0 OPINION

EDITORIAL

FLYING START TO NEW PSL SEASON

GET ready for the 2025-26 Premier Soccer League season as the annual MTN8 quarter-finals kick off this weekend, featuring top teams like Orlando Pirates and Mamelodi Sundowns.

This single-leg knockout tournament features the top eight teams from last season's Premiership, and fans are eagerly awaiting the intensity of the first matches that promise to set the tone for the season ahead.

Orlando Pirates will kick off the MTN8 action at the iconic Orlando Stadium, hosting Polokwane City. Pirates will be looking to showcase their squad full of new talent and embark on what they hope will be a glorious season.

Among the standout signings taking centre stage is the former Polokwane star, Oswin Appollis, who returns to the pitch with a point to prove.

Another addition that has garnered significant attention is the skilful Pirates midfielder Sipho 'Masterchef' Mbule, known for his flair and creativity. These players could be vital for the Pirates as they aim to reclaim their MTN8 dominance.

This match marks the official start of the Abdeslam Ouaddou era at Pirates, as the Moroccan coach takes the helm following the departure of José Riveiro.

Following their pre-season tour of Spain, Ouaddou and his squad are set to make a strong statement, especially with Pirates being the reigning champions after clinching title victories for the past three consecutive years.

Getting a fourth title in a row would send a message to the rest of the league, signalling their intent to also pursue their first league title since 2012.

Following a remarkable showing at the FIFA Club World Cup, league champions Mamelodi Sundowns are gearing up for their first competitive match of the season. They host Richards Bay at the Lucas Masterpieces Moripe Stadium on Sunday.

Stellenbosch FC's resilience will be put to the test by AmaZulu on Sunday. The Winelands club is now confronting a new set of challenges as it navigates a wave of player departures that could have a significant impact on its campaign.

In the remaining quarter-final, Sekhukhune United will begin the campaign against TS Galaxy at the Peter Mokaba Stadium tomorrow. They have shown huge improvement in the Premiership, but are yet to win their first trophy.

CAPE TIMES

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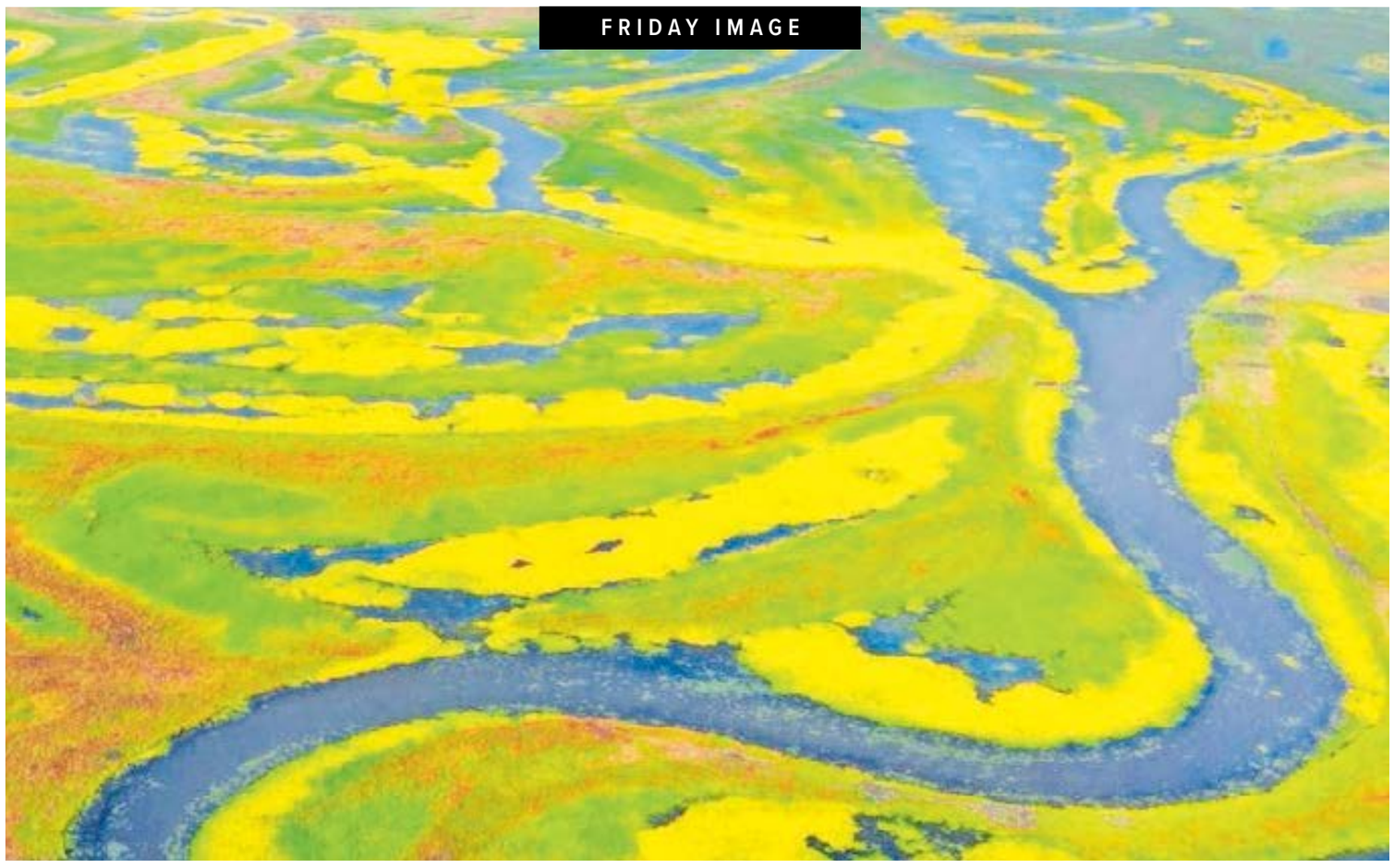
FRIDAY IMAGE



