

PublicSector

MANAGER

Minister Simelane

On advancing human
rights, restoring
dignity and expanding
access to safe homes

Human Rights Month

Turning the promise
of human dignity
into reality

DPME assessments

show real progress –
with a renewed push to
accelerate delivery to
every community



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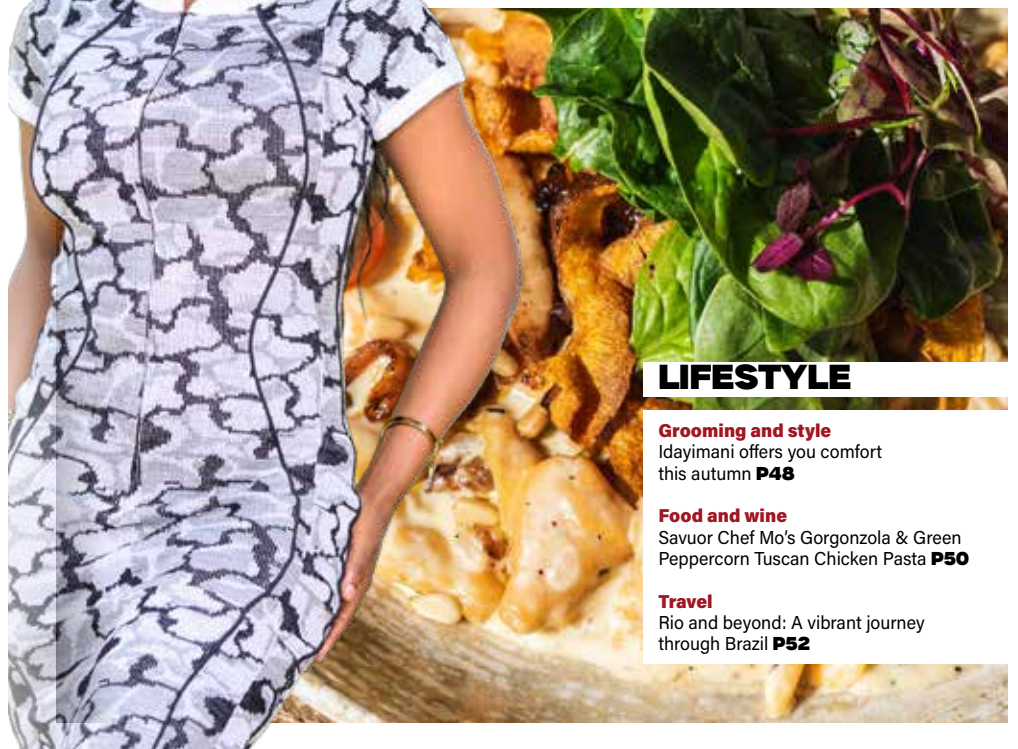
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**government
communications**

Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE MAGAZINE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS | **Publishers:** Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)
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30 Years of the Constitution:

One Constitution, One Nation – Reflect. Renew. Recommit



Justice and Constitutional Development Minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi.

As we launch our annual Human Rights Month, we do so in the year that we celebrate two very significant events whose occurrence, amongst others, brought us the human rights we enjoy today – the 70th anniversary of the 1956 women's march to the Union Buildings and the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

One was courageous challenge to the oppressive apartheid regime to concede to the demands by women for

their basic human rights and the other was to mark the victory of many years of struggle against colonisation and oppression. Because of the adoption of the Constitution 30 years ago, we now have a foundation upon which we can strive towards the common vision for unity in diversity, while strengthening the culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law in South Africa.

The Constitution making process was one of the most inclusive processes in modern times. The inclusivity of the process is best described by Justice Albi Sachs when he said the following about the consti-

tution: "We wanted a constitution that was smiling to the people – but it must not be a sneer smile, or an insincere mask of a smile. The smile must come from inside, that people may believe in it, because it is authentic. And the smile contains tears, and sadness, and a knowledge of imperfection".

The Constitution is a testament that wise men and women of all races, religions and diverse cultural freely came together to weave a new nation in a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it; black and white.

While the years that followed the adoption

have been neither seamless nor without contradiction, the constitutional project that was set in motion then has, over 30 years, reshaped the political, legal and social construction of this country in ways that deserve both serious reflection and, where warranted, genuine acknowledgment.

Background

To appreciate the magnitude of what the Constitution represented, one must first reckon with what preceded it. For over three centuries, colonialism and then apartheid did not merely discriminate, it institutionalised and systematised human degradation, and in particular of the black South African majority. Both colonial and apartheid regimes implanted racial hierarchy into the fabric of law itself, so that the very institutions that ought to have protected citizens became instruments of oppression. Justice was not blind; it was deliberately sighted, and it saw race.

What the negotiated transition of the early 1990s accomplished, therefore, was not merely a political handover but a civilisational reorientation. The Interim Constitution of 1993 described the moment as a "historic



bridge" as it symbolised a passage from strife and injustice to peaceful coexistence premised on open democratic governance and the pursuit of universal human rights. That bridge led, in 1996, to the final Constitution,

a document that did not simply list rights but rooted them as the supreme law of the land, binding the executive, the legislature and the judiciary alike.

Critically, the Constitution was never designed to be a static

settlement. From its inception, it was conceived as a living framework, one capable of responding to an ever-changing legal, social, and political context. As reflected by the Reconstruction and Development Programme's

insistence on integrated, people-driven, sustainable development, the Constitution built into its very structure the expectation that the work of transformation would be ongoing, that rights would be progressively realised, and that the institutions of justice would continue to evolve in response to the demands placed upon them.

Equal rights for all

The past 30 years, examined honestly, reveal that the Constitution has done much of what it promised, even as implementation has too often fallen short of aspiration. Perhaps the most consequential achievement has been the structural integration of the justice system itself.

What this record reveals, taken together, is that the constitutional framework was not static. It was built to grow from its very foundation and ultimately respond to the shifting demands of justice, the evolution of rights, and to the changing context of a society still working through the inherited inequalities that the Constitution was designed to dismantle. That is a significant claim, and like all significant claims, it must be tested against the evidence.

The evidence for what the Constitution has delivered to the justice system, is on its own

terms, substantial. Where once there were eleven disparate departments, there is now a unified framework. The Superior Courts Act 10, 2013 (Act 10 of 2013) rationalised the court hierarchy, bringing coherence to a system that had been deliberately fractured under apartheid. The Constitution Seventeenth Amendment Act of 2012 affirmed the Constitutional Court's apex

status in all matters, affirming its role as the final arbiter of the Republic's supreme law. These reforms are, in themselves, expressions of the principle that no legislative or executive action, regardless of its political weight, sits beyond the reach of judicial scrutiny. That is the foundation on which the rule of law, in any meaningful sense, depends.

Equally significant has been the expansion of access to

justice, and the direction of that expansion is as important as its scope. The Traditional Courts Act, 2022 (Act 9 of 2022) represents a considered effort to align customary dispute resolution with constitutional values, sweeping away the last remnants of the Black Administration Act, 1927 (Act 38 of 1927), a statute whose continued existence within a democratic

dispensation had long been an anomaly that the constitutional framework could not indefinitely accommodate.

The Land Court Act, 2023 (Act 6 of 2023) likewise created a dedicated forum for the resolution of land disputes, a matter of no small consequence in a country whose land history remains one of its most contested and emotionally charged inheritances. These develop-

ments are significant because access to justice is a substantive constitutional obligation, one that extends beyond the mere existence of courts to encompass whether those courts are practically accessible, procedurally comprehensible, and institutionally equipped to serve those who have historically been furthest from them.

The Bill of Rights

If the justice system provides one category of proof, the advancement of human rights provides another, and it is here that the Constitution's responsiveness is perhaps most vividly demonstrated.

At the nub of the constitutional dispensation lies the Bill of Rights. Chapter 2 does something ambitious that, thirty years on, still deserves appreciation, specifically in that it refuses to treat civil and political rights as somehow more real or more pressing than socio-economic rights.

The right to equality, to human dignity, to privacy, and to freedom of expression are articulated alongside the rights to housing, healthcare, food, water, and education. These rights are far beyond aspirational ornaments; they are justiciable entitlements, enforceable in courts of law

What makes their entrench-





“The right to equality, to human dignity, to privacy, and to freedom of expression are articulated alongside the rights to housing, healthcare, food, water, and education. These rights are far beyond aspirational ornaments; they are justiciable entitlements, enforceable in courts of law”.

ment particularly significant is that it does not freeze them in time.

The Constitution's interpretive framework obliges courts to develop the content of rights in a manner that responds to present-day circumstances and evolving understandings of human dignity.

Legislation giving effect to this vision has progressively extended the Constitution's reach into the everyday encounters citizens have with government, addressing unfair discrimination, protecting access to information, and insisting on transparency,

lawfulness, and reasonableness as conditions of legitimate administrative action.

Areas to improve

What the record of these thirty years also reveals, however, is that the communities that bore the heaviest cost of apartheid's deliberate impoverishment have not experienced the pace of transformation that the Constitution's provisions reasonably implied.

Those who were systematically denied access to property, education, and the basic conditions of a dignified life have

found that, while the legal order has been fundamentally recast, their material circumstances have not shifted with commensurate decisiveness.

Corruption, persistent resource constraints, and uneven implementation have each, in different measure, drawn the pace of delivery away from what the legal framework envisioned.

The consequence is a constitutional democracy in which the law has advanced with considerably greater speed and clarity than the material reality it was expressly designed to transform, not because the framework is

wanting, but because the administrative and financial conditions necessary to give it full effect have not been consistently sustained.

This is the central tension that three decades of constitutional democracy has not yet resolved. The framework has proven its durability, in the courts, the legislature, and in the institutions created to give it effect.

What has not kept pace is the translation of that framework into the daily lives of those it was most urgently intended to serve. That remains the most consequential measure by which this constitutional project will continue to be assessed.. ♦

****This message is part of a speech delivered by Minister Kubayi at the launch of the 30-Year Anniversary of the Constitution and Human Rights Month. Scan the QR code for the full speech***



Human Rights Month: Deepening democracy through ethical governance

As we commemorate Human Rights Month, we are reminded that our democracy was built through sacrifice and sustained through our daily commitment to uphold the dignity of every person. This year's theme, "Bill of Rights at 30: Making Human Dignity Real", calls on us to move beyond remembrance towards deliberate action that makes rights tangible in the lived realities of our people.

The roots of Human Rights Month lie in the tragedy of the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, when 69 peaceful protestors were killed for standing up against the injustice of the apartheid regime. Twenty-five years later, on the same date in 1985, the Langa Massacre again exposed the violence of a system determined to suppress legitimate protest and silence demands for dignity, justice and freedom. These events are enduring reminders of the cost of

oppression and the courage required to confront it.

The courage of leaders like Former President Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn and the many activists who carried the Struggle forward helped shape the democratic South Africa we now serve – a nation grounded in justice, equality and human dignity.

This year, we also commemorate the 30th anniversary of our Constitution, a document celebrated as one of the most progressive in the world. Making the Bill of Rights real requires a state that is capable, ethical and developmental, and a Public Service that treats integrity as non-negotiable — exactly the direction reinforced in the 2026 State of the Nation Address (SoNA)

As we look ahead to the upcoming Seventh Local Government Elections, we are reminded of both



Nomonde Mnukwa, GCIS Acting Director-General.

the resilience of our democracy and the progress we continue to make, despite the challenges we face.

Even as we reflect on progress, we must confront the persistent threats that undermine the rights guaranteed by our Constitution. Among the most damaging of these is corruption. It is not a technical lapse or administrative inconvenience; corruption directly violates human rights. When public funds are diverted or procurement processes are manipulated, the consequences manifest in the daily lived experiences of communities: a clinic without medication, a school without basic resources, a community without clean water or safe infrastructure.

