

EDITORIAL

SA needs to get back into growth

SOUTH Africa is not in a happy place as it awaits today's mid-term budget and if anyone expects miracles they are likely to be disappointed.

Unfortunately there are no more rabbits to pull out of the hat and the mini budget will very much be a zero sum game – if the finance minister gives to one ministry, he will have to take from another.

There is little room to manoeuvre. In his main budget speech in February, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan made it clear that government belt-tightening was on the cards.

He slashed budgets for, among other expenses, travel, consultants and entertainment while asking state employees, including ministers, to cut back on spending wherever possible.

Some ministers gave this a lukewarm response but Gordhan clearly intends to curb state spending further, raise taxes and cut the budget deficit to 3.2% of gross domestic product this fiscal year, from 3.9% last time around.

We hope we will hear today that his austerity campaign has been a success because it's important for the country's credit ratings that we are seen to be fiscally disciplined.

Finance ministers are a bit like football coaches – so many people think they can do a better job.

But one thing everyone agrees on is that we need to shake the economy out of its stupor and create jobs.

Big business, the government and trade unions have been working hard behind the scenes to achieve this, but nothing will be achieved in talk shops.

We need a radical change in the very structure of our economy to set us back on a growth path. It won't be easy, but do it we must.

Public transport needs fixing now

WE ARE just coming to the end of Transport Month and you would be excused for having spent the whole month in total ignorance of this fact.

Sadly, even though transport and the hugely important issues that go with this vast topic are something we should all be concerned about, Transport Month has lacked the required traction that it should have had in the public space.

Regarding the complete inadequacy of our public transport, we have not seen much fanfare. Unfortunately this is because the same old stumbling blocks exist and there is just at present no evidence of any breakthrough being on the horizon.

This needs to be addressed far more urgently than it is. We cannot even refer to a public transport system as the word system denotes something far more sophisticated than the dire methods of transport offered to commuters at present.

Trains and buses are inefficient and mini bus taxis are uncomfortable, dangerous and antiquated in terms of mass transport.

But we cannot just throw up our hands in despair – we must address this situation with urgency.

WISE WORDS

"If I had my choice I would kill every reporter in the world, but I am sure we would be getting reports from Hell before breakfast." – William Tecumseh Sherman

THE NEW AGE

How to contact us:

Tel : 011 542 1222
 Fax : 011 314 2986
 NEWS : news@thenewage.co.za
 BUSINESS : business@thenewage.co.za
 SPORT : sport@thenewage.co.za
 OPINION : opinion@thenewage.co.za
 LETTERS : letters@thenewage.co.za
 LIFESTYLE : lifestyle@thenewage.co.za
 ONLINE : online@thenewage.co.za
 ARTS & CULTURE : arts@thenewage.co.za

Advertising Sales : 011 542 1233

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Fax: 086 733 0101
 Email: ombud@thenewage.co.za

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BLUE PHASE: A woman walks past a section of a mural by stencil artist Logan Hicks titled The Story of My Life on the Houston Bowery wall in New York on Monday.

Brics economic plans advanced

Africa regional centre of the New Development Bank links Brics and African continent

WE HAVE just returned from the eighth Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) sSummit, which also marked the 10th anniversary since the first meeting of Brics foreign ministers in New York in 2006, which instituted the partnership.

The Brics leaders convened in Goa, India, from October 15 to 16. The leaders once again confirmed their commitment to the founding principles, which underpin their cooperation, as enshrined in the 2011 Sanya Declaration, namely openness, solidarity, equality, mutual understanding, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The principles were carried into the Goa Declaration, the primary outcome document of the summit together with its action plan.

The host and current Brics chair, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, proposed to set a target to double intra-Brics trade from \$250bn (R3 trillion) to \$500bn by 2020.

The memorandum of understanding on customs cooperation, which was concluded at the summit, was seen as an important step in this direction.

Leaders also emphasised the importance, to ensure the implementation of the Strategy for Brics Economic Partnership and notably the implementation of its action plan and road map of projects.

In this regard, the South African chapter of the Brics Business Council developed a publication containing priority projects. The first-ever Brics Trade Fair was also held in New Delhi and the South African pavilion attracted many visitors.

Brics leaders have fully embraced the regional outreach engagement, an initiative started by President Jacob Zuma in 2013 when he invited the African leadership to meet with Brics leaders. Prime Minister Modi invited the leaders and his fellow members of the Bay of

Analysis

MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE

Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

In terms of the reform of global governance institutions, pertinent issues deliberated included support pledged for the coordinated effort by the emerging economies to ensure the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 15th General Review of Quotas, including the new quota formula, will be finalised within the agreed timelines, as well as to ensure that the increased voice of the dynamic emerging and developing economies reflects their relative contributions to the world economy, while protecting the voices of least developed countries, poor countries and regions.

In this regard, it was emphasised that the two chairs on the executive board of the IMF and its reform should strengthen the voice and representation of the poorest members of the IMF, including sub-Saharan Africa.