A DRONE photo shows scenery at the Naoli River National Natural Reserve, in north-east China's Heilongjiang Province. | Xinhua

COMMENT

Inauguration strife at Afrikaans Language Monument

Involvement of brown people and other population groups was source of great division

STEWARD VAN WYK

AT THE Afrikaans Language Monument's inauguration on October 10, 1975, political strife and undercurrents prevailed in brown politics.

In his autobiography, Dr. Richard (Dick) van der Ross describes the early 1970s as a time marked by division, split loyalties, and prejudice.

Their political actions in response to government-led celebrations were shaped accordingly: radicals strongly opposed and boycotted them, while moderates supported limited participation, provided it did not validate the harsh apartheid structure.

It is not an exaggeration to say that, for radicals, the Language Monument was a non-event and therefore didn't even figure in debates.

Jannie Rossouw and Annemarie van Zyl point out the intense struggles and differences among white Afrikaans speakers in the run-up to the monument's erection and inauguration.

The involvement of brown people and other population groups was one of the aspects over which great division existed. Reverend S.J. Loots, minister of the Toringkerk in Paarl, strongly expressed his opposition, particularly to the symbolism of the three domes that represented the contribution of black people to the development of Afrikaans.

In a petition to, among others, the then state president and prime minister, he criticised the "linguistically indefensible hut depictions" for which there was no evidence that "native languages" had made any meaningful contribution to the development of Afrikaans.

On the other hand, there was a strong sentiment that the inauguration should not be an exclusively white Afrikaner celebration. In response to circular 2/75 from Mr. P.J. Cillie to the language monument committee, Prof. W.J. du P. Erlank (Eitemal) wrote: "We have lost ground in the relationship between white Afrikaners and their brown linguistic and cultural counterparts. We must progressively reclaim that ground step by step."

Therefore, he opposed gross segregation between different groups at the inauguration: "I fully agree that ... coloured leaders and their wives should sit together and intermingle with prominent whites. But the minister or school principal or lawyer who refuses to sit on stage with prominent coloureds - we must write him off and forget about him, for we truly no longer need him."

Cillie mentioned in a memorandum following a conversation with Van der Ross that brown participation in the celebration programme had to be ensured to avoid the "near-complete boycott" and "pathetic contribution" of Malays and Griquas to the Van Riebeeck Festival (1952) and the Voortrekker Centenary Festival (1938).

