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CBE Focus

Year-End Message from CBE President Jay Pema



As we approach the end of another year one is reminded of a year when a message like this would primarily highlight successes of the preceding year and good wishes for the festive season and a prosperous new year.

Sadly, for the second year in a row, the pandemic dominates everything else. The year 2021 will be remembered for two more variants of the Covid virus, namely the Delta and more recently the Omicron variant.

As scientists grapple with understanding the mutations and severity of the new strain, we have to reconcile with the fact that Covid will be with us for some time to come and find ways of dealing with that. The determining factor that will allow us to adequately deal with the virus is for mass vaccinations.

South Africa already has a very fragile economy and any further disruptions to the economy will have far reaching consequences that will take years if not decades to recover from. It is heartening therefore to see business and labour increasingly advocating vaccination.

Vaccine "hesitancy" is unfortunate, exacerbated by misinformation, fuelled by social media; as well as the initial slow rollout, coupled with the unnecessary red tape in administering the vaccine. This has led to only 36 percent of South Africa's adult population being currently vaccinated and government missing its year-end target of achieving some level of herd immunity.

We may never attain herd immunity, but the more people that opt to get vaccinated, the lesser the risk of spreading the virus. Nedlac has backed mandatory Covid -19 jabs and restricting the unvaccinated from public events. Some near-sighted unions might oppose this, but the Constitutional Court will make the final ruling.

The year 2021 will also be remembered for the near insurgency, or the 72 hours of anarchy, as some have labelled it. Our hard-fought democracy is showing signs of cracks that cannot be superficially plastered over, but which rather need high intensive care. The low voter turnout and apathy of voters at the polls in November is an affirmation that our people require decisive leadership by the ruling party.

South Africa's economy shrunk by 1.5 percent in the third quarter of this year. No doubt the rampant looting and unrest in July as well as the tight lockdown restrictions contributed to the low growth. If Statistics South Africa announces another contraction in GDP for the fourth quarter of 2021 by March next year, the country will enter its third recession under the current presidency.

The scenario we are faced with is not without its challenges, as a resilient nation we will once again have to show our mettle and overcome these challenges as we look forward to 2022 in what we hope will be a year of renewal and revival.

On behalf of the Congress of Business and Economics, our wish for you and your family is health, prosperity and peace of mind as we approach 2022.

Jay Pema President CBE



CBE Condolence Message to Shannon Ebrahim

"We at the Congress of Business and Economics (CBE) learnt with deep sadness about the passing of Comrade Ebie, who was an amazing role model who always spoke truth to power. Comrade Ebie was always fearless in pursuit of justice and sound leadership.

The Gentle Revolutionary that we all have come to love and respect. That was the very reason he was selected as a recipient of the CBE Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016.

It was a special tribute to a special man who until his very last breath was committed to the people of the country he loved so much when others would have opted for a quiet life away from the pressures and tensions of public duties.

In 2017, comrade Ebie once again graced the CBE stage with Mavuso Msimang in a story telling segment reliving his life as an activist. A giant of a man that will be missed by all who knew him.

May you and the family be granted strength through these trying times. Rest in peace comrade Ebie. Warm Regards."

Yusuf Moosajee
Executive Director

History / Politics

What Kathy said about the Rivonia Trial

In November 2013, veteran activist Ahmed Kathrada said he believed that the Rivonia Trial of 1963 that sent him, Nelson Mandela and others to Robben Island had drawn attention away from other significant political trials.

"I think that the Rivonia Trial has overshadowed many other trials, which is not consistent with the struggle in this country. What about the 'Little Rivonia' trial in which Mac Maharaj was involved?" Kathrada asked as the main speaker at the 50th anniversary of the trial in the Palace of Justice in Pretoria's Church Square, where the original trial was held.

Before going down with others who had been involved in the trial to the holding cells below the court, Kathrada gave a graphic account of the time he spent there. A few months later, in March 2014, Kathrada again commented on the Rivonia trial as he joined fellow trialist Dennis Goldberg at the Apartheid Museum on 12 June, the 50th anniversary of their sentencing in the infamous Rivonia Trial.

Expecting the worst sentence—death penalty

Despite the suffering they had endured, both veterans were full of wit and humour as they regaled a full house. The trial saw the country's most renowned anti-apartheid leaders being sentenced to life imprisonment. Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni and Kathrada were flown to Robben Island after their sentencing. Goldberg, being white, had to serve his time at Pretoria Central Prison.

