

More forced to squat

KZN dept blamed for escalation of informal settlements in cities

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THE number of informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal is rising.

The province has 743 informal settlements and the number is expected to grow with continuing urbanisation.

Human Settlements and Public Works MEC Ravi Pillay, who delivered a R3,6 billion budget at the legislature on Friday, said “the escalation of informal settlements in our cities is a function of a rapid urbanisation, migration and consequent invasion”.

Most of the informal settlements are in eThekweni (547) and uMgungundlovu (97).

Pillay said the department will focus on informal settlement clearance projects.

He said he believes the department has reached a breakthrough with military veterans, which may stop the latter from occupying council houses.

The department has been negotiating with military veterans who have occupied houses in Msunduzi and Margate, which they invaded, recently.

“Military veterans have agreed to accept a standard BGN unit [40m²]. They had previously demanded 50m² units, and other specifications such as tiling, fencing and others,” he said.

DA spokesperson on Human Settlements George Mari blamed the recent house invasions by military veterans on the department’s slow pace in providing

homes for them.

“The Aloe Ridge invasion by so-called military veterans is a direct result of the department failing to provide homes,” he said.

Mari said Pillay needs to deal effectively with land invasions in the province.

“It is no good slamming the invasions. You must take legal action to stop this. There is no law that authorises amakhosi or izinduna to allocate privately-owned land to others,” he said.

IFP MPL Joshua Mazibuko said the government had failed to deliver on promises made before elections. “It is very unfortunate the issues of illegal takeover of houses by military veterans is still with us. We reiterate our position, articulated in this house in 2012, that yes, we condemn the illegal occupation of either houses or land,” he said.

“And we also realise there may be opportunists who want to benefit from this programme though they do not qualify. However, we understand the frustrations of military veterans, which are similar to frustrations of the majority of destitute KwaZulu-Natal residents.”

NFP MPL Bonga Nzuza said the invasions by military veterans were uncalled for. “We condemn this juvenile behaviour by military veterans and their ANC friends.

“Their right to housing does not mean they must take houses that are meant for other people.”