

UBUNTU NEWSFLASH



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SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN POLICY DEFINED BY COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

South Africa's commitment to human rights is central to its foreign policy, promoting solidarity and respect for other nations.

This is according to President Cyril Ramaphosa, who spoke to the media following a letters of credence ceremony for heads of mission and ambassadors at the Sefako Makgatho Presidential Guesthouse in Pretoria.

"Our commitment to human rights defines our international foreign policy, and this is who we are as South Africans. We promote human rights solidarity as well as respect for other nations, and that's how we've decided to define our foreign policy," he told reporters on Thursday, 27 March 2025.



South Africa's foreign policy aims to promote the prosperity of all nations, collaborating with them in a multilateral manner, and upholding the values that are significant to South Africans, the President said.

"The recognition by other nations as they come to present their credentials of what we stand for is a real recognition for us, which we really appreciate because sometimes we don't really realise the impact of what we stand for has on what other people think of us.

"I mean, some of them [other nations] are relating how our Truth and Reconciliation Commission process has also influenced what they are doing, what our constitutional principles are, and how they also influence what they do.

"So, it's soft power. We've got human rights advocacy in South Africa as the soft power that we spread around the world. We do so with humility, without being arrogant, and without being disrespectful to others. And it is what Ubuntu is all about; that is what defines us, and we are very proud of continuing to adhere to those values and those constitutional principles," the President explained.

At the ceremony, the President received Heads of Mission from 14 countries, which were Gabon, the Republic of the Congo, Russia, Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Türkiye, Japan, Mongolia, Portugal, Panama, Nepal, and Senegal.

Letters of Credence are official diplomatic documents presented to the President by the Heads of the Mission Designate, whose respective governments have been nominated to serve as ambassadors to South Africa.

The President believes that the presence of ambassadors and high commissioners presenting their credentials, sent by their respective countries, indicates that South Africa is open for business.

"They want to represent the interests of their own countries here, but at the same time promote our own interests.

"You should be spreading this message and saying, as much as we are going through many challenges, we are seen and recognised by others for what we do, particularly what we seek to do to advance the interests of our own people," he told journalists. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

PRESIDENT CONVEYS WARM WISHES FOR EID

President Cyril Ramaphosa has extended warm wishes to the Muslim community as they prepare to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

In a statement on Monday, 31 March 2025, President Ramaphosa highlighted the significance of Eid-ul-Fitr coinciding with Human Rights Month, emphasising South Africa's commitment to a constitutional order that guarantees rights and freedoms for all, including religious freedom.

"This year Eid-ul-Fitr is being observed during Human Rights Month—when we pay tribute to our constitutional order that guarantees rights and freedoms for all, including religious freedom."

The President further encouraged South Africans to embrace values that unite the nation.



“As we wish our Muslim compatriots well on this auspicious occasion, let us continue to be guided by the common values that unite us all, such as generosity, compassion and empathy,” he said.

Eid-ul-Fitr, also known as the “Festival of Breaking the Fast,” is a significant religious celebration for Muslims worldwide. It marks the conclusion of Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer, and reflection.

Earlier this month, President Ramaphosa extended his best wishes to the Muslim community as they observed Ramadan.

“For our Muslim brethren here at home and around the world, this is a sacred time of reflection, prayer and performing acts of charity—values that unite us all,” President Ramaphosa said at the time. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

SOUTH AFRICA SENDS MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCES TO THAILAND AND MYANMAR FOLLOWING EARTHQUAKE

The Government of the Republic of South Africa expresses its deepest condolences to the peoples of Thailand and Myanmar following the devastating earthquake that has resulted in significant loss of life and extensive damage to property.

Minister Ronald Lamola said, “South Africa stands in solidarity with the affected communities during this tragic time. The thoughts of the people of South Africa are with the families who have lost loved ones and those who have been injured. We commend the efforts of the emergency response teams and volunteers who are working tirelessly to provide relief and support to those in need.”

