

Mail & Guardian

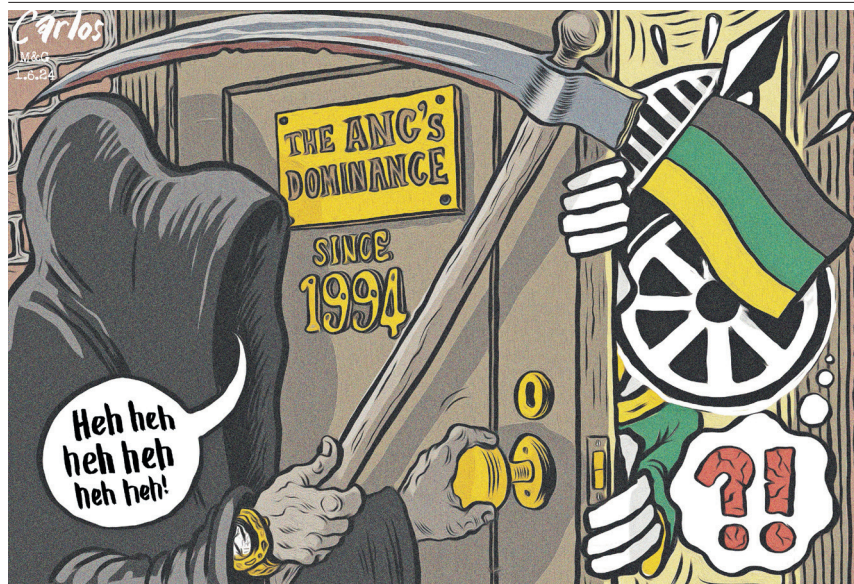
AFRICA'S BETTER FUTURE

ELECTIONS SPECIAL

After the shock:
Into the coalitions
minefield



All photographs by Delwyn Verasamy



VOTERS' VOICES



'This election is significant because of what is currently happening around the world, and in recent months we have seen what true leaders mean when they stand up for humanity and there is one party that made it known where they stand with humanity and that made my vote very easy.'

— Ammaarah Vaizie, 25



'Just to know that I have some sort of power, obviously South Africa has its challenges so being in a position to vote and to make a change makes me happy. That's why even if I have to stand here for four more hours, to make my change, to make my vote, I would.'

— Tshiamo Seokane, 24



IEC confirms election results as talks about talks get under way

The electoral commission released the final result despite threats of 'trouble' from Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe party

**Paddy Harper, Emsie Ferreira
& Mandisa Nyathi**

The Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) has confirmed the results of the national and provincial elections despite threats of “trouble” from Jacob Zuma, with the two largest parties — the ANC and the Democratic Alliance (DA) — opening the door to coalitions with each other.

IEC chairperson Mosotho Moepya said on Sunday that after “carefully” considering the extent measures of section 57 of the Electoral Act put in place, he was satisfied to declare the results of the elections, whose credibility had been questioned by the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party and 25 others.

They had written to the IEC threatening court action should the declaration of the results go ahead, with Zuma upping the ante with his warning that doing so was a “provocation”, but the official cere-

mony went ahead as planned on Sunday evening.

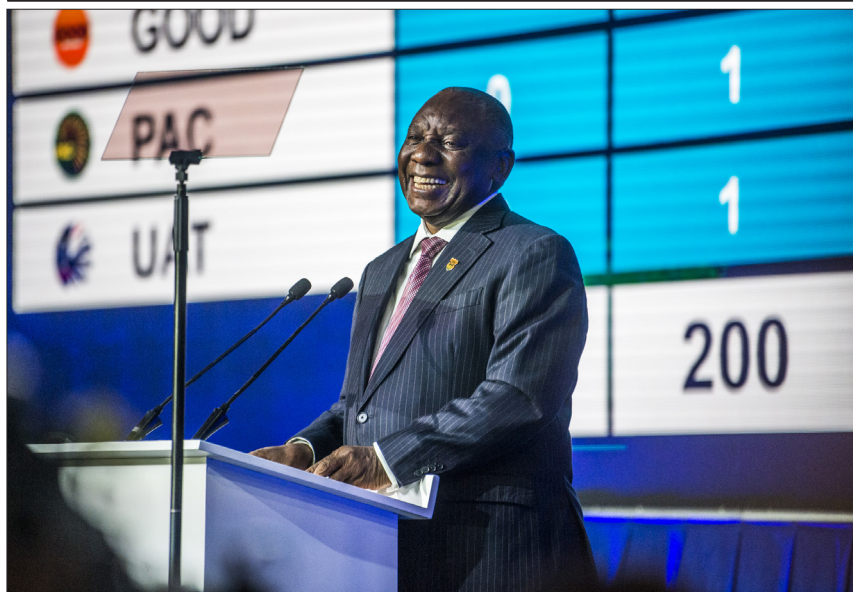
Hours before Moepya declared the result at the Results Operations Centre (ROC) at Gallagher Estate, ANC secretary general Fikile Mbalula and DA leader John Steenhuisen announced that their doors were open for negotiations.

