

R700m for new schools in Gauteng

This is money well spent, says MEC as building gets under way

LOUISE FLANAGAN
louise.flanagan@inl.co.za

GAUTENG is building 12 more schools this year, and builders are rushing to finish them.

This is part of a project to build 27 new schools in the province over several years.

Twelve of the schools are already finished, according to the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development.

Another three schools are in the planning stages.

"Some have been handed over to the Department of Education, while others are pending final touches and accounts settlement before handover to the end-user," said the department's spokesman Thulasizwe Simelane.

The department builds the schools, then hands them over to education authorities.

Gauteng Department of Education spokesman Charles Phahlane confirmed that the 12 schools had been opened, mostly last year.

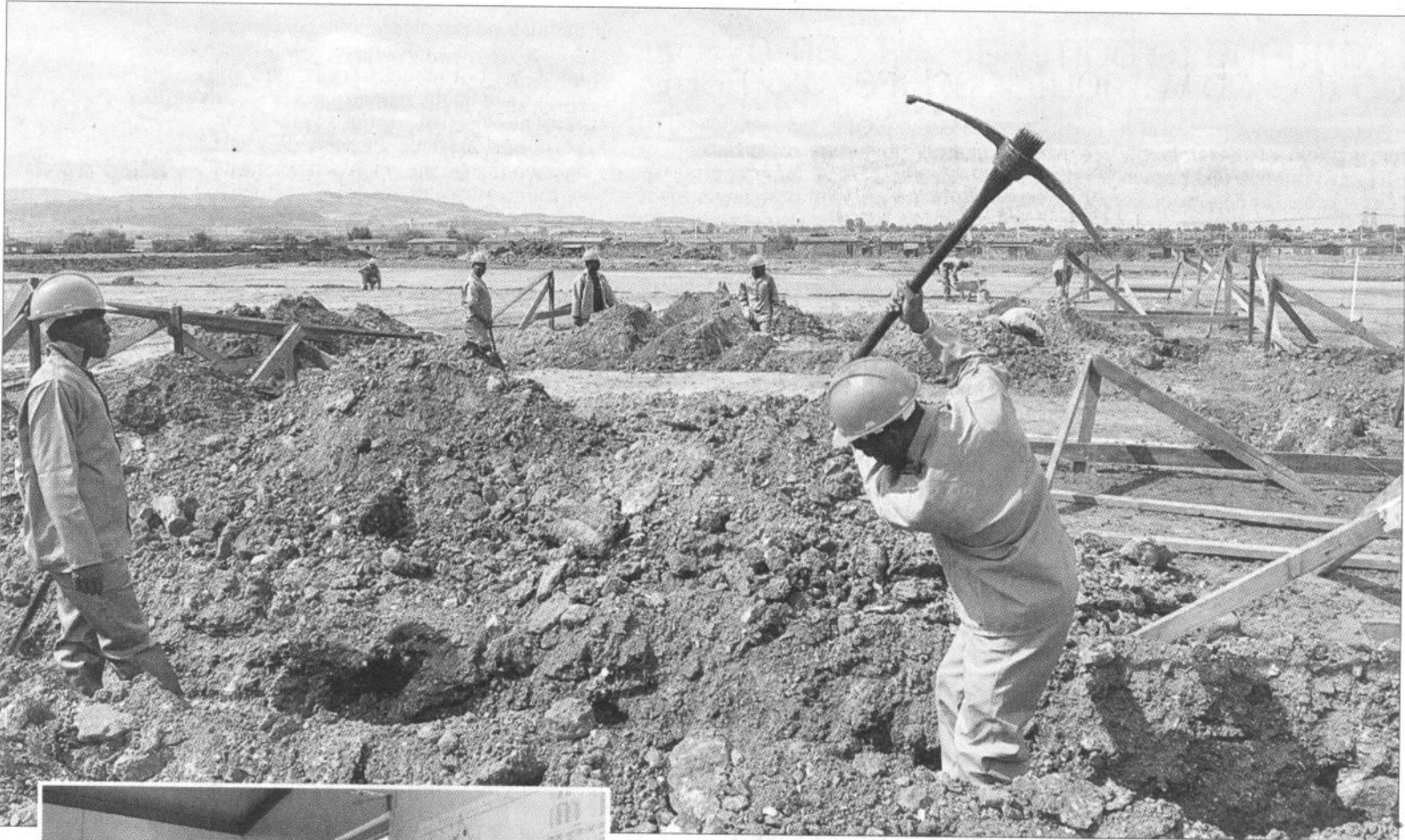
Construction on this year's 12 schools has either started or is due to start soon.