Each of these failures represents a breach of the rights to health, education, safety and dignity, and they weaken public trust in the institutions meant to protect and serve them.

The 2026 SoNA reminds us that building a developmental state demands consequences for corruption and protection for those who speak out, including the introduction of the Whistle-Blower Protection Bill and the strengthening of procurement integrity through new procurement regulations.

Government's message is clear: corruption will not be tolerated. The fight against the scourge continues to intensify across the State. Five years into its implementation, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy has strengthened coordination and accountability, improving collaboration among law enforcement agencies and advancing whistleblower protections through national dialogues and expert advisories. The strategy has also guided key legislative reforms, including improvements to procurement systems and measures to combat anti-money laundering. In addition, digital case tracking systems piloted by the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), State Information Technology Agency and The Presidency are enhancing referral monitoring and ensuring accountability.

This commitment extends to the reinforcement of crime-fighting institutions such as the Hawks, the National Prosecuting Authority and the SIU. Recently, the SIU uncovered corruption within the Department of Home Affairs involving the fraudulent issuing of official documents to undocumented foreign nationals.

Over the years, government has established commissions of inquiry to investigate allegations of corruption. The Zondo Com-

mission exposed the scale and depth of state capture across government, state-owned enterprises and private networks. Its findings have paved the way for criminal prosecutions, with several cases already concluded with guilty verdicts and many more still under investigation.

The ongoing Madlanga Commission, tasked with probing criminality and corruption within the justice system, further illustrates government's commitment to ensuring that no institution is beyond scrutiny.

In his 2026 SoNA, President Cyril Ramaphosa reaffirmed our shared responsibility to build an ethical, capable and developmental State. This work is supported by the ongoing professionalisation of the Public Service, which seeks to ensure that those entrusted with public responsibilities are not only skilled but guided by integrity and a commitment to the public good.

As public servants and leaders, each of us has an essential role in making human dignity

real. Upholding ethical standards, following established processes without compromise, and reporting wrongdoing whenever we encounter it are not

optional duties, they are foundational to protecting the rights that generations before us fought to restore.

As we observe Human Rights Month, and

as we honour the giants of our liberation while reflecting on three decades of our Constitution, let us renew our dedication to integrity and accountability. Let us work to build a government that is transparent, responsive and worthy of the trust of the people of South Africa.

Anyone who witnesses or suspects fraud and corruption is encouraged to report it anonymously through the National Anti-Corruption Hotline at 0800 701 701, or via email at integrity@publicservicecorruption-hotline.org.za.

Let our legacy be measured not by what we say about dignity, but by what our people feel because we chose integrity. ♦



Minister Thembi Simelane on human rights, dignity and the right to a home

As South Africa marks Human Rights Month and approaches three decades since the adoption of its Constitution, the link between human rights and human settlements has never been more pronounced.

Few portfolios illustrate the lived reality of constitutional rights as directly as housing – where dignity, equality and access to opportunity intersect in brick, mortar and place.

Human Settlements Minister Thembi Simelane believes this milestone demands reflection, celebration and renewed commitment. Speaking to *Public Sector Manager* magazine, she frames housing not merely as infrastructure delivery, but as a constitu-

tional promise realised over time.

"Human rights and 30 years of the Constitution is an important celebration that needs to be held," Simelane says. "I am going to look at it from a human settlements and property ownership perspective."

Gone are the days when women, specialised categories of society, could not own property. It took a lot of policy and direction just to make sure we are equal citizens in the eyes of the law."

Right to own property

For Simelane, the right to own property is inseparable from the

broader project of equality. The Constitution, she argues, did more than remove legal barriers – it fundamentally altered who could claim space, security and belonging.

"...it is to allow you to be able to exercise your right – and your right to be guaranteed by the





Housing developments in Ekurhuleni.

Constitution – that you deserve dignity,” she explains. “Dignity is part of what could be realised by a government in providing you with a house.”

Yet the Minister is careful to stress that dignity does not end with a roof over one’s head. The democratic vision of human settlements is far more expansive.

“Not only providing you with a house, but a human settlement, where there are amenities like schools, amenities that bring conveniences like complexes, recreation centres like

skills training and development centres that our communities so deserve,” she says.

Progress made

This integrated vision is reflected in how the department defines a human settlement. “When we categorise a human settlement, we say it must be provided with electricity – of which our country is doing well. There are challenges, but in our roll out we are at 97% provision,” Simelane notes. “With water and reticulation, we are at 72% in the con-

nectivity of bulk, including roads in human settlements and other social amenities.”

While acknowledging persistent backlogs and service delivery pressures, she believes the constitutional trajectory is clear. “We have ticked what is key,” she says, “but when we talk to issues of urbanisation – which is what we are now dealing with – rapid growth, rapid migration forces us to follow what we call the priorities of the Seventh Administration.”

Those priorities include

strengthening smaller towns and secondary cities. “Ensuring that we now even go into urbanisation of the small areas so that, conveniently, people are able to stay where they are,” Simelane explains.

“To all South Africans, we have made a mark in growth – at a constitutional to a developmental point of view. That deserves to be celebrated.”

The gains

Central to this celebration is the country’s constitutional

democracy and its oversight institutions. Simelane sees bodies such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) not as adversaries of the State but as enablers of better governance.

“We have got a democracy in the form of the SAHRC, and that guarantees every South African that if you feel that your right is being violated in one way or the other, or the promises of the Constitution are not adhered to, you could be able to lay a right that you have in the Constitution for it to be looked into,” she says.

“We do not take that from a negative point of view. The SAHRC is able to assess your systems, how you can grow and how you can develop in achieving that every right is guaranteed for every South African. We must celebrate the Constitution as a victory.”

Embracing technology

Looking ahead, the Minister situates the department's current work firmly within this constitutional mandate. “In 2025, we presented our Budget Vote Speech under the theme: Leveraging technologies for resilient, sustainable human settlements,” she says. “We did this with full understanding that technolo-

gies can assist us in achieving our targets as contained in the 2024 – 2029 Medium Term Development Plan.”

She points to Section 26 of the Constitution as a guiding principle. “The Constitution enjoins us to take reasonable legislative and other measures within available resources to ensure everyone has access to adequate housing,” Simelane

explains. “With this directive, not only to provide houses, but to deliver sustainable human settlements that are affordable, resilient and dignified.”

A key intervention in this regard is the Innovative Building Technologies (IBTs) Summit, hosted by the department in early February. “This Summit is a national platform dedicated to advancing and showcasing

innovative, sustainable and scalable construction solutions,” she says.

“It supports the delivery of dignified housing, the eradication of informal settlements and mud houses, and strengthens our capacity to respond to housing emergencies stemming from disasters.”

“These challenges are further compounded by climate



University of Johannesburg's engineering students showcase new built environment technology at the IBT Summit.

change, which has increased the frequency and severity of floods and storms."

Rapid urbanisation adds another layer of complexity. "Our country continues to experience rapid urbanisation and population growth," she notes. "These dynamics require new and innovative approaches to housing delivery that are faster, more cost-effective, environmentally sustainable, climate resilient and capable of being deployed at scale."

Innovation

For Simelane, innovation is not a luxury – it is a constitutional necessity. "A key focus of the summit is the role of IBTs in accelerating housing delivery while maintaining quality, safety and compliance with regulatory standards," she says. "These technologies include modular and fabricated construction systems, alternative and locally produced building materials, climate-resilient designs, green and energy-efficient solutions, and smart construction methods that reduce time and cost."

She is particularly concerned about the continued existence of mud houses. "These structures are often highly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions, including heavy rains and flooding, posing serious risks to the safety and well-being of occupants," Simelane says.

"Through IBTs, we want durable,

affordable alternatives that can be rolled out rapidly, while supporting local manufacturing, skills development and job creation."

Spatial justice

The constitutional promise of dignity, she insists, must also translate into spatial justice. "With IBTs, we seek to achieve spatially transformed and socially integrated communities," she says.

"By promoting innovative construction methods that support higher density development and well-located housing, we will reverse apartheid spatial patterns and build communities truly reflective of a democratic South Africa."

As South Africa reflects on 30 years of constitutional democracy, Simelane's message is both reflective and forward-looking. "Through hosting the IBTs Summit, the department affirms its commitment to ensuring that all South Africans have safe, decent and affordable housing," she says. "Innovation must play a critical role in accelerating delivery and improving the quality of household life."

Ultimately, she returns to the Constitution itself. "Housing is not just about structures," Simelane concludes. "It is about dignity, equality and human rights made real. That is what 30 years of our Constitution calls on us to protect – and to deepen – for generations to come." ♦



Housing developments in Ekurhuleni.

Photo: Gauteng Department of Human Settlements

How budget allocations affect human rights

As South Africa celebrates 30 years since the adoption of the Constitution, the Chairperson of the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), Dr Nombeko Mbava, reflects on the strides that the country has made in transforming itself into a more equitable nation.

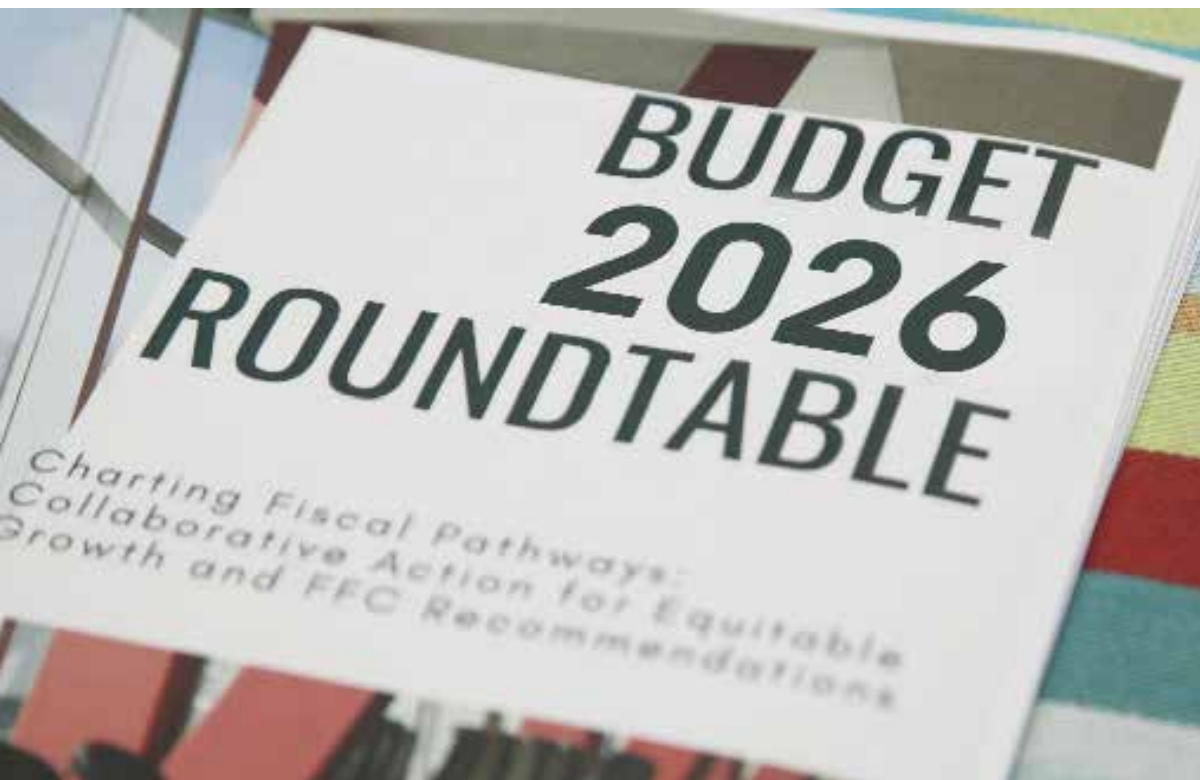
The FFC is a unique constitutional institution established to guard against political excesses and ensure checks and balances on the fiscal purse.

