

Media focus on ANC battles: Zuma

Media and commentators are eager to focus on "perceived battles" in the ANC ahead of its elective conference in Mangaung, instead of the party's policies, President Jacob Zuma said yesterday.



(Image: GCIS)

"We must emphasise that this conference is no different from 52 others that took place before," Zuma said in a speech prepared for delivery at a Foreign Correspondents' Association meeting in Johannesburg.

"As we prepare [for Mangaung]... we also have to contend with the eagerness of the media and commentators to focus on perceived battles in the ANC, instead of the important policies that are to be discussed at conference."

He said the Press Freedom Commission had addressed a lot of the party's issues concerning the media.

ANC will 'respect' media freedom

"The ANC fought for media freedom and will continue doing everything in its power to promote freedom of expression and media freedom. At the same time, we also remind those who are privileged to have access to the media to respect the rights of others."

He said African National Congress branches were still busy deciding on who should lead the ANC.

"The thoroughness ensures that the ANC elects leadership after much debate and consideration each time, and emerges stronger. We wish to emphasise as well that life will certainly continue after Mangaung. The ANC will emerge stronger, ready to lead South Africa towards prosperity and cohesion."

He said the growth in the ANC's membership, from about 600,000 at its last conference in Polokwane in 2007, to 1.2 million in 2012, was a sign the ANC was still "strong".

"This underpins the reality that our people still believe in the ANC and in its ability to complete its historic task of the total emancipation of our people," Zuma said.

He said the deaths of 34 striking Lonmin mineworkers in Marikana, Rustenburg, on August 16, had shocked the world.

"These painful incidents are not what we want to see in a free and democratic South Africa, where people are free to express themselves."

He said although the ANC and its leagues were often "far apart" on several issues, they always worked together to close the distance.

"We will continue to value and engage the ANC leagues to ensure that their roles in the organisation are not diluted," Zuma said.

"However, this must be characterised by high levels of discipline and respect for the constitution of the ANC."

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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