

# SIU granted order to freeze bank accounts of Digital Vibes

The Special Investigating Unit (SIU) has been granted a preservation order to freeze approximately R22m held in bank and investment accounts linked to Digital Vibes (Pty) Ltd.



Source: © Bruce Rolff – [123RF.com](https://123RF.com)

The order was granted on 17 June 2021 by the Special Tribunal.

This is as part of taking action against those implicated in corruption, maladministration and malpractice, in the matter involving the national Department of Health and the communication firm.

This also includes entities/individuals, who received payments from Digital Vibes, which is at the center of, inter alia, a Covid-19 media campaign contract that was awarded to it by the department.

The Special Tribunal Order prohibits Digital Vibes, Tahera Mather, Naadhira Mitha, Suhaila Mather, Suhaila Mather

Consulting (Pty) Ltd, Amod's Attorneys, WT Graphics and Designs (Pty) Ltd, and Strategieewhiz (Pty) Ltd (the 1st Respondent and the 5th to 11th Respondents) from dealing with the funds held in the relevant bank and investment accounts in any manner.

Based on the information presented by the SIU investigating team and certain information sourced and assisted by the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC), between 4 and 14 June 2021, after being approached by the SIU with evidence, the FIC issued intervention directions under Section 34 of the FIC Act. This was to place on hold approximately R22m of funds derived from the monies paid to Digital Vibes by the department for a period of 10 working days.

In a statement on Wednesday, the SIU said the funds are held in bank and investment accounts owned or controlled by the 1st Respondent and the 5th to 11th Respondents as listed in the Special Tribunal Order.

“The SIU received excellent cooperation and assistance from the FIC, for which the SIU is grateful.”

The SIU approached the Special Tribunal for preservation order/interdict to freeze the accounts following an investigation into allegations of unlawful and/or irregular procurement of Covid-19 communication services by the department.

In addition, the SIU will launch review proceedings in the Special Tribunal within the next 30 working days and seek an order against Digital Vibes and other relevant entities/individuals to pay back all financial losses suffered by the State as a consequence of the appointment of Digital Vibes by the department.

## Ongoing investigation

Though the SIU investigation in the appointment of Digital Vibes is ongoing, preliminary investigations have revealed clear evidence exposing two highly irregular and unlawful transactions.

The first transaction is a procurement process in 2019 in terms of which the company was appointed to perform communications services relating to the National Health Insurance (NHI).

The second transaction occurred in 2020 during the tenure of the first transaction when Digital Vibes was ‘appointed’ in respect of a Covid-19 awareness campaign without any competitive bidding or other procurement process at all.

The Covid-19 awareness campaign was merely brought-in as an extension to the contract between the department and Digital Vibes in respect of the NHI media campaign in circumstances where such an extension was irregular and unlawful.

Furthermore, the department utilised the budget allocated for the NHI contract and NHI media campaign to pay for the purported Covid-19 media campaign work allegedly performed by Digital Vibes.

The department paid a total of approximately R150m to Digital Vibes, approximately R25m of which was paid in respect of the NHI media campaign and approximately R125m in respect of the Covid-19 appointment.

Despite civil legal outcomes, the SIU investigation into the affairs of the department is ongoing. In line with the SIU Act, evidence pointing to criminal conduct will be referred to the National Prosecuting Authority for further action, and the SIU will refer evidence in support of disciplinary, administrative and/or executive actions to the relevant authorities for further action.