

Getting to grips with a current favourite media catchphrase: the em dee em

THE MDM is not an organisation, has no formal structure, and was never officially launched. But it did not materialise out of nowhere. It arose after the banning of the United Democratic Front last year and represents the coming together of Cosatu, the UDF and other organisations which were not affiliated to the UDF.

"It is quite wrong for the media and politicians to treat the MDM as if it were an organisation," says Professor Douglas Irvine, head of the Department of Political Studies at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. "What used to be referred to in lower case letters has suddenly acquired capitals."

"No one has officially established the MDM and it therefore gives the impression of being shadowy. We don't know who the leaders are and we don't know who the followers are. Under these circumstances the MDM lends itself to possible manipulation. However, I am not saying that the MDM is not supported by a great many people who are pro-democracy," said Professor Irvine.

"Because of the emergency it is impossible for an organisation (with the image of the MDM) to have proper organisation with a clear mandate and accountability. MDM started off as a euphemism — a kind of blanket term — for ANC supporters inside the country."

Freedom Charter

Yunus Carrim, publicity secretary for the Natal Indian Congress, one of the organisations under the MDM umbrella, confirms that the title refers to anti-apartheid organisations in the Freedom Charter tradition, which, he says, are "mass-based, democratic and non-racial".

"They include a wide range of trade union, political, community and civic, student, youth, women, cultural and professional organisations. These organisations are bound together in a strategic alli-

ance, at the core of which are the UDF and Cosatu.

"The concept which the MDM represents surfaced in the mass struggles waged between 1984 and 1986. Scores of organisations sprouted throughout the country in this period — and street, area and zone committees were formed in many of the key townships."

Together with parent/teacher/student associations and trade unions these groups "constituted a mass movement — whose features were the size of its membership and the depth of its democracy", says Mr Carrim.

Cosatu

The idea of the MDM began to take root at Cosatu's congress in 1987. The UDF and Cosatu would, it was decided, co-operate more closely, and "the scores of mainly regionally based UDF affiliates would be converted into broader more powerful national organisations representing youth, women, civic associations etc", says Mr Carrim. This idea was re-affirmed at the Cosatu Congress in July this year.

After the banning of the UDF in February 1988, the alliance between the UDF and Cosatu was referred to as the "mass democratic movement", in lower case. A spokesman confirms that the MDM is "still somewhat amorphous, because of repressive conditions. It is 'more of a process' than an organisation".

Like UDF, the MDM uses powerfully evocative words in its title. "Mass" says a spokesman, refers to the numbers who are represented. Cosatu, for example, has a paid up membership of nearly a million through its participating unions. The UDF, at the time of its banning, claimed to have more than 600 affiliated organisations. "Where these organisations are legal, the numbers are reflected in the meetings. You will recall that we had about 6 000 at our meeting

What's in the name?

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The "mass democratic movement" has leapt into the limelight with highly-publicised campaigns against the elections and health services. But what is the MDM, and how does it operate? The SABC and the National Party frequently refer to it as the "so-called 'mass democratic movement'". Ken Owen, the editor of Business Day, says the MDM has "little mass and no democracy, but marvellous tactical mobility". Are these fair comments?

MARTIN WILLIAMS investigates.

at Wadley stadium recently. The word 'mass' is also an oblique way of excluding Black Consciousness, Apdusa and other groups, who do not attract large audiences. 'Democratic' means that the

organisation must have structure and it must be accountable to its members."

Under the state of emergency, not all organisations falling under the MDM can conduct meetings

where the accountability of office bearers can be validated. "But Cosatu, for instance, has a well-tryed structure of accountability," said a spokesman.

"By calling ourselves democratic we specifically exclude Inkatha, which we regard as authoritarian. The MDM is accountable when it is allowed to be. It has no formal leader and no formal structure, except when operating through the structures of Cosatu, for example."

Broad masses

UDF acting publicity secretary Murphy Morobe describes the MDM as "that political movement which unites the broad masses of the oppressed from all classes and strata, together with democratic whites, in action around a programme of securing the transfer of political and economic power to the democratic majority of the people".

