

# Works says cannot stop railway, roads contracts

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Willem Goeiemann

**THE postponement of awarding two multibillion-dollar rail and roads contracts to foreign contractors is hanging in the balance as the works and finance ministries have passed the buck to each other on who should be stopping it.**

This comes after finance minister Calle Schlettwein wrote to works minister John Mutorwa on 9 October 2018, asking him to postpone awarding the two contracts so that Namibians can also benefit from them, and not just international companies.

The tenders are for the upgrading of the Walvis Bay/Kranzberg railway line, and the construction of a dual carriageway from Windhoek to the Hosea Kutako International Airport, whose due dates were 10 and 12 October 2018, respectively.

Partially funded by the N\$10 billion African Development Bank [AFDB] loan secured last year, the tenders' conditions heavily disadvantaged Namibian companies, whom government wants to empower.

The works ministry's permanent secretary, Willem Goeiemann, yesterday said they cannot postpone the due date of the two multibillion-dollar rail and road contracts as it is not their mandate to do so.

Goeiemann yesterday confirmed that the ministry has responded to Schlettwein's letter on Friday, where they stated that they have no power to do so.

“We could not agree because it is not within our mandate. He [Schlettwein] should contact the African Development Bank, then they would be the ones to stop it,” he said.

However, Schlettwein, who said he has not seen the response, felt it was not up to him, but to the line ministry itself.

Schlettwein stressed that that ministry has been given full mandate over the contract, and they thus have the power to stop it.

“It is not up to me. They are in charge of the contract completely. We have no technical expertise, they are the line ministry. If we must contact the AFDB, we will contact them. But then, what is their role? I have a problem if the line ministry does not carry out their role. It is rather disappointing,” the finance minister added.

Works deputy minister Sankwasa James Sankwasa last week complained that the tender requirements for both contracts are not in favour of Namibians, who still have to pay back the loan through taxes.

He accused the African Development Bank of being un-African by setting conditions that only international companies can meet.

Documents seen by *The Namibian* show that contractors were called upon to have multimillion-dollar financial thresholds and turnovers, long-term profitability as well as over N\$130 million as cash flow