NUM prepares legal action over Eskom restructuring

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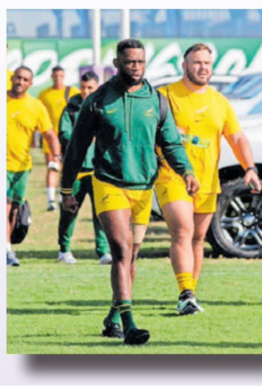
THE MERCURY

RACISM STOPS WITH ME



Rassie's dilemma: Kolisi injury threatens the Bok' 'Bomb Squad'

ConCourt rejects appeal on Ramaphosa impeachment

Political fallout continues as accountability issues are raised

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THE Constitutional Court's refusal to urgently hear the African Transformation Movement's (ATM) challenge to the suspension of President Cyril Ramaphosa's impeachment proceedings has sparked a fresh political row.

The ATM and MK Party have questioned the impact of the ruling on accountability, while political analysts warn that the process could be dragged out until Ramaphosa leaves office.

The apex court in a ruling delivered yesterday rejected the ATM's bid to appeal directly against a Western Cape High Court order suspending public hearings by Parliament's Impeachment Committee, pending the outcome of Ramaphosa's review application.

The Western Cape High Court last month barred the Impeachment Committee from holding public hearings until Ramaphosa's review application, which seeks to overturn the Independent Panel's report finding that he had a case to answer, is finalised.

In its ruling, the Constitutional Court said the outcome of Ramaphosa's review application could make the interim interdict moot and found that it was not in the interests of justice to hear the matter at this stage, given the imminent determination of the review application in the Western Cape Division of the High Court. The court said it had also considered an application by the MK Party and United Africans Transformation (UAT) to file a replying affidavit.

"It has concluded that no case has been made out for leave to file a replying affidavit," the court said.

The court refused both the application for leave to file a replying affidavit and the ATM's application for leave to appeal directly, saying: "Consequently, leave to file a replying affidavit and leave to appeal must be refused."

ATM national spokesperson Zama Ntshona said the apex court had missed a "golden opportunity" to settle an important constitutional question with implications beyond the current dispute.

"The Constitutional Court lost an opportunity...to clarify a matter which was of a constitutional nature."

He said one of the issues the ATM wanted clarified was whether a lower court could interdict an order of the apex court.

Ntshona added that the decision could set a "bad precedent" and accused Ramaphosa of using legal avenues as a "delaying tactic" to slow down the process of determining whether the president should be held accountable.

"When we challenged the matter in the apex court, it took us 15 months before we could get a verdict on the matter," Ntshona said.

He said the dispute was ultimately about equality before the law.

"There must not be laws that are made particularly for the president."

He said the ATM believed there was prima facie evidence supporting all four complaints it had raised previously and that the party would meet Ramaphosa in the Western Cape High Court to ventilate the matter.

Ntshona also accused the courts of moving beyond their role in monitoring the implementation of orders and into Parliament's terrain, arguing that the legislature should be allowed to perform its constitutional oversight responsibilities.

ATM's criticism of the ruling was echoed by the MK Party. National spokesperson Sifiso Mahlangu described the decision as "expected" and "predictable".

"It may not be today, but Cyril Ramaphosa will be held accountable, and justice will prevail," he said.

Political analyst Kenneth Mokgatlhe-Kgwadi, a fellow at the Middle East African Research Institute, said the ruling would disappoint those who wanted Parliament to exercise its constitutional oversight role over the president.

"It is unfortunate that the apex court is invited, but out of desperation, by members of the legislature to do the work that Parliament fails to do, which is to hold members of the Cabinet accountable."

He said Ramaphosa had had sufficient time to review the outcomes of the Section 89 committee but only pursued the review when his position was under threat.

"Ramaphosa had all the time in the world to review the outcomes of the Section 89 committee, but he chose not to do that until recently when he could see that his position was endangered," Mokgatlhe-Kgwadi said.

