

EDITOR'S VIEW

# Be grateful for religious freedom

SOUTH Africa might have produced a few dodgy leaders, but we have also produced many of substance. Take King Goodwill Zwelithini for example. He is a member of the Anglican Church but this weekend he hosted a Diwali celebration at the Ondini Palace in Ulundi. It was the fifth such celebration and in keeping with his tradition of reaching out to various communities.

A few years ago, he visited the Grey Street Mosque in Durban to wish Muslims well before the fasting period. He also has a close relationship with the Jewish community in South Africa.

One of the guests at the Ondini Palace celebrations was Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a man who has also reached out to various communities throughout his life.

Buthelezi said the Diwali celebrations were much needed in the troubled country.

"Diwali is a celebration of light, so by celebrating it we also acknowledge that there will be light regardless of what we are facing as a country," he said.

A few hours later, Premier Sihle Zikalala joined Hindus at the Durban Diwali Festival.

Addressing the gathering, he said the provincial government viewed Diwali as part of the traditions and heritage of KwaZulu-Natal.

He also reached out to people of all faiths.

"Unity and peace in KwaZulu-Natal must be the foundation upon which we anchor the dreams and aspirations of our citizens – be they Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Muslim or those who embrace African spirituality."

We are fortunate to have leaders of the calibre of Zwelithini, Buthelezi and Zikalala because, in some parts of the world, the god you choose to pray to could result in you getting into serious trouble, even death.

A few months ago, the US State Department released the latest instalment of its annual international religious freedom report.

According to the report, 80% of the world's people live in a place where religious freedom is under attack.

The worst culprits are Saudi Arabia, China, Russia and Myanmar.

In Saudi Arabia, there is no freedom to practise a non-Muslim faith in public.

In China, between a million and two million Uighur Muslims are being detained in "re-education" camps.

Russia has labelled Jehovah's Witnesses as extremists. The Russians arrested about 200 people, mostly Muslim, for "offensive" public speech.

Meanwhile, in Myanmar, attacks on the Rohingya people began more than two years ago yet there has been little in the way of justice.

The atrocities, carried out by the army and Buddhist extremists, included the looting and burning of villages and shops, mass killings and gang rapes.

We should use the Diwali celebrations to be thankful for what we have in South Africa.

And we should resolve to work harder to achieve what we need.

## The Quote

Although no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new ending

CARL BARD  
everydaypower.com

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# Mashaba's resignation from DA beginning of the end

Grand experiment of party governing Africa's financial capital with EFF's permission over

JUGGERNAUT



KANTHAN PILLAY

"HOW long do you give Herman Mashaba?" I was asked in a radio interview last week. "Three weeks!" I confidently replied.

In fact, it took three days from my prediction.

At a press conference this week, the mayor of Johannesburg announced his intention to resign from the DA and step down as first citizen, effective November 27.

Mashaba's decision to resign is a direct response to the election of former DA leader and former Western Cape Premier Helen Zille as federal chairperson of the party.

"The election of Helen Zille as the chairperson of federal council represents a victory for people in the DA who stand diametrically opposed to my beliefs and value system, and I believe those of most South Africans of all backgrounds," Mashaba said.

It's the beginning of the end for a grand experiment, which saw the DA governing Africa's financial capital since 2016 with the permission of its ideological opponents, the EFF.

But let us step back for a moment and put this in perspective.

If Joburg were a country, it would be the ninth-largest economy in Africa, displacing Ghana and knocking Tanzania out of the top 10.

Joburg's gross domestic product clocks in at \$76 billion ahead of Ghana (\$68bn), Tanzania (\$61bn), Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$48bn). The city economy is bigger than the combined GDP of our neighbours Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, eSwatini, and Zimbabwe. And that figure does not include the neighbouring megacities of Ekurhuleni and Tshwane.

The 2016 municipal elections saw the ANC lose its majority in Joburg for the first time since 1994. The ANC managed to get 121 seats out of 270, leaving it significantly short of the 135 needed to run the metro.



