment. Its objectives are clear and practical. First, to raise awareness and build sustained support for corruption prevention initiatives within the water sector. Second, to foster collaboration among stakeholders so that responses are coordinated rather than fragmented. Third, to enhance investigative capacity by improving cooperation among law enforcement agencies. Fourth, to ensure effective consequence management, including asset recovery, prosecutions and disciplinary action. And finally, to implement robust prevention measures that mitigate fraud and corruption risks before they materialise.

Crucially, this Forum embodies the multi-stakeholder model endorsed globally, including through





the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which recognises that combating corruption requires the active participation of government, the private sector, civil society and citizens alike. Integrity cannot be outsourced. It must be embedded.

We are under no illusion that the task ahead is simple. Entrenched interests will resist reform. Criminal networks will seek new avenues. But the message we send through this Forum is unequivocal: there will be zero tolerance for corruption in the water sector. Those who attempt to profit from scarcity will face investigation, consequence and accountability. At the same time, we must inspire hope. South Africa has demonstrated that when institutions act with courage and society stands united, corruption can be confronted and defeated. The launch of the Water Sector Anti-Corruption Forum signals a new era of vigilance, coordination and shared responsibility.

Water is life. It sustains our families, powers our economy and



Report **water leaks** and **burst pipes** to your **local municipality** or contact the ANC tollfree number:
080 030 1912.

anchors our future. Protecting it from corruption is both a constitutional duty and a moral obligation.

Let us therefore move forward together as government, business, labour, civil society and every community to expose wrongdoing, strengthen systems and uphold integrity. Let us refuse complacency. Let us demand accountability. And let us act, each in our sphere, to ensure that every drop of water serves the people of South Africa.

Together, we will safeguard our water. Together, we will defeat corruption.

Pemmy Majodina is a member of the ANC National Executive Committee and Minister of Water and Sanitation.

Global power dynamics: Whither South Africa?

This is a presentation made by **JOEL NETSHITENZHE**
at the **eThekweni Colloquium** on **global dynamics**

GLOBAL power dynamics are today characterised by a combination of geo-strategic, economic, political, social, technological and environmental forces which have given rise to the volatility that we are experiencing today.

Let us in this context examine the debate about unipolarity and multipolarity. I wish to preface observations in this regard by quoting a lament in an Open Letter to the World from ‘an ordinary Cuban woman’.

“I write this with a broken heart and trembling hands, because what my people are experiencing today is not a crisis. It is a slow, calculated, coldly executed murder, orchestrated from Washington.

...in Cuba, elderly people are dying prematurely because the blockade prevents the arrival of medications for heart conditions, high blood pressure, and diabetes...

...incubators in Cuba have had to be shut down due to a lack of fuel... [N]ewborns are fighting for their lives while the United States government decides which countries can sell us oil and which cannot.

...our doctors, the same ones who saved lives during the pan-



demic... now lack syringes, anaesthesia, and X-ray equipment. Not because we don't know how to produce them. Not because we lack talent. But because the blockade prevents us from accessing supplies, spare parts, and technology.”

I think we would not be human if a situation, such as described in this letter, did not generate a profound sense of moral outrage. Conceptually, this feeling of abandonment among the Cuban people, in the face of what is akin to a so-called neutron bomb, capable of preserving material assets and wiping out human beings, raises profound questions about the concepts of unipolarity and multipolarity.

A number of global developments in the past decade have generated intellectual assertions claiming that we now live in a multipolar world. Primary among these developments is the re-emergence of China as a “great power”. One uses the word “re-emergence” guardedly; because for most of the last millennium, China was among the top two largest world economies, and it was the largest for part of the 19th century.

After its colonial “humiliations from abroad”, it constituted about 2 percent share of the global economy in 1980, and then 18 percent in 2016 – using purchasing power parity. On the other hand, the United States accounted for about 50 percent of the

global economy immediately after the Second World War, then 22 percent in 1980 and 16 percent in 2016 – what Allison describes as a rapid and tectonic shift in the global balance of power never seen in world history.

Many point to the rise of east Asia generally, the emergence of BRICS+ which accounts for about 40 percent of the global economy compared with the G7 which is at 28 percent, as affirming the existence of multipolarity.

It is clear that the US cannot stop the rise of China. For instance, despite its interventions to slow China's technological advancement, China is succeeding in forging self-reliance. In relation to microchips and chipmaking technology, for instance, it has moved with surprising speed in developing AI tools for domestic use; and through open access, it is starting to dominate global adoption, showing that America's attempts to hobble China's ambitions are failing.

Great power transition

The relay-race of great power transition is indeed under way. But a sense of balance and realism is necessary.

Firstly, the question of whether China will be able to sustain its high rates of growth and preserve its export-led model depends on too many variables. The Chinese government has acknowledged that it needs to expand domestic consumption, which will be "arduous" and require a wide variety of interventions, including social security and consumer cultural change.

Secondly, the global economic system is to all intents and pur-



poses capitalist, with neo-liberalism the dominant paradigm. In spite of efforts at reshoring, near-shoring and friend-shoring, global trade continues to grow, cementing interdependencies. This extends to the financial system, reflected not only in the dominance of the US dollar; but also, in the fact that China holds more than US\$500-billion in US Treasury holdings.

Thirdly, an assessment of geo-strategic balances has to reckon with the fact that, in terms of military strength, the US is a hyperpower, commanding the widest network of military bases across the globe, and with military expenditure that is larger than that of the next 10 military powers combined.

The fourth consideration calling for balance and realism on the notion of multipolarity is about coherence and self-assertion among what are meant to be alternative poles in global power dynamics. Take BRICS+ for instance: it is not underpinned by any cohesive geopolitical or ideological foundations; and each of its members pursues self-centred approaches to relations with the US.

The US and internal decline

All these elements have resulted in a situation in which, in the words of Indian academic Raja Mohan (2026) in *The Economist* recently:

The weak international response to Washington's aggressive trade policies, its interventions in Latin America and the Middle East, and its threats to take new territory have exposed how difficult it is for any coalition to mount effective resistance to the United States.

He also opines that: China and Russia have resisted Washington on select issues, but they have been unable to mount a comprehensive challenge to the United States' effort to restructure global rules. Washington's European allies have proved even less able to stand up to the United States...

Some have even said that, if you believe that there currently is multipolarity in global power balances, ask the people of Venezuela, Iran and Cuba, and you will be rightfully laughed out of court.

It is on account of all these realities, that the assertion by the ANC some 20 years ago remains

true: that the dominant feature of global power dynamics is one of primary unipolarity, with “*secondary multi-polar features*”.

However, as history has shown, the relay race of global power transitions cannot be stopped. In some instances, it is a protracted process; and yet in others it can happen suddenly. A sudden decline is usually occasioned by unguided drift, hubris and decay within the incumbent great power.

