



NOT GUARANTEED. ANC deputy president Paul Mashatile's chances of succeeding Cyril Ramaphosa as leader of the ANC are slim as he will be fiercely contested, say analysts. Picture: Nigel Sibanda

Mashatile 'may not get top job'

SUCCESSION DEBATE: HE 'MIGHT NOT BE RIGHT MAN'

» Deputy president 'lacks what it takes to be head of state'.

Eric Naki

High leadership stakes within the ANC have resulted in the succession debate coming too early compared with previous years.

But experts say Deputy President Paul Mashatile may not make the cut.

Mashatile, although by virtue of his position is supposed to be heir-apparent to President Cyril Ramaphosa in line with party succession tradition, is not guaranteed as he will be fiercely contested when the time comes.

One analyst explicitly stated that Mashatile did not have what it takes to be a head of state.

However, another said pro-government of national unity (GNU) ANC presidential candidates would have an advantage over opponent, Gauteng premier Panyaza Lesufi, if the GNU succeeds.

Mashatile is facing a series of corruption allegations emanating from his time as MEC in Gauteng.

He appeared recently before the party integrity commission to "answer for his sins". But the committee does not have the final say over members' fate after the party resolved to allow for an appeal, to a certain party panel.

North-West University political and international relations analyst Dominic Maphaka said Mashatile might not be the right

man for the job and ANC branches might vote for someone else.

"Apart from the allegations, the man cannot be envisaged to be a suitable person who could redefine and grow the ANC. The ANC needs leaders with a clear plan and track record of achievements to draw voters. Mashatile lacks such qualities. As such, ANC regions, branches and provinces will opt for alternative leaders," Maphaka said.

He mentioned Lesufi and former treasurer-general Zweli Mkhize among potential contenders for the position.

Other quarters envisaged a tough contest between Lesufi and secretary-general Fikile Mbalula who were likely to be front-runners for the ANC presidency in 2027.

Party national chair and Minister of Mineral Resources, Gwede Mantashe was also touted as a likely contender.

The ANC criticised Lesufi recently, accusing him of starting his election campaign too early with his public statement opposing the GNU and initiatives like Nas'ispani and the launching of unfunded programmes like "amaPanyaza force" and overreaching on national issues.

Another political and economy analyst Daniel Silke said the succession debate had come too early and it was difficult to make any prediction.

He said there was no certainty within the ANC on any issue, including the heir-apparent to Ramaphosa.

"I don't think there is any guarantee that because Mashatile holds the position of deputy president he is a shoe-in to get the votes. I think a lot is going to depend on the success of the GNU."

The analyst said if the GNU survived, pro-GNU candidates would be stronger, but Lesufi, as an anti-GNU leader, would become stronger should it fail.

"Lesufi is certainly betting on the fact that the GNU with the DA is not going to work well for the ANC. He has taken a stand on that issue," he said.

If the GNU fails, that would favour Lesufi as a presidential candidate and he would feel vindicated while Mbalula, Mantashe, Mashatile and others who support the GNU depend on

its success.

Silke also raised the ANC performance in the 2026 local government elections.

He said if the party recovered lost ground in the polls, Ramaphosa and others in the centre would gain political mileage.

"This will strengthen the centrist forces within the ANC or the pro-GNU forces within the ANC."

"I think that's a very important issue to consider before you even look at who will be the frontrunner going forward," Silke said.

Maphaka added that Mashatile's appearance before the integrity (committee) was an attempt by the party to redefine its image amid the loss of confidence in the organisation by the electorate. - erien@citizen.co.za

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