It serves as a guardian of the country's democracy and safeguards the socio-economic rights enshrined in the Constitution by ensuring that adequate resources flow to provinces and municipalities responsible for delivering education, healthcare, housing and other essential services.

Through its research and independent recommendations, the commission

Dr Nombeko Mbava.





ensures that public money is distributed based on objective analysis of need, capacity and constitutional obligations and not political favouritism or short-term electoral considerations.

Speaking to *Public Sector Manager* magazine (PSM) ahead of Human Rights Month commemorations, Mbava admitted that South Africa is a better place than it was 30 years ago.

Leaving no one behind

"The constitutional democracy has enabled basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity and housing, among others, to significantly be expanded to previously underserved communities, fundamentally changing the quality of life for millions of South Africans," she said.

The significant investment in

transport infrastructure, including expanding and upgrading roads, railways, airports and ports has also enhanced connectivity and supported economic growth across the country. These improvements, she said, have facilitated trade competitiveness and reduced the spatial inequalities that characterised pre-1994 South Africa.

Advancements in information and communications technology infrastructure, including the expansion of broadband connectivity, the rollout of fibre-optic networks, and increased mobile penetration, have enabled millions to access information, education, financial services and economic opportunities previously beyond reach.

While government has made strides in progressively realising socio-economic rights enshrined

in the Constitution and continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to social development, Mbava is concerned by the persistent triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

Shaping fiscal policy

For Mbava, a redistributive budget is a powerful tool for redress, as those responsible for its implementation must ensure that improved service quality is reflected not only in the allocations but also in the delivery framework.

As Chairperson of the FFC, Mbava leads and coordinates the submission of the commission's financial and fiscal recommendations – prepared in accordance with Constitutional provisions – to both Houses of Parliament and the provincial

legislatures.

She also provides strategic direction to the commission by overseeing the development of institutional strategy and ensuring effective corporate governance. In addition, she ensures that research activities align with the commission's mandate and that sound administrative systems are maintained.

Budget process

"The budget process formally begins with the commission's recommendations. By law, the FFC is required to submit its recommendations on the budget ten months before it is tabled. Accordingly, the commission tables its Annual Research Submission and Recommendations on the Division of Revenue well in advance. For the 2026 Budget, the FFC tabled its annual submission at the end of May 2025," Mbava explained.

Thereafter, the commission briefed all nine provincial legislatures and parliamentary committees and the South African Local Government Association on its tabled recommendations.

It made frequent briefings and submissions in response to parliamentary requests throughout the remainder of the year.

These addressed departmental budget allocations in relation to performance, as well as in-year budget adjustments and

amendments for the 2025/26 financial year.

Mbava explained that during the 2025 budget process, the commission strongly advised against the proposed VAT increase based on its research

and empirical analysis. The effectiveness of VAT as a fiscal instrument was evaluated through analysing its socio-economic impact (on households and consumers) as well as its broader fiscal impact in terms of potential revenue generation.

"The FFC's empirical evidence showed that the policy would disproportionately impact lower-income households (regressive impact) and that the revenue-collection potential was lacking and, therefore, unlikely to assist government in reaching its projected revenue targets," Mbava explained.

Recently, the FFC was the first institution that

spoke to the change in inflationary pressures, which significantly impacts the fiscus and budgetary allocations. The commission has advised that efficiency in public spending be improved through better aligning expenditure with actual inflation and revenue.

Positive growth

South Africa's economy is moving along a positive trajectory. From Mbava's perspective, one of the most notable improvements has been the sustained low-inflation environment – a trend the Commission was among the first institutions to identify and highlight as significant and encouraging for economic stability and consumer confidence.

She noted that lower inflation has contributed to improved financial conditions, including a moderation in interest rates, a strengthening of the rand, and a decline in the risk premium on South African debt. This has provided meaningful relief to households and businesses through

reduced borrowing costs and easing overall cost pressures.

"The removal of South Africa from the Financial Action Task Force grey list is a significant achievement that demonstrates progress in strengthening anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing frameworks. Maintaining this momentum is critical," she added.

Way forward

To ensure that the economy remains on a sustainable trajectory, Mbava said this window of opportunity must be used to consolidate fiscal discipline and refocus policy on the fundamentals of long-term growth in terms of industrial development, policy certainty in finalising legislation enabling the electricity market reform, support for private generation through streamlined licensing, and ensuring Eskom's operational and financial stabilisation.

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined a renewed effort to strengthen the economy through structural reforms and strategic infrastructure improvements. He said reforms under Operation Vulindlela had helped restore optimism and investor confidence, noting progress in rebuilding and restructuring key



Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana tabled the 2026 budget last month.

The FFC is required to submit its recommendations on the budget ten months before it is tabled.



network industries.

The President highlighted that improvements in these sectors are already attracting investment and supporting job creation. He stressed that completing the reform agenda requires close collaboration between government,

business, labour, and other social partners.

Looking ahead, the President announced a second wave of reforms for the coming year to accelerate faster and more inclusive growth, with immediate priority given to stabilising and strength-

ening state-owned enterprises such as Eskom and Transnet.

These measures aim to ensure reliable, world-class infrastructure while fostering greater competition in electricity generation, freight rail and port services. ❖



Explaining the Prime Interest Rate

PSM asked Mbava for a comment on recent pronouncements by the SARB Governor by Lesetja Kganyago suggesting that the ideal scenario for the country would be to phase out the Prime Interest Rate.

What this means for ordinary South Africans:

Since 2001, South Africa has used a 350 basis point rule with commercial banks charging consumers a Prime Rate 3.5% above the SARB Repo Rate (base rate).

Key Points:

- ◉ The fixed gap does not always reflect the actual cost of money or lending risks.

- ◉ Phasing out the 3.5% markup would require banks to justify their lending margins more transparently.
- ◉ Banks could implement a Repo-plus/minus model, replacing the current Prime-plus/minus system.

Impact on Borrowers:

- ◉ Existing debt may not become cheaper.
- ◉ Example: A loan at Prime + 1% could convert to Repo + 4.5%.
- ◉ Monthly payments likely to remain the same, but calculations and terminology become clearer for consumers.

Reimagining the future of nursing education in South Africa

Major Neliswa Leticia Cuba's career is defined by courage, impact and an unwavering commitment to creating platforms for support, recognition and collaboration.

A multi-award-winning nursing professional, she serves as Head of Student Counselling at the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) Nursing College, where her leadership extends beyond clinical expertise to shaping the wellbeing and development of future healthcare practitioners.

The SAMHS is the specialised branch of the South African National Defence Force established to provide comprehensive medical services, support and

training to military personnel.

In 2024, Cuba was named to the *Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans* list – an honour reserved for young leaders whose work is changing the country's trajectory. The recognition affirmed her role as a bold, authentic voice in community health and underscored the influence she has built within both military and public healthcare spaces.

At the time, she was the youngest Head of Student Counselling at the college. She initiated student-centred programmes and events, supervised

Major Neliswa Leticia Cuba.

Photo: GCIS



the Student Representative Council, and served as Staff Officer: Training and Control in the SAMHS Nursing Directorate of the Department of Defence, contributing to the strategic direction of national nurse training programmes.

“The award meant a lot to me because I held a belief that certain achievements are meant for people with a certain background, so I was very critical of myself. It motivated me to work harder,” she said.

The milestone became a catalyst for growth. Inspired to expand her reach and deepen her impact, she began attending more nursing conferences, actively engaging and building networks with like-minded professionals across the sector.

The recognition also sparked a moment of introspection. Rather than viewing the award as a culmination, she saw it as a call to do more; questioning whether she was contributing enough and challenging herself to elevate her influence even further within the profession.

Youth empowerment

At the beginning of 2025, she channelled that renewed sense of purpose into action by establishing a foundation dedicated to empowering young girls in Grades 8 and 9. The initiative



Major Neliswa Leticia Cuba is shaping the development of SA's future nurses.

Photo: GCIS

focuses on mentorship, educational support and leadership development, targeting formative years where confidence, direction and aspiration are often shaped.

“I also became part of leadership that established the academic programme for SAMHS undergraduate nursing students at UNIVEN [University of Venda] in 2025”.

The inaugural cohort was limited to five placements, with candidates selected through a rigorous process to ensure academic excellence and leadership potential. Cuba continues to provide structured support to these students as they integrate and study alongside civilian peers.

Plans are underway to expand

the programme nationally through partnerships with other universities.

Recognition

These contributions culminated in her being named a recipient of the South African Heroes Awards (SAHA) in the Community Health category.

Cuba believes that the selfless work carried out through her foundation gave her an added edge in securing the SAHA accolade – an award that recognises individuals whose actions inspire and uplift communities, turning challenges into opportunities for growth and unity.

She says seeing the student nurses she has trained graduate and go on to build successful careers remains the true high-

light of her professional journey.

Academic and career journey

Cuba joined the SAMS in 2011, where she completed her basic military and officer's formative training. She went on to obtain a National Diploma in Nursing Science (general, psychiatric, and community) and midwifery from the SAMHS Nursing College.

“The best thing about joining the military services is that you study fulltime towards your qualifications while still getting your full salary as an employee,” she said.

She completed her community service at several military hospitals including 1 Military Hospital. Following this, she was

promoted to candidate officer, and later a Lieutenant.

In 2020, she earned a Bachelor of Nursing Science Degree in Education and Administration from the University of Pretoria. That same year, she was promoted to Captain after successfully securing a position as a lecturer at the SAMHS Nursing College.

Breaking gender roles

As a lecturer, she actively encouraged male student nurses to consider specialising in midwifery. Her goal was to address and reduce the apprehension many students felt about the field, particularly fears of potential litigation if a patient or newborn were to experience complications during labour.

"My aim was to ensure that I instill passion more than just the skill and competence of the subject," she explained.

National duty

Working as a military nurse primarily involves providing care across healthcare facilities within the Department of Defence (DoD). However, when other parts of the national health system face strain, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the DoD deploys trauma and primary care nurses to areas where their expertise is most needed,



Major Neliswa Leticia Cuba is shaping the development of SA's future nurses.

both domestically and abroad.

During the pandemic, Cuba was part of the team that established the COVID-19 Department at 1 Military Hospital, playing a crucial role in the country's emergency response and supporting frontline health-care delivery.

"That experience was a bit scary in the beginning because this was the first time the world is experiencing this...ultimately, most of us started realising that we were safer at work than out in the streets," she explained.

Stepping up

In 2024, she was promoted to Major, a management rank she continues to hold as one of the Heads of Department at the SAMHS Nursing College. In this role, she provides holistic support to students – both academically and emotionally – ensuring

they have the guidance and resources needed to perform at their best.

In 2025, Cuba graduated cum laude with a Master's in Nursing Science, specialising in innovative teaching through virtual simulation. Her research was inspired by the COVID-19 lockdown, which compelled educational institutions to either pivot to online learning or temporarily close when in-person instruction was not possible.

Her research demonstrated that nursing education can be delivered effectively through virtual platforms, though it also identified areas requiring improvement.

The study recommends implementing hybrid training sessions, combining virtual and in-person instruction, to upskill students and ensure comprehensive practical and theoretical

learning.

Human rights

As South Africa observes Human Rights Month, Cuba pays tribute to her fellow nurses for leading the charge in upholding citizens' right to healthcare.

For instance, the SANDF deploys healthcare professionals, including military nurses, to disaster-affected areas, such as KwaZulu-Natal during severe flooding. Equipped to operate in field hospitals, these nurses provide critical care in challenging and urgent conditions.

