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'Mafia' riots shakedown

ANC caught up in row over R5m demand from tenderpreneurs who say party backed their claim for 'riot protection' fee

By NQUBEKO MBHELE

● "Construction mafia" bosses in KwaZulu-Natal are demanding R5m for foiling an elaborate plot to bomb the Durban City Hall, reservoirs, transport infrastructure and other key installations during the 2021 riots.

And they say top ANC officials are pressuring the council to make the payment out of public funds, which the city is refusing to do. The eThekweni municipality says no such arrangement was made.

Bhambuzi Mnyandu, a reformed former criminal and president of the Amadlangokubona Business Forum, insists he is owed R5m.

"They [rioters] were given a mandate to bring the city to its knees. I had to come to the rescue as I know that we survive on tenders and also we do projects with eThekweni. If I had let that happen, where would we find our next source of income?" said Mnyandu.

"We were risking our lives while they were sleeping and living cosy in their homes. But we continued as we hoped for what we would get after our hard-earned work."

Amadlangokubona is a group of tenderpreneurs who have organised themselves into a forum that demands a 30% share from contractors working for government and private companies in Durban.

But this is not limited to Durban. Experts say the disruption of construction projects has cost the economy more than R63bn since 2019.

While public works minister and former KZN premier Sihle Zikalala has taken a hard line on construction mafias, even stating that there was a proposal that the army be deployed at building sites, senior KZN ANC officials are said to have played a role in setting up a meeting between Amadlangokubona leaders and city council officials, leaning on them to pay.

The row casts fresh light on the scourge that has been identified by law enforcement and business as an impediment to infrastructure development and maintenance and its relationship with the ruling party.

It also provides some insight into the ANC's factional battles and how they played out in the days that KZN erupted in an orgy of violence and looting after former president Jacob Zuma's arrest.

It was at the meeting facilitated by the ANC that the city allegedly caved in to municipal pressure to pay the group R5m out of municipal funds to protect key installations.

The city is denying such an agreement exists.

But Mnyandu is insisting on the payment.

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IN THE PINK

Influencer Faith Nketsi, left, and 'The Real Housewives of Johannesburg' cast member Mercy Mogase at the 'Barbie' movie premiere at Mall of Africa in Midrand on Wednesday. *Barbiemania* has spread across the world with the release of the much-hyped film from acclaimed director Greta Gerwig. See Page 10 and Lifestyle. Picture: Tumi S Radebe

Mbalula warns PG 'fix Transnet or else'

By KGOHATSO MADISA

● ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula expressed frustration yesterday at the number of heavy trucks on the roads and issued a stern warning to public enterprises minister Pravin Gordhan – fix Transnet, and quickly, or face the chop.

Mbalula, speaking at the ANC Women's League national conference at Nasrec, said the government had to take serious action to move commodities and other freight from the roads and onto rail.

Transnet's service has been crippled by poor maintenance, a shortage of locomotives and vandalism. This has led to importers and exporters moving cargoes by truck.

Business Times recently reported that Minerals Council South Africa estimated the country's bulk commodity producers missed out R50bn in revenues in 2022 due to problems at Transnet.

Gordhan recently made changes to the leadership of Transnet by appointing new board members. This included the removal of Popo Molefe as board chairman. He was



ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula



Public enterprises minister Pravin Gordhan

replaced by Andile Sangu, previously the vice-president of the Minerals Council and a former member of the Anglo American and Tongaat executive boards.

Mbalula said it was an ANC policy to reduce the number of heavy vehicles on the

highways, and this needed to be done fast.

"Now I'm going to say to Pravin Gordhan, I was with him there. I was also a minister of transport. Comrade Pravin, move faster or otherwise we will move you."

Mbalula told the almost 3,000 delegates

at the conference that the ANC government had to start performing like a real government should.

"We need all the trucks off the road because people are dying because of these trucks. Trucks must get off the road and goods be transported with rail. Let's not act like we are not in government. We are in charge," he said.

Mbalula's threat may not mean much because Gordhan is believed to be preparing for retirement anyway. He is unlikely to return as minister as his office had been preparing for the winding-down of the public enterprises department. Plans are afoot to create an alternative structure that would be tasked with running strategic SOEs on behalf of the government.

