

# Mental hospital 'on track'

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THE construction of the controversial mental hospital that started 13 years ago, will finally be completed at the end of this year.

The provincial government commenced construction of The Kimberley Mental Health Hospital in 2004. Construction was halted several times leading to protracted court challenges between Vista Park, Joh Arch and the government.

Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi has said it is important for the hospital to be completed because mental patients in the province are being held in Correctional Services facilities. "There are a total of 26 State patients currently accommodated in Correctional Services facilities in the Northern Cape," Motsoaledi said.

He said the matter was brought to his attention by the sister department of justice and correctional services and he has since spoken to all the MECs responsible for health. "The requirements and plans for each province including the Northern Cape to alleviate the challenges were agreed to, including prioritising building new facilities where required or adding additional wards in existing state facilities," he said.

Meanwhile, the MEC of roads and public works, Mxolisa Sokatsha, said yesterday the construction of the hospital was at an advanced stage and only "minor work needs to be done".

He said it was feasible that the contractor would be handing over the 286-bed hospital to the provincial government. "The contractor has completed 97% of all the wet-work trades with the final 3% set to be completed.

"There is hope in this building compared to what it looked like a few years

ago. I am excited about the developments in the hospital."

The MEC said he was confident completion of the hospital would be this year and that his department would hand over the facility to the health department. "We are committed to ensuring the project is completed, we also remain focused on dealing with challenges that may arise," he said.

The department said they were monitoring the progress weekly to ensure its completion by the end of the year.

Sokatsha said the provincial department of health, treasury and public works were working around the clock to ensure the state-of-the-art hospital was completed and serving the people of the province. "Over the past number of months a joint management committee team has been established to ensure there is adequate senior oversight on the project," he said.

An estimated R680m has been spent in the construction of the hospital.

"We comprehend the need and high demand for specialised mental health care in the province," Sokatsha said.

The hospital will include, among other things, a pharmacy, a child and adolescence wards, overnight accommodation, a library, a wellness centre and other wards.

The MEC said delays in the construction of the hospital were over and he was adamant that "in his lifetime" the hospital would be operational. "This is one of the most challenging projects we've ever started.

"Contractual disputes with the contractors have been the cause of the delay. Mota-Engil Construction said 300 people had been employed. The hospital was meant to be completed in 2008 at a cost of just under R900m.

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