

‘You blew it, Mr President’ - John Steenhuisen to Cyril

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Insults and allegations of domestic abuse flew in parliament on Tuesday, before EFF leader Julius Malema led his party out after an explosive debate, which also saw DA interim leader John Steenhuisen launch a blistering attack on President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Speaking in parliament during a debate on Ramaphosa’s state of the nation address, Steenhuisen said the country had moved from the promise of a “new dawn” to a “new despair” because the president had blown the many chances he’d had to inspire the nation since taking office.

“You are not the reformer South Africa thought you were,” Steenhuisen said.

“You don’t have the guts to make the tough choices our country needs.

“You are not brave enough to take on the unions that hold this country to ransom.”

He said more and more communities were running out of basic services such as water and more than a million people had lost their jobs during Ramaphosa’s term of office.

He also slated the return of load-shedding.

“I am not going to stand here and say that this happened on your watch, Mr President.

“That would be far too kind.

“It didn’t just happen on your watch, it happened by your own hand.

“You, sir, put us in this situation. You had your chance to fix it — and you blew it.”

Steenhuisen said Ramaphosa had opted to put the interests of his own party, the ANC, ahead of those of the country.

He also accused Ramaphosa of failing to deal decisively with corruption.

“While you were telling us on Thursday night how you’ve fought back against corruption, you had people like [corruption-accused former eThekweni mayor] Zandile Gumede with you in the house,” he said.

“While you were telling us how you’ve acted decisively against state capture, the beneficiaries of state capture — some of them chairs of portfolio committees — sat in these very benches.

“And while the country waits with bated breath for the long-promised arrests to be made, we have to learn in a document sent from parliament to the committee on public service that there will be no arrests, prosecutions or orange overalls this year.

“That’s why instead of a new dawn, there’s a new despair.”

Steenhuisen said though his party welcomed Ramaphosa’s plans to help Eskom do away with load-shedding, it did not support the proposed National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme.

He said the public purse was not in a position to afford the R280bn required for the rollout of the NHI without an increase in taxes.

He also slammed Ramaphosa’s proposed establishment of a sovereign wealth fund.

“We are running a budget deficit and spiralling deeper and deeper into debt.

“Where will the money for a sovereign wealth fund come from, Mr President?

“From your own bank account?

“Talking of banks, on Thursday night you announced the creation of a state bank.

“The trouble is that we already have two state banks — the Land Bank and the Post Bank — and both of them are bankrupt and riddled with corruption.”

A short while later, EFF and ANC MPs traded insults as ANC MP Boy Mamabolo used his parliamentary privilege to accuse Malema of physically abusing his wife, Mantwa.

Mamabolo stood on a point order — and then directly asked Malema, as he was responding to the state of the nation address, to confirm or deny allegations that he physically abused his spouse.

“You are abusing your wife. We want you to stand here in front of the nation and assure us.

“So my question to you is: are you abusing your wife?” Mamabolo said.

But Malema ignored him and continued to read his speech attacking Ramaphosa’s policies.

However, the house was plunged into chaos as ANC MPs repeatedly rose on points of order in an attempt to force Malema to answer the question.

At that point, Malema told the members of the ANC caucus that he had them by “the scrotum” and that the “fools” would not tell him when and how to respond to questions.

“I never said I won’t answer the question,” he said.

“So I’m reading my speech. No-one is going to tell me what to do, at what time.

“I am in charge, that’s why these fools are running around.

“I’ve got the ruling party by [the] scrotum.

“I’m in charge. I’m running the house,” Malema said, amid heckling between EFF and ANC MPs.

He refused to withdraw his comment calling MPs fools when asked to do so by NCOP chair Amos Masondo.

When he eventually addressed Mamabolo’s claims, Malema said they were not true.

“I don’t have a history of abuse. It’s a history of love. That’s me for you.

“I don’t have a history of abusing women. I’m in love. I’m happily married,” he said.

Malema said he would be suing Mamabolo for R1m because he had repeated the allegations against him outside parliament.

But Malema also accused Ramaphosa of abusing his late ex-wife, Nomazizi Mtshotshisa.

He claimed that Mtshotshisa had complained to former president Jacob Zuma about the alleged abuse.

“President Zuma can confirm that Nomazizi used to complain ... about being abused by the president,” he said.

But small businesses minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni accused Masondo of failing to protect Ramaphosa against Malema’s “unfair” allegations, which she said the president had previously dealt with.

“You don’t recognise us to clarify that matter.

“The president was asked whether he’s abused his wife and the president said he’s never abused his wife.

“In the public domain it was said it was his first wife [who was abused], and Ms Hope Ramaphosa went on public record and said, ‘I’ve not been abused, Cyril has never laid his hands on me.’

“And he [Malema] turns and says it was Nomazizi because she’s now late, may her soul rest in peace, she can’t stand and speak for herself,” Ntshavheni said.

Malema and his MPs eventually staged a walkout as they shouted “ningo satan [you’re all devils]” towards ANC MPs, who reciprocated by calling them Malema’s bodyguards.