

Probe into 'misuse' of Madiba burial fund over



Public protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane and speaker of the Mpumalanga legislature BT Shongwe.

PHOTO: SANDILE NDLOVU

Sibongile Mashaba

INVESTIGATIONS into millions of rand spent by the Mpumalanga government for late statesman Nelson Mandela's memorial services have been concluded.

The public protector's office yesterday told the Mpumalanga legislature that the investigation would form part of a national probe into millions spent by the Eastern Cape government during the mourning period in December 2013.

Mandela died at his Houghton, Johannesburg, home at the age of 95 on December 5 2013 after suffering from a respiratory infection.

The Mpumalanga government is accused of splurging nearly R40-million on several memorial services across the province during the mourning period.

It was further alleged that the government shifted R70-million meant for service delivery from several departments to enable it to pay the salaries of staff after the mourning period.

The Daily Dispatch reported that the Eastern Cape bill was

MPUMALANGA IN CROSSHAIRS

expected to increase from R22-million to R90-million and would include monies spent on printing T-shirts bearing the global icon's face.

Mpumalanga provincial head in the public protector's office Botromia Sithole said: "We have concluded the investigation and are accessing documents that we have. "It is also in line with the main investigation [into the Eastern Cape government] that is done by national [office]."

Public protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane said the recommendations to be made in regard to the manner in which the Mandela memorials were handled and monies spent should be able to address what needs to be done in future should a statesman die.

Sithole said investigations into the provincial premier spending R6.19-million on luxury vehicles over a period of five years was not being investigated at provincial level.

"We will follow up and advise accordingly," she said.

Mkhwebane visited the legislature to introduce and engage stakeholders on the work she does.

She said there was an investigation into the illegal deduction of insurance and airtime from the social grants of beneficiaries.

"There is a systematic investigation. It will have a recommendation or remedial action which will address all those particular instances.

"We hope to finalise it quicker," she said.

Mkhwebane said there were "some organs of state in this province that do not fully co-operate with our processes and this frustrates complainants".

"Departments such as human settlements, rural development, public works and municipalities such as Emalahleni, Mkhondo, Emakhazeni and Dipaleseng are culprits in this regard.

"As the end of the 2016/17 financial year draws nearer, my office in this province is pulling all stops to finalise the 323 cases that we currently have at hand," Mkhwebane said.

"The most prevalent complaints in this province are matters concerning service delivery at municipal level.

"They include issues such as delays in the processing of applications for RDP houses and allocations of such properties," Mkhwebane said.

The sitting did not go without drama with member of the legislature Jeanette Nkonzweni threatening to beat up EFF provincial leader Collen Sedibe.

Even after proceedings, Nkonzweni walked up to Sedibe, pointing a finger at him several times saying: "You must be beaten up."

Mkhwebane said the behaviour of legislature members had "traumatised me".