



CALL FOR UNITY: Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande, left, Cosatu president S'dumo Dlamini, centre, and President Jacob Zuma at the Workers' Day rally in Kimberley yesterday. PICTURE: DUMISANI DUBE

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Cosatu rows may lead to rift — Gwede

Don't divide organisation in our name, federation leaders told

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ANC SECRETARY-general Gwede Mantashe has warned that Cosatu would split if its leaders did not stop their infighting.

He said constant media reports of battles among various union leaders, including Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi and the federation's president S'dumo Dlamini, were a threat to the federation's future.

Addressing a Workers' Day celebration at Goble Park Stadium in Bethlehem, Free State, yesterday, Mantashe said a lack of respect among union bosses would "weaken the collective bargaining."

Works Minister Thulas Nxesi, who were among the speakers.

Vavi also called on Cosatu and its affiliates to fight corruption. Taking a swipe at those who accused him of corruption, Vavi said the scourge should not be fought on the basis of targeting an "individual leader in the federation".

He reiterated his call for the country's monetary policy to be changed, prompting loud applause from a section of the crowd.

The union boss said Cosatu's challenge throughout this month, dedicated to the workers, would be how to radically improve its role as the defender of workers' rights while also fighting for the broader transformation of the

He singled out Vavi, Dlamini, National Union of Metalworkers of SA boss Irvin Jim, National Education Health and Allied Workers Union boss Fikile Majola and SA Democratic Teachers Union president Thobile Ntola.

"Divisions among Cosatu leaders are not in the best interest of the union. Do not divide the federation in our name," Mantashe said.

The ANC leader then appealed for unity within the labour federation.

This came amid growing infighting among rival union leaders, led by Vavi and Dlamini, in recent months.

The factions hold different views about President Jacob Zuma's leadership, e-tolling and the fight against corruption, among others.

After failing to remove each other from the leadership of Cosatu at the elective national conference in Midrand last year, they began leaking damaging information about each other in the media.

This culminated in claims that Vavi had fraudulently sold a Cosatu building in Joburg.

Mantashe added that corruption should be fought at all costs as it reduced the state's capacity to deliver services.

He also called on people to bring about citizen's arrests against those who raped children and women.

Mantashe's sentiments were echoed by Vavi and Public

economy.

He said the creation of decent jobs and the elimination of poverty and unemployment remained the other challenges.

Vavi repeated his call for the abolition of e-tolls: "We don't want tollgates, in particular e-tolls."

Earlier on, the Cosatu leader had expressed his disgust at the granting of permission for the Guptas to use the

Waterkloof Air Force Base. He said he supported a call by the ANC to investigate who gave permission. "Whoever granted them permission must face the music."

For his part, Nxesi said: "We need a militant and united Cosatu capable of leading the working class. We need Cosatu affiliates who are well organised on the shop-floor, who service their members and practise worker democracy."

"A toothless Cosatu that is simply a conveyor belt of the ANC-led government is no use even to the ANC-led government."

He added that the SACP was deeply concerned about reports of divisions within Cosatu and its affiliates.

"We call on Cosatu to get its house in order," said Nxesi, who also serves in the SACP's central executive committee.

He added that the SACP believed that business interests were the root causes of the divisions within the SACP and Cosatu.

'Graft should be fought at all levels because it affects delivery'