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**Author:** Clive Ndou

# Zikalala calls for probe after 'smear campaign'

## Deputy minister refers IDT appointment allegations to Public Protector

**CLIVENDOU**

Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Sihle Zikalala has referred allegations of political interference in the appointment of the CEO of the Independent Development Trust (IDT) to the Public Protector, in a bid to clear his name from what he terms a "smear campaign".

The appointment process in question began under Zikalala's predecessor, former Public Works and Infrastructure minister Patricia de Lille.

According to recent media reports — which Zikalala at a press conference yesterday described as part of a "smear campaign" during his tenure as the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure between 2023 and 2024 — he recommended the appointment of Tebogo Malaka as CEO of one of the department's entities, the Inde-

pendent Development Trust (IDT), which was the custodian of the government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

The reports alleged that this recommendation was made despite questions around Malaka's role in IDT's failed R45 million office rental deal with a private company.

Further, the reports claim that Zikalala had pulled the plug on a National Treasury probe into Malaka's role in the awarding of the R45 million office leasing contract.

However, it has since emerged that Malaka, who at the time was the IDT acting CEO, was recommended by Zikalala's predecessor, then Public Works and Infrastructure minister Patricia de Lille.

"When I was appointed as the minister of Public Works and Infrastructure in March 2023, the memorandum for the appointment of the CEO had already been

processed by the board.

"The recommendation to appoint Tebogo Malaka as the CEO of IDT had already been submitted to Cabinet for final processing," Zikalala said.

However, given that there were questions about Malaka's role in the appointment of the office leasing company, Zikalala resolved to reverse the board's decision to recommend Malaka's appointment as IDT CEO.

Zikalala then urged the IDT board to launch an investigation into the appointment of the company in question.

"As all these matters were unfolding, I, on the side-lines, faced a legal challenge by the then acting CEO, who had initiated a grievance on the outcome of the permanent appointment of the CEO.

"Before me, there was no report with any verdict or adverse finding against the

acting CEO, who already had been recommended to be CEO before I kept the process in abeyance for a year," Zikalala said.

"There is no report or any concluded investigation by the board or any other body of the state against the appointment of the CEO that was before me as the minister then."

After no evidence or report linking Malaka to any wrongdoing was presented, Zikalala proceeded to endorse Malaka's appointment as IDT CEO.

"I granted the concurrence letter in a similar manner as my predecessors had done.

"The difference is that my process was not in haste and attempted to deal with investigations.

"There is a deliberately concocted interpretation designed to create an impres-

sion in the public mind that there are mischievous dealings that happened under my tenure in the department leading to the appointment of the CEO of the IDT," Zikalala said.

The Gauteng Division of the High Court in Pretoria has since ruled that the IDT has failed to present evidence showing any illegality in the awarding of the office leasing tender.

However, Zikalala wants the Public Protector to also look into the office leasing matter.

"This will assist so that the truth is exposed and we avoid narratives that are littered with inaccuracies and speculation.

"In all my public life I have never and will never attempt to escape public scrutiny or inquiry," he said.

• clive.ndou@witness.co.za