



# Friday@Noon

Signals from this week's news

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- In a unanimous judgement on Thursday regarding the Nkandla upgrades to President Zuma's private home, the Constitutional Court declared the decisions of the public protector binding. Chief Justice Mogoeng ordered that the resolution of the National Assembly absolving Mr Zuma of repaying any of the money spent at Nkandla was unlawful. The National Treasury will determine the costs Mr Zuma should repay within 45 days of the court signing off the Treasury report. The DA initiated processes to impeach Mr Zuma while the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) called for the dissolution of Parliament and an early general election.
- Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan defended the legality of the so-called rogue unit at SARS as he filed responses to some of the 27 questions posed by the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, the Hawks. Mr Gordhan said the approach taken by the Hawks in their probe and the timing of their questions on the eve of last month's budget speech were unlawful.
- The ANC has denied that it agreed to the DA motion to request Parliament to establish an *ad hoc* committee to investigate alleged state influence by the Gupta family. The ruling party said its chief whip, Jackson Mthembu, stated that Parliament as a forum for public debates should never quash multiparty debates. The ANC noted that Mr Maimane's proposed motion had been rejected and that the allegations relating to the so-called state capture were before state institutions, such as the Hawks and the public protector, following requests for investigations by certain organisations and individuals. The party said Parliament should not find itself in a situation where it conducted parallel investigations.
- Court papers lodged on Wednesday by the SA Faith Communities Environmental Initiative and Earthlife Africa in the High Court in Cape Town show that SA intended to sign a binding deal with Russia to buy a fleet of nuclear reactors, bypassing public finance management rules. The records included a memorandum on the draft Russian deal, which makes clear that the deal was 'intended' and was 'understood as creating a firm commitment that Russia would construct the required nuclear plants in SA'. It was this opinion that is believed to have caused the then finance minister Pravin Gordhan and then energy minister Ben Martins to oppose the signing of the agreement. President Zuma subsequently moved both out of their positions in May 2014.
- Mr Zuma, on a state visit to the Arab kingdom this week, told a SA-Saudi Arabia business seminar that economic and trade ties should be revitalised. Among the sectors targeted for high potential to expand trade, economic and investment relations were petrochemical gas exploration and alternative energy sectors.
- Former Constitutional Court justice Richard Goldstone has urged civil society to ensure SA remains in the International Criminal Court (ICC). After the debacle around Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's visit to SA in June last year and the failure by the authorities to arrest him, despite being indicted for crimes against humanity by the ICC, the ANC is now campaigning for SA's withdrawal from the ICC.
- Thousands of SA teachers are relocating to the UK, Australia, Canada and other countries to earn better salaries, according to the Code4SA Data Journalism Academy. This trend shows the opportunities available for SA professionals while pointing out the difficulty for SA to retain or attract engineering, mathematical and other skills.
- Durban is the top-performing SA city when it comes to growth in house prices, increasing on average by 11.6% between Q4 2014 and Q4 2015. It takes 14<sup>th</sup> place out of the 165 cities in the world surveyed for the latest Knight Frank Global Residential Cities Index. Cape Town was second among the South African cities.
- Manufacturing business confidence has fallen to a six-year low. Lower manufacturing output will limit economic growth given that the sector makes up 12.5% of gross domestic product. The government projects growth this year at 0.9%, which is too low to address the 24.5% unemployment rate. The Bureau for Economic Research's manufacturing survey, measuring confidence among producers, also fell sharply.
- Transport Minister Dipuo Peters announced a 46% drop in the Easter road death figures, from 287 fatalities in 2015 to 156 this year. The Automobile Association said the drop in Easter deaths may simply be an anomaly because, based on the figures for the December festive season death toll, the trend shows an increase. **End**