

Cape Town, South Africa, February 4 (Infosplusgabon) ▯ Senior members of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) are locked in talks with President Jacob Zuma in Pretoria on Sunday amid growing speculation that he will be forced to vacate his position.

The meeting is being led by the party's Deputy President David Mabuza and there are unconfirmed reports that the party's new leader Cyril Ramaphosa recused himself from the meeting in order to ensure that he is not blamed for forcing Zuma out.

Ramaphosa has repeatedly said that he is seeking a "dignified" exit for Zuma who has left the party deeply divided following numerous high-profile scandals.

Although Zuma remains President of the country, he is no longer head of the ruling party. Ironically, his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki, found himself in exactly the same position when he was recalled as President of the country by his own party in 2008.

The timing of Sunday's meeting is crucial because the leader of the country is due to deliver the State of the Nation address on Thursday and there is likely to be chaos if Zuma takes the podium.

Should Zuma step down before the speech, it is understood that National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete will serve as acting President to convene parliament, and then will grant Ramaphosa as the leader of the party the opportunity to deliver the address.

Over the past few years, Zuma's State of the Nation speeches has been marked by chaotic protests which have often resulted in violence.

More than 1,000 journalists from 140 media houses around the world have applied for accreditation for this year's event.

Mbete said just 66 journalists could be accommodated. She added that the State of the Nation Address is in honour of former President Nelson Mandela, who would have turned 100 years this year.

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