

Union, Motlanthe meet over rail fleet

Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe heard the Federation of Unions of SA's (Fedusa) concerns over a multi-billion rand fleet renewal programme.



Fedusa general secretary Dennis George said Motlanthe had agreed to meet with them at his residence in Pretoria.

"We have great trust in him and he has proven to us in the past how he can apply his leadership skills to navigate out of these difficult situations," he said.

Fedusa and its affiliate union, the combined United Transport and Allied Trade Union and the SA Railways and Harbours Union (UTATA SARWHU), were present at the meeting.

The Passenger Rail Agency of SA's (Prasa) chief executive Lucky Montana recently announced that Gibela Rail Transportation (GRT) would partner with a black economic empowerment company to manufacture South Africa's next generation of modern commuter trains.

Fedusa expressed its shock that Prasa was not using Transnet Rail Engineering to build new train coaches for the agency's R51bn renewal programme.

It said Transnet Rail Engineering could find itself with at least 800 redundant employees as a result of the decisions taken by Prasa.

Logic questioned

George said UTATU SARWHU had questioned the "logic" of the deal, as it believed there were enough staff and technical capacity at its plants in Koedoespoort, Durban, and Salt River.

The GRT consortium is led by French multi-national company Alstom.

The federation alleged after an an initial investigation that Alstom "had a fairly chequered past when it comes to corruption".

UTATU SARWHU general secretary Steve Harris claimed Montana had refused to meet with the union and federation, a claim dismissed by Prasa.

"Fedusa's assertion that Prasa is unwilling to engage Transnet Rail Engineering on the rolling stock fleet renewal programme is totally misguided," said Prasa spokesman Moffet Mofokeng in an e-mail two weeks ago.

"Fedusa and its affiliate unions within Prasa are wrong to exaggerate the capacity of Transnet Rail Engineering or any of the industry suppliers to meet our requirements," Mofokeng said.

He said that although Transnet Rail Engineering had an important role to play in the revitalisation of the rail industry, it had been struggling to meet targets with the refurbishment of Prasa's existing fleet.

George said Fedusa would reserve further talks with Prasa until after the meeting with Motlanthe.

"We have seen too many examples of valuable state-owned capacity being sold off for the short-term economic gains of a lucky few," he said.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge

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