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CBE Focus

Education is critical for youth empowerment

CBE Executive Director Yusuf Moosajee *contends that until the Government addresses the "army" of unemployed youth, crime will continue at unacceptable levels*

June is Youth Month, when on the 16th South Africans pay tribute to the student uprising of 1976 with a public holiday that recognises the role of the youth in the liberation of South Africa from the apartheid regime.

We celebrate Youth Day against a background of much turmoil. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years.

We must urgently interrogate the high levels of unemployment amongst the youth.

One of the first port of calls is our dismal education system, for which Government must take full responsibility for endemic failings.

"For South Africa to comply with both its own constitutional and international human rights obligations with respect to education, major change is needed urgently," Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa, said after a report by the organisation highlighted amongst others:

- Poor infrastructure in public schools, including sanitation.
- Badly damaged buildings that have never been renovated.
- Students being taught in overcrowded classrooms, impacting on their ability to learn effectively.
- Out of 23,471 public schools, 20,071 have no laboratory. Furthermore 18,019 have no library, while 16,897 have no internet.
- South Africa has one of the most unequal school systems in the world.
- Children in the top 200 schools achieve more distinctions in mathematics than children in the next 6,600 schools combined.

Whilst South Africa has many excellent teachers, conversely there is also a huge teacher constituency that is not properly equipped in effective teaching.

Research found that 79% of South African Grade 6 maths teachers were classified as having content knowledge levels below the level at which they were teaching.

> *One of the first port of calls is our dismal education system, for which Government must take full responsibility for endemic failings.*

In a staggering report by TIMMS on mathematics achievement amongst Grade 5 pupils, it was found that half of all South African pupils struggle with basis calculations.

Government must seriously take responsibility for this poor state of affairs and start creating an environment for an education renaissance, as the alternative is too scary to contemplate. Unemployment will continue increasing progressively with decreased educational levels.

This year's Youth Month is celebrated under the theme "Promoting sustainable livelihood and resilience of young people for a better tomorrow".

It is one thing to have fancy slogans and another to create a conducive environment for the education system and the youth of South Africa to have a better future.

Until the Government addresses the "army" of unemployed youth, crime will continue at unacceptable levels.

Added to this, unemployment in itself has a corrosive effect on investment and contributes significantly to much of the social unrest that has been seen in South Africa.

In his book 'Lions of Lenasia', which was released on Youth Day this month and reviewed elsewhere in this issue, Dr Ismail Vadi emphasises how the 4,000 learners at schools in that township who were instrumental in mobilising against apartheid education in 1980 realised the importance of academic development even as they engaged actively in the national liberation struggle in South Africa.

"They demonstrably rejected the misguided slogan, 'Liberation before Education'," Vadi said.

Many of those youth and those of the 1976 protests in Soweto still continue to play important roles in government, education, health, business, sport and other sectors today.

The resilience of the youth of 1976 and beyond taught us that change is possible with determination.

Perhaps it is time for the youth of 2022 to insist that Government implements an education system that equips them to become future leaders.

CBE endorses Declaration of the Conference for Democratic Renewal and Change

THE CBE was among 100 organizations that adopted a Declaration on 2 July 2022 at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre, Ekurhuleni, Gauteng Province, South Africa. This historical conference was organised by the Defend Our Democracy—an initiative of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation. We reproduce extracts from the document.

We, the representatives of diverse civil society groups, organised labour and business, faith-based and community organisations, academia, and the media, and all who live in South Africa who pledge allegiance to the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,* 1996 (the *Constitution*), declare for our country and the world to know that:

1. The *Constitution* which guarantees South Africans wide-ranging political and socio-economic rights and liberties in a participatory democracy - drafted to be a binding source of national unity - is under direct threat due to the insurrectionary and other nefarious activities of corrupt forces in our society that are opposed to democratic rule, the rule of law and constitutionalism.
2. The *Constitution* provides a framework for a *'political freedom and bread'* developmental agenda, to redress historical inequalities and uplift the material conditions of South Africans through the various generations of rights it enshrines. However, poor service delivery, organised criminal syndicates, large-scale corruption, and the systemic capture of the state by an organised network of compromised politicians, public servants and private business interests has over the past decade weakened our democracy and placed at risk the ability of the state to ensure that all our people live in dignity. This has been tellingly confirmed by the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture.
3. It is of grave concern that parliamentary oversight and the accountability of public representatives as envisaged in the *Constitution* have been seriously undermined by state capture and an electoral system that hinders accountability to citizens. This in turn has eroded the trust and the legitimacy of parliament, the provincial legislatures, municipal authorities, and the wider government in the eyes of people in South Africa.
4. Inequality, poverty, joblessness, and violence, which we inherited from apartheid, have been made worse by a decade of state capture, corruption, and maladministration by the government. We envisage a new economic model that is inclusive and leaves no one behind, that meets people's basic needs and is characterised by values of empathy, solidarity, and social and climate justice.

It is Time to Act

It is time for South Africans, irrespective of party-political affiliations, to confront the pain of the present and past.

Democratic renewal and change are overdue. We dare not fail in changing course to achieve the vision of those who went before us, and inclusion of those in more recent years, for whom no sacrifice was too great in their courageous actions to usher in and defend our democracy.

We believe a new politics for South Africa is imperative.

We need new and innovative ways of thinking about politics, mobilising and organising to re-ignite people's power. Our point of departure should be based on clear constitutional principles, economic inclusion, values of solidarity, social and climate justice, ethical behaviour, respect, collaboration, and transparency, which must advance participatory democracy and unity. The new politics must change the lived experience of joblessness, a stagnant economy, adverse climate change effects, and indefensible inequality. Similarly, the private sector must be held accountable to the duties and values of the *Constitution.*

Now is the time to take back our democracy.

Now is the time to defend our *Constitution*. We must make our constitutional democracy meaningful. It must enable the full expression of people's power, where citizens are empowered to become more active, rightfully exercising their political agency. We call for a democracy where the conduct, ethics and integrity of public representatives and public servants are beyond reproach; where openness, accountability and service to the people is the starting point and non-negotiable in practice.

We pledge our commitment to a constitutional democracy, the supremacy of the *Constitution* and the rule of law.

Our *Constitution* is based on a deep tradition of liberatory politics and embodies a binding social contract between the state and citizens in which we - as equal partners - are responsible for the progressive realisation of fundamental human rights and the effective and efficient rendering of quality services to all people, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, origin or class.

We have a duty to act.

We believe that when the state and its public representatives fail to fulfil their constitutional obligations and governmental responsibilities, we - individually and collectively - have a right and duty to hold them accountable in lawful and peaceful ways.

The following were among the key points of action in the document:

1. Campaigning for a New Electoral System
2. Reclaiming and Renewing our Democracy
3. The measure of a democracy is the quality of life and dignity of the people who live in that democracy.
4. Professionalising and Restructuring the Public Service
5. Combatting Corruption and State Capture
6. Standing up to the Destabilisation of Democracy
7. As civil society formations we will stand up to activities aimed at destabilising our constitutional democracy; acts of sabotage; the destruction of public infrastructure; the threats to, violent attacks on, and assassination of political opponents, whistle-blowers, activists and persons exposing corruption and state capture; xenophobic attacks and the co-ordinated propagation of disinformation. We will mobilise citizens in defence of our democratic constitutional order.
8. Build a popular movement for change.

Vadi book documents the role of Indian youth in the anti-apartheid struggle

by Fakir Hassen

A new book by veteran historian and political activist Ismail Vadi, 'Lions of Lenasia', documents the role of the Indian youth of the 1980s in the anti-apartheid struggle, largely through the activism of students in the sprawling suburb of Lenasia.

Lenasia was created in the 1950's to forcibly resettle the thousands of Indian families who had lived in various suburbs of Johannesburg for decades since their forebears first arrived from India from the 1860's inwards.