In a letter from secretary J.F. Venter to the organising committee, he asked that the possibility of involving brown high school students in carrying the torch for the first few kilometres be considered.

However, in his comprehensive review of the torch run, Rossouw provides no indication that this proposal was implemented. A brown committee consisting of Drs. Henry Beets, Frank Quint, Van der Ross, Messrs. Pat Sonn and Schroeder was convened to provide advice regarding the programme.

News coverage and the official programme show that there was limited participation and presence of brown people. Among others, the Cape Corps band performed, the Bel Canto Choir from Paarl, led by David Samaai, sang pieces by Bach and Schubert as well as some Afrikaans folk songs. The Primrose Muslim Choir performed the well-known song Ag Rosa. The Afrikaans poem Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika by Adam Small was read by Nic de Jager but more on this later.

The participation of brown people was to occur through the Coloured Representative Council (CRC), the institution through which the NP government engaged politically with brown people.

However, the situation was not that simple. Van der Ross aptly summarised the political stalemate of this period: "From 1975 until 1979 a truly remarkable position persisted which, more than anything else, emphasised the ludicrous situation into which the government's determination to enforce apartheid and the people's counter-determination not to accept it, had led the country."

Within the CRC, this untenable situation played out in the confrontation between the majority party - the Labour Party under Sonny Leon and later Alan Hendrickse – and the chair of the Executive Committee, Alathea Jansen, who was appointed by the government.

"During the succeeding months, the ludicrous situation – the Executive Committee refused to cooperate with the government, yet continued to administer funds voted by the government, and a non-party member as nominal head of the Executive signed the budget despite having been rejected by her Executive – reached breaking point," wrote Van der Ross.

On many levels, the situation within the brown community could be described as "half-petrified" -wavering, indifferent, apathetic, resistant, and disapproving, stemming from varied and divergent political backgrounds.

Although Small, like many Afrikaans writers, refused to attend the controversial inauguration, his poem Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika was read during a segment alongside C.M. van den Heever's Fallen Zulu Indoena. Was the intention to connect to the African symbolism of the monument?

The poem was part of the 1963 collection 'Sê Sjibbolet', in the section 'Swart Landskap' (Black Landscape) which, along with poems like Pad, Donkermaan and Apokalips (Path, Dark Moon, and Apocalypse), paints a bleak picture of South African history and future.

The specific poem mentions the Xhosa prophetess Nongqawuse and her false prophecy that led to her people's downfall; it ties in with several poems in the collection that denounce false prophets, blasphemers, and heretics.

Rob Antonissen argues that mentioning Nongqawuse "brings the tragic existential and faith crisis of a great tribal group into focus."

Small's suggestion that this is the path white Afrikaners were taking with apartheid cannot be ignored.

Although the poem was more than a decade old when recited at the inauguration, Small's message still resonated. The warning tone in the closing verse must have echoed eerily against the concrete pillars – a threatening foreshadowing of the Soweto uprisings the following year, when the youth rose against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction: "ou geeste / kan weer leef soos ou vulkane / as die bloed in hul bly kook het / vir 'n duisend mane" (old spirits / can live again like old volcanoes / if their blood kept boiling / for a thousand moons).

Ironically, in 1975, Small also published his collection of English quatrains 'Black Bronze Beautiful'. Written in the spirit of the Black Consciousness Movement, its themes included pride in blackness, black history and culture, and the promotion of black solidarity in overthrowing white oppression.

If the organisers had sought a poem with African themes, one of these quatrains would have been an obvious choice, despite being in English.

In a piece in the Cape Times on August 16, 1975, titled Afrikaans: a vital language but what of the future? – featuring a graphic of the Language Monument and reflecting on the 100th anniversary of Afrikaans (implicitly since the founding of the Society of True Afrikaners, the GRA, in 1875) – Small points out the good and bad of a people embodied in their language.

He quotes Van Wyk Louw: "Afrikaans can remain vital as long as it remains the bearer of our complete destiny" and "We must keep both our heritages, Europe and Africa, close to our hearts – warmly, blood-warmly".