This consideration has been exercising the mind of many Chinese scholars, with Kang and Ma asserting that internal decline is often more damaging to hegemons than are external challengers. In this regard, the following trends in US policy and conduct bear relevance:

- There is a tendency towards overreach in trade policy – with negative consequences for the US population and conscious efforts by trade partners to derisk. The temptation to overreach is also reflected in military adventures such as in Latin America and the Middle East.
- Technological embargoes are forcing targeted countries such as China to pursue self-reliance and forge new alliances. For instance, China’s advanced Artificial Intelligence DeepSeek and other ventures with lower prices and open access have enhanced their global reach and popularity, with China now leading in the manufacturing and deployment of humanoid robots.
- Social inequality, plutocracy (or rule by the rich), corruption and a ham-fisted approach to issues such as migration and race have widened the fault-lines in American society and,

indeed, among many developed countries. The attempt to misdirect society away from issues of class and social inequality, may temporarily muddy the waters; but social anomie is bound to intensify. Tragically, the political centre-left does not seem to have any answers, having been co-opted into the extremes of neo-liberal economics, “classless” identity politics and military adventures.

- Many commentators in the US have expressed concern at the undermining of free speech including the idea that journalism, the bearing of witness, the documenting of facts is seen as a political act to be selectively targeted, the assault on intellectual freedom and brow-beating of universities, attacks against statisticians and even economists at the Federal Reserve, and weaponisation of law-enforcement agencies.

(On a lighter note, for those who are interested in conspiracy theories and some light relief about the timing of some wars, you may want to watch a film from the 1990s, titled *Wag the Dog*, about an American president facing a

sex scandal deciding to attack some obscure country, in order to distract from the scandal.)

It is this unguided drift, hubris and decay that have not only undermined America’s global soft power; but also undergird the conclusion of Kang and Ma, cited earlier, that internal decline is often more damaging to hegemons than are external challengers.

United States’ trajectory unlikely to change

Now, the question that has engaged the minds of intellectuals and politicians alike, is whether the current administration of President Donald Trump is an aberration. The fact of the matter is that it is a product of majority electoral support; and it is largely reflective of the interests of the country’s economic and security establishment. Whether there may be tweaks and changes in tone beyond the mandate period of the current administration, is a matter of conjecture; but the substance is unlikely to change.

In this regard, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is right about the permanence of the current rupture in geopolitics: We



knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false... We know the old order is not coming back. We shouldn't mourn it. Nostalgia is not a strategy. Of course, questions have been posed, for instance, about Canada's support for the attacks against Iran by the United States and Israel and about even more strange statements by the E3 made up of the UK, France & Germany with many wondering what "rapture" actually means; but this is a discussion for another day.

These objective conditions and subjective factors relating to great power transitions have spawned the possibility of what has been referred to as the Thucydides Trap of kinetic war between a rising power and the incumbent. But is this a given? Is an orderly multipolar world a pipedream? Or are we going to experience predatory co-operation among the great powers characterised by the subtle carving out of spheres of influence: the so-called Donroe Doctrine in relation to Latin America, combined with Russia's dominance in its so-called "near-abroad", Chinese self-assertion in its neighbourhood, and Israel's untrammelled domination in the Middle East?

All these matters are addressed in a book that the Mapungubwe Institute is publishing, entitled, ***Africa and the Thucydides Trap: Strategies for a world in transition.***

Intensifying great power tensions

The fact of the matter is that, whatever the trajectory of global power dynamics, tensions and intense competition among the great powers are bound to intensify.



And so, Africa, and South Africa in particular, have to develop strategies practically to exercise their collective agency. In this regard, we need to be very clear: primary unipolarity in the context of a hyperpower sensing decline, is now being asserted without the velvet glove of pretence.

The neo-imperialist underpinning to this was clearly articulated by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently at the Munich Security Conference. To quote him: For five centuries, before the end of the Second World War, the West had been expanding – its missionaries, its pilgrims, its soldiers, its explorers pouring out from its shores to cross oceans, settle new continents, build vast empires extending out across the globe. In the post-1945 period, he laments, Western empires experienced a terminal decline, accelerated among others by anti-colonial uprisings. In other words, from his perspective, our freedom from colonial rule across countries of the South, is a negative development to be decried.

Whither South Africa?

What then needs to be done? Whither Africa and South Africa in particular?

What is required is, firstly, that we should fully appreciate the objective position of our country and the rest of the continent in evolving global dynamics. The endowments that we have are our key competitive and comparative advantages: be it minerals for old and new technologies, arable land, the sun and wind for a low-carbon transition, or the demographic dividend.

Secondly, intense competition among global powers creates the possibility for us, tactically, to take advantage of the situation. As these powers pursue their interests on the continent, we need to disabuse ourselves of the notion that Africa is a passive theatre of great power competition. China's Belt and Road Initiative and the partnerships that the US and its allies pursue on the continent should be used as a platform for us to benefit as much as we can. Critical to this is that, as they develop and implement their Africa strategies, African countries should, individually and collectively, themselves devise strategic approaches to all the great powers and other regions of the world.

Thirdly, the various possibilities we referred to earlier – a Thucy-

dides Trap, an orderly multipolar world or predatory co-operation – or even a combination or temporal manifestation among them, are not immutable realities devoid of human agency. A united African voice can influence the direction of global human endeavours, including the promotion of peace, sovereignty, equitable trade relations, social development, a just low-carbon transition and pandemic-readiness. In other words, it is possible for us to contribute to the shaping of global power dynamics.

Lastly, this can only succeed if we consciously build concentric circles of broad fronts around issues pertinent to the global commons. We should proceed from the understanding that some among the global players will agree with us on specific issues; while others may embrace all the ideals we have, such as the restructuring of global multilateral institutions, Agenda 2063, Africa Mining Vision, Africa's Green Minerals Strategy, the African Continental Free Trade Area and, closer to home, the National Development Plan.

Most of these issues were unanimously agreed to at the recent G20 Summit. This is in addition to other continental propositions on global financial reform, reducing the cost of capital, a debtors' club, methodological transparency and counter-balances in relation to credit rating agencies, resolving conflicts, improving governance and eliminating corruption.

Now, this kind of strategic posture is equally demanded of South Africa.

We command over 70 percent of global reserves of Platinum

Group Metals, chrome and manganese; and among the largest reserves of vanadium, zirconium and titanium: with 16 commodities ranked in the Top 10 internationally. Besides its relatively advanced level of industrialisation, South Africa's geo-strategic location – including the sea lanes – also counts in our favour.

Blessings, curses

But, as we all know, blessings can, at once, be a curse. They do attract both wanted and unwanted attention. It is not by accident that South African territory was among the first to suffer the rapacious licence of Rubio's vast empires extending out across the globe.

And so, as the velvet glove is removed, and attempts are made to resuscitate the status quo ante in whatever form, we need to reflect on the profound meaning of all this. Critically, we have faced systematic targeting as South Africa because, besides sovereign foreign policy decisions, we dare, as a post-colonial democracy, to honour the injunction of our basic law to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

Of course, we cannot auction our freedom and sovereignty to satisfy the appetites of modern-day neo-imperialist marauders. At the core of our national mission is social transformation, proceeding from the premise that, like the people of the United States and others across the world, We the People have a right to promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, in the words of the American Constitution.

