

NEW GUARD: President Jacob Zuma with newly elected State Security Minister Bongani Bongo, who was sworn into office by Western Cape Judge President John Hlophe in Cape Town yesterday.

PICTURE: DAVID RITCHIE / ANA



History to the rift between JZ, Blade

Nzimande 'wanted to be deputy president'

**KHAYA KOKO
AND BALDWIN NDABA**

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma's alleged refusal to make former higher education minister Blade Nzimande the country's deputy president after the 2014 elections supposedly heralded the rift between the two former allies.

This was the assertion by former Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, who is currently the general secretary of the new South African Federation of Trade Unions.

Yesterday Vavi, reacting to Zuma's reshuffle on Tuesday, during which he dumped Nzimande as higher education minister, told The Star of a conversation he had with Zuma "sometime after 2012".

He said Zuma spilt the beans on Nzimande's overtures for the country's second-highest political office. "Zuma once made a claim that Nzimande had approached him to say that he must be appointed deputy president after the 2014 general elections.

"He (Zuma) was saying this to express shock because, at that time, the deputy president (of the ANC) was Cyril Ramaphosa," Vavi said.

"During that discussion, I just happened to be in the vicinity when we were talking about something else when Zuma dropped this bombshell that Nzimande demanded the position of deputy president," he added.

But SACP spokesperson Alex Mashilo dismissed Vavi's

claim as laughable, saying it was the former Cosatu leader who wanted to become ANC deputy secretary after the party's 2012 elective conference in Mangaung and, ultimately, the country's deputy.

"I just want to outright dismiss the baseless allegations by Mr Vavi. We all know that there was a meeting in Nkandla, where Vavi's name was put forward for the position of (ANC) deputy president," Mashilo said.

He was alluding to revelations made by Cedric Gina, the former president of Numsa and current leader of the Liberated Metalworkers of SA, who revealed after resigning from Numsa that he and Numsa's current general secretary, Irvin Jim, had approached Zuma at his Nkandla homestead to lobby for Vavi to be Zuma's choice for deputy president.

Vavi's comments come in the wake of Zuma's cabinet reshuffle, which has caused a major fallout between him and Nzimande.

Vavi and Nzimande were once close friends who formed part of the group that helped Zuma ascend to the Union Buildings, a project known then as the "Zuma Tsunami".

As the fallout over Zuma's change of the executive continued yesterday, the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) warned the SACP to desist from branding Zuma a "factionalist" while ANC presidential hopeful Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma endorsed Zuma's decision to reshuffle the cabinet.

Through her presidential

campaign spokesperson, Carl Niehaus, she said she had no specific comment on the movement of cabinet members but underwrote Zuma's prerogative to make cabinet changes as stipulated in the constitution of the country.

Another ANC presidential hopeful, Mathews Phosa, differed drastically with the views of Dlamini Zuma. "We should not be surprised that we have a one-man show government."

Phosa said the ANC national executive committee (NEC) should take collective responsibility "for the mess" caused by the latest reshuffle. According to Phosa, the ANC NEC had retained Zuma in office despite numerous calls within the party for him to step down.

The ANCYL shared Dlamini Zuma's views that the president had acted within his powers.

ANCYL spokesperson Mlondi Mkhize said: "The ANCYL calls on those who are using this to drive a wedge between Zuma and the SACP leadership to stop doing so. If (he) was fighting with leaders of the SACP, comrades like Buti Manamela, Thulas Nxesi, Senzeni Zokwana, Jeff Radebe, Jeremy Cronin and Ben Martins would have been recalled.

"We want to caution comrade Solly Mapaila, the first deputy general secretary of the SACP, to stop with his posture because it is not helping the alliance. It is perpetuating differences and making the vanguard party to be viewed and treated like a Dr Blade Nzimande entity, and a vanguard for him and not the working class."