Small's hopeful final wish in the 1975 newspaper article was: "Afrikaans can let South Africans sing, even if in pain, of life-universally. Indeed, I am quite confident that my language will not die."

It was a meaningful yearning given the political climate of the time and the following year, 1976.

This year, with the 50th anniversary of the Language Monument, we now have an opportunity to finally ensure that all speakers embrace the institution as part of our linguistic heritage... and are not left half-petrified.

• This article is part of a series celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Afrikaans Language Museum and Monument (ATM) in 2025.

Van Wyk is professor of Afrikaans Literature and Chair of the department at the University of the Western Cape. In October 2025 his department will host the 5th Black Afrikaans Writers symposium.

MADAM & EVE — Stephen Francis and Rico Schacherl

TREKNET — Gavin Thomson and Dave Gomersall

COMMENT

THEMBILE NDABENI

How Pokela's leadership shaped the PAC

BOTH the ANC and the PAC had challenges in exile. But the main issue is how they survived under the challenges.

The ANC took control of its situation through in some instances applying harsh measures, but the PAC could not.

Unlike the ANC, the PAC had a huge leadership challenge. The situation became out of control. What complicated matters was that the problem was started by one of its main founders Potlako Leballo. That was the man who was unilaterally appointed by Mangaliso Sobukwe to act as the President because he (Sobukwe) was imprisoned.

After causing the PAC a terrible blow, Leballo was succeeded by the triumvirate (Central Committee) comprising Vusumzi Make, David Sibeko and Elias Ntloedibe. However, the triumvirate too could not really bring a solution to the problem until John Nyathi "Poks" Pokela arrived and took over as chairman.

A teacher born in the Eastern Cape, Pokela was one of the early active members of the ANC Youth League and later one of the founders of the Pan Africanist Congress. He was one of the ANC members who were sceptical about the taking over of the organisation by minority interests.

He was imprisoned for 13 years in Robben Island for the PAC's armed wing, POQO (renamed APLA) activities. He was charged for plotting to overthrow the government.

Prison was not a resting place or for only going through torture but for addressing another challenge that confronted the PAC in Robben Island.

The PAC was divided. After his release, Pokela went into exile. Once more, in exile he was confronted with the same challenge of a divided and faction-ridden PAC. In exile he served in the PAC Presidential Council.

His coming to that fractional PAC was long overdue. He demonstrated his leadership by bringing the warring factions together. It is under his leadership that the likes of Ata Phillip Kgosana came back into the fold of active PAC politics. The most important thing was re-establishing control over the mutinous ranks of the PAC's military wing, APLA. After his arrival the PAC started to revive. Though his arrival made a huge difference, it could not express itself to the fullest.

There were two reasons for that: he was not given a global picture of the situation before or immediately after his arrival and assumption of duty. Secondly, it was the nature of the crisis he was trying to address, the PAC was in a mess. Those in charge of the PAC prior to Pokela's arrival should have briefed him before he assumed his duties so that he could know what he was going to deal with and how. Despite the challenges Pokela did his best, also paving the way for his successor.

June marked the 40th anniversary of his death. He was a leader with integrity, a true freedom fighter and the real lover of his people. That's why he risked his life until his death. His premature death was a blow to his family, especially to the PAC and the struggle for the total liberation of Azania.

It is unfortunate that death deprived the PAC and Azania (South Africa) of "a real Son of the Soil". The fact that he was charismatic, and modest means that the PAC needed him from then, during the era of negotiations, the first democratic elections and afterwards in South Africa.

It is an open secret that the collapse of the PAC after the unbanning of the liberation organisations resulted from the lack of dynamic leadership.

With his skills, admiration, political stature, and African statesmanship he would have closed that leadership vacuum in the PAC. It seems those who worked with him did not learn from him.

From the ranks of the PAC, after Sobukwe he was the best leader the PAC ever had. What about South Africa and Africa at large? He died and was buried in Zimbabwe where he was also honoured with a state funeral by the Mugabe Regime for his contribution in the liberation struggle.

Last year, almost 40 years after he passed on, his remains were returned to his country Azania.

Ndabeni is a freelance writer. He holds a Master's degree in South African politics and political economy from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.