Reflecting on her journey, Cuba is reminded that opportunities begin with the courage to dream, the determination to work hard and the commitment to serve with purpose. ❖



MZANSI **BUY LOCAL**

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Rail Regulator CEO trudges into a New Era of Safety and Recovery

The Railway Safety Regulator (RSR) has entered a decisive new chapter with the appointment of Brian Monakali as Chief Executive Officer (CEO). His appointment brings long-awaited leadership stability to the organisation after more than two

years without a permanent CEO. It also comes at a pivotal moment as the sector implements the Railway Safety Act of 2024, which seeks to modernise, strengthen and redefine rail safety in South Africa.

Monakali stepped into the role with more than 25 years

of multidisciplinary experience, including over 14 years in the rail sector and a decade in executive positions within the mining industry. His career includes leadership roles at South32, Transnet Freight Rail, Lonmin Platinum, Unilever and the Municipality

of Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality).

He is internationally recognised for his leadership in the heavy-haul rail sector, having served as the former Global Chairperson of the International Heavy Haul Association. In this



Inspecting trains at the Uitenhage Metrorail Station in the Eastern Cape

Photo: Department of Transport.

role, he led the development of the Heavy Haul Vision 2030 – Digital Rail 4.0 strategy, which was adopted by ten countries in 2023.

As the Founder and Chairperson of the South African Heavy Haul Association, he continues to drive excellence, innovation and collaboration across the heavy-haul industry.

Rebuilding the rail sector

Speaking to *Public Sector Manager* magazine shortly after his appointment, Monakali underscored the urgency of rebuilding the rail sector while ensuring that safety remains paramount.

“This is a critical time for the rail sector – the recovery in operations and safety performance,” he said. “...we are working with the industry to identify areas of collaboration to ensure a safe recovery. When we have more trains running, more risks are introduced. We are collaborating with the industry, operators to be more specific, on what can be done to ensure that we together work on achieving a safe recovery”.

Central to this recovery, he noted, is the intelligent use of data to anticipate risks rather than react to them. “There are a number of initiatives that we are

exploring, such as the use of data – how do we use the data on things such as incidents that have already occurred and data on the condition of the rail network?” he explained.

“The data is coming from the inspections that are done on the system, and how do we use those to identify where the hotspots are and where the challenges are and be more predictable...Driving a culture of being more proactive in our approach and the use of data is going to be at the centre of it”.

Economic growth

Monakali sees the sector’s recovery not only as a safety imperative but also as an economic opportunity.

“There is a big opportunity in this turnaround – ensuring that we can retain jobs, employ more people, and contribute to the socio-economic challenges that we have in the country within the rail space”.

More rail activity, he added, will have “a multiplier effect because the rail industry is supporting the customers of logistics such as cargo owners or even passengers”.

He emphasised that South Africa’s broader economic goals hinge in part on a functional rail system. “It has been stated that the country needs

Photo: Railway Safety Regulator.



Railway Safety Regulator
CEO Brian Monakali.

to get to growth levels of at least 3% to make a big impact on poverty, unemployment, crime and all issues. Rail, therefore, needs to be at the centre of that.”

Making a difference

Looking ahead, Monakali is clear about the legacy he wants to leave. “We would like to look back in 10 years’ time and say we have made a huge difference in the rail industry through ensuring we have achieved the aspirations in terms of the rail performance in a way that has not injured people, that has guarded the lives of people and also not caused major damage to rail assets. We want to become a global benchmark on how to transition from what we had to an industry that is very complex going forward.”

Monakali also spoke candidly about the sector’s current challenges, linking them directly to South Africa’s socio-economic struggles. “We are aware of the challenges that the country is facing – poverty, unemployment, crime, economic growth that is not where we want it to be. Rail is contributing to these challenges,” he said.

“Safety performance is not where we want it to be, we still have a lot of cargo being moved by road, a lot of people are still

using the road to commute.”

He added that broader sustainability challenges – climate change, safety risks and the cost of doing business – affect the sector’s performance and, ultimately, the country’s competitiveness. “Our role is to ensure that we lower the cost of doing business for customers and clients,” he said.

He added that South Africa’s ambitions for freight and passenger rail are substantial. “As a country, we have aspirations that have been put to the regulator,” he said. “These include having to move 250 million tonnes of freight rail by 2030 and almost 600 million passengers by the same year. That is a big, big ask”.

Groundwork

Government and industry, he noted, have already begun laying the groundwork. “Our government – together with business – has started to implement some of the key initiatives. One of them is focusing on the recovery of safety and efficiency operations,” he said.

He pointed to recent initiatives aimed at broadening private sector participation. “We have seen the RFIs [requests for information] that have been issued for both freight and passengers to encourage private sector



Photo: Department of Transport.

investment and allocation to additional operators”.

Progress made

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa affirmed that government’s economic reform initiatives under Operation Vulindlela are already reshaping South Africa’s rail and port sectors, with improving freight capacity strengthening trade volumes and expanding access to global markets.

He noted that the restoration of passenger rail is gaining momentum through the rollout of new locally manufactured trains, which are reducing commuting costs, while the opening of the national rail network to private

operators is set to spur competition and shift more freight from road to rail.

The President added that plans are underway to introduce concession-based public private partnerships in port terminals and key rail corridors, alongside ongoing preparations for high speed rail links between Johannesburg and Musina, as well as eThekweni and Johannesburg.

Nearly 30 companies responded to last year’s request for information on the proposed high speed corridors, and with government now preparing to issue a formal request for proposals, the President said the country is poised for a transformative new era in long distance rail travel. ♦

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



A budget to accelerate our economic and social recovery



Last week, Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana presented a Budget that will accelerate the momentum of inclusive growth, create jobs and tackle poverty.

Every budgetary allocation is a developmental choice: ensuring there are teachers in classrooms, nurses and doctors in clinics, electricity and basic services in homes and businesses, infrastructure to grow the economy, and employment opportunities for communities.

After a prolonged period of economic uncertainty, this Budget builds on the progress made over the last few years to stabilise, reform and transform our economy. Improvements in public finances, stabilising debt,

a narrowing budget deficit, credit rating upgrades and improved market confidence all signal the beginning of an economic recovery.

A stable macroeconomic environment boosts investor confidence and increases government's capacity to invest in both growth and poverty relief without compromising sustainability.

The stabilisation of public finances gives us space to accelerate public investment, sustain the social wage, and direct resources to reforms that drive growth and job creation.

The social wage accounts for over 60% of government spending after interest payments. The allocation for this financial year

will enable us to provide health-care services to 84% of the population, social grants to 26.5 million beneficiaries and free basic services to over 11 million indigent households. It will support approximately 13.6 million learners at school.

This is a redistributive budget that reduces inequality, builds the capabilities of our people and strengthens the foundations for inclusive growth.

Basic education is one of those key foundations. We will be allocating additional spending to employ more educators. Additional funds have been allocated to the early childhood development grant to reach an additional 300 000 children and to align the National School

Nutrition Programme to food inflation.

The Budget supports inclusive growth by accelerating public investment, particularly on infrastructure. Improved infrastructure lowers the cost of doing business, raises productivity and supports our country's exports.

Over the next three years, public spending on infrastructure will exceed R1 trillion to build and maintain roads and rail lines, expand energy infrastructure, and build and maintain water and sanitation infrastructure.

Government alone cannot finance the scale of infrastructure our country needs. We are, therefore, mobilising investment from private and other sources, and opening the space for

public-private partnerships. As we encourage private investment in electricity, rail and port operations, we are maintaining state ownership of strategic national infrastructure.

Under Operation Vulindlela, government departments and public entities are undertaking impactful reforms in energy, telecommunications, water and logistics.

The Budget acknowledges that many municipalities are in financial distress, driven by weak revenue collection, poor management and substantial service delivery backlogs.

Many municipalities are not spending appropriately. For several years, water and electricity revenue has not been invested in infrastructure maintenance or expansion, but has been redirected to cover other municipal costs.

Local government finances have to be placed on a more sustainable footing to support the delivery of basic services. Over the medium term, R19.2 billion will be reallocated to the reform of electricity, water, sanitation

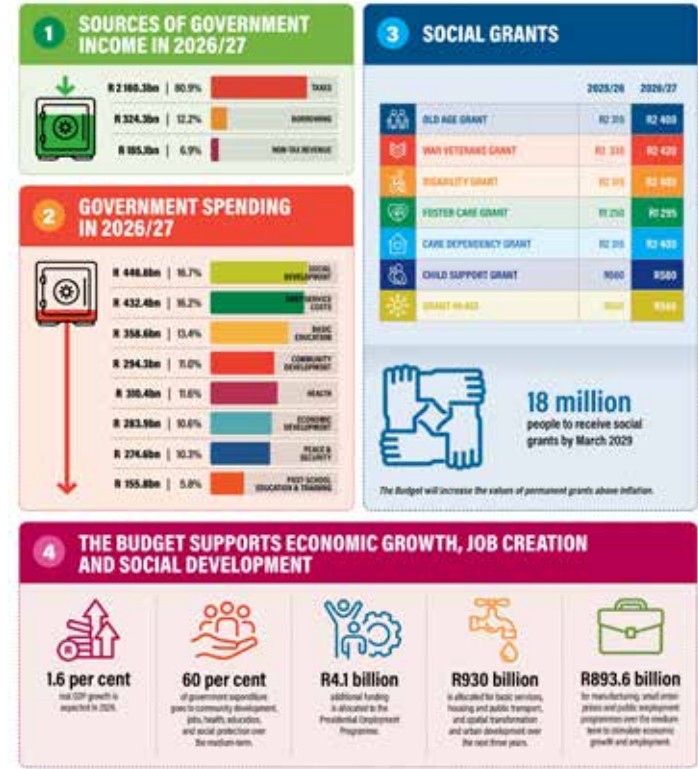
and solid waste trading services in metros. These allocations will be linked to performance against clear targets.

The Municipal Infrastructure Grant is being reformed to address underspending and misuse of funds. Over the next three years, R86.9 billion has been allocated to support the provision of free basic services to indigent households.

This year's budget reflects government's goals of inclusive growth and job creation through additional support for mass public employment programmes and relief for small businesses.

An additional R4.1 billion has been allocated to the Presidential Employment Stimulus to provide work opportunities to more young South Africans.

To ease the regulatory burden for small businesses, the threshold for business to register for VAT has been increased by more than double. For small business owners who wish to sell or transfer their businesses, the capital gains tax exemption has also been significantly increased. To-



gether, these measures will help small and informal businesses to grow and employ more South Africans.

This year's Budget focuses on three imperatives: maintaining fiscal sustainability, driving inclusive growth and protecting society's most vulnerable. It is a balanced budget that reflects the realities of our economy,

limited financial resources, high unemployment and urgent infrastructure needs.

As we build on the momentum of our recovery, we will continue to be guided by fiscal discipline, structural reform, targeted investment and an overarching commitment to improving the material conditions of every South African. ❖



**This message was first published on 2 March 2026.*

2026 Budget

Speech a 'turning point' - Godongwana

The country's financial future was on the agenda on 25 February, when Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana delivered the 2026 Budget Speech in Parliament.

Godongwana noted that this year's Budget Speech comes at a critical juncture for the public purse.

"We have reached an important turning point in the management of our public finances. Five years ago, the outlook was stark. State Capture had hollowed out critical institutions and weakened state-owned entities. South Africa had been downgraded to junk status by the last of the three major credit rating agencies in 2020.

"The devastation of the Coronavirus pandemic coupled with the Russia-Ukraine conflict had dealt a blow to global growth. And in 2023, the Financial Action Task Force had placed South Africa on its grey list.

"The warning lights were flashing. Public finances were



Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana tabled the 2026 Budget at the Parliament Dome in Cape Town.

under severe strain and growth had stalled. Faced with this crisis, we chose not to be defined by it. Instead, we turned it into a catalyst for change," he said.

Reforms

As a result of a long-standing commitment to change through

a clear reform agenda and a disciplined fiscal strategy, South Africa's public debt is expected to stabilise this financial year - growth is on the cards with a decline forecasted in the medium term.

