

Deadly fire building to come down

BANK OF LISBON: 'DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR,' SAYS MEC

Eric Naki

The Bank of Lisbon building that previously housed the provincial health department in central Johannesburg will be turned into a heap of rubble in November.

But it will be rebuilt as part of a multibillion-rand project to renew government buildings in the City of Joburg.

The building was gutted by a fire that claimed the lives of three firefighters and injured several others in September last year.

Gauteng executive committee member for infrastructure development and property management Tasneem Motara told *The Citizen* yesterday the building was damaged beyond repair. A contractor has been engaged to implode the charred remains, probably in November.

The Bank of Lisbon building housed the provincial department of health, which was forced to relocate after last year's inferno.

Motara, who was appointed as MEC after the May election, said the building would be rebuilt as part of her department's ambitious five-year Kopanong Precinct development project to rebuild and refurbish 18 buildings in the city to house various government departments.

The project is a public-private partnership and is expected to mobilise R10 billion through investment.

It was hoped it would also

contribute to the renewal of the Johannesburg central business district (CBD).

The MEC said the other buildings identified for the project would be refurbished, with a few changes.

The Kopanong development was necessitated by the need to cut the high cost of leasing private buildings in the CBD.

"We will demolish the Bank of Lisbon to bring down the cost of refurbishing it. It is set to come down in November," she said.

Earlier, provincial government spokesperson Thabo Masebe announced that the building was stabilised and an investigation was underway to determine the safest way to demolish it in terms of the bylaws.

Motara's department, which replaced the public works department, serves as the custodian of the government property portfolio, including land and assets.

According to Motara, it decides what must be done with public buildings and is responsible for the building of all public infrastructure except those done through the public-private partnership.

The provincial government, through the infrastructure development and property management department, owns Roodeplat buildings, the Emoyeni conference centre and the Innovation Hub building.

It also owns a small portfolio of economic properties which it plans to expand to bring revenue to the provincial government.

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