

BUILDINGS TORCHED

Less than quarter of Vuwani schools repaired

Staff Writer

Only eight out of 31 schools that were damaged during the 2016 violent protests in Vuwani have been repaired.

Violence erupted in Vuwani after the Municipal Demarcation Board recommended that Malamulele and Vuwani municipalities be merged. Schools were torched and learning ground to a halt, affecting about 30,000 pupils.

In a written reply to the DA, the Department of Education has confirmed that R177m was allocated in the 2016-17 financial year towards schools damaged by storms and to tackle protest-related incidents.

But only eight out of the 31 schools had been refurbished and rebuilt, according to the education department.

"The DA can confirm that the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure has conducted an assessment that estimated the damages to all 31 schools was worth R177.5m, but the assessment report further indicated that the upgrades and maintenance required in the same schools including the riot damages amounted to R462m," DA member of the provincial legislature Jacques Smalle said.

"The contracts for these projects were awarded on February 15 2017 but it's extremely astonishing that a year on, only eight schools were attended to."

The party said it would ask the department for an explanation of how the budgeted money was spent, what plans there were to provide funds to repair all the schools and how long it would take to rebuild them.

A study by the Human Sciences Research Council published in March ascribed the torching of schools in Vuwani to residents' fear of not being heard by the authorities as well as concerns about the economic viability of municipal demarcation.

Speaking at the release of the study, researcher Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane said there was no evidence that the proposed new municipality would be financially viable.