"Today, that commitment has delivered tangible results. For

the first time in 17 years, debt will stabilise and it will continue to fall in the coming years. The budget deficit has narrowed significantly, and debt-service costs are also falling.

"The world has taken notice: South Africa has been removed from the FATF [Financial Action Task Force] grey list; we secured our first credit rating upgrade in 16 years; and borrowing costs have eased, creating space for growth and development.

"These are signals of restored credibility. Of renewed resilience. And of a nation regaining its footing. The lesson is a simple but powerful one: steady structural reform and responsible public finances are the bedrock of a prosperous and more inclusive South Africa," the Minister noted.

Strong outcomes

The numbers crunched by National Treasury in the 2026 Budget Review concur with Godongwana's optimism.

The review reports that the main budget deficit comes in R12.4 billion lower than forecasted in last year's budget because of "strong fiscal outcomes for the first 10 months of 2025/26".

Since the 2021/22 Financial Year, the main budget deficit has narrowed from 5.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) to a projected 4.5% in 2025/26.

It is further projected to decline to 2.9% in 2028/29.

"In 2023/24, the primary balance swung from deficit to surplus for the first time since the 2008 global financial crisis. It will grow to 2.3 % of GDP in 2028/29.

"As a result, debt as a share of GDP will decline over the next three years and the cost of servicing that debt will reduce from 21.3% of revenue in 2025/26 to 20.2% in 2028/29.

"These developments reflect a determined approach to repair the public finances while creating a foundation for stronger and sustainable economic growth," read the review.

The consolidated budget deficit also continues to decline over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period. It is expected to narrow from 4.5% of GDP in 2025/26 to 3.1% in 2028/29.



Governor of the SA Reserve Bank Lesetja Kganyago, SARS Commissioner Edward Kieswetter and National Treasury DG Dr Duncan Pieterse at the Budget speech.

"In 2023/24, the primary balance swung from deficit to surplus for the first time since the 2008 global financial crisis".

"Gross loan debt stabilises this year at 78.9% of GDP. Debt-service costs continue to rise in nominal terms, from R420.6 billion in 2025/26 to R469.3 billion in 2028/29, but as a percentage of revenue they also peak in the current financial year and then decline," Treasury noted.

Reflecting on the progress made, National Treasury stated that government is "delivering on its pledge to rebuild the health of the public finances".

"After a long stretch of rising debt that began in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, government debt peaks as a share of economic output in the current fiscal year.

"Government is working to ensure a steady decline in debt as a share of GDP for the rest of the decade, reducing the cost of servicing debt and creating a

more supportive environment for private investment.

"For the first time this decade, government is tabling a fiscal framework in which debt service costs grow more slowly than overall expenditure. Over the next three years, principal and interest payments are expected to be R21 billion lower than estimated in the 2025 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS)," stated the Budget Review.

Strategy

The shift towards improvement has been anchored on three principles: stabilise debt, invest in infrastructure and spend better.

"The benefits of this strategy have started to become evident. Enhancing monetary policy certainty and consistent delivery on

the fiscal strategy have prompted a virtuous cycle, especially in the period following the tabling of the 2025 MTBPS.

"South Africa received its first sovereign credit rating upgrade by one of the major agencies since 2009. Lower inflation and stronger public finances have boosted confidence and reduced risk, leading to lower borrowing costs and stronger investment conditions.

"Much work is needed to improve the delivery of public goods, but the recent removal of South Africa from the FATF grey list illustrates the depth of capacity that can be assembled. Government will build on this success in other areas," read the review. ♦

From reform momentum to tangible results: Delivering on South Africa's 7th Administration mandate



Photo: Supplied.

Minister Maropene
Ramokgopa .

In the 2026 State of the Nation Address (SoNA), President Cyril Ramaphosa made a decisive call: South Africa must move from stabilisation to acceleration. The foundation has been laid, and reforms are underway.

But the defining task of the 7th Administration is to translate reform momentum into measurable improvements in the lives of all South Africans.

The recent assessments conducted by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) on the implementation of the Medium-

Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024 – 2029 confirm that progress in the work of government is real. Yet, the assessments also underscore a central truth – delivery must deepen, accelerate and reach every community.

A reform agenda taking root

The MTDP 2024 – 2029, the programme of action and implementation blueprint of the 7th Administration, operationalises the vision of the National Development Plan (NDP) into measurable strategic priorities:

- Driving inclusive growth and job creation;
- reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living; and
- building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

The DPME's review of performance

between April and September 2025, tells a story of steadiness and resilience amid global uncertainty.

South Africa recorded 0.8% gross domestic product growth in the second quarter of 2025, the strongest quarterly performance since 2022. In the third quarter, 248 000 jobs were added.

Significantly, the country experienced more than 175 executive days without load shedding, marking a significant improvement in energy reliability and investor confidence.

Operation Vulindlela

Structural reforms under Operation Vulindlela are unblocking constraints in energy, logistics and water. South Africa's exit from the Financial Action Task Force grey list has strengthened financial credibility. Infrastructure financing has gained momentum, with R1.03 trillion allocated over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and substantial blended finance approvals through the Infrastructure Fund.

These are not isolated achievements. They represent the early dividends of a reform programme designed to stabilise and reposition the economy for sustained growth.

Confronting persistent structural challenges

Yet, stabilisation alone is insufficient.

Unemployment remains at 31.9%, with youth unemployment at 58.5%. A Gini coefficient of 0.63 indicates inequality remains and continues to shape the daily realities for millions of South Africans. For many households, the cost of living continues to exert pressure.

Government's response has focused on protecting the vulnerable while expanding opportunity.

More than 19 million South Africans receive social grants, cushioning vulnerable households against economic shock.

Food and nutrition programmes continue to reach communities nationwide. HIV suppression rates stand at 96%, demonstrating the resilience of the public health system.

Early childhood development (ECD) has expanded significantly, with over 1.3 million children enrolled in (ECD) centres, exceeding the 2025 registration targets.

During the 2026 SoNA, President Ramaphosa reaffirmed that social protection must increasingly serve as a bridge to economic participation.



President Cyril Ramaphosa presenting the State of the Nation Address 2026.

Sustainable poverty reduction depends on growth that generates employment, empowers micro, small and medium enter-

prises (MSMEs), and integrates young people into productive value chains.

The MTDP 2024 – 2029 and

the NDP are unequivocal: women, youth and persons with disabilities must be mainstreamed into South Africa's economic trajectory.

Scaling investment and industrial momentum

Encouraging signs are emerging in industrial policy and investment mobilisation.

Over R44 billion in new investments have been secured across sector masterplans, including expansion in the new energy vehicle ecosystem and battery minerals value chains.

Tourism arrivals reached 7.6 million between January and September 2025, while MSME support programmes created or sustained more than 86 000 jobs.

These green shoots must now be scaled. Reform credibility must translate into higher investment, broader participation and sustained job creation.

Building a capable and ethical state

The SoNA reaffirmed that delivery depends fundamentally on state capability.

The DPME's assessments indicate measurable progress:

- 93% of senior managers in the Public Service have undergone lifestyle audits.

“Through the District Development Model (DDM), planning and coordination across national, provincial and local spheres of government are becoming more integrated.”

- 55% of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture have been completed or substantially completed.
- Ministerial Performance Agreements are now tightly aligned to MTDP 2024 – 2029 and SoNA commitments, strengthening accountability at the highest level.

Through the District Development Model (DDM), planning and coordination across national, provincial and local spheres of government are becoming more integrated. An inter-ministerial committee is supporting distressed municipalities, while reforms to the local government framework are under way.

Digital transformation is emerging as a key enabler of capability – from digital identity reforms to the *MyMzansi* citizen platform prototype. However, municipal capacity, procurement inefficiencies and fiscal pressures continue to hamper implementation in parts of the country.

The lesson is clear – reform must be accompanied by institutional strengthening.

From measurement to acceleration

The DPME's role is not limited to monitoring performance. It is also to drive corrective action and support course correction.

Recent MTDP reviews have identified priority levers for accelerated delivery – including strengthening housing implementation, improving infrastructure project preparation in municipalities and enhancing administrative efficiency in health and social grant systems.

Evidence-based monitoring is increasingly informing decision-making at Cabinet level. Performance is being tracked. Bottlenecks are being identified. Accountability is being reinforced.

The imperative of acceleration

The SoNA marked a pivot from reform initiation to reform consolidation and acceleration. Evidence from the DPME's as-

sessments of the government's implementation of the MTDP shows that the foundations of recovery are in place – in energy reforms, infrastructure development, logistics recovery, tourism growth and public sector accountability.

But reform momentum must now yield visible change in the lives of South Africans through:

- more jobs, especially for young people,
- faster and more reliable service delivery
- safer communities, and
- a professional, ethical and capable state.

South Africa has entered a new phase, one defined not by promise, but by implementation.

The task before us is to convert momentum into measurable impact. To ensure that growth is inclusive. To ensure that reform is felt in households and communities. To ensure that the State works for its citizens.

The progress is real. The direction is clear. The responsibility now is to accelerate delivery – together – in building a nation that works for all. ❖



THE BILL OF RIGHTS AT
30 – MAKING HUMAN
DIGNITY REAL

DID YOU KNOW?

APARTHEID-ERA MASSACRES (1948–1994)

Boipatong Massacre (17 June 1992):

The attack on township residents was carried out by armed men from the steelworks residence KwaMadala Hostel, which is located about 1 km from the township. 45 people died and several were maimed. The attackers were supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), rival party of the African National Congress (ANC).

At the time, the South African government and several other political groups were negotiating in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) talks.



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A **NATION** THAT **WORKS** FOR ALL



Disinformation Dialogue 2026:

Countering disinformation, safeguarding local democracy

As South Africa prepares for the 2026 Local Government Elections, the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) and its use in hyper-local disinformation campaigns has emerged as a key concern for the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC).

IEC Chairperson Mosotho Moepya warned that the 2026 polls are likely to see a shift from broad national misinformation to ward-specific deceptions driven by generative AI tools.

"The primary challenge of 2026 is the rise of Generative AI and its application in 'hyper-local' contexts. We are seeing a shift from broad national



IEC Chairperson Mosotho Moepya discussed disinformation campaigns ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections at the Disinformation Dialogue 2026.

“The integrity of our 2026 Local Government Elections does not rest on the IEC alone. It rests on the fact-checker in Johannesburg, the lawmaker in Cape Town, the tech engineer in Silicon Valley, and the EU [European Union] diplomat in Pretoria”.

untruths to ward-specific deceptions. As identified by the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF), we expect a 'flurry of deepfakes' in these municipal elections,” Moepya said.

He was speaking at the Disinformation Dialogue 2026: “Countering Disinformation, Safeguarding Local Democracy” held in Cape Town recently.

The dialogue was hosted by the Institute of Security Studies, in collaboration with the delegation of the European Union, Embassy of Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Flanders State of the Art. This strategic dialogue on disinformation holds relevance in the digital age, across international borders, as well as locally as South Africa prepares for Local Government Elections this year.

Moepya said procedures most vulnerable to manipulation include the voters' roll, the transportation of ballot boxes

and the manual tallying of votes at stations.

“Disinformation targets these points because they involve human elements that can be misrepresented,” he added.

Innovation

In response, the IEC is implementing a 2026 strategy that includes direct-to-citizen verification tools, enabling voters to confirm ward boundaries and registration status through zero-rated digital portals.

The Commission is also establishing “rapid-response pathways”, linking local community radio stations and youth networks directly to fact-checking hubs aimed at countering false information at community level.

Other measures form part of what Moepya described as a shift from a “defensive” posture to one of “radical transparency”.

These include the “News Sausage” approach, which encour-

ages media houses to show the public how election results are audited and verified in order to reduce suspicion and conspiracy theories, as referenced by SANEF.

