sport, arts & culture
Department:
Sport, Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT
Attention: Editors & Journalists
Tuesday, 17 November 2026

MZANSI BOOK FAIR 2027: CALLS OPEN FOR EXHIBITORS AND NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS NOMINATIONS

The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) has opened applications to exhibit at the inaugural Mzansi Book Fair, as well as nominations for the National Literary Awards. The awards will be presented on the fair's closing night.

The Mzansi Book Fair takes place from **25 to 27 February 2027 in Cape Town**, across three heritage spaces: the Iziko South African Museum, the National Library of South Africa's Centre for the Book and the Company's Garden. Under the theme, ***"Pathways of a Rainbow Nation: Literary Journeys",*** the fair will bring together South African, African and international authors, publishers, booksellers and readers.

"Books changed my life, and I know they can change the lives of millions of South Africans. A nation that reads is a nation that thinks, questions and dreams bigger. The Mzansi Book Fair is about building that reading culture, celebrating stories told in all our languages, and making sure our authors, publishers and booksellers can earn a real living from their work," said the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie.

National Literary Awards

Each winner will receive R20 000, a trophy and a certificate, across 17 categories:

Official Language Award for original fiction or non-fiction in each of the 11 written official languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

Lifetime Achievement (which may be awarded posthumously)
Liberation Struggle Literature
Children's Book
South African International Author
Publishing House of the Year
Outstanding Literary Organisation

Nominations will be assessed by an independent panel of industry experts, and an independent auditing firm will certify the process and the winners. For the Lifetime Achievement and Liberation Struggle Literature awards, the panel will shortlist three nominees and the Minister will select the winner. The Department is also inviting experienced literary professionals to apply to serve as adjudicators.

Exhibiting at the fair

Exhibition stands range from a R3 000 table stand to an 18 m² cubicle at R30 000. About 20 stands will be allocated free of charge to emerging local publishers who meet the published criteria.

"These awards put every one of our written languages on the same stage. Too many of our best writers, especially those writing in African languages, have never had the recognition they deserve. If you know a book that deserves to be honoured, or a publisher who has gone the extra mile, nominate them. And if you have books to sell, come to Cape Town in February and sell them," added Minister McKenzie.

The three-day programme will include book launches, author conversations, panel discussions, children's storytelling, schools programme and industry dialogues on multilingual and digital publishing, copyright and getting published.

All calls close on 12 December 2026. Guidelines, criteria and application forms are available at https://dsacevents.dsac.gov.za/mbf/

- **ENDS**

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