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Department denies travel scandal claims

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THE NORTHERN Cape Department of Sport, Arts and Culture has dismissed allegations that a high-ranking official allowed Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) interns to accompany him on regular trips to destinations including Sun City, Johannesburg and Uptington.

It is believed that the official was reprimanded, as the department is expected to fund travel, subsistence and accommodation expenses for employees. Interns, however, do not qualify for these allowances as their names do not appear on the Personnel and Salary System (Perset).

Concerns were reportedly raised as to who would be held responsible should the interns be involved in an accident or incident where they were injured or harmed.

Department spokesperson Conrad Fortune said he noted with concern the allegations being circulated.

"These allegations are baseless and appear to be aimed at tarnishing the reputation of the department," Fortune said.

He said official travel was conducted strictly in line with government prescriptions and approved delegations of authority.

"Interns and EPWP participants are not permanent employees. Their travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses can only be funded in accordance with applicable departmental and Treasury regulations.



The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture has denied allegations that EPWP interns have been accompanying a high-ranking official on official trips.

Picture: File

"The interns are funded under the EPWP budget, which is specifically allocated for skills development and work-exposure initiatives."

He explained that the participation of interns in official activities had to be approved and directly related to their learning and development objectives.

"The five EPWP staff members were selected from the group of 81 EPWP employees and allocated to the Ministry, while others were placed at various other departmental facilities throughout the province."

INSINUATIONS OF ROMANCE

Fortune also dismissed insinuations that any romantic relationship existed between the official and any of the interns.

"The department has no knowledge or evidence of any personal or inappropriate relationship. Allegations of this nature are entirely unsubstantiated and deliberately intended to mislead the public. These baseless claims are nothing more than a calculated attempt to distort the facts and undermine confidence through disinformation. We categorically reject and condemn such reckless assertions, which lack even the slightest foundation in truth.

"It is deeply regrettable that certain individuals or groups would seek to advance their own agendas by spreading falsehoods and misleading narratives. We remain committed to transparency and accountability, and we urge the public to disregard these unfounded allegations and rely on verified, factual information.

He added that the safety and well-being of all employees and interns remained a priority for the department.

"Standard procedures apply in the event of any incident involving staff or interns while on duty. The department reiterates its commitment to transparency, accountability, and adherence to all legislative and policy frameworks governing public-service conduct," Fortune stated.