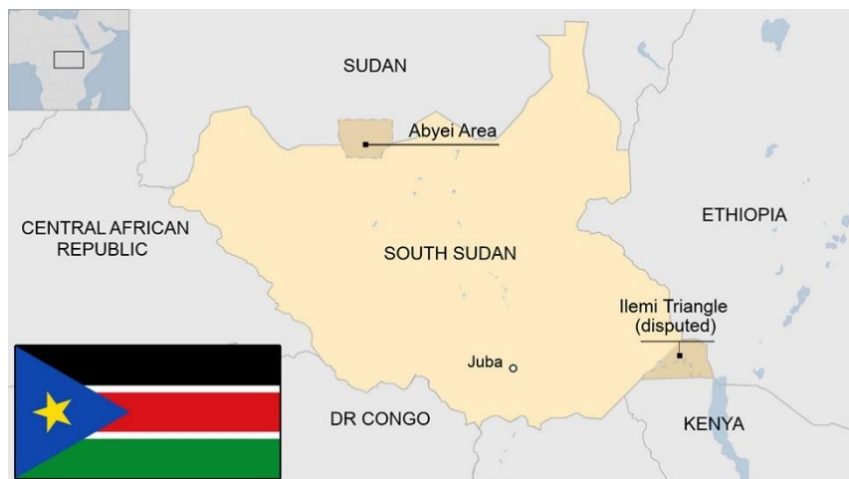
Minister Lamola added that: “In this time of sorrow, we extend our heartfelt sympathies and support to the peoples of Thailand and Myanmar.”

The South African Embassy in Bangkok is aware of 11 South African citizens affected by the earthquake and is rendering consular assistance to them. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za



SOUTH AFRICA EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER RISING TENSIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN

The South African Government is deeply concerned over the rising tensions in South Sudan, particularly following the arrest of 1st Vice President Dr Riek Machar.



Minister Ronald Lamola said: “We call upon all stakeholders in South Sudan to prioritise a peaceful resolution to the crisis.”

“We further urge all parties to the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) to create the necessary conditions for the effective implementation of the agreement”, added Minister Lamola.

In solidarity with the people of South Sudan, the South African government emphasises the necessity of collective efforts aimed at concluding the transitional period and ensuring the holding of inclusive elections by 2026, as mutually agreed upon by all stakeholders, in order to have a democratic and peaceful end to the transitional period. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

FORMER PRESIDENT MBEKI TO ADDRESS DIRCO'S INAUGURAL ANNUAL AZIZ PAHAD PEACE, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) hosted the inaugural Annual Aziz Pahad Peace, Security and Human Rights Dialogue in Pretoria, on Monday, 31 March 2025.

Former President Thabo Mbeki delivered a keynote address at the event.

The event was held under the theme *Constitutionalism as the Foundation of Nation Building and Social Cohesion: 30 Years of Freedom, Equity and Justice in Post-Apartheid South Africa*.

In recognition of the contribution and the groundbreaking work done by the late former Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad towards peace and mediation, Minister Ronald Lamola hosted the dialogue to honour the legacy of the distinguished politician and anti-apartheid activist known for his commitment to peace and diplomacy.



The objectives of the Annual Peace and Security Dialogue are:

- To get various stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences and encourage collective reflections on the requirements of building sustainable peace and building upon the post-conflict reconstruction and development processes worldwide.
- To celebrate 30 years of freedom and democracy, recognising the contribution of the negotiators and mediators whose work ushered in the era of respect for human rights.

– Source: www.dirco.gov.za

DIRCO CONFIRMS RESCUE OF 23 SOUTH AFRICANS FROM MYANMAR

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has confirmed that 23 South Africans—who were part of a group of 7 000 people from various countries— have been rescued from Myanmar.



“Our citizens returned to South Africa a few hours ago, assisted by DIRCO and the Border Management Authority. DIRCO facilitated the repatriation of the South African nationals and provided financial assistance,” the department said in a statement issued on Thursday afternoon, 27 March 2025.

Before leaving South Africa last year, these men and women were lured by an employment agency to Thailand under the pretences of lucrative jobs that were advertised on various social media platforms.

“These adverts promised the victims good salaries, free accommodation, comprehensive travel expenses, and other lucrative benefits. Once in Thailand, they were transported to Myanmar against their will.”

The victims were held captive for more than four months in a cybercrime compound in Myanmar, which borders Thailand.

“They were subjected to brutal treatment, including intimidation, physical torture, and forced labour. They were also compelled to engage in illicit activities, including online scams that targeted individuals worldwide.”

In addition, DIRCO said that they were under 24-hour armed security and a ransom of about R50 000 was demanded for their release.

