

E CAPE'S MASUALLE ALSO UNDER SCRUTINY

# Premier Supra to know his fate

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**T**HE ANC's top six officials yesterday had their hands full discussing the future of two premiers under fire in their respective provinces.

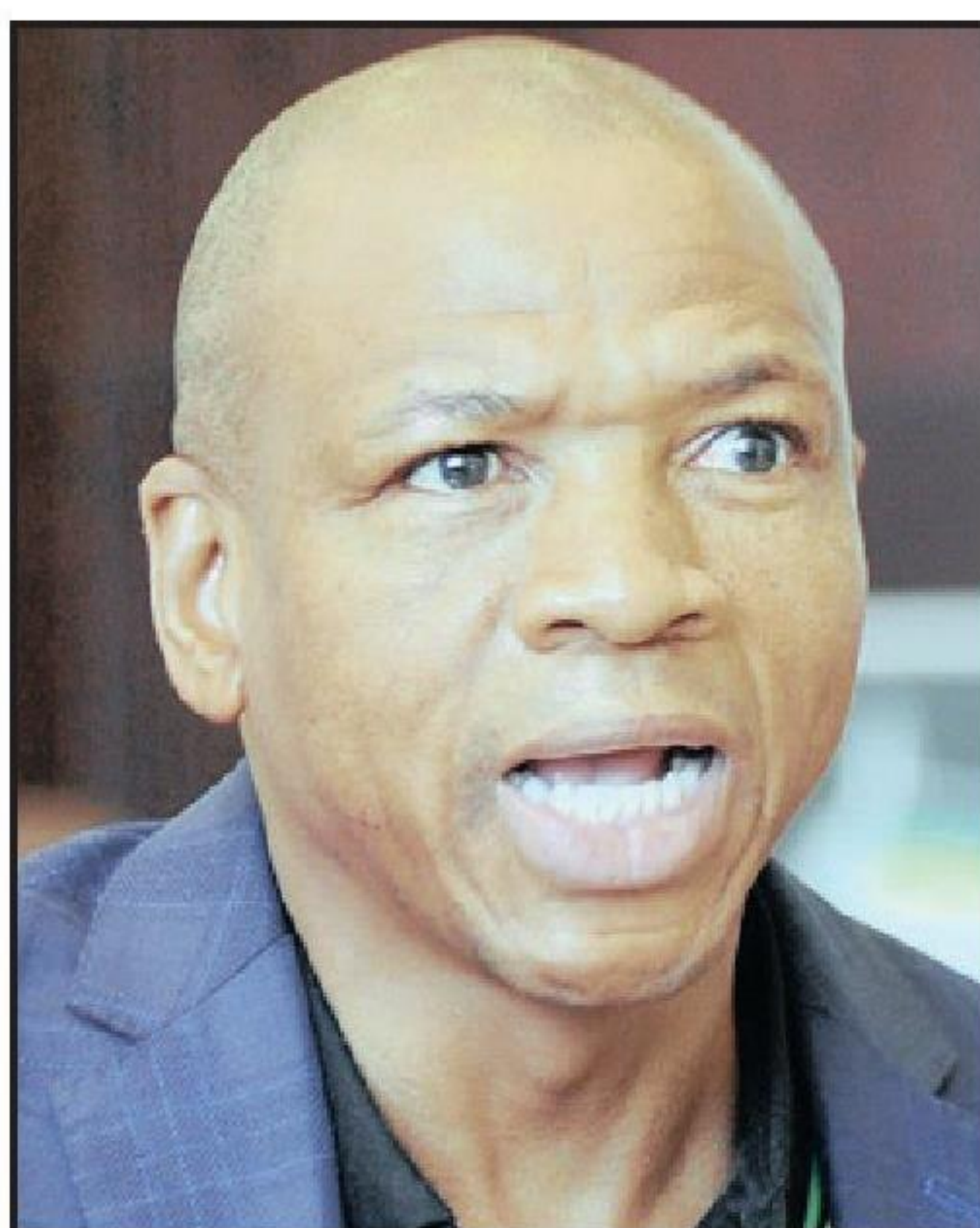
Like North West's Supra Mahumapelo, Eastern Cape Premier Phumulo Masualle is facing attempts to remove him from office by the governing party's tripartite alliance partners – SACP and Cosatu, among others.

Frustrated ANC Eastern Cape officials were at the party's headquarters, Luthuli House, in Johannesburg yesterday, asking for permission to take action against Masualle, whom they say is defying changes in the provincial administration.

Following Masualle's defeat by current provincial chairman Oscar Mabuyane in last year's chaotic provincial conference, the ANC national executive committee (NEC) ordered Mabuyane's provincial executive committee not to remove him from the helm of the provincial government as part of healing divisions that were created by the conference.

While Masualle's group backed Minister in the Presidency Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's presidential candidacy ahead of last year's national elective conference, Mabuyane rallied behind President Cyril Ramaphosa. Mabuyane's executive has grown impatient with Masualle for what they say is his failure to remove some of his loyalists from the provincial cabinet as ordered by the party in March.

An ANC provincial leader said the PEC wanted the ANC NEC to review the decision to keep Masualle in the premier's office and possibly deploy him elsewhere.



SUPRA MAHUMAPELO

"We want the NEC to review this decision because it is clear that he (Masualle) does not recognise the current PEC. He must be deployed somewhere else, maybe Parliament so that the organisation can be allowed to lead here," he said.

"This decision of the NEC has emboldened him and his group because, in some of the regions that supported him this defiance is continuing."

The MECs who are wanted out include rural development and agrarian reform MEC Mlibo Qoboshiyane, roads and public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu, social development MEC Nancy Sihlwayi and finance, economic affairs and tourism MEC Sakhumzi Somyo, whose removal would weaken Masualle's power within the provincial government.

Yesterday provincial secretary Lulama Ngcukaitobi led a delegation which met with the party's top brass where they wanted permission to discipline Masualle – who is a member of the ANC NEC and SACP central committee.

Last week, alliance provincial leadership including SACP, Cosatu and SA National Civic Organisation (Sanco) provincial structures ex-

pressed frustration with Masualle's behaviour of snubbing the ruling party on governance matters, saying he would no longer be tolerated.

Cosatu Eastern Cape secretary Xolani Malamlela yesterday accused Masualle of trying to create two centres of power in the province.

"In as much as we respect the decision of the NEC, the national leadership must recognise that things are going to get worse here if he remains.

"He does not respect or recognise the PEC and decisions of the alliance. He seems to be returning favour to the group that supported him during the conference, hence he is refusing to remove the MECs he was asked to remove. He must move," Malamlela said.

Masualle's backers in the province continue to snub the provincial leadership under Mabuyane and its authority even in municipalities where it was in control, arguing that it was elected in a violent conference where other delegates were excluded.

Branch members from regions supporting him, including Amathole and Nelson Mandela Bay, picketed outside Luthuli House as they petitioned the ANC national leadership not to remove him but to disband Mabuyane's PEC.

Meanwhile, Mahumapelo has continued to dig in his heels despite the recommendation by the ANC's national working committee that he step aside. In what has been viewed as a move to solicit public sympathy, Mahumapelo has instead called for increased security detail as he claimed there were covert plots to assassinate him.

Attempts to get comment from ANC spokesperson Pule Mabe were unsuccessful yesterday.