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North West Transport MEC, Mahlakeng Mahlakeng, wants establishment of the Anti-Corruption Task Team expedited

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North West MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, Mahlakeng Mahlakeng, today (Thurs) applauded moves by government, to establish an Anti-Corruption Task Team to fast-track investigations and prosecution of cases of corruption.

“I can’t just wait for the launch of this unit, and rest assured, I will be among the first on the queue to meet them, once they have established office,” he said.

Mahlakeng said the Anti-Corruption Task Team, would “definitely” supplement the capacity of police and would “prioritise and effectively” deal with a backlog of corruption and fraud cases “especially those involving senior officials in the public service”.

“If we fail to declare war on all fronts to crash and dislodge this apparent chain of dishonesty among senior public servants, their cronies, and some of the private entities, our democracy and what we seek to achieve as government will forever be in danger,” he warned

Mahlakeng was speaking against his department “impatience with police investigation” in the corruption case he reported with the police more than six month ago.

Police were asked to investigate a criminal case against officials and an apparent collusion with certain road construction companies and consultants.

“I am yet to hear from the police what the status of the investigation is on the case, more so that we have cooperated fully with them,” said Mahlakeng.

This followed a forensic investigation by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, which confirmed the deep financial woes his department found itself in, barely four months in office in 2009, was largely caused by the irregular awarding of multi-million rand of road contracts to specific companies.

The scandal gobbled R525million of the roads budget in less than three months, and to rub salt, more than R1.5billion budgeted for roads projects in the next three years was discovered to have been committed already.

“This is a classic case that requires a dedicated unit like the one in the pipeline. For

police to make a breakthrough in such complex cases, we need a dedicated structure to help fast-track investigations of cases already in the system,” explained Mahlakeng.

“We cannot as leaders in government, claim victory against acts of corruption by suspending or firing senior officials only, and leave culprits to enjoy the spoils ‘peacefully’ outside of the public service.

“The same applies to those officials ‘sensing danger jump ship’ hoping that, leaving the public service in a huff will exonerate them,” he said.

Mahlakeng said the challenge in the public service was that, severe sanction against culprits “only go as far as dismissal” which he said was “not enough”.

“The expertise to investigate, formulate criminal charges and securing a conviction, to re-coup to the last cent of the plundered tax payers monies from the culprits and those who colluded with them, reside with our law enforcement agencies,” he said.

Mahlakeng said: “It would seem we have now found the correct prescription to effectively deal with this prolonged pain of corruption in the public service once and for all, because we have diagnosed it correctly.”

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