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Mbalula: Govt not out of money

ANC secretary-general dismisses reports implying that national government on brink of bankruptcy



ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula addressing the crowds at the Harry Gwala Stadium yesterday, at the ANC's review of the party's 2019 manifesto, ahead of next year's elections. **PHOTO: NQUBEKO MBHELE**

CLIVENDOU

ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula yesterday dismissed reports that the national government, whose revenue for the year is expected to be lower than projected, is on the verge of bankruptcy.

Addressing the media during the ANC KwaZulu-Natal manifesto review rally at Pietermaritzburg's Harry Gwala Stadium, Mbalula said the ruling party wants Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana to address the nation and allay fears that the government will soon run out of money. "As the ANC, we have made commitments in terms of our manifesto. If there are any financial problems, we expect our government to be proactive, to lead, provide answers and address the nation.

"If you are told that by next year government will run out of money,

it becomes a field day for propaganda and lies. That's why we want the minister to address the nation on the matter," he said.

Speculation that the national government was in financial trouble gained traction last month following a memo sent by National Treasury calling on departments and other state entities to implement austerity measures.

According to the National Treasury, austerity measures have become necessary after government recorded a R143 billion deficit in its monthly balance for July amid the country's energy crisis, coupled by a ballooning state wage bill.

While Mbalula conceded that the government was facing financial challenges, he denied that it was on the brink of bankruptcy.

"I saw [Godongwana] last week and he said it's not correct [to say] that

we will run out of money. That is encouraging ... he has allayed our worst fears," he said.

Earlier, Mbalula told thousands of ANC supporters who braved yesterday's chilly weather to hear party leaders speak about progress made by the organisation since 2019, when the ANC made election promises as part of its manifesto.

Mbalula, who said the ANC has fulfilled 70 of the 120 commitments which the party made during the 2019 general elections, urged the organisation's supporters to counter the narrative that the ANC has not delivered.

"The ANC is the only party in this country which built and continues to build houses for the poor. When HIV was wiping out lives, the ANC government made it a point that our people received the life-saving antiretroviral (ARV) [treatment].

"You look at the public infrastructure, the ANC government continues to construct dams, roads and hospitals," he said.

The ANC supporters, some of whom arrived in buses and minibus taxis, while others travelled on foot, filled the 12,000-capacity Harry Gwala Stadium.

Wearing their signature black, green and gold colours, the ANC backers sang the party's liberation struggle songs in between speeches by various ANC leaders.

Mbalula said ANC supporters would have long deserted the party had it been true that the organisation was not delivering.

"If the ANC is not delivering, then how come we are able to fill up a big stadium such as this one? If the ANC was not delivering then how come the ANC is still the strongest political party in KZN?" he said.

ANC Moses Mabhida region chairperson, Mzi Thebolla, who is also the Msunduzi Municipality mayor, assured the party's national leaders who were at the rally that the ANC in the region will deliver the highest number of votes in next year's general elections.

"As the ANC in the Moses Mabhida region, we have committed ourselves to getting 70% of the vote in this region," he said.

ANC NEC members who were part of yesterday's manifesto review rally include former health minister Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Small Business Development Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, Sports, Arts and Culture Minister Zizi Kodwa, Police Minister Bheki Cele, Water and Sanitation Minister Senzo Mchunu, Public Works Minister Sihle Zikalala and Transport Minister Sindi Chikunga. - clive.ndou@witness.co.za