

# Govt wants FNB Stadium back

'Current arrangement is not proper and does not benefit national teams'

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**T**HE Department of Sport and Recreation wants the management of FNB Stadium taken out of private hands. Private company Stadium Management South Africa (SMSA) has been managing the national stadium, which was rebuilt for the 2010 Fifa World Cup, since 2009 after they won a tender from the City of Johannesburg.

Sport and recreation director-general Alec Moemi told the Sunday Times that they have issued a directive to the Department of Public Works because the current arrangement between SMSA and the City of Johannesburg is not proper and does not benefit national teams.

SMSA manages FNB, Orlando, Rand and Dobsonville stadiums in Gauteng, which received massive funding from the government for upgrades for the 2010 World Cup.

"We have already issued a notice to the Department of Public Works informing them that we are looking at getting FNB Stadium back. We don't think that the current arrangement is proper because our national teams and other federations cannot afford to book that stadium," said Moemi.

"Millions are asked for rental for the usage of a public facility. This is crazy. The state builds a facility, issues a tender for someone to manage it, that person takes over the management of the

facility and wants to charge the state for the use of its own property."

The City of Johannesburg leased the running of the stadium to SMSA to offset financial pressure of about R4m a year, but Moemi said his department will ensure that FNB Stadium will be self-sufficient and that it isn't a burden to the city.

"The facilities that are making money and are breaking even, like Moses Mabhida in Durban and Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium in Port Elizabeth, are both managed by public servants," he said.

"There is a notion in South Africa that if it is privately managed it means that it is better managed, but that is not necessarily the case.

"We have seen with Moses Mabhida that since the stadium was opened it was never a burden financially to the City of eThekweni. In fact it generates money for the city and that is what we are interested in."

Moemi added that it was a travesty of justice that there were people benefiting financially from the running of the stadium at the expense of all the national teams and the public.

"It is a travesty of justice that things are the way they are at the moment and all facilities of the state must be for the benefit of the public.

"Parking that was supposed to have been expanded has not been done, paving that is needed to other areas within the stadium has not been done, yet some person is making money from

managing the property," he said.

"National teams such as Bafana Bafana, the Springboks or other sports must pay exorbitant funds to access the facility. That is very wrong and we are committed to this process of ensuring that we claim our stadium back."

Moemi said that if for whatever reason the department allows the stadium to continue to be privately run, they will look into issuing new and stringent terms that will favour national teams and the public.

SMSA spokesman Sisa Majola said they were not aware of the developments by the department and referred inquiries to the City of Johannesburg, who are custodians of FNB Stadium.

Ivor Hoff, chief director for sport and recreation in Gauteng, said they are highly supportive of the development of the National Sport and Recreation Centre (Nasrec), situated where FNB Stadium and Safa House stand.

"There is a plan to develop that area with accommodation and other related sporting facilities to make it an international, national, regional and provincial sports hub which could be able to generate money," said Hoff.

"It is part of our long-term athlete-development plan, high-performance programme and our bidding and hosting of events strategy to bring sport revenue to the [Gauteng] province."

— *TMG Digital/TMG Sport*