The IEC will also rely on legal mechanisms, including the Cybercrimes Act, 2020 (Act 19 of 2020) and the Electoral Code of Conduct, to ensure that individuals who intentionally spread harmful digital disinformation face legal consequences.

Double-edged sword

Moepya described technology as a “double-edged sword” capable of both causing harm and empowering citizens depending of how it is used.

“It can be the tool that disenfranchises a grandmother in a rural village through a viral lie, or it can be the tool that empowers a first-time voter in a bustling township to verify their ballot.

“The integrity of our 2026 Local Government Elections does not rest on the IEC alone. It rests on the fact-checker in Johannesburg, the lawmaker in Cape Town, the tech engineer in Silicon Valley, and the EU [European Union] diplomat in Pretoria,” he said.

Moepya also revealed that the commission has subjected its Voter Management Devices (VMDs) and results systems to independent end-to-end testing to ensure that the technology used at the 23 292 voting stations are transparent and verifiable.

The dialogue brought together high-level political representatives, lawmakers, international experts, the IEC, government departments, local government representatives and media organisations. ❖

The JETC outcomes:

A reflective look at a strategic economic partnership

In a global environment marked by shifting alliances, supply chain realignments and a growing emphasis on industrial resilience, South Africa's engagement with China through the Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETC) represents more than a routine diplomatic exercise. It signals a recalibration of economic priorities, an opportunity to deepen strategic cooperation, and a chance to reposition South African exports and industries within one of the world's most

significant markets.

The latest JETC engagements, which took place in 2024, created space for a comprehensive review of bilateral trade and investment relations between the two countries. At a time when South Africa is seeking to stimulate growth, expand industrial capacity and increase export competitiveness, these discussions served as both a stock-taking exercise and a forward-looking platform.

They provided an opportunity

to assess what has worked, identify gaps, and set out a clear path for strengthening cooperation in areas that can deliver meaningful economic impact.

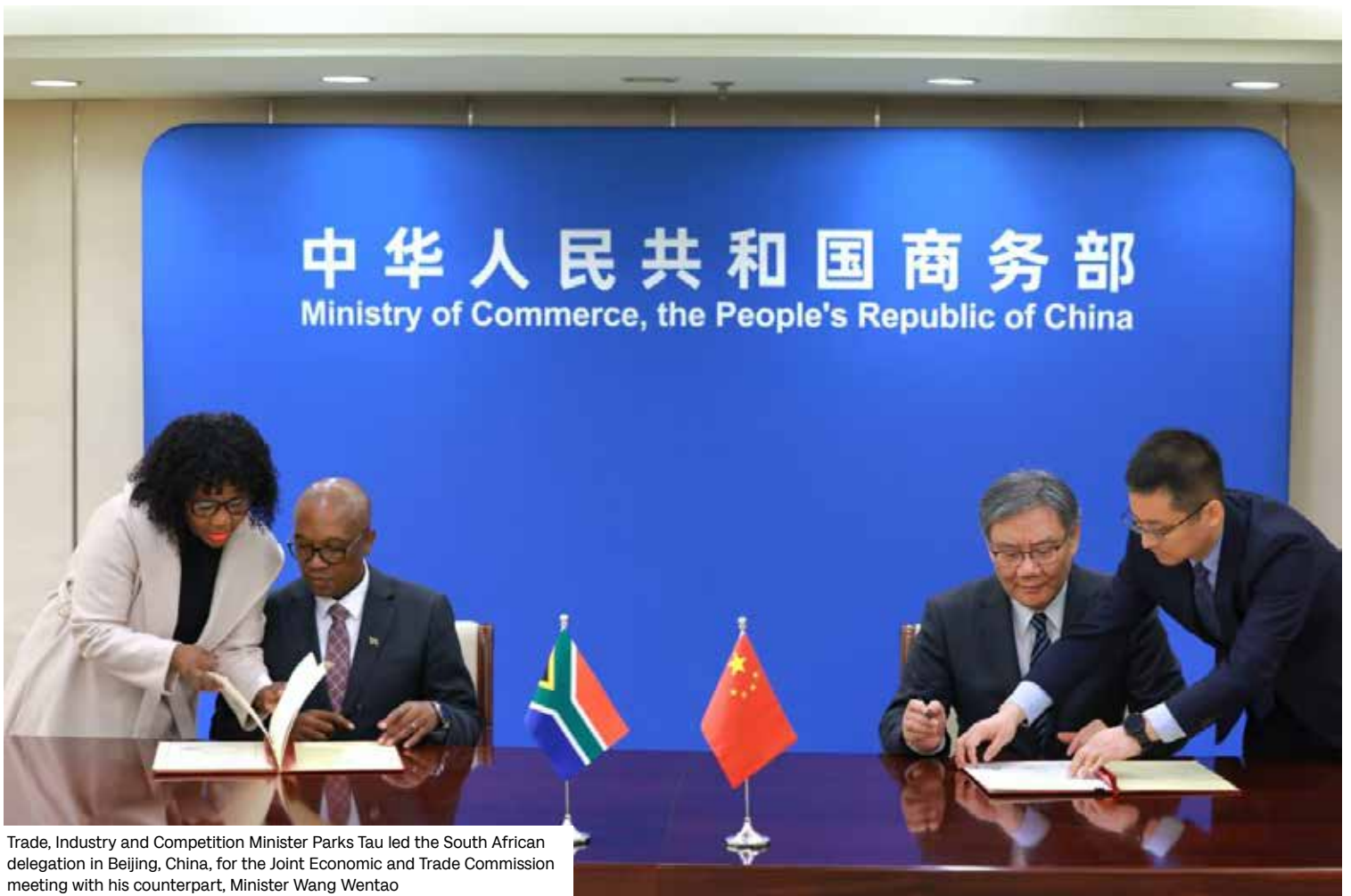
Reviewing trade approach

Central to South Africa's presentation was an ambitious 8-Point Plan aimed at transforming the nature of trade with China. Historically, the trade relationship has been characterised by South Africa exporting largely raw ma-

terials while importing finished goods. The new approach seeks to shift this pattern by increasing the export of agricultural products and value-added manufactured goods.

The intention is not only to expand export volumes but also to enhance the quality and diversity of South Africa's offerings, positioning local industries to capture more value in global supply chains.

The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, work-



Trade, Industry and Competition Minister Parks Tau led the South African delegation in Beijing, China, for the Joint Economic and Trade Commission meeting with his counterpart, Minister Wang Wentao

ing alongside industry bodies and export councils, has already taken concrete steps in this direction. A list of the Top 100 products with strong potential for export to China has been identified, with plans underway to refine and expand this selection.

This process reflects a targeted and evidence-based approach, focusing on products where South Africa has competitive advantages or growth potential. It also signals a shift

from broad aspirations to practical, sector-specific interventions designed to unlock market access.

Alongside export promotion, the 8-Point Plan places strong emphasis on attracting increased Chinese investment into key productive sectors.

Automotive manufacturing, mineral processing and the steel industry have been identified as priority areas. These sectors are deeply connected to South Africa's industrial development

goals, employment creation strategies and long-term competitiveness.

Increased investment could help strengthen local production capacity, support technology transfer and create opportunities for downstream value addition.

Economic partnership

A significant outcome of the JETC discussions was the signing of a framework agreement on economic partnership for

shared prosperity. This agreement lays the groundwork for deeper cooperation and structured negotiations across several critical areas.

These include trade, investment, mineral processing, supply chain development, energy collaboration and financing mechanisms.

Collectively, these focus areas reflect a comprehensive vision of partnership that extends beyond simple trade transactions to broader economic integration.

The first phase of negotiations will focus on an Early Harvest Agreement. This initial step is designed to deliver tangible and immediate benefits by securing 100% duty-free market access into China for selected South African products. For exporters, this represents a significant opportunity.

Reduced tariffs can enhance competitiveness, open new market channels and increase the attractiveness of South African goods in a highly competitive environment.

The approach to this agreement has been carefully structured, with consultation forming a central pillar. Over the past year, Trade, Industry and Competition Minister Parks Tau engaged business and labour stakeholders, including through the National Economic Development and Labour Council.

These consultations were aimed at ensuring alignment, addressing concerns and building consensus around the direction of the proposed trade arrangements.

Importantly, an agreement was reached that government could proceed with signing the Comprehensive Africa-China Economic Partnership Agreement while continuing trade discussions, provided that necessary safeguards are in place.

This reflects a pragmatic balance between advancing economic opportunities and protecting domestic interests. It also highlights the importance of inclusive policymaking, where the voices of industry and labour are incorporated into decisions that will shape the country's economic future.

Consultation will remain an ongoing process. As negotiations with China progress, business and labour stakeholders will continue to be engaged. This sustained dialogue is essential, not only for maintaining trust but also for ensuring that the final outcomes reflect the realities on the ground. Trade agreements are most effective when they are understood, supported and actively utilised by the sectors they are meant to benefit.

Opportunities for local business

For South African exporters and manufacturers, the practical implications of these developments could be substantial. Key sectors such as automotive, mineral processing and white goods manufacturing stand to gain from improved market access and increased investment flows.

Duty-free entry into China for selected products could lower

barriers that have historically limited participation, enabling companies to scale up production and explore new growth pathways.

The potential benefits extend beyond large corporations. Small and medium-sized enterprises involved in value-added manufacturing, component supply, or agro-processing could find new opportunities to enter or expand within the Chinese market.

With the right support structures, these firms could become important contributors to export growth and industrial diversification.

Commitment

The timeline for progress is ambitious. Both sides have indicated a commitment to finalising the Early Harvest Agreement by the end of March 2026. If achieved, this would mark a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship and provide an early signal of the partnership's potential.

Ultimately, the outcomes of the JETC and the 8-Point Plan represent more than policy statements. They reflect an evolving strategy to reposition South Africa within the global economy, strengthen industrial capabilities and

deepen ties with one of its most important trading partners. While challenges remain, the framework now in place offers a foundation for progress.

As negotiations unfold and implementation begins, the true measure of success will be seen in the extent to which these initiatives translate into expanded exports, increased investment, job creation and a more diversified industrial base.

For South Africa, the moment presents both an opportunity and a responsibility: to turn strategic intent into tangible economic outcomes that support inclusive growth and shared prosperity. ♦



Themba Thobela. Acting Director:
International Media Engagement



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DID YOU KNOW?

APARTHEID-ERA MASSACRES (1948–1994)

Durban Riot (1949):

Anti-Indian riot that took place between 13–15 January 1949, primarily by black South Africans targeting Indian South Africans in Durban, it resulted in the deaths of 142 people and 1087 people were injured. 300 buildings were destroyed & 2000 structures were damaged.

It also created 40,000 Indian refugees, followed by a wave of suicides among Indians, as a result of the disintegration of their families, economic failure, stress, humiliation & racist discrimination.



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President Ramaphosa reaffirms SA's strategic autonomy at Armed Forces Day

President Cyril Ramaphosa has reaffirmed South Africa's strategic autonomy and commitment to peace, saying the country will continue to assert its sovereignty amid rising geopolitical tensions.

Delivering the keynote address at Armed Forces Day at Thavhani Mall in Thohoyandou, Limpopo, the President said members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) serve in an era of great geopolitical tension.

"South Africa remains steadfast in our policy of non-alignment. We refuse to be drawn into the spheres of influence of competing global powers. We assert our strategic autonomy and sovereignty. And we conduct all our operations under strict civilian oversight and in absolute adherence to international humanitarian law," the President said.



Various divisions of the SANDF participated in an Armed Forces Day parade.



President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed members of the SANDF at Armed Forces Day celebrations in Thohoyandou.

New realities

President Ramaphosa emphasised the need for the nation to adapt to new realities.