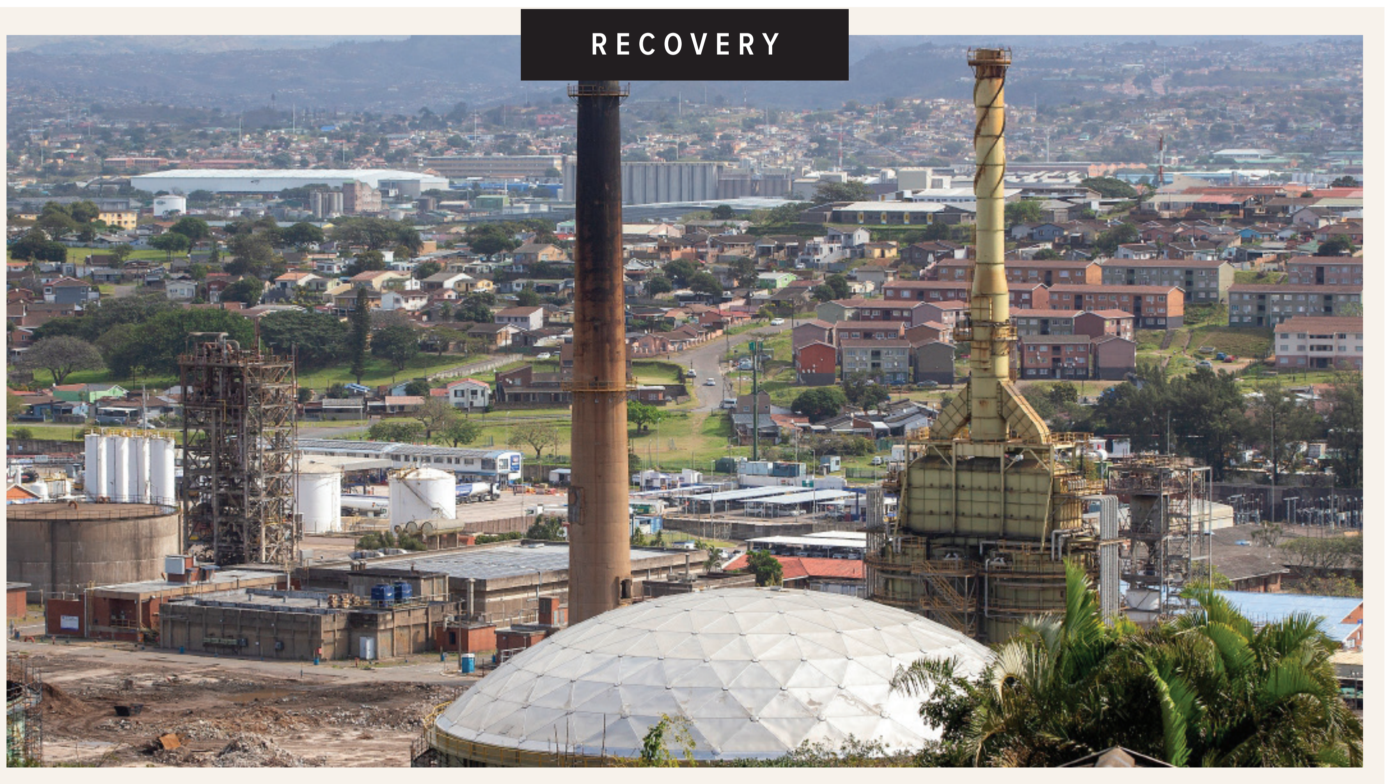
He accused Ramaphosa of using legal avenues to frustrate Parliament's responsibility. While the decision could be viewed as a victory for Ramaphosa, Mokgatlhe-Kgwadi said it would be a "colossal disappointment" to South Africans who wanted the three arms of government to exercise their checks and balances.

Political analyst Sandile Swana said the only issue to consider now is the date when the actual application will be heard.

He said due process still had to be followed and suggested that the Constitutional Court's decision indicated that it believed justice could still be served through the pending review.

But Swana said there was a clear political concern that Ramaphosa 'could be playing for time'. He said there was concern among elected members of Parliament that by the time the process got off the ground, Ramaphosa could have already left office.

RECOVERY



RECONSTRUCTION work at the Engen crude oil refinery in Wentworth, Durban. A major explosion and fire in December 2020, halted refining operations. The refinery once produced 120 000 barrels per day and while operational, was the second largest crude oil refinery in Durban, supplying about 17% of the nation's fuel. Instead of a full demolition or dismantling, the site was converted into an active commercial fuel storage and import terminal. LEON LESTRADE ANA Studio

MADLANGA COMMISSION

IPID exposes police 'hit squads' killing suspects

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LEN John, Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) Deputy Director for Investigations in KwaZulu-Natal, has alleged that SAPS 'hit squads', operating under the guise of task teams, have been killing suspects linked to cash-in-transit (CIT) robberies, taxi operators and drug syndicates.

Testifying before the Madlanga Commission of Inquiry yesterday, John highlighted that rogue police involvement in hit squads had been a long-standing problem and is increasing. He told the commission that between 1 April 2023 and 31 May 2026, IPID investigated more than 300 cases. Of those, 77 involved the deaths of 149 people at the hands of police task teams. He added that all cases under IPID investigation were still awaiting court determination.

