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Cleaning firms face off for Parliament contract

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TWO cleaning companies with indirect links to political figures Cyril Ramaphosa and Tokyo Sexwale are squaring off for Parliament's cleaning contract, after a lack of maintenance and poor hygiene came under the spotlight when a lift in the precinct fell three floors last week.

RoyalServe, a subsidiary of listed cleaning company Myelaserve, which devolved from Mr Sexwale's Myelaphanda Group, is hoping to

win the contract it has held for the past five years. But one of Bidvest's subsidiaries, Bidvest Prestige Group, has entered a competing bid.

The lifts in the nine buildings that make up Parliament's precinct have developed a reputation for unreliability and frequent breakdowns.

The Department of Public Works is responsible for the maintenance of the lifts and buildings along with the deep cleaning that occurs during the parliamentary recess, as this is considered part of the overall maintenance of the national key point.

However, Parliament is responsible for the daily cleaning. It does this through its own permanent staff and the use of about 50 outsourced cleaners. The latter work mainly in the evenings, when the politicians and their staff are not there.

Sightings of rats and other vermin have been reported in at least two of the buildings and they were known to have damaged computer cables, ceilings and other fixtures.

"This is a flagship site due to its national importance," RoyalServe CEO Tseliso Phiso said. "The value

of the contract is in excess of R2m per annum and we currently employ about 50 staff on site."

He said the company was still awaiting Parliament's decision.

Bidvest Prestige Cleaning head of human resources Paul Roux said the company had bid for the tender and had conducted a site inspection. His expectation was that a decision would be made this month.

Mr Ramaphosa, who is Bidvest's nonexecutive chairman, has announced that he will step down from the post in September as part of

divorcing himself from his business positions due to his reinvolvement in active politics.

Mr Roux said he had never known Mr Ramaphosa to have been actively involved in any tender bid by Bidvest or its subsidiaries.

A parliamentary spokesman said the bids were still being evaluated and could not say when a decision would be made.

Over the weekend, Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi visited workers injured in last week's accident and promised a full investigation.

A spokesman for Mr Nxesi said he did not know when the investigation would take place or if it would include inspecting other lifts and machinery or whether the Department of Labour would also be involved in the probe.

Parliament has also expressed its sympathy to the injured workers and has pledged its full co-operation for an investigation.

The daily cleaning contract has been held RoyalServe since November 2011.

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