



Friday@Noon

Signals from this week's news

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Issue 1068 20 May 2016

- The rand reached two-month lows this week and sentiment towards the local currency remained fragile in the wake of news reports, which has since been denied by the Presidency, that Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan faces possible arrest over espionage charges. Economists say with political uncertainty in the build-up to the local government elections and power struggles within the ruling party still making headlines, the rand will probably underperform other emerging-market currencies. Mr Gordhan has called on South Africans to protect the Treasury from unrestrained attack, saying that reports of his imminent arrest have ulterior motives.
- The EFF disrupted President Zuma's appearance in Parliament on Tuesday and refused to allow him to speak. Punches were thrown as Parliament protection services escorted EFF MPs out of the house. During his second showing in the house since the Constitutional Court delivered its damning judgement on Nkandla in March, remaining opposition parties used the opportunity to put President Zuma on the spot about previous statements he had made that his family footing the bill for his private homestead.
- EFF leader Malema's call for 'communities involved in protests to burn the offices of the ANC' could be one of the first cases referred to the Electoral Court following Monday's adoption of the Electoral Code of Conduct. The ANC's Zizi Kodwa noted that the Electoral Code of Conduct prohibits language that provokes violence, intimidation of candidates or voters, and publishing of false information about other parties, among other rules.
- The South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sactu) has been implicated in damning findings of the leaked final 'jobs for cash' report and is preparing to challenge the disclosures on legal review. The report, due to be released today, also accuses Sactu of holding the basic education system hostage. Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga delayed releasing the report to allow teacher unions and others more time to respond.
- The Constitutional Court has dismissed an application for leave to appeal, clearing the way for a judicial conduct tribunal to investigate gross misconduct allegations against Western Cape Judge President John Hlophe. The highest court's order also clears the gridlock of pending judicial conduct tribunals against at least five other judges. The judgements all related to corruption charges against President Zuma.
- The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs says the government will deploy 74 mobile classrooms to 20 schools in Vuwani and surrounding areas in Limpopo. Education in the Vuwani area has been on hold since the schools were torched in public unrest about two weeks ago.
- Members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) on Thursday began meetings to decide on pay demands for platinum companies as wage talks loom. Amcu spokesman Manzini Zungu said the union's branches would put forward their wage demands, which would be consolidated at national level ahead of talks with Anglo American Platinum, Impala Platinum and Lonmin. The two-year wage deal between the companies and unions expires at the end of next month.
- The government and the mining industry had reached agreement on most of the sticking points in the new draft Mining Charter, Mineral Resources Minister Mosebenzi Zwane said. The minister was addressing the Chamber of Mines annual general meeting on Wednesday, a month after he issued a new draft charter crafted without consultation and containing drastic changes to previous versions.
- Suspended Independent Police Investigative Directorate boss Robert McBride, former Hawks boss Anwa Dramat and former SARS deputy commissioner Ivan Pillay have each detailed the same modus operandi of those in the government seeking to suspend and remove them from their positions. In a statement on Tuesday, after a hearing of his case in the Constitutional Court where judgement was reserved, Mr McBride said they aimed to defend state institutions from political interference. In another statement 45 former directors-general asked the Finance Minister and Public Service and Administration Minister to institute a public inquiry into how senior government officials contravened laws to benefit the Gupta family.
- StatsSA revealed that retail sales growth slowed more than expected in March. Retail sales grew 2.8% year on year in March, compared to 4.1% in February. Global economic data collator Trading Economics' consensus forecast was 3.6% year on year. Retailers are cutting margins to try to maintain sales.
- The Reserve Bank kept interest rates unchanged on the back of data showing consumer inflation slowed as expected in April. StatsSA said the consumer price index (CPI) rose 6.2% year on year in April, slowing from 6.3% in March and 7% in February. Most economists expected the Bank to pause in its rate-increasing cycle.
- SA is still ahead of other African nations in new global higher education rankings according to higher education analysts Quacquarelli Symonds' 2016 Higher Education System Strength rankings. SA came in at 30th place out of the 50 countries ranked, the only country in Africa to place in the published rankings. **End**