Mbalula told the media that they were “talking to everybody” and that their choices would have to be guided by more than ideological considerations, while Steenhuisen said the DA would work with any party that was committed to South Africa’s Constitution.

Delivering his address on Sunday, President Cyril Ramaphosa called on political parties to work together as they head towards the next administration, adding that the elections represented the will of the voters.

“[The people] expect the parties for which they have voted to find common

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY			
TOTAL SEATS	REGIONAL	NATIONAL	TOTAL
ANC	86	73	159
DA	45	42	87
MK	27	31	58
EFF	22	17	39
IFP	9	8	17
PA	4	5	9
VF PLUS	2	4	6
ACTIONS SA	2	4	6
ACDP	0	3	3
FM	1	2	3



On record: Commentators have said that President Cyril Ramaphosa has lost the Ramaphoria still present during the last elections has faded. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

ground, to overcome their differences, to act and work together for the good of everyone," he said.

"However, all the parties share an overarching mandate, to work in partnership with each other and with society more broadly, to build a country that is inclusive, united and prosperous.

"Our people have spoken, whether we like it or not," Ramaphosa said.

On Saturday night, the MK party and 25 others demanded that the results be delayed until their complaints had been dealt with — and they called for a recount. Zuma took things a step further with a warning that there would be "trouble" if the declaration went ahead before they were "satisfied", but provided no evidence to back up his claims.

Zuma said declaring a result that deprived his party of a two thirds majority before their "serious" allegations

were addressed was a "provocation" and accused the IEC of "funny tricks" in the counting and collation process.

Earlier on Sunday, ministers from the security cluster held a media briefing at which they said that any attempt to disrupt the announcement or any subsequent acts of violence would be dealt with by the security forces.

Police Minister Bheki Cele said law enforcement would be visible to ensure order.

"If you call a war against the nation, we will act on that," Cele said. "We all have rights in South Africa, but once you cross the line, law enforcement will be there."

He said the law outlined mechanisms through which parties could raise disputes and that "there cannot be any room for threats of instability in order to register objections or concerns about the electoral process".



“The law enforcement agencies stand ready to maintain peace and stability as they have done throughout the elections period. Any attempt to undermine the authority of the state and South Africa’s constitutional order will be dealt with accordingly,” Cele said.

With the results out and the lay of the land clear, both the ANC and the DA on Sunday made it clear that their doors were not closed to each other — or other parties.

Mbalula said they were “talking to everybody” and that they had a mandate to listen to every “party of substance” in the course of the next few days.

Significantly, Mbalula said that if circumstances dictated, coalition negotiations would be conducted on a principled rather than an ideological basis.

The ANC would not accept any proposal that placed removing Ramaphosa as a precondition, saying this was a “no-go area” and that parties wanting to negotiate with that precondition should “forget” it.

Mbalula said the ANC negotiating team would report to its national working committee ahead of a meeting of the national executive committee on Tuesday.

An hour before the results were announced, Steenhuisen released a recorded address in which he suggested

to DA voters that the party could enter into a coalition with the ANC to “keep the MK party out of government”.

Steenhuisen said the DA federal executive had met and agreed to “initiate exploratory talks with other political parties that share a commitment to the South African Constitution”.

The DA had spearheaded the opposition pre-election coalition — the Multi-Party Charter of South Africa

— which appears to be effectively dead, with its members now negotiating as individual entities.

The DA’s negotiating team, which included federal chairperson Helen Zille, chief whip Siviwe Gwarube and former leader Tony Leon, would “identify options for

the formation of governments at national and provincial level where no party has obtained an outright majority”.

Other members of the team are Western Cape premier Alan Winde and former DA spin doctor and chief strategist Ryan Coetzee, who became Zille’s special adviser but later left to work for Britain’s Liberal Democrats.

There is a strong lobby in the ANC that had been advocating a coalition with the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), but there is another that includes Ramaphosa and Mbalula and favours the formation of a government of national unity.

“If you call a war against the nation, we will act on that. We all have rights in South Africa, but once you cross the line, law enforcement will be there”



This would see the ANC calling other parties to participate — including the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and now possibly the EFF — along with the DA.

A well-placed source confirmed on Sunday that there was deep-seated resistance in the ANC ranks to an alliance with the DA, for multiple reasons.

“There is self-interest driving a preference for the EFF and MK party as well as political, cultural alignment,” said the source.

As for the DA, members remained torn about the extent to which the party could cooperate with the ANC without losing its ideological — and opposition — identity.

Some favour a structured agreement where the DA would stay out of government but take key positions in parliament and demand concessions on key pieces of legislation.

