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Pandor says 'ANC has lost its glory'

Former minister says party needs selfless leaders who prioritise service to the people

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ANC veteran and former International Relations and Cooperation Minister Naledi Pandor has said the party has lost its glory and that South Africans now look at the once-revered liberation movement with "disdain, horror and shame".

Pandor made the remarks while delivering a lecture during the centenary celebration of former ANC Women's League president Gertrude Shope on Sunday.

Shope, who died in May this year, was a former Member of Parliament and veteran activist. She would have turned 100 this month. "Ma' Shope would have been dismayed at our faltering progress," Pandor said.

Pandor's comments come after ANC National Executive Committee members Malusi Gigaba and suspended Police Minister Senzo Mchunu had also recently criticised the party.

Speaking about Shope, Pandor said she had been a keen observer of the country's development over the past 30 years of democracy and noted several advances in education, science, innovation and technology. However, Pandor said Shope would also have been deeply troubled by widespread corruption and the erosion of values among leaders.

"She knew of the corruption that has dragged down the revolutionary morality of our leaders. She was aware of our failures at local government level and of the inadequate capacity to serve, which is so prevalent in our public service," Pandor said.

"She was keenly aware of the decline of her beloved organisation, the African National Congress (ANC) — a decline not just in electoral outcomes but also in the party's ability to reflect the values of leadership and commitment to serve the people."

She called on women in the movement to rise and reclaim the ANC's historic mission after the ANC experienced a decline in support, losing its parliamentary majority for the first time in May 2024.

The ANC's loss led to the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU), which has been fraught with tensions, especially between the ANC and former opposition parties such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Freedom Front Plus (FF+). Pandor said Shope would have insisted that the ANC, its Women's League, and the Youth League need selfless, committed members who prioritise service to the people above all else.

"Comrades, this is our biggest fault line," she said.

She also warned against leaders who put personal interests above the organisation, undermining its revolutionary traditions.

"We have forgotten that we exist to serve the people. We need to bring that back — by scrutinising our leaders carefully and ensuring that if they fail in their duties, we hold them to account, no matter their position."

She added that Shope would have stressed the importance of revolutionary morality and genuine renewal.

"We shouldn't be talking about renewal in abstract terms. We must talk about it practically. We need branches that respect members, meet regularly, hold political discussions, and allow everyone to become members of the ANC."

"I believe she would say: it is possible, comrades, to arrest the slide. It is possible to restore our lost glory. And we have lost

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We have lost our glory... let's not pretend about it. The people are looking at us with disdain, horror and shame...

NALEDI PANDOR

our glory... let's not pretend about it. The people are looking at us with disdain. The people are looking at us with horror and shame."

Pandor likened the task of renewal to scrubbing a burnt pot.

"It's like that pot at home when you've burnt the cabbage. If you use the sponge scourer, that blackness won't go away. But if you use the hard one, the copper wire — you will get rid of it. We need that kind of renewal."

She said Shope would have urged the ANC to go back to the branches.

"When you have strong branches, you have a strong ANC. And she would say: alongside those strong branches, let us have active members in service to the communities in which we organise."

Pandor's comments come after Mchunu likened the ANC to "a person walking on the edge of a cliff," urging the party to regroup before it is too late.

Gigaba, a former cabinet minister, had reportedly said that the ANC's national executive committee had "failed in its objectives".

The ANC subsequently said disciplinary action would be taken against the two. Political analyst Solly Rashilo said last week that the remarks by Gigaba and Mchunu revealed serious fractures within the ANC.

Another political analyst, Professor Theo Neethling, said the ANC appears increasingly thin-skinned about criticism from within, expressing doubt on the party's cohesion and image as a "broad political church."

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JAPAN's team compete in the five ribbons group final of the 41st FIG Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at the weekend. | AFP

EXCELLENCE

Durban North pupil wins KwaZulu-Natal Woman Chess Player of the Year award

MERCURY CORRESPONDENT

A 13-YEAR-old chess prodigy from Durban North College, Kaylee Grace Budhram, has been named Woman Chess Player of the Year for KwaZulu-Natal.

The award was presented at the annual KZN Chess Awards evening, hosted at the weekend by the KwaZulu-Natal Chess Federation in partnership with the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.

The recognition follows a highly successful 2024 season for Kaylee Grace, who secured a series of impressive victories. She clinched the title at the South African Junior Chess Championship before going on to represent the country at the African Youth Chess Championship, where she earned a silver medal.

Her performance on the continental stage also saw her awarded the Woman Candidate Master (WCM) title by the World Chess Federation (FIDE).

Reflecting on her latest accolade, Kaylee Grace said: "It's honestly such a huge honour. I didn't expect to win something like this so early in my chess journey, and it makes me feel really proud. It shows me that all the hard work, late nights, and tough games were worth it. It also makes me want to keep improving and make my

province and country proud."

Her journey began in 2019, when she taught herself the basics of the game and honed her skills by playing online during the Covid-19 pandemic, said her father, Rishi Budhram. She later rose through the competitive ranks, representing KwaZulu-Natal in the Under-8, Under-10, and Under-12 categories.

Asked what she liked about chess, Kaylee Grace said: "At first, I just thought chess was fun and cool because I am very shy, and this is a game for two people or you can play alone against the computer. But then I started winning games and realised I could actually be good at it. I kept going because I love the challenge; it's like solving a puzzle every time. And when I got to represent South Africa, that made me want to work even harder."

