

Officials could face harsh penalties for not paying suppliers

PRETORIA: Accounting officers in government could in future be punished for failing to pay suppliers of service within the stipulated 30 days, Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan told the SABC on Wednesday, 21 November 2012.



He said a proposal will be made to political leaders to "punish" government officials who were not abiding by the 30-day payment rule. This, Gordhan said, would assist small businesses manage their cash flow more effectively.

A meeting of the Presidential Coordinating Council (PCC), chaired by President Jacob Zuma, further endorsed that performance agreements of all the accounting officers and chief financial officers should have the payment of invoices within 30 days as a key deliverable.

The council met in Cape Town on Tuesday.

It noted the need to further improve the rate at which progress was made in achieving full compliance with payments being made within 30 days.

"The PCC agreed that premiers will monitor the payment of invoices on a monthly basis to ensure adherence to the 30-day period and the reduction of the number of exceptions in this regard."

The council also commended what it described as the collaborative work by the Department for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation and the offices of premiers in improving the quality of service delivery.

It said between June 2011 and September 2012, more than 300 service delivery centres were visited across the country. The centres included government departments that offered frontline services.

The reports highlighted areas that needed improvement, such as cleanliness, queue management, customer satisfaction and non-attendance of basic maintenance of the facilities.

"The monitoring process entailed interviewing customers, the officials managing these facilities and through observations made by the monitoring teams. The monitoring was tested against the generic quality standards and norms expected in the respective service centres," said the PCC.

It further called on the offices of the premiers and the relevant departments to commit to addressing the challenges noted in the reports.

Premiers and ministers had been asked to further support these planned visits by follow-up "surprise visits" to the sites and facilities.

The council would be briefed in the next sitting on progress made in addressing the issues raised.

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