

SUNDAY TRIBUNE

Gauteng, pay back the money

THE government's latest initiative to collect toll fees in Gauteng is a step in the right direction.

Any discussion of the subject must take into account that in 2013 the Supreme Court of Appeal found the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project had been lawfully instituted.

This week government reduced to 30c (from 58c) the amount motorists will pay per kilometre. And those who drive cars will never pay more than R225 a month. Previously, it was R450 a month.

Buses and taxis ferrying passengers don't have to pay toll fees. Nor do motorists from outside Gauteng as long as they don't pass 30 gantries a year. It might sound good, but those in other provinces do pay.

The lower tariffs mean the government will have to find more than R30 million every month to service the loans that were taken to improve the roads. They intend getting the money from taxpayers around the country.

So, instead of KwaZulu-Natal getting better hospitals, proper classrooms or a more resourced criminal justice system, we will be helping to pay for roads that most in our province will hardly use.

It is not fair, but to ensure "we move South Africa forward" it is arguably worth the sacrifice.

However, it is now time that Gauteng motorists pay up. They use the roads and it is only fair that they pay for the use.

Keep it real

THE Sharks may have ended a losing streak on Friday that started before Easter, but a lot of it had to do with the opposition's poor quality.

The Reds were woeful and turned over the ball more than a dozen times in the first half alone, yet the Sharks managed just two opportunistic tries from scrum-half Stefan Ungerer and 11 points from the boot of Francois Steyn.

The powerful pack is littered with international stars who look impressive, with Bismarck du Plessis and Marcell Coetzee the shining lights. The forwards have dominated the set pieces but possession is still being squandered by a back line that has too little punch going forward or on defence.

While the Sharks may have displayed character, it's quality that is required of contenders in Super Rugby. There's still much room for improvement, starting with this Friday night's game against the Melbourne Rebels at Kings Park.

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Stop assuming there is a hidden agenda

SPECIAL Investigating Unit head Vasanthrai Soni SC announced in January that he would step down. He had served 18 months.

He cited personal reasons: his wife was ill and he had to make a choice between being a corruption-buster or a husband.

The fallout was immediate. Corruption Watch head David Lewis said there had been so much instability in the corruption fighting institutions that news of Soni's resignation was not a shock.

Lewis told Stephen Grootes of Eyewitness News it was hard to understand why political leaders "allow this instability" in organisations such as the SIU, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the Hawks.

MP Glynnis Breytenbach released the DA's view: "The DA notes the resignation of SIU boss Soni. This follows reports stating he has tendered his resignation, allegedly due to 'intensely personal reasons'. Whether or not this is the main reason remains to be seen.

"After the long-standing state capture of the NPA, and the recent politically motivated suspensions at the SA Revenue Service, the SIU appears set to be the latest victim of a politically expedient ANC in government, whose sole fixation seems to be to protect Number 1 and his deepening network of patronage.

"This is the wanton disregard for our State institutions we have come to expect from President Jacob Zuma's government."

Trade Union Nehawu issued a statement saying: "We believe that his resignation was long overdue and it is nothing but camouflaged surrender by a man who knew that he had lost the confidence of his employees.

"Despite his best efforts and those of his sympathisers to present him publicly as a cutting edge leader, he was an intolerant, stuffy conformist who became a polarising figure within the institution."

The Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution's Lawson Naidoo said it was an unhealthy situation. "The only people



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who can benefit are those speaking to a broader account of corruption and wrongdoing under our law."

Google "Vas Soni resignation" for more examples. The almost universal undercurrent to this story was that someone, somewhere was lying and Soni had been forced out.

On May 18, Brand South Africa chairwoman Chichi Maponya stated: "Brand South Africa has learnt with sadness of the passing of former chairwoman Anitha Soni. South Africa has lost a passionate and committed brand ambassador. Soni led the rebranding of the International Marketing Council to

Brand South Africa. It was also during her tenure that Brand South Africa began to focus on the domestic market as well as the international. This was based on the understanding that a successful nation brand is built by citizens.