South Africans need keenly to appreciate that building broad fronts across the globe in pursuit of social justice and an equitable world order, can only succeed if we are united as a nation; if we persevere in building a state that is not only capable, developmental and ethical, but also one that enjoys popular legitimacy; and if we persist with a national dialogue to forge a social compact among all South Africans: black and white, worker and employer, young and old, men and women and all other sections of our society.

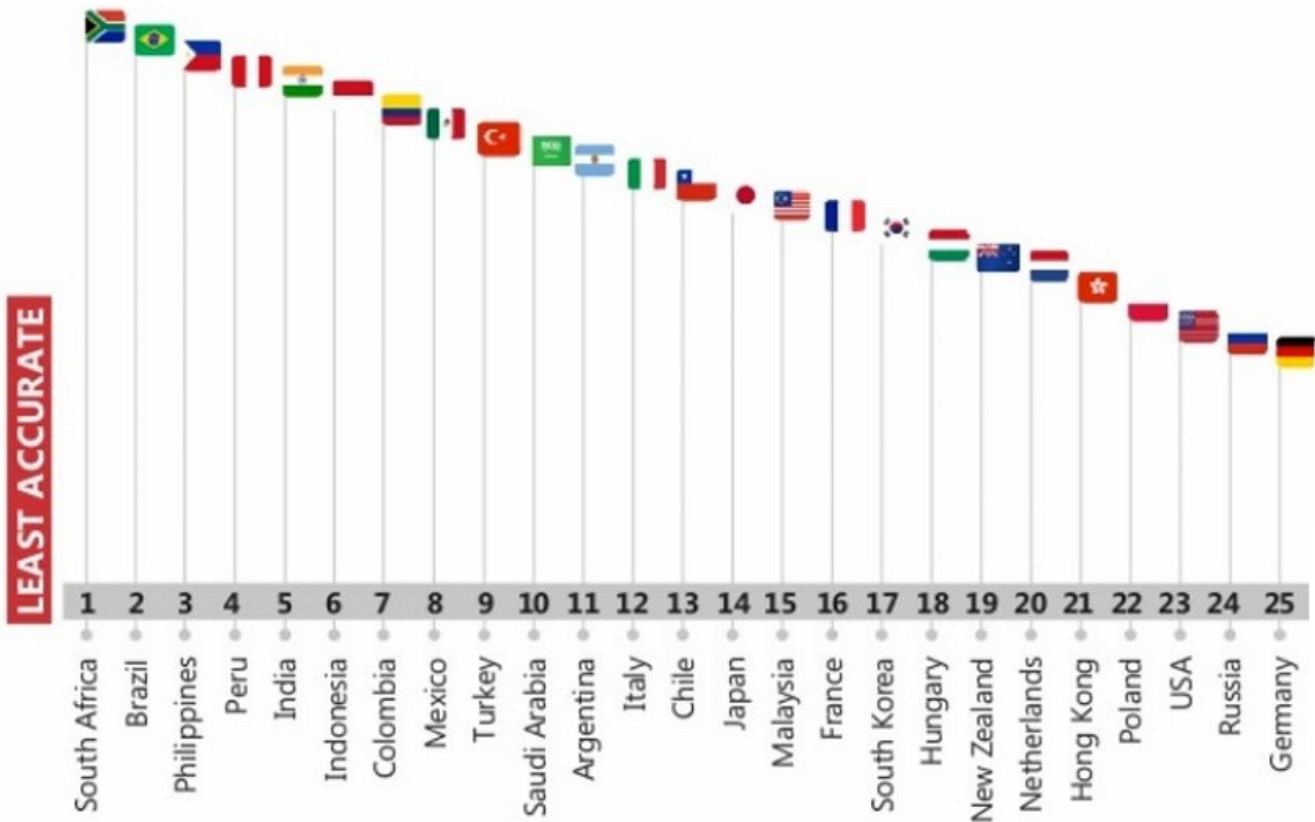
It is therefore of utmost concern that, at precisely the moment when empires of yore are striking back, there are those among us who behave like Trojan Horses, to sap our strength and resolve by promoting the notion that we should behave as an outpost of these erstwhile colonial empires; and by encouraging the very demon of tribalism that was, in significant measure, responsible for our defeat during the colonial incursions of past centuries.

The imperatives of statecraft dictate that we cannot afford the luxury of discounting the possibility of overt and covert external interventions to undermine our democracy: from soft electoral meddling to acts of sabotage.

Therefore, in addition to the civil, political and diplomatic efforts to build global broad fronts, South Africa needs, more than ever before, to accelerate the strengthening of our security services, including military and intelligence agencies.

Joel Netshitenzhe is Executive Director: Mapungubwe Institute (Mistra).

Misperceptions index - Who's most wrong?



Dissecting the Ipsos Perils of Perception Index

■ By **GEORGE MAGOMA**

IPSOS recently released a Perils of Perception Index which exposed the shocking impact of the conservative media which refuses to transform. Owing to findings and evidence of ineffectual reporting that lacks credibility, unable to fulfil its mandate of fair reporting and educating the index describes South Africans as being pessimistic, the most propagandised people in the world and a nation “misinformed” or “disconnected” from reality regarding the state of

their nation, revealing a wide gap between what they believe and what actual data shows.

This is dangerous and needs to be put into perspective, dissect and identify factors which contribute to the narrative that South Africans are gullible. The index takes us on journey spanning years since the dawn of democracy, the nature and role of the media in the country’s body politic, falsehoods which threaten our social fabric, its anathema to the

National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as a transformative instrument for social change, redress and the erasure of the vestiges of apartheid, still painfully evident in 30 years of a Constitution which guarantees a free press hinged on the values of fairness and objectivity.

To interrogate this index, its observations we trace this to the role of the media from apartheid to our current, the impact of negative reporting and propaganda

and the contemporaneous psyche of the nation.

The index cautions us of the impact of the disconnect, but the fundamental state of the country.

At the centre of this resides the media, its distortion of developments in the country and ineptitude in the public discourse.

In the advent of democracy in 1994, amidst falsehoods and scare crows of the swart-ge-waar, communist takeover, fear, nationalisation, lies of driving whites into the sea, the perennially grinding Strategic Communications (STRATCOM) of the apartheid propaganda machinery and the conservative media that propped the minority regime, the atmosphere was eerie, laden with fear, suspicion and mistrust.

Australia and other countries became exit points and sanctuaries for those who opposed the project of inclusivity, universal suffrage, democracy, common citizenship, and non-racialism as the values and foundational plinths of our nascent democracy.

This was the work of the apartheid government and its appendages, especially the conservative media that still exists today, thriving on lies, ignorance, gullibility and institutionalized racism, bigotry by fanning fires of divisions and racial hatred.

The African National Congress had in its observation in the 55th National Conference on Communications and the Battle of Ideas said, *"The negative public sentiment occurs in the context of the rising global and domestic dominance of a conservative narrative relentlessly seeking to undermine progressive politics."*



This resolution focused on policy issues on broadcasting and media transformation.

Media freedom and freedom of expression guided by ethical, credible, research and fact-based information sharing and dissemination are important ingredients for media transformation to instil patriotism and to advance freedom, defend democracy and to contribute to equality and a sense of belonging.

