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CBE Focus

CBE — Soweto body sign historic cooperation document



The CBE and Soweto Business Collaboration (SOBCO) signed a historic Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC) in September to assist with developing the economy in Soweto and later elsewhere.

The CBE delegation comprised Jay Pema (President), Yusuf Moosajee, Rashid Chopdat, Kamalesh Naran and Shireen Ebrahim.

The Soweto team was represented by Sibusiso Nxumalo, Dineo Qabang, Thabang Mowale, Ththuka Dladla and Bheki Twala, who represented both SOBCO as President and the Township Economy Council South Africa (TECSA)

In his opening address Jay Pema said the signing was an important day for both parties.

"It's a wonderful occasion to celebrate," Pema said as he expressed the wish for it to result in growing the township economy so that individuals could earn a decent living and empower themselves.

Pema introduced Shireen Ebrahim and Rashid Chopdat as the lead CBE persons in the implementation of the MoC.

"Nation-building and building a future for our country as well as to share ideas, promote ethical leadership is definitely our priority," Ebrahim said.

Twala concurred that this MoC could be a game changer as he was confident that there would be joint activities to support Soweto locals. He said that he looked forward to setting up a pilot project with the CBE.

Twala also hoped that it would be a long relationship and come up with strategies for developing Soweto, encouraging CBE, its members and all businesses to to take advantage of the Africa Free Trade Agreement.

Twala informed the gathering that he was also President of TECSA, a body committed to bringing about structural changes in townships. He said that TECSA had 27 Chapters so far and was growing.

As part of their strategy, they had been meeting various organisations and political leaders, including President Cyril Ramaphosa and Gauteng Premier David Makhura, both of whom had given blessings for their current and future initiatives.

Twala invited the CBE to attend the launch of TECSA's Gauteng chapter and their brand-building programme titled 'Township Economy Month'.

In their official social media post, SOBCO described the event as a day of significance, as both parties had agreed on mutual organisational collaboration and cooperation to lead the way for economic growth by helping small businesses and individuals become financially sustainable.

Naran, who attended the launch, said it was a privilege to represent the CBE at the launch and to commit the organisation to make a significant contribution to helping develop township economies.

Naran outlined a brief history of the birth of the CBE as the Business and Economic arm of the Transvaal Indian Congress, its role in the liberation struggle and its close ties with the ANC over many decades.



CBE President Jay Pema (R) and SOBCO President, Bheki Twala shake hands after the signing



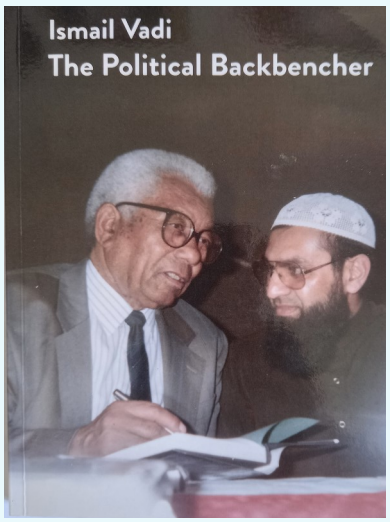
CBE Executive Director Yusuf Moosajee (L) and CBE Board Member signs as witness under the watchful eye of SOBCO President, Bheki Twala



Some of the delegates receiving a copy of the book of activist and human rights lawyers and former CBE President Krish Naidoo

Book Review - The Political Backbencher by Ismail Vadi

Reviewed by:
Reneva Fourie



That someone so modest had the courage to write about himself for the sake of preserving history is inspirational, given that Comrade Vadi is usually very private and reserved.

As with all autobiographies, Vadi's narrative begins with his family background. In addition to giving one a sense of his birth town, Kliptown, before the Group Areas Act, this background information dispels the myth of general Indian opulence.

Before moving to Lenasia, his current hometown now of over fifty years, Vadi lived in a zinc home that had no electricity and used the bucket system. The importance of sharing and caring was deeply embedded in his upbringing, and he states, "…If there is an expression that captures who we are, it is 'service to humanity'".

The book meanders through his life as a student, teacher, lecturer and his various platforms of activism. With absolutely no sense of entitlement Vadi describes the honour and wonder of the experience of serving as an MP for the ANC in the first democratic parliament, and the subsequent terms.

