

Blade wants Independent Newspapers broken up

Independent News & Media's South African operations should be broken up and not sold to a monopoly, SACP secretary-general Blade Nzimande said yesterday. He told about 2000 delegates at the 13th national congress of the SA Communist Party near Empangeni that they should be opposed to media monopolies.



(Image: GCIS)

"Why are we not launching a campaign to de-monopolise? We see this (newspaper group) as too big."

He described Independent Newspapers as an "active opposition to government".

SACP deputy secretary-general Jeremy Cronin told journalists the Irish owners of the group had been guilty of asset stripping its SA operations and that some "R500 million has been shipped out of the country".

Both he and Nzimande said they would like to see more localised news rooms rather than the current pooling of news gathering found in large media groups.

Banks also in the firing line

Nzimande said banks should be forced to invest in low-cost housing.

The state should move from merely regulating to actively directing the private sector, he told delegates at the party's elective conference near Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal.

Delivering his political report, Nzimande said the state had to direct the private sector towards developmental outcomes and objectives.

"Legislation must be made to force South African banks to invest in low-cost housing. It is after all the money of the working class."

Nzimande said he had no doubt that the banks would oppose such measures but said that that the Financial Sector Charter had been a failure, especially since the government had been forced to guarantee bank investment in the poorer sectors on the community.

The Financial Sector Charter was adopted in 2004 as the financial service industry's contribution to social transformation.

It commits the industry to meeting a range of transformation targets, some of which, like broadening access to financial services, are uniquely applicable to the financial services.

There's no business like getting state business

Referring to government employees, Nzimande said that all public servants should declare their business interests and should in fact not work for government if they were in business.

"If you are in public service you can't be in business, if you are in business you can't be in public service; you must choose."

Currently, only those at the level of directors in the public service have to declare their interests.

Nzimande said that all public servants should have to declare their business interests.

Earlier, outgoing SA Communist Party chairman Gwede Mantashe urged party members to join the African National Congress.

"Our ability to influence and advance our agenda will be determined by our immersion in the structures and programmes of our alliance partners," he said.

"The reality facing the party today... is that of communists who are not even members of the ANC."

Mantashe said there were several SACP members at national level who held top positions in the ANC and Cabinet.

But there was a lack of "cross-pollination" between the two parties at a provincial level, with the exception of the Eastern Cape.

Mantashe said his decision to step down as party chairman was not newsworthy.

"This (decision) is born of practical consideration that one is doing a disservice to the party by being an absentee chairperson."

A melody for Malema

Earlier, axed ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema and former ANC chief whip Tony Yengeni featured in songs at the start of the conference.

Yengeni is a member of the African National Congress's national executive committee and in charge of its political education schools.

He lost his position as chief whip after accepting a discount on a luxury car during the tendering process for the country's arms deal.

At the time, he was a member of a parliamentary committee reporting on the arms deal. Yengeni went to prison in 2006, and was released on parole after serving six months of his sentence.

Malema was expelled as president of the ANC Youth League in April.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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