

Crescendo of calls for Zuma's head, but he gets support

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ANC Chief Whip Jackson Mthembu has admitted there is a crisis in the country following the country following the dramatic cabinet reshuffle, but says the ANC will deal with it.

All eyes are now on the ANC leadership which meets today, as other party members remain divided over the firing of finance minister Pravin Gordhan and his deputy, Mcebisi Jonas, in the early hours of Friday morning. They were among five ministers and two deputies booted out of Zuma's cabinet which now boasts 10 new ministers and 10 deputies.

Zuma urged the new ministers to "work tirelessly with their colleagues to bring about radical socio-economic transformation and to ensure that the promise of a better life for the poor and the working class becomes a reality".

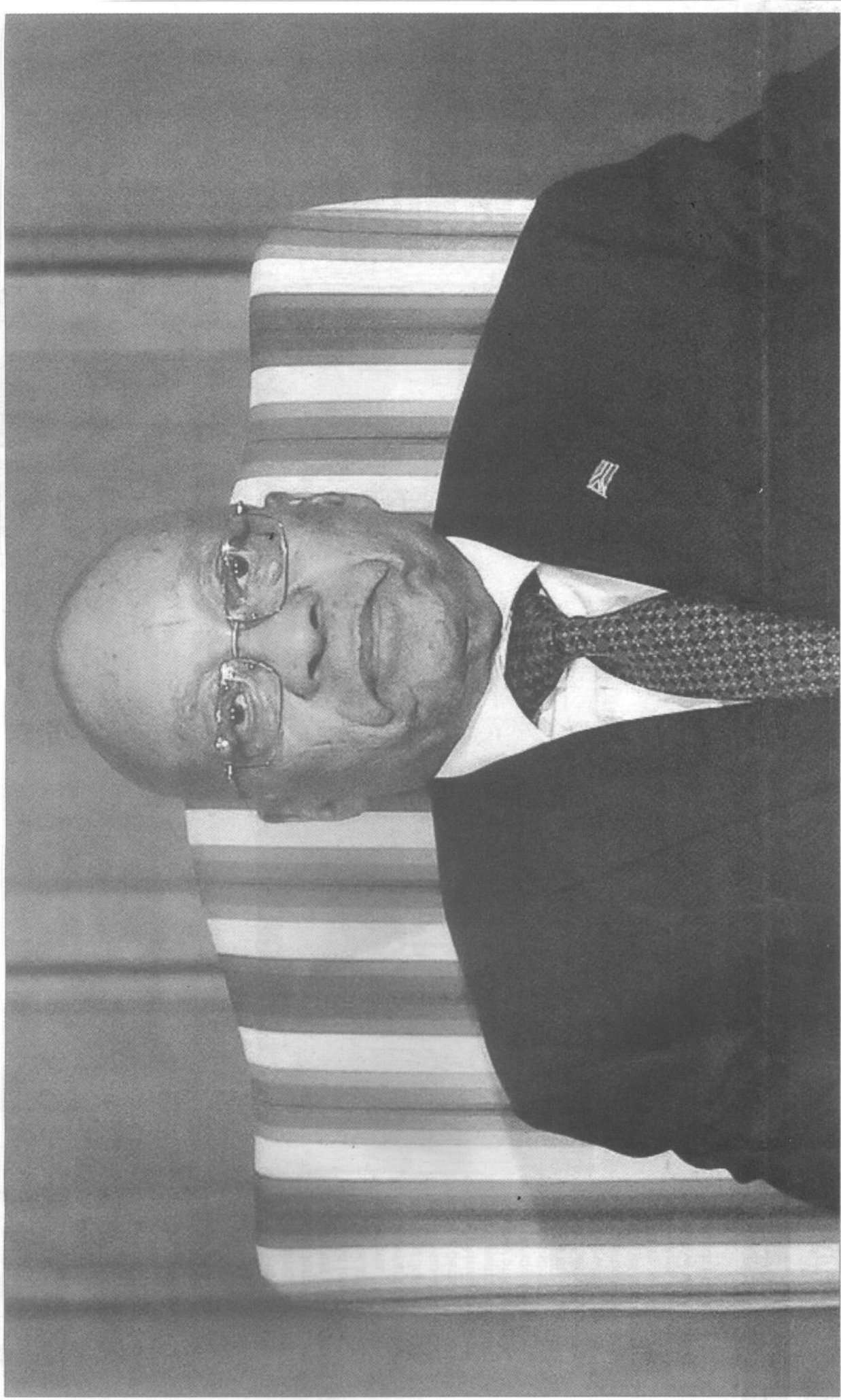
Zuma announced that Malusi Gigaba would replace Gordhan with Sifiso Buthelezi as his deputy. Gordhan moved fast, hosting a press conference at the Treasury in Pretoria on Friday, he suggested some questions South Africans should be asking and called on the public to mobilise against the wrongs in society.

