

# GOOD TRIUMPHS OVER EVIL

**Eternal flame lit in celebration of our democracy**

## Alfred Moselakgomo

**THE location of the Constitutional Court at the site which represented injustice and dehumanisation in the past is a rugged expression of the victory of democracy for South Africa.**

Speaking during the lighting of the "Flame of Democracy" in Johannesburg last night, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe said the event was aimed at dispelling darkness at a site.

The foundation of the highest court at Constitutional Hill is on what was once the Old Fort Prison Complex, commonly known as Number Four, where political prisoners and common criminals awaited trial and sat out their jail sentences. The prison was closed in 1983, leaving a scar on Johannesburg's metropolis – a bleak reminder of our painful past.

As part of celebrating 15th anniversary of the signing of the South African Constitution, Motlanthe lit what he termed "eternal flame of democracy".

The flame, he said, would burn constantly in its hand-carved copper bowl in one of the four remaining stairwells



**NEW ERA: Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng and Kgalema Motlanthe in Johannesburg last night.**

of the Awaiting Trial Block, opposite the carved wooden doors of the Constitutional Court.

A beam of light, switched on for the first time during the event, will be projected into the Johannesburg's sky every night as a visible reminder of our democracy.

Businessman Cyril Ramaphosa, who served as the chairman of the Constitutional Assembly, said: "When we stood in the sun in front of Parliament 15 years ago to celebrate the adoption of our new Constitution, we were a

country united. The writing of the Constitution, which saw a politically diverse body of former enemies come together, has become an international reference point in law-making and an example of what participatory democracy should be."

He said the placement of the flame was significant. "The Awaiting Trial Block stairwell is a symbolic threshold between the incarceration that was inherent in life under apartheid and the hard-won freedoms that are the foundation of South African life today."

The Constitution Hill Trust has also commissioned the book *One Law, One Nation*. Available in book-stores, the book charts the story of the long fight for constitutional rights in South Africa, and the complexity and obstacles that faced the Constitution-making process after 1990.

Using previously unseen archival, photographic and interview material, including former president Nelson Mandela's handwritten notes from the negotiation process, the book offers first-hand perspectives of the hidden history of the development of the South African Constitution.



**LET THERE BE LIGHT: Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe lights the 'Flame of Democracy' to commemorate the adoption of our Constitution.** PHOTOS: VATHISWA RUSELO