Welcome to Matters of Mind (MM)

February 2026 second edition

It has been an eventful two weeks; the Sona and Budget 2026 have left South Africa on an even keel locally, ready for an upturn in contrast to the US Supreme Court hearing against Trump which has brought the tariff wars into a new round of global uncertainty which may not work in America's favour.

We cover these themes and industry news that is free to access. We include a few podcasts, amongst which is the latest one from ASSA: **Beyond the Numbers – Success Accelerators in Actuarial Science.** We expose the downside of the rapid acquisition of AI in industry where it should be most effective, and at places of learning where it could be misused.

"We are all *pattern-matching* machines. We absorb and reproduce the patterns we're most often exposed to, often without conscious effort. The input shapes the output." **Daphne Gray-Grant**

Daphne Gray-Grant is talking about reading more to improve our writing skills, but it can just as easily be describing any patterns we're exposed to repeatedly. Please read the articles in the **About YOU** section which bring learning and eating habits into perspective.

Enjoy!

MM Editorial Team

Economic matters

What was promised in the Sona vs what Treasury funded

This article provides a high-level audit of what the Sona promises against the figures from the 2026 Budget. A useful 8min read for a quick grasp on the essentials.

South Africa's economy starts repairing, but recovery remains slow and fragile

Data released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) paints a picture of an economy that is finally catching its breath. Headline consumer price inflation (CPI) dipped to 3.5% year-on-year in January 2026, down from 3.6% in December 2025. On the labour front, the official unemployment rate decreased by 0.5 of a percentage point to 31.4% in the fourth quarter of 2025.

5min read

The Supreme Court's ruling leaves Trumponomics facing major challenges

The decision by the US Supreme Court to rule most of Donald Trump's "liberation day" tariffs illegal will have far-ranging consequences for the president's economic agenda. Although the administration will find other ways to increase tariffs, their usefulness as a weapon of economic warfare will be diminished.

This article describes the ramifications of the changes globally. 5min read

Trump reconfigures tariff architecture after Supreme Court ruling

The United States administration has replaced the emergency tariffs struck down by the Supreme Court last week with a new 15% temporary global import levy under a different statutory authority, reshaping tariff exposure for trading partners, including South Africa.

This article has a specific focus on what the changes mean for South Africa. 4min read

Financial Services Industry

Allianz Built an AI Agent to Train Claims Professionals in Virtual Reality

One thing that experienced adjusters will probably tell you about learning to be a better claims handler is to get more…well…experience. Years and years of it.

Multinational financial services and insurance giant Allianz is looking for a way to accelerate that experience-getting process for claims novices and experienced professionals.

4min read on how learning is so vital to building experience.

When insurance claims are declined: how exclusions work

One of the common exclusions found in insurance contracts relates to claims arising from criminal and illegal activities, such as resisting lawful arrest and driving under the influence of alcohol.

3min read

Full Bench adds weight to challenges against RAF medical expense directives

A Full Bench of the Western Cape High Court has dismissed an appeal by the Road Accident Fund (RAF), rejecting its reliance on internal directives to avoid paying past medical expenses already settled by a medical scheme and warning that continued attempts to do so risk undermining the authority of the courts.

The law is precise. Find out why the RAF is liable for medical expenses where these have been settled by the medical aid of the injured. 8min read

Understanding 'Cell Captives' in SA – a strategic insurance vehicle

PART 1 of 3

Cell captives have become a defining feature of South Africa's alternative risk transfer market. For corporates, affinity groups, fintech platforms and entrepreneurs seeking participation in underwriting profits without establishing a fully licensed insurer, the cell captive model offers a structured and regulated pathway.

Watch out for parts 2 and 3. 3min read

Diversity and Inclusion

Clarity Podcast: Beyond the numbers

In the latest episode of the Clarity podcast, we "rip off the Band-Aid" on transformation within the South African actuarial profession. While African representation among fellows has grown to 10% (and 27% for AIC groups) over the last two decades, the journey is far from over.

An ASSA podcast which shines a light on the gaps and how the society is addressing them.

Are women board members risk averse or agents of innovation? It's complicated, new research shows

Do women board members make a company more innovative or risk averse? The answer is both, according to a recent study. It all depends on how the company performs relative to its goals.

5min read

[Gender Balance as a Business Strategy]

The insurance industry is built on assessing risk, yet many companies overlook a critical one: the risk of sameness in leadership. When all decision-makers look and think the same, they're limited in their ability to spot emerging risks, connect with diverse customers, and navigate disruption. In a globally connected market, homogeneity can become a liability.

3min read

Life Insurance

[Life cover nominations still valid despite administrative slip]

A recent High Court ruling in the Eastern Cape Division (Makhanda) underscores a key lesson for insurers and policyholders: minor administrative errors should not undermine a clearly expressed intention, and insurers must focus on the substance, not just the paperwork, when honouring life cover policies.

3min read

General Insurance

[Discovery thinks AI can make you a better driver]

Speaking to TechCentral on Monday, Discovery Insure CEO Robert Attwell said the company's reliance on a combination of telematic data, research and generative AI is helping reduce overall risk in the company's client portfolio.

