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NEWS

Prominent politician to be added as accused in mental hospital saga

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AN INFLUENTIAL political figure, who is currently serving a 15-year sentence for corruption and money laundering at the Upington Correctional Centre, will be added as an accused in the investigation involving the Kimberley Mental Health Hospital.

He was the MEC for Transport, Roads and Public Works at the time of the alleged offence and resigned as ANC provincial chairperson in 2015.

Two other prominent figures were the first individuals to be arrested this week in connection with the "colossal mess", where the original contract of R290 million for the mental hospital ballooned to R2.1 billion and construction took 14 years to complete.

The individual who is listed as "number two" on the charge sheet is expected to join his co-accused – the former head of the Department of Roads and Public Works, Patience Mokhali, 63, and a company director of Babereki Consulting Engineers, Tshego Motaung, 59, in the dock at their next court appearance.

Mokhali was released on bail of R10,000 while Motaung received bail of R50,000 after they were charged with contravening the Public Finance Management Act, fraud amounting to R51 million and R290 million, corruption to the value of R557 427.77 and money laundering of R51 million.

Both accused have denied the allegations against them.

During their first appearance in the Kimberley Magistrate's Court earlier this week, the legal representative for both accused, Herholdt Robertson, stated that neither of his clients had any previous convictions or pending cases.

He stated that Mokhali was a pensioner who was not employed and had suffered from memory loss since leaving the employment of the Department of Roads and Public Works.

Motaung, who resides in Johannesburg, indicated that due to his financial position, he would not be able to forfeit his bail money and would attend all court cases.

"I am self-employed and I must work. The matter has been investigated since 2010. I have assisted the SAPS with their investigation."

He added that his health was also "not good" as he suffered from high blood pressure and cholesterol.

The State prosecutor, advocate Boitumelo Sediti, requested that the matter be postponed to July 11 to join accused number two to the charge sheet and to attend to outstanding issues.

The Kimberley mental hospital was branded a "monument to corruption" due to the immense sum of money that was poured into the project.

The original contractors, Joh Arch Investments/Vista Park Developers joint venture, were liquidated in 2010.

An amount of R420 million was paid to them although the work completed was found to be sub-standard, where large sections of the building had to be demolished.

The owner of Vista Park Developers, Andrew Scholtz, who was the first of three contractors on site, died in 2021.

He was identified as a prime benefactor by the Hawks in an investigation that dates back to 2006.

In 2012, Scholtz sought damages of R57 million from the Department of Public Works after the tender was terminated due to poor workmanship.

A R36 million settlement agreement was reached between the two parties in 2011.