Kathrada, then 84, and Goldberg, then 81, told of how they expected the death sentence, but were given life imprisonment instead. "There was a sense of relief when the sentence was announced," Kathrada said, adding that Mandela had already written down points which would have been read out if that was the sentence.

"We were expecting the worst, but since the charge was changed from high treason to sabotage, the judge could allow some leniency. I rejoice on days like this for what I stood for," Goldberg said as he chuckled about the irony of Black African Mandela calling him a 'boy', something that whites said to adult Africans in a derogatory way at the time.

Kathrada said that prisoners like Goldberg and Braam Fischer were treated even worse than the others because they were seen as traitors by the ruling white minority of the time.

Extracts from the book "A Pictorial Tribute to Ahmed Kathrada" by Fakir Hassen

CBE Tribute to veteran activist 'Ebie' Ebrahim

FAKIR HASSEN

The CBE extends our deepest condolences to the family of veteran activist Ebrahim 'Ebie' Ebrahim, who succumbed to a long illness on 6 December.

The CBE remembers Ebie as a strong supporter, often providing advice on a wide range of issues.

Condolences poured in from all over the world after Ebie's passing, particularly as he played a significant role representing the ANC and South Africa in peace negotiations in many troubled areas of the world.

Ebie served time on Robben Island as a prisoner alongside Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and others.

He joined the liberation struggle at the age of 13, after his father was arrested twice for resisting the laws that curtailed the movement of Indians in South Africa.

He also stated often how he had been inspired by the Satyagraha style of Mahatma Gandhi, which he used in his passionate representation of the African National Congress (ANC) in global conflict situations in Sri Lanka, Palestine, Rwanda, Kosovo, Bolivia and Nepal.

After his arrest in 1963 Ebie shared a cell with former president Jacob Zuma, whose role in state capture and corruption he later decried.

After his release, Ebie went into exile to continue his work with the ANC, but was abducted by apartheid-era security police from neighbouring Swaziland, tortured and sentenced to a second term on Robben Island, where he successfully completed two degrees.

After the release of all political prisoners and the election of Mandela as South Africa's first democratic president, Ebie served in various capacities, including as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Counsellor to Mandela.

In 2018, CBE honoured Ebie with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Comrade Ebie, as he was fondly known, recalled at the time how he had spent half of his adult life in prison but that he would do it all over again if he had to because of his firm belief in struggling for peace, justice and the end of the scourge of apartheid and racism across the world," said CBE Executive Director Yusuf Moosajee.

Ebrahim leaves his wife Shannon, a celebrated journalist who is currently Group Foreign Editor for the Independent Media group, and two children.



Ebrahim Ebrahim proudly took his two children onto stage with him to accept his Lifetime Achievement Award at the Congress of Business and Economics Tribute to our Heroes Gala Dinner from Nizam Kalla in December 2016.

From the CBE Archives

In this third episode we reflect on the founding of the CBE and its work which led to the branding of the CBE as a progressive movement.

1995	**The Gauteng Development and Growth Organisation (GAUGRO) was inaugurated. The CBE served on the executive during the term that the (GAUGRO) remained in existence.**
Mar 1995	CBE hosted Dr Swaraj Paul from Capharo Group UK at a meeting with local business people.
July 1995	CBE hosted a business delegation from India which included the Indian Merchant Chamber (IMC) and the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).
July 1995	CBE hosted a dinner with guest speaker Shamsher Singh, Regional Manager for Africa, from the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in Laudium.
Aug 1996	CBE initiated a Leadership Focus Project and hosted Minister Sydney Mafumadi and Minister Dullah Omar on the 'New Crime Plan and its Impact on Business'.
Nov 2004	CBE hosted an all-day seminar on 'Empowerment For All.' Participants included several Ministers and Deputy Ministers. The seminar culminated in a Gala Dinner where President Thabo Mbeki was the keynote speaker. The CBE also handed a cheque for 1,75 million to President Mbeki for the ANC election campaign.
Dec 2012	After a remission of several years, former executive members of the CBE got together to explore the re-establishment of the CBE, as there was still much work to be done. As a result, a Steering Committee was formed.
Jan 2013	The Steering Committee recommended the re-establishment of the CBE.
Apr 2013	CBE established an office in Johannesburg.
Apr 2013	CBE hosted a strategic workshop with a number of Business Leaders and Professionals, who unanimously endorsed the re-establishment of the CBE.
2014 to 2019	CBE hosted what has now become an annual calendar event entitled 'Tribute to our Heroes - our Legacy and Contribution to our Country". There are luminaries in diverse fields who have been recipients of the prestigious 'CBE –Ahmed Kathrada Excellence In Leadership Award'. The Covid-19 pandemic unfortunately halted the event in 2020 and 2021.
May 2014	CBE hosted a seminar by strategist Clem Sunter on 'The World and South Africa beyond 2014 - the latest scenarios, flags and probabilities' at the Wanderers Stadium.
Oct 2014	CBE hosted Michael Lalor, lead partner at E &Y Africa Business Centre on 'Trade Opportunities in Africa' at the Wanderers Stadium.
2015	CBE hosted a workshop on 'The Business of Family Business' facilitated by Mirza Yawar Baig at the Wanderers Stadium.