Her father said Kaylee Grace's preparation for tournaments is rigorous, with daily training sessions focused on strategy and game analysis. He described the family's immense pride in her achievements, highlighting her "extraordinary discipline and talent."

Balancing chess with school and athletics requires careful planning, Kaylee Grace admitted: "It's not always easy! I have to plan my days really well, and sometimes

to support parents, to deliver infrastructure where it is most needed.

"A number of provinces are facing severe financial constraints; they are struggling to pay for learning and teaching materials, for scholar transport, infrastructure programmes and other essential services," Gwarube said.

"We have facilitated the development of financial recovery plans for each province and that will include a verification of warm bodies, to flush out ghost teachers who drain the cost of employee budgets and also to flush out ghost learners who drain the norms and standards budget."

"We have a thorny road ahead of us to turn around the financial situation of provincial departments of education, but we have no other choice; we must cut our



13-YEAR-old Kaylee Grace Budhram was named KZN Woman Chess Player of the Year. | SUPPLIED

I miss out on things to focus on chess or school. But I enjoy athletics too, it helps me stay fit and focused. I just try to give my best in everything and ensure I don't burn out."

Beyond the chessboard, she excels in 100m and 150m sprints, and also enjoys soccer and volleyball. Her older sister Cadence plays chess for the University of KwaZulu-Natal, while her younger sister Zara, 8, has just started playing competitively.

Looking ahead, Kaylee Grace has ambitious goals, including earning higher titles such as Woman FIDE Master and Woman International Master.

"Right now I'm training more seriously, working extra hours, and playing in tougher tournaments. I'm also studying my games to learn from my mistakes. I know it's going to take time, but I'm excited to keep pushing and hopefully earn those titles one day," she said.

FEES WAIVED

Over 500 000 driving licence cards await printing as backlog persists

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SOUTH Africa's driving licence woes are far from over, but the Department of Transport (DOT) says it expects the backlog in cards to be tackled by the end of the year.

South Africa relies on a single machine to print licence cards. It has been operational since 1998 and is prone to breakdowns.

The most recent of these took place in February, rendering the machine inoperable until May, as it was being repaired by its original manufacturer in France. The effect of this printing backlog is still being felt today.

Department of Transport spokesperson Collen Msibi told SABC News recently that even though the Drivers' Licence Card Agency (DLCA) has printed over 800 000 cards since operations resumed in May, there was still a backlog of 539 000 cards.

However, he said the department remains confident that the backlog will be dealt with by the end of the year.

"On a daily basis we get more than 10 000 applications. So, that is why the backlog is difficult to go down. But we've given ourselves until December to complete the backlog," Msibi said.

The backlog has been reduced from 747 000 in May, when the DLCA extended the working hours of its staff in order to reduce the backlog.

In July, the DOT bowed to pressure from advocacy groups and announced that it would waive the fees associated with temporary driving licence cards and halt penalties for motorists caught with expired licences.

Transport Minister Barbara Creecy said motorists would be permitted to drive with an expired licence card for up to three months before facing any fines, provided they showed proof of application for a new card prior to the current card's expiration date.

Motorists, therefore, must keep the receipt issued for the new licence in their car or wallet to serve as proof if they are stopped at a roadblock.

At the time, Creecy also said her department was working on an interim solution with the Government Printing Works to lessen its dependence on the old printing machine.

The government currently has plans to introduce a new 'smart' driving licence; however, the contract is before the court after Creecy asked the Auditor-General to investigate allegations of an irregular procurement process that led to Idemia being selected as the preferred bidder.

The department has lodged a high court application for a declaratory order regarding the tender.



THE licence backlog could be resolved by the end of 2025. | IOL

CHALLENGES

Education department working on financial recovery plans for provinces

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BASIC Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube highlighted that several provincial education departments in the country are facing severe financial constraints, but that they are facilitating the development of financial recovery plans for each of them, which include flushing out ghost learners and teachers.

KwaZulu-Natal's education department was among those severely affected by financial constraints.

Gwarube and Deputy Minister Dr Reginah Mhaule reflected on the state of the education system at the National G20 Basic Education Indaba yesterday.

Held in Cape Town under the theme:

"Taking the G20 to the People – A National Indaba for Advancing Quality Foundational Learning through Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Education Professional Development," the indaba aims to strengthen the sector's drive to ensure participation in the G20 is felt at all spheres.

Having traversed all nine provinces, the Indaba will see the sector gather to deliberate on crucial provincial insights ahead of the Ministerial Meeting of the Education Working Group in October.

In her keynote address, Gwarube said that ECCE is not an optional extra.

"It is the foundation on which everything else rests. If we fail to get quality foundational learning right, we undermine every other reform," Gwarube

said.

"Through the provincial izindaba, we have created a space where voices from every corner of our country could be heard, where ideas were tested, and where solutions emerged that speak directly to the realities in our schools and communities."

"This Indaba is about consolidating insights received from all the provincial editions, elevating the voices of our people, and shaping the future of education in the spirit of solidarity, equality and sustainability," she said.

Gwarube added that they've heard from voices from across the provinces.

She said in the Eastern Cape and in Limpopo, communities are finding ways to expand access to early childhood care,



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MAKE THE BEST USE OF WHAT IS IN YOUR POWER, AND TAKE THE REST AS IT HAPPENS.
| **EPICETUS**