

New Age dawns: editor reiterates independence, support for government



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Rocked by [mass editorial resignations](#) and [allegations](#) of iron-fist management and lack of logistics, which twice postponed its launch this year, and criticised for being an ANC-led government mouthpiece, *The New Age* daily newspaper finally hit the newsstands yesterday, Monday, 6 December 2010. Editor Henry Jeffreys launched a scathing attack on the media for suggesting his publication is the New Agent, insisting it remains independent but supports the government of the day.



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"Despite everything that has been said about us, we hold no brief for any political party or formation. We are proudly South African and fiercely independent... We will generally support the government of the day at all levels... exposing bad government, bad business and corruption wherever it exists and hold public figures to their promises," Jeffreys wrote in the front page of the 32-page newspaper, whose shape looks almost the same as that of the now-defunct *The Weekender*.

Easier said than done?

But given the reality on the ground, this might look easier said than done, if the saying 'you do not bite the hand that feeds you' is to be believed.

Some insiders believe any attempt by Jeffreys to introduce the notion of fearless investigative journalism that could expose government heavyweights' wrongdoings will likely trigger an earthquake in the newsroom, and could even cost him his job.

Jeffreys, who [quit *Die Burger*](#) newspaper under mysterious circumstances earlier this year, also wrote on his [Another Monday column](#) (page 10): "We support media self-regulation as the only mechanism where a free press may exist and flourish. Self-regulation of the media is the hallmark of a truly open society in which ideas flow freely and contested in

public domain."

Denying that *The New Age* has any formal links with the ruling ANC, he wrote: "There is no hotline between my office in Midrand and Luthuli House in Sauer Street... Our journalists are not ideologues and propagandists, and to suggest this is an insult."

Ties with the ruling ANC

Critics are said to be closely watching the newspaper for signs of what they called the 'explosion' of government adverts, as the publication's financial backers have strong and family-like ties with the ruling ANC, despite Jeffreys nonchalantly suggesting otherwise.

Government entities and ANC-linked adverts which appeared in yesterday's edition include SATAWU, Free State Province Arrive Alive campaign, the Department of Public Service and Administration, a full page of the Limpopo Provincial Government (Department of Agriculture), the National Empowerment Fund and Motheo District Municipality (Free State).

Labour federation Cosatu, which turns 25 this year, also splashed a two-page gallery of black and white pictures recounting its creation in the '80s.

More flexibility

The management said the advertising space will be sold per square centimetre to give advertisers a lot more flexibility in the size of their advertisements.

To stay true to its early promises of introducing an 'innovative departure' in carrying news from all nine provinces, yesterday's edition was crowded with provincial news ranging from health, arts and culture, service delivery, farming and women abuse. Provinces covered include Limpopo, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State, Free State, North West and Mpumalanga.

Well-known writers plying their trade at the pro-government publication include Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, Zinhle Mapumulo, Xolani Mbanjwa and Eric Naki.

The newspaper is sold at R3.50 and a monthly subscription costs R60. A free trial three-month subscription to the ePaper is available online.

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ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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