"Her commitment to developing the South African brand from the inside out also found expression in her commitment to social development projects. She supported the education and development of women throughout the country and continent. She contributed immensely to the drafting of South Africa's national tourism policy."

Anitha and Vas Soni met in 1987 and they married in 1990. Vas had a long and illustrious career as a journalist, lawyer, lead investigator into corruption at prisons and acting judge.

Pause to reflect on the fact that we had in this couple two remarkable South Africans, both commanding respect from their peers and colleagues, who went through the past six months in physical and emotional

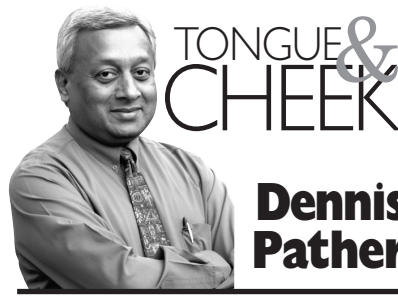
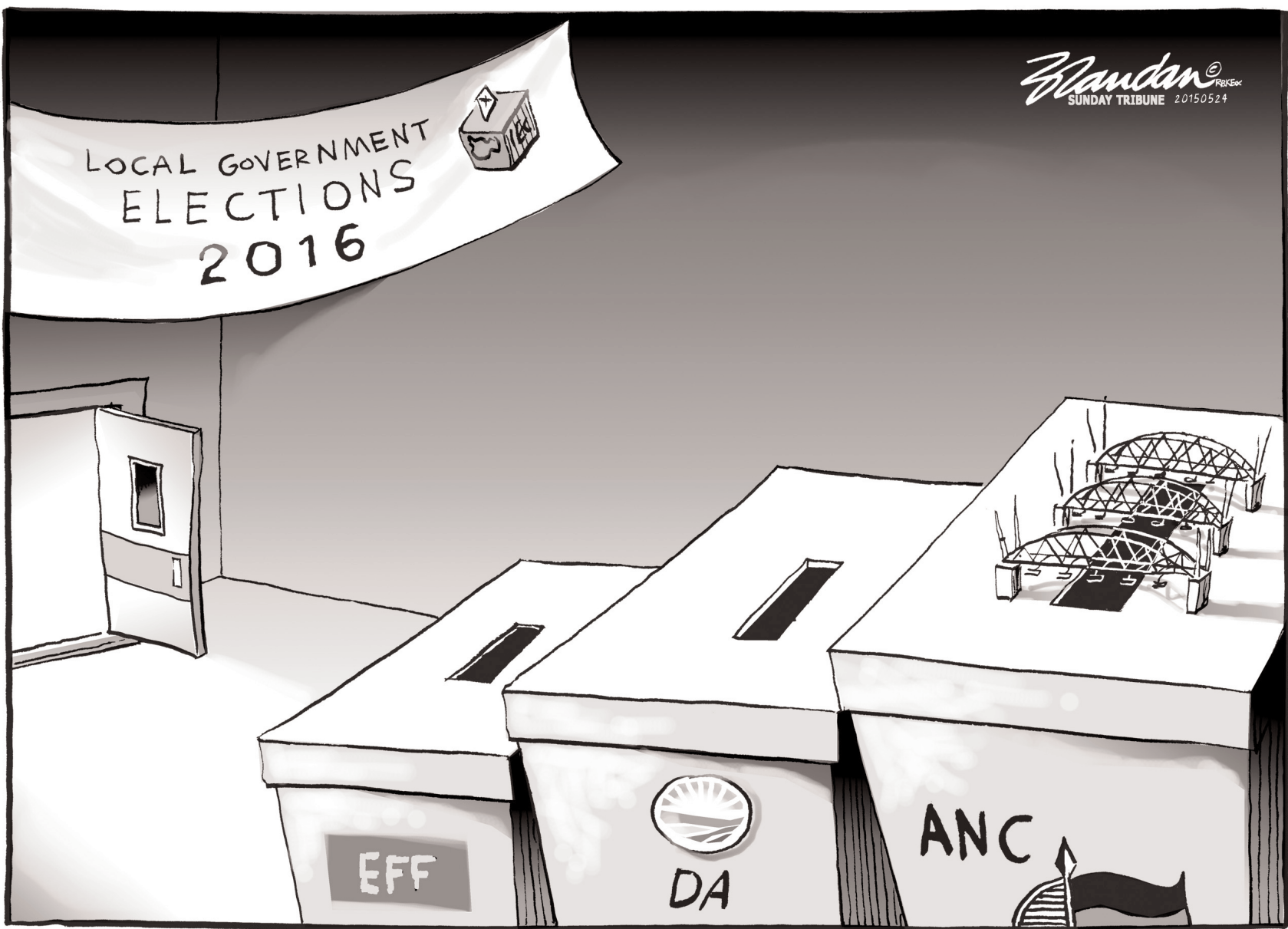
pain. And the overall narrative in our media was that someone was lying. We need to stop this.

