

ConCourt secret ballot application sets tone for political discourse

This week in politics

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THE Constitutional Court hearing of an application by UDM and EFF to force a parliamentary vote of no confidence in President Jacob Zuma to be conducted by secret ballot will be heard today.

The hearing will be preceded by a march led by opposition parties to the ConCourt in Braamfontein. It will start at the Mary-Fitzgerald Square.

Today also marks the end of a 24-hour hunger strike in support of Palestinian political prisoners. The protest action, organised by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation (AKF), is supported by vari-

ous government ministers, ANC office bearers, organised labour and leaders from civil society and takes the form of lunchtime pickets in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg and Mangoch. There will be a rally hosted by the AKF tonight to mark the end of the protest action. Speakers include Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Nomaindia Mfoketo and former Robben Island prisoner Ebrahim Ebrahim.

Tomorrow Zuma will be at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre in Durban to open the annual Tourist Indaba in Durban. Also tomorrow, acting national police commissioner Khomotso Phahlane and the head of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) Robert McBride will

face each other before the portfolio committee on police. In a recent testimony before the committee, McBride complained and publicly accused Phahlane of trying to frustrate and thwart Ipid's investigations into allegations of malfeasance.

Another contentious issue will be up for discussion in Parliament tomorrow when the standing committee on public accounts will engage the South African Social Security Agency on what the committee calls the current state of affairs regarding extended the contract with Cash Paymaster Services.

On Thursday, the Department of Public Enterprises will be in the public enterprises portfolio committee to present a report on the effectiveness of the Competitive Supplier Development

Programme, which is meant to support local businesses, beneficiation and rural development.

However, it cannot be ruled out that MPs would want an explanation for the return of Brian Molefe, who had resigned as Eskom CEO before becoming an ANC member, only to return to the utility in his previous position as announced last Friday.

Also on Thursday, the standing committee on finance will receive a briefing from South African Airways (SAA). Last week in his first briefing to the committee, Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba spoke about the future of the national airline. This week SAA will speak for itself.

The Budget Vote season also hits Parliament this week and will last until

the beginning of June when President Jacob Zuma is due to respond to his own budget vote. This year's Budget Vote session will run parallel to the normal parliamentary programme of committee meetings.

According to the programme released, five Cabinet ministers will present their budgets tomorrow for approval.

They are Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor, Public Works Minister Nathi Nhleko, Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande, State Security Minister David Mahlobo and Mineral Resources Minister Mosebenzi Zwane.

A sixth member of the Cabinet, Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, is also tentatively scheduled to present his budget for endorsement.

On Wednesday, the budgets of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Office of the Chief Justice and Judicial Administration and Home Affairs will be up for debate.

On Thursday, it will be the turn of the Human Settlements, Small Business Development, Statistics South Africa, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Justice and Constitutional Development.

Rural Development and Land Reform as well as Energy will bring the week's budget votes to an end on Friday.

However, the process will continue next Tuesday and is due to end on Thursday, June 1, when President Jacob Zuma will rise in Parliament to reply to his Budget Vote.

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