

Decline in illegal imports

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South African President Cyril Ramaphosa speaks in parliament in Cape Town
Durban - Just two months after President Cyril Ramaphosa assumed the leadership of the ANC, security agencies at the country's borders are being praised for cutting down on cheap clothes entering the country illegally.

Talking to the Daily News on the sidelines of the SA Clothing and Textile Workers' Union's (Sactwu's) three-day national bargaining conference in Durban on Thursday, Sactwu general secretary André Kriel said the ANC under Ramaphosa had brought control to the country's borders.

"The machinery of government has started to work," said Kriel.

He said under former president Jacob Zuma inefficient border and customs controls had led to job losses in the country's clothing and textile industry.

"We are very pleased to see that since the December conference there is more vigour and energy in doing the job that is supposed to be done."

Since the beginning of the year, the SA Revenue Service had confiscated more than R200 million worth of illicit goods in clothing, textile, footwear and leather.

He said previously the security agencies' commitment had been lacking because of internal political issues that had been haunting the government, "such as corruption in state institutions".

Sactwu runs its own textile and clothing companies in Cape Town, Durban, Ladysmith and Pretoria, with a total workforce of 4000.

According to Statistics SA, the third quarter of 2017 showed a decline of 31 000 jobs to 9 589 000 in the formal non-agricultural sector in the quarter ending in September. This is a loss of 83 000 jobs when compared with the same period in 2016.

Quarterly employment declines were mainly driven by the community services industry, with 10 000 jobs. Additional job losses were observed in the mining and quarrying industry, 9 000 jobs; trade industry 7 000; business services 6 000; manufacturing 5 000 and the electricity industry, 1 000 jobs.

There were, however, increases in employment in the construction industry as well as the transport industry, with 4 000 and 3 000 jobs respectively.

Addressing the conference, Cosatu second deputy president Zingiswa Losi warned that workers' support for Ramaphosa would be short-lived if he did not get rid of labour brokers, implement National Health Insurance (NHI) and provide free wi-fi for the poor.

Losi said the ANC should commit itself to Cosatu's demands by including in its general election manifesto radical socio-economic transformation, free education and a total ban on labour brokers.

After a probation period of three months, a worker should enjoy other rights "like full employees in the company", she said.

Losi told the shop stewards that they should report breaches of the legislation by employers who kept employees on contract for more than three months.

"The legislation is very clear. The reason employers get away with this is because at times we are also complacent, and we keep quiet," she said.

Losi also said Cosatu would resume its struggle for the scrapping of e-tolls in Gauteng.

"When we are negotiating for wage increases, it gets taken away by the e-tolls," she said.

She added that the manifesto must speak to the full implementation of the NHI, basic income grants for the unemployed and a guaranteed minimum 40-hour work week.

"We also want free wi-fi in all urban areas outside the main metros and in the rural areas.

"This is what will be guiding our relationship with the current leadership of the ANC and the alliance," she said.

Losi said Cosatu members had voted for Ramaphosa to emerge as the ANC president.

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