

Locals feel more hopeful

By THOKOZILE MNGUNI

THE government has listened to the concerns of residents of Pilgrim's Rest.

During a visit to the historic Mpumalanga town on Friday, MEC for public works Gillion Mashego assured residents lease agreements for businesses in the area had been concluded and operations would start soon.

Residents had accused the government of selling off the town.

Mashego told them: "The department has awarded tenders to the Pilgrim's Pantry, Africa Silk, Scotts House, Jubilee Pottery, the Golf Club, Ponietzkranz Arts and Crafts, the Bank House and The Vine. Other businesses are still at the adjudication stage."

Speaking at Pilgrim's Rest Primary School, the MEC promised the community that a bakery

business wouldn't be awarded to any private company but would rather be used to empower local people with the necessary skills to run it.

Tourism MEC Eric Kholwane said the bakery would supply bread to local hospitals, the Royal Hotel and other state-owned institutions.

"Tourist attractions are critical for business in this museum town.

"Therefore, the government has concluded a study which will boost the economy in the area. Locals stand to benefit through employment opportunities."

Resident Ditebogo Sefako said: "This is the first step in the right direction.

"We're relieved something is being done to address the challenges facing this historic town."