“They were forced to work for 16 hours a day and were frequently beaten or tortured if they refused, and they survived on spoilt food and contaminated water without access to medical treatment.”

The department explained that the repatriation of the South African victims was part of the bilateral cooperation agreement to combat human trafficking and other forms of transnational organised crime signed by Thailand and South Africa in 2023.

“The government is grateful for the assistance provided by Thai authorities in facilitating the repatriation of the victims.”

Victim support

The Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) have since conducted an initial screening of the victims to verify their identity and family information.

Following the screening interviews, the DPCI will transport the victims to health facilities to undergo health screenings.

Temporary accommodation will be provided for those from outside Gauteng, enabling them to reunite with their families and relatives, while those who live in the province will be transported home by DPCI.

Investigation

According to the department, the DPCI will investigate the matter, and follow-up appointments will be scheduled at a later stage with the victims to gather comprehensive statements, as their emotional and physical wellbeing must be taken into consideration.

“The DPCI will continue to work with all the relevant government departments to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the victims, as well as the successful arrest and conviction of traffickers in South Africa.”

The department said the South African Government strongly condemns any acts of trafficking and has introduced relevant legislation to deal harshly with this heinous crime.

The government has urged citizens to exercise extreme caution when considering employment opportunities abroad.

“If the promise of employment is too good to be true, you must exercise caution and be suspicious.”

All countries with embassies and liaison offices in South Africa are listed on the DIRCO website www.dirco.gov.za.

Travellers are also advised to register on the DIRCO Travel Smart app, a digital platform that provides support and information to South African citizens travelling or residing in foreign countries.

However, those who suspect that their loved one or someone else is a victim of human trafficking can report the matter to the SAPS Crime Stop hotline on 08000 10111, the nearest police station, the DSD, or a designated child protection organisation.

“Your safety and well-being are in your hands. Stay vigilant and protect yourself and your loved ones from falling victim to these malicious schemes. Let us all work together to stop trafficking in persons,” the department said.

Use the following helplines to report suspected incidents of human trafficking:

- Childline – 116
- Film and Publication Board – 0800 148 148
- GBV Command Centre – 0800 428 428
- National Human Trafficking Hotline – 0800 222 777

– Source: www.dirco.gov.za

Deputy Minister Alvin Botes received the credentials of Dr El-Halabi Shenaaz, the new World Health Organisation (WHO) Representative in South Africa.

Dr El-Halabi Shenaaz has 30 years' experience as a public health professional, with 19 years in senior leadership positions. She graduated *cum laude* from Boston University in 2001 with an MPH in epidemiology and biostatistics. Dr El-Halabi has worked in the Ministry of Health and Wellness in Botswana since September 1993, becoming the Permanent Secretary in March 2015. She was appointed as Director in the Office of the Director-General of the WHO in December 2017 to date.

The relationship between South Africa and the WHO is marked by collaborative efforts aimed at addressing public health challenges both domestically and globally. As a member state of the WHO since its inception in 1948, South Africa has engaged actively with the organisation to leverage its expertise and resources in tackling pressing health issues such as HIV, AIDS, tuberculosis and, more recently, COVID-19.

The meeting reaffirmed South Africa's commitment to the WHO as the leading global institution to take forward issues of global health aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including delivering universal health coverage (UHC) with primary health care at its core, and in strengthening pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPPR).

The Deputy Minister assured Dr El-Halabi Shenaaz of South Africa's support and cooperation and wished her all the success in her tenure in South Africa. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za



TOP OFFICIALS RETURN FROM UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A delegation of senior officials, led by South Africa's Group of Twenty (G20) Sherpa and the Director-General of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Zane Dangor, visited the United Nations General Assembly to brief them on South Africa's G20 presidency. The General Assembly overwhelmingly endorsed the priorities and theme of the South African G20 presidency.



During their visit, the delegation advanced discussions originally initiated by the former Ambassador to the United States (US) Ebrahim Rasool, engaging with counterparts in Washington, D.C., including senior officials at the White House and the State Department, to address bilateral priorities. The delegation clarified key issues and misconceptions in meetings with the National Security Council's Africa Director and Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, as well as Treasury Department representatives. We believe that these dialogues will assist to refine the current administration's understanding of South Africa's position on critical matters, fostering a more nuanced perspective.

