

EDITOR'S NOTE



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A solution that takes into account economics and emotions would be capital

THIS WEEK, Indonesia's president announced the decision to move the capital from crowded Jakarta to elsewhere off the island of Java. Other countries have moved their capitals, including Nigeria (Lagos to Abuja) and Brazil (Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia).

South Africa does not have their overcrowding problems, but it has another: its legislative capital in Cape Town and its administrative capital in Pretoria are about 1500km apart, and with that comes costs in moving thousands of people between the two.

There is no doubt that having both functions in one place would save millions in the long run, nor that it would be cheaper to build a new Parliament in Pretoria than to relocate all the national government headquarters to Cape Town.

A move to Pretoria has been on the cards for decades. In 2016, economists calculated that the move could cost R7 billion while savings would amount to R500 million to R750m a year.

Answering questions in Parliament last week, Minister of Public Works Thulas Nxesi said a steering committee of members of Parliament and Public Works officials were overseeing a feasibility study. Possible sites had been identified in Pretoria, he said.

What is needed is a comprehensive study, relating not only to cost but to the role the current location plays versus what a new one could. Considering our past, we need a solution that makes sense from a practical, economical and emotional perspective.