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Zuma needs some voomah for 2010

IT MIGHT BE A new year, but for President Jacob Zuma old promises are staring him right in the face. And with the national kitty dwindling, his party facing ructions and the delivery machine moving slower, the new year is bringing back old headaches.

In the popularity stakes, Zuma doesn't have to worry much because TNS Research Surveys shows his approval rating is strong at 58 percent.

However, approval ratings can't solve problems. Zuma has made a number of bold promises, and the ball needs to start rolling this year as he only has three years to deliver on these before his term expires.

Writing in The Economist's *The World in 2010* supplement, Zuma was optimistic about 2010. But he is yet to meet some of the major promises contained in his ambitious election manifesto.

The government needs to move urgently on the ambitious National Health Insurance scheme, which seeks to broaden the quality of healthcare at private and public healthcare institutions.

Dwindling tax revenues are making his work all the more difficult with indications that tax revenue shrunk by R26 billion between March and November last year. Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan has already warned that the global economic meltdown will slash about R70bn off the money the government estimated it would collect when the budget was presented in February last year.

This is not good news for the president and will negatively affect many of his grand plans such as better health, more houses, increasing the number of people on antiretroviral treatment, reducing crime, improving education and developing rural areas.

MyView

Caiphus Kgosana

He also needs to appease the middle class and the rich by managing the economy in a way that does not hurt them.

Zuma's government has already entered into agreements it cannot renege on. These include generous increases for doctors, soldiers and an above-inflation increase of 11 percent for all public servants. But where will the money come from?

Economist Iraj Abedian says Zuma should either revise some of his promises or enter into partnerships with the private sector to start reactivating the economy.

ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe has already indicated that they would "reprioritise", but it remains to be seen if this will appease left allies who expect a welfare-type state from Zuma.

Abedian says the government should act more firmly this year on the management of parastatals such as Eskom and Transnet so that internal problems can be sorted out and these state entities can focus on their core functions.

According to Abedian, Zuma's job creation dream also hangs in the balance if the global economic outlook does not improve soon.

He promised in his State of the Nation address that he would create 500 000 jobs by December, but Mantashe had to admit this week that the recession, having wiped out more than a million jobs, made it almost impossible to attain this goal.

Regrettably, the new Zuma cabinet – whose calibre was even hailed by the London Financial Times – spent

Zuma needs some voomah for 2010

most of the past eight months quibbling about who is smartest to run the economy. This was also compounded by power struggles in the alliance.

As the ANC prepares for its national general council – a mid-term review of its programmes – in September this year, Zuma also has the added headache of holding the party together.

Clashes between leftists and nationalists, which spilled into the open at the SACP's special congress in Polokwane last month, will require exceptional leadership skills from Zuma.

Political analyst Professor Adam Habib says differences of opinion are bound to emerge in the ruling alliance sooner or later.

"The problem for (Zuma) is how do you manage those? It has to be done in a way that people do not engage each other in an acrimonious and destructive way, as has been the case," he says.

Habib believes that Zuma has nothing to fear from the upcoming national general council as his leadership position is extremely secure, unlike Mbeki who had to fight for his political life at the last council in Pretoria in 2005.

A major worry for Zuma will be keeping his ministers on their toes to ensure they do not hold him back in his drive to create an effective government machinery.

For this, he is going to need the people who work directly under him, such as the two ministers in the presidency, and his own administrative staff to be extremely sharp. But does he have sharp people around him?

Prince Mashele of independent think-tank the Centre for Politics and Research says while there are islands of brilliance in the presidency, there are also some worrying

appointments.

He says the new director-general in the presidency, Vusi Mavimbela, is a sharp mind and should have no problems coping with the demands of the job.

He believes chief operating officer Jesse Duarte, who has held more strategic than operational positions in government, could have a problem hitting the ground running.

Mashele also points out that a number of the people Zuma has entrusted with the security of the country, such as spy chief Moe Shaik, prosecutions boss Menzi Simelani and police chief Bheki Cele, need to prove they are not just there because of loyalty to the president.

On the international front, however, his appointment of foreign minister has come under criticism.

Professor Shadrack Gutto believes the appointment of International Relations and Co-operation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane has seen the country's foreign policy profile dwindle.

Gutto notes that Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi advanced positions that would have not seen the light of day under Mbeki during the recent AU summit in Egypt.

At 98, the ANC is, according to observers, still doing a great job. However, most of the voters who were born when Nelson Mandela was released will be turning 20 this year, and they do not necessarily have an emotional connection to the liberation movement, and could pose an electoral challenge to the ANC when it turns 100.

