

## SA ambassador recalled over false matric claims

SA's ambassador to Italy, Shirish Soni, has been recalled and docked three months' salary after he was found guilty of financial irregularities and misrepresenting his academic qualifications, says a report in the **Sunday Tribune**. Durban-born Soni, who worked as a senior SARS official when Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan was commissioner, was charged with four counts of misconduct related to sexual harassment, misrepresentation of academic qualifications, financial irregularities and 'compromising the mission's security'. Soni's 15-page suspension letter and charge sheet stated that he 'provided in his personnel file that he obtained his matric in 1974', which was 'false because the Department of Basic Education stated that ambassador Soni doesn't appear among the names of candidates who wrote the matric or Standard 10 in November 1974'. **He was also charged with breaching security by appointing an Italian woman as an intern against the policies of the Department of International Relations & Co-operation**, and causing the embassy to pay for his medical treatment without approval. According to a letter written to Soni by acting Department of International Relations and Co-operation DG Clayson Monyela, the disgraced ambassador was found guilty by a disciplinary hearing which sat between 21 and 24 October. For the charges in which he was found guilty, Soni was slapped with 'a final written warning valid for six months' and 'suspension without pay for a period of three months'.