DA LEADER Mmusi Maimane and Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba following Mashaba's announcement of his resignation from the DA. | KAREN SANDISON African News Agency (ANA)

The DA had even fewer seats at 104. This left the EFF with 30 seats as effective kingmakers, but the EFF had made it clear ahead of the elections that they would not support the ANC under any circumstances.

Herman Mashaba as DA mayoral candidate entered into a Faustian pact with the EFF. The EFF would support Mashaba's mayoral candidacy but would not enter into a coalition government with the DA.

This effectively left Mashaba running the city, but with the EFF having veto power as no legislation could be passed without the party's support.

This support came at a price though, and that price ran contrary to established DA policy in many cases.

The first thing to go was an ambitious plan by outgoing ANC mayor Parks Tau

to build bicycle lanes throughout the city.

EFF leader Julius Malema said people living in the suburbs should be patient and allow those living in shacks to get houses before bicycle lanes could be built.

"EFF government will not build bicycle lanes as long as people still live in shacks," Malema said during the launch of the party's election manifesto.

"We want to build houses and roads before bicycle lanes. Let's get our priorities straight. Let the rich be patient while we give services to the poor."

Mashaba dutifully complied. The bicycle lane project was mothballed.

Second, DA policy favours empowering multiple small businesses to provide services to municipal governments. The EFF favours a big government model

with the municipality itself being the primary employer.

As a result, Mashaba began a process of "insourcing"; with workers employed by small businesses being brought onto the city payroll. This included specialised fields such as electrical engineers and security services.

I've no doubt Mashaba made those concessions grudgingly, taking a view that cleaning up corruption in the city and pushing inner-city rejuvenation were more crucial things to achieve. He increased the operating hours of clinics run by the city and increased their efficiency.

But the cost of these resulted in the failure to deliver those basic services which DA voters in Cape Town take for granted. Traffic lights did not get fixed, potholes did not get filled, trash did not get cleaned up.

Moreover, the EFF has been able to hold the DA hostage at a national level with the threat of toppling DA governments in Johannesburg and Tshwane.

What happens to Johannesburg when Mashaba goes?

The ANC has already begun a process of discussion with the IFP who hold five seats as well as other smaller parties. Assuming they bring on board most of the smaller parties (except for the Freedom Front Plus), this would bring them up to 134 seats; still not enough to form a government.

To me, the answer is obvious. The ANC needs to enter into a coalition government with the DA.

The idea might sound absurd, given their diametrically opposed viewpoints. But the ANC and the DA have far more in common, policy-wise, than either does with the EFF.

So let the ANC appoint the mayor, let the DA control the city finances. Let the city council become the place to thrash out policy and agree priorities.

The alternative is to let the EFF continue to hold the city hostage. Johannesburg is too important for the country to afford this. If Africa's financial capital sinks, so does the country.

*Srikanthan is one of the names of Vishnu. Another name for Vishnu is Jagannath, "the unstoppable force", which gives us the modern word juggernaut. Pillay writes about understanding the unstoppable forces which shape our lives in technology, commerce, science and society.*

# Up to each of us to light the way for unity, peace

PREMIER SIHLE ZIKALALA

A FESTIVAL like Diwali, which celebrates the victory of light over darkness in the Hindu calendar, is an important celebration of our diverse and rich heritage as South Africans.

Diwali reflects the deep cultural and spiritual connections between KwaZulu-Natal and India, the ancestral home of many citizens of Indian origin.

It also symbolises the resilience, strength and value of numerous Indian cultural and community organisations.

During the festival of lights, we are called upon to be of service to others and to work for a more harmonious world that is free from vice and hatred.

It's a time to fight gloom, apathy, despair and selfishness. The light Diwali signifies represents hope, promise and love, reminding us that we all belong to the human family.

As the provincial government, we are proud to claim Diwali as part of the rich traditions and heritage of KwaZulu-Natal.

As we gather here to welcome the festival of light, about 230km away in rural KwaZulu-Natal, in Ulundi, His Majesty King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu is celebrating Diwali with many Hindu compatriots from the length and breadth of our country. It is the fifth year isilo (our King) has hosted the celebrations.

As the premier of the province, I also wish to endorse the important message of His Majesty, who has said we must use the 2019 Diwali celebrations to unite the people of KwaZulu-Natal.

