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Syndicate running in the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport unearthed...

Date: Thursday, October 25, 2012

Addressing media today at the departmental building, MEC Raymond Elisha again stated that his office is adamant to continue uprooting fraud and corruption in the department.

“ Yes there is leadership in the department, it does not mean that when officials are being put on precautionary suspensions and charged then the department is collapsing,” said Elisha. “There are dedicated men and women in the department who are diligently undertaking their tasks. People are talking because we have closed taps from which they have been fraudulently benefiting from the department,” he added.

The MEC indicated that Mr Sam Thobakgale has been appointed Acting Head (HoD) of Department and Mr Thapelo Makhetha is still the HoD of the department. He said Makhetha has just been seconded to North West Transport Investment Cooperation (NTI) for about six months to lead an interim board that is charged with restoring governance at NTI. He explained that this was after the previous board was suspended following irregularities that were unearthed at the entity which is 100 percent owned by the North West Provincial Government.

There are four senior officials who were earlier suspended, before MEC Elisha came into office. These were the then Acting HoD, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Director: Roads and Director Supply Chain. Their suspensions were related to the awarding of the Koster-Lichtenburg road project.

The MEC continued to announce that five other officials were recently placed on precautionary suspensions. These included the following:

- Chief Director: Transportation,
- Chief Director: Facility Management,
- Director: Transportation,
- Acting Director: Facility Management
- Control Inspector: Facility Management

He said that some of the officials including those at the NTI were suspended due to a syndicate that was discovered operating within the department's transport portfolio. The activities of the syndicate involving officials, service providers and other members of the community affected the transport portfolio, roads and building maintenance portfolio and the Mahikeng revitalisation programme.

“I am saying it is a syndicate because people are conniving to defraud the department. What we forget is that there are corruptors outside the department, hence we might soon be pursuing civil and criminal charges against six individuals outside the department,” Elisha explained.

“ I am not able to quantify how much the officials have defrauded the department. But we are expecting a report on all the investigations in three weeks,” he said.

Elisha went on to elaborate on the dispute surrounding the building next to The Crossing Shopping Complex.

“Our department is the custodian of government properties, but the much talked about building, is a private property. The issue in question is that the manner in which the lease was handled is irregular. The matter is currently in and out of court. On the other hand it is correct to acknowledge that there is a dire need for office accommodation,” he said.

He indicated that officials implicated have since been served with charges.

“ The communities have recently been protesting against the poor road conditions. We have realised that our people are not being informed about the departmental and municipal plans in as far as the road infrastructure is concerned. We have held district road summits to engage communities and relevant stakeholders, unpacking the departmental plans on roads,” MEC Elisha said.

MEC Elisha added that the provincial summit which is to be held on November 2, will finalise on the priorities and recommendations submitted by stakeholders.

Regarding the scholar transport, the department is currently transporting 38 281 learners. The challenges on this programme are, amongst others, disparity of rates versus claims submitted for payments, regularisation of contracts and late payments.

“ We have since initiated a process of verifying all contracts and routes under scholar transport and embarked on a process to resolve all service provider problems on a case by case basis. We can confirm that after a meeting with all scholar transport operators, that operations are back to normal and we have been assured that no disruptions of schooling caused by suspension of services by scholar transport operators will occur,” he concluded.

Issued by **Communication Directorate**

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