He told a Transvaal Indian Congress meeting at the weekend that the MDM "recognises the ANC as the vanguard in the national democratic struggle; has organised formations like the UDF, Cosatu (which form a strategic alliance); has a mass approach to organisation (thus involving the masses actively, purposefully and consistently in their struggles; has or sought to have accountable leadership; and engages in alliances, and campaigns on the basis of unity in action and united mass action behind a common programme".

Ultimately, says Mr Morobe, "there can only be two parties at the negotiating table — the leaders of the present minority Government... and those of the democratic majority, led by the ANC".

So much for MDM spokesmen. Not all anti-apartheid activists are impressed by the phenomenon. A Black Consciousness spokesman, decrying the "so-called leaders" for riding around in luxury cars

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"Its emergence is entirely undemocratic as organisations were not invited to discuss the creation

of the organisation. In the circumstances can it be 'mass'? It claims to have the UDF and Cosatu on its side. The ructions within those two organisations clearly point to the sudden need to create the MDM.

"Most of the spokesmen of the MDM, ironically, are to be found in rich white and non-white suburbs. Their values are entirely bourgeois and this insubstantial MDM is a perfect vehicle by which they can achieve bourgeoisdom without the taint of apartheid."

Like or hate it, the MDM is with us. Journalists, unsure about the origins and authenticity of the MDM, find themselves giving it credibility merely by using capital letters. Even the National Party faces similar problems. Information officer Con Botha yesterday spoke of the "so-called 'mass democratic movement'", but his senior, Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok, has taken to occasionally dropping the "so-called" and referring to the MDM. The "marvellous tactical mobility" of the MDM is paying off.

• Apart from the UDF and Cosatu, other "significant" organisations, not affiliated to the UDF but now under the banner of the MDM are the National Medical and Dental Association (Namda), the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (Nadel), the Congress of South African Writers (Cosaw), and the SA Health Workers' Congress (Shawco), according to Yunus Carrim. He adds that in some areas "non-Congress people" have been included. Some church groups, the Five Freedoms Forum and the the SA Youth Congress are also counted in the ranks of the MDM.

White hospitals

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'Trojan horse' trial faces collapse

From BRYAN PEARSON in Cape Town

THE "Trojan horse trial" — a private prosecution by parents of two youths killed in a police ambush — was close to collapse last night because of a demand that the parents lodge security of almost one million rand (\$450,000).

The trial, in which 12 South African police and an army officer are accused of murder by the parents of the dead youths, opened in the Cape Supreme Court yesterday.

It immediately hit a snag when the defendants said the 10,000 rand security lodged by the parents was not enough and asked the judge to raise it to 945,000 rand.

South African law allows for the defence to ask for guarantees from private prosecutors to cover their legal costs in the event of acquittal. The judge was expected to rule on the issue early today.

The trial is the first private prosecution for murder in South Africa.

It follows the "Trojan horse" incident in October

1985 in which police, who had been hiding in packing cases in the back of a truck at Athlone near Cape Town, sprang out and sprayed a crowd with bullets when the truck was stoned.

The incident took place during a period of widespread anti-apartheid violence in black areas, particularly prevalent in Cape Town at the time.

'Defendants' bid to boost security deposit could cripple prosecution'

In March last year an inquest found the police were negligent and caused the deaths of Shaun Magmoed, 16, Michael Miranda, 11, and Jonathan Claasens, 21.

The magistrate said police had exaggerated the extent of the stoning by the crowd. BBC and CBS videos showed only one brick and two or three stones had been thrown at the truck.

He also found 39 rounds of shotgun ammunition had been fired into the crowd and there was no evidence to show the three dead youths had thrown stones.

The parents of two of the youths started the private prosecution after the Attorney-General of Cape Province, Mr Neil Rossouw, declined to prosecute.

Mr Rossouw gave no reason

for not prosecuting, but issued a non-prosecution certificate enabling anyone unhappy with his decision to take the matter to court.