The leaders also warmly welcomed and acknowledged China's milestone achievement, namely the inclusion of the RMB into the Special Drawing Rights' currency basket.

In respect of reform of the UN, leaders again recalled the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of the developing countries so it can adequately respond to global challenges.

China and Russia reiterated the importance they attached to the status and role of Brazil,

India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.

The substantive measures undertaken by the UN membership to make the process of selecting and appointing the UN Secretary-General more transparent and inclusive was also welcomed.

The leaders conveyed their gratitude to the outgoing UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, for his contribution to the UN during the past 10 years. They also congratulated Mr António Guterres as his replacement, expressing their support and undertaking to work closely with him.

President Zuma was notably encouraged by the synergies between his stated priority areas and South Africa's foreign policy objectives. Brics leaders underscored the operationalisation of the Africa regional centre of the New Development Bank was welcomed as a mechanism for cooperation between Brics and the African continent. Leaders noted the operationalisation of the Brics contingent reserve arrangements as a mechanism of strengthening the financial safety net.

Brics leaders decided to propel the proposals for the creation of a Brics credit rating agency, a railway research network, an agriculture research platform and a sports council.

They once again reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that this strategic grouping, which provides an amplified voice for the core interests of emerging and developing economies, will continue to be innovative in its approaches to finding meaningful and sustainable solutions to the shared challenges of the modern era, while at all times maintaining the interests of their people at the core of all Brics undertakings.

Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

THE HORSE'S MOUTH



"This was the only trophy missing for me and now I have it." – Sun Downs coach Pitso Mosimane



"I've said enough." – ANC chief whip Jackson Mthembu following up on his recent pronouncements on the ANC NEC



"It's a sovereign decision of South Africa or whatever country. It was a sovereign decision to join. It's their sovereign decision to go." – African Union Commission chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma talking about the ICC.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

October 26, 1976

ON OCTOBER 26, 1976 the oldest of the independent homelands, Transkei, gained complete independence as an autonomous republic under the policy of separate development.

At its opening session the Transkei National Assembly elected paramount chief Botha J Sigcau as the Transkei's first president and Kaizer Matanzima as prime minister.

The new republic did not incorporate the apartheid ideology into its constitution, but became a multiracial state in which all citizens had the franchise. The Republic of Transkei was not recognised beyond South African borders. The General Assembly of the United Nations rejected the declaration of independence as invalid and called upon all governments to deny any form of recognition to Transkei and other Bantustans. – www.sahistory.org.za



Stepping up measures to protect canned lions

Analysis

DON PINNOCK

BECAUSE South Africa was unable to demonstrate the conservation value of canned lion hunting, the US last week banned the import of all trophies from captive lion hunts in the country.

According to the director of the US Fish and Wildlife Services, Dan Ashe, lion trophies may only be imported from exporting nations like South Africa if they can provide evidence of the hunts benefiting the long-term survival of the species in the wild.

"That burden of proof has not been met," said Ashe said. "If and when such benefits can be clearly shown, we may reevaluate our position." Most recent lion trophies imported into the US have been from captive populations in South Africa, so the decision will likely substantially reduce the total number of lion trophy imports.

Moves towards the ban began earlier this

year when lions were declared as protected under the Endangered Species Act, giving Fish and Wildlife the responsibility to regulate the import of live lions, lion trophies and other parts and derivatives.

The ban does not include the importation of trophies taken from wild or wild-managed populations if they have been authorised by the South African government.

"We cannot and will not allow trophies into the US from any nation whose lion conservation programme fails to meet key criteria for transparency," Ashe said.

The service noted that it had received import permit applications from US hunters seeking prey in Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe – for permits to import sport-hunted lion trophies. "We will only approve those applications if we receive sufficient evidence of long-term benefits to wild lions resulting from those programmes," Ashe said.

The US expressed concern for wild lions in Africa and for good reason. The human population of sub-Saharan Africa is projected

KEY POINTS

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to more than double by 2050 – pushing settlements, grazing and agriculture into lion habitats.

Humans are depleting the wild prey that supports lions, consuming these animals or selling them as bushmeat.

Faced with declining habitat and prey, lions are increasingly targeting livestock and people – resulting in retaliatory killing.

"Unless effective measures are taken to protect lions, their prey and habitat, lions may face extirpation from many parts of their historic range. We understand that securing the lion's future depends upon finding solutions that recognise the needs of those people and communities who share the landscape with them."

For this reason, US Fish and Wildlife will be working with partners to protect lions and address the threats they face. This includes efforts to reduce cattle depredation and other lion-related conflicts, while also supporting tourism and other sustainable economic activities involving wild and wild-managed lions.

It will also be expanding its capacity to work with international law enforcement agencies to investigate, arrest and prosecute poachers and traffickers.

Don Pinnock is a writer and conservationist, this article was supplied by the Conservation Action Trust