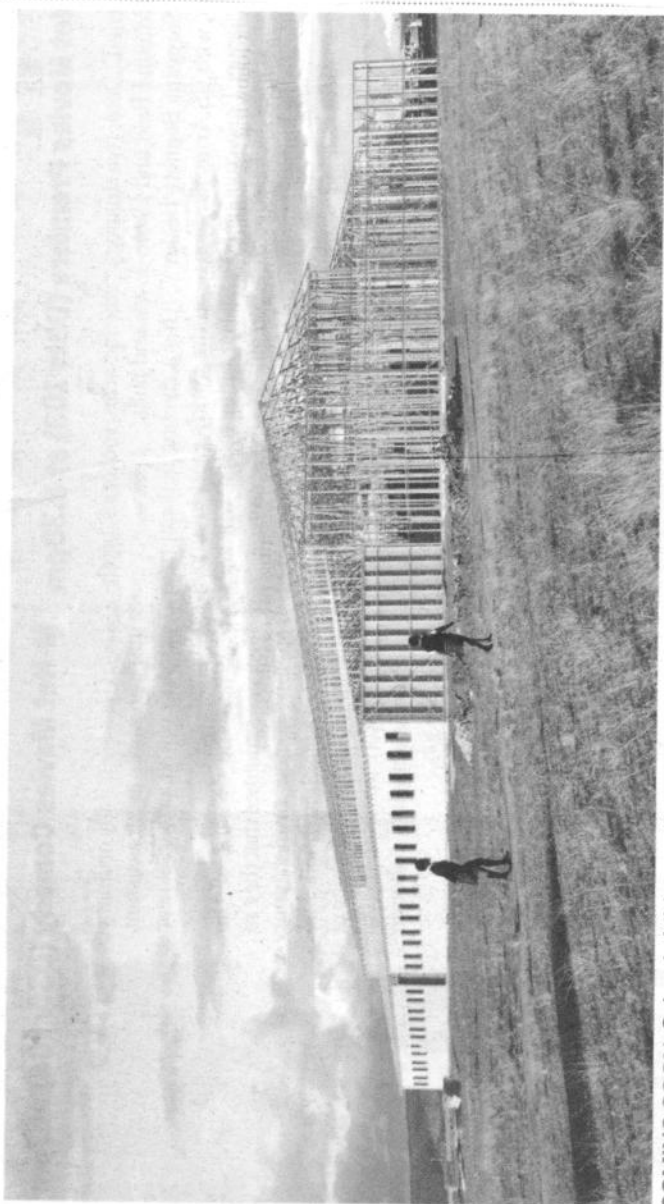


132 rebuilt schools on way

Education minister promises refurbished institutions for province by end of this month



COMING SOON: School children walk towards the new Phakamani secondary school that is under construction in Debere in Idutjiwa in the Eastern Cape. PICTURE: TINA

SITHANDIWE VELAPHI

SCHOOLS in the province will never be the same again, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga said while delivering her budget vote speech in Parliament this week.

Motshekga said her department was planning to rebuild 200 dilapidated schools in the country and 132 of these were in the Eastern Cape.

"By end of May, we will hand over the completed schools to the province so that they can pass them on officially to the people."

Many of these schools are drawn from the eastern parts of the province where many children are either learning in makeshift classrooms or on the floor because of the lack of furniture.

The New Age reported yesterday about the plight of Nquba Junior Secondary School pupils in Willowvale, where teachers said they had been physically fighting for a share of desks and chairs in the past two years. In their personal capacities, advocates Mthunzi Mhaga and Thabo Mantyi donated 41 desks and 82 chairs to the school last week. But the school still needed more furniture.

At Putuma Junior Secondary School in Elliotdale, the school principal, Babalwa Mtumtum, recently said her school had

been buying the school furniture on its own, following failure by the department to provide them with it.

"This happened while the department had been aware of it. We have been buying desks in the hope that the department will finally come to our rescue but nothing ever came up. Instead we have just

received promises. "In my school it is not an exaggeration to say five children share one desk," Mtumtum said.

The province's department of education recently gazetted closure of more than 300 unviable schools.

Provincial education spokesperson Loyiso Pulumani said this week that the

decision did not directly come from the department.

"We want to state that the decision to close these schools has not been taken by the department itself. It is because these schools have had dwindling numbers of pupils," he said.

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