



# The doctor is out?

**UNANIMOUS:** EXPERTS CALL ON HEALTH MINISTER MKHIZE TO STEP DOWN

» 'A litmus test for the president because he has to deal with his Cabinet and party.'

**Brian Sokutu**

**H**ealth Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize appears to be on a slippery slope out of his Cabinet job – whether he resigns or is “redeployed” by President Cyril Ramaphosa – in the wake of the irregular awarding of the R150 million Covid-19 communications tender to his close associates.

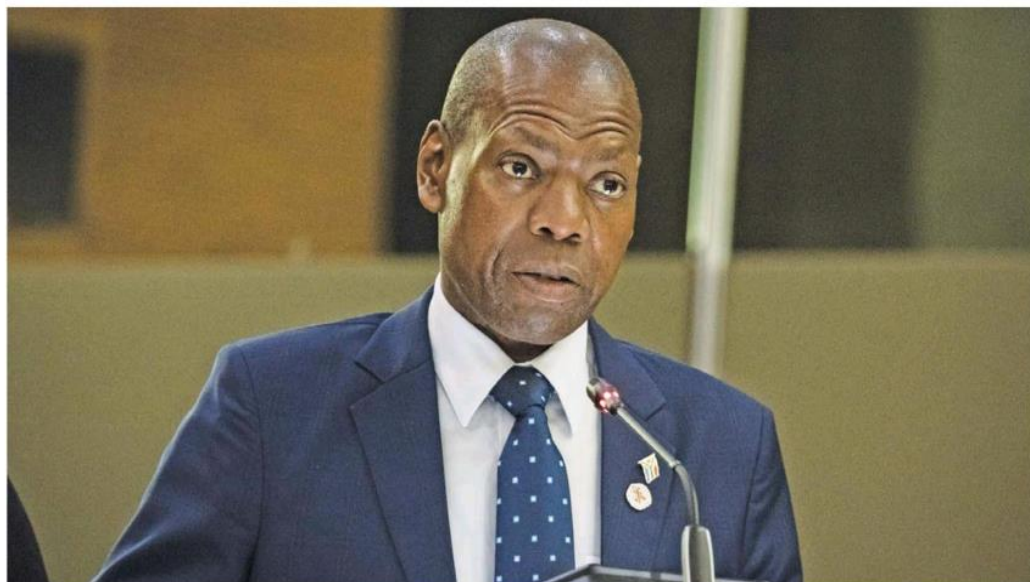
Political and legal experts were yesterday unanimous in calling for him to step down.

Amid unconfirmed media reports claiming Mkhize was on the verge of resigning, Accountability Now director advocate Paul Hoffman said the minister was hiding behind the sub judice rule – due to a probe into the Digital Vibes scandal by the Special Investigating Unit and criminal charges laid against him by the Democratic Alliance.

Hoffman said the sub judice rule was of very limited scope and had no application in the Mkhize matter.

“He should resign before he makes matters worse for himself by spuriously relying on an inapplicable doctrine,” said Hoffman.

With pressure mounting for



**PRESSURE.** Calls are mounting for Minister of Health Zweli Mkhize to step down after allegations he irregularly awarded a communications tender. Picture: Jacques Nelles

him to step down, Mkhize has gone to ground – maintaining silence in line with “legal advice”.

He did not respond to *Saturday Citizen* inquiries about his rumoured imminent resignation, with department spokesperson Popo Maja saying: “Nothing came my way.”

Echoing Hoffman’s view, independent political analyst Dr Ralph Mathekga said: “When an embattled minister does not appear before parliament when he is expected to, it gives the impression he is on his way out.”

“A resignation is the only option for Mkhize at this point.”

“In his reaction, Ramaphosa

has been careful – mindful of a possibility of losing someone who has been a key figure in his policy response to Covid-19 and a senior ANC leader.”

University of Pretoria political science lecturer Roland Henwood said the Mkhize saga would put pressure on Ramaphosa.

“If Mkhize is found to have acted wrongly in the awarding of the Digital Vibes contract, that puts pressure on Ramaphosa in his campaign to fight corruption because the health minister is seen as a trusted ally and one of very few effective ministers.”

“This increases pressure on the president to act against some-

one seen as close to him – leading to tensions and possible conflicts in the ANC. Ramaphosa has to assure other members of the executive that he will act correctly, responsibly and fairly.

“Mkhize is left with options: step aside or resign while awaiting the outcome of the investigation,” said Henwood.

Said Institute for Global Dialogue political analyst Sanusha Naidu: “The saga continues to deepen in such a negative way for the minister and the president.”

“It is a litmus test for the president because he now has to deal with his Cabinet and party.”

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