Over several decades, the apartheid regime falsely spread fears of communist rule, reinventing McCarthyism to suppress freedom of association, to derail negotiations and purge opponents of apartheid. This became a dangerous and deadly game propagated by the apartheid media.

The consequences became dire and fatal, culminating in the assassination of Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC with the intention to cause chaos and ungovernability to defer the dream of democracy, the establishment of an egalitarian society and majority rule.

Apartheid media propaganda was in full swing, and still is, evidenced by the abdication of its

rule in building a democratic state, building bridges of reconciliation. The drama replays itself with the resurgence of fear and false narratives in a new form, white genocide, farm killings, persecution of the minority by Afriforum and its racist allies, and those advocating for secession reminiscent of posture of yesteryear, which predates our democracy. The people's struggles prevailed over rejection of majority rule by a negligible section of society.

This drama unfolds despite evidence to the contrary. In their loathness for black majority rule, progressive legislation designed to reverse the ugly vestiges of inequality, poverty, sexism, patriarchy and to advance socio-economic transformation is vehemently opposed, used as a falsehood for the persecution of the minority.

White rightwing opposition to the employment equity legislation, the Expropriation Act which gives effect to land compensation and distribution, the National Health Insurance Act and other pieces of legislation that are catalytic vehicles for redress, continue to persist.

The silence of the media is palpable, complicit in worsening a

fragile situation which the media can neutralize through factual reporting, plurality and diversity of voices and a content that contributes to the project of nation building and most importantly, education and class consciousness.

The assertion and observation of the 55th National Conference of a media refusing to transform is confirmed by the IPSOS Perils of Perception Index. This vindicates the ANC of a stubborn media in cahoots with lie peddlers and actors on a stage of regress and sabotage, narrow nationalism and politics of polarization.

Regrettably, this happens in the year of 30 years of democracy which guarantees all rights of South Africa, guaranteeing media freedom.

Lo and behold, the expatriates, similar to those who left our beautiful shores in 1994 owing to fear mongering induced by the media are now returning home to the land in droves, away from the false promises of comfort by the United States (US) under the Trump administration. This poignant development is the deliberate work of a reckless and untransformed media which give rise to gullibility.

They're returning home to their land of birth and a Constitution that promotes equality and the potential of each person, their individual and collective rule in building a non-racial democratic country founded on equality and justice, a Constitution that guarantees human rights, based on the conviction that South belongs to all those who live in it, united in diversity, black and white as articulated by the Freedom Charter.

Indeed, there is no better place

than home.

Lest we forget. On the side of the liberation movement was a progressive section of the press, as well as alternative media, which exposed the atrocities of apartheid, leading to South Africa's isolation from the international community and declaration of apartheid a crime against humanity. It was this fearless press that exposed the lies and atrocities of apartheid.

For its role, the progressive press was banned, its leaders detained and silenced. As we celebrate the Human Rights Month, we recognise the role of the progressive media and seminal writers, Bessie Head, Alex La Guma, Gladys Thomas, Mongane, Wally Serote, Don Mattera, Percy Qqobozza, Frank Anthony, Miriam Tlali, Mathata Tsedu and many others who defied apartheid, stood on the side of the truth and exposed the apartheid lie.

The quality of these writers is missing, and rare. Under their erudite pen, no one could have been cajoled and lured the gull-

ible with false promises to the cloud cuckoo land. If left unbridled and untransformed, it poses a perilous threat to our democracy, as IPSOS had correctly observed, apt to well researched index of Perils of Perception.

In conclusion, we should interrogate the question whether the ANC had done enough to transform the media in furtherance of its mandate of accuracy, reflecting fair and factual reporting. The ANC government had passed the Broadcasting Act. 1999, together with the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), Code of Conduct for broadcasters which expressly require that reporting be presented in a manner that is fair, reasonable and without international or unfair bias. 31 years into democracy, we against, ask, do we have such a press?

To address the IPSOS findings, the ANC needs to invest in the transformation of the media, especially the national broadcaster to articulate society's views in a manner that is fair.



Ramaphosa: The Foreign Minister South Africa Never Had

■ By **GODFREY NKOSI**

WHEN President Cyril Ramaphosa rose to speak yesterday in Chicago at the funeral of Reverend Jesse Jackson, his remarks did more than honour an American civil rights icon. They reflected something deeper about the traditions of the African National Congress and the long history of international solidarity that sustained South Africa's struggle against apartheid. Ramaphosa spoke with clarity about the relationship between the African-American freedom struggle and the liberation movement in South Africa. In doing so, he reminded the audience that the defeat of apartheid was not achieved by South Africans alone but through the collective efforts of people across the world who believed in justice.

It was a speech rooted in historical memory and political gratitude, a language the ANC has historically deployed when acknowledging those who stood with the movement in its most difficult years.

Watching that address prompted a reflection that may appear unconventional but is worth considering: did South Africa miss the opportunity to have one of the most formidable foreign affairs ministers of the democratic era?

I write this unique reflection fully



aware that in our current political climate such observations carry the risk of being factionally pigeonholed. Too often in contemporary discourse, any attempt to analyse a political figure with nuance is immediately interpreted as an act of political allegiance or opposition. Yet serious political analysis demands that we move beyond these narrow frames and examine leadership in a more thoughtful and historically grounded manner.

This reflection should not be mistaken for a romanticisation of Cyril Ramaphosa's political leadership. It is, rather, an analytical observation about political temperament and historical possibility. The argument is not

that Ramaphosa has been an unblemished president, nor that South Africa's domestic challenges can be wished away through admiration of diplomatic finesse. It is simply to note that the qualities many critics interpret as hesitation in the domestic arena, patience, deliberation and an instinct for consensus, are precisely the attributes that often define effective diplomacy.

In other words, the question is not whether Ramaphosa has faced limitations as president. The question is whether his most natural political strengths have always been more visible in the realm of international engagement.

Those who have observed him in global forums will recognise this pattern.

When South Africa hosted the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, Ramaphosa presided over proceedings with the calm authority of someone comfortable within the rhythms of multilateral diplomacy. The ability to convene major powers with divergent interests requires more than ceremonial leadership. It requires patience, careful listening and the capacity to frame conversations in ways that encourage cooperation without unnecessary confrontation.

The same qualities were visible when South Africa hosted the G20 Summit in 2025. In that setting, Ramaphosa again demonstrated the composure and confidence that international diplomacy demands. Hosting a gathering of the world's major economies requires careful navigation of complex geopolitical interests and competing national priorities. Ramaphosa approached the task with the measured and deliberate style that has come to define his leadership in multilateral forums.

Few South African leaders since 1994 have had the opportunity to preside over such a dense calendar of multilateral diplomacy. In these spaces Ramaphosa's political instincts appear particularly well suited. Similar attributes have also been visible in African Union summits, where he often appears at ease when delivering reports to plenary sessions and facilitating discussions among leaders with differing perspectives.

These characteristics are not incidental. They are central to the craft of diplomacy.



Foreign policy is not conducted through dramatic gestures or impulsive declarations. It is a discipline that rewards restraint, strategic patience and the ability to build relationships over time. Negotiations between states often unfold slowly and require leaders who are comfortable with process rather than spectacle.

