

Cyril Ramaphosa says NHI is on its way — whether you like it or not

Business Day 22 JUNE 2018

Addressing the NUM congress, the president says the National Health Insurance Fund will bring stability to the country's stressed healthcare system

The country's health system is in a crisis, according to President Cyril Ramaphosa.

He has confirmed fears expressed by experts, activists and unions that the system has collapsed and contradicted Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi's strong opposition to the sentiment.

On Tuesday, Motsoaledi said government health services were not falling apart as criticism against his leadership grew, with union federation Cosatu calling on Ramaphosa to fire him.

Ramaphosa was addressing the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) congress in Boksburg on Friday when he said the National Health Insurance (NHI) Fund would bring stability to the stressed system. He said the universal healthcare coverage meant the financially fit must help subsidise those who are not, and that was the trend across the world.

"Our job as the governing alliance, as the ANC, is to make sure all South Africans have access to the best healthcare. Right now our hospitals are burdened and our healthcare is in crisis, and we believe the only way to [correct] this is to pool all resources and everyone makes a contribution," he said.

On Thursday, Motsoaledi released the NHI Bill, which will pave the way for the reforms Ramaphosa said, adding that the system would be implemented "whether people like it or not", referring to opposition to the plans expressed by medical aid companies, among others.

"There are vested interests; those who want to hold on to the current system that is bringing a huge burden on the health system. They will oppose it, but this is one issue we are going to see implemented whether people like it or not."

ANC-alliance infighting

Ramaphosa also spoke to the congress delegates about the importance of unity in the ANC-led alliance. NUM is affiliated to Cosatu, which is in the alliance partnership with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

Ramaphosa said the infighting needed to end if the party wants to win the 2019 elections.

"We continue to see infighting; comrades fighting for positions; structures of our movement colliding with each other — it must end, because we have a huge task ahead, which is the 2019 elections, we cannot go into those elections if we are divided and fighting among ourselves. We must be united if we want to win the 2019 elections."