3min read

[Insurance as a strategic lever for mining resilience in 2026 and beyond]

South Africa's mining sector is operating under sustained pressure because of the sector's challenges, including ageing assets, unreliable power supply, constrained logistics and regulatory uncertainty. What used to be peripheral operational risks in mining are now directly influencing underwriting decisions, insurance pricing, capacity, and the financial viability of mining projects.

5min read

[Parametric insurance provides a smarter safety net for SA's climate reality]

Instead of assessing and compensating actual losses after an event, a parametric policy is triggered by the occurrence of a pre-defined and measurable event, such as a specific level of rainfall, wind speed, or temperature. Once that parameter is reached, payment is automatically made, removing delays, disputes, and uncertainty at a time when affected people need immediate support.

4min read

[Credit Insurance: The Unsung Hero of Business Growth]

Trade credit insurance may not always grab headlines, but it is the quiet engine that keeps B2B transactions running, especially in tough economic times. In this insightful episode, Gideon Bochedi, CEO of **Credit Guarantee Insurance Corporation (CGIC)**, unpacks the critical function that credit insurance serves in South Africa and beyond.

10min podcast, with a summary read of 2min.

[Why event cancellation insurance is a non-negotiable in 2026]

Despite careful preparation, events remain vulnerable to a range of risks that can force last-minute changes or full cancellation.

4min read

Health Insurance

[NHI: Noble but nowhere]

A fresh look at the challenges on the ground between what public and private health offer and the populations that they serve. Karin Mitchelmore Executive Head of Healthcare Consulting at NMG answers the basic questions with compassion for all citizens and stake holders.

15min interview

[Colorectal cancer is increasing among young people, as James Van Der Beek's death reminds us – cancer experts explain ways to decrease your risk]

Recent medical aids' reports show that colorectal cancer is also increasing in South Africa. The Conversation U.S. asked gastrointestinal oncologist Christopher Lieu and cancer researcher Andrea Dwyer to explain what's known about early-onset colon cancer and what young people can do to protect themselves.

4min read

Banking

[SA banks shift from caution to participation in crypto market]

After years of caution, South African banks are increasingly positioning themselves to enter the crypto-currency market, as regulatory clarity improves and institutional risk concerns ease.

3min read

[Banks, operators to drive Africa's stablecoin tipping point]

When African banks and mobile network operators make a decisive move to adopt stablecoin services for institutional, cross-border and treasury transactions, Africa will reach a pivotal tipping point in adoption.

4min read

[SA, Nigeria drive stablecoin spending in Africa]

This is according to the Stablecoin Utility Report, compiled by YouGov on behalf of fintech firm BVNK.

Note: *BVNK provides enterprise-grade stablecoin infrastructure for global businesses, enabling fast, compliant payments and digital asset solutions worldwide. The name originates from a concept to* ***"turn banking upside down"****. Google AI*

3min read, but to find out more about stablecoins the utility report is easy to read and paints a fuller picture. You can access the report here.

Investments

Ruling leaves key exchange control questions unresolved in crypto arbitrage dispute

A recent High Court judgment has drawn attention to questions about how South Africa's exchange control framework should be interpreted when offshore crypto trading is conducted through intermediated, loan-funded structures.

Informative 8min read providing ample background on crypto trading and how it has evolved to current practice.

Minding the gaps

It is often said that nature abhors a vacuum. Meanwhile, financial and economic commentators distrust a gap. Whenever two variables that normally run together diverge, some explaining is required. Why did this happen, and what will cause convergence? Does one catch up, or the other slow down? Or are we witnessing a permanent misalignment?

This article covers four gaps to look out for both as economists and investors. 10min read

Navigating the Great Wealth Transfer

Tony speaks with Khanyi Nzukuma, CEO of Glacier by Sanlam, about one of the most significant economic events of our time, the global Great Wealth Transfer. Over the next 20–30 years, trillions of dollars, and hundreds of billions of rands, will move from baby boomers to younger generations. This shift, Khanyi explains, is not only financial; it is generational, global, cultural, and deeply personal.

An 18min podcast.

Retirement / Pensions

Umbrella fund governance goes beyond headline fees – Sanlam

South Africa's retirement savings sustainability remains a central industry concern. Asset managers and fund selectors are under growing pressure to allocate capital where member outcomes are genuinely protected and improved, rather than simply where headline fees appear lowest.

4min read Nzwa Shoniwa - managing executive of Sanlam Umbrella Solutions

Umbrella funds are not a "set and forget" benefit strategy

How the legislation and the employer's choices on behalf of the employees intersect. The difference between what is fair and reasonable and what is a minimum involvement when looking after a retirement fund as an employer.

Enlightening facts about a retirement fund ecosystem. 20min interview

About YOU

The greatest risk of AI in higher education isn't cheating – it's the erosion of learning itself

AI can reduce drudgery, and that's not inherently bad. But it can also shift users away from the parts of learning that build competence, such as generating ideas, struggling through confusion, revising a clumsy draft and learning to spot one's own mistakes.

A 5min must-read.

[Are ultra-processed foods impossible to avoid? - The Global Story podcast, BBC World Service]

Research into ultra-processed foods suggests they could be linked to health problems including cancers, heart disease, obesity and depression - but scientists are yet to agree on how they affect us.

20min podcast.