Ramaphosa's political formation prepared him for precisely this kind of environment.

From his early leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers to his central role in the constitutional negotiations that ended apartheid, his political style has consistently emphasised dialogue and negotiated outcomes. He is a political actor shaped by one of the most complex negotiation processes of the twentieth century, the transition from apartheid to democracy. That experience cultivated habits of patience, consultation and strategic compromise.

These habits remain visible in his leadership today.

Ironically, the same traits that serve diplomacy well can appear

frustrating in domestic politics. Modern political culture increasingly demands visible urgency from leaders. Presidents are expected to project decisive action and immediate solutions to complex problems. In such a climate, caution can easily be interpreted as indecision and deliberation as delay.

Yet international diplomacy operates according to different rhythms.

In that arena, leaders who move too quickly often create problems that are difficult to reverse. Diplomatic credibility is built through consistency, reliability and the ability to maintain dialogue even in moments of tension. The capacity to hold together competing interests without escalating conflict is one of the defining marks of successful foreign ministers.

Ramaphosa appears particularly suited to this dimension of leadership.

His approach to international relations frequently draws on the moral vocabulary that defined the ANC's global engagement during

the struggle years. The language of solidarity, multilateralism and international justice is not merely rhetorical flourish. It reflects a historical understanding of South Africa's place in the world.

The tribute to Jesse Jackson illustrated this clearly. By situating Jackson within the broader story of anti-apartheid solidarity, Ramaphosa reaffirmed a central principle of the ANC's diplomatic tradition. South Africa's freedom was achieved through international cooperation and the country therefore carries an enduring responsibility to uphold justice beyond its borders.

This historical consciousness remains a distinctive feature of South Africa's foreign policy identity.

None of this negates the legitimate concerns that many South Africans hold about the pace of reform and governance at home. The country confronts deep structural challenges including unemployment, inequality, weak state capacity and persistent corruption. These realities shape public expectations of leadership and understandably influence how Ramaphosa's presidency is judged.

But it is possible that in focusing almost exclusively on domestic frustrations, we have overlooked a different dimension of his political strengths.

Ramaphosa's leadership often appears most coherent in environments that reward negotiation, patience and strategic restraint. These are not the qualities typically celebrated in contemporary presidential politics, where speed and spectacle dominate public perception. Yet they remain the essential attributes of effective

diplomacy.

This observation invites a broader reflection about leadership in South Africa's democratic era. Political figures are often evaluated primarily through the offices they occupy rather than the temperaments they embody. Yet history sometimes reveals that the strengths of a particular leader may have been better suited to a different institutional role.

In Ramaphosa's case, one cannot avoid the thought that his political instincts align closely with the demands of foreign affairs.

In the quiet rooms of international diplomacy, where relationships are built through dialogue rather than confrontation, his style of leadership finds its most natural expression. His capacity for careful listening, his grounding in the traditions of negotiated politics and his comfort in multilateral settings all point to a political temperament that thrives in the diplomatic arena.

History does not offer the luxury of alternative timelines. Cyril Ramaphosa became president of South Africa, and his presidency will ultimately be judged according to the challenges and achievements of that office.

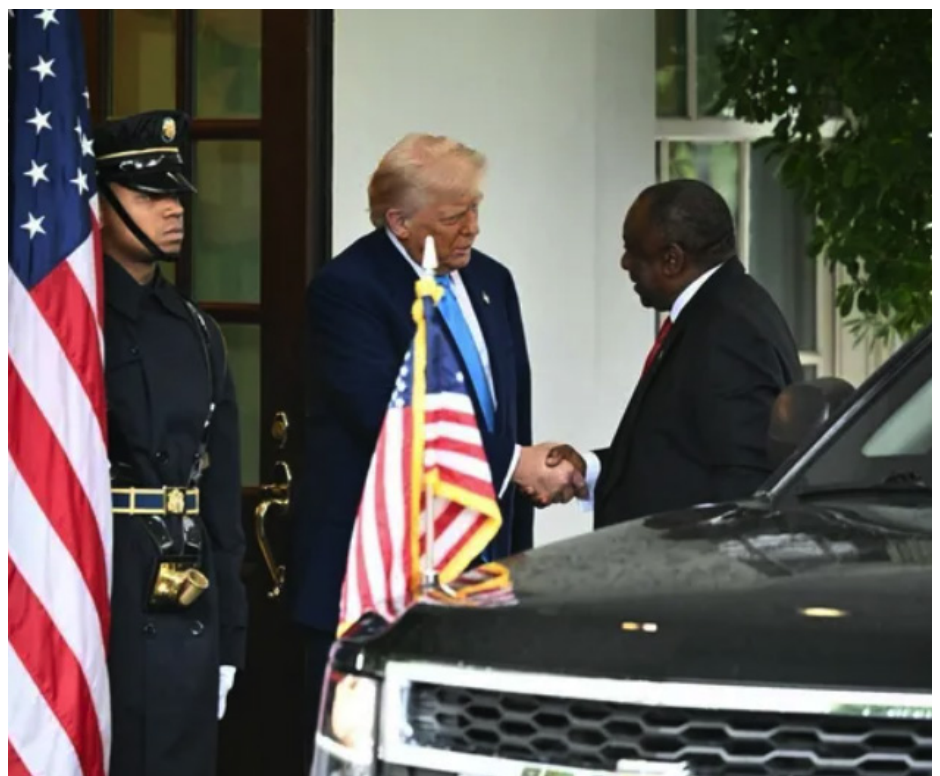
Yet the question remains worth asking.

In another configuration of South Africa's post-1994 leadership, might Cyril Ramaphosa have been remembered above all as one of the most effective foreign ministers of the democratic era?

It is a question not intended to romanticise his leadership but to understand it more accurately.

Sometimes the true nature of a political figure becomes most visible not in the office they hold, but in the instincts they reveal when engaging with the wider world.

And in that arena, Cyril Ramaphosa often appears unmistakably at home.



THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

14–20 March 2026

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

14 March 1979

Lira born



Lerato Moipone Molapo, known as the singer Lira, whose music is a fusion of soul, funk, jazz and African, was born in Daveyton, Gauteng. She is a multi SAMA winner, with a number of platinum sellers.

14 March 1982

ANC London offices bombed

On this day the ANC headquarters in London, England, was bombed. General Johann Coetzee, former head of the South African security police, and seven other policemen, claimed responsibility and applied for amnesty before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Coetzee's accomplices were Craig Williamson, John McPherson, Roger Raven, Wybrand du Toit, John Adam, James Taylor and Eugene de Kock.

14 March 1984

Koeberg nuclear power station became operational

Located on the West Coast, Koeberg provides Western Cape with electricity, contributing at some point 6.5% of South Africa's electricity supply (in 2018 down to 4%). According to Eskom (owner), it is the only nuclear power station in Africa, with the largest turbine generators in the Southern Hemisphere, and the most southerly-situated nuclear power station in the world. The power station is surrounded by a 3 000-ha nature reserve owned by Eskom, with over 150 different species of birds. The power plant's original lifespan was until 2024, but recent upgrade puts it in commission until 2045.