John told the commission that in the majority of cases, only a few firearms were recovered at the scenes relative to the number of deceased, and many of those killed had no connection to the cash-in-transit robberies alleged by police.

He raised concern that "the dockets are closed almost immediately once the person is killed," adding that police link the deceased to an existing docket without conducting further investigations, including checking whether the firearms were linked to cash-in-transit robberies.

In one of the matters, the suspect, a taxi boss, who had gone into hiding in the Hibberdene area after allegedly receiving threats from rival taxi owners, was nevertheless alleged by police to have been planning a cash-in-transit robbery, despite his whereabouts being unknown.

"There is a possibility that the taxi owners would have identified where he went to," he said.

The police found the suspect at a holiday cottage he rented with his girlfriend.

John testified that the task team members alleged they received information that the suspect possessed one firearm and was instrumental in illegally securing explosives for CIT heists from Limpopo and Gauteng. The task team allegedly knocked on the door and identified themselves as police officers.

According to John, the suspect opened the door, after which the members entered the premises and searched the lounge, finding nothing suspicious. Task team members took the suspect's girlfriend to the car to search it, he told the inquiry.

"Two SAPS members were armed with R5 rifles and pistols. It is alleged that the suspect wanted to change and the members accompanied him. The members alleged that the suspect grabbed one of the SAPS members' R5 rifles while at the same time pulling his firearm from under a pillow.

"The member alleged that he and the suspect lost balance. When the suspect got up, he fired the pistol in the direction of the member, missing him and his colleague. The member fired four rounds at the suspect, fatally wounding him," he said.

He said IPID investigators requested the police case numbers in which the deceased was sought; however, the commander of the task team failed to provide any case numbers to validate their claim that the deceased was in fact sought by the police for any offences, let alone CIT offences. The deceased's girlfriend has gone into hiding after allegedly being threatened by task team members.

"The position of the deceased at the crime scene contradicts the version of the members of the task team in relation to his attempt to draw a firearm from underneath a pillow as he was found at the base of the bed while the pillow was at the head of the bed. The only outstanding investigation in this matter is the statement from the girlfriend who is still being sought," he said.

John said there were clear indications that the task team members' version had been fabricated to conceal an unjustified shooting.

AMBITION

Lamola calls for 50% intra-SADC trade during SA's leadership

HOPE NTANZI

INTERNATIONAL Relations and Co-operation Minister Ronald Lamola says South Africa will push to increase trade between SADC member states to 50% and ensure the region benefits from its critical-mineral wealth during its 2026–2027 leadership.

Lamola was speaking in Durban yesterday as South Africa formally accepted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Chairpersonship at the Council of Ministers meeting.

He said South Africa's priorities would include peace, security and stability, accelerating industrialisation, expanding regional trade, developing infrastructure and strengthening social and human capital.

South Africa targets greater regional trade

Lamola said South Africa would focus on agricultural transformation, critical-mineral beneficiation, increased regional trade and the development of regional value chains.

The SADC region holds nearly 30% of the world's proven critical-mineral reserves, including approximately 50% of global cobalt reserves and 20% of graphite reserves, he said.

However, Lamola said the region needed to ensure its mineral wealth translated into economic and social development rather than continuing a pattern in which its resources benefited economies outside the region.

"Reversing this pattern requires us to beneficiate our resources, build regional value chains and trade more with one another," Lamola said.

Trade between SADC countries currently stands at about 20%, which Lamola said was too low given the potential within the region.

He said the African Export-Import Bank estimated in 2018 that the untapped potential of intra-Africa trade stood at US$84 billion, with the SADC region accounting for US$53 billion.

"During our tenure, we will ensure the implementation of our Skukuza retreat objectives to achieve 50 percent intra-SADC trade and harnessing of critical minerals for beneficiation at source," Lamola said.

Infrastructure and jobs are top of the SADC agenda. Lamola said infrastructure development would also be a priority, with South Africa seeking to expand and modernise systems connecting countries across the region. This includes reliable energy, efficient transport corridors, modern ports, integrated digital networks and dependable water systems.

"Without these foundations, regional manufacturing cannot expand," Lamola said.

He said manufacturing accounted for only 10% of GDP and could not generate employment on the scale required by the region.

Lamola said social and human capital development would also form part of South Africa's agenda, particularly given Africa's young population. The median age across Africa is 19, while nearly 60% of the population is under 25, he said. By 2030, one in four young people globally will be from Africa, Lamola said.

"This means our economies and level of job creation must be at the same par with population growth," he said.

A focus on gender equality, climate resilience and disaster-risk management would also underpin the priorities.