Here, they have already indicated to the ANC that this would include the National Health Insurance Bill and the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill.

Steenhusein said that although the party had done its best to ensure a victory of the Multi-Party Charter, they had not succeeded, and that they now had to find other partners to provide a stable government and keep the ANC out of a coalition with EFF and now MK.

Since then the MK party had appeared

on the scene and had shown itself to be a “threat” to South Africa.

“We urge all others who love our Constitution and all it represents, to set aside narrow sectarian interests and join hands to act in the interests of the country that we all love,” Steenhuisen said.

He reiterated that a coalition between the ANC, the MK party and the EFF would be a “doomsday” scenario.

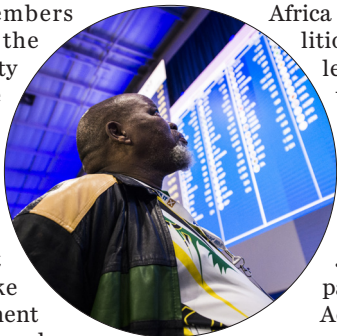
“All throughout the election campaign, the DA undertook to rescue South Africa from the doomsday coalition. We will now do our level best to do exactly that,” Steenhuisen said.

This suggests the DA would not be amenable to a national unity government into which the ANC sought to include Julius Malema’s EFF party.

ActionSA national chairperson Michael Beaumont said

in a statement that the party would act as an “unofficial opposition in parliament” because it was not interested in getting into an agreement with the ANC.

“It is, however, unlikely that ActionSA will depart from its commitment to the South African people to not take the votes we received from South Africans seeking change only to give them to the very party that has created the crisis from which we need change 30 years into our democracy,” Beaumont said on Sunday. ●



National election results

for 29 May 2024

M&G
mg.co.za



ANC

40.18%



DA

21.81%



MK

14.58%



EFF

9.52%

IFP

3.85%

PA

2.06%

VF+

1.36%

ActionSA

1.2%

Total result for other parties **5.44%** Total voter turnout **58.64%**

Results for the top three parties in each province

N. Cape

ANC 49.3%
DA 21.22%
EFF 12.89%

W. Cape

DA 53.05%
ANC 21.34%
PA 7.33%

E. Cape

ANC 62.47%
DA 14.62%
EFF 10.07%

North West

ANC 58.3%
EFF 16.4%
DA 13.48%

Gauteng

ANC 36.48%
DA 26.63%
EFF 12.47%

Limpopo

ANC 74.23%
EFF 12.97%
DA 6.08%

Mpumalanga

ANC 51.89%
MK 17.24%
EFF 12.71%

KwaZulu-Natal

MK 45.93%
ANC 17.62%
IFP 16.28%

Free State

ANC 52.88% DA 21.31% EFF 13.09%



'Friends' of Jacob Zuma

Saturday's spectacle was a shameful episode for which we all bear responsibility

COMMENT

Luke Feltham

Zuma is coming." The words were a firelighter thrown into the middle of a dense veld.

Reporters spilled out the compact cubicles at the Results and Operations Centre in Midrand. Interviews on the main floor were abandoned mid-conversation; dinner plates in the mess hall were deserted. Every pen, laptop, phone camera and TV lens was pointed at the entrance, primed for the former president, who had promised nothing but his presence.

IEC officials, smelling the impending mayhem, scrambled to install contingencies. Phones glued to ears, they directed law enforcement to upstairs posts and endeavoured — ultimately in vain — to set up a path their imminent guest could travel with minimal ruckus.

How did the uMkhonto weSizwe party (MK) do so well? That question had lingered uncomfortably in media circles before that point. For a party ostensibly set up sometime last year, but

only launched in earnest by Zuma in December, 14.58% on the national board and a commanding 45.93% in KwaZulu-Natal was an incredible return.

We were about to answer our own question. We were about to understand that we were complicit.

The media scrum swarmed the green MK entourage as it took its first steps into the Gallagher Convention Centre.

Zuma's people formed a phalanx around him, stiff-arming the

mob. And then the mass moved as one. A living organism of cameras and shouts with a smiling octogenarian at its heart.

The beast rolled through the hall, knocking down computer screens, banners and anything else that stood

in its way. People tussled, tripped and clambered over desks — and each other — to get an eyeline of the centre of the chaos. Zuma paused amid the detritus at one point to genially bend down to rescue a reporter's bag before it was obliterated by trampling feet.

The feeding frenzy was unparalleled.

No other figure had even approximated

"And then the mass moved as one. A living organism of cameras and shouts with a smiling octogenarian at its heart"



Disgrace: In profiling Jacob Zuma on our front pages and using his every word, the media has effectively collaborated with him. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

such a reaction in the preceding days. The ANC had shelled up, its members reportedly under strict instruction to make themselves scarce after the butchering of their 30-year majority. The notable exception was invariably Gwede Mantashe, whose capricious swings between cantankerous and affable uncle are a reliable feature of these occasions.

