

Gupta money-laundering claim in court papers

A court application by a Gupta-linked company in Bermuda to secure R1bn from the estate of the Optimum Coal Mine has been rubbished as just another attempt to make the business rescue of various Gupta companies grind to a halt, says a **City Press** report. Optimum's business rescue practitioners are locked in a legal battle with Centaur Ventures, which is co-owned by a relative by marriage of the Gupta brothers – Akash Garg Jahajgarhia, who married the Gupta brothers' niece, Vega, at the infamous Sun City wedding in 2013. Now the business rescue practitioners have also threatened to make a submission to the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture detailing suspicious flows of money between Centaur in Bermuda, Optimum and, ultimately, the wider Gupta business empire in SA. **City Press** notes investigations have thus far suggested that the mine was pillaged, with money meant for its operations being siphoned off by Oakbay, the family's overall holding company. Optimum's business rescuer Kurt Knoop filed his responding affidavit last week in which he makes these allegations against Centaur. 'The fact that (Centaur) is an independent creditor has nothing to do with, and cannot justify, the obvious inferences that flow from the aforesaid facts; namely, that **Centaur, its directors and shareholders have close associations with the Guptas, and seems to have assisted in channelling and laundering money.**' Centaur has launched an application for enormous amounts of information, which has the effect of stopping the provision of a lifeline to Optimum from new funders, who intend to eventually buy the mine. These investors are the state-owned African Exploration, Mining and Finance Corporation (AEMFC) in co-operation with local coal trading group Lurco, which is headed by Ellington Nxumalo and Aubrey Chauke.