

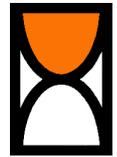


Friday @ Noon

A weekly electronic news briefing for the business community
Editor: Basil C Leonard

Institute for
Futures Research

Instituut vir
Toekomsnavorsing



Issue 911 11 Jan 2013

- President Jacob Zuma moved into election campaign mode this week, making a case for the ANC to continue leading SA. He said a SA not led by the ANC was inconceivable as the party was the only true defender of the interests of all the country's residents. He made the remark at a concert to mark the end of the party's centenary celebrations. Mr Zuma said the ANC was the only reliable defender of the constitution. It should continue providing political, moral and intellectual leadership to SA and ensure internal unity. 'A united ANC is good for the country and good for the continent.'
- The ANC's political jamboree kicked off in Durban with the movement parading its newly elected top six, led by President Jacob Zuma, bolstered by his election to lead the party for a second term and to unofficially begin the 2014 election campaign. Last month, Mr Zuma secured a second term as ANC president and Mr Cyril Ramaphosa replaced Kgalema Motlanthe as his deputy. The party programme includes a series of rallies, dinners with leading businesspeople, the first meeting of the newly elected national executive committee and the release of the annual January 8 statement, which will give impetus to the policy decisions taken at the party conference last month in Mangaung.
- A number of controversial decisions awaits Parliament when it reconvenes later this month for the 2013 session of the national legislature, not the least of them on the 'secrecy bill'. Parliament's committees begin work on January 29 and President Jacob Zuma's state of the nation address will take place on February 14. The Protection of State Information Bill has been approved by both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, with the ruling ANC using its majority muscle in both houses to force the bill through against widespread resistance from opposition parties and civil society.
- The Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry has voiced its strong disapproval of the resumption of the Western Cape's agricultural strikes. The strike resumed on Wednesday after a four-week hiatus while talks between government, organised agriculture and unions continue over a new minimum wage. Union leaders have also called for an international boycott of the province's produce, saying that it is produced under 'slave labour' conditions. Government spokeswoman Phumla Williams said government wouldn't tolerate violent action and farm workers need to be peaceful and remain calm during strikes.
- Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga announced that matriculants secured a record pass rate of 73.9% alongside improvements in virtually all key indicators in the 2012 exam. However, dropout rates in tertiary education are approaching 40%, while business continues to raise concerns over the high cost of training graduates. The class of 2012, all born in or after 1994, achieved a matric pass rate 3.7 percentage points higher than 2011. All provinces registered significant increases in their pass rates, with Gauteng performing best with a pass rate of 83.9%. Although second-placed Western Cape saw a slight drop of 0.1 points as compared to 2011's 82.8%, it had the highest proportion of pupils achieving bachelor level passes at 36.5% of those who wrote – slightly edging out Gauteng's 36.2%.
- At least 98% of textbooks had been delivered to inland schools ahead of the first day of school on Wednesday, the Basic Education Department said. Last year, many Limpopo schools failed to receive textbooks on time. Some schools were reportedly still without textbooks in August. The department said extra textbooks would be delivered within the first two weeks of school this year. Teachers should be ready and in their classrooms from the first day. While the department acknowledged encountering some problems, it said these were being addressed.
- According to The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) research SA is not among the best countries in the world in which to be born in 2013. Switzerland is the leading country, with Australia the second best option. SA's high crime rate, failing education and health systems, and chronic levels of unemployment counted against its featuring among the most favoured nations. SA was ranked 53rd out of 80 countries in EIU's 'Where to be born index 2013', with Nigeria coming last.
- According to SAPS, it is estimated that approximately 1 465 people lost their lives, Transport Minister Ben Martins said in announcing the preliminary road death statistics. He attributed the deaths to drinking and driving, speeding, dangerous overtaking, failure to use seatbelts and vehicles not being roadworthy. Road Traffic Management Corporation acting CEO Collins Letsoala said alcohol contributed to 60% of road accidents – which cost the economy R180b every year. This festive season, 1 282 586 vehicles were stopped and checked, and 226 major operations were conducted. A total of 3 944 people were arrested: 2 856 for drinking and driving, 116 for speeding, 146 for reckless or negligent driving, and 826 for other offences.
- The consumer favourite this festive season was high technology with buyers – both online and in shops – spending freely on the latest electronic gadgets such as e-readers, tablets and smart TVs. Arthur Goldstuck, MD of World Wide Worx, said online sales increased between 20% and 40% in a year. He singled out Apple's iPad mini as the single most successful seller and said it outsold all other tablets. **End**