

Parliament under attack by rodents

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RATS in the parliamentary arena are causing widespread anger and fear.

At 100 Plein Street, one of the buildings in the parliamentary precinct, rats are wreaking havoc as they chew telephone wires and have even left droppings on an official's desk.

Last Friday, offices on the first floor in the media section were decked out with poison and traps to curb what has been described by many as an infestation.

While journalists refused to comment, co-chairman of the Press Gallery Association, Donald Pressly, said official complaints had been made about the rodents. "There appears to be a general neglect of the media wing in the parliamentary complex," he said.

Pressly said despite most of the buildings in the precinct being upgraded, 100 Plein Street had been neglected.

FF Plus MP Pieter Groenewald said he had come across one of the offending rats.

"Everybody knows it can cause some sickness ... I've visited some of the journalists in the building and I could see that proper maintenance is not done. ... I can understand [that there would be rats]," he said.

Thami Mchunu, spokesman for the Department of Public Works responsible for cleaning and hygiene, said they were not aware of a "so-called" rat infestation.

However, there have also been reports that rats have set their sights on the decision makers, with some targeting Tuynhuys, President Jacob Zuma's official Cape Town residence, as well as the Marks building where the MPs are housed.

However, MPs said they were generally happy with the cleanliness there.

DA chief whip Watty Watson said no MP or staff had reported any concerns over pest control.

But ANC MP Raseriti Tau said rat sightings were a worry.

"It would definitely be a concern to me knowing what rats can do. It makes you think of what the people of Alexandra [township] are feeling, [with rats] eating their food and their clothes."

The thought of a burgeoning rat population sent shivers down Cope MP Dennis Bloem's spine. "I'm very scared of a rat."

But, IFP chief whip Koos van der Merwe said: "The only rats I've seen are some ANC MPs."