

Famo leader threatens to "deal with Majoro"

Bereng Mpaki

ATERENE, Famo gang leader has threatened to "deal" with Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro for failing to attend the All Basotho Convention (ABC)'s weekend rally in Mohale's Hoek alongside party leader, Nkaku Kabi.

Sarele Sello, popularly known as Lehlanya (the crazy one), was not amused by the absence of Dr Majoro who was in Quthing for the burial of slain National University of Lesotho (NUL) student, Kopano Makutoane. (See story on page 4).

It is not clear whether Lehlanya was aware that Dr Majoro was committed elsewhere. The fiery Famo leader, whose faction, is aligned to the ABC, was nonetheless unimpressed by the premier's absence especially as Mr Kabi recently announced that he and the premier had buried their hatchet which threatened to scupper the party's prospects of retaining power in the elections due in October this year.

Mr Kabi broke the news of their reconciliation while addressing ABC supporters three weeks ago in Hlotse, Leribe. He said as a demonstration of their newly-minted unity, the erstwhile foes would henceforth be addressing joint rallies, with the first of these slated for Koro-Koro a fortnight ago. However, Dr Majoro did not attend that rally as he was away for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kigali, Rwanda.

He did not show up for the Sunday rally in Mohale's Hoek as he was attending the funeral of the 22-year-old Mr Makutoane who was shot dead by police during a student strike over allowances on 16 June 2022.

His absence did not go down well with Lehlanya who said all ABC members must be present at the party's rallies at all times.

Taking to the podium, he belted, "Where is the Prime Minister?"

"This is his last opportunity, and I

...Lehlanya riled by premier's no show at ABC rally

swear I will deal with him. I'm serious. We aren't here to play," Lehlanya said. He however, did not say what action he would take against Dr Majoro. Nevertheless, threats by Famo gangsters should be taken seriously even by no less an authority as Dr Majoro. The Famo gangs have been implicated in killings country-wide. The late Famo gang leader, Mosotho Chakela, was implicated in the 14 June 2017 murder of former Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's ex-wife, Lipolelo. Mr Thabane and his current wife, 'Maesaiah Thabane, are due to stand trial for Lipolelo's murder on 26 July 2022.

On his part, Mr Kabi said he had made peace with Dr Majoro and urged all party members to embrace their newly minted working relationship.

"There's no more infighting in the ABC. It is cordial and you can tell from posts by party members on social media," Mr Kabi said.

Mr Kabi and Dr Majoro had been at each other's throats after the prime minister refused to relinquish his position after losing the party's leadership contest to Mr Kabi in January this year. The ABC leader subsequently supported a parliamentary vote of no confidence against Dr Majoro but the prime minister prevailed. Dr Majoro had vowed to remain in power until the elections though he quit the ABC's national executive committee (NEC).

Even before the Majoro-Kabi war, the ABC was already on the back foot due to incessant infighting, which began three years ago when former leader Thomas Thabane rejected the February 2019 election of his former deputy, Professor Ngqosa Mahao. The subsequent infighting allowed the Democratic Congress (DC) which had only recovered from its own debilitating internal squabbles, to gain ground on its main partner in the

current coalition government.

As if the DC recovery under Deputy Prime Minister Mathibeli Mokhothu (who took over from founding leader Pakalitha Mosisili in February 2019) was not enough, prominent businessman Sam Matekane then formed his Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) party in March this year.

In the first two months of its formation, the RFP lured prominent politicians like former cabinet ministers Mahali Phamotse, Tlohelang Aumane, Leketekete Khetso and former deputy minister 'Manthabiseng Phohleli. All these joined from the opposition Alliance of Democrats (AD). Their arrival added to the RFP's already stellar cast of personalities including former Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) governor, Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane; former Chief Justice Nthomeng Majara and prominent Moshoshoe Walk organiser, Thabo Maretlane.

Former Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) head of investment promotion, Mokhethi Shelle, prominent businessman Lephelema Lebona and former Accountant General Sam Mphaka, former DC stalwart Tlohang Sekhamane, had joined the RFP at its inception.

Faced with this existential threat, Mr Kabi and Dr Majoro had then agreed to talk peace and try and unite ahead of the elections.

Despite their moves to close ranks, obstacles remain in the path to achieving full reconciliation as some key party officials – like spokesperson Montoeli Masoetsa – remain unconvinced of the sincerity of Dr Majoro and his allies.

Meanwhile, Mr Kabi told the Mohale's Hoek rally that the establishment of an agricultural bank to support commercial agriculture was high up his list of priorities if elected into office this year.

He said a bank dedicated to financ-



Sarele Sello

ing agriculture would go a long way in reducing the country's heavy reliance on imported agricultural products.

He said in line with his party's Sera Sa Motho ke Tlala (a person's enemy is hunger), slogan, an ABC government would work hard to create a viable commercial agricultural sector to replace the predominantly subsistence farming practices.

The rally was attended by ABC supporters mainly from the three southern districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing. As has become the norm at ABC rallies, members of Lehlanya and his Famo gang were in attendance and they performed some songs from the immensely popular music genre. Their performances were wildly cheered by the crowd.

In his address, Mr Kabi said an agricultural bank was necessary because existing financial institutions had allegedly failed to provide capital to transform the agricultural sector.

"We have already invited companies that will work with Basotho to establish an agricultural bank in the country.

"Anyone who expects farmers

to depend on the existing banks that do not cater for the agricultural sector for the country's future is not serious," Mr Kabi said.

He also paid tribute to the ABC led-coalition for clinching the lucrative US\$320 million second Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact from the United States (US).

He said the compact, signed in May 2022, would help transform the agricultural sector through its support for irrigation schemes.

