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The Quick Interview

Minister wants lifestyle audits of IDT board

By **MICHELLE BANDA**

The Independent Development Trust (IDT), a state-owned entity under the department of public works and infrastructure, is facing serious allegations of mismanagement and procurement malpractice.

A staggering R836m, linked to an oxygen plant project, is at the centre of the controversy. In response, minister Dean Macpherson has recommended that all newly appointed IDT board members undergo lifestyle audits. James de Villiers, the minister's spokesperson, unpacks what prompted this.

Sowetan: What specific red flags or concerns triggered the decision?

De Villiers: The minister can only recommend that the board should consider this issue, as only they can take such a decision. Just as we are doing 400 lifestyle audits in the department, and considering the serious allegations of mismanagement, and problematic tender processes, it will be a useful tool to build public trust.

Sowetan: When will these audits begin, and what is the expected completion?

De Villiers: It is up to the board to determine when the audits will begin and be completed, but the minister urged the board at a meeting on Monday that they should be instituted as soon as possible.

Sowetan: Lifestyle audits have long been talked about in government circles –

what makes this different, and what exactly will be scrutinised?

De Villiers: As there has been a pattern of serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement at the IDT, a lifestyle audit will help to determine whether any individual has possibly received kickbacks to be able to live lifestyles which are beyond their means. A lifestyle audit will [make it] easy to identify those who spend more than they earn through buying cars, holidays and other expenses. This may raise flags that an official was possibly involved in financial mismanagement.

Sowetan: Since the intention to conduct these audits was made public, will the findings be released for transparency?

De Villiers: The board will have to



James de Villiers

consider that as they would be commissioning the audits.

Sowetan: What are the consequences for board members with unexplained wealth or conflicts of interest?

De Villiers: Where bribery, corruption, fraud or other crimes are found, internal disciplinary processes will be followed and matters referred to the police.