“There has been a shift on the battlefield from traditional weaponry to high-tech autonomous and unmanned systems such as drones, digital warfare and the use of artificial intelligence. These changes require a SANDF that is responsive, relevant and agile,” he said.

As Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF, the President told dignitaries, military leadership and members on parade, that he was honoured to address the Armed Forces Day.

“Our armed forces reflect the diversity of the South African nation, a people of

different identities and varied origins, united in our shared nationhood and common purpose. We are united in advancing the values of our democratic Constitution and in safeguarding the fundamental rights of our country’s people,” the President said.

A legacy of commitment and bravery

Paying homage to the legacy of those who came before, President Ramaphosa said the nation’s soldiers carry forward the courage and sacrifice of past generations.

“You are the shield that ensures our people know lasting peace, security and stability. You stand on the

shoulders of giants: great warriors like King Makhado, the Lion of the North, and King Thohoyandou, whose leadership shaped our destiny, and of the soldiers who refused to betray the cause of freedom at the Battle of Mutale River. Their legacy is mirrored in the resolve of the modern SANDF,” he said.

Historical background

Armed Forces Day is commemorated annually in remembrance of the 616 members of the Native Labour Corps who perished when the SS Mendi sank on 21 February 1917 during the First World War.

“It is recorded that they met their end not with cries of

fear, but with a death dance of defiance and unity. The tragedy of SS Mendi reminds us of the importance of unity and solidarity, that despite great peril, those brave soldiers stood together as they faced their fate. Their courage and spirit continue to inspire us today,” the President added.

He paid tribute to fallen soldiers and expressed condolences to their families, saying that Armed Forces Day honours all the soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving the Republic, outside of its borders and in internal operations.

“This day is a tribute to the courage of those who wear uniform, and we bow our heads in memory of those who never returned from the horizon. We extend our deepest sympathies to the families and comrades of those who made the ultimate sacrifice,” he said.

Hope in times of disaster

The President also acknowledged the SANDF’s role in disaster response, following heavy rains and flooding in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and neighbouring Mozambique.

“This deployment is a shield for the vulnerable, so that a child in Nyanga, Eldorado Park or New Brighton can walk to school without the shadow of a bullet haunting their steps”.

“The SANDF brought its expertise to assist in the relief efforts, working together with local and provincial authorities: deploying engineers to support disaster management, repair roads and bridges, purify water and erect temporary structures for those affected. This recovery effort extended to our neighbouring country, Mozambique, where the SANDF rescued citizens from raging floodwaters,” he said.

As part of this year’s commemorations, the South African Military Health Service rolled out Project Owethu, providing medical care, mental health services, ophthalmology, oral health and orthopaedic care in Sekhukhune, Waterberg and Vhembe districts. More than 85 cataract procedures were conducted at Elim Hospital in Limpopo.

Turning to public resources, the President said the country’s military was having to adapt at a time when public resources were constrained.

“Given the critical importance of the SANDF to our security, sovereignty

and development, additional resources have been allocated from the budget.

“This is a targeted intervention to close funding gaps, improve efficiencies and ensure our operational ambitions are matched by our resources,” he said.

Phased withdrawal

The President further announced a phased withdrawal of South African troops from the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“Having assessed our current priorities, I have decided to draw down our participation as a troop contributing nation in the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, known as MONUSCO.

“This will be done in a phased and well orchestrated manner to ensure the safe return of our troops and their equipment. As we withdraw, we pledge our continued support to continental peace and security initiatives under

the UN [United Nations], the African Union and SADC [Southern African Development Community],” he said.

Fighting crime

On the domestic front, the President confirmed he had authorised the deployment of SANDF elements to support the South African Police Service (SAPS) in tackling crime.

“I have authorised the deployment of SANDF elements to support the SAPS in a targeted offensive against brazen criminality, illegal mining and ruthless gangs.

“From the Cape Flats to Gauteng, our message is clear: the rule of law will be enforced and the safety of our citizens will be secured. This deployment is a shield for the vulnerable, so that a child in Nyanga, Eldorado Park or New Brighton can walk to school without the shadow of a bullet haunting their steps,” he said.

The President called on young people to consider careers in the defence force.

“To the young people present

here today and watching across the country, I invite you to see the SANDF as a career and as a calling.

“We need your capabilities in engineering, medicine, technology, strategy and many other disciplines. Join the SANDF for the love of your country. By serving your people, you build your own future and you contribute to a better nation,” President Ramaphosa motivated.

The Armed Forces Day commemoration featured a wreath-laying ceremony, a fly-past by the South African Air Force and live military capability demonstrations aimed at deepening public understanding of the SANDF’s role in safeguarding the nation.

The President stood in salute as various divisions of the SANDF paraded past, observing military vehicles, advanced weaponry and specialised units on display in a show of operational readiness. ♦

AGSA FASSET Women Leading in the Public Sector

The Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) and Finance and Accounting Services Sector Education and Training Authority (FASSET) are recruiting 500 dynamic women leaders from across South Africa's public sector to take part in a prestigious leadership development programme, fully funded by FASSET.

This programme is designed for women in senior public service roles who are ready to lead with confidence, drive systemic change, and build a more ethical, effective, and inclusive public sector.

The first cohort will start in January 2026.

Please note: This is not a job opportunity, but an application to join the Women Leading in the Public Sector executive development programme.



As a public sector leadership fellow, you will join a national cohort of high-potential women leaders to:

- sharpen your strategic, ethical, and crisis leadership capabilities,
- gain tools to navigate complexity, influence stakeholders, and lead with integrity,
- build a powerful peer network of women public leaders,
- participate in group coaching circles, leadership immersions, and high-impact conversations,
- access an alumni network and ongoing leadership support after graduation.

This is a 12-month programme, requiring a monthly time commitment of approximately two days for learning modules, three hours for a masterclass, and two hours for group coaching. All sessions take place during work hours, and participants are expected to make arrangements with their employer to apply for leave where necessary.

REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the Women Leading in the Public Sector programme, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be South African by birth
- Identify as female (all races)
- Hold a minimum qualification of NQF Level 7
- Have at least 5 years of experience in a senior or executive management role
- Be currently employed within the South African public sector
- Must not have previously participated in Women Leadership Programme funded by FASSET
- Your employer/profession must be affiliated with FASSET (any department or unit)
 - * If not affiliated, you must work within a finance, audit, or compliance unit
- Persons with disabilities are welcome to apply – reasonable accommodations will be made where required

BENEFITS

Participants selected for the Women Leading in the Public Sector programme will receive the following:

- **Executive leadership development**
A high-level, practice-driven programme designed by Duke Corporate Education, with a focus on strategic thinking, ethical governance, stakeholder engagement, and leading through complexity.
- **Structured coaching and peer learning**
Participants will engage in individual and group coaching circles to support leadership growth, self-awareness, and professional development.
- **Cross-sector public service network**
Access to a national cohort of senior women leaders from across the public sector, enabling collaboration, shared learning, and long-term relationship building.
- **Immersive learning experiences**
A combination of virtual modules and in-person sessions, including a Public Sector Leadership Exchange to explore effective leadership practices within government.
- **Alumni recognition and ongoing connection**
Graduates will join an alumni community dedicated to strengthening public sector leadership and advancing gender equity in government.

APPLY ON: apply.workable.com/duke-corporate-education/j/COFBFF39C/

SA's labour market shows modest improvement in Q4: 2025



Statistician-General of Stats SA Risenga Maluleke.

Statistics South Africa's latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the fourth quarter (Q4) shows that the country's labour market ended 2025 with some signs of improvement, although some structural challenges remain. While unemployment remains a central concern, the final months of the year presented small but meaningful shifts that signal resilience within the labour market.

A drop in unemployment

The official unemployment rate eased from 31.9% in Q3 to 31.4% in Q4, marking a 0.5 percentage point improvement. The decline reflects two important

developments: more people entering employment and a reduction in active job seekers.

Employment rose by 44 000, bringing the number of employed South Africans to 17.1 million. At the same time, the number of people actively seeking work fell by 172 000, pushing the overall tally of unemployed individuals down to 7.8 million.

These movements collectively contributed to a 128 000 reduction in the labour force, highlighting the complex dynamics influencing household decisions, economic participation and access to opportunities.

The rise of discouragement

The survey also highlighted the rise in discouraged work-seekers, which increased by 233 000 to reach 3.7 million people. These are individuals who want to work but have stopped looking for jobs, often because they have repeatedly been unable to find employment or see few opportunities in their communities.

While other categories of the broader potential labour force declined slightly, such as a drop of 110 000 in other available job-seekers and 41 000 in those unavailable but wanting work, the cumulative effect was a net increase of 82 000 people in the potential labour force.

This brought the total to 4.6 million, signalling that growing numbers of South Africans are on the sidelines of meaningful labour market participation.

Outside the Labour Force

The data also shows an expansion of people classified as “outside the labour force” – a group that includes students, the elderly, caregivers and individuals unable or not ready to participate in work.This group increased by 165 000, rising to 12.5 million.

When combined with the potential labour force, South Africa had 17.1 million people outside the labour force by the end of 2025, a jump of 248 000 compared with Q3.

These numbers hint at wider socio-economic pressures affecting households: rising living costs, limited job creation in certain sectors, and uneven access to skills and training continue to shape the labour environment.

A deeper look at labour underutilisation

In addition to the official unemployment rate (LU1), the QLFS provides expanded measures to capture the full scope of labour underutilisation:

- LU2 – unemployment

+ time-related underemployment: 34.3% (down 0.6 percentage points).

- LU3 – unemployment + potential labour force: 42.1% (down 0.3 percentage points)
- LU4 – the composite measure combining unemployment, underemployment, and the potential labour force: 44.5%

These broader indicators reveal the depth of labour market strain, especially for individuals who may be employed but working fewer hours than they would like, or for those who have stepped

back from active job searching but remain available for work.

Balancing the act

The Q4: 2025 labour force results provide a detailed picture of a country working towards economic recovery while confronting entrenched inequalities.

Understanding these trends helps policymakers and public sector leaders design targeted interventions that speak to the lived realities of South Africans. It reinforces the need for coordinated action in expanding training programmes, supporting small enterprises, improving labour

mobility and strengthening local economies.

Government response

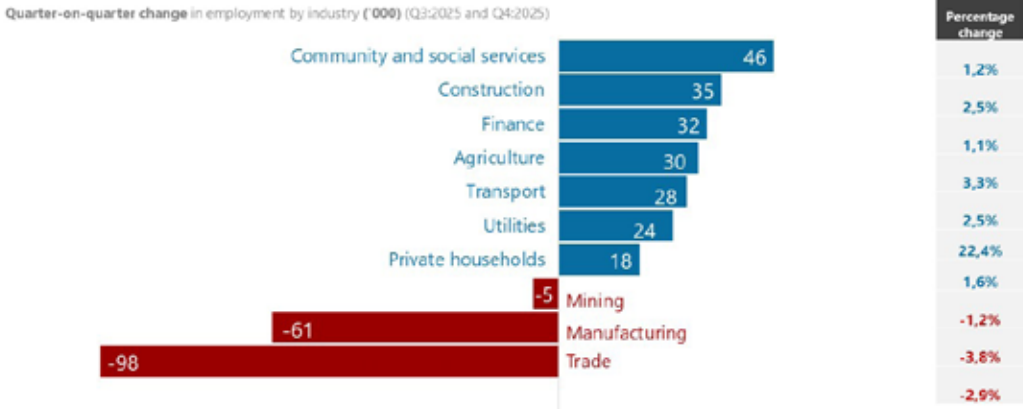
Meanwhile, government has welcomed the results.

“The improvement in employment reflects the resilience of the South African economy and the impact of targeted interventions aimed at stimulating growth, supporting businesses, and expanding labour market opportunities.