14 March 1991

Famished Road published

Ben Okri's first book in the Nigerian trilogy, *The Famished Road* is published. The book was followed by *Songs of Enchantment* (1993) and *Infinite Riches* (1998)

14 March 2018

Stephen Hawking passed on

English theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, best known for his work on the physics of black holes and for the book *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (1988), died at age 76.

14 March 2019

Cyclone Idai hits Mozambique

One of the most powerful storms to hit Mozambique, Cyclone Idai struck with winds up to 177 km per hour, causing 6 meters deep flooding and devastating the port city of Beira.

14 March 2021

Grammy Awards for Nigeria artists

Nigerian music stars Burna Boy wins Best Global Album for *Twice as Tall* and Wizkid for Best Music Video for *Brown Skin Girl*.

15 March 1954

Ghetto Act passed

The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act (Act 28 of 1946) was introduced on 15 March 1946 and passed in June 1946. This prevented Indians from occupying land outside certain exempted areas and forced them to live in certain restricted areas. In return for restrictions on land ownership, Indians were offered a limited form of parliamentary representation, mainly through White representatives. This act, labelled the 'Ghetto Act' caused an outcry in the Indian community. Following it, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, with other younger leaders like G.M. Naiker, formed an anti-segregationist lobby, which soon ousted the older leadership. Naiker became the chairman of the Natal Indian Congress and

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

Dadoo of the Transvaal Indian Congress.

15 March 1961 South Africa withdraws from the Commonwealth

The Union of South Africa of 1910 was still a British colony, but in October 1960 a referendum amongst whites was held on whether the country should become a republic, distancing itself from the British monarchy. 52% voted yes, and then Prime Minister Verwoerd informed the British, but still wanted to remain a member of the Commonwealth (an association for British colonies). African member states, as well as India and Canada objected because of the apartheid policy. Verwoerd on this day announced that South Africa will therefore leave the Commonwealth. South Africa was invited to rejoin the Commonwealth with effect from January 1994.

15 March 2010 Malema convicted for hate speech

EFF leader Julius Malema was convicted of hate speech for mocking the woman who accused President Jacob Zuma of raping her. The case casts light on issues of misogyny and sexual abuse.

15 March 2014 First issue of Comic Kwezi published



The first issue of the South African

comic, Kwezi, created by Loyiso Mkize was published on this day. The comic features a teenage boy who acquires superpowers.

15 March 2015 Collins Chabane dies in car accident



ANC NEC Member Collins Chabane (15 April 1960–15 March 2015) passed away tragically in a motor vehicle accident on this day. At the time of his passing Chabane was a member of the National Executive Committee since 2007, a Member of Parliament and Minister in the Presidency for Monitoring and Evaluation. Cde Collins was born in Xikundu, village, Limpopo, matriculated from Shingwedzi High School and registered for a BSc degree at Turfloop University. His commitment to freedom of his people took precedent and he joined ANC underground activities at the age of seventeen (17), went into exile in May 1980 where he joined Umkhonto we Sizwe, received military training in Angola and on his return worked in the underground, until his arrest and sentence to Robben Island from 1984 to 1990. In prison, he resumed formal studies, obtaining a Diploma in Electrical Engineering from Technikon South Africa, started studying aviation,

and later completed a Diploma in Management from Arusha in Tanzania. After his release from prison, he served as Provincial Secretary of the ANC in the Northern Province from 1990 to 1998 and was instrumental in the re-establishment of ANC structures in Limpopo Province. After the dawn of democracy, he was a Member of Parliament, served as MEC in the Limpopo Provincial Government in 1998. As an NEC member he served in the Constitutional committee.

16 March 1892 Dr JS Maroka born



Dr James Sebe Moroka, medical doctor, landowner and politician who was elected President-General of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1949 to 1952, was born in Thaba Nchu, Orange Free State. He was a great grandson of Chief Moroka I of the Barolong Boo Moroka at Thaba Nchu.

16 March 1984 SA and Mozambique sign Nkomati Accord

Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord with apartheid South Africa – a non-aggression pact where the South African government undertook no longer to support the RENAMO rebel group and the

Mozambique government undertook to no longer harbour the liberation movements (ANC and PAC). President Samora Machel signed this accord under great pressure, with RENAMO engaged in a civil war and the SADF incursions into Mozambique. The Nkomati accord did not last long, with further invasions by SADF.

16 March 1994 New Flag and National Anthem Unveiled



The Transitional Executive Council unveiled South Africa's new "interim" national flag and *Die Stem* and *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* as joint national anthems, and the flag was first flown on 27 April 1994, when all South Africans went to the polls to elect a government, for the first time in the country's history. The flag and anthem were adopted as national symbols.

17 March 1820 British Settlers arrive in South Africa

After the Napoleonic wars, Britain experienced a serious unemployment problem; to solve this problem, it started sending settlers to its colonies. The first British Settlers arrived in South Africa on 17 March 1820, in Table Bay on board the *Nautilus* and the *Chapman*, till then a Dutch colony, and started the process of the British

takeover of South Africa, especially the Cape colony and Natal. This first group was sent to Algoa Bay, later Port Elizabeth, now Gqeberha. They were sent to settle in the Eastern Cape, as a buffer against the amaXhosa and to boost the English-speaking population. The settlers were given farms and equipment to support them, near Bathurst. Others continued on to Natal (now KwaZulu Natal). This period saw one of the largest stages of British settlement in Africa, and approximately 4,000 Settlers arrived in the Cape, in around 60 different parties, between April and June 1820.

17 March 2000 First National Lottery begins

The first national lottery started in South Africa, with its slogan *Thatha maChance, Thatha maMillions*. A percentage of proceeds of the Lottery goes towards arts, sports, culture and community development, and it is regulated by the National Lottery Commission.

18 March 1963 Guinea-Bissau gains Independence



Guinea-Bissau, the home of Amílcar Cabral, launched its war of independence against Portugal (joined by Cabo Verde). Guinea-Bissau is in West Africa, and borders Senegal and Guinea,

with a population of just under 2 million people. Historically, the territory was part of the Kaaba/Ngabou Empire (1537–1867), part of the Mali Empire, until being colonized by the Portuguese from the 16th century. Cabral and others formed the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC), which conducted an armed liberation struggle against colonisation.

18 March 1979 Government claims responsibility for Mdluli's death in detention



The South African government admitted responsibility for the death of the African National Congress (ANC) member, Joseph Mdluli (50), on 19 March 1976 and agreed to pay damages to his family. A claim for loss of support by Mdluli's widow against the Minister of Justice and police was settled out of court. She received the amount of R28 616. Joseph Mdluli died of an injury to his neck while being detained in Durban security headquarters. His death occurred just a day after his arrest in connection with the 1976 Gwala treason trial. Four security policemen were charged with culpable homicide, namely Mr Frederick Van Zyl, Col. A.R.C. Taylor, Mr Mandlakayise Patrick Makhanya and Mr Zabulon Ngobese. During their trial, they claimed that Mdluli

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

had tried to escape and had fallen over a chair. A pathologist presented evidence disputing the police version. All four accused were acquitted on 25 October 1976, the fifth day of the trial. The presiding judge said there was insufficient evidence to connect them directly to the death. He called for further investigation.

