

## NEWS RELEASE

President Jacob Zuma awarded the National Press Club - Glenrand MIB  
Newsmaker of the Year 2009

The National Press Club Pretoria has awarded President Jacob Zuma as the Newsmaker of the Year for 2009.

He was announced as the winner of this annual award earlier this year. National Press Club Chairperson, Yusuf Abramjee, said at a formal banquet at the CSIR in Pretoria on 19 March that it took a lot of discussion, deliberation and even debate amongst members of the National Press Club to reach a decision. "There is no doubt that 2009 was President Jacob Zuma's year. He dominated the centimetre column space in the print media and much of the airwaves in the electronic media," said Abramjee.

"Corruption charges against him were dropped in the early part of the year. He then walked the streets canvassing, and millions voted. He won, celebrated, were sworn in, addressed the nation, appointed a cabinet, got down to work, visited areas affected by poor service delivery, launched the Presidential hotline, appointed a new National Police Commissioner and other top government officials, received many foreign visitors, visited several foreign countries, engaged leaders from all spheres of society, NGO's and ordinary South Africans. He made the headlines, as some will say, for good and bad reasons," he said.

Abramjee said President Jacob Zuma was labelled a Peoples' President by some – just months after taking office. He complimented Zuma for engaging the media continuously.

"This award is made on the grounds of impact, news value and media attention," he said.

Zuma is the fourth head of state to be named newsmaker. Previous recipients were F W de Klerk, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. In 2005, Zuma was named by the press club as Newsmaker of the Year when he was Deputy President of the ANC. At the time, he was entangled in legal battles.

According to Monitoring SA, Zuma was mentioned no less than 22 300 times in the South African print media, nearly 33 000 times in the broadcast media and over 12 500 times on online media during 2009.

Abramjee called on the media fraternity to continue to report accurately, fairly, independently, without fear or favour, without bias, and boldly.

"We have seen over the past few weeks – an escalation in name calling and attacks on individuals personally. This is very unfortunate. The name-calling must stop. While the media tackle and expose issues, challenge, and highlight what is right and what is wrong, let's all act with dignity. It is wrong to refer to President Zuma in such demeaning ways, as did some British media reports recently. In the same vein, when spokespeople and some organisations call journalists "mobs, gangs, criminals, sick and mentally ill" we need to condemn it in the strongest possible terms. These individuals and organisations who resort to intimidating the media, need to be brought to order."

He also said that reckless and irresponsible allegations that reporters sleep with politicians to get stories, are corrupt or criminals must be proven, or those that make the allegations must rather keep quiet.

The press club also announced its National Press Club - North- West University Journalist of the Year awards on the night.

Other nominees for the 2009 newsmaker title included ANC Youth League President, Julius Malema, athlete Caster Semenya and ex Springbok rugby captain Joost van der Westhuizen. Over the years the club has recognised and awarded many newsmakers. Previous recipients also included Hollywood star Charlize Theron, Zachie Achmat and the Treatment Action Campaign, the late Hansie Cronjé and various other sporting personalities, the DA's Helen Zille, ESKOM and Cope.

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