As a living testimony to the inclusive nature of our movement, Vadi went to the swearing-in ceremony in traditional Islamic garb. Accordingly, he states, "If this was to be a true democracy that recognises racial, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, I should be free to dress as I deemed fit".

In addition to giving one a lesson in history and religion, the book teaches one about governance. Vadi uses his experiences to explain our transition to democracy, and the workings of parliament in the national and provincial spheres.

He provides profound background on the challenges in key sectors such as education and communications. And while being astute on domestic politics, an equal astuteness is displayed on the international front.

The book contextualises the internationalist character of the movement, assisting to locate our passion for human rights including the rights of Palestinians and the people of Western Sahara. The views on parliament as an instrument of peace are well worth considering.

Despite the richness of its content, 'The Political Backbencher" is filled with scintillating tidbits, providing insight into the personal aspects of the political, thereby giving a human touch to history.

It conjures both smiles and tears as Vadi interweaves his life story with descriptions of many comrades whom we have grown to love, some of whom have now passed.

Gender-balanced acknowledgements are given to those who had influenced him over the years, whether it be well known persons like Comrade Ahmed Kathrada or the lesser-known taxi driver, Rashaad.

Some of the tales shared are so typical of the naughtiness of comrades and evokes surprise that it had not been censored. Vadi's clothes might be conservative, but his sense of humour definitely is not!

"The Political Backbencher" is a delightful and easy read. It is a lightly told narrative with many endearing anecdotes; yet it is pregnant with many powerful messages and lessons. In the midst of distortions of history and developments in our country that sometimes causes despair,

"The Political Backbencher" is a feel-good book. History is depicted simply and accurately, free of jargon and agendas. Ismail Vadi does not shy away from the truth. The weaknesses in the movement are frankly raised.

But in line with his former profession as an educator, he locates the weaknesses within good practices of the past, thereby presenting examples of how our challenges can be overcome. What a beautiful autobiography by Dr Ismail Vadi!

Entrepreneurship

Financial discipline – the R50 concept

Early in my journey, I met a very influential entrepreneur—he was an engineer by profession.

He was much older than me, and I was young and naïve. I was boasting to him of my early travels in the Far East and internally within Southern Africa. He said, "money spent was not earned by you". He added, "go and spend R50, and see how long it takes you to make R50".

Being an arrogant and boastful young Turk, I took on the challenge. Spending the R50 was done in a flash, but earning the R50 took me a whole day, as any sale is only completed after the money is in your possession. It made me realise the value of money.

I always use this principle in my entry interview with clients, and it has raised a few eyebrows. If this concept was taught to children by their parents, there would be more financial discipline in many of the family businesses that I have consulted to.

Many family businesses tend to use their daily takings as their stipend. Common causes for taking money out of the business in this way are peer pressure for paying for family gatherings; and educating children beyond their means.

I have come across clients who have raked up enormous debt to sustain their lifestyles. The reasoning behind this has been the "keeping up with the Jones's" phenomenon.

Education is a priority, as education is one of the facets that assist an individual to economic freedom. However, some families send their children to specific schools to be noticed, and to give them social standing.

If the majority of the extended family's children are in private schools, then they have to send all the children to private schools. This is often financed by loans at high interest rates.

When we speak to our clients and make them understand the value of R50, many of them say "we cannot embarrass our children by not sending them to private schools." This phenomenon is rampant within family businesses."

• *Ahmed M. Seedat is an international Business Consultant, Author and Coach specialising in Family-owned Businesses. He is a CBE Board member and heads the Research Desk.*

The fish rots from the head down...

The fish rots from the head down. It's a saying in Turkey and other places that means: the problem starts at the top.

Corruption at Government level and its various State owned Enterprises (SOE's) has become so endemic and rife. In order to protect their turf and new found wealth malfeasance and gangster type tactics has become part of the modus operandi.

Law abiding and patriotic citizens that are privy to the malfeasance remain hamstrung as reporting the wrongdoings could come at a price both to their and their families lives. South Africa does not have a proud track record on protecting "Whistle Blowers".

The murder of Babita Deokaran on August the 23 is one tragic example. Deokaran was a senior financial officer at the Gauteng Department of Health and an important witness in an investigation of corruption within the department of Health.