Democratic Alliance leaders patrolled proudly, happily giving interviews when asked. Julius Malema arrived earlier on Saturday to explain the EFF's stagnant performance (Zuma, incidentally, was to blame, he said) and drew a fair crowd at his presser.

It was all part of the usual pageantry. But in retrospect, the facts of the day read as a prelude to that evening's main event.

Zuma settled into the press room's

centre chair and the commotion eventually hushed. The MK party, as so many feared, had arrived to denounce the election and demand a revote. They were joined by 25 smaller parties who claimed they had evidence of voting misconduct.

After a Q&A session, there was an excited purr as we were told that Zuma would address the nation. "Here are my friends, the media," he said sardonically after rising to the lectern.

At face value, we know he had laced the greeting with irony — news written about him is indubitably not positive on most platforms. But there is also a damning level of truth to it. We are friends.

He sells our newspapers, graces our front covers, drives our digital media. We know our audiences are paying for any sliver of an update or just a glimpse of his face — whether out of hate or love.



Playing the victim: Jacob Zuma, once president of the ANC, is the face of the uMkhonto weSizwe party despite being tainted by the arms deal and state capture . Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

The relationship is mutual. Our coverage drives his legend. He undoubtedly has long understood that how we portray him has little consequence. If anything, criticism only feeds his driving narrative of a man striving against persecution.

He knows one phone call is all it takes to send us into delirium. And he knows how to operate us when we arrive.

It was a remarkable, if perverse, achievement to witness. No one in the press room had any illusions about the gravity of what Zuma was doing.

His protest pulled at the very seams of our democracy and endangered its legitimacy. We believed him when he said there would be “trouble” if they were not taken seriously. We all fear what that could mean.

And yet he injected an aura of levity into the space.

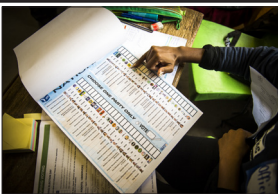
His voice was not boisterous, but calm, smooth and beguiling. He spoke in terms of “us”; calling on the nation to unite against what he saw as an injustice.

The smatterings of cheers and claps loudened as he threw more dispersions at the IEC; many came from party members, but journalists worried aloud afterward whether some colleagues had been caught up in the moment.

Ultimately, all of us in the media have to take collective responsibility for how the circus played out.

It was a shameful spectacle to be a part of.

How do we avoid a repeat? What is the appropriate coverage? That’s not easy to say. The literal trials and tribulations of a former president are not something we can ignore. But it can’t be this. For the sake of our nation, we cannot be friends. ●



Ramaphosa won't resign despite ANC electoral loss

The options of cooperation for the ANC and the Democratic Alliance are limited, but any deal with the MK party is off the table

Emsie Ferreira & Paddy Harper

President Cyril Ramaphosa does not intend to resign as ANC leader despite leading the party to the historic loss of an electoral majority it has held for 30 years.

Although he is bitterly disappointed that the ANC barely polled 40%, sources close to Ramaphosa said he reasons that “much is at stake” and South Africa is in need of political maturity that can provide stable governance after voters tore up the odds by making uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, that of his predecessor, Jacob Zuma, the third biggest in the country.

The only route to that stability, for Ramaphosa and his closest allies in the ANC is through a working arrangement with the Democratic Alliance (DA).

The party's Gauteng leadership and younger members of the ANC national executive committee have thus far favoured the Economic Freedom

Fighters (EFF) as a coalition partner but this thinking has lost some of its currency with a far lower share of the vote than in 2019.

Several high-ranking ANC sources have confirmed to the *Mail & Guardian* that they are advocating such a tie-up to create a centrist government, and would not countenance any concessions to Zuma's MK party.

Some suggested there is an in-principle agreement between the two biggest parties that they will work together.

“There is alignment. It is a question of ironing out details,” one said.

It remains to be seen what form precisely such a pact will

take.

The election result puts the DA in an existential dilemma it has seen coming for a while, arguably even before its highly accurate internal polling system foretold the possibility of the MK party





Options: The Democratic Alliance, led by John Steenhuisen, could enter into a full coalition with the ANC or cooperate on the election of the president and secure key positions. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

winning up to 14% of Wednesday's vote.

There are two options. The first is a full-blown coalition in which the official opposition becomes the junior partner. The second is a narrowly-structured pact where the DA agrees to cooperate on particular steps required for the government to function, notably the election of the president in the National Assembly and passing the national budget.

In return, the DA would secure key positions in parliament that would allow it to hold the executive to account. In any haggling of this nature, it is almost certain to demand greater devolution of powers to provinces.

