

Chaos follows Alli's exit

While Sanral CEO Nazir Alli seems to have bowed under pressure from the Gauteng e-tolling crisis, his political leaders seem to shy away from all responsibility in the resultant chaos.



Attempts on Wednesday to obtain answers around ongoing investigations into e-tolls and Alli's resignation, among others, proved to be a tall order.

The SA National Roads Agency board announced that its engineering executive, Koos Smit, will act in Alli's position when he leaves office next month.

Board chairman Tembakazi Mnyaka said Alli was not forced to resign. He said he did so out of his "choice".

"The board has taken note of speculation around the reason for the resignation of Alli as CEO.

"In his letter of resignation, Alli did not elaborate on factors that influenced his decision.

"While acknowledging the pressure on Sanral in recent times, the board did not believe it necessary in the circumstances to try to explore with him his personal deliberations and reflections," said Mnyaka.

Approached for comment, Alli said: "Please direct your request to Department of Transport [spokesman Tiyani Rikhotso]."

Rikhotso, however, said no reasons were given for Alli's resignation.

No response

Officials of the national Treasury could not respond to questions when they appeared before parliament's portfolio committee on finance on Tuesday as some of the issues will form part of court proceedings. The Treasury is fighting an interdict to halt freeway tolling filed by the Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance last month.

It only told the committee that the agency had debts amounting to R37.9-billion from the project, and that R21.4-billion was

guaranteed by the government.

Treasury spokesman Jabulani Sikhakhane yesterday referred The Times to a statement he released on Monday, in which the department would not comment on e-tolls as this would form part of a court hearing soon.

Alliance chairman Wayne Duvenage said it had not yet been told when the parties would go to court again.

He said whoever succeeded Alli would inherit a huge task.

Although Cosatu and the ANC have set up a task team to investigate alternative funding models for the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project, the trade union federation's spokesman, Patrick Craven, refused to comment on whether progress had been made.

No response

"It would be inappropriate for [members of] the task team to communicate progress before reporting to their respective leadership," he said.

The project was first signed off by the cabinet in 2007 when current Justice Minister Jeff Radebe was minister of transport. E-tolls were at the time identified as a method to be used to repay debt.

Radebe's spokesman, Tlali Tlali, said: "The minister is out of the country on government business and for that reason, it is not possible to solicit a response from him at this stage."

Gauteng premier Nomvula Mokonyane asked Transport Minister S'bu Ndebele last year to halt the implementation amid complaints that public consultation on the project had not been adequate.

Mokonyane's spokesman, Xoli Mngambi, said yesterday: "There is a government task team led by the Deputy President [Kgalema Motlanthe] on e-tolling. The premier will, therefore, be guided by the outcome of that process going forward."

The cabinet announced last Friday that a task team, to be headed by Motlanthe, would look into the e-tolls saga.

Source: *The Times* via I-Net Bridge

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