

IOL Online, 7 April 2017

Quitting MP 'cashing in pensions

ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe has poured cold water over the resignations of two ministers and a deputy as MPs, saying they were doing this to cash their pension. Mantashe, speaking to The Star yesterday, said there was nothing sinister about ministers resigning after being axed from the executive

He said candidates were waiting in the wings to replace the two former ministers and a deputy who were dropped during President Jacob Zuma's cabinet reshuffle last week. Yesterday, former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas, former energy minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson and former transport minister Dipuo Peters left the National Assembly. All eyes were now on whether former finance minister Pravin Gordhan will resign and join his ally Jonas.

Gordhan, who yesterday said he would be in the National Assembly during the debate of a motion of no-confidence in Zuma on April 18, faces a dilemma on how to vote. The ANC has already warned its MPs not to vote with the opposition or abstain.

Fired minister of tourism Derek Hanekom also said he is not quitting. He, too, faces a catch-22 situation, having openly attacked Zuma and masterminded a motion of no-confidence in him during a meeting of the party's top brass late last year. ANC chief whip Jackson Mthembu, who has also been critical of Zuma, echoed Mantashe's views on the resignations.

"All those ministers who have resigned are to be replaced immediately. We are voting on April 18 and we need them to be replaced... We understand the resignations and it's not because they are grumpy or bitter. It's a question of when you are at a certain level, as a minister, it has an effect on your pension," he said.

Speaking to journalists after he addressed a large crowd at an Ahmed Kathrada memorial gathering in St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, Gordhan refused to say whether he would resign. He said he needed time off after last week's drama.

“I am resting. Don’t ask any more questions. I will see you on the 18th,” he said before leaving the cathedral. Hanekom, who has been in government since 1994, said he would remain as an ordinary ANC MP. “I’m remaining in Parliament until the end of this term. That’s my plan. I will continue to serve in Parliament to the best of my ability in any portfolio.”

Gordhan told a packed cathedral the ANC would emerge from this matter and continue its mission of serving the people. At the same event, Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin reiterated Kathrada’s call that Zuma step down. He also called for an inquiry into state capture in line with recommendations of then public protector Thuli Madonsela.