

## ■ DAMAGE

# Safety fears after ceiling caves in at Master's Office

**THAMI MAGUBANE |**

thami.magubane@inl.co.za

WORK at the Master's Office in Pietermaritzburg has come to a stop after the ceiling caved in over the weekend, raising safety fears for workers operating inside the building. The workers were not inside at the time.

The Master's Office provides numerous key services to bereaved families looking to process information about their loved ones.

The Department of Justice said it expected workers to resume services today, even if they had to work in another building.

Zimasile Giyama of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union in the Harry Gwala region said union members would not go back into the building until they had been assured it was safe.

"It's fortunate there was no one inside the building when the ceiling collapsed, or people would have been seriously injured. We have given them (Department of Justice) until (today) to address the matter.

"Our position is that until a qualified engineer goes in, checks

the building and issues a safety certificate, our members will not be going inside," he said.

Giyama said they had met with Justice Department regional managers, who could not guarantee the workers' safety.

"We would like to apologise to members of the community. We know they travel from far to that office, but the community should be aware that if the building is not safe for workers, it is also not safe for them," said Steve Mahlangu, the media liaison for the department.

He said three offices and the boardroom had water damage. The Department of Public Works (DPW) had been contacted to assess the damage and initiate repairs.

"The water damage was caused by a copper pipe connected to a fire extinguisher that burst. We are awaiting a certificate from DPW confirming the building's safety.

"The office has a business continuity plan, and the public can expect services to resume," he said, adding that a notice would be posted if necessary about where services were being offered.