

North West toll disputes continue

A meeting between the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the transport department and the South African National Roads Agency Ltd about North West tolls was unfruitful, the union federation said.

Cosatu spokesman Solly Phetoe said the three organisations met in Potchefstroom over the proposed fee increases for motorists using the Swartruggens Plaza on the N14.

"The department failed to bring concrete proposals and responses to the meeting and a progress report of the so-called task team which, we were told, has done some work," Phetoe said.

"That [road] was built using the taxpayers' money and yet the taxpayer has to pay for the same road through toll fees," Phetoe added.

"Workers and poor motorists will pay until Bakwena gets its money back, which we are told is an amount of R3bn."

The union accused Bakwena, the N1 and N4 toll concessionaire, of wanting to profit from the road fees.

"Sanral and the department want Cosatu to accept that Bakwena will toll the road for 30 years and they also confirm that Bakwena will be able to repay their debt in 21 years. Therefore it will have nine years to make profits," said Phetoe.

Cosatu said the roads were not being properly maintained, despite toll fees.

"The [roads] are in a bad condition. We have potholes in all of them, including the same N4 toll road," he added.

Last week, Cosatu led a protest at the toll plaza. It demanded that the fee of R71 be suspended until a solution was found.

It launched a campaign earlier in the year, calling for the toll fee at the Swartruggens plaza to be reduced to R20.

"From 23rd November until the second week of December and on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, we will be there in full force with the support of our taxi industry and most of the motorists who use the roads on a daily basis," Phetoe said.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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