Cooperation has long been cast as an impossible ideological meeting which ignores the divides in both the ANC and the DA, the latter having for several chapters of its recent history struggled to reconcile divergent positions on black

economic empowerment, to name but one issue.

Two members of the ANC's provincial executive committee (PEC) in the Eastern Cape said Ramaphosa was adamant that forming a coalition with the opposition was the "pragmatic" option.

The province catapulted Ramaphosa to the ANC presidency in December 2017, including his re-election to the party's top position five years later.

But there is a rebellion in the ANC in the same province over the president's choice to go with the DA instead of the EFF or the MK party.

"The agreement the president is going with is for the ANC to form a government and the DA takes the legislature, including the speaker of the National Assembly and chairing the parliamentary portfolio committees," said one PEC member, who asked to remain anonymous.



But another PEC official reiterated that the ANC “would lose its base” — that is, the black working class in townships and rural areas — should the party adopt Ramaphosa’s strategy.

“Going into bed with the DA will ensure the ANC sleeps forever and does not rise. The EFF and MK will be the biggest beneficiaries,” the insider asserted.

DA MPs featuring near the top of the party’s list have said they doubt that this second option, known to be favoured by federal executive chair Helen Zille, would allow it to stem the excesses of the ANC executive.

They noted that even when ANC portfolio committees have been chaired by people prepared to take a non-partisan stance, this has had little real effect.

DA leaders, who were due to attend an all-day meeting of the federal executive on Sunday, also reported that there have been calls for a conventional coalition with the ANC from within their constituencies.

For now, however, it appears — from what has informally been placed before the ANC — that the DA is leaning towards option two.

It entails concessions from the ANC on key pieces of legislation, including the National Health Insurance Act signed by the president a fortnight before voting day.

The DA was expected to flesh out its gambit at Sunday’s meeting.

On Sunday, ANC secretary general Fikile Mbalula said any party that placed the removal of Ramaphosa as a precondition for coalition talks should “forget” about trying to do business with the ANC.

“Ramaphosa is the president of the ANC. If you come to us with those demands, forget it. If you come to us with

the demand that Ramaphosa is going to step down, what is not going to happen,” he said, adding that the ANC was “talking to everybody” but would “not be bullied”. Its options included various coalition formulations, forming a minority government or taking up the opposition benches, should the situation

demand this, Mbalula said.

EFF president Julius Malema on Saturday told a media briefing that his party would not impose the removal of Ramaphosa as a pre-condition for participation in a coalition with the ANC.

Malema said the EFF would not “get involved” in the ANC’s internal leadership battles and would not make any call for him to resign as president of the party or the country. It would be happy to work with either the ANC or with MK in the provinces or nationally, he added.

The presidency has declined to comment. ●

“Going into bed with the DA will ensure the ANC sleeps forever and does not rise. The EFF and MK will be the biggest beneficiaries”



Crude: Criticism of the Electoral Commission of South Africa by the uMkhonto weSizwe party was a strategy typically employed by its leader, Jacob Zuma. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

IEC was short of money and time

It faced budget cuts, the burden of an amended electoral system and a legal challenge from Jacob Zuma

Emsie Ferreira & Lyse Comins

It was, predictably, the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party that fired the first shot at the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) after logistical problems left voters standing in long, winter-cold queues deep into the night on Wednesday, 29 May.

In accusing the commission of denying South Africans the constitutional right to choose their government, the party was continuing Jacob Zuma's timeworn strategy of undermining key institutions for political and private gain.

The party last Thursday demanded the IEC's leadership resign for focusing on its "persecution and disqualification" of the former president to favour the ANC, instead of running free and fair elections.

The inference was clear and crude — the commission had subverted the democratic will of the people to be led by Zuma again. On Saturday, he issued a sinister threat that there would be "trouble" unless the IEC delayed the announcement of the final result.

It is a dangerous attack on a body that has won credit for the way in which it



has handled six previous post-apartheid national elections but went into this one burdened by financial and operational challenges.

The biggest of the latter was implementing a new electoral system enshrined in an amendment bill only signed into law in April last year.

The amendment was made in response to the constitutional court ruling in *New Nation Movement NPC and Others v President of the Republic and Others* in 2020, which declared South Africa's party list system unconstitutional in that it did not allow individuals or independent candidates to stand for election at a national or provincial level.

The court gave parliament 24 months to amend the law, but the process lagged and parliament twice asked for an extension of the deadline.

Once the Act was finally promulgated, the provision that independent candidates must collect signatures equal to 15% of the votes they would need to secure a seat in a constituency was challenged.

In December, the apex court ordered that this requirement be substituted with a provision lowering the number of signatures to 1 000.

The changes the IEC had to make with very limited preparation time included

considering and registering a groundswell of new candidates and providing each voter with a third ballot, which accommodated independent candidates contesting a seat in their region for one of the 200 regional seats in the National Assembly.