The delegation directly addressed the perception that the South African Government's policies are designed to violate the human rights of minorities in post-apartheid South Africa. Amongst the issues addressed was the matter of how the Expropriation Act's zero compensation clause is not designed to facilitate unlawful land seizures and undermine property investment but rather to ensure that:

- where the land is not being used and the owner's main purpose is not to develop the land or use it to generate income, but to benefit from appreciation of its market value.
- where an organ of state holds land that it is not using for its core functions and is not reasonably likely to require the land for its future activities in that regard, and the organ of state acquired the land for no consideration.
- where an owner has abandoned the land by failing to exercise control over it despite being reasonably capable of doing so.
- where the market value of the land is equivalent to, or less than, the present value of direct state investment or subsidy in the acquisition and beneficial capital improvement of the land.

During the cordial discussions, the senior officials addressed misconceptions on what has been presented by some as race laws designed to undermine minority rights in South Africa. To this end the senior officials presented information which highlights the persuasive racial and structural inequality that continues to divide South Africa in all areas of the nation. The post-apartheid administration is constitutionally mandated to correct the injustices of the past. These initiatives are consistent with the efforts to ensure that post-apartheid South Africa entrenches human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism, non-sexism and the supremacy of our constitution and the rule of law.

These fruitful engagements will be carried out at various levels of government pursuant to the 7 February Executive Order issued by the President of the United States (US). This includes ensuring that the Seventh Administration positions itself as a strategic partner in a manner that avoids conflagration of our national interests against those of our strategic partners across the world. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

MINISTER PATRICIA DE LILLE VISITS GHANA TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL TOURISM RELATIONS

Minister of Tourism Patricia de Lille embarked on a special outreach programme to Ghana from 26 to 28 March, with the aim to strengthen tourism partnerships and promote cultural exchange between the two nations.

As part of the outreach programme, Minister de Lille engaged with the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts of Ghana, Honourable Abla-Dzifa Gomashie; the South Africa-Ghana Chamber of Commerce; tourism trade; key media; and tourism stakeholders to showcase South Africa as an attractive leisure and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination.

The easing of visa regulations between the two countries in November 2023 was a progressive step that contributed to unlocking significant tourism potential. It also marked a new chapter in strengthening tourism and trade, creating a seamless journey for both South Africans and Ghanaians to experience the beauty and diversity Ghana and South Africa have to offer. This development also opened doors for increased business, leisure and cultural exchange.

“Ghana and the broader African continent are incredibly important markets for South Africa's tourism sector. This visit reaffirms our dedication to deepening partnerships and unlocking growth opportunities through meaningful collaboration. Ghana has emerged as a standout performer, recording an exceptional 149.0% increase in tourist arrivals to South Africa in 2024 when compared to 2023. The number of Ghanaian visitors surged to 36,656, largely due to the introduction of a visa waiver in November 2023 coupled with the consistent marketing by South African Tourism, allowing citizens of both countries to travel to each other's country visa-free for up to 90 days within a year,” Minister de Lille said.

Minister de Lille's visit held added significance as it takes place in a year when South Africa proudly hosts the G20 Summit—a momentous occasion that highlights South Africa's growing influence on the global stage and its commitment to fostering meaningful partnerships across the African continent.



“We recognise the immense potential of intra-African travel to drive economic development, cultural exchange, and shared prosperity. It is for this reason that we are conducting this outreach mission to strengthen relations and partnerships with our counterparts in Ghana,” Minister de Lille added.

The outreach programme will also enable senior officials from both countries to engage further on tourism bilateral issues and enhance relations.

– Source: www.gov.za

CONFERENCE PLACES THE SPOTLIGHT ON OCEAN SUSTAINABILITY

As the current holder of the G20 presidency, South Africa is leading global efforts for ocean sustainability, particularly focusing on advancing sustainable ocean initiatives in Africa.



The country is hosting the 14th International Conference on Southern Hemisphere Meteorology and Oceanography (ICSHMO), which is currently underway in Cape Town.

This premier scientific gathering, being held in Africa for the first time since 1997, brings together renowned meteorologists, oceanographers, and climate scientists to address the unique atmospheric and oceanic challenges of the southern hemisphere.

The five-day event, which kicked off on Monday, 31 March 2025, is hosted by the National Research Foundation (NRF) through the South African Environmental Observation Network, with support from the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI).

The conference shows South Africa's growing influence in global climate science.