It is believed that Deokaran was helping authorities' link senior political figures to irregular procurement deals and contracts.

Global research indicates that there are more Women prepared to help unearth instances of misdeeds, maladministration, cronyism and theft than Men.

Women in the workplace who wish to blow the whistle on malfeasance they witness but who fear the consequences of reporting such information have good reason to be cautious. New research shows that female whistleblowers experience more retaliation than male whistleblowers.

Our support needs to go out to whistleblowers out there exposing corruption and malpractice within the companies and organisations they have worked in.People like:

- Moses Phakwe-Assassinated – ANC Municipal Councillor who had attempted to expose corruption in the Municipality.
- Dr Paul Theron-Dept. of Health, delivering health care service in Pollsmoor prison.
- Mike Tshishonga- Masters office department of Justice- attempted to expose corruption and nepotism.
- Takalani Murathi- Senior manager in supply chain for the Manufacturing and Engineering SETA - Raised concerns about irregularities in the tender process.
- Xola Banisi – Human Resource department of Bloem water. Assassinated for exposing corruption to two tenders at Bloem water.
- Segomoco Sibambato- Manager at the Transport, Education and Training Authority- Raised concerns that her CEO had flouted procurement procedures.
- Roberta Nation – worked for the State Security Agency's medical aid scheme – Reported on fraudulent activities made in relation to claims.
- Ismail Mukaddam - complained about the collusion in the baking industry.
- Not forgetting Babita Deokaran, and a whole host of whistleblowers from South Africa not mentioned here.They are the true heroes.

President Cyril Ramaphosa says whistleblowers are important guardians of our Democracy, as they raise the alarm against unethical acts and practises in Government and Organisations.

If the Government is serious about rooting out corruption than the legislation in place protecting whistleblowers, and witness protection offered by the Department of Justice and Correctional Services should be reviewed and implemented fully.

Far greater support and protection should be given to the whistleblowers and their immediate family. The system of reporting malfeasance anonymously should also be reviewed and tighter controls implemented.

The failure of those in power to adequately care for, and encourage whistleblowers results in a diminution of the trust of its citizens. Whistleblowers in South Africa are heroes under fire……

Yusuf Moosajee

"Check that CV thoroughly first!"

Here are some genuine job application and CV bloopers.

- Covering Letter: "Please disregard the attached CV; it's totally outdated."
- Work History: "Left last four jobs only because the managers were completely unreasonable."
- Reason For Leaving: "It was hard work."
- Key Skills: "I am a rabid typist."
- Education & Qualifications: "Have repeated courses repeatedly."
- Hobbies and Interests: "My interests include cooking dogs and interesting people.

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Business and Professionals welcome to join the CBE. Our contact details are:

+2783 786 1960 | +2711 837 5728

yusuf@cbeonline.co.za

www.cbeonline.co.za

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National Orders for Dr Essop Jassat and former Ambassador Mosie Moolla

By FAKIR HASSEN

Veteran activists Dr Essop Jassat and a former South African ambassador to Pakistan, Mosie Moolla, were among the recipients of National Orders at the Presidential Guest House in Pretoria on Freedom Day in 2013.



National Order recipients Dr Essop Jassat, Mosie Moolla and Quarraisha Abdool Karim shortly after the event at the Presidential Guest House in Pretoria.

"We didn't do what we did to get the Order, but because we felt that we had to fight the injustices that there were in this country. We suffered, but we didn't want this to be repeated for our children," Jassat said.

"We played our part and it's good to get recognition, but the important thing is that the objective of a free South Africa has been attained and we must build on it," Moolla added.

The honours list for that year included an unprecedented seven Indian South Africans and Enuga Reddy, an Indian citizen who led the fight against apartheid at the UN for decades.

Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim received the Order of Mapungubwe in Bronze for her internationally acclaimed research into HIV Aids.

"This award is validation for the work being done by lots of teams across the country in the important challenge facing us. Having that recognised at this level is incredibly important, because we have a lot more work to do and hopefully it will inspire other people to join the efforts already under way to prevent HIV infections and the consequences of being infected," Abdool Karim said.

The Order of the Baobab in Bronze was presented to Lenasia-based community worker Suraya Khan, popularly known to all as "Aunty Bibi", while the same order in Silver went to Lead SA originator Yusuf Abramjee and pioneering skin cloning plastic surgeon Dr Ridwan Mia.

