

■ NATION

Municipal heads to earn more than president

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THE highest-earning municipal manager in the country will take home an annual salary higher than that of President Cyril Ramaphosa.

This is in accordance with the decision by Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize to increase municipal managers' salaries, which has been slammed by unions representing municipal workers.

Mkhize announced this week that municipal managers and those directly reporting to them will receive pay hikes of up to R200 000. The highest-paid officials will possibly earn up to more than R3.9 million a year.

Ramaphosa's salary is just above R3.6m annually, while Mkhize and other ministers take home R2.4m a year.

Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (Imatu) president Stanley Khoza told the Weekend Argus workers' salaries were increased by small percentages compared to those of their bosses.

He said municipal managers were remunerated as if they worked alone in municipalities.

Imatu members and local government workers in general were unhappy with this, Khoza said.

In August, municipal workers received a 7% salary increase, which saw them take home a minimum wage of R7 324.24 a month.

Mkhize, however, said he had consulted

with his finance as well as public service and administration counterparts, Tito Mboweni and Ayanda Dlodlo respectively, MECs responsible for local government, as well as relevant unions.

He explained that the municipal managers' salary increases were aimed at ensuring an appropriate remuneration mix. They also sought to ensure that the remuneration of senior managers was cost-effective, consistent, equitable, competitive and performance-related.

The SA Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) was greatly disappointed by Mkhize's determination and condemned the increases, maintaining that inflated salaries of municipal managers should be redirected towards service delivery and remunerating workers better.

"These increases happen when municipal workers are heavily underpaid. When they demand a fairer salary increment, they are told that their demands are simply unaffordable, whereas those sitting in air-conditioned offices are swimming in pools of money," Samwu said.

The increases, according to the union, come at a time where municipalities are intensifying their strategy of delivering services through the use of the Extended Public Works Programme volunteers whose salaries were recently increased "a mere R4.31 per day".

"It does not make sense how a municipal manager can be remunerated 180 times more than the least-paid employee in the sector," the union added.