

NATION

Forum to halt infrastructure malfeasance

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A NEW forum which seeks to monitor infrastructure projects more effectively and put systems in place to detect and prevent corruption has been launched.

The new Infrastructure Built Anti-Corruption Forum (IBACF) was launched in Parliament yesterday by Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille and Special Investigating Unit (SIU) head advocate Andy Mothibi.

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

The value of alleged irregularities in the infrastructure build investigations amounts to over R10 billion to date, Mothibi revealed.

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

Mothibi said that it was impor-

tant that integrity and transparency was maintained in all infrastructure projects. He noted that about 80% of irregularities in the infrastructure build stems from the procurement process.

“The current value of alleged irregularities investigated by the SIU in the Infrastructure Built Investigations is to date totalling over R10bn.

“To this end it will be very important that transparency is introduced in the Infrastructure Built Procurement Process and 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 cooperation to enhance the prevention, detection, civil litigation and prosecution of fraud and corruption in the sector.

“This will bring a greater level of transparency and will give credibility to the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan. Transparency and collaboration are key if we are to wage an effective fight against corruption.

“The IBACF consists of diverse

stakeholders coming with respective mandates, which will assist in resolving corruption allegations speedily. These stakeholders include law enforcement agencies, civil society, regulators, government departments and the private sector.”

De Lille emphasised 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 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 was to collaborate, consult, support and cooperate with one another. It needed to do this 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, the identification and detection of corruption, controls improvement, and 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 forum agreed that one of its main and immediate areas of work will be to look into how whistle-blowers can be incentivised and rewarded for coming forward with information on corruption that leads to successful prosecution.”

The initiative comes at a time when the country has embarked on the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment Plan approved by Cabinet in May last year which forms an inte-

gral part of the country’s Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.

The Cabinet also approved the establishment of Infrastructure South Africa (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 the forum is in line with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy which was approved by the Cabinet in November last year to help improve the fight against corruption and fraud. She said anyone found guilty of corruption must bear the consequences of their actions.

“Anyone involved in corrupt activities and found guilty of such must face consequences, they must face the full might of the law. We must work together to put an end to this scourge because corruption steals from the poor.

“We also need a clear path to delivering quality infrastructure to create the crowding in effect of more investment by the private sector.”