South Africa gets a New President

Why in news?

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'Cyril Ramaphosa' has replaced 'Jacob Zuma' as President of South Africa due to pressure from within the ruling, "African National Congress" (ANC) party.

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How did Mr. Zuma's tenure fare?

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- The President of South Africa is elected by the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, and is usually the leader of the largest party.
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- In May 2014, Jacob Zuma was inaugurated as the President of the Republic of South Africa for his second term in office.
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- During his entire tenure, 75-year-old Mr. Zuma had survived 8 non-confidence motions and was even nicknamed "Teflon president", for his resilience.
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- But pressure from within his own party saw him peeve within weeks, which ultimately ended his nine-year-long scandal hit tenure.
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- Allegations and charges of fraud, money laundering and racketeering, had marred his and his party's reputation over the years.
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- The growing pressure on Mr. Zuma was reflected on his close acquaintances like the India-born Gupta brothers, whose properties were raided by officials.
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- The Gupta brother trio, whose business interests range from mining to media and technology, are accused of having made illegal gains with Zuma's help.
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- The allegations include - "state capture" by possessing inside information, influencing ministerial appointments and swinging big state contracts.
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What forced Mr. Zuma’s ouster?

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- The unseating of Mr. Zuma has come at a time when ANC’s popularity is at an all time low since the anti-apartheid struggle (which it led).
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- It is also significant to note that the general elections are slated for 2019, which the ANC will have to face with a very poor track record.
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- Significantly, South Africa is now characterised by high levels of inequality and corruption and a flagging economy, with 30% unemployment and low growth.
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How does the future look?

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- **New president** - Mr. Ramaphosa is a veteran reformist, who was previously a trade union leader, and a key figure in the anti-apartheid movement.
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- He was also a close associate of Nelson Mandela and led the effort to draft the country’s new constitution in 1994.
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- As ANC chose ‘Thabo Mbeki’ to succeed Mandela in 1999, Mr. Ramaphosa’s presidential ambitions were dashed and he moved on to focus on his business.
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- He subsequently emerged as one of South Africa’s wealthiest businessmen and in December 2017, he successfully contested for presidency of the ANC.
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- **The Agenda -** Mr. Ramaphosa has spoken of a new direction for the country and envisions prioritising the economy.
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- His rich experience due to his background in politics and business, gives reason to be optimistic about South Africa.
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- However, whether and to what extent the new leadership will allow the law to independently take its course with regard to Mr. Zuma remains to be seen.
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Source: The Hindu

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