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# Zikalala rejects link to appointment of Malaka as IDT CEO

By **JEANETTE CHABALALA**

The deputy minister of public works Sihle Zikalala has distanced himself from the appointment of the CEO of the Independent Development Trust (IDT) Tebogo Malaka, who was reportedly under investigation over the entity's multimillion-rand head office lease.

Briefing the media yesterday, Zikalala said in recent weeks there have been "slandorous" stories to "defame and tarnish his image" about issues at the IDT.

Zikalala's briefing comes after a report by amaBhungane, an investigative journalism organisation, which said the allegations of procurement irregularities against Malaka were swept under the carpet by him and then IDT chair, Kwazi Mshengu. The publication also said the interventions included "squashing a forensic probe facilitated by the National Treasury and whitewashing an audit by Zikalala's department", which ultimately

cleared the way for her to be elevated from an acting position to permanent chief executive. The IDT is a public entity which reports directly to the department of public works. It delivers social infrastructure such as schools, police stations and clinics.

Yesterday, Zikalala dismissed the claims, saying when he was appointed as the public works minister in March 2023, Malaka had already been recommended and "deemed suitable through a proper public process by the board that Zimbini Hill led as the chairperson".

He said the recommendation to appoint Malaka as IDT CEO had already been submitted to cabinet for final processing.

"As the new minister, I decided to withdraw the matter due to issues that were emerging at the time about the entity and had to deal with due diligence.

"Also informing my decision to withdraw the matter were allegations related to the office lease at the IDT. I am



**Public works and infrastructure deputy minister Sihle Zikalala** /Freddy Mavunda

the first minister to task the board of the IDT to investigate the matter of the office lease and to give a report after six months.

He said the IDT board was plagued by problems and infighting, which defocused the entity from its primary mandate of social infrastructure delivery.

"There were serious concerns on the governance affairs of the Independent

Development Trust, and despite numerous attempts to assist from the department, there was little improvement.

"I held a number of meetings to refocus the board to its governance and fiduciary oversight duties. These efforts did not yield expected results. It was against this background that as the then minister, in line with my oversight responsibilities, I wrote to the board and requested explanations and representations from board members over serious lapses in the management and administration of the IDT.

"There are undertones of an attempt at a political smear campaign intended to undermine and discredit my reputation through false narratives. There is no investigation that was ever squashed, all investigations that we were requested by the board to pursue because of its contaminated processes were undertaken and the second of those investigative reports is complete and is still to be finalised by the seventh administration."