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CHESS SOUTH AFRICA MEDIA STATEMENT

Passing of FIDE MASTER (FM) Dr Shabir Bhawoodien

For Immediate Release

27 May 2026

Chess South Africa (CHESS SA) mourns the passing of FM Dr Shabir Bhawoodien, one of the greatest figures in the history of South African chess.

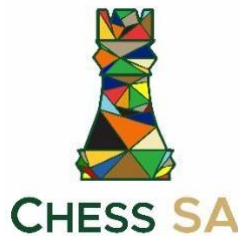
FM Dr Bhawoodien dedicated his life to the advancement and promotion of chess, leaving behind a legacy of excellence, humility, and service to the game. His contribution to South African and African chess will forever be remembered and celebrated.

A former South African Chess Champion and internationally respected player, Dr Bhawoodien achieved one of the most historic milestones in African chess when he won the 2003 World Amateur Chess Championship, becoming arguably the first African player to secure that title. This remarkable achievement inspired generations of players across the continent and firmly established his place among South Africa's chess legends.

Throughout his distinguished career, he represented South Africa with pride at numerous international competitions, including the World Senior Team Chess Championship. Even in recent years, his passion and competitive spirit remained unwavering, highlighted by his shared victory at the 2024 South African Senior Closed Championship alongside Dr Lyndon Bouah.

Beyond his accomplishments over the board, FM Dr Bhawoodien was admired for his sportsmanship, kindness, and dedication to mentoring and encouraging fellow players. He embodied the values of chess and served as a role model to young and old alike.

President: **Andre Lewaks** – Vice President 1: **Lindokuhle Ngubane** – Vice President 2: **Shaun Levitan** – Treasurer: **Liezl Bothma**
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Head Coach: **Reuben Salimu** – PRO: **Gerald Neels** – SASCA President: **Fungile Ngqenga**



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Speaking on behalf of Chess South Africa, President André Lewaks said:

“Shabir Bhawoodien was a true giant of South African chess. His achievements brought honour to our country and inspired countless players across generations. More importantly, he was a gentleman, a mentor, and a passionate ambassador for the game. South African chess has lost one of its finest sons.”

Chess South Africa extends its sincere condolences to the Bhawoodien family, friends, teammates, and the broader chess community during this difficult time.

His contribution to chess will never be forgotten, and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations.

Rest in peace, FM Dr Shabir Bhawoodien.

Issued by:

Gerold Neels

Public Relations Officer (PRO)

Chess South Africa (CHESS SA)

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