HOLIDAY HUMOUR

Every organisation has a basic skeletal structure of four bones:

1. WISH BONES, who spend all their time wishing someone else will do all the work.

2. JAW BONES, who do all the talking and very little else.

3. KNUCKLE BONES, who knock everything that everybody else tries to do.

4. BACK BONES, who get under the load and do all the work.

Consensus at a board meeting means that everyone agrees to say collectively what no one will say individually.

A new employee at ABC Foods got fired for dishonesty after he replied yes to a question from his manager: "Did you wipe your feet on the mat as you came in?" The company had no doormat.

A traveling salesman from Johannesburg was held up by a bad storm in Umhlanga one December, with foul weather expected to block the N3 for a further week. Advising his manager, he got a swift reply: "Your annual two-week holiday leave has been approved to start from yesterday."

Q: "How long have you been working at that office?"
A: "Ever since they threatened to fire me."

An unemployed man told his surprised friend that he had just turned down an offer to be the CEO and President of a footwear company. His reason was that the position offered no scope for advancement.

Fun Year-End for CBE

In an attempt to bring some relief after a second difficult year for all due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the CBE hosted a Fun Evening at the brand-new Galata Restaurant in Boksburg on 24 November.

Continuing with an earlier decision to acknowledge the spouses who make many sacrifices to allow their partners to go about their daily tasks, they were also invited to the event.

Also attending were members of the Advisory Committee and a few other guests who have a special association with the CBE.

The Turkish menu of meat and vegetarian platters and traditional deserts, specially overseen by Ashfaq Dawood, was complimented by everyone.

Besides the entertainment by Ridwan Dawood and Anil Rambaran, MC Fakir Hassen kept the evening going with his quirky comments as he handed out special framed citations to the members in line with the theme for the evening.

The citations highlighted some characteristics of CBE members in a fun way.

So, for example, CBE President Jay Pema received the Gandhi Look-Alike Award, with a voucher for round glasses and a dhoti; while Executive Director Yusuf Moosajee got the World's Greatest Gopher Award for always running around excitedly to ensure the success of CBE events.

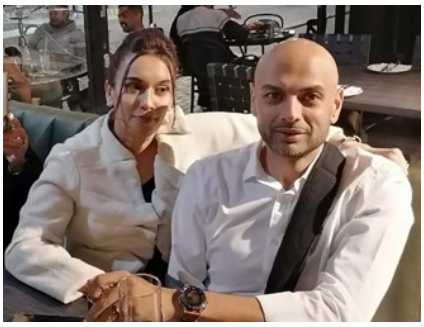
Many guests shared their compliments afterwards.

Khalik Mayet from the CBE Advisory Committee said he had thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

"Thank you for a wonderful evening. I really enjoyed the music, namely the old songs," said fellow Advisory Committee member Fuad Cassim.

Nazir Osman also enjoyed the music, as Ridwan sang some of his special favourite songs.

Shireen Ebrahim provided special gifts for the ladies who joined the event. At Hassen Mohamed's suggestion, husbands of spouses who could not join the event were also given one of the gifts.

















Affable Kamalesh Naran celebrated his 60th birthday with his CBE colleagues at the Fun Evening.
With him as the audience joined Ridwan Dawood in the traditional birthday song was his son Mehul.