"These considerations must run through every aspect of our regional programme because our development cannot be inclusive if it is gender-blind, leaves young people behind or fails to prepare our communities for climate and other shocks," Lamola said.

Lamola urged SADC states to back orderly migration. Migration is also expected to feature during South Africa's chairpersonship.

Lamola said South Africa was experiencing an increasingly vigorous public debate around irregular migration, the integrity of national borders, access to economic opportunities and pressure on communities and public institutions.

CRISIS

SA's unemployment rises as manufacturing, other sectors shed jobs

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SOUTH Africa's unemployment crisis is deepening as jobs disappear from some of the sectors that have traditionally provided work to millions of people, with experts warning that weak economic growth, declining investment and rising costs are making it harder for businesses to absorb new workers.

This comes as the country's official unemployment rate climbed from 32.7% to 33.6% in the second quarter of 2026, with about 345 000 more people joining the ranks of the unemployed, pushing the number of unemployed people in the country to about 8.5 million, according to the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey released by Statistics South Africa.

The latest figures have raised questions about whether South Africa's economy is creating enough jobs, with employment declines recorded mainly in community and social services, mining, agriculture and manufacturing. NWU Business School professor Raymond Parsons said the latest figures were an "unhappy picture" but reflected a problem that went deeper than the latest quarter.

"Unemployment in SA is not just a cyclical phenomenon, but remains basically a deep-seated structural one," Parsons said.

He said South Africa's economic growth remained trapped in a narrow 1% to 2% corridor, making it difficult to generate employment at the scale needed.

Parsons also pointed to a worrying decline in investment, saying the value of new projects announced in the first half of 2026 had dropped by 81% to R137 billion, from R718 billion in 2025.

"A worrying feature is the weak fixed investment outlook," he said.

He added that the answer was ultimately economic growth, with reforms and investment needed to move the economy beyond its current low-growth path.

"We need to go for growth," he said.

Momentum Group Foundation youth employment specialist Nkosinathi Mahlangu said the figures were particularly concerning for young people, who continued to face barriers when trying to enter the labour market. He said the problem included a mismatch between the skills young people acquire and what employers actually need, while many young workers were being pushed into short-term jobs that offered little security.

"Manufacturing and agricultural job losses are a concern as these are sectors that gave us entry-level jobs for our youth to grow from," Mahlangu said.

He said high fuel and electricity costs were placing further pressure on businesses, while unpredictable weather was making it harder for agriculture to provide permanent employment.

Mahlangu said job creation would require the government and the private sector to work together, with training institutions aligning programmes with actual labour-market demand. "Entrepreneurship shouldn't be a fall-back option, but a viable part of economic activity, where sustainable businesses are thriving and creating jobs as an outcome," he said.

But agricultural economist Wandile Sihlobo cautioned against reading the latest agricultural employment decline as evidence of a sector in collapse. He said the farming sector employed about 944 000 people in the second quarter, down 2% from the previous quarter but up 4% year-on-year.

"While primary agricultural jobs fell from the previous quarter, these figures are generally better and well above the sector's average of 799 000," Sihlobo said.

He warned, however, that higher fuel and fertiliser costs, rising electricity prices and the expected El Niño drought could place pressure on agricultural employment going forward.

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) said the youth unemployment rate had risen from 45.8% in the first quarter to 47.4% in the second quarter, meaning almost one in every two young people in the labour market was without work.

The agency said the figures showed that youth unemployment could not be addressed simply by telling young people to acquire more skills, arguing that the economy also needed to create enough opportunities to absorb those skills.

It also pointed to the 36.4% of young people aged 15 to 24 who were not in employment, education or training, calling for greater public and private investment in manufacturing, infrastructure, agro-processing, the green economy and digital industries to create jobs at scale.

Bennie van Zyl, general manager of TLU SA, said the employment crisis could not be blamed on a single issue, arguing that businesses needed an environment that encouraged investment and growth.

"There's a lot of things that get together to actually create work and create jobs," Van Zyl said.

He pointed to policy uncertainty, labour laws, poor infrastructure, rail problems and struggling ports as obstacles to businesses trying to remain productive and profitable.

"For us, that is the reason for that, our government's policy, crime, corruption. Those things are pushing down on people to make sure that I want to get involved in South Africa within this economy and environment. And that is not something that happens," he said.

Van Zyl warned that continued pressure on businesses could affect young people the most. The Department of Employment and Labour described the latest figures as a "sobering reality check", saying the labour market was under sustained pressure from structural weaknesses, sluggish investment and limited capacity to absorb new workers.

It said job creation required a coordinated response between government and the private sector, with interventions such as Operation Vulindlela and the Presidential Employment Stimulus needing to be accelerated.