

■ SPECIAL INVESTIGATING UNIT

SIU owed millions

Debt recovery proving a challenge in the fight against corruption and fraud

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA

Mayibongwe.maqhina@inl.co.za

THE Special Investigating Unit (SIU), which is crucial to the government's fight against corruption, is owed close to R400million by state institutions for its forensic services

Revenue collection remains a serious challenge for the unit, which is mandated to prevent and recover financial losses to the state due to corruption, fraud and maladministration.

"Only R310406073 was generated in cash from the recovery of debt for the 2017-18 financial year, bringing the total outstanding debt as at March 31 to R397910343," said Andy Mothibi, the unit's head, in its 2017-18 annual report tabled in Parliament.

Mothibi said the unit would take up the issue of outstanding debt with the heads of departments and chief executives of state-owned entities, and "if necessary, to the executive authorities".

"The SIU will also engage the National Treasury, as it has been doing, in cases where state institutions have requested exemption from payment of the SIU debt."

He said the unit submitted invoices for forensic services rendered to state institutions as per proclamations signed by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

"While recovery has been slow, the SIU continues to remind state institutions that it is legislated to recover costs incurred in rendering such services," he said.

The unit disclosed that it had collected R302.6m for the rendering of services to state institutions.

During the year under review the unit conducted 1556 forensic investigations, and 15 reports were submitted to the president.

The value of money and/or assets potentially recoverable was R299m. In one investigation, overpayments were identified in respect of parking bays, lettable space or a shortage of space.

"In only nine matters the value of the overpayments identified was R150m. The total value of the con-



The Special Investigating Unit is the state's preferred service provider of forensic investigating and litigating services to eradicate corruption in the country. It is mandated to investigate serious malpractices or maladministration at state institutions, with state assets and public money or any conduct that may seriously harm the interests of the public, and to establish a special tribunal to hear civil matters where necessary. | AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA Archives)

tribution of this investigation was R232m," the report said in reference to a Department of Public Works tender.

The unit reported that the value of money and assets that had been recovered stood at R34m, falling short of their R120m target.

"There were a number of matters where potential recoveries were identified that we had hoped would be recovered during this financial year. Meetings have been held with the departments concerned, and they are doing a full reconciliation of all matters referred to them."

The entity put the figure for contracts set aside at R797m, while the

prevention of potential losses stood at R407m, including a South African Post Office lease contract valued at R493m, and another R301m contract for the Department of Correctional Services.

The value of matters referred for litigation totalled R2.7billion using the unit's evidence. "In one matter, the value of the litigation was R1.3bn which contributed to us significantly exceeding the target."

There were 148 cases referred to the National Prosecuting Authority for prosecution, and 319 for disciplinary hearings.

Justice and Constitutional Development Minister Michael Masutha said the unit played a critical role in rooting

out maladministration and enforcing the fight against corruption.

Masutha said that in an attempt to ensure that the full impact of the mandate of the unit was felt by all, it had identified the need to re-establish the Special Tribunal in Gauteng.

"Work is under way to ensure that the Special Tribunal is fully operational, with a sufficient budget for the required infrastructure," he said.

"The re-establishment of the tribunal will require the SIU to identify matters that can immediately be heard, to act speedily against offenders of maladministration, or perpetrators of malpractice, in a specialised court," Masutha said.