

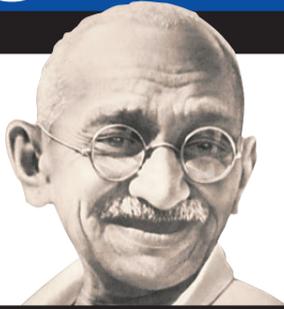
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# Ratepayers spared cost of stadium

SIYABONGA MAPHUMULO

**I**T'S OFFICIAL – eThekweni ratepayers and service delivery will not bear the brunt of the R800-million funding shortfall for the building of the new 2010 stadium.

Negotiations between the municipality and the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government have culminated in an agreement between both parties to contribute towards the required R800-million.

The National Treasury had initially offered the city R1.8-billion towards the project but a sharp rise in building costs pushed up the costs to R2.6-billion, leaving eThekweni with an R800-million shortfall.

In terms of the agreement the province is to cough up R300-million and the city is to contribute R500-million.

Mayor Obed Mlaba, who at a recent full council meeting, proposed the new stadium be named after the late SACP General Secretary Moses Mabhida, also gave his word that neither ratepayers nor service delivery would be harmed.

Mlaba said that because we are sharing the shortfall with province service delivery will

not be affected. "In fact we will be intensifying our efforts as there are some major infrastructural changes which need to occur in readiness for 2010," he said referring to the new station to be built near the stadium site.

City Manager Michael Sutcliffe said provisions in the city's capital budget had been made to foot the bill in the respective financial years.

The latest agreement should allay public fears that there could be a looming rates increase to fund the shortfall.

## Legal action

Mlaba said it was unlikely that work on the new stadium would be disturbed by legal actions recently instituted by one of the losing bidders against the municipality.

"That is not something we are unfamiliar with. We issue more than 100 tenders a month and (losing) bidders sometimes want to contend in court. Of course these will be dealt with by the law, but work on the stadium continues as we speak," he said.

Receiving the news at full council, opposition parties praised the city for its swift

resolution of a problem that threatened to disrupt the 2010 preparations.

DA caucus leader Cllr John Steenhuisen said: "While our initial concerns last year were not sufficiently attended to, all that is water under the bridge and we move to support the fact that provincial (government) will come to the party."

He said while there had been calls to upgrade Absa stadium, it was his party's belief that this would "not be a viable option".

The IFP also applauded the move saying it would not have been very cost-effective to trim back on the original stadium design.

"We need a stadium to survive beyond 2010 and while there is talk that we should revisit the stadium design we should remember that this project will create job opportunities," said IFP Cllr Gladwin Ndlela.

The ANC itself appeared impressed by the opposition's willingness to co-operate.

"The timeframes given to us by Fifa are very strict and I'm very impressed by the IFP and DA for agreeing with us on this matter," said ANC Cllr Visvin Reddy.

# Row over street renaming

SIYABONGA MAPHUMULO

**T**HE ANC's intention to rename some of eThekweni's streets has been met with jeers from opposition parties.

Mayor Obed Mlaba tabled a list of eight streets to be renamed at a full council meeting, held at Folweni, south of the city, last week.

The list further proposes that the International Convention Centre (ICC) be renamed Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Con-

vention Centre, while the new 2010 stadium might be named after late SACP General Secretary Moses Mabhida.

Mlaba said the citywide renamings were "in line with the creation of a united, non-sexist South Africa."

But the move by the ruling party at council has raised the ire of opposition parties, particularly the IFP and the DA who cried foul over the "dictated decisions."

Both parties voiced concern over what they said was "a

lack of consultation by the ANC".

The IFP's Vela Gumede said that the ANC's "half-hearted decisions were taken without proper consultation and left questions about the (eThekweni) administration."

He likened the renaming process to a "fracas and a political fiasco".

The DA's Tom Stokes, who said the process showed distinct signs of being flawed, seconded Gumede.

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**WATCH OUT MOTSEPE:** It's not so much a grassroots initiative, as a bid for the big time for Mayor Obed Mlaba. In partnership with an Asian Tiger, among others, Mlaba hopes to revive the fortunes of African Wanderers. Picture: SIYABONGA MAPHUMULO

## Mayor brings boardroom muscle to Wanderers FC

SIYABONGA MAPHUMULO

**P**AINED by the declining fortunes of KwaZulu-Natal's top-flight football teams, Mayor Obed Mlaba has thrown his weight behind a bid to revive one of the province's oldest teams – African Wanderers Football Club.

Although the Premier Soccer League (PSL) fortunes of Lamontville-based Golden Arrows appear to be on the mend, the same cannot be said for the province's other top soccer sides.

Amazulu is placed last in the PSL tables, and Maritzburg United are also flirting with relegation.

The once mighty Wanderers now languish in the lower leagues, but fans will be hoping Mlaba, who has partnered with Korean tycoons, will be able to bring some boardroom muscle to

bear. Wanderers, known to fans as the Abaqulusi, are to be merged with Durban-based second division side, Real Connection FC to form a much stronger outfit. The new team would be managed locally and internationally under the banner of African Wanderers Holdings.

## Chairman

"I will be the club's chairman on the African continent and Tiger Koon, one of the co-owners of the club, will handle international affairs," said Mlaba.

The team's technical staff would comprise Korean and South African coaches, he said.

African Wanderers Holdings spokesman Mthembeni Mkhize said: "By approaching Real Connection FC we want to develop on their

current crop of players to rebuild Wanderers."

Mkhize, who also has a stake in the new team, said the province was blessed with talent, evident by the number of KwaZulu-Natalians who play international football.

He criticised media reports that suggested Mlaba had "bought" the team.

"The team is a result of a partnership between the Koreans and us, it is not owned by a single person," he said.

African Wanderers' last showing at the PSL was four years ago before they were relegated to lower ranking leagues.

The team is renowned for having produced some of the best players in the country, such as Sibusiso Zuma and Siyabonga Nomvetho, both of whom now play top-flight European football.