Opening the conference, the Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Nomalungelo Gina, emphasised the urgent need for scientific collaboration to combat the escalating threats of climate change.

“The world is experiencing intensified heatwaves, prolonged droughts, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events that disrupt economies, displace communities, and strain infrastructure,” the department said.

South Africa has witnessed the devastating impact of climate change in repeated floods and recurring droughts.

These events highlight the pressing need for enhanced climate prediction, risk management, and adaptation strategies, all key topics at ICSHMO 2025.

The Deputy Minister stressed the importance of turning scientific knowledge into tangible, actionable solutions.

Through the NRF, the country continues to support cutting-edge research in marine and coastal science, weather forecasting, and climate adaptation to inform global policy and action.

Gina welcomed the integration of ICSHMO with the Ocean20 initiative, a flagship programme introduced under Brazil's G20 Presidency, which is designed to promote sustainable ocean governance, and reiterated South Africa's commitment to leveraging science, technology, and innovation for sustainable development.

The Deputy Minister stressed the importance of equitable access to artificial intelligence, big data and remote sensing technologies, which were transforming climate science, enabling more accurate forecasting, early warning systems, and disaster preparedness.

Collaboration and knowledge-sharing were key to building a more stable and resilient global future, especially for nations that were most vulnerable to climate change.

A group of learners from Luhlaza and Usasazo high schools in Khayelitsha attended the conference and had a special interaction with Gina on the benefits of science for society.

During the opening session, Kenya's representative for the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Patricia Nying'uro, highlighted the critical role of indigenous knowledge in promoting sustainability. She stated that the extensive knowledge accumulated by indigenous communities over centuries should be utilised to enhance climate action efforts.

NRF CEO, Dr Fulufhelo Nelwamondo, said the conference would provide a vital platform for advancing scientific collaboration, sharing cutting-edge research, and addressing the pressing challenges of climate variability and change in the southern hemisphere.

"The insights and discussions over the next few days will undoubtedly contribute to shaping policies and strategies that enhance climate resilience in our region and beyond," he stated. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

SOUTH AFRICAN CHARITY'S SHORT FILM WINS AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL IMPACT IN LONDON

South African non-profit, the Pebbles Project is relishing in a special moment thanks to the success of their short film, "Kindness". The short film has gone on to earn global recognition, recently winning the Bicester Collection Award for International Impact at the 2025 Smiley Charity Film Awards hosted in London.

The Smiley Charity Film Awards are the world's largest cause-based film campaign, often referred to as the Oscars of charity film awards.

"We are deeply honoured to have been nominated alongside 27 remarkable international NPOs, including Habitat for Humanity Canada and Greenpeace. This global recognition means the world to us, and we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to highlight the positive impact of our work," shared Pebbles Project's Liesl Ahlers.



The Pebbles Project is all about uplifting children and families from farming communities in the Western Cape. Through their short film, they turned the spotlight on the power of small actions and efforts.

Kindness

A beautiful telling of how one pebble of kindness can cause a ripple effect of good, the short film takes us into the worlds of different people that the project has supported in real life.

The *Kindness* film is a tear-jerker for all the right reasons. It scraps overwhelming statistics (good or bad) in exchange for a few stories of impact. This way, the stories become personal. Digestible. Easy to hold in our hands and really sit with. We get to see the impact that we're always being told is possible.

The Pebbles Project could've boasted big numbers. They have supported thousands of children and families in their time. Instead, they picked a few as a representative of the many.

Through the film, we get to meet a myriad of people who have all been impacted by Pebbles for the better. There's founder Sophia Wagner, who, 20 years ago, had a dream to positively support farm children in rural South African communities and, along with her sister, decided to go for it. This dream would change the life of Ernestine, a mother who Pebbles helped achieve a bursary and find a job to provide for her family. We also get to see Ernestine's children, who, thanks to Pebbles' support of their mom, have happy lives.

There's also Perchwin, another project beneficiary who found peace and purpose through art after Pebbles put him in touch with a social worker. And Robin, the budding seamstress, who is developing her skills largely thanks to Pebbles.



All of these lives, all of this impact from one dream centred around kindness—one pebble.

