

■ SCEPTICS



Newly elected Premier Sihle Zikalala at his inauguration and swearing-in of MECs in Pietermaritzburg. | MOTSHWARI MOFOKENG African News Agency (ANA)



Bongi Sithole-Moloi



Siphon Hlomuka



Hlengiwe Mavimbela



Nonhlanhla Khoza



Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu



Ravi Pillay



Kwazi Mshengu



Peggy Nkonyeni



Mxolisi Kaunda



Nomusa Dube-Ncube

Doubts on Cabinet's capability to deliver

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OPPOSITION parties in KwaZulu-Natal have cast doubt on the ability of Premier Sihle Zikalala's Cabinet to confront the challenges faced by the province.

Leading the charge against Zikalala's team was the official opposition IFP, supported by the DA and EFF.

Speaking to Independent Media shortly after the Cabinet was sworn in in Pietermaritzburg yesterday, Velenkosini Hlabisa, leader of the IFP in the KZN Legislature, said he doubted the new MEC for Education, Kwazi Mshengu, and his Health counterpart, Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu, were up to the task of leading the two troubled departments.

"The appointment of Hon Mr Kwazi Mshengu as the MEC for Education leaves much to be desired. His experience and qualifications make him not equal to the deep challenges experienced by the Education Department. Again, the appointment of Ms Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu into the Health Department is a big challenge. The Health Department is critical, servicing many people and experiencing so many challenges.

"Ms Simelane-Zulu will not have command and authority in the medical field. We are of the opinion that the premier compromised these two departments," Hlabisa said.

He also maintained that the appointment of Siphon Hlomuka to oversee municipalities and traditional affairs wasn't a good move.

"The local government is in deep crisis, with protests almost daily and Section 139 interventions one after the other. We appreciate and support the key role to be played by young people in the Cabinet, but the interest of the people of KZN should not be compromised with people lacking relevant experience and expertise."

The DA called the new Cabinet a "desperate executive". The party's chief whip Francois Rodgers said that of particular concern to them was the return

of former Cogta MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube, who is now the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. She remains under a cloud of suspicion over her husband's business interests within various KZN municipalities.

"That she has now been handed the ultimate 'jobs for pals' portfolio is alarming. With the collapse of both Msunduzi and eThekweni also under her watch, this is one MEC who should not have returned and one can only wonder what she will bring to her critical new role," Rodgers said.

He also had a dig at new Public Works and Human Settlements MEC Peggy Nkonyeni, saying she was back five years after being banished.

"The reality though, is that in spite of all the new faces within Zikalala's Cabinet – and the promises they will undoubtedly make – KZN will not move forward without the creation of a capable state. This means that until such time as there is proper governance and consequence management, cadres who have been deployed based on political affiliation rather than merit will continue to abuse the system," Rodgers claimed.

The EFF, which has eight seats in the legislature, had strong words after the appointment of Ravi Pillay as Finance MEC. The party's chairperson, Vusi Khoza, said Pillay failed as MEC for human settlements, and corruption, including selling of houses, thrived under his watch. "I doubt this Cabinet is up to the task, and I will tell you why. We have a finance MEC, that is Ravi Pillay, who failed housing in this province. Today we have people who have been stuck in transit camps, whether it's Bottlebrush or Lamontville, or anywhere for that matter, because he failed to deliver houses," he said.

However, despite the bashing, Zikalala said his government would prioritise fighting crime, focusing on education and skills development, and fighting graft.