But some of them love soccer.

So, Zuma can also take comfort in the fact that the World Cup, which will cast the country and him into the global spotlight for a month, is taking place this year.

That is at least something to look forward to in 2010.

Education must be as valued as the World Cup – Mchunu

GREG ARDE

SENZO Mchunu believes that if South Africa is to succeed, education has to become a national priority, like the preparations for the World Cup.

This week Mchunu – a teacher who became involved in politics and is now the provincial MEC of education – was roundly praised when it emerged that KwaZulu-Natal's matric pass rate had improved from 57 percent to 61 percent.

President Jacob Zuma called Mchunu to thank his old comrade.

"I was quite excited to receive the call," the reserved MEC told the Tribune.

"The president said he was very pleased. He said: 'Congratulations and thank you for making a difference'."

The KZN matric pass rate helped raise the national standard and while Mchunu is the first to admit that a national pass rate of 60 percent is nothing to crow about, at least the province appears to have arrested the decline and "can move forward with enthusiasm".

While Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga said the national matric results would give her sleepless nights, at least Mchunu can rest easy. KZN was the only province that boasted a better matric pass rate this year.

Mchunu attributes the success of 2009 to hands-on school management and a return to basics.

In the past eight months, he personally visited several hundred state schools and addressed "thousands" of teachers.

"That created a buzz. They were happy that I had met them and listened to them. One teacher said: 'I have been eye to eye with you now and I will go back to the classroom and teach with all my heart.'"

Mchunu taught between 1985 and 1991 at St Augustine's High School in Ngutu and iMpande High School in Eshowe.

He says education is his passion.

"I know what it is like to be in the classroom and in the staffroom. I know exactly what the dynamics are and what differentiates schools that are well managed, have discipline and integrity."

Mchunu says getting education right hinges on it being "the national priority". Motshekga has blamed poor teaching and bad management for the national matric pass rate dropping to 60.7 percent from 62.5 percent in 2008 and 65.2 percent in 2007.



I told principals if they were managers of a factory producing bars of soap they would be fired if they didn't produce

Mchunu says critics of systems, management and curriculum, including the controversial outcomes-based education curriculum, are often justified.

But, he believes a massive effort and huge resources need to be directed at education.

"Fifa said to us that for 2010 we would need to build new stadiums, each costing at least R2 billion, surrounded by new roads... and other infrastructure and Fifa said we had to build that on time.

"There was a presidential committee established and it became a project of national interest. We need this approach to education because sooner or later we need to be honest and ask: what has prioritising education delivered?"

"If we can't point to anything, it will be a tragedy.

"Education is beyond politics.

"It is about the future of the country and competing internationally. We need to invest billions in education to put all schools in the top category."

Mchunu says top-category (former white) schools had sufficient resources to engage pupils and teachers in their lessons.

"There are critical challenges of curriculum, teachers who are not qualified – and management – but honestly, if you took the best, most experienced teacher and put her in mud schools where there is no water, no toilets and 90 percent of the pupils walk more than 10km a day to get to school and back, it would require a miracle for her to be a success.

"In KwaZulu-Natal our budget for new schools and maintenance is R1.3bn. We would need R44bn to raise all our schools to the standard of former white schools."

Having said all of that, Mchunu believes that until education is made the national priority, he has to stick to what he can do to improve things in the country's biggest department with 110 000 staff.

This means further surprise visits to schools, arriving at 6.45am and checking that staff and pupils are in class on time and doing lessons and tests.

"Principals were surprised when I asked them what their plan was to improve.

"I said if they were managers of a factory producing bars of soap they would be fired if they didn't produce.

"We need to have this attitude in education.

"You can't call yourself a principal if your children aren't passing."

Mchunu says constant inspection and monitoring of schools is required.

"Every day a child must come back with homework."

He says Motshekga is likely to make further announcements in respect of scrapping OBE and re-introducing text-book-based learning.

SUNDAY TRIBUNE JANUARY 10 2010

IFP MP comatose after collapsing at home

NATHI OLIFANT

IFP MP and former MEC in the KwaZulu-Natal government, Inkosi Nyanga Ngubane is seriously ill and has been in a coma for the past five days after collapsing at his home last week. He is in hospital in Pietermaritzburg.

Ngubane, who hails from KwaZeshuke in Bulwer, outside Pietermaritzburg, has been in and out of hospital for the past four months, according to IFP

secretary-general Rev Musa Zondi.

Zondi confirmed that Ngubane, 65, was currently comatose and that his condition had not improved since being placed in the intensive care unit.