The impact film also won Best Documentary from the Kleinkaap Short Film Festival earlier this year before hopping onto the international film festival circuit. In celebration of The Pebbles Project's 20th birthday, *Kindness* was revealed to the public, which shared a series of important messages. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

SOUTH AFRICAN BRAND NAMED WORLD'S BEST BLENDED WHISKY

South Africa may be the home of the world's best wines and brandy, but it is also home to some of the best whiskies in the world. On International Whisky Day, 27 March 2025, news broke that a local brand earned a top spot at the prestigious 2025 World Whiskies Awards (WWA), hosted in London by TheDrinksReport.com.



The Three Ships Whisky Bourbon Cask has officially been crowned the World's Best Blended Whisky in 2025.

The proudly South African whisky impressed the judges to such an extent that they awarded it the World's Best title in the Blended Whisky category, outshining competition from Scotland, America, Japan, and Ireland, among others.

At the prestigious competition, whiskies from around the globe are rigorously blind-judged (without a label) by an independent panel of the world's top whisky experts. The judging involves multiple assessments based on appearance, nose, taste, finish, balance, character and complexity to determine the best in the world.

The judges praised the Three Ships Whisky Bourbon Cask for its unique taste profile: "Varnished oak, vanilla ice cream, milk chocolate, and smoked pineapple all align on an expressive nose, while cornflake, caramel sauce, and ripe fruits drift through the palate. Spicy oak adds structure and interest while brown sugar and vanilla contribute to a rounded finish."

The whisky is crafted at the James Sedgwick Distillery in Wellington, about an hour's drive from Cape Town, and is one of only a few distilleries globally where both malt and grain whisky are distilled.

"South Africa may be considered a young whisky-making country, but we've proven yet again that world-class whisky knows no borders. This marks the third time Three Ships Whisky has earned the World's Best title and is a testament to local craftsmanship, resilience and ingenuity. We could not be more honoured by the recognition!"

"Our warm South African climate required us to think differently about whisky and find innovative ways to work with our warmer temperatures, not against it."

"While we adhere to the same whisky-making regulations as Scotland—using only water, yeast, grain and oak casks with a minimum maturation of three years—our conditions are unique. The climate accelerates maturation and although our Angels' Share is considerably higher than colder countries, our whiskies truly stand-out as exceptionally smooth and flavourful", said Walters Uys, Lead Spirits Intrinsic at Heineken Beverages South Africa. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

SOUTH AFRICA'S GARDEN WINS "GRAND GOLD" AT FLOWER SHOW

The Shenzhen International Flower Show welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors who come to explore the gorgeous garden installations for only a handful of days. Despite the many nations and talented hands that plant, this year, the garden on everyone's lips is South Africa's thanks to a local team's creating winning this year's Grand Gold Award.

South African renowned botanist Leon Kluge and his right-hand green thumb Tristan Woudberg proudly welcomed the Grand Gold trophy at the Flower Show. This, for South Africa's garden named *Living Contours*.

One out of 34 garden installations at the show, it's easy to recognise why 'Living Contours' won the acclaimed award (it's breathtaking).

According to Kluge, *Living Contours* is “a fusion between African and Chinese design”.

This win comes after a slew of victories for South Africa in the gardening world, many of which were led by Kluge.

The botanist shared his pride over South Africa’s “Grand Gold” win, a sentiment shared by many of us back home.

In more exciting news from Leon and his team, the garden design set to showcase at this year’s RHS Chelsea Flower Show (where South Africa has a history of excelling) has officially been revealed

As Kluge explains: “This year’s design showcases the influence of two magnificent oceans, namely the Indian and Atlantic, on the flora of South Africa. Cutting through a mountain of fynbos runs a canyon where tannin-rich water flows. On the Atlantic side of the display the drier West Coast is represented by its colourful geophytes and bright flowers whilst the Indian Ocean on the opposite end is home to a lush collection of well-known sub-tropical plants.” – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com



LOCAL PUBLISHER UP FOR “BEST CHILDREN’S PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR” AT INTERNATIONAL FAIR

Local publisher Imaginary House has been shortlisted for the “Best Children’s Publisher of the Year” award at an international book fair.



Imaginary House is thrilled to have been shortlisted.

“It’s a huge honour for Imaginary House to be shortlisted for the Bologna Children’s Book Fair’s Best Children’s Publisher of the Year award,” the team shared.

“Even being shortlisted is a huge acknowledgement of the devotion, passion, and expertise poured out by the team and our incredible authors and creators.”