Unity and peace must be the foundation upon which we anchor the dreams and aspirations of our citizens – be they Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Muslim or those who embrace African spirituality.

During the crucible of the Struggle for freedom, it was the unity forged between all the racial groups and faith-based organisations that enabled us to defeat the tyranny of racial division.

To overcome our current challenges and prosper, we must continue to unite our people against those who seek to drive a wedge between them.

Leaders of my political home, the ANC, were inspired by many leaders from the Hindu community.

A key figure among them was the founding father of Indian independence and its spiritual leader, Mahatma Gandhi. ANC presidents Inkosi Albert Lutuli and Nelson Mandela as well as Dr Martin Luther King Jr in the US are some of the world icons who admired Gandhi.

It is Gandhi who teaches us that, "the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others".



ATTENDING the official opening of the Durban Diwali Festival 2019 at the old drive-in site, North Beach, on Saturday were, from left: Neeran Besesar, Premier Sihle Zikalala and Ashwin Trikamjee. | ZANELE ZULU African News Agency (ANA)

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He showed the world that, "in a gentle way, you can change the world".

He believed in forgiveness, reconciliation and social justice.

As we gather in the promise of the enlightenment that Diwali brings, let us look closely at the importance and meaning of Gandhi in a world that is increasingly becoming polarised along racial, ethnic, religious and ideological lines.

This October witnessed the worldwide celebrations of Gandhi's 150th birthday. He was born Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on October 2, 1869 in Porbandra, India.

In his honour, the UN declared October 2 as the International Day of Non-Violence to coincide with his birthday.

And, if there is one wish that we, the people of KwaZulu-Natal, should collectively express as we welcome the new light, it must be the rooting out of violence in the social fabric of the South African society.

We have seen how violence has denied the women of our land peace, and robbed them of their dignity as they are subjected to sexual abuse, beatings, and murder.

What is more tragic is that often the violence against them is perpetrated by men they know.

There's no doubt, we have lost our sense of morality and ubuntu.

Nowadays, parents live in constant fear, not knowing whether their children will return from school or university alive as these too are becoming death traps or

kidnapping sites for the young people of our country.

This brutality of the violence is also written in the faces of our youth who have given their lives to drugs and alcohol.

Some of the violence is invisible to the naked eye, yet it can be felt by those who feel the pangs of hunger daily and without any hope that their circumstances will ever change.

At times, it is also, sadly, reflected through increased incidences of racial abuse and intolerance. But Diwali gives us the hope that light ultimately triumphs over darkness, just as good triumphs over evil.

It is our prayer as the government that the welcoming of the lights of Diwali must usher in a new era of sustainable peace and an end to the despicable violence.

It is our prayer that our youth may learn from the tradition of non-violence resistance which Gandhi perfected here at home and in India, instead of resorting to burning public property during service delivery protests.

To succeed, it means that our government must work even harder and closer with the Hindu community to root out social ills and achieve moral regeneration.

Like in the old days, we need to again mobilise and organise our communities. We need to make them realise that they have immense power to be their own liberators.

One of the greatest lessons Gandhi gave the world was in a Diwali speech. He spoke about the need to rekindle the light inside

our hearts.

For Gandhi, it was always clear that our greatest battles must be waged with ourselves, and that to conquer oneself, one had to be disciplined.

Gandhi's Diwali message was ultimately that we must be the change we want to see in the world.

I urge all of you to continue playing your part in bringing harmony and lasting peace in KZN. It is in our hands to defeat the scourge of gender-based violence and the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Each day, let us make our contribution to deliver a new society that is united in its diversity and free from racism, sexism and inequality.

I have learnt that this year, the world commemorates Diwali on October 27.

This day also marks the birthday of the late ANC president, Oliver Tambo, who once said we all have a "responsibility to break down barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither whites nor blacks, just South Africans, free and united in diversity".

Let us rekindle this light in our hearts to realise Tambo's dream of such a united and equal society. I wish you a fruitful Diwali celebration and all the prosperity that it promises. Let us grow South Africa together!

Zikalala was the chief guest at the Durban Diwali Festival.