As a result, the commission needed more staff and more electoral material.

Its chief financial officer, Dawn Mbatha, has said the amendments to the Electoral Act had a "huge impact" on its budget.

The IEC was facing budget cuts of R280.3 million for this year, after its medium-term allocation was adjusted downwards by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana last year.

In February, Godongwana said he would largely reverse the cut because the IEC would require "additional funding in the adjusted budget to allow for extensive voter education and mobilisation given the changes to the electoral laws around independent candidates".

Talks with the IEC had shown that the cost of the elections could be "accommodated within the entity's baseline through the retention of surplus funds".

This referred to unspent funds from the previous year. This roll-over of R1.5 million was approved, the treasury said, and stressed that the IEC said if

"The changes the IEC had to make with very limited preparation time included considering a groundswell of new candidates and providing each voter with a third ballot"



this was done, it would “not require any additional allocation for election-related activities”.

It said it also allowed additional allocations of R350 million for the security of the election process.

The treasury’s rethink left the IEC with a real budget cut of about R30 million, and final allocation of R2.3 billion.

From this, it had to find money to defend legal challenges from candidates found ineligible, the most famous case being that of Zuma.

Last Wednesday, 29 May, as voters queued for hours because there were too few ballot boxes and scanners were faulty, social media commentators were quick to criticise the commission for spending time in court instead of on the ground, preparing for the vote.

They forgot that it was Zuma who took the IEC to court on the most contrived of arguments. Not defending the challenge or appealing the electoral court’s ruling in his favour would have been untenable.

Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa analyst Ebrahim Fakir said the election had been plagued with “administrative, management and

logistical problems” but the IEC was not entirely to blame because its budget had been slashed and it had faced a slew of “needless” and “vexatious litigation” when the legal rules on elections are clear.

“They must take responsibility for the management, administrative and logistical rubbish that happened, and there was a lot of it, but it was not all of their own doing,” Fakir said.

He said the implementation of the new electoral system had not given the IEC enough time to prepare for the election — it needed at least 18 months but only had about a year.

The addition of the third ballot paper also extended voting time as people took longer to complete their slips. As for the scanners, Fakir said it was not clear whether the devices had been adequately stress-tested in the field.

“Technology is going to fail and I am not sure that they trained their staff sufficiently,” he said.

Centre for Risk Analysis executive director Chris Hattingh said: “Staffing and training problems were a clear and definite concern and hindrance. Perhaps there was also not enough voter education around the three-ballot system.” ●





SA starts countdown to elect president and speaker

The clock started ticking once the electoral commission declared the final result of the vote on Sunday

Emsie Ferreira

Once the final election result was declared on Sunday night, the clock started counting down a 14-day deadline in the Constitution for parliament to convene to elect a president and speaker of the chamber.

Section 86 (1) says that in its first sitting after an election the National Assembly “must elect a woman or a man from among its members to be the president”.

Chief Justice Raymond Zondo will determine and gazette the date for this first sitting, where the newly elected members of the National Assembly will be sworn in before electing the new speaker of the house. When this is done, the speaker will then preside over the election of a deputy speaker.

Only after this, will the new president be elected by members, with the chief justice once again presiding over this part of proceedings.

Section 51 stipulates that this sitting must happen at a date determined by the constitutional court, but that it must happen no later than a fort-

night after the final result is announced. With the political landscape dramatically altered by the loss of the ANC’s long-held majority, coalition talks are under way, but so fraught with ideological battles and personal motives that it would be unwise to assume an agreement is certain within a fortnight.

It does not strictly matter because the voting procedure, set out in schedule 3 part A of the Constitution, provides for an elimination process whereby members will vote in successive rounds until one candidate receives a majority of votes.

The process will simply be longer and more complex than if there is an accord between parties who hold a clear majority of seats in the house on a presidential candidate.

All candidates must be nominated by way of a form signed by two members of the assembly. Voting will then take place by secret ballot.

Item 7 of the schedule says: “If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, the candidate who receives the lowest number of votes must be eliminated and



a further vote taken on the remaining candidates.

"This procedure must be repeated until a candidate receives a majority of the votes."

It even provides for the eventuality of two or more candidates each receiving the lowest number of votes, in which case "a separate vote must be taken on those candidates, and repeated as often as may be necessary to determine which candidate is to be eliminated".

The law also makes provision for a scenario where only two candidates are nominated, or if only two candidates remain after an elimination procedure has been applied, and both receive the same number of votes. In that event, another sitting must be held within seven days.

If a coalition agreement is struck before the sitting, and there is only one consensus candidate, that person will be pronounced president by the chief justice.

The new president then ceases to be a member of the National Assembly, and must by law be sworn into office at an inauguration ceremony held within five days.

President Cyril Ramaphosa is understood to have no intention of stepping down in response to the ANC's humbling loss of its majority and will therefore,

barring a revolt in the party, be its nominee for president.