Under the compact's market-driven irrigated horticulture (MDIH) project, up to 2000 hectares would be put under irrigation at several sites across the country. The project has a strong focus on empowering communities, landholders and farmers.

"Through this funding which was signed for by Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro, we will no longer depend on rain for farming. We will be able to irrigate our crops. By so doing, we will be able to transform our agricultural production sector," Mr Kabi said, adding commercialisation of agriculture was the only way to reduce the dependence on food imports.

Warrant of arrest for Frazer Solar boss

...as tables are turned against German company in controversial M1, 7 billion solar deal.

'Marafaele Mohloboli

FRAZER Solar boss, Robert Frazer, is wanted by the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) for alleged fraud.

This in connection with the abortive 2018 M1, 7 billion solar energy deal between the German company and the previous Thomas Thabane-led government.

The Lesotho Times has established that the warrant was issued in April this year by the Maseru Magistrates' Court. Despite this, no action has been taken against the German-based Mr Frazer. The police are claiming ignorance about the warrant.

The arrest warrant states that "there are reasonable grounds of suspicion that Robert Frazer did commit the crime of fraud" and he should be "apprehended and brought before the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Offences offices in Maseru, Lesotho to be examined and answer to the said information (fraud), and to be further dealt with according to the law".

The signature on the warrant is not legible enough to show which particular magistrate granted it.

Although she would not say which magistrate issued the warrant, DCEO spokesperson, 'Matlhokomelo Senoko, this week confirmed its authenticity.

"Yes, we have a warrant for Robert Frazer's arrest for fraud. He has

a case to answer before the DCEO," Ms Senoko said in an interview.

"The warrant was submitted to the police after it was granted by the magistrates' court. We will follow up the matter with them," she added.

In a separate interview, deputy police spokesperson, Inspector 'Mareabetsoe Mofoka, said they were unaware of the warrant for Mr Frazer's arrest.

The alleged fraud is in connection with the botched deal for the German company to supply Lesotho with solar water heating systems, solar generated electricity, LED lights and solar lanterns over four years.

Mr Frazer signed on behalf of his company while then Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Temeki Tšolo, signed on behalf of the government.

Frazer Solar was in 2020 awarded £50 million (M856 million) damages for the government's alleged breach of the 2018 'deal'. Frazer Solar insists it had a valid agreement that was signed by Mr Tšolo. The project was not implemented due to current Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro's dogged refusal to sign the financing agreement when he was finance minister under the Thabane government. The DCEO began probing the botched deal in the aftermath of the Gauteng High Court's April 2021 judgement endorsing the damages award to Frazer Solar. The

Lesotho government has since challenged the Gauteng High Court decision in the same court and in the Lesotho High Court. Both applications are pending.

The DCEO says its preliminary investigations into the abortive deal revealed that the agreement was "marred by corruption right from the beginning".

DCEO acting Director General, Sefako Seema, made the claim in a confidential 9 June 2021 letter to then acting Attorney General, Ntebaleng Morojele, who has since been replaced by Advocate Rapelang Motsieloa.

Adv Seema's letter has been attached to the Lesotho government's Gauteng High Court application for a stay in the execution of the same court's order endorsing a South African arbitration award for £50 million (M856 million) damages to Frazer Solar.

In his June 2021 letter to Adv Morojele, the acting DCEO boss Seema says the supply agreement was signed by people who did not have the authority to sign the contract.

"This matter was reported by yourself (Morojele) alleging inter alia that the supply agreement was done corruptly and in contravention of the laws of the Kingdom," Adv Seema states.

"Furthermore, the arbitration documents issued against the government of Lesotho were deliberately withheld from the Prime Min-

ister (Majoro) and or the office of the Attorney General.

"The intention, allegedly by some public servants acting in concert with Mr (Robert) Frazer, was to deny the Attorney General information regarding that corrupt agreement and secondly so that default judgement may be entered against government thereby causing government financial loss.

"Our investigations have thus far revealed a series of frauds in the whole process of signing the contract as it is allegedly signed by people with no authority to sign and witness the contract. On the alleged concealment of the arbitration papers, both the Attorney General (Morojele) and the Right Honourable the Prime Minister (Majoro) claim they were neither served nor informed of the papers despite being the only authorities empowered to deal with such. Our investigations further reveal that all these were done deliberately, further investigations are ongoing. (sic)."

Although he does not mention any names, Adv Seema says they have identified the individuals behind the "corrupt and fraudulent" deal.

Presumably, one of the "corrupt" local individuals could be Mr Tšolo who has been accused of signing the "deal" by Dr Majoro.

Mr Tšolo however, denied signing the controversial deal with, Frazer Solar, when he appeared before the

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in July 2021.

He told the PAC members, who included former cabinet minister, Nyapane Kaya, that his signature had been forged. He said he was "set up for failure" by unnamed people who had inked his signature on the botched deal.

Despite his denials, Mr Tšolo was named by then Energy and Meteorology Principal Secretary, Themba Sopeng, as the man who approved the deal.

In June 2021, Mr Sopeng told PAC that Mr Tšolo had made it clear that the deal had the blessings of the then Prime Minister Thabane.

Frazer Solar insists that the agreement is valid and it is entitled to the damages for the alleged breach by the Lesotho government.

The company has launched a sustained social media onslaught accusing Dr Majoro of denying Basotho the benefits that would have come with the full implementation of the botched solar project.

The campaign is being run on the company's Facebook page under the hashtags, #LesothoSolarScandal and #FrazerSolar. It can be accessed on the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/FrazerSolarGroup>.

"Moeketsi Majoro's refusal to approve Frazer Solar's signed agreement is now costing Basotho M367 million (or US\$22, 9 million) in lost savings," Frazer Solar claims on its Facebook page.