



- President Jacob Zuma was widely criticised by opposition leaders in the National Assembly this week over his state of the nation address. DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko, COPE leader Mosioua Lekota and IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said the president's address lacked vision and that they had lost confidence in his ability to lead. The crises in government, education, mining, and the spending on Mr Zuma's home in Nkandla were identified as some of the failings of his administration.
- Former black consciousness activist, academic and World Bank director Dr Mamphela Ramphele launched her new political movement, Agang (let's build), which appears to be the first step towards the formation of a political party. Dr Ramphele said the country risks becoming a failed state and already has the makings of one. She says Agang will act as a bridge to help South Africa out of its quagmire. Reaction has been varied, from those who dismissed her on social media networks, to politicians who welcomed her move.
- Moves are afoot to shake-up the public service, including the removal of unqualified managers, dismissal of accounting officers who fail to achieve clean audit reports and new minimum standards for top appointments. Public servants will be banned from engaging in private business with government departments, and the Department of Public Service and Administration will establish the capacity to investigate fraud, corruption and other disciplinary matters. These measures are among those National Planning Minister Trevor Manuel and Public Service and Administration Minister Lindiwe Sisulu have settled on as the first steps to implement the National Development Plan. Ms Sisulu has launched a skills audit of all public servants and said that public servants, who were deemed not to be competent by a performance management system, would be retrained for other positions.
- Department of Trade and Industry director-general Lionel October on Wednesday endorsed a Democratic Alliance proposal that points awarded for skills development be racially neutral in the revised Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment codes of good practice and scorecard. He said he would take this, and other proposed changes to the draft codes of good practice released last year for public comment, to Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies in the next week or so. The amendments, among other things, assign more points to skills development and enterprise and supplier development. Other proposals relate to the definition of 'value-added' procurement.
- The South African Post Office (Sapo) has terminated the contracts of all labour broking firms and all contracted employees have been given 12-month, fixed-term contracts. The Post Office became a major battleground in Cosatu's opposition to labour-broking after the federation failed to have the practice banned outright. The move by the Post Office to terminate the contracts of all labour broking firms could be seen as a notable victory for Cosatu. However, the Post Office warned there was a risk of illegal strikes by employees with one-year contracts who are demanding full-time appointments. Last year, the Post Office was rocked by strikes, with the Communication Workers Union calling for an end to labour broking.
- Labour, Amplats, the Chamber of Mines and Mineral Resources Minister Susan Shabangu met this week to find solutions to continuing violence in the platinum sector after 12 people were hurt in clashes at a mine near Rustenburg on Monday. A group of about 1 000 workers demanded the closure of the NUM offices at Amplats' Siphumelele mine. Violence between workers on the platinum mines last year claimed at least 50 lives, and cost mining companies billions of rand in lost revenue. Workers stayed away from Amplats' mines on Tuesday, bringing the Rustenburg operations and mines north of the Pilanesberg to a standstill. The same mines were shut down during a six-week unprotected strike last year.
- South African Airways (SAA) is expected to make further losses this financial year as its business model has not yet changed and it still faces crippling high operating costs, according to acting CEO Nico Bezuidenhout. This is despite the fact that the airline had made R1b in savings. He said that there was no doubt that SAA would need more capital, either in the form of an injection from the state or in loans. Mr Bezuidenhout said a precondition for SAA being able to make a profit was the acquisition of a fuel-efficient fleet. This would be addressed in the 20-year turnaround strategy being drawn up by a special executive task team.
- Vehicle exports from SA into the rest of Africa grew almost 20% last year, more than making up for a decline in sales to traditional, recession-hit markets in the European Union and the US. This bodes well for motor manufacturing and demonstrates that SA remains a gateway for trade in Africa. According to RGT Smart, which provides export data to the Naamsa, figures suggest that a combination of good growth in certain African markets and the introduction of the Automotive Production and Development Programme this year has sheltered the industry from poor consumer spending in austerity-hit Europe. **end**