

Get rid of Mantashe, say experts

The cabinet reshuffle should move the mineral resources and energy minister to another portfolio

Mandisa Nyathi

While the government scrambles to find a solution to South Africa's prolonged energy crisis, some experts contend that for Eskom to be restored and load-shedding curtailed, the minister of mineral resources and energy, Gwede Mantashe must be removed from his portfolio when President Cyril Ramaphosa shuffles the cabinet.

Mantashe is responsible for signing renewable projects that generate new generation capacity to relieve the overloaded energy grid.

During its 55th elective conference, the ANC adopted a resolution that Eskom be moved from the department of public enterprises to Mantashe's ministry. The party said that having the state-owned enterprise fall within its line department would improve efficiency. Eskom is burdened by debt of R396.8 billion and is shifting between load-shedding levels four, five and six.

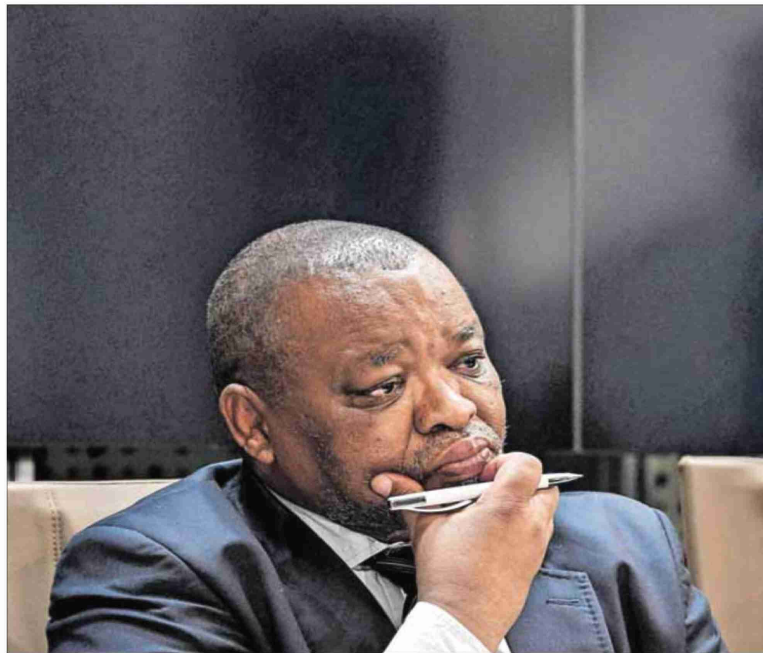
David Walwyn: professor in the Graduate School of Technology Management, University of Pretoria engineering faculty

"Moving Eskom to the energy department would be a good idea — but not under Mantashe's watch, because he has contributed to discrediting the utility.

"Eskom is trapped politically and economically. The minister of energy is the biggest problem for Eskom because he is delaying the procurement of new energy."

"A short-term solution would include the national treasury assisting Eskom with funding to procure diesel, to lessen load-shedding by allowing its open-cycle gas turbines to continue operating during power cuts.

"The immediate solution right now would be beneficial to Eskom and South Africa but very expensive for the treasury. Eskom needs money to burn more diesel and, in turn, lessen



Conflicted: Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe, who is responsible for driving the independent power producer programme, has touted coal over renewable energy. Photo: Ntswe Mokoena

load-shedding, but this plan will cost Eskom.

"In the long term it needs to create stability for success in the transitions Eskom needs to navigate. It needs to turn back the tide of state capture, and deliver a reliable electricity supply. It must reorganise the group into generation, distribution and transmission, and it must reduce its carbon footprint."

Bertha Dlamini: founding president of African Women in Energy and Power

"I don't think Mantashe has to go. He should stay and harness the energy mix in South Africa and look at our abundant resources. We are getting mixed messages from [many in government], including the presidency. I cannot single out one entity that hasn't been giving mixed messages. They must all sing from the same hymn sheet to provide policy cer-

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and, in time, reduce the number of breakdowns.

"Government should help Eskom get funding to solve its diesel shortage problem.

"The utility should focus on inspecting its procurement team to ensure there are enough reserves. In the mid-term, the utility needs to get new generation, which will help reduce demand from the utility's grid, and in the long term it should decommission plants that are no longer viable."

Calvin Rafadi: forensic investigator at private security firm Biz Tracers

"The political interference has caused problems to the utility; look how the utility doesn't have a director general because of the likes of Pravin [Gordhan], Mantashe's influence and their proximity to the president, that is why neither of these two should run the utility.

"Eskom needs to vet its senior managers to receive its full revenue. Its staff are enabling ghost vending from within the utility. Eskom's senior managers are helping syndicates to sell illegal electricity to prepaid customers by giving the syndicates access to the credit dispensary unit.

"Ghost vending involves the illegal sale and purchase of electricity using Eskom's offline credit dispensary unit (CDU). The machines are difficult to track because they do not transact on a network or at a single place, but are constantly roving.

"We will still experience serious challenges from prepaid customers as Eskom has no clue on how to tackle this cancer.

"This circle which flows from ghost vending is costing Eskom billions of rands, and that is why Eskom cannot collect full revenue. These syndicates sell mostly to pensioners at their pay-out stations.

"The new board must vet and analyse employee performance appraisals as many are involved in these crimes."

Grant Son: Black Business Council

"Declaring Eskom to be in a state of disaster would assist in expediting the process of appointing a chief executive after André de Ruyter's resignation, and the retirement of chief operating officer Jan Oberholzer."

ainty and strategy certainty, and the execution of these, to [allay] the fears of investors.

"Government must support our coal-fired power stations. Transformation and renewables [are] necessary but this must be based on the requirements of base-load needs. Renewables must be tailored to the economy. Right now, the need in South Africa is to keep the lights on."

Lungile Mashele: energy economist

"Eskom needs a minister that will be able to support it and help it increase its energy availability factor. This means that if the time comes to sign new projects that will help it gain new capacity, the process must be done swiftly and quickly.

"Eskom should focus on improving the energy availability factor by running adequate and reliable maintenance of its plants to stabilise them