Phahlane said the 27 schools would accommodate nearly 28 000 pupils. About 11 000 had already started at the 12 opened schools.

The 27 new schools would cost an average of about R55m each, said Simelane.

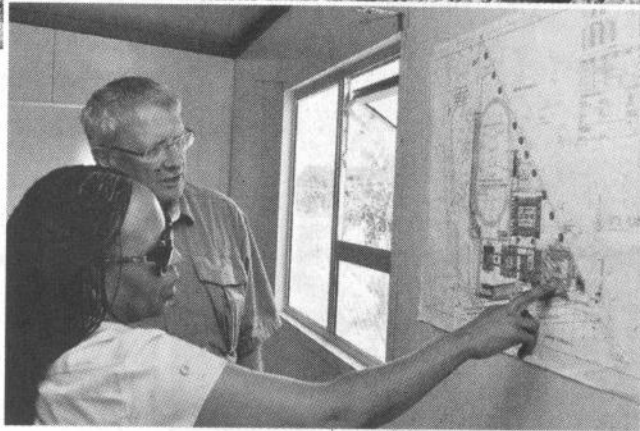
"The project costs include all costs from start to completion of the project, including sports fields, combo-courts (basketball, tennis, netball), laboratories, libraries, energy efficiency technologies such as solar roof panels, ground water pumps and water harvesting tanks, and school furniture," he said.

The schools on which construction is under way or about



INVESTMENT: Workers prepare the foundation at one of the sites of Gauteng's school building project. At least 27 new schools will be built in the next few years to provide for the province's growing population.

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BIG PLANS: Construction company official Gavin Munro shows Infrastructure Development MEC Qedani Mahlangu the building plans for Noordwyk High School in Midrand.

to start will altogether - building and furnishing - cost around R700m.

"I'm confident that the money's well spent," said Infrastructure Development MEC Qedani Mahlangu after visiting construction sites on Friday for the five schools which have been started.

Accompanying her was the new head of department,

Bethuel Netshiswinzhe, on his first day on the job.

The new schools are all brick-built permanent structures, and are going up fast.

Construction of Chief Albert Luthuli school in Daveyton, Ekurhuleni, started in mid-November, and the main structure was completed a month later, while the finishing touches and service connec-

tions are now under way. Furniture is soon to be installed.

Mahlangu expects to hand the keys to Chief Albert Luthuli to the Education Department at the end of this month.

On the other four sites, foundations are being dug.

The MEC wants all of them finished by the end of April, so they are being fast-tracked.

They take about three months to build - half of that time is for construction of the main structure, and the rest for the finishes and furnishing.

The four under way are a school in Palm Ridge near Alberton (costing R54m), a primary school in Slovoville on the West Rand (R51m), a high school in Northriding (R49m), and a high school at Noordwyk in Midrand (R46m).

At Palm Ridge, the site is still flooded from recent rains.

The area has waited 15 years for the new school.

At Slovoville, there is an old disused mineshaft near the

Easing the congestion

COMPLETED

Polokong Primary
Bronkhorstspuit Primary
Simunye Primary
Katlehong Primary
Rietvallei Primary
Diepsloot Secondary
Tsakane Primary
Sakhisizwe Secondary
Winnie Mandela Primary
Thulasizwe Primary
Sikhulisile Primary
Olievenhoutbosch Primary

UNDER WAY OR SOON TO START

Naturena Primary

Steve Bikoville Primary
Mamelodi East Primary
Freedom Park Secondary
Soshanguve Primary
Phomolong Primary
Lotus Gardens Primary
Chief Albert Luthuli Primary
Slovoville Primary
Palm Ridge Primary
Northriding Primary
Noordwyk Primary

IN PLANNING AND DESIGN STAGE

Doornkop
Buhle Park
East Rand

site, raising concerns about dangers of structural problems such as sinkholes.

Mahlangu's department is negotiating with the mine owners and the municipality to have the shaft sealed and made safe.

"This school has been outstanding since 1996," said Mahlangu of the Slovoville school.

"We are going to give you a nice job," Phillip Meno, one of the contractors on the site, told the MEC.