The book, marking the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Lenasia Youth League (LYL), uses a style of both archival research and first-person accounts from many of the youth of that era, some of whom now occupy leading positions in the democratic government, business, academia and the professional sector.

Vadi himself, also part of the youth movement at the time, served in the South African Parliament and as transport minister in the Gauteng Provincial government before his retirement.

Among the LYL leaders still serving in public office today are Kuben Naidoo, Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank; Sharmaine Balton, Judge of the High Court; Neeshan Balton, Executive Director of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation; Prof Shabir Madhi, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Professor of Vaccinology at Wits University and Ismail Momoniat, Acting Director-General of the National Treasury.

"To the credit of the founders of the League, they stressed the importance of academic development of its members even as they engaged actively in the national liberation struggle in South Africa. In this they demonstrably rejected the misguided slogan, 'Liberation before Education', Vadi said.

"The youth were the torchbearers of the liberation struggle in the 1980s and the book celebrates the contributions of a new generation in the freedom struggle," he added.

Vadi was commenting on the fact that the generation before this one had all been detained or imprisoned under the draconian apartheid-era security laws of the white minority government.

"It's important to record the local history of a community's struggle against apartheid," Vadi shared as he explained how 4,000 students from the four high schools in Lenasia at the time staged protests en masse against the discriminatory education practices that were inferior to those in white schools.

The action led to the formation of LYL, which in turn inspired youth from all communities across the country to rise up against apartheid.

It had a relatively small membership compared to other youth formations of the time such as the Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO), but its political influence was felt directly for over a decade in the community and more broadly in South Africa.

Although the LYL was disbanded in 1991, when it was replaced by the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in Lenasia, members used that experience to participate in building a post-apartheid South Africa.

In his foreword, Mandla Nkomfe, who was a member of the Soweto Youth Congress in the huge Black township neighbouring Lenasia, and is currently Deputy Chairperson of the Board of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, lauded the role of the LYL members.

"The thread that goes through this account is of young activists who were so moved by the injustices and oppression that visited their communities and their fellow countrymen and women that they made a lifelong commitment to socio-political transformation in South Africa.

"These campaigns helped to build a national movement against apartheid and later the creation of a united, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa," Nkomfe said.

Humour Time with CBE

A recruitment agency boss explained how they decided placements for three candidates by placing them in a room with 100 bricks, leaving them alone for two hours to discuss the bricks and then going back to see what they were doing with them.

This is what they listed as the criteria for placement decided about the candidates:

1. If they are counting the bricks, appoint them in Accounts Department.
2. If they are recounting the bricks, appoint them in Auditing.
3. If they messed up the whole room with the bricks, appoint them in Engineering.
4. If they are arranging the bricks in some strange order, appoint them in Planning.
5. If they are throwing the bricks at each other, appoint them in Operations.
6. If they are sleeping, appoint them in Security.
7. If they broke the bricks into pieces, appoint them in Information Technology.
8. If they are sitting idle, appoint them in Human Resources.
9. If they say they have tried different combinations yet not a single brick has been moved, appoint them in Sales.
10. If they have already left for the day, appoint them in Marketing.
11. If they are staring out of the window, appoint them in Strategic Planning.
12. If they are talking to each other and not a single brick has been touched, congratulate them and appoint them in Top Management.

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Veteran politician Ebie Ebrahim remained positive about South Africa

In the last pages of his autobiography "Beyond Fear" the late veteran activist Ebrahim Ebrahim remains positive about the future of South Africa despite all the challenges of recent years.

The book, which Ebrahim completed just six weeks before his passing, was launched at the Al Ghazali College in Erasmia. Almost a hundred people attended the launch on 22 June, which was done under the banner of the Congress of Business and Economics (CBE).

'He has seen it from the 40s and he says we have been through worse," said former ambassador Shirish Soni, a close friend of the Ebrahim family, in a panel discussion moderated by veteran lawyer Krish Naidoo.

Soni said a new kind of unity is now required, in which civil society has to take up the cudgels.

