

NEW FORUM LAUNCHED

Infrastructure irregularities amount to more than R10bn

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THE head of the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), advocate Andy Mothibi, has revealed that investigations conducted into alleged irregularities in the infrastructure sector amount to over R10 billion.

Mothibi made the comments during the launch of the new Infrastructure Built Anti-Corruption Forum which seeks to monitor infrastructure projects more effectively and put systems in place to detect and prevent corruption.

Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia de Lille, and Mothibi launched the forum at Parliament yesterday.

They were joined by Deputy National Director of Public Prosecutions, advocate Rodney de Kock, and Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, head of Infrastructure South Africa (ISA).

According to Mothibi, the SIU identified sectors vulnerable to corruption and these include health, local government, infrastructure/construction, state-owned entities, transport, energy, financial sector, mining and border management.

The senior investigator said it was important that integrity and transparency was maintained in all the infrastructure projects.

He noted that about 80% of irregularities in the infrastructure build stem from the procurement process.

"The value of alleged irregularities investigated by SIU in the Infrastructure Build Investigations is to date totalling over R10bn. To this end it will be very important that transparency is introduced in the infrastructure build procurement process and an effective corruption risk prevention framework introduced."

He added that the forum had its specific terms of reference which would ensure collaboration with various stakeholders in the fight against fraud and corruption, and identify areas of co-operation to enhance prevention, detection, civil litigation and prosecution of fraud and corruption in the infrastructure build sector.

De Lille, on the other hand, empha-



PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia De Lille at yesterday's announcement of an initiative to monitor infrastructure projects more effectively and to detect and prevent corruption. | ARMAND HOUGH African News Agency(ANA)

sised that corruption had run rampant in the country for far too long.

"The state has structures in place, but government cannot do this work alone and that is why we have brought the private sector, public entities and civil society together in this forum so that we can work together on more effective ways to detect, prevent and act against corruption.

"Our people need better roads, hospitals, schools and generally better infrastructure for better services, we need better and more government buildings. We cannot allow the crooks to continue to steal billions meant for infrastructure. People, no matter who they are, cannot be allowed to continue to steal and stifle progress at the expense of the most vulnerable in

our country," said De Lille.

She added that the mandate of the forum in summary was to collaborate, consult, support and co-operate with one another to fight fraud and corruption in the sector, through criminal prosecution and civil litigation as well as through prevention initiatives such as corruption risk assessments, awareness programmes, identification and detection of corruption, controls improvement, systemic recommendations, monitoring and reporting.

"The forum will have oversight of investigations and will see various agencies working together to investigate any reported and alleged corruption so that we enhance accountability in the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan's projects."

The initiative comes at a time when the country has embarked on the implementation of the infrastructure investment plan approved by the Cabinet in May last year, which forms an integral part of the country's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

The Cabinet also approved the establishment of ISA as the administrative arm responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan, which is made up of projects from all three spheres of government, state-owned enterprises and the private sector.

According to De Lille, the establishment of this forum is in line with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy approved by the Cabinet in November last year to help fight fraud.