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Limpopo premier fires three MECs

Masemola, Moraka and Boshielo's removal comes after the ANC PEC ordered Mathabatha to reshuffle his executive committee

MASHUDU SADIKE

LIMPOPO Premier Stan Mathabatha has wielded his axe and fired three MECs from his executive committee despite previous claims that he had no intention of reshuffling his executive.

A little over three months after being re-elected as ANC provincial chairperson, he gave in to pressure from the ANC provincial executive committee (PEC) to effect a second reshuffle to his cabinet since June.

Mathabatha sacked Social Development MEC Dickson Masemola, his main political rival in the province, as well as Sports, Arts and Culture's Thandi Moraka and Polly Boshielo, who was the political head of the Department of Transport and Community Safety.

The three were politically vulnerable after being dumped from the PEC by ANC delegates at the June provincial elective conference where Masemola challenged Mathabatha for the position of provincial chairperson.

However, the outgoing MEC and his faction were defeated by big margins, paving the way for Mathabatha's third

term as Limpopo ANC leader.

In the reshuffle, which affected five departments, Mathabatha replaced Boshielo with ANC provincial deputy chairperson Florence Radzilani, who has been implicated in the scandal surrounding the now-defunct VBS Mutual Bank.

Moraka was replaced by party provincial treasurer Naledi Sibanda-Kekana, who was tainted by the VBS scandal after she allegedly illegally invested with the bank when she was mayor of Lepelle-Nkumpi in Sekhukhune.

In a surprise turn of events, Economic Development and Tourism MEC Thabo Mokone was moved to the less-influential Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to replace Nandi Ndalane, who was moved to the Department of Social Development.

Mokone was voted as the third most popular additional member of the PEC at the end of the party provincial conference. Rising political star and provincial working committee member Rodgers Monama, who took over from Mokone as the new MEC for Economic Development and Tourism, was number five on the PEC additional members list.

In a statement, Mathabatha's office said his decision followed a "further assessment of the performance of the executive council with the view to improve service delivery and enhance corporate governance".

The new MECs, who are seen as close allies of provincial ANC treasurer Danny Msiza, are expected to be sworn in in Polokwane today. Even though he has forced to step aside after being charged criminally, Msiza is effectively still in charge of the Limpopo ANC.



FORMER Social Development MEC Dickson Masemola.

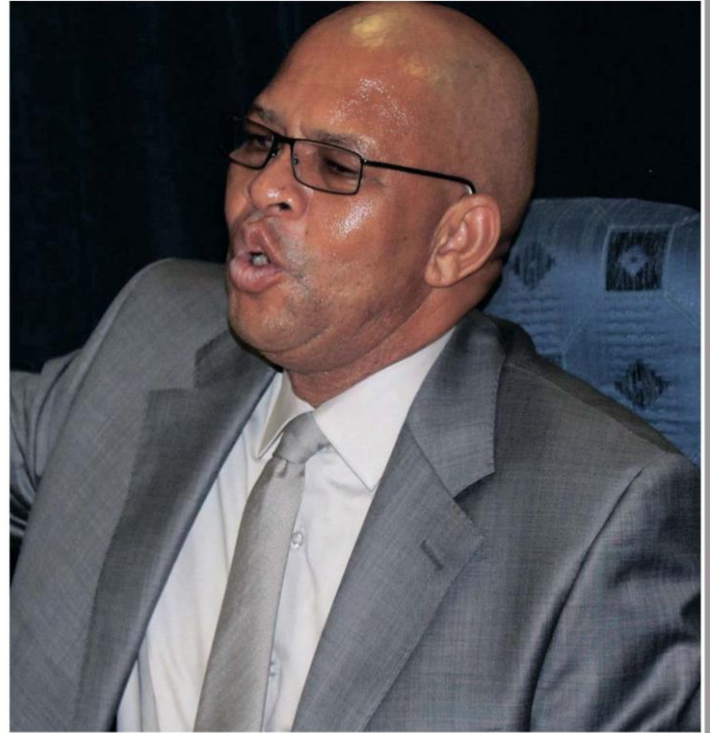


FORMER Sports, Arts and Culture MEC Thandi Moraka.



FORMER Transport and Community Safety MEC Polly Boshielo.

Surviving the chop are Treasury MEC Seaparo Sekoati and Ndalane, who have been voted out of the ANC PEC. Three months ago Mathabatha



LIMPOPO Premier Stanley Mathabatha. | CHESTER MAKANA

reshuffled his executive committee, demoting Masemola from the influential Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure portfolio to Social Development. Boshielo was moved from Education to Transport and Community Safety during the first reshuffle.

The Limpopo ANC was not done yet. Its axe extended to the provincial legislature where the PEC removed deputy speaker Jerry Ndou and replaced him with Vhembe regional chairperson Tshitereke Matibe. Ndou and Masemola

have been redeployed to the National Council of Provinces.

The sweeping changes in Limpopo have long been expected. Last month the PEC met to discuss, among others, the reshuffle and the party's endorsement of President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second term. They also backed ANC treasurer Paul Mashatile as his deputy and Mathabatha as chairperson, before the elective conference in December.

The move is seen as a victory for Mathabatha's faction, which defeated

Masemola's faction, that included former provincial secretary Soviet Lekganyane, at the June provincial conference.

Speaking to the *Pretoria News* yesterday, ANC provincial spokesperson Jimmy Machaka said: "As the PEC, we welcome this decision by Premier Mathabatha to reshuffle his executive committee. This shows that the premier is decisive and we are fully behind him."

"We are committing to work with all the ANC employees to make sure that we provide service delivery to our people."