

Eskom suspends CFO Anoj Singh pending investigation

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State-owned power utility Eskom has suspended its chief financial officer, Anoj Singh, on a precautionary basis, pending the outcome of a forensic investigation.



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The suspension, *TimesLIVE* has learned, follows an urgent intervention by Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba and Public Enterprises Minister Lynne Brown. This was after Eskom was faced with a threat from the Development Bank of SA (DBSA) to recall its R15bn loan if no action was taken against Singh and other Eskom officials responsible for the beleaguered parastatal's qualified audit opinion.

In releasing its financials last week, Eskom confirmed irregular expenditure to the tune of R3bn, but downplayed any possible consequences from its lenders. But the Times has learned that the DBSA's threat, which was issued in a letter on Monday, was followed by that from another major bank the next day.

Such action would trigger similar recalls from Eskom's other lenders, which exposes the fiscus to an immediate demand of more than R300bn Eskom owes a number of lenders. Two weeks ago, the Sunday Times reported that Eskom closed the 2017 financial year with R20bn in its bank accounts.

"It's a major sovereignty risk ... It's R350bn because once DBSA happens, it triggers everyone else. If they all pull out it means treasury must go and find hundreds of billions by tomorrow," said a government source on Thursday.

Although Gigaba's office could not be immediately reached for comment, TimesLIVE understands he held crisis meetings with the DBSA on Monday and is currently allaying the fears of other lenders. A DBSA board member declined to comment, but did not deny a letter was addressed to the Eskom board on Monday, instead indicating that correspondence between itself and Eskom was confidential.

On Monday, *TimesLIVE* reported that Singh's involvement in major deals involving the Gupta family could be traced through evidence in leaked e-mails. Most notably, Singh was directly sent a Trillian Capital Partners invoice for R30.6m on 11 February 2016, two months before the company was registered on Eskom's supplier database.

Trillian, who announced on Wednesday that it and key Gupta associate Salim Essa had parted ways, sent the invoice again on 14 April, it was paid the same day - coincidentally, the day payment was due for the Guptas' purchase of Optimum Coal.

Singh also travelled to Dubai five times between 6 June 2014 and 24 December 2015 where he stayed in the five-star Oberoi Hotel on each occasion, all on the Guptas' tab.

Every meeting was either just before or after the Gupta family clinched a major deal.

Last week, Eskom executives finally admitted, after months of public denials, it had paid Trillian a total of R495m, without a contract being in place.

Eskom's board and Brown's spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions.

Source: The Times

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