Mbalula warned that the country had to get a grip on load-shedding and fix its logistics.

"Load-shedding will be defeated. And it will be defeated not temporarily but permanently and it will be defeated not for the election but forever, because it's eating into the economics of our country," he said.

BIG STORY



Chair of Discovery Bank and insurance firm Assupol Reuel Khoza

Still too many billionaires from Stellenbosch, – Reuel Khoza

By DINEO FAKU

● Top black business leaders have blasted the slow pace of economic transformation, saying there is still too much wealth concentrated in white hands almost 30 years into democracy.

Speaking this week at a Black Management Forum (BMF) seminar on reimagining BEE, businessman Reuel Khoza singled out Stellenbosch in the Western Cape.

"We probably have the densest concentration of billionaires in Stellenbosch; it is not by accident, it is by absolute design. They [Africans] laid the foundation legislatively in a manner that was not open to misinterpretation, they meant business."

Khoza, who is chair of Discovery Bank and insurance firm Assupol, said it was unjustifiable that so few black billionaires had been produced since 1994. The same legislative framework that underpinned the economic successes of Afrikaners should be repurposed for black South Africans if the economic playing field was to be levelled, he said.

"To produce something like two, three or four but fewer than 10 billionaires in close to 30 years, it cannot be justified."

Sanlam chair Elias Masetlela, speaking at the launch of the Sanlam Transformation Gauge, said South Africa was still ticking boxes and paying lip service to transformation.

Economist Duma Gqubule said BEE had not worked given there were no majority black-owned companies in the JSE top 50.

"South Africa needs political will to confront powerful interests in mines and banks and reverse policy impediments," he said.

See Business Times



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saying his group alone saved the city.
"During July civil unrest in 2021 in KZN, there was information leaked to me that there was a group from the political battles between two groups of former president Jacob Zuma and of President Cyril Ramaphosa. They were sent to bomb all the assets of eThekweni metro. It is alleged that group was given R36m to execute the plan of vandalising city properties."

He said that at 11pm on July 10 2021 he received a call from a person identifying himself as one of those who were paid to destroy eThekweni metro infrastructure.
"We were busy making sure that Check Save supermarkets at Umlazi were not touched as they were our responsibility. The person asked me if they destroy those areas [about which they had received advance warning], would they be touching our territory as they know we are doing various projects with the municipality."

He said he called eThekweni head of security management Damsani Bhengu after police and security companies had deserted the locations. Bhengu referred the Sunday Times to the metro's communications team when approached for comment.

When the city refused to pay, saying there was no such deal, Mnyandu said he asked ANC leaders to intervene on his behalf.

ANC leaders then summoned top eThekweni metro officials to a meeting held at the ANC provincial offices, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme House in the Durban CBD, to discuss settling the dispute.

Details of the meeting were revealed to the Sunday Times by Mnyandu, who expressed his frustration with the municipality's delay in effecting the payment despite an ultimatum from ANC leaders.

It took place in the second week of June. Mnyandu says ANC leaders instructed top municipal officials, including city manager Musa Mbhele, to make the payment.

ANC provincial secretary Bheki Mtolo this week confirmed meeting Mnyandu once. He said he referred Mnyandu to ANC eThekweni regional secretary Musa Nkiki, who facilitated a meeting between Mnyandu and city officials.

"Because [Mnyandu] solicited the intervention of the ANC, I then directed the regional secretary [Nkiki] to facilitate the meeting ... which ... did take place with the city manager included. That was the end of the ANC role ... What happened to his claims would be better known and responded to by the city itself," said Mtolo.

Mtolo said the ANC has no relationship with Amadelangokubona.

At that meeting a decision was taken that the city settle the amount as demanded by



Musa Nkiki



Musa Mbhele



Bheki Mtolo

“The reason that made me to open a case against him is that I know these people are evil. He will be killed by his enemies and I will be a prime suspect



Bhamusa Mnyandu, right

Mnyandu. Also present were Mbhele, Bhengu, CFO Sandile Mnguni and speaker of council Thabani Nyawose.

