

Eskom defends lifting suspension on senior managers

Eskom has been quick to defend the reinstatement of two senior managers just a couple of days after their suspension, saying that there was nothing untoward in the power utility's processes.



In a late-night statement, Eskom's group executive: human resources, Elsie Pule, said she wanted to set the record straight about media reports on senior procurement manager, Charles Kalima, and former procurement head, Edwin Mabelane, who were alleged to have been complicit in paying R500m in consultancy fees to the Gupta-linked company, Trillian.

"While we can confirm that suspensions occurred, in line with our procedure on the basis of preliminary precaution with pay and with immediate effect, the affected individuals were called upon to make written representations to motivate why the preliminary decision to suspend should not be made final," she explained.

Pule said that they were expected to submit their representations within two working days of receipt of the letter, which they did.

"Upon receipt of their representations on 17 August 2017, the respective line managers of these employees, assisted by HR, considered them and in turn decided to lift the preliminary suspensions," Pule added.

She emphasised that the process followed is in strict compliance with the Eskom disciplinary procedure as well as established labour law principles.

However, the counter claim is that the suspensions were lifted because of pressure for Eskom's current acting board chair, Zethembe Khoza.

Disciplinary hearing for Koko

She also responded to allegations that Eskom was dragging its feet on resolving charges against the former acting CEO, Matshela Koko, saying he would face a disciplinary hearing. He has been linked to Gupta companies for shady coal-supply deals, and multi-billion rand contracts, which were awarded to his stepdaughter's company for construction work at the Kusile power station.

"As far as the disciplinary matter against Mr Koko is concerned, the report by both Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr and Nkonki Incorporated went through an entire process of edification, as critical documents, presentations and submissions by various parties internally and externally were required in strict accordance with a fair process.

"We don't believe that the 'dragging of feet' allegation is based on a fair assessment of the prescribed process against the actual steps taken thus far on the Koko matter," she stated.

Pule pointed out that several steps had already been completed. "All these milestones are vital in ensuring a fair outcome, and unfortunately they could not have been achieved without spending some time addressing them."

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