



**The concrete barrier wall between uMkhanyakude and the Mozambique border is now under scrutiny**

# Border wall scrutiny

Muzi Zincume

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has signed Proclamation R16 of 2021, authorising the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) to probe allegations of corruption and maladministration at the KZN Department of Transport, and to recover any financial losses suffered by the government.

The proclamation was signed on Monday.

The investigation will focus on the construction contract of an 8km concrete barrier wall between uMkhanyakude and the Mozambique border, and payments made in respect thereof in August 2018. SIU spokesperson Kaizer Kganyago said the tender of more than R85-million was awarded to two construction companies.

'We received information from a whistleblower claiming that the Department of Transport approved the project, despite such projects having to be mandated by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

'The public works department is the custodian of border infrastructure outlay and the maintenance thereof,' Kganyago said.

In October last year, a report of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and

Infrastructure indicated that only 0.166km of the project was completed while R48-million had already been paid to the contractor.

'Our investigation will determine whether the procurement and payments made in relation to the construction of the barrier wall were done in a fair, competitive, transparent, equitable or cost-effective manner, or whether it was done contrary to applicable legislation or guidelines issued by national or provincial treasury.

'We will also look at whether there was any related unauthorised, irregular or wasteful expenditure incurred or financial losses suffered by government,' Kganyago said.

'Our investigation will cover transactions that took place before or between 13 July 2016 and 7 May 2021.

'The proclamation authorises us to use all its legislative powers to subpoena bank statements and cellphone records, search and seize evidence, and interrogate witnesses under oath in an effort to hold those responsible to account for their actions.

Attempts to obtain comment from the KZN Department of Transport spokesperson Kwanele Ncalane were unsuccessful.