Zarina Hutchinson collected the Order of Luthuli in Silver made posthumously to her mother Amina Desai, who was banned for many years in South Africa before eventually going to Ireland.

"It was a very emotional moment. My mother was a feminist to her dying day and a firm believer in human rights. I put that on her gravestone in Dublin. She was born a Muslim and died a Muslim, but didn't believe that it was mutually exclusive and that it was possible to be a feminist as well, like many other Muslim feminists in this world," Hutchinson said.

Laila Turkmore-Reddy , daughter of veteran diplomat Enuga Reddy, who started the fight against apartheid led by India in 1948 at the UN and continued to do so for many decades, received the Companions of Oliver Tambo in Silver award on his behalf.

Dr. Abubaker Asvat to be awarded the Order of Luthuli

Activist and Azapo leader Dr. Abubaker 'Hurley' Asvat has been recognised for his services to the poor and freedom fighters.

On November 11, President Ramaphosa will confer on him the Order of Luthuli in Silver Posthumously, when he presents National Orders to a number of people in different categories. National Orders are the highest form of recognition that South Africa bestows on deserving citizens, past and present.

The citation for Dr Asvat's award says that it is being made "for his enormous contribution to the lives of freedom fighters and the poor by generously providing medical care, which was desperately needed. He was 'the people's doctor.'"

He held several leading positions in his lifetime including Health Secretary of Azapo, President of the Transvaal Cricket Board (1979-1981), and President of the People's Education Committee (Lenasia) (1986-1989).

His work included starting a clinic in a squatter camp; providing medical care to the poor; assisting with the establishment of the Community Health Awareness Project (CHAP), and developing a handbook on health as well as a mobile clinic.

Asvat was known as 'the People's Doctor' for his untiring efforts to assist the needy in Soweto before he was gunned down in his surgery there in 1989, has also been honoured with a road named after him.

But this is no ordinary road – it is the main link between the sprawling townships of Lenasia, where Asvat lived, and Soweto, where he had his surgery. For decades, residents of the two dormitory townships created by the apartheid government had to travel long distances just to reach the other side, until the link road was built after 1994.

The Abu Asvat Institute for Nation Building, founded in 2004 to honour the memory of the doctor, hosted a function on Human Rights Day in 2012 to declare the link road "Abu Baker Asvat Drive."

"The naming of the road linking Lenasia and Soweto after Abu is a fitting tribute to him," the Institute said in a brochure prepared for the occasion.

From the CBE Archives

In this second episode we reflect on the founding of the CBE and its work for the first two-years which led to the branding of the CBE as a progressive movement.

Nov 1991	CBE hosted an ANC Task force team in a seminar where the ANC's Economic Policy was debated. The seminar was addressed by Jay Naidoo of COSATU, Tito Mboweni and Feroz Cachalia from the ANC.
Nov 1991	CBE presented a paper at a fundraising dinner attended by Nelson Mandela in Lenasia.
Jan 1992	CBE was part of a Co–ordinating Committee on VAT hosted by COSATU.
03/04/93	CBE hosted a delegation of Indian industrialists at the Carlton Hotel.
11/10/93	CBE hosted the 'Report from the World Trade Centre – The Economic Perspective- structure your business accordingly'. At the Carlton Hotel. There was an address by Andrew Feinstein and a report from the Department of Economic Planning of the ANC on lifting of sanctions and what opportunities this presented.
30/10/93	CBE set up an Inaugural meeting of Indian traders from all over the Transvaal province at Jiswa Hall in Mayfair to organise themselves into local associations.
27/07/93	CBE hosted a seminar titled "The Economy in Crisis – The Role of Banking and Finance in Promoting a Recovery" at the Carlton Hotel. Representatives of all the major banks attended. The main address was by Professor Vella Pillay.
25/01/94	CBE hosted a business delegation from the Federation of Indian Exporters Organisation (FIEO) at the Carlton Hotel.
28/03/94	CBE hosted a dinner where speakers on the topic "Reconciliation for Economic Growth and Development" included President Setar Motani; Joe Hlongwani, President of SOUTACOC and Premier Designate of Gauteng Province Tokyo Sexwale at the Balalaika Hotel in Sandton.
06/08/94	CBE hosted a Pakistani Trade Delegation led by the Minister of Commerce Chaudry Ahmed Mukhtar and the Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau Mian Habibulah at the Carlton Hotel.
08/08/94	CBE hosted a dinner of the first official visit by a Government and Business Delegation from Malaysia at the Carlton Hotel. The delegation was led by the Minister of International Trade and Industry Seri Dato Rafidath Aziz.
25/11/94	CBE hosted members of the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce. The high-level delegation was led by Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Chabildas Mehta.