19 March 1998

First black cricketer to represent SA in a test match



Makhaya Ntini becomes the first black cricketer to represent South Africa in a test match, played at Newlands, Cape Town. He became a mainstay in the national Test team through his relentless fitness and aggression. His cricket career include taking nearly 400 Test wickets, including a record 13 for 132 against the West Indies. He also became the first South African to take 10 wickets at Lord's in 2003. Ntini's international Test career culminated with his 100th Test in 2009 before his retirement.

19 March 1999

Gadaffi sets date to hand over Lockerby suspects

Libya, led by Brother Leader Gadaffi sets a date to hand over the two Lockerbie suspects, in a letter to the UN Secretary General by 6 April 1999. The date is con-

firmed in a letter to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. This followed engagements on the issue by President Nelson Mandela.

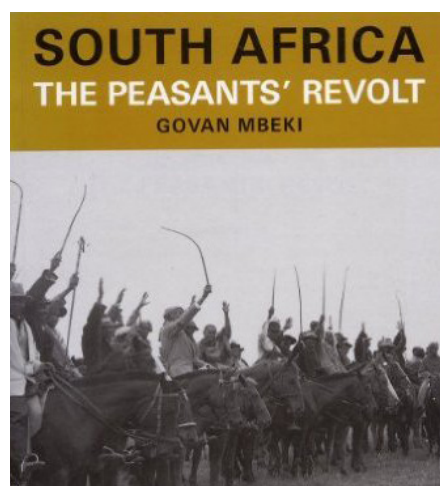
20 March 1953

First Mountain Zebra born in Cradock Mountain Zebra Park

The Mountain Zebra is an endangered species native to South Western Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. It is boldly striped in black and white or brown and white with a white underbelly and no two individuals look alike. Due to overhunting, the Mountain Zebra population came close to extinction, with only 100 remaining in the 1930s. The Mountain Zebra Park near Cradock, Eastern Cape was established, and on 20 March 1953 the first foal was born. This success has continued until today with the Mountain Zebra population now standing at 9 000 mature ones, though it is still regarded as an endangered animal.

20 March 1960

The Pondoland Revolts starts



The Pondo people fiercely resisted the rise of the colonisers and their attempts to reshape and re-engineer Pondoland and to co-opt their Chiefs. Violence erupted around issues such as Chiefs

who collaborated with the Apartheid state, the land reclamation programme, the Bantu Authorities system and spontaneous revolts against further imposition into the Pondo people's lives. The specific protests which started in the district of Bizana arose from the rejection of the tribal authorities and self-government of Transkei, initiated by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. Between August and October 1961, 30 Pondo people were sentenced to death for their participation in the revolt. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) heard details of these events and decided that the remains of the twenty-three men that had been executed in Pretoria and buried in a Mamelodi cemetery, were to be exhumed and returned to Pondoland for reburial. Govan Mbeki wrote a book, *The Peasants Revolt* (1964), about these events.

20 March 1993

Passing of renowned artist Gerald Sekoto



On this day, eminent artist and musician Gerard Sekoto (80) died in Paris. He was the pioneer of urban black art and social realism, and his paintings today rank amongst the top ten most expensive works of art in the country. Sekoto was also an accomplished pianist and composer of over 29 songs.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DAYS

14–20 March 2026

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



14 March

International Day of Mathematics

Mathematics plays an important role in such areas as artificial intelligence, climate change, energy, economics, business, social and sustainable development, and to improving the quality of life in both the developed and the developing worlds. The day is also celebrated as World Pi Day, which refers to Pi, a symbol used in mathematics to represent a constant. It is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter which is approximately 3.14. The theme for International Day of Mathematics 2026 is **Mathematics and Hope**. Connecting hope and mathematics creates opportunities for deeper insight and knowledge. Mathematics gives us hope to understand reality and truth clearly, share common defi-

nitions, learn cooperation, use data responsibly, find win-win strategies, and more.

14 March

Ask a Question Day

On the day of the birthday of theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein, asking questions and being inquisitive (not intrusive) is encouraged, in order to learn, gain knowledge and understand our world and each other better. As Einstein said: *“the important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”*

14 March

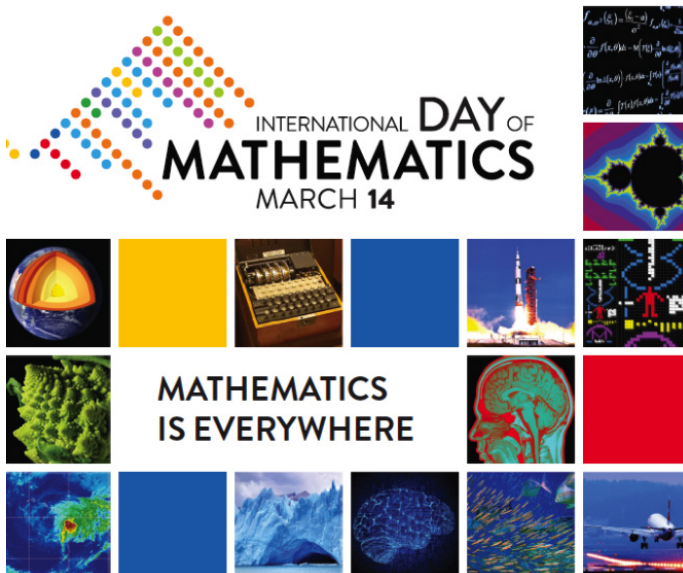
International Day for Action for Rivers

Rivers provide water for irrigation, domestic supply, power generation and industry as well as a range of other ecosystem services and biodiversity. Wikipedia lists over 200 rivers in South Africa, although some of them are really spruite, which is what *“small, often dry tributary streams”* are called. A report by government in 2019 indicated that only 15% of our rivers are ecologically healthy.

15 March

International Day to Combat Islamophobia

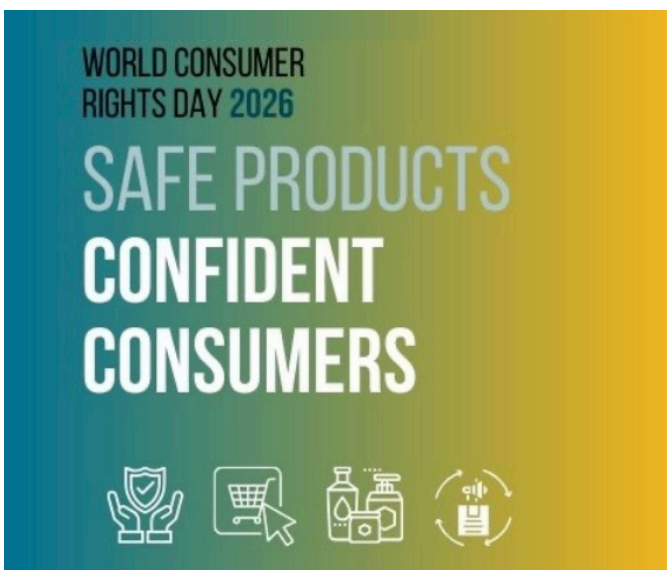
Islamophobia is a fear, prejudice and hatred of Muslims that leads to provocation, hostility and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment,



abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims, both in the online and offline world. Motivated by institutional, ideological, political and religious hostility that transcends into structural and cultural racism, it targets the symbols and markers of being a Muslim. A recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief found that suspicion, discrimination and outright hatred towards Muslims has risen to “*epidemic proportions*.”