"Ebie (as he was popularly known) was a leader who followed," Soni said as he explained how Ebie had placed his total trust in him and other young activists when he was to be smuggled out of the country during the apartheid era.

Ebrahim's widow Shannon, who now works in the office of Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor, gave a candid account of her life with Ebrahim, saying that despite the age difference, they had a happy life with their two children.

Shannon shared how their teenage son is now going through a phase of depression because he was so close to his father.

"I can't remember Ebie speaking badly of anyone. I sometimes wondered how he could be such good friends with Roelf Meyer, (who was Minister of Police at the time) because he knew everything about when Ebie was kidnapped (from Swaziland and brought back to South Africa). Ebie embraced Roelf Meyer and forgave him and they went around the world, talking about how they brought about reconciliation in this country," Shannon said.

The title of the book really describes what kind of person Ebie was - human rights activist Yasmin Sooka

Commenting on the love that Ebie had for Indian cinema and music, Shannon said he had dreamed of one day taking the family to India, but his untimely death had ended that plan.

Celebrated human rights activist Yasmin Sooka said Ebie was a selfless person.

"He speaks in the book of his experiences through the eyes of other struggle activists. When you read the book, you get a real sense of the activists, people that we know, who really cared and were committed to a different value system. They cared about the transformation of South Africa and even an equal and egalitarian one. He epitomizes what was really good and noble about the struggle," Sooka said.

"The title of the book really describes what kind of person Ebie was," she said.

CBE member Sanjay Nana said they were initially concerned that not many people would turn up because of the bitterly cold winter evening.

"But to see that not one person left early and we filled a great number of seats was great – thank you Laudium for coming out!

Several CBE members responded to a call to buy bulk copies for the book for free distribution to libraries.

Picture highlights of book launch in Erasmia









Vaccine patent waiver at WTO hailed

This waiver and the other commitments secured at the WTO is also about pandemic preparedness, to enable developing countries to have the legal tools in place to address variants to Covid-19 in future and indeed, to prepare for future pandemics—Minister Patel

Fakir Hassen

The South African government, local vaccine manufacturers and organised labour have welcomed the agreement at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that developing countries can start producing their own vaccines without the permission of the patent holders.

South Africa and India first proposed the measures to the WTO, with support from a number of other developing countries.

The discussions at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva were triggered by a joint proposal by South Africa and India in October 2020 for a time-bound and specific waiver of certain provisions of the Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights agreement (TRIPS) administered by the WTO, to allow manufacturers in developing countries to produce vaccines without the patent-holder's consent.

The agreement came after a week of concerted efforts by the movers of the motion, with some developed countries and pharmaceutical companies initially opposing the wording of the waiver agreement.

Talks were extended by a day to finalise the agreement, which was concluded on 17 June 2022.

"The waiver is one element of a wider set of actions to build both innovation and production capability in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent," said Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Ebrahim Patel.

"South Africa has four vaccine initiatives under way. Our focus now is to ensure we address demand by persuading global procurers for vaccines to source from African producers.

"This waiver and the other commitments secured at the WTO is also about pandemic preparedness, to enable developing countries to have the legal tools in place to address variants to Covid-19 in future and indeed, to prepare for future pandemics," Patel added.

South African vaccine manufacturers unanimously welcomed the terms and supported the approach to reach agreement at the WTO.

"This will be an enabler to all institutions involved in Covid-19 vaccine development and manufacture in developing countries to focus on the task at hand unhindered," said Morena Makhoana, CEO of South African vaccine producer Biovac.

Professor Petro Terblanche, Managing Director of Afrigen, said the agreement will unlock manufacturing capacity on the African continent.

Afrigen is a South African company which has designed and developed the first South African mRNA vaccine, which is currently being tested.

Stavros Nicolaou, Group Senior Executive for Strategic Trade at Africa's largest pharmaceutical manufacturer, Aspen Pharmacare, described the agreement as a positive step for the diversification of global pharmaceutical supply chains and for manufacturing on the African continent.

