South African President Mbeki tenders resignation
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South African President Thabo Mbeki announced his resignation on Sunday.

The resignation will be effective from a date to be decided by South Africa's parliament, Mbeki said in a television speech.

The president will remain in office until the National Assembly accepts his resignation and determines his date of departure.

Also in his speech, Mbeki denied the accusation that his government had interfered with the National Prosecution Authority. "We have never compromised the right of the National Prosecution Authority to prosecute or not to prosecute," he said. "We have always protected the integrity of the judiciary."

The resignation came after the top-level National Executive Committee of the ruling party African National Congress (ANC) decided on Saturday to recall Mbeki before the end of his term next year.

An acting president of South Africa is expected to be announced on Monday, ANC treasurer-general Mathews Phosa said on a televised debate on Sunday.

"What we want to do tomorrow is to announce the next acting state president," Phosa said on the SABC1 current affairs program Asikhulume. "And he or she will announce the next Cabinet." He said the ANC wants the Cabinet to stay.

It was unclear how many Cabinet ministers would quit in solidarity with Mbeki.

South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel - key to investor confidence in South Africa - was expected to stay, according to the South African Press Association.

The ruling party's leader Jacob Zuma is not eligible to be interim president because he is not a member of Parliament. And the ANC has indicated it does not want to call early elections.

Before the announcement, an urgent cabinet meeting started at 4p.m. (1400 GMT) in Pretoria on Sunday, a government spokesman said.

At the start of the Cabinet meeting, Mbeki spoke only briefly to insist that his departure would not affect South Africa's hosting of the World Cup.
The meeting lasted just over an hour and officials refused to comment on the discussions before Mbeki's television address.

Mbeki agreed to stand down on Saturday.

According to a statement from the presidency, Mbeki would "step down after all constitutional requirements have been met."

Addressing the media at the Esselen Park conference center in Kempton Park on the East Rand, ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe said Mbeki's reaction to the news was "normal".

"He didn't display shock or any depression. He welcomed the news and agreed that he is going to participate (in the parliamentary process). If I said he was excited I would be exaggerating."

Mantashe said the decision was taken "as an effort to heal and unite the African National Congress."

He also said the decision was a political way to deal with the implications of Pietermaritzburg High Court Judge Chris Nicholson's ruling that Mbeki may have been involved in a political conspiracy against Zuma.

"The biggest worry of the ANC had been the question of a reversal of the closure of the chapter (that the Nicholson judgment seemed to have promised)."

The National Prosecuting Authority's decision to appeal the judgment had become a worry, said Mantashe. "If pursued it will continue to be a point of division for the ANC."

When asked what the reaction would be if other cabinet ministers were to resign, Mantashe said they were considered on the one hand, those who had mutual respect and commitment to the ANC, but on the other hand they were also individuals.

"In the coming days the president of the ANC will meet with ANC deployees in government to assure them that the ANC would wish for them to remain in government... (but) if that individual opts out of the movement, we cannot chain them to the process. we will respect their decisions."

Earlier on Saturday, Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka's spokesman Denzel Taylor said that Mlambo-Ngcuka would hand in her resignation, depending on whether Mbeki...
hands in his resignation.

Mbeki has come under pressure to quit following the judge's ruling last week that Mbeki was instrumental in Zuma being charged with corruption, news agencies reported.

Mbeki became President in 1999, taking over from Nelson Mandela. He was due to leave office in April, 2009.

He was the head of the ANC from 1997 until he lost a battle for power at the ANC's national conference in Polokwane in December 2007, when Zuma, his former deputy president, became the head of the organization.

"Source:Xinhua"