He and Jonas derided the "Operation Checkmate" intelligence report that there was an ulterior motive to a foreign investment roadshow by him and Treasury officials as "nonsense".

A handover briefing session is expected to take place at the Treasury today, amid speculation that Treasury Director-General Lungisa Fuzile may step down.

Attacks on Zuma came at a memorial service on Saturday for Ahmed Kathadra, attended by Gordhan and another minister relieved of his position, Derek Hanekom. An angry Barbara Hogan, Kathadra's partner and a former cabinet minister herself, lashed out at Zuma's cabinet reshuffle as a "dastardly deed done in a dark corner of the country".

She said that if Zuma had "ears to hear and eyes to see" he would not have hired and fired so many finance ministers. She received rousing support when she called for Zuma to step down. There is a request for a motion of no-confidence in Zuma in Parliament, an online petition and a social movement calling for a day of national action against Zuma's actions on Friday.



President Jacob Zuma at the Presidential Guest House during the swearing-in ceremony for new ministers and deputy ministers.

Picture: Oupa Mokoena

But Mthembu, who is chairperson of the ANC national executive committee on communications, said yesterday he was convinced the ANC leadership would be able to address the "crisis facing us" when the national working group meets today, and give direction. "That's what the people of South Africa expect. It's a matter of importance. It's on the agenda of ANC structures," he said.

He was briefing the media in Johannesburg where he presented a discussion document on communications and the battle of ideas, ahead of the national policy conference in June.

Addressing another media conference, this time at OR Tambo airport after cutting short a trip to Bangladesh, National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete said requests by DA leader Mmusi Maimane and EFF leader Julius Malema for an urgent debate on a motion of no-confidence in Zuma would be given "appropriate consideration".

Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the former AU Commission chairperson and ANC presidential hopeful, used a meeting of the ANC Women's League in Durban to question ANC

Gwede Mantashe and treasurer-general Zweli Mkhize have criticised and distanced themselves from Zuma's decision to fire Gordhan and Jonas, who were widely seen as having blocked a controversial nuclear energy deal and prevented a ratings downgrade.

The Ahmed Kathrada and Nelson Mandela foundations, opposition parties, the SACP and even some within the ANC have also called for Zuma to step down.

Addressing delegates at the SACP Brian Bunting regional congress, the party's national deputy chairperson and recently appointed Sports Minister, Thulas Nxesi, spoke out against "state capture".

While the SACP objected to the manner of Zuma's cabinet reshuffle, Nxesi said the party would not "run ahead of the masses" in taking decisions.

"Comrades, corruption is killing us. It pits comrades against comrades, it demoralises the many honest and committed public servants, and it is at the root of factionalism, of gatekeeping and all the wrong things that beset the African National Congress," said Nxesi.

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Thulas Nxesi

members who had lambasted the president.

"There are internal platforms to raise challenges, to raise disagreements. The ANC is the most democratic organisation," she said, warning at the same time of a revolt by "young lions" if the government did not deliver on their demand for radical economic transformation.

The young lions are the ANC Youth League members, who together with the ANCWL, are supporting Dlamini Zuma to be the next party and country's president.

Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC secretary-general

Mthembu criticised the media in general and print, specifically, saying it hardly recognised any achievements on the country's socio-economic front. "You don't reflect on any positive things that we do," he charged.

Mthembu added that challenges and division within the ruling party and the democratic movement "have opened up a window of opportunity for local and global opponents of the ANC to attack the organisation".

Dlamini Zuma described the current economy system as dangerous and "unsustainable". She said it was wrong that a few white companies were monopolising mining, retail, financial, construction and telecommunication sectors.

"If we don't change that situation, the young lions will revolt. There will be a revolution. It is not the choice we have. It is an imperative if we want stability to remain in this country," she said.

"You cannot have a country where the majority are not part and parcel of the mainstream economy," she said.

Dlamini Zuma also lashed out at those within the party who had

spoken openly about problems facing the ANC.

She said that as the democratic movement, the ANC had internal platforms to raise challenges and disagreements. We debate and debate, but once we have come to a view, and all of us, irrespective of what your position was at the beginning of the debate, once the decision has been taken we must defend that decision."

The newly elected chairwoman of the ANCWL in eThekweni, Lindiwe Kweyama-Mthembu, said party leaders who had gone public to attack Zuma were not even involved in the party activities.

"They are not there when we conduct door-to-door, and when we have rallies they are not there, but they go to funerals to express themselves because they want to be celebrities," said Kweyama-Mthembu.

There were certain party MPs who had indicated that they would vote with opposition parties for the impeachment of Zuma, she said.

"Those leaders (MPs) should be recalled even before the (next) sitting of Parliament," said Kweyama-Mthembu.