"It achieves a balance between providing access to COVID vaccines in developing countries within a framework that still rewards much-needed innovation by the original patent holders. That this has come through agreement between multilateral parties augurs well for partnership in the pharmaceutical value chain," Nicolau said.

SA's largest trade union federation, the Congress of SA Trade Unions (COSATU) also welcomed the agreement.

"Significant advances have been made in areas that are crucial for public policy in South Africa, including in the overall architecture of the WTO and its ability to respond to development issues," COSATU said.



After an absence of two years, the CBE will once again be hosting our much-anticipated annual Woman's Month High Tea.

We look forward to hosting you once again. This year we have teamed up with HEELS International, (Helping Every Exceptional Lady), a group assisting women in business and empowering abused and disadvantaged women globally.

This event has always been well received by delegates present. It is a combination of inspiration, good food, and goodie bags as well as an opportunity to recognise women for the immense role they play in society.

This year the event will be held as follows:

Date: Saturday 13 August 2022

Venue: Palm Continental Hotel,
9 Church Street, Mayfair

Time: 2pm – 5:30 pm

For further enquiries or to book your table or seat contact the CBE office at 083 786 1960 or email info@cbeonline.co.za

Flashback to past CBE High Teas





World needs to support ILO in eliminating child labour – President Ramaphosa

FAKIR HASSEN

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has called on the countries of the world to unite in helping the International Labour Organisation (ILO) achieve its target of eliminating child labour by 2025.

Ramaphosa was addressing delegates at the weeklong 5th ILO Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour in Durban.

More than 4,000 delegates from governments, trade unions, the private sector, civil society, regional and international organisations, think tanks, academia, and youth and children from all over the world debated measures that are needed to achieve this, although many agreed that total elimination is unlikely in the three years left since the first International Conference on Child Labour was held in Oslo in 1997.

"The ILO has been at the forefront of the global effort to eradicate the practice of child labour. Not only has the ILO forged international consensus through instruments such as the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, but it has been active, together with its partners, to ensure that such instruments have a meaningful impact on the lives of the world's children," Ramaphosa said.

Child labour is an enemy of our children's development and an enemy of progress.

"Child labour is an enemy of our children's development and an enemy of progress. No civilization, no country and no economy can consider itself to be at the forefront of progress if its success and riches have been built on the backs of children," Ramaphosa said.

The president said that the conference would look at why millions of children are victims of exploitative labour practices, why this persists in some countries but less in



others, and what decisive interventions are needed to end these practices.

"The fragmentation of global supply chains, and how this has affected child labour in countries with extractives-based economies, is a matter that should be taken up by the ILO, business, labour, human rights activists and civil society," Ramaphosa said, adding that child labour co-exists with migration flows and socio-economic instability in developing economies.

"In a climate where millions are prepared to brave the harshness of deserts and rough seas in search of a better life, the risk of children being exposed to exploitative labour practices is high.

"The reality is that our prospects for eliminating child labour and achieving decent work are limited unless we change the structure of the global economy and the institutions that support it.

"Among other things, this requires patterns of trade and investment that are more inclusive, creating opportunities for developing economies to become more integrated into global value chains.

"They need to have the resources and the opportunities to industrialise, to advance up the production value chain and to provide their people with better jobs," Ramaphosa said as he called on all social partners to



adopt a 'Durban Call to Action' that focuses on the practical steps needed to take to make a difference.

Ramaphosa proposed a seven-step plan in this regard.

1. These are ensuring the full implementation by all countries of the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention of 1999;
2. universal access to social protection, with a specific focus on children and the vulnerable;
3. providing a basic floor of support for families with children;
4. free, equitable and quality education for all children;
5. intensifying efforts to end all forms of discrimination against the girl child;
6. expanding global supply chains to include poorer countries as part of efforts to achieve decent work and eradicate child labour; and
7. ensuring that companies and consumers are more aware of child labour and its effects, and that through their purchasing and investment decisions, they do not support exploitative labour practices.

"Without a conscious effort to achieve social justice, we will struggle to eliminate child labour," Ramaphosa concluded.