15 March

World Consumer Rights Day



The day raises awareness about the rights of consumers, in the face of often powerful companies and brands, which need to be held accountable. This often requires government regulations, for example through the SA Bureau of Standards and/or specific legislation around labeling of products and more generally, the Consumer Protection Act of 2008, in order to “*promote a fair, accessible and sustainable marketplace for consumer products and services*.” The theme for 2026 is **Safe Products, Confident Consumers**. This year’s theme highlights the shared responsibility of businesses, regulators, and consumers in ensuring that the products we use every day are safe and reliable.

16-22 March

South African Library Week

The theme for South African Library Week (SALW) 2026 is **Reclaiming Knowledge, Empowering Futures**. The SALW theme reflects a critical moment for libraries and information services in the region. In an era marked by rapid technological change, misinformation, and widening knowledge

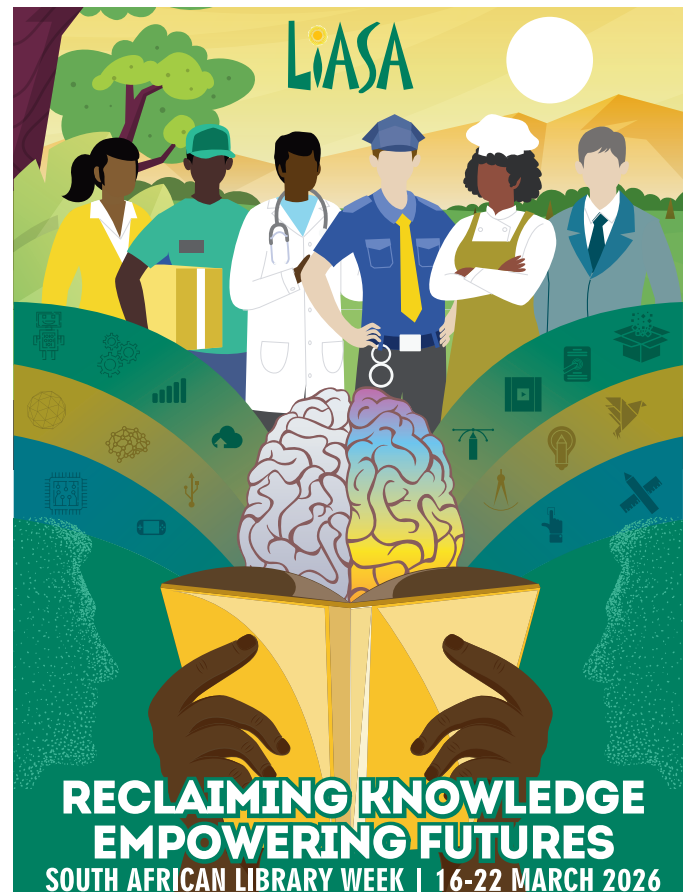
gaps, libraries stand as guardians of authentic information and catalysts for inclusive development. This theme underscores two interconnected imperatives:

Reclaiming Knowledge

Knowledge is a shared heritage that shapes identity, culture, and progress. However, barriers such as digital divides, loss of indigenous knowledge, and inequitable access threaten this heritage. By reclaiming knowledge, libraries commit to preserving cultural memory, promoting open access, and ensuring that communities have reliable, diverse, and contextually relevant information. This involves digitization of local content, fostering multilingual resources, and advocating for intellectual freedom.

Empowering Futures

Access to knowledge is not an end in itself, it is a means to empowerment. Libraries empower individuals and communities by equipping them with skills for lifelong learning, digital literacy, and critical thinking. In a knowledge-driven economy, libraries are strategic partners in education, innovation, and social transformation. Through inclusive programs, technology integration, and partnerships, libraries enable citizens to navigate complexity, seize opportunities, and shape sustainable futures.



Why This Theme Matters Now

Southern Africa faces challenges such as socio-economic inequality, climate change, and the need for digital transformation. Libraries are uniquely positioned to bridge these gaps by reclaiming marginalized voices and democratizing access to information. SALW 2026 calls on stakeholders, libraries, governments, educators, and communities to reaffirm the role of libraries as engines of empowerment and resilience..

18 March

Global Recycle Day

Planet Earth gives up billions of tons of natural resources each year, and her health continues to decline. As humans mainly responsible for this decline, we must reduce waste, reuse items and restore the health of the planet. One vital way of doing this is through the practice of recycling. **Global Recycling Day** is part of various awareness days aimed at raising awareness of our responsibilities as global citizens towards our environment. These focus on the themes Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Recycling day aims to encourage recycling, so that we reduce humanities footprint on nature, in the context of the struggle for a sustainable planet and against climate change. The Green Times (www.greentimes.co.za) notes that *“the last decade has been the hottest on record, and we are now facing a climate emergency of unparalleled proportions. If we don’t make significant and rapid changes, we will see continued rising global temperatures, the melting of icecaps, continents on fire and rapid deforestation.”* We all have to do our part and also to become responsible consumers.

19 March

International Read to Me Day

‘Every day is International Read to Me Day!’ is an audacious campaign working to build a community where volunteers from around the globe read every ten minutes, 24 hours a day, supporting families by sharing the love of reading! The day aims to (a) empower children to ask for more support, not just from their family but also from their community. Marking a day when kids can ask to be read to is a key part of this strategy. (b) Promote, encourage and inspire reading activities within communities. (c) Showcase organisations which are passionate about improving the literacy standards of the children around them. (d) Address the disparity between resources and where they are distributed, by supporting a book



drive and sending the collected books to locations around the world to those who are looking for books! (<https://www.readtomeday.com>)

20 March

International Day of Happiness

Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognise the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world. In 2015, the UN launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet – three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness.

20 March

World Oral Health Day

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO): Oral health refers to the state of your mouth covering teeth, lips, tongue, palate, etc. Diseases and condition include dental problems with your teeth, mouth cancer, cleft lip, etc. The Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 estimated that oral diseases affect close to 3.5 billion people worldwide. The 2026 theme for World Oral Health Day, **A Happy Mouth is a Happy Life**, emphasises that good oral health is fundamental to overall health, confidence, and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables individuals to eat comfortably, speak clearly, smile with confidence, and engage socially without discomfort or embarrassment.

The PEOPLE'S MARCH

21 MARCH 2026

In Defence of Our Sovereignty and Democratic Gains

START Mary Fitzgerald Square
Mandela Bridge
Peoples Park,
Constitutional Hill **END**

TIME 08H00

**#SAWillNotBeBullied
#DefendOurSovereignty
#MarchForSouthAfrica**



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