The refusal to prosecute led to a public outcry and the decision by Mrs Georgina Williams, mother of Michael, and Mr Martin Magmoed, father of Shaun, to institute the private prosecution.

Though Mrs Williams and

Mr Magmoed have received funds from overseas, the battle is expected to be long and costly and if the judge rules they must increase their security, the action will almost certainly collapse.

The 13 men who have been subpoenaed in the Trojan horse case are: Colonel Pieter Janse van Rensburg, who was head of the South African Police riot unit; Major Christiaan Ludolff, formerly of the Railways Police; Commandant Salmon Pienaar of the South African Defence Force; Lieutenant Douw Tiaan Ludolff, formerly of the Railways Police; Commandant Salmon Pienaar of the South African Defence Force; Lieutenant Douw Vermeulen, who commanded the men on the truck; Sergeant F. van Niekerk, Sergeant J. Burger, Constable W. Puchert, Constable P. du Toit, Warrant-Officer A. Swart, Sergeant J. Sayer, Constable A. Smit, Constable A. Rossel and Sergeant A.M. Smit.

AFP

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S African 'white hospitals' treat blacks

JOHANNESBURG: Scores of black patients demanding medical attention were admitted to "whites only" hospitals yesterday for the first time after pressure from an anti-apartheid campaign.

Organisers promised a mounting campaign of defiance against the government.

At least 260 sick black people were treated in whites-only hospitals in Transvaal and Natal provinces.

"The defiance campaign will be taken to every corner and every section of society until apartheid is unworkable," trade union leader Mr Jay Naideo told a rally at Johannesburg's medical school.

Hospital authorities readily treated some of the black patients but referred others to black hospitals.

Victory

The union, youth and other groups, allied as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), said the protest was an initial victory in a campaign set to culminate with a week of as yet unspecified action before general elections on September 6.

The black majority cannot vote in the parliamentary polls.

The Health Minister, Mr Willie van Niekerk, scoffed at the campaign, saying: "Sick people were used as pawns by a small group of radicals."

"Any changes in health legislation will occur inside and not outside Parliament."

An MDM spokesman, Mr Cas Coovadia, said pressure against segregation of hospitals would not let up.

"From today we will ensure

that the people in the vicinity of whites-only hospitals will get admitted there," Mr Coovadia told the rally. "Should they be refused treatment, we will make sure that the whole world gets to know about it."

The campaign will broaden, with individuals and organisations openly defying government restrictions in a series of open challenges to emergency regulations.

A spokesman for the United Democratic Front (UDF), which has been largely silent since it was forbidden early last year to carry out any political activities, said the umbrella group would "unban itself" by holding an overtly political meeting.

On Sunday, people bound to their homes after dark under official restriction orders will break their curfew by attending an evening church service. A few openly defied restrictions yesterday by attending a political meeting.

MDM leaders says the protests aim to be peaceful, but the Government has accused it of stirring up violence.

Two hand grenades were thrown into the Soweto township home of a black police colonel yesterday evening, severely injuring one of his two sons and wounding him and the other boy less seriously.

In the only tense confrontation reported in yesterday's protests, police stopped coloured school pupils from joining a march in the centre of Cape Town's suburb of Mitchell's Plain.

Witnesses said the police fired tear gas and youths built barricades across streets.

Other protests yesterday involved black mineworkers using a canteen for whites

and riding whites-only buses.

MDM members had expressed fears of attack on the hospital protesters by extreme right-wing whites, after the distribution of leaflets threatening them with death in the name of a shadowy group called the White Wolves.

The largest protest turnout was at Durban's Addington Hospital, which treated 150

non-white patients while about 2000 protesters gathered outside.

The only arrests connected with the demonstration were of 12 middle-aged white women of the anti-apartheid Black Sash movement who were held briefly by police after picketing a main road in Johannesburg in support of the defiance campaign.

Reuters

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A white nurse tends a black patient at the whites-only Johannesburg Hospital (above) while anti-apartheid activists parade through the hospital grounds (top) — Reuters pictures

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