Yes, corruption is rife. Yes, there are political machinations at play. But to trample roughshod over the feelings of a couple who have more than played their part in building our country simply because some of us believe there is a hidden agenda is inhuman.

Many in the media believe a story must be "hyped" to appeal to readers. If there is no evidence to support wrongdoing, hint at it; draw spurious correlations with unrelated incidents and suggest that somewhere, somehow, "Number 1" is behind it.

I do not expect my colleagues in the media to blindly lap up statements issued by officialdom. But can we agree that we need to be a compassionate nation before we are a distrustful one?

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Danny's juggling two hot potatoes

THE most reliable figures from Statistics SA estimate there are more than 54 million people in the country today.

So, when it comes to choosing who should lead our various forums in politics, judicial matters, civic affairs, sport, labour, business and the like, there shouldn't be any concerns about a shortage of skills and talent.

If that is so, why do so many of our leaders insist on hogging two and sometimes three positions at a time – and in a few instances not doing justice to any of them.

Among the more prominent of job jugglers is Blade Nzimande, who holds the critical position of Minister of Higher Education and Training, yet insists on moonlighting as general secretary of the Communist Party.

What about Baleka Mbete? The prominent businesswoman chairs the ANC. I think she handles the two roles competently. It's when she pretends she's also an impartial Speaker of the House that the trouble starts.

Closer to home, we have the classic example of eThekweni mayor James Nxumalo, who does a great job for our city but is now involved in an ugly political spat because he wants to double up as ANC chairman in the region.

As a resident of this city, this worries me. I would prefer him to give his undivided attention to the mounting problems on his slate.

Which brings me to my point. Does soccer supremo Danny Jordaan actually believe he can juggle two hot potatoes in the air for any reasonable length of time without dropping one?

Few people have any doubts he has the ability, composure and experience to head our national soccer organisation, Sifa.

He has already served the game with distinction, and his role was pivotal in us securing the 2010 World Cup.

His role as an ANC Member of Parliament and involvement in the civic affairs of Port Elizabeth hold him in good stead for his new role as mayor of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro.

But – and it's a big but – can he do justice to both at the same time?

As Nelson Mandela Bay's new mayor, he faces a growing groundswell of anger and frustration from residents over service delivery.

He will also have to fight off a determined bid by the DA to unseat him in next year's municipal elections.

We also know how seriously South Africans take their sport, so Jordaan can expect the soccer fraternity to be equally demanding of his time and efforts at Sifa.

There's an old saying, Mr Jordaan, that people should avoid biting off more than they can chew, in case they choke.

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King's stance on women unfortunate

IN HIS recent speech to traditional leaders, King Goodwill Zwelithini complained about men having been disempowered because the government had given their first wives the power to veto additional marriages.

