

Magashule, Minister named in murder and bribery trial

The names of ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule and Home Affairs Minister Aaron Motsoaledi have been dragged into a high-profile R5m bribery and murder investigation playing out in the Free State High Court (Bloemfontein), says a **City Press** report. Eight men – among them a Bloemfontein businessman, police officers, a soldier and a lawyer – are facing a raft of charges, including murder, conspiracy to murder and defeating the ends of justice, for the death of businessman Louis Siemens in May last year. On the eve of the trial, which is set down to continue until the end of November, a letter classified as ‘top secret’ and authored by provincial counter-intelligence – a unit of the police’s Crime Intelligence division – revealed the extent of the probe into high-level corruption in the province. The report says the confidential letter cites ‘the former provincial Premier and a serving national Minister’ as being persons of interest in the investigation into Siemens’ assassination. Law enforcement sources reportedly told **City Press** that the former Premier and Minister cited in the letter are Magashule and Motsoaledi. Both names also appear in affidavits deposed to by accused parties and witnesses as part of the probe into the R5m bribery scandal, which led to the hit on Siemens. In an affidavit signed in September, the provincial Health Department’s former legal services director, Justice Finger, claimed he had been told by a friend that Magashule had been paid R5m to facilitate the approval of a licence for CityMed Day Hospital – of which Siemens was chief executive officer and shareholder. Bloemfontein businessman Stanley Bakili, who is accused of masterminding Siemens’ murder, has also claimed in an affidavit that he bribed Motsoaledi, who was Health Minister at the time, with R154 000. The alleged bribe was to facilitate the expeditious approval of Siemens’ private hospital licence application for the CityMed hospital. **Motsoaledi has vehemently denied the allegations, saying he remains opposed to corruption and that he will co-operate with investigators.** The voluminous indictment also shows that Bakili told a convicted murderer – who has turned state witness in the case – that if he agreed not to testify against him and his co-accused, ‘Ace’ would give him R500 000.