These pictures were taken at various high-powered CBE events. In the first former Gauteng Premier Tokyo Sexwale is seen with late CBE president Setar Motani and Essop Pahad from the Presidency. In the last picture, Patrice Motsepe is pictured with some of the guests

AKF and Accountability Lab carries out youth voter programme

By Nikita Pillay and Irfaan Mangera

In preparation for the Local Government Elections on 1 November 2021, the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation (AKF) Youth Activism Programme partnered up with Accountability Lab South Africa, to host a series of voter education workshops across the various community based Kathrada Youth Activist Clubs.

The workshop series focused on linking civic education by unpacking the in's and out's around Local Government Elections, the process of voting and the importance of exercising the right to vote.

The workshops also delved into the importance and role of young people in strengthening our democratic systems from a grassroots level.

This project titled 'Youth for Civic Change', highlighted the importance of youth in driving civic change from within our respective communities. It involved going into communities where our youth clubs are situated; rolling out discussions around elections, voting, the role of local government and the role of a voter.

In addition, we hosted a voter registration drive and series of online posts and engagements to encourage youth participation in the electoral process.

The workshop sessions granted us access to many Kathrada Youth Club members, the majority of whom are yet to cast their first vote in a national election of any kind. Our workshops began by posing the question, "Do you, as a young person, plan on voting in the upcoming local government elections?"

While few will be voting, the majority remain unsure for a multitude of reasons, mainly, not understanding what or who they would be voting for in Local Government Elections.

Others shared feelings of general disillusionment with existing political parties and detachment from political processes, even though it is always said that the "youth are the future and have the power".

Our workshops allowed us to engage with the young people of our youth clubs and listen to their experiences and lived realities.

One participant was involved in a dialogue where he tried to explain why he thinks voting is a waste of time and won't change his life in any way. He expressed that his grandmother was someone who was very active in the community and always tried to participate in local projects and by voting.

The facilitators took time to try and explain that the process of change is incremental, taking a lot of effort, mobilization and time.

Another participant noted that the political space in his community is dominated by older people and felt that this deterred a lot of youth in the area from being vocal and from participating.

We addressed these concerns through a series of discussions followed by civics academic resources to help broaden understanding.

At the end of our workshops, members who were unsure at the beginning of the sessions indicated that they would now take to the polls and cast their vote.

Others indicated that they felt empowered in knowing that they could still participate in decision-making processes and bringing about change even if they were unable to vote in this particular election.

Significantly, it seemed that many of the participants were inspired to become more involved in the governance of their communities and indicated an interest in organising further activities through the Kathrada Youth Club in their area.

The workshops highlighted the grave and harsh conditions that many communities face. These range from poor or no service delivery, ageing and dilapidated infrastructure, no jobs or economic activity, no schools, libraries and safe places to play, the prevalence of drugs and other harmful substances, and the huge scourge of violence.

While we address the broader issues, it is clear that solutions must be community driven and owned to ensure that sustainable measures can be put in place to deal with these issues. This is why the need for grassroots civic organising is so important for a healthy and prosperous democracy.

This project is part of ongoing work to strengthen civic education and participation by youth in their communities. In preparation for the election, we have also registered 50 election observers across the province of Gauteng.

This has been done to ensure that we as an organisation also play our role in ensuring that the election is conducted freely and fairly.

The Kathrada Youth Activism Programme has already grown to 20 youth clubs across the province of Gauteng in its two years of operation.

There is a huge desire among youth in the country to be part of changing their lives and that of their fellow community members, and this movement-building programme allows us the space and opportunity to do so, whilst also carrying forward the legacy and values of our founder, Ahmed Kathrada.

AKF welcomes the support of funders, donors and justice-loving people and organisations to ensure that we can sustain this important foundational work in democracy building.