"I can confirm that he is seriously sick. At one stage he was better and spent Christmas and New Year at home, but he collapsed five days ago and was again rushed to hospital," said Zondi.

Zondi said the former Social Welfare and Population Development MEC was suffering from kidney failure.

Ngubane is a veteran IFP politician who has held several key portfolios during the party's regime. These include the portfolio of traditional and environmental affairs after the KwaZulu-Natal parliament was formed in 1994.

In March 1997 he took over the safety and security ministry and after the 1999 election

then-premier Lionel Mtshali gave him the local government portfolio.

After 2004, he held the portfolio of MEC for Social Welfare.

Ngubane also served in the legislative assembly of the former homeland of KwaZulu from 1983 and as deputy health minister and cabinet minister without portfolio during the IFP regime's administration.

In a controversial move in November 2006, Ngubane was stripped of his Social Welfare

portfolio by then-premier S'bu Ndebele and was replaced by Meshack Radebe, who has been at the helm of the department since then.

Ngubane once faced charges relating to the arms and ammunition Act in the late 1990s after his home was raided in April 1999. A shotgun was allegedly confiscated.

He and his then 35-year-old son appeared in court as co-accused. The case was latter withdrawn.

SUNDAY TRIBUNE JANUARY 10 2010

It's time teacher union rolled up sleeves

AT THIS time of the annual ritual of wailing and gnashing of teeth over yet another decline in the matric pass rate, it's apt to ask what, if anything, the largest teacher union, Sadtu, plans to do to contribute towards improving the standard of education in our schools.

It's also pertinent to ask if the ruling party-aligned union's only reason for existence is to protect and advance the interests of its members above all else, even when, through its actions, the future of our children, and therefore the country, is compromised as a result.

Truth be told, Sadtu's affiliation to the ANC has so far mainly served the ambitious in its ranks, who have used the union as a stepping stone to plum jobs in government and parliament.

It has not served the interests of education – instead, it could be argued, it has caused the ANC to be loath to call its ally to order when its members have let down our children. At the tragedy of it is that the biggest losers are the children of the

black working class, the very people whose interests the ruling party professes to champion.

It's common cause that while there are many good schools in black residential areas, a distressingly large number do not offer quality teaching and learning. And this is not about lack of textbooks, libraries or laboratories, but teachers who simply could not be bothered to do their jobs. In many of these schools, Sadtu is the dominant union.

These schools share common traits: teacher absenteeism and tardiness, an appalling work ethic, power struggles between the principal and union-aligned teachers, a lack of order and discipline, and pupil truancy.

Often they are sites of debilitating contests between teachers fighting for promotion to better-paying posts. Invariably in such cases, the stirring hand of a Sadtu activist is not far off.

Sadly, the most disadvantaged by the collapse of the system are often children whose parents, in contrast to

EDITOR'S NOTE

Philani Mgwaba



the teachers, do not have the means to relocate their kids to good schools found mostly in former white and Indian residential areas.

Thus the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, which was the lot of their parents under apartheid, is perpetuated, a point President Jacob Zuma made eloquently to union delegates at a conference last year.

In essence, failure to do right by these children entrenches existing class divisions between the better-off and the poor. It's inexcusable that the culprits co-responsible for the mess are allowed to continue in their posts, in spite of annual promises of tough

corrective action by the authorities.

The government will have to act against the bad apples if it is serious about improving the lot of its core constituency and giving every South African child an equal chance to succeed in life. And what of Sadtu? It is obliged to champion the interests of its members. But surely it also owes it to our children not to defend the lazy and unscrupulous in its ranks? It would be nice to know what it intends to do to fix the damage.

A lot has been said about the president's three wives and their likely cost to the fiscus. The fears are justified.

But yours truly is more worried about whether, with three wives and a fiancée in the wings, he will still find enough time in his busy day to attend to affairs of state.

Apparently before he retires in the evening, he phones every member of his family to check on their health, which is admirable but must take quite some time in his day.

No doubt the man is full of energy as he amply demonstrated with his traditional dance moves at his latest wedding. No offence to my senior readers, but the thing is, Mr Zuma is 67 years old.

He's obviously made of sterner stuff than most men.

You might have thought that police commissioner Bheki Cele would have learnt something from the personal experience of his predecessor, Jackie Selebi, now accused of consorting with known criminals during his term of office.

Selebi, the self-confessed friend of a convicted drug trafficker, is facing charges of corruption arising from his alleged links with the underworld.

One obvious lesson for Cele could have been that a man in his position should be careful about the company he keeps, especially associates who emerge from nowhere with more money than they seem to know what to do with. But all this seems to be left on the police commissioner.