

INVESTIGATION

Parties hail probe into North West department

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WHILE opposition parties in the North West yesterday welcomed President Cyril Ramaphosa's move to authorise the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to probe graft in the Department of Public Works and Roads, they warned him not to allow the report to gather dust.

Ramaphosa gave the SIU the green light to investigate corruption, malpractice and maladministration in the department, and to recoup any financial losses it incurred.

The probe would be instituted in line with Proclamation R21 of 2021, authorising the unit to look into transactions that took place between January 1, 2016, and March 12, 2021.

According to SIU spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago: "The SIU is also authorised to look into transactions that took place after the date of the proclamation, which are relevant to, connected with, incidental or involve the same persons, entities or contracts investigated."

Part of the investigation's scope included scrutinising the procurement of contracts related to project management for the transport infrastructure directorate, and the rehabilitation of flood-damaged road infrastructure.

Reacting to the much-anticipated probe, DA MPL Freddy Sonakile warned Ramaphosa to guard against failure to implement the SIU's recommendations upon completing its investigations.

He said: "What is of concern is that



NORTH West Premier Job Mokgoro | African News Agency (ANA)

in 2018, then president Jacob Zuma signed a proclamation authorising the SIU to investigate the then North West Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport after it was embroiled in a number of corruption allegations which included multimillion-rand tenders for scholar transport and the Expanded Public Works Programme."

Sonakile said the SIU report at the time was sent to Zuma "to act on its findings, but no further action was taken".

"We hope that this investigation ordered by the president will yield results this time around and not turn out to be another fruitless exercise. The DA will monitor the SIU's investiga-

tions to ensure that all irregularities are exposed and that those found guilty are held accountable," he said.

EFF provincial secretary Papiki Babuile, also a member of the legislature, expressed disappointment that previous investigations had not borne results, but were "a waste of money and part of protecting those who are

in power".

"We wish to see the outcome of this investigation being convictions, and where politicians are involved they must be recalled and be arrested or convicted."

He said he was worried that the probe would be undertaken at a time when the province was still under Section 100 of the Constitution, evoked by the Cabinet on May 23, 2018, after the province was found wanting when it came to fulfilling its executive obligation. Babuile said service delivery in the province was not improving, but continued to decline. He said the EFF was aware of a contract awarded for road rehabilitation in Moses Kotane and Ramotshere Moiloa local municipalities.

"One was about shoddy work, where work was not properly done, and in some instances the money was paid but there was no work done in those areas," he said.

Department spokesperson Matshebe Mfoloe was contacted for comment on the allegations of corruption and the SIU investigation, but he had not responded to requests by the time of publication.

The SIU will also investigate a tender related to the installation of perimeter fencing at the Eagle Waters Wildlife Resort in Hartbeespoort.

Kganyago did not respond to written questions seeking clarity about the investigation's scope, including the nature of corruption allegedly committed at the resort, and roads infrastructure.