



# Friday@Noon

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- About 1m, or slightly more than 40%, of the 2.5m South Africans who registered to take part in the 2014 polls at the weekend were first-time voters, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) said. The IEC aims to add about 2m first-time voters to the roll by the time voting starts in 2014 and has reached only half of this during its first registration drive. Potential voters will now have to register at IEC centres at municipal offices across the country. It is likely another voter registration weekend will be held, but the IEC could not confirm this. IEC chairwoman Pansy Tlakula said while the number of voters between the ages of 18 and 19 had almost tripled from 167 535 to 434 370, it was still a challenge to get young voters to the polls. This age group represents only 22.6% of all those registering to vote. The highest number of voters registered was in KwaZulu-Natal, at 620 864, and the second highest was in Gauteng, at 572 395.
- ANC deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa believes it is unfortunate that his use of the term 'boers' during an address to Limpopo residents at the weekend caused offence. Mr Ramaphosa's comments were this week condemned by opposition parties, including the COPE, the DA and the FF Plus. During his visit he was quoted as saying that if residents failed to register to vote for the ANC in 2014, the country would return to 'boer' rule. In a statement, Mr Ramaphosa said he never intended for his comments to offend anyone. He said he had warned of the danger of SA going backwards and used a term that has commonly been used by black South Africans to refer to the erstwhile apartheid regime. He added that for the country to move forward, all South Africans, regardless of their language or background, had to work together as equal citizens.
- The ANC has made voters a promise that claims for land restitution will be reopened despite the absence of a budget to do so. Parliament's portfolio committee on rural development and land reform launched a series of public hearings in towns to publicise the Land Restitution Amendment Bill, which looks set to become law before next year's election. In terms of the bill, the reopening of the restitution process will give those who missed the cut-off date of 31 Dec 1998 a chance to reapply by the new deadline of 31 Dec 2018.
- Public Protector Thuli Madonsela has called the government's handling of her Nkandla report unlawful, unconstitutional and in violation of the independence of her office. Her statement this week is the latest development in the tense relationship between Ms Madonsela and the ministers of police, public works, defence and state security over the release of her provisional report into R206m of security upgrades to President Jacob Zuma's private home in Nkandla. Ms Madonsela has outlined in detail her claim that top government ministers and officials had tried to block her investigation into alleged impropriety in court papers. The application will be heard in the Pretoria High Court today.
- Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa has nominated disgraced former Ekurhuleni police chief Robert McBride as the new head of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate and asked Parliament to confirm or reject the appointment. Mr McBride was on death row for murder in the early 90s for his role in the bombing of the Magoos bar on Durban's beachfront. He was released along with 'wit wolf' Barend Strydom, by then president FW de Klerk, as a sign of good faith ahead of the Codesa negotiations. He lost his job as metro police chief in Ekurhuleni after he crashed his car and was charged with drunken driving and then trying to defeat the ends of justice. He was initially sentenced to two years in prison. The request will be considered.
- The latest audit report of national and provincial government shows that wastage now stands at about R30.8bn. Outgoing Auditor-General (AG) Terence Nombembe released his audit reports of national and provincial departments and their entities in Parliament this week. Financial wastage is made up of unauthorised expenditure (R2.3bn), irregular expenditure (R26.4bn) and fruitless and wasteful expenditure (more than R2.1bn). Last year, unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure amounted to R24.8bn. But the latest reports do show an improvement from the previous years. Mr Nombembe said the good news was that government was paying attention to wasteful and irregular expenditure, adding that it was important to avoid the recurrence of wastage going forward. Even though public finance laws sanction officials who are found guilty of flouting the law, there have been no successful prosecutions of any culprits.
- SA's mining industry will be bankrupt within a few years if claims on its earnings from labour, shareholders and the government continue at current levels. In its latest SA Mine survey, PwC analyses the financial statements of the JSE-listed mining companies with a market capitalisation of more than R200m, and shows that, in total in 2012-2013, they reinvested 37% of available funds in their businesses, paid 36% to employees, 20% to shareholders in the form of dividends, 21% in various forms of tax, and 2% to communities. After all the payments, there was a 20% deficit, which had to be met from borrowings. The report says if not for the weak rand, SA's mining industry would be in deep trouble. Because commodities are denominated in dollars, a weak rand-dollar exchange rate lifts rand revenue.