The king's criticism is unfortunate, given the burden African women in this province have historically carried due to what is erroneously termed customary law.

This speech, like others the king has made recently, conveys the impression that he speaks for all black Africans in this province.

That is not true since other allegiances, including Bhaca and Hlubi, also exist.

His references to pre-colonial times, too, suggest a Zulu homogeneity that never existed. Tens of thousands living in the then Natal colony had never been part of the Zulu kingdom, and the widespread Zulu ethnic identity which exists today is a product of processes set in motion by colonialism and cemented by apartheid.

If African women under apartheid were doubly oppressed by race and gender, the oppression of women in this province was triple, thanks to the codification of what the government termed customary law in 1878 – the infamous Natal Code.

This codification (only in Natal) was to "ensure control of the natives" who could not be controlled by "civilised law". As one legal academic has put it, this law was what the whites thought was good for the Africans.

It also imposed a unity that did not exist among those subject to it, since customs, and the flexible, unwritten laws associated with them, varied (and still do) between one clan or region and another.

Women became perpetual minors, subject always to the authority of a



MY View
Mary de Haas

man – father, husband, brother or son – even if they suffered gross injustice at their hands. Only under certain circumstances could they become "emancipated" from these controls and achieve adult status.

According to women minor status was a reflection, too, of Victorian England's obsession with hierarchy, including between men and women.

Gender relationships in the type of horticultural society that existed in pre-colonial KZN, where state formation was in its early stages, would have been more nuanced.

It is more appropriate to see them as complementary and interdependent, given the strict division of labour. Men's dependence on women's economic and child-bearing contribution, and the need to retain good relationships with women's natal families (since marriages were about creating alliances) were themselves checks on excessive abuse of male power (and in such societies women's status and power tended to increase with age).

This entrenched discrimination went hand in hand with the rapid social changes taking place, especially of an economic nature.

When the KwaZulu homeland came into being, two codes operated, one in Natal and the other in KwaZulu. In the early 1980s, under pressure from the Inkatha Women's Brigade, the KwaZulu government earned accolades



The word of King Goodwill Zwelithini is not above that of the government.

for abolishing these hated provisions of the code (but it also surreptitiously inserted new, highly repressive policing clauses linked to the apartheid government's Total Strategy).

However, the damage had been done, with generations of men and women conditioned by the entrenchment of female subservience.

When I was researching marriage, men would tell me that compared with Zulu women, Xhosa women were too independent (although a third of marriages in Durban in the early 1980s were between Zulu and Xhosa).

In the last academic paper David Webster wrote before he was assassinated, he described how Thonga men found it useful to adopt a Zulu identity because that increased their likelihood of employment on the mines.

Women, however, rejected it because they saw their status as far better than that of Zulu women.

King Zwelithini's unconditional

support of polygyny is also regrettable. Polygynous marriages invariably generate tensions, which can be minimised if husbands are able to spread their time, and economic support, equitably among wives.

However, far too many men married to only one woman fail to maintain their families, and the problem is compounded when men – most of whom cannot afford it – marry two or more wives (or father children by different women).

That is the height of irresponsibility because the long-term losers are their children. It is this irresponsibility which the king should speak out against.

It is also important to place the position of the king in context. There are 10 kings in South Africa whose role, like those of the traditional leaders who fall under them, is largely ceremonial and advisory.

Although there are disturbing moves to give them more powers, they are not part of democratic governance and, like the queen of England, should not interfere in it.

There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of many of Zwelithini's loyal subjects to see him as "above" government. The fact that his speeches do nothing to dispel this serious misinterpretation has worrying implications for democracy.

All the traditional leaders – especially the Zulu king – are paid handsomely by taxpayers, so there is no reason for any further funding for cultural ceremonies – especially as the Ingonyama Trust is sitting on a surplus of millions of rand.

● De Haas writes this in her capacity as a social anthropologist who has researched the subject extensively and as a research fellow of UKZN's School of Law. She was formerly programme director of social anthropology.