

R400m tender fraud trial to begin in May next year

Four people are expected to have their day in court in May next year in a case related to tender fraud amounting to some R400m.



Image source: Tomasz Wyszolnirski – 123RF.com

The tender was awarded to airline SA Express by the North West Provincial Government (NWPG) in 2014 and was subject to scrutiny at the State Capture Commission, which subsequently recommended a criminal probe into the matter.

In the dock in May 2024 will be former head of the provincial Department of Transport, Thabang Mohlokoleng; Tebogo Van Wyk, Nothando Dube and Sipho Phiri, together with companies, Batsamai Investment Holdings, Sevilex Investment Holdings and Lavao Estevao (Pty) Ltd.

The four face 34 charges including fraud, corruption, money laundering and contravention of the Public Finance Management Act, with charges of racketeering also expected to be added to the docket.

According to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) regional spokesperson Henry Mamothame, the charges stem from

the provincial government's 2014 bid to reintroduce commercial airlines to airports in Mmabatho and Pilanesberg on a subsidy of some R400m.



SA Express to lay charges against former executives

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“An amount of R183m was then paid to SA Express between 2015 and 2017, for the services rendered by the ground management companies, which Van Wyk, Dube and Phiri are linked to. The State alleges that of the amount... R51m was channelled irregularly through the charged companies,” he said.

Mathomane said the tender awarded to the airline was done without “following the proper supply chain management processes”.

“The irregularly secured agreement is said to have been signed by the fourth accused. Mohlokoleng signed on behalf of the Department of Transport as the then Accounting Officer, in his capacity as the head of the department. The deal was allegedly riddled with procurement irregularities and monies were paid for services not rendered.

“The irregularities prejudiced the North West government of millions of rands that could have been directed to service delivery,” Mamothame said.

Pre-trial conferencing is expected to commence in January 2024.

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