“Government has intensified actions to grow employment through accelerated infrastructure investment to unlock opportunities across

“Through Operation Vulindlela and ongoing economic reform measures, government continues to remove structural constraints that limit growth”.

Employment increases were mainly in the Services, Construction and Finance industries. However, the largest decreases in employment were recorded in the Trade, Manufacturing, and Mining industries.



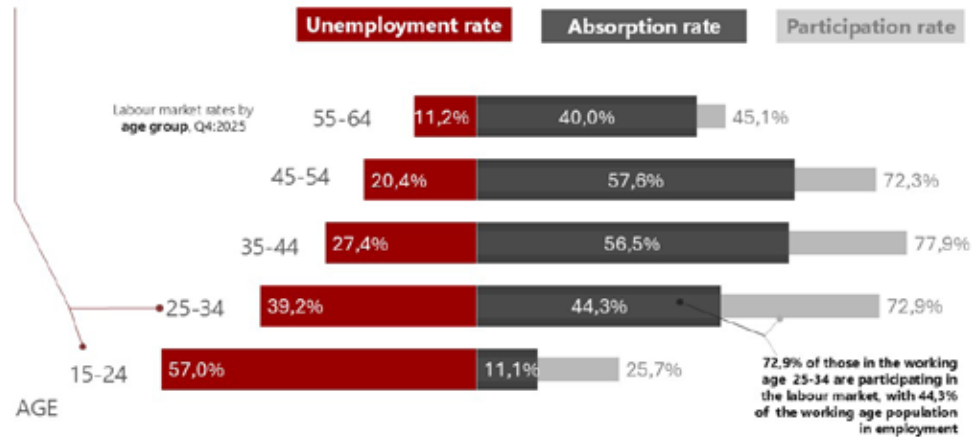
key sectors of the economy," said the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) in a statement.

The implementation of the Presidential Employment Stimulus continues to provide work opportunities, particularly for young people and women.

"Strengthened public-private partnerships are unlocking new investment and supporting industrial expansion to create long-term employment opportunities.

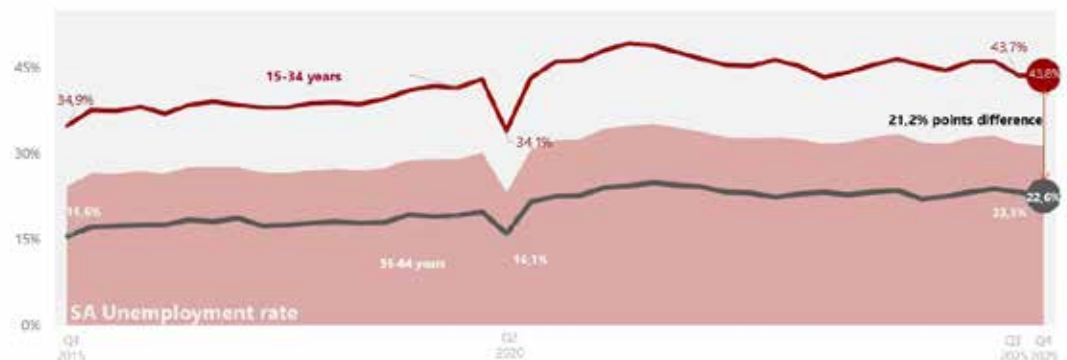
"Through Operation Vulindlela and ongoing economic reform measures, government continues to remove structural constraints that limit growth, including energy stability and logistics efficiency. These reforms are laying the foundation for sustained job creation," read the statement. ❖

Youth aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years continue to have the highest unemployment rates at **57,0%** and **39,2%** respectively.

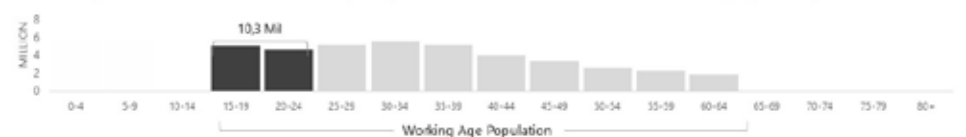


Youth aged **15-34 years** are more vulnerable to unemployment when compared to older age groups

Official Unemployment rates by age group, Q4:2015-Q4:2025



Approximately **3,5 million** out of **10,3 million** (or **34,0%**) young people aged 15-24 years were not in employment, education or training (NEET).



Scan here for the full report:





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DID YOU KNOW?

APARTHEID-ERA MASSACRES (1948–1994)

Duncan Village Massacre (1985):

Police killed 19 people in East London on August 11, 1985. The Duncan Village Massacre took place when mourners were coming from the funeral of late Nonyamezelo Mxenge in King William's Town.



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Idayimani offers you comfort this *autumn*

Tebogo Selebi is on a mission to put Africa at the forefront of luxury, power and excellence. As the founder of Idayimani, he does not just create beautiful products – he uncovers the brilliance beneath the surface, finding potential where others might overlook it. Like a diamond in the rough, his brand reflects sophistication, individuality and African elegance, proving that true luxury is about character, vision and unapologetic excellence.

- Blue Golfer (Men): **R1 450**
- Blue Shorts: **R1 250**
- Bucket Hats: **R850**

- Black Maxi Dress: **R2 250**
- Pink Cropped Golfer (Women): **R1 350**
- Black Cropped Golfer (Women): **R1 350**



About the Brand

Founded in 2022 in Johannesburg, Idayimani sets out to create timeless fashion that endures, combining elegance with individuality. Each collection is a tribute to lasting style, crafted with simplicity, sophistication and sustainability at its core. For the diamonds in the rough, Selebi envisions fashion that speaks volumes without ever needing to shout – pieces that celebrate quiet confidence, refined taste and the brilliance found in understated luxury. For more information, visit www.idayimani.africa

**Prices correct at the time of publishing*

Savour Chef Mo's Gorgonzola & Green Peppercorn Tuscan Chicken Pasta

This month, *Public Sector Manager* magazine brings a taste of Tuscany to the table with Chef Mo's Gorgonzola & Green Peppercorn Tuscan Chicken Pasta. Creamy and full of flavour, the dish combines tender chicken and homemade red pepper ribbons in a rich gorgonzola and green peppercorn sauce – a comforting yet elegant choice for both special occasions and family meals.

Ingredients

For the pasta:

- 500 g plain flour, plus extra for dusting.
- 1 medium red pepper.
- 2 large eggs.
- 20 ml olive oil blend.
- For the sauce:
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped.
- 30 g fresh garlic, finely chopped.
- 15 g fresh oregano leaves.
- 5 g dried basil.
- 40 g green peppercorns, finely chopped.
- 200 g Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled.
- 4 chicken breasts thinly sliced.



- 500 ml fresh cream.
- 30 ml olive oil.
- Salt and black pepper, to taste.

Method

Make the pasta:

- Heat oven to 200°C/180°C fan or gas. Roast the red pepper for 20 minutes until the skin blisters. Cool, peel and deseed.
- Blend the pepper with the eggs and olive oil until smooth.
- Tip the flour onto a clean surface, make a well in the centre, and pour in the pepper mixture. Mix with a

fork, then knead for 5 to 7 minutes, adding more flour if sticky. Cover and rest for 10 minutes.

- Roll out the dough to 2 mm thick. Cut into 3 cm-wide ribbons, dusting with flour to prevent sticking.

Make the sauce:

- Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion, green peppercorns and chicken. Sauté until the chicken is cooked through.
- Stir in the garlic, basil and oregano. Cook for 1 minute.
- Reduce the heat to low.

Add the cream and gorgonzola, stirring until the cheese melts. Season to taste.

Cook the pasta and finish:

- Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Cook the pasta ribbons for 4 minutes, then drain.
- Add the pasta to the sauce, tossing to coat. If the sauce is too thick, add a splash of milk or more cream.
- Serve topped with grated Parmesan, cherry tomatoes and extra oregano leaves, if you like.



Tips:

- ⦿ Short on time? Use good-quality shop-bought pasta instead of making your own.
- ⦿ Vegetarian version: Swap the chicken for sautéed mushrooms or roasted courgette.
- ⦿ Make ahead: The pasta dough can be made a day in advance and kept in the fridge, wrapped tightly in cling film.

About the Chef

Chef Mogammed Zaakier Hoffman's love for food was born in bustling family kitchens, where generations cooked side by side while catering for functions – spaces he describes as filled with unity, joy and shared purpose. Known to many as Chef Mo, he has since built a distinguished culinary career spanning more than 15 years across restaurants, hotels and catering operations. A Capsicum Culinary Studio graduate with distinctions in Culinary Arts and Pastry from City & Guilds London, Chef Mo approaches every dish as artwork on a plate. Inspired by the simplicity of Jamie Oliver's philosophy, he believes great food need not be complicated – it simply needs to strike the right note and create lasting memories.

Now serving as Sous Chef at Truffle on the Park, and having previously held senior roles, including Senior Sous Chef at Thaba Eco Hotel, Hoffman counts mentoring young chefs among his proudest achievements, with some of his former students now thriving internationally.



Rio and beyond:

A vibrant journey through Brazil

In early December 2025, my friends and I set out for Brazil, basing ourselves in the iconic neighbourhood of Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro, with a brief stopover in São Paulo aboard LATAM Airlines. What followed was an immersion into the colour, rhythm and layered cultural identity of one of South America's most dynamic nations.

Rio de Janeiro is a city of striking contrasts and undeniable beauty, famed for its dramatic landscapes, tropical climate and vibrant cultural heritage. During our stay, we divided our time between its celebrated beaches and some of its most iconic landmarks, each offering a deeper understanding of the city's character.

Among the highlights was

standing before Christ the Redeemer, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, where sweeping panoramic views reveal the scale and splendour of the city below. We also visited the vividly tiled Escadaria Selarón, renowned for its colourful mosaic artistry, and explored the futuristic Museum of Tomorrow, whose immersive exhibitions examine science, sustainability and the future of humanity.

Getting around

Transportation throughout Rio de Janeiro was both efficient and accessible, making it easy to navigate between beaches, neighbourhoods and landmarks.

We relied primarily on Uber – a convenient and cost-effective

option. The widespread use of digital ride-hailing platforms across Brazil's major cities has significantly enhanced urban mobility, offering both residents and visitors a practical and reliable way to move around.

Card payments are widely accepted across Brazil, making transactions easy and minimising the





Photo: Sidcley/Pixabay

The Museum of Tomorrow is a science museum in Rio de Janeiro.



Spend time soaking up the Brazilian sun on its famous beaches .

Photo: Supplied

need to carry cash. The local currency, the Brazilian Real, is considerably

stronger than the South African Rand, an important consideration for South African travellers when planning and budgeting

for their trip.

During our visit, the weather was largely pleasant, with warm temperatures and mostly sunny skies. Occasional showers punctuated the days, a typical feature of the season, adding a refreshing rhythm to our time in the city.

Travel compliance

From a public health and travel compliance standpoint, travellers to Brazil are required to have a Yellow Fever vaccination, a mandate common across many South American countries. This highlights the importance of thorough advance planning and adherence to international health regulations before embarking on the journey.

One challenge we encountered during our trip was the

language barrier. Portuguese is the country's primary language, and English is not widely spoken, which occasionally made communicating with locals difficult. Learning a few key phrases or using translation tools can enhance the travel experience.

Visa-free travel

Brazil continues to offer visa-free entry for South African passport holders, making travel more convenient and fostering closer cultural and people-to-people connections between the two nations.

Overall, our experience in Brazil was both enriching and unforgettable, providing deep cultural insights and a firsthand appreciation of a country that plays a significant role in both regional and global affairs. ♦



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DID YOU KNOW?

APARTHEID-ERA MASSACRES (1948–1994)

Soweto Uprising (16 June 1976):

Police shot at young protesters in Soweto, leading to 176–700+ deaths across the country.

Students were protesting the Bantu Education Department's policy requiring Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools, which was viewed as the language of the oppressor.



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