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Cele slams ANC for poor turnout

By [Avuyile Mngxitama-Diko](#) on May 2, 2016

NEC member urges party to take urgent action to rectify Bay situation

ANC national executive committee (NEC) member Bheki Cele yesterday lambasted the ruling party, saying it was an embarrassment that in Nelson Mandela Bay it was unable to fill a hall.

He said it was time for the ANC to admit there was a problem as it had veered off track and alienated people.

Cele, who is the Deputy Agriculture Minister, was speaking at a Workers' Day rally organised by union federation Cosatu at the Nangoza Jebe Hall in New Brighton.

The ground floor of the hall was half full while the top level was empty.

"The situation is not as good as we say it is. We were here a few weeks ago and we saw how the Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium was," he said.

"We all need to take the blame and take responsibility while we still have time. We need to change things before August 3."

To cheers from the crowd, Cele said the ANC should stop lying to itself and see that things were bad.

"To say this [empty seats] is not an embarrassment is a lie. A man once said it is good to lie but not to yourself.

"If you say we don't have a problem you are lying to yourself," he said.

Cele was flanked by NEC member Thoko Didiza and SACP deputy chairman Thulas Nxesi.

Among those who also attended were ANC Bay regional task team convener Vuyani Limba, Bay chief whip Litho Suka, ANC veteran Mike Xego, Bay speaker Maria Hermans and PEC member Andile Lungisa.

Warning that the party had less than three months before the local government elections, Cele said: "The worst thing about elections is that you are sentenced to five years. In that time you cannot do anything, you wait.

"The best thing you can do is not to lose elections because coming back after losing will be tough. Elections are about numbers, not about what you say."

Cosatu had planned to hold the rally at Dan Qeque Stadium in Veeplas, but the venue was switched to Nangoza Jebe Hall due to poor attendance. The event was due to start at 9am. “Thulas, Thoko and I were asking the organiser this [yesterday] morning at 10am: must we come? We were told there [were] only nine people when we called,” Cele said.

“For that to happen in Port Elizabeth is a big problem. In PE, we should have fought not to have a May Day rally in a hall.

“I know that it was not easy to bring this crowd here, these people you see were begged to be here.”

Cele said as a solution, the party and its alliance partners needed to stop doing rallies and go to the people.

“Let’s admit we have a problem,” he said.

“We need to go to the leadership and ask them to send an army of comrades to Mandela Bay.

“Stop coming to halls and do door-to-door campaigns; ask the people of this metro what have we done wrong. Rallies are clearly not helping.”

Addressing the crowd, Nxesi, who is also Public Works Minister, slammed the Gupta family, saying they were predators who had ripped off South Africa’s democracy and had run to Dubai with their ill-gotten gains.

Calling on members to confront what he said were “parasites inside our economy”, he said the Gupta family had left their employees behind to face an uncertain future.

Standard Bank, Absa, FNB and Nedbank recently ditched Oakbay Investments in the wake of accusations that its owners, the Gupta family, had undue influence over the government through their relationship with President Jacob Zuma.

Nxesi said: “The Guptas and their supporters are, of course, trying to blame the banks, brokers and auditors for this situation. Of course, these same banks, brokers and audit firms were very happy to be making money out of Gupta transactions for many years, for as long as they could get away with it.”

Nxesi said the “smash-and-grab, hit-and-run greed” of the Guptas had become so reckless that the banks had been warned that they were exposing themselves to international sanctions and that they could even lose their operating licences if they continued dealing with “these parasites”.

“That’s the reason for what is happening – not some imperialist plot that those who are in bed with the Guptas claim.

“The Guptas are not patriots, they are parasites,” Nxesi said.

The SACP could not effectively deal with established monopoly capital or defend the country's sovereignty if those operating in the economy were allowed to weaken the SA Revenue Service and undermine the developmental duty of Eskom and other parastatals, Nxesi said.

"The struggle against corporate capture of our democratic state is a necessary struggle to defend our people, our democracy, our constitution in the face of imperialism and monopoly capital," he said.

"It is not a question of supporting the Ruperts and Oppenheimers against the Guptas, or supporting the Guptas against the Ruperts and Oppenheimers.

"We have to fight capitalist exploitation in all its forms."