The uMKhonto weSizwe party of Jacob Zuma cannot nominate the former president because he was declared ineligible to become a member of the National Assembly because of his 15-month prison sentence for contempt of court.

The party disputes this disqualification, which was confirmed by the constitutional court nine days before the election, and may well make its objection felt in that first sitting of the National Assembly.



The country is not rudderless until the sitting takes place, though currently there is no National Assembly, the chamber having ceased to function on the eve of the elections.

But section 94 of the Constitution says that when the country goes to the polls in national elections, the president, the deputy president, cabinet ministers and deputy ministers "remain competent to function until the person elected president by the next Assembly assumes office".

Parliament on Sunday issued a statement that Zondo has gazetted rules for the first sitting of the National Assembly, as required by the Constitution. However his office said this would only happen by mid-week, once the election results had been formally handed over to him. ●



Pollsters accurately called MK party's stellar rise

The vote for the MK party reflects frustration with the ANC

Lyse Comins

South Africans frustrated and disillusioned by the ANC's broken promises inevitably threw their weight in last Wednesday's general election behind a man many view as corrupt.

But to supporters of former president Jacob Zuma in KwaZulu-Natal, he is trustworthy and is the scapegoat for the endemic corruption in the governing party.

Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party took 45.38%, the lion's share of the vote, in the province, followed by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) with 18.09%, the ANC at 17.01%, and the Democratic Alliance's (DA) 13.28%. Nationally, the MK party came out with 14.6% of the vote, taking third position after the ANC and the DA, and relegating the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to fourth place.

The MK party's success, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, was accurately called by pollsters, including the Social Research Foundation, Ipsos and the Brenthurst Foundation, as early as February, after gleaning voter sentiment.

The three organisations, as cited in a Centre for Risk Analysis (CRA) report,

conducted polls that forecast a "shifting political landscape" in which MK would rise to prominence.

"Between these polls, the ANC is expected to get the largest share of the votes — although none puts the ANC above 50%. Polling data indicates that the DA stands to remain between 20% and 27% of the vote, while the EFF stagnates around 10%. Should the official 2024 election results reflect the polling figures ...the MK party could emerge as the third or fourth-biggest party in South Africa," the report said.

Social Research Foundation board member Bheki Mahlobo said the organisation conducted a daily election tracker, polling public sentiment of all age groups and demographics across provinces starting six weeks before elections. One of the questions asked was which party people would vote for if an election was held "today".

Mahlobo said this weekend that the poll reflected "a slice of public sentiment" that has been brewing for years.

"A lot of what we are seeing in MK was what we saw in 2022, for example, when a third of ANC supporters said



they were open to the idea of voting for another party. And that answer was the MK and Jacob Zuma this year — the vote for MK is not necessarily a vote for the party's policies, but really the frustration amongst ANC voters," he said.

"This is a party that hasn't really over the past 10 years improved the living conditions of South Africans, and has lost a lot of support. ANC voter support is anchored by the material circumstances of South Africans and as those were depleted, party support levels declined."

Another contributing factor was the ANC's perceived ill-treatment of Zuma, who according to polls is more popular in KwaZulu-Natal than President Cyril Ramaphosa.

"He stands next to Nelson Mandela in that province, which explains a lot of the momentum growing MK. It's a frustration vote against the ANC, and it's a vote for Zuma," he said. "They see this as a man who was exiled by his own party and scapegoated by the ANC. These problems of corruption are quite prevalent within the ANC itself."

Mahlobo said the MK party had also taken votes from the EFF, which 70% of registered voters viewed as a violent party.

Mahlobo said former CRA head Frans Cronje had in 2012 first called the waning of the ANC to below 50% of the vote

by analysing socio-economic conditions, rising protest levels and unemployment, and the decay of educational standards.

Ahead of the election, one of the intriguing phenomena was the growing number of ANC voters who were no longer supporters, CRA executive director Chris Hattingh said.

"This, as well as voting abstention from ANC-leaning voters, suggested there existed a large potential pool of disgruntled ANC voters who could be persuaded to vote for a different party," he said.

Enter the MK party, and those disgruntled voters suddenly felt they had an alternative, Hattingh said, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where Zuma remains "phenomenally popular" despite his legal battles.

"MK was the party that broke the dam wall of loyalty keeping ANC support above 50%," he said, adding that while MK provided an outlet for pent-up voter frustration, it would be a mistake to attribute its success to the appeal of its manifesto.

"ANC governance has been disappointing in KZN, especially in eThekwin. Once voters saw a credible and — in their view — trustworthy alternative to the ANC, they flocked to support it," Hattingh said.