The boutique publishing house focuses on bringing children’s stories (fiction and non-fiction) into the world, especially to Africa. The publishing house has been running since 2015 and was founded by Brad Harris with leadership from Alison Harris since 2018.

“As proud distributors of [Imaginary House’s] beautifully crafted books, we’ve seen firsthand the magic they bring to young readers,” praised Jonothan Ball Publishers.

“This recognition is a testament to the incredible work they do, and we couldn’t be more excited for them.”

The Bologna Children’s Book Fair celebrates the many facets of creativity that bring children’s stories to life—from writers to illustrators, literary agents and teachers. Its 61 years of experience have helped unite the creatives from all over the world through the power of storytelling. Around 1 500 exhibitors from 90 countries and regions are expected to attend the 2025 session taking place from 31 March to 3 April in Bologna, Italy. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

DEMI LEE MOORE LIGHTS UP TIMES SQUARE

Demi Lee Moore has just taken her music (and Mzansi pride) to dazzling new heights, lighting up a massive billboard in the heart of Times Square.

The beloved Afrikaans songstress, known for her powerhouse vocals, infectious laugh, and deep connection to her fans, has just landed on a massive billboard in the middle of Times Square, New York, thanks to Spotify's Equal campaign.

Demi Lee has become a household name across the country. Whether she's performing on stage or connecting with fans on social media, her authenticity and talent shine through. She first captured national attention as the winner of *Die Kontrak* and has since gone on to release chart-topping albums, sell out shows, and win numerous awards.

Now, thanks to Spotify, Demi's face is splashed across the electric buzz of Times Square as part of their global Equal campaign—a movement celebrating women in music. She's joined a powerful lineup of female artists from around the world, with this particular campaign designed to promote gender equality and elevate female voices.



“Never in my life did I think this South African girl would be on a billboard in New York, Times Square!!!” Demi shared.

“Thank you, Spotify. It's such an honour and privilege to be part of your Equal campaign, proudly representing Women in Music in Africa.”

But why does this matter? Because it reminds us that local talent is global talent. It shows young artists across South Africa that dreams aren't just for dreaming; they're for doing. It highlights that stories, songs and voices from our shores belong on international stages.

Demi now joins an elite group of South African artists who've graced that very space. Lloyiso lit it up with his soul-stirring vocals and heartfelt lyrics. Jeremy Loops brought his signature sound to the city that never sleeps. And Craig Lucas showed the world that talent from Elsie'srivier can reach global heights. Each one a reminder that Mzansi has magic and the world is starting to take notice.

So, if you're walking through Times Square right now and see Demi's face smiling down, know that it's not just a personal win for her; it's a win for all of us. For every artist, dreamer, and believer who calls South Africa home. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

TYLA SHINES AS SHE ACCEPTS THE IMPACT PRIZE AT THE 2025 BILLBOARD WOMEN IN MUSIC AWARDS

South African-born international superstar Tyla has bagged yet another accolade. Last weekend, Tyla accepted the prestigious Impact Award at the Billboard Women in Music, which celebrates females in the industry.

Held at the YouTube Theatre in Los Angeles on Saturday, 29 March and hosted by Laverne Cox, the ceremony recognises rising stars and iconic legends who are pushing boundaries and making a lasting impact on the music industry.

Meanwhile, Tyla, renowned for her captivating stage presence and chart-topping hits like *Jump* was recognised for her influence and achievements in the music industry.



With her career continuously reaching new heights, the 23-year-old's "Impact" accolade proves her position as one of the most exciting and influential young artists in music today.

The crowd's screams and excitement signified that Tyla's red carpet arrival was one of the evening's most eagerly awaited moments. On the red carpet, the award-winning singer dazzled in a stunning black see-through knit dress designed by Jean Paul Gaultier, turning heads and captivating the attention of photographers as well as her fans.

During a red carpet interview with "Billboard's" Rania Anifas and Jazzy, she revealed how it felt to be honoured with the illustrious prize.

"It feels amazing, not a lot of people get recognised so I'm really lucky and grateful to be here," she said.

Tyla also added that she was grateful to all those who have impacted her life and career, acknowledging their role in her success.

The red carpet was abuzz with talented women in music, including BLACKPINK member Jennie Kim. Tyla was spotted posing with the talented singer-songwriter, who was honoured with the prestigious Global Force Award.