Insiders confirmed Mnyandu's version, saying the ANC delegation sympathised with Amadelangokubona and the meeting agreed that payment be made.

The dispute has now escalated to a war of words between Mnyandu and Mbhele, who had a heated text message exchange two weeks ago after the municipality missed a June 28 deadline to settle the R5m. Mnyandu threatened Mbhele for ignoring his calls, while the city manager dismissed Mnyandu's threats, saying he was not intimidated.

Mnyandu said when he tried to reach the city manager for a follow-up, Mbhele showed him the middle finger.

"Mbhele was arrogant towards me. I got a shocking response from him saying he is busy with serious stuff as his house was washed away during recent KZN floods. He won't discuss work matters while he is at home dealing with his crisis," added Mnyandu.

"After these threatening messages I received a message from the men in city's intelligence. [They] asked me why I am threatening Mbhele? I sent them the messages where he was swearing at me. I heard that he opened a case against me. I also opened a case of intimidation three days ago in Chatsworth police station."

Mnyandu alleges Mbhele threatened him during a telephone call, saying he would send people to kill him.

"The reason that made me to open a case against him is that I know these people are evil. He will be killed by his enemies and I will be a prime suspect."

South African Police Service KZN spokesperson Col Robert Ntshinda confirmed that a case of crimen injuria had been opened. "It's about two people who exchanged words over a phone call."

eThekweni municipality said this week: "The facts in this matter are in dispute and a meeting has been scheduled to clarify matters. eThekweni never instructed any business forum to guard its assets. One of the forum [members] approached the city to be

compensated for efforts they had put in to guard some of city's buildings."

Nkiki had not responded to questions at the time of going to press.

Nyawose confirmed attending meetings with Mnyandu. "I've attended many meetings with them, but there are many issues that are being discussed. There's no specific issue like that that I remember."

When asked whether the forum was con-

tracted to protect the city's infrastructure during the riots, Nyawose said: "Raba, I've answered. We confirm, no."

Mnyandu insists he is owed money because of an agreement he reached with Bhengu when the riots happened.

He said he had recruited his men and contacts from hostels, taxi associations around Durban and business forums to protect the city's assets.

"These listed assets to be bombed and destroyed were the Durban City Hall, all city fleets, depots, water reservoirs from Umlazi, Umbumbulu, Amanzimtoti, Umgababa and Umkhomazi, and others," Mnyandu said.

Mnyandu said his group secured 94 municipality sites around Umlazi, Umbumbulu, Winkelspruit, Doonside to Illovo, Umgababa to Umkomas, kwaMakhutha, Isipingo and South Region.

He said security companies appointed to provide services in those key areas for the metro had pulled out, fearing for their safety as the situation was worsening.

"No-one was on the sites, they were vulnerable and empty," he said.

-Additional reporting by Kgothatso Madisa



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HAVE YOUR SAY

The Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies invites interested individuals and stakeholders to submit written comments on a Bill, the purpose of which is detailed below:

SOUTH AFRICAN POST OFFICE SOC LTD AMENDMENT BILL [B 11-2023]

The Bill seeks to amend the South African Post Office SOC Ltd Act, 2011, so as to provide for the revised duties and expand on the mandate of the South African Post Office as provided for in this Act and the Postal Services Act, 1998: provide for the repurposing of the Post Office infrastructure so as to provide diversified and expanded services and exploit the infrastructure capacity to extract value and forge partnerships with other stakeholders; to provide for the revised governance structure of South African Post Office; to provide for the establishment, appointment and functions of the Stamp Advisory Committee; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Enquiries can be directed to the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies (for attention: Ms Hajiera Salee) or emailed to sapobill@parliament.gov.za. Alternatively, you may use the Google form for the written submission using the link on <https://forms.gle/TRjks5KhEzkyX7A>.

In addition to the written submissions, please indicate if you are interested in making a verbal presentation to the Committee.

The closing date for written submissions is **Monday, 14 August 2023 at 16:30**. A copy of the Bill can be obtained from Ms Hajiera Salee on cell: 061 472 9191 or at www.parliament.gov.za.

Issued by: Mr BM Manel, MP, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies.

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