"The shift in support to MK was driven not by policy, but by personality. MK voters see in Zuma a politician who has

"The vote for MK is not necessarily a vote for the party's policies, but really the frustration amongst ANC voters"



Risky business: The success of the MK party is not because voters necessarily support its manifesto, but rather because it is an alternative to the ANC. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

their interests at heart, who understands them, who is authentic and in touch.

“He has successfully positioned himself as a victim — of an unjust judicial system and an uncaring ANC — who is rallying the people to his cause and who can be trusted to look out for them.

“He supplies emotional comfort to an electorate that feels abandoned by the far-off Luthuli House.

“While *Mail & Guardian* readers see Mr Zuma as a convicted criminal, originator of state capture and underminer of the rule of law, his supporters in KwaZulu-Natal see him as a lovable rogue who may have overstepped the

mark here and there, but whose heart is in the right place.”

Hattingh warned that the rise of the MK party presents a risk of violence and corruption, especially in KwaZulu-Natal which has high levels of political violence and assassinations.

“As ANC councillors in local municipalities watch the rise of the MK party, many will be tempted to throw in their lot with the MK party in the run-up to the 2026 local government elections. This will create a great deal of tension and disruption, with the potential for more political assassinations and violence,” he said. ●

Fikile Mbalula 'is a certified clown'

The ANC secretary general should join 'Takalani Sesame' and leave politics

Ugcwele iTakalani." That is; your existence is filled with Takalani, loosely translated.

Growing up in the Gauteng township of Katlehong, we used the saying "ugcwele iTakalani" in reference to a bumbling blockhead of a buffoon with the misfortune of a bird's brain.

The word Takalani is taken from the long-running and renowned SABC children's educational programme, *Takalani Sesame*, which first aired in 2000 and is the South African co-production of the 53-year-old United States offering, *Sesame Street*.

In both children's programmes, there is a tall, bright yellow and fluffy bird character known as Big Bird in the US version, and Moshe in the South African production.

This was the image I had when ANC secretary general Fikile Mbalula posted pictures of himself in a bright yellow and fluffy Dolce & Gabbana two-piece sweatsuit, during his October 2023 trip to the Rugby World Cup final match in Paris, France.

It was the bespoke embodiment of the birdbrain political persona Mbalula has portrayed while occupying senior government positions since 2009, as well as the secretary general seat — often referred to as the ANC's engine room —

where he has overseen the lowest point of the 112-year-old organisation's democratic history following the hammering it took during these national elections.

For example, who can forget how Mbalula, during his seven-year sports ministerial tenure, twerked like an impoverished Instagram influencer in front of scores of Springboks supporters ahead of the national team's departure to Britain for the 2015 Rugby World Cup?

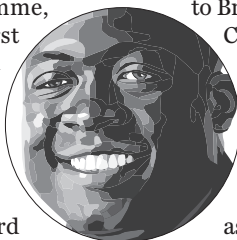
"Moer hulle; slaan hulle. Haak Vrystaat, Transvaal is ver [beat them, hit them. Go to the Free State because Transvaal is far]," he would shout, making as much sense as a Swiss-cheese condom

With no noticeable government achievements in the sports fraternity, Mbalula — typical of a broke Instagram

bonehead — needed a blesser to sponsor his R680 000 family trip to Dubai, with the assistance of a company that was doing business with the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee.

The ANC's secretary general has not faced the consequences for the corruption and conflicts of interest claims in a 2018 public protector report.

It was unsurprising, then, that he rocked up in his clown car — a Mercedes



KORNER TALK

Khaya Koko



Playing his part: Fikile Mbalula (left) and Moshe from the TV show *Takalani Sesame*. Photos: Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images & K Mazur/Getty Images

Benz G63 luxury vehicle worth more than R3 million — to campaign for the ANC ahead of the 2024 polls in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal.

This is in an area that is a sea of poverty and has the indignity of recording the country's highest murder rates for at least three years running. Mbalula behaved like a man who would throw Cyril Ramaphosa-branded cupcakes to people longing for a loaf of bread.

It is that level of arrogance that saw his party in Kwazulu-Natal — where it achieved 54.22% at the 2019 national polls — slumping to 17.22% this year as the province's voters moved to uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, Jacob Zuma's nascent stokvel that has seen the former ANC and state president making a bigger political comeback than a Beijing boy

growing up to avenge the death of his father. And if you think I'm being unfair in my criticism of Mbalula, remember that he confirmed his clownish characteristics less than a month ago.

"We paid for the circus to end on 29 May, but I see the clowns are already bringing down the tent and leaving town before then," wrote Mbalula on 7 May, before deleting his post on X, formerly Twitter.

Many speculated what he meant, but I saw it as his honest appraisal of the ANC's ballot box chances — that the clowns will finally attain their electoral comeuppance.

Whereafter Mbalula will dust off his dastardly Dolce & Gabbana getup to play the *Takalani Sesame* role he has long auditioned for. ●