The evening's performances were just as impressive as the red carpet arrivals. Tyla took the stage to deliver another memorable performance of her hit song *Push 2 Start* serving a high-energy performance that showcased her vocal range and stage presence.

But the evening's biggest moment came when Tyla was presented with the Impact Award, recognising her influence and impact in the music industry at such a young age.

Right after giving a performance, she was called on stage to receive her award. Still out of breath, she took to the stage to accept the prize. The award was presented to her by American singer and actress Becky G, who praised Tyla's drive, creativity and dedication to her craft.

During her acceptance speech, Tyla reflected on her global success, once again thanking the people who impacted and poured into her, including her mother, her team and her label.

"I left my country with big dreams, and I thought I had more time to figure things out. But when my career took off, I realised that God has His own plans," she said.

– Source: www.iol.co.za

CAPETONIAN SAILOR TO LEAD CREW AROUND THE WORLD FOR CLIPPER RACE



Capetonian sailor Dylan Kotze will be lining up with his team in Portsmouth, United Kingdom, this August to spend 11 months racing 40,000 miles (over 64373 km) around the world during the 2025-2026 edition of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race.

In total, more than 700 participants will embark on the challenge, making six ocean crossings and experiencing extreme conditions, from hurricane-force winds to the isolation of the North Pacific.

Inspired to apply for the role by fellow Capetonians and former Clipper Race Skippers Dale Smyth (who is now the Clipper Race Director) and David "Wavy" Immelman, Kotze is looking forward to flying the flag for his hometown.

Speaking on his appointment, Kotze said, "I see the Clipper Race as the ultimate opportunity to challenge myself and accomplish something truly extraordinary. Ocean sailing is a gruelling sport—it's mostly being tired, hungry, and wet. But the glimpses of oceanic wildlife, sunrises and sunsets and, of course, the sense of camaraderie and fulfilment of reaching your goal are unbeatable."

The Clipper Race, which is divided into eight legs, will call into Cape Town at the end of its second leg. For Kotze, it's the homecoming race which means the most.

He added, "Of course, I'm most looking forward to winning Leg 2—the leg into my home port!"

Fellow Capetonian and Clipper Race Director Dale Smyth has already had the privilege of sailing into his home city twice as part of the Clipper Race, and this time around he will be eagerly awaiting the fleet's arrival when it calls into port in November.

This will be the first edition of the Clipper Race where the fleet will be managed by a South African after he took on the role last year. Smyth previously held roles as deputy in the race management team and skipper of the *Dare To Lead* yacht in the 2017-2018 edition.

Talking about being a South African who has sailed home, he said, "It's always good sailing home. For those that haven't done it, sailing into Table Bay is incredible.

"With a long and unique history of being connected to some of the world's greatest ocean sailing races like the Cape to Rio, the Ocean Race, the Whitbread and Around Alone, South Africans have always had an understanding and connection with the sea.

"It is common for South Africans to also deeply respect the sea, knowing that from the Wild Coast to the Skeleton Coast to the Cape of Good Hope, the long and dramatic coastline produces some of the most fearsome conditions. The Clipper Race provides an opportunity for crew to become part of this history and legacy, and to put their name among the list of greats that have approached and departed this iconic ocean destination."

Capetonian Dale Smyth is a former Clipper Race Skipper and is now the Clipper Race Director.

About the Clipper Race

Eleven competing teams, led by a professional Skipper and First Mate, battle storm-force winds, towering waves, and the relentlessness of racing 24 hours a day for up to 30 days at a time across some of the world's most unforgiving oceans. The route is divided into eight legs – including six ocean crossings – with participants choosing to complete the full circumnavigation or selecting one or multiple legs.

Around 30% of the race crew have no previous sailing experience before they begin their four weeks' training. Each team accrues race points for their leaderboard position at each stage of the global route, and they can win bonus race points which are awarded for tactical challenges along the way.

While the racetrack can be thousands of nautical miles long, racing remains tight. In the past, just seconds have separated teams at the finish line, and the overall winner has only been decided at the finish line of the grand finale after 40 000nm of racing.

The race will make 14 ports of call on its global route, with Portsmouth (UK), Cape Town (South Africa), Qingdao (China), and Tongyeong City (Korea) announced so far, with more port announcements due next week. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

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