

The good, bad and ugly of news



scumbag Markus Jooste. The most exciting thing about this story is that you might fall asleep, slide off your chair and concuss yourself. Wake me up when Maimane is caught driving nine times over the legal limit with fifty copies of *The Cloven Hoof* in the boot and an application to join the Church of Satan in his jacket pocket.

Flipping between CNN and Sky and then switching over to eNCA is like going from fifth to first while travelling at 160km/h. Trump impeachment! Brexit drama! Ramaphosa releases newsletter! There goes the gearbox.

The EFF gets caught donating the same tractor to different communities. Might raise a smile. Or a sigh. But it's more likely you'll stare at the words and feel nothing at all. We have become deadened inside, our interest and morale white-anted by the endless litany of unimaginative thievery.

News that the government owns almost R130 billion worth of buildings and plots of land ignites a tiny spark of hope, quickly extinguished upon discovering that nobody can find the register. A clerk who worked for the Verwoerd administration seemed to think it was in a blue folder.

Public Works Minister Patricia de Lille said she was shocked. That brings to two the number of top government officials who are shocked.

The government is not short of immovable assets – some of them have been in the same position for decades. They can, however, be seen moving at lunchtime and again at the end of the day. Since

nobody can be fired from the civil service, I suppose a more correct term would be immovable liabilities.

De Lille is the ninth minister of public works since 1994. This suggests that her eight predecessors were somehow unaware that criminal syndicates were having the time of their lives renting and selling state-owned property. Somebody ought to name and shame the hateful eight. I would if I didn't think it might induce a catatonic coma.

There have been some exciting moments since Ramaphosa sauntered into power. His appointment of Shamila Batohi as national director of prosecutions caused a momentary quickening of the pulse. The palpitations dwindled as months passed without a single prosecution. I've seen rabbits freeze in headlights before, but never for eight months.

To be fair, the news isn't all toe-curlingly dreary. I read with a rare flicker of interest this week that pupils will soon be allowed to leave school after Grade 9. They will be given a general education certificate that, once laminated, will make a cheap, yet effective, weapon in the war against want.

Job interviews will be spectacular.

"Hire me or I will cut your throat with my certificate."

"But you're only fourteen. What can you do?"

"I'm good with my hands."

"Yes, I can see that by the way you slipped my cellphone down

your trousers."

I would have done anything to leave school after standard seven. Anything but homework, obviously. I wasn't that desperate.

Unlike today's kids, I was a slow developer and hadn't even had my first child by that age. Quite frankly, I was still having trouble tying my own laces. I wasn't good with my hands or my brain. Then again, as a white boy, I would have been able to walk into any job I wanted. I could have been doing open-heart surgery by the time my idiot mates were writing matric.

The education minister's idea is that these Grade 9 graduates, upon being freed from the shackles of learning, will proceed to one of the country's technical training colleges and not, as the cynics assume, to a street corner near you.

Not being a cynic, I am looking forward to the day when South Africa is flooded with a generation of plumbers, electricians and keen young men and women who know how to fit and turn things to their advantage.

But, being who we are, every bit of good news must come weighted with a bunch of bad. It's a constitutional requirement. Apparently the government is developing legislation that will bar foreigners from operating in certain sectors of the economy.

This is a terrible idea. Our country will be poorer without Malawian manservants, Congolese car guards, Pakistani cell-

phone fixers and Nigerian drug dealers. Yes, we have our own dealers, but Nigerians are so much more charismatic. Or so I've heard.

Oh, look. Here's a story that has my heart racing. A ship docked in East London has been given a permit to take 60 000 of our sheep to Kuwait. Not on holiday, in case you're wondering. There will be neither deck quoits nor invitations to dine with the captain. There might be a crossing-the-equator ceremony, but I expect it would end badly. If you are a sheep, it always ends badly. It's a good thing they don't know this because there are a billion of them out there. Sure, it's still seven of us to one of them, but the brighter ones will eventually join forces with our slower ones and then it's anyone's game.

Our sheep are in for a rough journey. They will be cramped, terrified and sea sick and so very happy to get to Kuwait. They will be happy for around seven hours and then they will have their throats slit.

I couldn't find out why our sheep are even going to Kuwait. Have they eaten all their own? Is Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah planning to invite his extended family over for a braai? The country produces eight million tons of sheep and goat meat a year and there are four million Kuwaitis. That's two tons per person. Every person would have to eat five kilograms a day for a year before having to start gnawing on our *skapies*. I suppose it's possible. When it comes to a country like Kuwait, ewe never know.

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